PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - A NETWORKING APPROACH

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an account of how a networking approach may assist participatory community development.

The author undertakes naturalistic action research into how she can improve her social practice with a view to gaining equal participation amongst university and community members in a community development practicum.

She describes how efforts to maximize group participation are typically countered with various forms of non-participation, analogous to a rebellion against authoritarianism.

Dialogue with her doctoral peer group about tacit meanings from her personal history reveals that she is too heavily invested in community involvement. A stance of irreverence gives her the freedom to realize that her politically correct approach is conveying the message that “MY way of participation is THE way”. She embarks on a networking programme of action in the hope of achieving more balanced participation.

A multidisciplinary workshop and a study tour show her that openness to multiple inputs may free people from restrictive views and problematic styles of participation. She initiates the formation of a local network and finds that this is a more free-flowing structure that encourages fluid problem solving among community, government and university participants.

The author's original anxieties are, however, revived when networking, too, becomes entangled in organizational complexities. She eventually realizes that she tends to base her actions on premises of power and justice and that it may be helpful to base new ventures on information flow and creativity instead.

Her new approach to group facilitation elicits creative inputs from others. She finds that deliberate debate of the assumptions on which collective undertakings are based releases an awareness of alternative approaches to addressing unequal resource utilization in the commons.
A review of the local Network's development over six years draws attention to networking resources, and its uses, structuring and management. The author's experiences continuously demonstrate that the assumptions of independence and freedom of choice may provide a more satisfactory basis upon which to manage community participation.

Key terms

Constructivism; Action research; Participatory community development; Community psychology practicum; Democratization problem; Networking; Community networks; Premises; Information; Creativity.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

I embarked on this study in the context of my work as a lecturer in psychology at the Medical University of Southern Africa (Medunsa). Medunsa was established in 1976 as a training institution for medical and allied health professionals from the black population groups in South Africa. As a product of apartheid policy, the university was placed a considerable distance from Pretoria on the outskirts of what was then known as Bophuthatswana - the so-called independent homeland of the Tswana. The university’s mission was to prepare black professionals to provide a service to the deprived people who made up the vast majority of the population. My job was challenging and gave me the opportunity of searching for relevant psychological services and training.

One of the training courses assigned to me was the community psychology practicum for third year and honours students. I wanted the practical training system to incorporate real-life situations, so I decided to follow a community collaborative research approach\(^1\). Together with a fellow lecturer, I put together a “tool kit” for students, which consisted of a reader and practical guidelines for teamwork with community service institutions.

To start with, we linked up with one of the university’s Saturday clinics, which focused on primary health care and community education at nearby community centres. This turned out to be a highly rewarding experience. Students ascribed this to the clinic’s ideology, which entrenched grassroots participation and community action, not only for the sake of empowerment, but also as a form of protest against the oppressive government of the day. Youth structures and community health workers from a non-governmental organization (NGO) welcomed our presence, and some of our joint projects, such as the Youth AIDS Awareness Project (YAAP)\(^2\), were ultimately run autonomously by community members.

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1 Pistorius et al. (1992).

2 YAAP is a pseudonym. I have used fictitious names whenever confidentiality is at stake.
The community practicum evolved into a process of annually rotating student teams that link with an established community structure, allowing for project continuity and for community groups to manage these projects autonomously. Students merely had to join existing community project efforts. The main organizers, including myself, NGO staff, youth and community activist leaders, developed relationships that involved intense commitment, personal growth and shared learning. Further, the YAAP’s community education effort represented quite an achievement for us in terms of enabling local creativity.

My involvement with the students and NGO staff enhanced my awareness of socio-political issues. In fact, it contributed immensely to my personal development, especially my development as a “community psychologist”. Learning about the community’s socio-political history from its members opened my eyes to the value of a social-structural appreciation of South Africa’s problems and highlighted the link between the abject poverty of the people and the government’s political history.

However, while we shared a common vision for a democratic society, this did not exempt us from experiencing problems in our interpersonal relationships. This became evident from the participatory research we tried to conduct at grassroots level, where we found that the attempt to achieve equal participation often created all kinds of complications. Eventually, I realized that noteworthy as the project achievements were, attempts to work democratically were being thwarted by problematic group dynamics. I started seeking wise counsel by discussing this problem with other people, and in 1993 I enrolled for the Alternative Doctoral Programme (ADP) of the Department of Psychology at the University of Southern Africa (Unisa). I hoped, by these means, to find a more suitable way of making a meaningful contribution.

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4 I follow Lauer’s (1986, p.26) use of the term “Social Structure Theories”, which covers the many critical, radical and Marxist theories. The essence of this broad perspective is that because all parts of society are interdependent, treating any social problem means treating the structure of society.

5 This programme was developed in response to the needs of professional psychologists who wanted to further their education but were not interested in the traditional approach to doctoral studies.
The Nature of this Enquiry

The ADP made it clear from the outset that the appropriate method of enquiry for practitioners to improve their own practice would not necessarily be associated with positivistic research methods. The research process was more likely to correspond with constructivist ideas about how a disciplined investigation, undertaken in the natural setting of one’s professional context, can deepen understanding. In my case, the setting was the institutional and community contexts in which I participate and perform my student training practice.

The basic beliefs of constructivism may be outlined as follows:

Realities are multiple and they exist in people's minds. We base our realities on our social interactions and experiences. Our realities are thus local and specific, and dependent on the persons who hold them. Thus subjective interaction seems to be the only way to access knowledge about reality. The results of an enquiry are always shaped by the interaction between the enquirer and that which is enquired into.

A constructivist approach to research aims to identify a variety of constructions and bring about as much consensus as possible regarding these constructions. Individual constructs are elicited and refined hermeneutically, describing them as accurately as possible. They are then compared and contrasted dialectically, so that each respondent (including the enquirer) must confront the constructions of others and come to terms with them. Simultaneously the methodology aims to keep channels of communication open so that information and sophistication can be continuously improved. In short, knowledge is a human construction that can never be regarded as ultimately true, but as problematic and ever changing. It is the mind that is to be transformed, not the world "out there".

The ADP programme also introduced me to naturalistic action research as a particular method of engaging in constructivist enquiry.

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Action research seeks to solve practical problems rather than to generate answers to theoretical questions per se\(^7\). Practical knowledge is generated through iterative cycles of identifying a problem, planning, acting, and evaluating. Through such reflection and action the enquirer aims to become aware of, and to act upon, the tacit knowledge that he or she holds that constrains or contradicts his or her own practice\(^8\). Thus, the intended change in action research typically involves gaining critical knowledge\(^9\), emancipatory knowledge\(^10\), or "reeducation, a term that refers to changing patterns of thinking and acting that are presently well established in individuals and groups"\(^11\).

Action research takes place in a social context as we exchange views with others about our enquiries and build communities of support around them. Invariably, the insights that issue from sharing our personal stories with others help build interactive knowledge\(^12\). Useful social knowledge does not derive from analysis of data about other human beings but from sharing a life-world. While the instrumental knowledge of traditional research requires separateness and externalization, interactive knowledge is predicated on connectedness and inclusion. It is from such complementary dialogue\(^13\) that mutual support and common action may arise for improving our practice and the situations or institutions that we co-create.

Following the above ideas, action research may be defined as "a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality ... [and] coherence ... of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these

\(^7\)Kemmis & McTaggart (1988).

\(^8\)Guba & Lincoln (1989).


\(^12\)Park (1993).

\(^13\)Gergen (1988).
practices, and (c) the (situations) and institutions ... in which these practices are carried out.

This definition provided me with a guideline for establishing whether my self-reflective enquiry has enabled me to fulfil my aims of (1) improving the quality of my practices for myself and for the people in my care; (2) emancipating my understanding of these practices; and (3) putting forward suggestions that others in my field of study may find worth paying attention to for their practices.

Context, Style and Structure of this Document

This document can be thought of as an intersubjective account of the process and findings of a naturalistic enquiry into improved social practices for participatory community development.

The process of my enquiry was assisted by the interactive support of my doctoral peers and promoter. Dialogue with them made me aware of the tacit meanings from my personal history which were constraining my professional practices and subverting my aims to make meaningful contributions. Conversations with my doctoral promoter assisted me to move outside of my usual frame, to enact new insights and to reflect on my findings in a congruent and credible ("trustworthy") manner.

My community practice included psychology students, community members, and university colleagues with whom I shared my field of interest. Our interactions and sharing of experiences provided substantial inputs to my enquiry, and from these inputs I could describe, illustrate, support and contrast various research constructions, including my own. The ideas of others, from both published and unpublished literature, also forwarded my enquiry. The content and process of my research are thus influenced by both personal dialogue and literature.

I have therefore included the inputs from my doctoral peers, promoter, community and university

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14 This definition by Carr & Kemmis (1986) is cited in McTaggart (1994, p.317) and McNiff (1988, p.2), who acknowledges it as perhaps the most widely accepted working definition of educational action research.

15 Lincoln & Guba (1985).
participants and from the literature in my research descriptions. I have provided firsthand inputs in the form of short statements and verbatim reproductions of exchanges. Such primary research data, including case illustrations and descriptions, are indented and printed in a different format so that they stand out in the text. For readers who are particularly interested in this field, I have also appended some of my project documents\textsuperscript{16} and have kept recorded materials which can be made available on request.

Due to the subjective nature of the enquiry that I have undertaken, I feel it is more congruent to describe my findings by using the first person. I have also tried to achieve a flowing, narrative style, and I have therefore cited all source references in footnotes. I have tried to adhere to the actual sequence of research events in my narration, but where there was an overlap between major projects, I have kept the descriptions separate for the sake of clarity.

Looking back at the process, I have retrospectively sub-divided my self-research into three phases, namely reconnaissance, trial and error and consolidation.

As part of the reconnaissance, I did fact finding and engaged in debate about my problem with gaining optimal participation from community and university members in the community practicum for psychology students. I embarked on networking both as a way of exchanging ideas with others about my democratization problem, and in the hope of finding a solution to problematic participation in community development projects. I found that I had to constantly re-examine, re-plan and refine my approach in order to find a creative solution, and I have therefore termed the second phase trial and error. I consolidated my findings on the gains I made in my community practice for myself and my clients through networking and community networks. I have drawn some suggestions from my findings, which interested parties may find useful in relation to their own enquiries into improved practices. Chapters in the phase structure concern specific project proceedings and themes within the broader research process. Naturally, these demarcations are my own punctuation of my subjective reality concerning the process.

\textsuperscript{16}I have replaced identifying names in the Appendixes with fictitious ones or "XXX" whenever confidentiality is at stake.
The topic of my thesis, "Participatory Community Development - A Networking Approach", indicates that the interest of my study extends to all the different planned, collaborative community development efforts by people from local community and other supporting institutions including university, community and government organizations\textsuperscript{17}, and how a networking approach may assist such efforts.

The democratization of participation is of central concern in the field of participatory community development. While much has been said about the potential of grass-roots participation for community development, substantial critical debate is required about the dilemmas that underlie our conceptualizations about equality in community participatory affairs. The focus on networking is also not new. Social scientists have been alert to this at least since the research of economists Rees and Schultz in the 1960s\textsuperscript{18} and sociologist Granovetter in the 1970s\textsuperscript{19}. However, until recently networking remained a much overlooked subject.

My study has continued over seven years, and has yielded a measure of coherence in my practice. I feel more at ease with myself now than at the beginning of my research, having searched for and developed a more congruent approach to participatory community development projects.

I acknowledge that the meanings and constructions of others that I have put forward in this document have been reconstructed by me and I therefore take sole responsibility for them. I also realize that others may view my constructions from another perspective and that in a different time and context I may further refine my findings. Hence, the process of enquiry does not end with this document and I honestly hope that this document will contribute to a continued debate.

\textsuperscript{17}Ferrinho (1979).

\textsuperscript{18}Rees (1966); Rees & Schultz (1970).

\textsuperscript{19}Granovetter (1985); Harrison & Weiss (1998).
PART 1
RECONNAISSANCE
CHAPTER 2
PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

The first year of the ADP programme consisted of two sets of fortnightly seminars. The first focused on the philosophy of science and concomitant methodological issues. Our work method consisted of readings and written assignments. The second was organized along "action learning" lines. It allowed for the exploration of practical professional issues, and in fact at the start of the programme, each student had to formulate a personal professional problem (PPP).

I described my professional problem as follows:

My efforts to build equal participation in community development projects often fail. I often confront undisclosed meanings of participation, group coalitions and divisive individuals. I find the dynamics of participation complicated and confusing, and I constantly feel neutralized in my dealing with the situation. In fact, from the way participants respond it seems as though my efforts do little more than perpetuate the imbalances between group members.

The following case study notes illustrate my problem situation and its evolution:

The YAAP meetings usually include community youth, the clinic's management staff and its community health workers, university lecturers and students. Some participants seem shy towards the group. This is particularly apparent in the way the community health workers respond to university people. In addition, the men tend to be outspoken and to take the lead in our initiatives, while the women tend to be passive.

My students and I have tried several ways of remedying this situation: breaking up into smaller discussion groups; rotating roles such as facilitator, spokesperson, secretary, organizer; encouraging participants to speak in their vernacular and use translators; emphasizing that people have access to different types of information (e.g. theoretical and local community experience); and reminding group members that shyness should not stand in the way of compassion and one's contribution to social upliftment. Some of the group leaders, including myself, guide group arrangements and subtly support ideas that are put forward by those group members who are usually silent.

Initially these methods improved participation, but we soon encountered complications. Health workers, often as a group, arrive late or stay away from a meeting without making any apology. When they do arrive, they often withhold their views. Group members make remarks to the effect that this behaviour shows there is "something wrong, they are unhappy about something". Youth members say they have noticed tension between the health workers and the clinic's management staff. Yet the leading staff nurse, who usually provides much direction in our meetings, regularly comments that our difficulties relate to the fact that the students are viewed as those "who know more than others". She also often comments that researchers just use community groups without sharing the research results with them, without acknowledging that previous student groups and I have religiously provided feedback reports. Whenever

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20 Revans (1980).
the group encounters problems with the health workers' participation, she stresses that university members should be more sensitive about how community members perceive them. According to her, community members act defensively towards university members, who are seen as arrogant and domineering.

The health workers, however, often form alliances against others and among themselves. Youth and staff members have, on various occasions, told me privately that certain individuals use rumours to spur the health workers on to form pressure groups against others. They maintain that these individuals use group factions to gain influence and to enact their covert agendas. My confidantes also complain that Mary, the managing staff nurse, is particularly "divisive". However, most of us like her very much and regard her as a dynamic and influential leader. This makes it difficult to talk to her about the role she seems to be playing in precipitating group conflicts.

Some youth members react to these conflicts by calling group members to order and insisting that we follow standard meeting procedures, but the effect of this is to keep the conflicts in the spotlight, and to stifle group creativity. For example, during early 1993, continuous dissatisfaction with the YAAP's management committee culminated in a coup d'état, in which youth members ousted some of the committee members and took control.

The following incident further illustrates my problem:

On one occasion, the health workers had promised to handle the arrangements for a meeting between themselves, child caretakers and the students. When the students and I arrived at the clinic, no preparations had been made, nor had anyone turned up for the meeting. In fact, the health workers ignored our arrival and carried on with their duties. The students waited outside the clinic and opposed my suggestion that they should find out what was going on. I approached the health workers and clinic staff myself, and found they were occupied with patients. Management staff asked me to call on everyone to finish up so that the meeting could convene. I told the students and delegated the task to them. I asked to be excused because I had to assist youth members with their preparations for the AIDS Awareness Day that was to take place the following Saturday. Some time later, the students came to tell me that they wanted to leave immediately. They said they would have to decide whether they wanted to pursue their project on community child care, because it seemed that people were not committed to it. Once outside the clinic, they fumed that the health workers had left them, without apologies, to practise their drama for the AIDS Awareness Day. They said they felt hurt and abandoned. I agreed to leave, but only once I had told Mary, the managing staff nurse, about their feelings and requested her to convey this to the health workers. However, Mary insisted that the students should change their attitude. I usually tried to understand and accommodate this point of view, but on this occasion I demanded that Mary should tell the health workers that the students were also humans and also had feelings. I told the students, later, about what I had done.

I perceived the interactional pattern that characterized this problematic participation as follows:

The community psychology practicum members (from Medunsa) generally go to great lengths to enable all group members to participate equally in project meetings. Yet there continue to be all kinds of difficulties with participation. Shy, reserved group members generally elicit accommodative responses from others in the group. Members in general rarely admit openly that they have relationship difficulties with others, and tend, instead, to gossip about those they have problems with.

Group leaders often make us aware of how inequalities among the group members affect their participation. The health workers' difficulties, in particular, receive a lot of
attention. Mary usually emphasizes that the health workers' defensiveness is a reaction to the "superiority" of student and university members. When group members oppose her views, they normally do so in a roundabout way. She frames the health workers' non-participation in group meetings as meaningful coalition formation. These coalitions seem to bolster health workers' assertiveness when they are confronted by dominant personalities. The coalitions are also used as a means of gaining support. Health workers and students use peer alliances for solidarity, and tend to communicate to other group members through their seniors. Senior members thus often act as centres for communication and group management. Some influential leaders are then suspected of using these interpersonal arrangements, tensions and gossiping to manipulate the group. Youth leaders try to counteract such divisions by adhering militantly to democratic procedures, but this contributes to a further spiralling of conflict.

I did a variety of things to try and remedy these problems of participation, such as the following:

I usually try to alleviate the inequalities between group members. I subtly steer group arrangements to ensure that all group members can make a contribution and have a role to play in our projects. I take a humble approach by tolerating criticisms that are directed at me and my students. I rarely confront community and clinic staff members about how I perceive them or how I expect them to behave towards us. I aim at establishing an improved interactional setup, rather than demanding desired behaviours from individuals. In addition, I encourage participants to comment on how we communicate, and I try to facilitate direct communication between the various subgroups.

When I analysed this, it struck me that our problems with group participation looked a good deal like a teenage rebellion against authority. We managed interpersonal conflicts through indirect means, such as by not participating or by being aloof towards others. We formed alliances and group coalitions to oppose those whom we took to be dominant. Because the community development practicum required equal participation from everyone, withholding participation became a powerful tool, and participants invested it with strength. Equal participation was therefore not achieved because a conflicting interactional pattern that was part of the problem was being maintained.

I also found the messages communicated by participants (including myself) very muddled. For example, "shyness" might signify no more than that, but it could also signify non-consent to group matters. Similarly, stay-away action on the part of a subgroup might amount to no more than an appeal for the scrutiny and remedying of unfair situations. The difficulty was that these same coalitions could also be mobilized, co-opted and used by individuals who wanted to gain influence and achieve personal agendas. Thus while our difficulties with group dynamics apparently arose from the goal of treating everyone equally, they sometimes also implied that personal motives were at work. Some participants might not want to share with others and some
used coalitions only to achieve their own agendas. These mixed messages and hidden motives were making participation more complicated.

No matter what I did to try and manage this situation, my approach usually left me feeling ineffective or disqualified. When I responded in a non-demanding and facilitative way, I created the impression that I lacked care and concern. I often achieved more by subtly steering groups in a particular direction and by forming alliances with certain group members on the side. Yet manoeuvring in that way for an equitable group structure only contributed to greater conflicts and relationship inequalities. In addition, because most group members engaged in concealed activities, which then escalated, the resulting conflict was difficult to contain. This dynamic actually aggravated the loss of control, and resulted in countermeasures - such as the youth members’ militant adherence to democratic principles - by others who wanted to remedy the situation.

The unique problem that I thought this whole problematic participation was creating in my community work was that I struggled with the immobilizing and disqualifying effects of competing, dominant realities - the one authoritarian, the other futurist and democratic. The different realities (mine and those of the community participants) had become juxtaposed and this had led us all to disqualify important concerns. This is how I conceptualized it at the time:

Reality 1: Encouragement of equal participation leads to defensiveness and allegations regarding positions of inferiority or superiority. Participants assume that they are expected to perform to the same standard, with no acknowledgement of the different contexts from which they come and how these may limit them.

Reality 2: Within a framework where differences are appreciated, one realizes that people’s competencies cannot be imposed upon. One should be humble and refrain from commanding behaviour. The creation of equality in group structure becomes the norm, rather than demands for desired behaviour.

The disempowering dialectic: Egalitarian norms lead to the disregard of contextual differences in knowledge and skills and an expectation that everyone should be the same. Where differences are appreciated, the norm of withholding performance and demands leads to not having a say and not making contact.

The attempt to establish equal relationships amongst unequal parties had apparently elicited a rebellious withdrawal by some participants, a lack of interpersonal care and maintenance of the status quo.

Once I had carried out this analysis, I thought that a possible solution could be to counter group
members' aloof defiance of others by fostering a caring attitude. In a context of disempowerment, it was perhaps necessary to shift from a humble to a humanistic position (e.g. advocating an appreciation of different but equally important inputs and roles) if the goal was to equalize interactional structure. Community practitioners elsewhere have criticized the notion that non-hierarchical participation is only possible when there are no differences in influence or in agendas among participants. They emphasize that this is not only unlikely but that it is also not necessarily ideal. They suggest that empowerment should be redefined as the creation of a system with a greater variety of roles\(^2\), and that power differences should be recognized, while the different resources each party brings to the research endeavour\(^2\) should be treated with the utmost mutual respect.

\(^{21}\) Gruber & Trickett (1987).

\(^{22}\) Bond (1990).
It gradually became clear why the point of departure chosen for the ADP programme was each student’s unique professional problem. I began to see that the way practitioners define their research problems is subject to the unexpressed personal assumptions they hold and have to become aware of in their search for creative solutions. A positivist approach to research would thus not be useful for such a subjective self-research venture. The seminar on the Philosophy of Science and Methodology served to prepare us for a constructivist approach to research, which was what the ADP programme advocated. What follows is an account of the arguments in the philosophy of science that were dealt with during the course of the seminar. These discussions crystallized my awareness of how practitioners (or everyone, for that matter) actively construct their enquiries and interventions.

Our study of Chalmers\textsuperscript{23} brought it home that the notion of objectivity is essentially flawed. Hanson\textsuperscript{24}, Kuhn\textsuperscript{25} and Popper\textsuperscript{26}, amongst others, have also seriously questioned the positivist belief that science is based on neutral observation. Observation statements are impregnated with assumptions which cannot be validated by empirical means. “Reality” exists only in the context of a mental construct for thinking about it. Thus scientific theory does not serve to map reality in any direct or decontextualized manner\textsuperscript{27} and these authors therefore deny the representational nature of knowledge.

\textsuperscript{23}1982.  
\textsuperscript{24}1958.  
\textsuperscript{25}1962.  
\textsuperscript{26}1968.  
\textsuperscript{27}Guba (1990).
These arguments support the notion of a constructivist\textsuperscript{28} epistemology. As Gergen\textsuperscript{29} comments, "the terms through which the world is understood are social artifacts - products of historically situated interchanges among people". The degree to which a given form of understanding is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on rational proof. Descriptions and explanations are inherently part of various social patterns. They serve to sustain and support certain patterns to the exclusion of others. Thus, all theories are historically situated. There is also no neutral criterion by which the ultimate truth or falsity of different knowledge claims can be determined\textsuperscript{30}. Empirical evidence is "empirical" only in terms of the epistemological context in which it is generated, and not in any other, more enduring or universal, sense\textsuperscript{31}. In fact, there are many different ways in which reality can be constructed\textsuperscript{32}.

Clearly, the constructivist position has radical implications for research. If we are in fact constructing reality, research cannot be a matter of discovering it! Kelly\textsuperscript{33}, who introduced personal construct theory to the fields of personality theory and mental health, insists that we should not confuse our inventions with discoveries. In describing the creation of his own theory, he explains that: "I must make this clear at the outset. I did not find this theory lurking among the data of an experiment, nor was it disclosed to me on a mountain top, nor in a laboratory. I have, in my own clumsy way, been making it up"\textsuperscript{34}. Watzlawick\textsuperscript{35} emphasizes a similar distinction when he suggests that objectivists are inventors who think they are discoverers. "Good" constructivists, by contrast, acknowledge the active role they play in creating a view of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{28}The terms "constructivism" (Watzlawick, 1984) and "constructionism" (Gergen, 1985) are often used interchangeably. Strictly speaking, they refer respectively to the biological and social determinants of knowledge. My use of the term constructivism includes both of these.

\textsuperscript{29}Gergen (1985, p. 267).

\textsuperscript{30}Atkinson & Heath (1990); Bernstein (1978).

\textsuperscript{31}Colapinto (1979).

\textsuperscript{32}Bateson (1972).

\textsuperscript{33}The selected papers of George Kelly as discussed and cited in Ephran, Lukens & Lukens (1988, p. 28).

\textsuperscript{34}Kelly, as cited in Ephran, Lukens & Lukens (1988, p. 28).

\textsuperscript{35}Watzlawick (1984).
\end{footnotesize}
the world and interpreting their observations in terms of it. Because context and meaning are regarded as all-important, constructivists accept that all human pursuits are dialogues about the interlocking wants, desires, and expectations of all the participants. Thus, the goal of research becomes a pragmatic and political one, a search not for truth but for any usefulness that the researcher's understanding of a phenomenon might have in bringing about change for those who need it. The constructivist therefore takes a practical approach to research and asks: Is the theory useful in my work? He or she also regards hypotheses that persist as, at best, part of a temporarily acceptable working framework.

As Rademeyer says:

**Assuming that (a) each of us creates his/her particular reality, and (b) research is a matter of problem solving, it follows that each individual (practitioner) can (and should) take the role of researcher. By sharing individual experiences through collaborative action research, general guidelines for resolving certain types of problems are bound to develop. These, however do not hold the status of theories (as in the case of the "received view" of science) but are regarded as working hypotheses. Given the traditional connotation of the term "hypothesis", it might be useful to use the word "diathesis" instead. "Diathesis" signifies a disposition, a way of managing things.**

The constructivist perspective *ipso facto* applies to us all; it is no esoteric idea. Kelly believed that each of us has the ability to notice the kinds of "templates" that we create and typically use to make sense of the world. He found it useful to characterize his role in therapy as that of "research consultant". Instead of fixing problems, he wanted to co-investigate testable hypotheses about productive ways of living. He saw symptomatic behaviours as human questions that had lost their connective threads, which might have led the person to either a satisfactory answer or a better question. He wanted to help his clients to reformulate their questions, so that their enquiry could move forward again. No human being can step outside of her or his humanity and

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36 Ephran, Lukens & Lukens (1988, p. 28).


38 Ephran, Lukens & Lukens (op. cit.).


40 As cited in Ephran, Lukens & Lukens (op. cit., p. 32).

41 Kelly (1980).
view the world from no position at all, which is what the idea of objectivity suggests, and this is as true of scientists as it is of anyone else. It therefore becomes necessary for researchers to acknowledge, and even to work with, their own intrinsic involvement in the research process and the part this plays in the results that are produced\textsuperscript{42}.

Argyris and his co-workers\textsuperscript{43} raised the point that professional practitioners often display a tension between their "espoused theories" and their "theories-in-use". Espoused theories are those that we use to explain or justify our behaviour - the theories that we claim to follow. Theories-in-use are those that can be inferred from our spontaneous action - the theories that we use and hold. The latter are usually tacit cognitive maps by which we design our action. This is aptly illustrated by the therapist’s tendency to perceive and to act in predictable ways under certain circumstances! Family therapists Kantor and Andreossi\textsuperscript{44} refer to the therapist’s "boundary profile", which is the somewhat discrete set of tendencies that govern his or her relationships. A specific set of internalizations derived from past experiences inculcate as well as account for such tendencies. These tendencies inevitably lead to the evolution of (often unarticulated) personal explanatory systems and constructions of reality. Because these structures actively mediate between the therapist and his or her therapy techniques, they often have more bearing on therapeutic outcome than do the therapist’s more readily observable formal interventions that are derived from the therapist’s theoretical perspective.

Thus the practitioner’s unofficial theory is a determining factor in her work with clients. This theory is, naturally, tacit because it is characteristic of spontaneous action that most of the knowledge informing it remains tacit (or implicit). Polanyi\textsuperscript{45}, the first to use the phrase "tacit knowing", illustrated this by referring to our ability to recognize one face among thousands

\textsuperscript{42}Burr (1995).


\textsuperscript{44}1985.

\textsuperscript{45}1967, p. 4.
despite the fact that we cannot tell how we recognize the face we know. Schön\textsuperscript{46} speaks of the tacit knowledge embedded in recognitions, judgements and skilful actions as "knowing-in-action", and argues that it is the characteristic mode of ordinary practical knowledge. But he also notes that people sometimes reflect on what they are doing when they are puzzled or don’t get the results they expect. This "reflecting-in-action" is a way of making explicit some of the tacit knowledge embedded in action so as to figure out what to do differently. Hence the need to educate "reflective practitioners"\textsuperscript{47}. Schön\textsuperscript{48} argues for a new epistemology of practice that takes as its point of departure the competence already embedded in skilful practice - especially, the reflection-in-action that practitioners bring to situations of uncertainty, uniqueness, and conflict.

How is this to be achieved? Fortunately, educationists have shown the way in this regard. During the 1970s, teachers in England and Australia expressed their dissatisfaction with the prescriptive way in which educational theory was then being applied. They argued that established educational practice often failed them when they were confronted with unique, problematic classroom situations, and they expressed a need for theory to move closer to practice. They maintained, too, that their professional development needed to be approached from the “bottom up”\textsuperscript{49}. They rediscovered the “Action Research” of Lewin\textsuperscript{50}, whose ideas on the relationship between science and social change showed them a way of achieving their objective. Lewin argued that drastic changes were necessary in dealing with the social crises caused by World War II. He was keen to study social issues himself and to provide people with a way of engaging in their own enquiries into their relationships. This, he proposed, could be carried out according to a spiral of steps of planning, acting, observing and reflecting\textsuperscript{51}. Lewin’s description of action

\textsuperscript{46}1983, pp. 50-54.

\textsuperscript{47}Schön (1983).

\textsuperscript{48}1987, p. xi.

\textsuperscript{49}Carr & Kemmis (1986).

\textsuperscript{50}1946.

\textsuperscript{51}McNiff (1988).
research allowed educationists to effect significant school reforms by applying action research in a naturalistic way. At the same time, they reaped major benefits such as personal and professional growth, a sense of empowerment and a release of creativity\textsuperscript{52}.

Stenhouse\textsuperscript{53} challenged armchair critics by inviting them to ascertain what changes to make in the schools by personally participating in and changing the practical situation\textsuperscript{54}. His central message for teachers was that, as the best judges of their own practice, they should become the researchers, and the natural consequence would be an improvement in education\textsuperscript{55}. The teacher participates in his or her own enquiry, and collaborates with others as part of a shared enquiry, instead of trying to apply the results of research done by academics\textsuperscript{56}. In fact, it was recognized by Peters and Robinson\textsuperscript{57} that action research done in this way exemplifies a constructivist orientation. In their review of contemporary writers on action research, Peters and Robinson suggest that two versions of action research exist - a weak and a strong version. While most commentators see it as a research methodology or strategy (the weak version), others (more specifically, Kemmis, Elliot and Argyris) emphasize the emancipatory potential of social research and the central importance of the participants’ beliefs, values, and intentions (the strong version). The proponents of the strong version rejected the positivist notion of a neutral research endeavour. In the same vein, they changed the role of “research subject” to that of a “research collaborator”. They stress that “our understanding of the world is both social and constitutive, social actors who have created their own histories can also reflect upon themselves and their situation and transform or change their reality”\textsuperscript{58}.

\textsuperscript{52}McKay (1992).

\textsuperscript{53}1975.

\textsuperscript{54}McTaggart (1991).

\textsuperscript{55}McNiff (1988).

\textsuperscript{56}McNiff (op. cit., p. 4).

\textsuperscript{57}Peters & Robinson (1984).

\textsuperscript{58}Op. cit., p. 121.
Method

The second seminar gave us ample opportunity to start our self-research and to discuss our practices with fellow students and ADP staff members. The following steps describe the method that was assigned.

Problem description
As mentioned in chapter 2, we were asked to describe a “personal professional problem” which would serve as a reference point for our self-research. In order to identify such a problem, we were asked to write up case reports on several of our problematic cases and our attempts to solve them. We each analysed our case reports according to specific questions which Gert had devised.

Problem analysis
Following this fact-finding process, we were engaged in a rigorous analysis of the assumptions that we associated with our problematic situation - focusing particularly on the assumptions underlying our explanations of our problem situation and the values and inferences on which we based our problem-solving attempts. This was mostly facilitated through discussing with the group our personal history and how this linked with our personal service dilemma. This analysis aimed to make us aware of our “theory-in-use” and to put us in a position to make it explicit.

A somewhat similar approach to the supervision process with students working with some version of collaborative action research had been proposed by Marshall and Reason\(^ {59}\). Rather than providing “expert” advice on methodology, they concentrate on students’ personal processes as they engage with their research. In their view, good research is an expression of a need to learn and change, to shift some aspect of oneself. Such research cannot be done alone, as “we each need to be with others who can support and challenge our work, to be affirmed as enquiring persons and to know where we stand in relation to others”\(^ {60}\). The research supervision thus becomes part of the field of enquiry.

\(^{59}\)1993.

Problem definition
Each of us had to formulate our own problem definition on the basis of the assumptions that had been identified. Gert stressed that the assumptions we held, determined our problem solving attempts. We were thus made aware that a creative solution to our problem could entail having to reformulate our initial problem definitions and solutions. This was in line with the views of the Mental Research Institute of Palo Alto\(^\text{61}\) on second-order change.

Alternative solutions
We explored alternative strategies for dealing with our problem, and new ways of viewing it. We were encouraged to do this through discussion with our doctoral promoter, group members and others in our field of practice. The latter included dialogue with fellow practitioners either by reading their written work or by exchanging ideas with them directly, e.g. during meetings or study tour visits. This would mean that our fact finding and analysis would also comprise “discussing, negotiating, exploring opportunities, assessing possibilities and examining constraints” - which are elements of analysis in the Kemmis notion of reconnaissance\(^\text{62}\).

Informed action
The above steps were meant to place us in a better position to make an educated decision about how to proceed. We had to be able to account for the choices we made and the values we based them on.

Trial and error
Lewin’s\(^\text{63}\) interpretation of action research indicates that systems are studied through changing them and seeing the effects and new dynamics this brings about. The research process thus entails

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\(^{62}\)McNiff (1988, p. 31).

\(^{63}\)Marrow (1969).
trial and error, engaging in the spirals of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning.

Figure 1. Lewin's Action Research Spiral

McNiff\textsuperscript{65} furthermore highlights that in practice action research should offer the capacity to deal with a number of problems at the same time by allowing the spirals to develop spin-off spirals, just as in reality one problem will be symptomatic of many other underlying problems. Other problems may be explored as and when they arise without the researcher losing sight of the main focus of the enquiry.

Figure 2. McNiff's Action Research Spirals

\textsuperscript{64} McNiff (1988, p. 23).

\textsuperscript{65} 1988.

\textsuperscript{66} McNiff (op.cit., p. 45).
Record keeping

We were encouraged to use various techniques for recording our action research data, including:

- Recording reflexive information about self and method in a personal journal
- Making field notes, documenting interactions and impressions related to our research
- Recording conversations onto audio tapes
- Writing up case study descriptions
- Using any other techniques that we found relevant to our study, e.g. verbatim transcriptions of conversations.

A common problem for action researchers is that they tend to gather so much data that they become overwhelmed by it all. McNiff\(^67\) recommends that one should try to identify and hone the focal points of the enquiry as it proceeds. One then shelves (but stores) subsidiary, irrelevant data and focuses on what is central.

The Issue of Validity

One of the problems associated with all kinds of research is its trustworthiness\(^68\). How can I persuade my audiences (including myself) that my research does the things that I claim and that my findings are worth paying attention to? What criteria are appropriate for judging the actions taken from a naturalistic action research approach?

Following McNiff\(^69\), action research emphasizes the need for a public validation by individual researchers of their own claim to know that they are improving the quality of their practices for themselves and for the people in their care. She proposes three steps which may assist educational action researchers: (1) self validation, (2) peer validation and (3) learner (client) validation. Lincoln and Guba\(^70\) similarly stress that the naturalist’s research report must be

\(^{67}\) 1988.

\(^{68}\) Lincoln & Guba (1985).

\(^{69}\) 1988.

\(^{70}\) 1985.
credible both to the respondents who have acted as data sources and ultimately also to the consumer of enquirer reports who might wish to use or act on the report.

In terms of these practical recommendations, I realized that I had to ensure the following. In validating myself, I should declare the values which are contradictory in my professional practice, so that I can do something about it. My desire to turn a negative state into a positive one was what motivated me to undertake the enquiry and it was important that I remained focused on this as my primary aim. My ability to explain my own educational development depended on critical reflection and on a desire to explore my tacit understanding of my practice and communicate it to others. I would have to demonstrate publicly that I had followed a system of disciplined enquiry in arriving at my hypotheses. Any theory that I put forward would have to be grounded in practice; I would have to be able to demonstrate in practice and discuss the actualities that make me think the way I do. I would have to interpret my own practice and make decisions about improving it. If I recognized a potential benefit in my own interpretations for myself and for the lives of other people, I would make this public and invite others to share in my way of doing and thinking about things. If they agreed it was worthwhile, they would validate my practice and my claim to knowledge.

I would also engage others and use public criticism as a check against which to judge the validity of my accounts. A willingness to be validated by my peers, to debate my practice with them, would encourage me to make my intuitive knowledge public and to move my ideas forward. My doctoral promoter could see to it that my enquiry was dependable and confirmable by examining the process, data, findings, interpretations and recommendations, and attesting that it was supported by data and was internally coherent. The reactions of my students and community members would perhaps be the strongest support for my claim to knowledge. I would have to give them the opportunity to make comments, e.g. during feedback sessions, collaborative project evaluations and through their project reports. I might present their responses in my thesis in short written statements, quotes or verbatim descriptions of our conversations.

My validation groups might thus be colleagues, my doctoral adviser, or anyone able to give a
critical assessment. Our dialogue would have to be a shared discourse. Applying Harbermas's\textsuperscript{71} criteria for establishing the validity of a conversation, McNiff\textsuperscript{72} emphasizes that "you and I must agree together that what I say about my practice is true; that we use words and expressions that we both understand; that we are both sincere and will avoid any deception; that the situation is appropriate for us to be discussing this issue". Thus, the validity of the conversations I reported would necessarily depend on the sincerity of the participants.

In addition, following Lincoln and Guba\textsuperscript{73}, my findings and interpretations might also be more credible if I could have "prolonged engagement" with the people in my field of study, so as to learn the culture, minimize distortions and build trust. "Persistent observation" should enable me to identify and assess salient factors and crucial atypical happenings. The technique of "triangulation", might allow me to make use of multiple and different sources, methods, and investigators to check the accuracy of data. I might also find it useful to do "negative case analysis" - a process of revising hypotheses with hindsight, so that it is continuously refined until it accounts for all known cases without exception. I might find it useful to append some of my project documents for the reader to refer to, and to keep recorded materials, because these could provide a kind of benchmark against which later data analysis and interpretations could be tested for adequacy ("referential adequacy"). If I gave a "thick description" of my working hypotheses together with a description of the time and context in which they were found, this might also enable other interested parties to ascertain whether my findings, or some of them, are "transferable" to their situation.

Finally, I would have to emphasize that my conceptualizations are at best afterthoughts that describe what I believed was done, and probably do not adequately describe what was actually done. Hopefully, my study will be useful for training others, will contribute to some communication among practitioners, and will provide a basis upon which even the experienced enquirer may be affirmed or challenged. I would also have to remember that my research

\textsuperscript{71}As cited in McNiff (1988).

\textsuperscript{72}1988, p. 134.

\textsuperscript{73}1985.
methods are not prescriptions of how an enquiry must be done as this would reduce me and others to the status of true believers. As Lincoln and Guba\textsuperscript{74} observe, "it is dubious whether 'perfect' criteria will ever emerge; until then, humility in asserting that a 'new and truer (more natural?) path to knowledge' has been found will be wise".

\textsuperscript{74}1985, p. 331.
CHAPTER 4
PROBLEM ANALYSIS

The next phase of the ADP action learning process was the analysis of the professional problem we had each chosen to work on. The idea was for us to use the doctoral group as a sounding board in attempting to solve our problems. We exchanged ideas and commentaries, and staff members helped us with our explorations by providing process commentary and family-of-origin analysis. This approach was a natural outflow of the fact that they were all family therapy practitioners. They encouraged us to keep a journal and to regularly reflect on the experience. Our programme facilitators did not give us the advanced training or the suggested solutions we expected, in spite of the fact that this made us feel intensely frustrated. Their reason for this restraint, I later learnt, was that "creating a fair deal of disequilibrium was a necessary condition for meaningful change." What they did do, instead, was to facilitate a critical analysis of our problems and assumptions.

One of our tasks was to look at our professional work against the backdrop of our life history so that we could start unravelling the influence of our families and personal lives on the tacit meanings by which we lived. We could no longer treat our personal theories as if they were factual, rather than personal constructions derived from our early experiences. Our personal styles and tacit theories, it was suggested, actually determined how we had each formulated our professional problem, and rational analysis alone was therefore not going to resolve the problem. What we had to do was become aware of our "theories-in-use", on the assumption that

75 Our doctoral group consisted of three members of staff and four students.
76 Rademeyer (1999, p. 4).
77 The development of this approach is in line with the shift away from an objective science to a constructionist, post-modern position. The idea is that the therapist, or change practitioner, takes responsibility for her personal circumstances and how these influence her unique approach to her professional work.
78 Rademeyer introduced the idea of analysing the "leitmotiv" of our personal professional problem. He defined the leitmotiv as an "enduring behavioural tendency on the part of the individual". This is synonymous with personal style, which is apparent in all facets of our lives: personal history, therapeutic approach and work context.
how we defined a problem was part of the problem.\(^{80}\)

I tackled this task by reviewing my problem description and reflecting, again, on how I usually tried to solve problems in the community practicum projects. I came to these conclusions:

I tend to encourage group members to play equally important roles in projects. I try and do whatever I can to help everyone feel free to participate - I facilitate group discussions, and I propose group compositions and procedures that will encourage this. I also give a lot of attention to the significance of group coalitions and how group members use them to participate and to influence other group members. I usually accommodate group alliances among members who seem to need encouragement to assert themselves. As an alternative, I sometimes inquire into the real problem and call on group members to respect one another, and one another's opinions. In any event, I stay away from making demands about how group members should behave. Instead, I focus on the group's structure and how I can use different formations in the hope of getting balanced participation from everyone.

When I placed this tendency in the context of my personal history, I started making connections.

I grew up in a small but developing mining town. I had all kinds of friends, from all kinds of backgrounds, but I felt ashamed of my father's high work status, and of the house and the car that went with it. These things all seemed to make others feel inferior. I experienced my father as elitist, and my rebellion against this added fuel to the fire of my shame. I tried to compensate for this by disregarding class and intellectual status in choosing my friends, and humility became a central goal in my approach to life.

Another factor was that, in my family, emotionally demanding behaviour was considered improper, and showing your feelings was as embarrassing as it was unacceptable. I felt envious of other families, who seemed to enjoy a warmth that my family lacked.

I saw that my interpersonal style and approach were linked with my rebellion against status and rank, and were based on my belief that equality among individuals would overcome the social divisions that result from separating people into different classes.

I discussed my personal style and approach with the ADP group and expressed my frustration that I seemed to be getting nowhere. In fact, I suspected my approach had contributed to an escalation of group conflict in the community practicum projects. My fellow students were curious to know more about my family background, and wondered whether that would shed any light on some observations they had made. One observation was that I seemed very relaxed (more relaxed than they themselves felt). Another was that I tended to focus on how people perceived inequalities. Yet another was that I worked with community groups instead of doing

\(^{80}\)Watzlawick, Weakland & Fish (1974).
psychotherapy, for which I was trained.

As to the first observation, I explained that when I feel anxious, I intensify the anxiety and imagine that I am melting into it, and that this makes it look as though I am relaxed. Further probing prompted me to put together the following recollections, which I think have influenced my personal approach:

I was the youngest of three children. I was a quiet child: apparently I started talking at a rather late stage, and in full sentences. My mother used to boast that I took care of my own upbringing, and that her role was to provide varied, enriched environments to take care of my personal development. To my eyes, my brother, the eldest child, tried to live up to my father's intellectual standards. My sister was, so I thought, the most protected and charming of the three of us. She made life easier for herself by teasing my brother and bullying me into submission. I felt there was no one to defend my rights, that I was neglected, and I think I was actually quite depressed. I believed I did not have the same status and privileges as my brother and sister, and that this was so because I was the youngest. This seemed so unfair that I could not make sense of it. I fantasized that I had been adopted, and although I knew this was just a silly game, it made me feel better. In fact, as a child I fantasized a lot and enjoyed it. Another refuge from my emotional distress was provided by a few close friendships. I became a member of a local "gang", and as an adolescent, I sought out significant relationships with friends and their families.

The ADP group did some more probing, nudged me into delving even more deeply, and finally came up with the following hypothesis:

Annalie tends to deal with emotional stress and anxiety by fantasizing. One of the fantasies she developed to cope with her feelings of emotional deprivation in her family involved identifying with "the orphans" of society. This explains many of her relationships, the environment in which she wants to work and the people with whom she has chosen to work. These include a psychiatric hospital with its social rejects, a black university referred to as a "bush college" by the ivory tower snobs, and marginalised "black communities".

The group suggested that I was perhaps too heavily invested in what I was doing, and a possible remedy was to take a more irreverent stance. By practising irreverence the therapist attempts "to remain free from the co-optive nature of consensual belief, to be willing not to become a true believer in what he is asked to do by the state, or the institution, or even the clinic in which he works"\(^{81}\) and "never to feel the necessity to obey a particular theory, the rules of the client, or the referral system"\(^{82}\). The group pointed out that my excessive devotion to the community and to

\(^{81}\)Cecchin, Lane & Ray (1992, p. 9).

the rules of equal participation placed me at risk of becoming a victim of my own approach. For example, I could easily be abused by some community project leaders if I were to be regarded as the token, the “memorable” white participant. Perhaps if I became doubtful about the community participation model and distanced myself, this would allow me to take a critical view of the factors that were restricting my group participants and preventing them from making the changes they hoped for.

At first, I found it hard to accept their suggestion. Taking an irreverent stance towards community participation seemed to vitiate much of what I held dear, such as being passionately involved in the research concern and its naturalistic setting; letting go of neutrality and control; and developing a non-authoritarian relationship between the researcher and research participants. Moreover, these premises were part and parcel of a fairly recent paradigm shift away from positivist research - a shift to which I subscribed.

However, I knew that I was overly involved in the YAAP and that I was allowing its project leaders to manipulate me. In addition, frustration at the lack of progress had caused me and the major role players to withdraw from each other and from the project. It would make sense to practise irreverence by refraining from influencing the project’s direction.

Disengagement did, indeed, free me to reconsider my approach to social change. At one time I had sympathized with the community activists’ argument that their role was to incite large-scale social upheaval to effect political change. I saw it as a parallel to the then popular interactional therapy and communications approach of “taking charge.” I had been impressed by this approach, in which the therapist seizes control of the problem-defining context by manipulating


84 According to Matiwana, Walters & Groener (1989) this stance was taken from the works of Alinsky, Freire, Illich and others by anti-apartheid community development workers in South Africa as a possible strategy for the promotion of social change. This position held that the ideal role of the community worker was to focus on mobilizing collective mass action through organized democratic group participation together with and by the oppressed masses and their popular organizations. Also referred to as an advocacy role (Jason, 1991), this meant targeting social action at regulatory or legislative processes in a bid to enforce changes in social awareness and policy practices that co-determined macro-contexts.

85 As proposed by Haley (1963) and Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson (1967).
the interactional structure, making it impossible for the client to persist in problematic behaviour. At the same time, I was aware of the difficulties that lay in “taking charge” of community development projects. There was, for example, its potential for abuse, both inside and outside a group. A case in point was the havoc wreaked with YAAP group projects when someone with a hidden personal agenda used the rhetoric of democracy to achieve self-centred purposes. Another argument against taking charge was that the co-opting of community participation by persons in power was a form of social control under the guise of progressive reform.

All in all, it had been important to stay clear of any role that would place me in a position of control over others, with the purpose of positioning myself as an active role player in a collaborative system. Understandably, then, I had had to develop an egalitarian style to counteract the political aspects of participation. I realized, however, that I had in fact contradicted myself and had sided with others in an effort to influence group participation, thereby becoming part of a faction against other factions and, as such, part of the problem.

I knew that a non-authoritarian but active positioning within the group was in line with a constructivist point of view, but I had taken this to the point of playing such an active part in the group that I seemed to have lost the ability to challenge my own and the group’s ideas about our approach to participation. I became acutely aware of the divisive effect of the partisan style of participation in which I had engaged, and of the fact that the alliances and political correctness characteristic of the projects excluded people who took an apolitical approach to community empowerment.

I started looking critically at the participatory process in which I believed so passionately, and saw that I seemed to have been saying that my (our) way of gaining community participation was the (only) way. Hence our thinking and communication about community participation involved “control through the monopoly of a single perspective.” I claimed to value equal participation, yet it now struck me that I contradicted this by not allowing another view. Norwegian sociologist

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86 Bråten ‘s 1987 article on “Paradigms of autonomy: dialogical or monological?” as cited in Anderson (1991, p. 8).
Braten poses the idea that people come into the world as dyads. By this he means that we each carry a space for the “Virtual Other” - a space for another view, even for the “Beloved Enemy”. Braten contrasts a monolithic world view with a dialogical posture that admits opposing points of view. He uses Plato’s metaphor of ship navigation to compare a mono-perspective with the inability to take cross-bearings at sea, which severely limits the navigational horizon. He stresses that when a conversational dyad becomes a monad, it is incapable of consciousness since it is unable to allow for the cross-validation of perspectives.

I started appreciating that the idea of irreverence carried with it the implication of personal responsibility. Cecchin, Lane and Ray promoted irreverence because they observed that “excessive loyalty to a specific idea makes the individual who embraces it irresponsible in relation to the moral consequences inherently involved”.

Looking back, I could understand that our politically prejudiced participation had been a way of dealing with an oppressive situation. We had marginalised and excluded those people and bogus community projects that were not in line with the anti-apartheid alliance. However, our intolerance of a different kind of participation was incompatible with advancing a democratic dispensation. I realized as well, with considerable anxiety, how isolated community projects had become from each other, even though they were situated in the same geographical area.

My anxiety compelled me to discuss my problem with many others whenever I had a chance - at conferences, socially and with “strangers”. The need to share ideas about community development also motivated me to attend an international community development colloquium in Thailand during April 1993, which focused on the management of natural and human resources through a community development approach. By the end of the five-day workshop, participants had put together recommendations for a way forward on community development. These included a recommendation that the colloquium’s international community development

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association should reflect the principles on which participatory structures are built by broadening its committee’s membership base and including representatives from diverse countries - which would also add transparency and accountability. It was also recommended that the committee should encourage its members to network and share their experiences.

These resolutions influenced me profoundly and made a strong impact on my approach to the community practicum projects. I became involved in other community groups and started inviting their participation in the community practicum projects. My new community connections reciprocated and requested student participation in their projects. I welcomed the opportunity this would give us to widen our focus and broaden participation in the community practicum projects. I also thought that this could make our more difficult project members realize that there were community participants elsewhere who might challenge their views.

I started talking to people about our social development in general. Most people welcomed this, since many of us suffered from “burn-out” and were anxious about the future. Sharing ideas and experiences alleviated our feelings of isolation. In the course of these explorations and conversations, I started referring to my problem as the “democratization dilemma” - a shorthand reference to the problem of achieving democracy in an authoritarian meaning system.

The prevailing explanation for ineffective group dynamics, I found, centered on the individualistic and egocentric use of participatory approaches. People hoped that they could remedy this by creating a context of open participation and continuous dialogue. Some held that introducing more, and more varied, perspectives would break patterns of competition and rigidity. The idea of networking and pooling resources became more and more popular, and everyone had a contribution to make.

So it was that during 1993 I distanced myself from the narrow kind of community participation I had engaged in until then. I did not want to withdraw from the community development field; on the contrary, my resolve was to break down the social isolation I had experienced and to become involved in a more interconnected way.
Towards the middle of 1993, I embarked on a programme of action to promote the idea of networking. I wanted to create a context that would facilitate the exchange of ideas between participants in the community development field. I hoped that this would help me to gain further insight into the democratization problem and to gather ideas on creative solutions. At the time, such an approach seemed well suited to the demands of building a democracy. Government, research and education institutions were being confronted with their perceived irrelevance, with the result that ties with community-based projects became sought after. Community projects in turn needed such interconnections for their survival in a new South Africa.

I therefore proposed a project on multidisciplinary involvement in community development and environmental management. The next chapter presents the background to this proposal and the activities it involved. It also describes how all of this helped me find more varied and insightful views on my problematic community practice.

90 I originally learnt about networking from the field of community development practice. Networking is posed from the point of view that the community-based practitioner needs to “link actively with and engage the support systems of individuals, groups, families, and communities, and help them to affect each other” (Maguire, 1984, p. 198). According to Maguire, networking is essentially about finding and utilizing human resources wherever they exist. One of the reasons for the rise in the use of networking in the USA was that the need arose to coordinate limited resources more effectively.
CHAPTER 5
PROBLEM ANALYSIS, THE SECOND ROUND

I embarked on the project mentioned in chapter 4 towards the end of 1993, and one of my hopes was that it would help me get rid of the frustration I had been feeling about the community practicum. The ideas I had gathered from the Thailand congress were exciting, and it looked as if networking would stimulate some creative thinking on my part about the "democratization dilemma". Networking struck me as coming from the same mould as Lewin's\textsuperscript{91} action research and Tandon's\textsuperscript{92} "dialogue as inquiry and intervention", and it could, I thought, contribute to the intermingled processes of knowing and changing.

One of my aims with the project was to introduce community participants to as many new people and diverse resources as possible. Broadening the focus of community issues by linking community practice to environmental management was a likely way of achieving this aim. It was also an attractive prospect since it would foster collaboration between diverse disciplines. More specifically, it would link the Department of Psychology to the other departments that comprised Medunsa's Faculty of Basic Sciences\textsuperscript{93}, and this Faculty to the university's other Faculties\textsuperscript{94}.

This scenario opened up another possibility - to shift the popular definition of community as something "out there" to something that \textit{included} the university. In other words, the university, its lecturers and students could be defined as \textit{part of} the community. This might mean that all of us could benefit from community development - even those who were unfamiliar with the concept.

\textsuperscript{91}Lewin (1947).
\textsuperscript{92}Tandon (1981).
\textsuperscript{93}The Faculty of Basic Sciences was established in 1988.
\textsuperscript{94}Being part of a natural science Faculty was a bit odd. The Faculty did not participate in the Medunsa Institute for Community Services (MEDICOS), which was connected to the medical Faculty, and it was therefore difficult to gain financial support for our own community projects.
The Multidisciplinary Community Development and Environmental Management Project

What I had in mind for the Faculty of Basic Sciences was a threefold course of action:

- Participation in multidisciplinary training and research projects focusing on community development and environmental management
- Contributing to problem-solving and development activities through ventures tackled jointly by scientists and members of the community
- Creating networks of expertise at local, national and international levels.

I submitted a project proposal to the Faculty Board, which was accepted. The next step was to approach the Foundation of Research Development for financial assistance. To start the project, I proposed the following activities:

1. A workshop, to be held in November 1993, would question the role of multidisciplinary sciences\(^\text{95}\) in community development and environmental management. Workshop participants would include:
   - Students and staff from Medunsa's various departments and faculties
   - Community representatives from community projects
   - NGOs and civic bodies from the surrounding townships and villages.

   Workshop activities were to include a tour of local community and environmental projects. Participants would be invited to present their current training, research and development activities and their views on the role of science in community development. A visitor from Thailand's Community Development Department was also to be invited.

2. A study tour (December 1993) would visit successful community projects undertaken by NGOs and "historically black" universities in Venda, KwaZulu Natal and Cape Town.

3. A workshop would be held in January 1994 to give feedback on the study tour and discuss

\(^{95}\)I used the term "multidisciplinary sciences" to indicate that it was no longer sensible to study the world in a fragmented, reductionist manner.
the way forward.

All of these were agreed upon and duly completed. It was, of course, immensely satisfying to achieve these short-term goals. It was just as gratifying that the feedback of information to local participants led to the launch of a local network called the Medunsa Community Development and Environmental Management Network (MCDEM-Net) in early 1994. The aim of the network was to stimulate the exchange of ideas and resources on a multidisciplinary basis across local, national and international boundaries.

While these developments were obviously encouraging, what I found particularly interesting was the way in which people responded to the project.

The first workshop
This workshop started with a visit to nearby communities, which exposed approximately forty Medunsa participants, who had never before visited the area, to existing community projects and conditions. This on-site visit was facilitated and guided by the health workers from the Clinic and members of my problematic community project. They pointed out health and environmental problems that needed attention from scientists. What impressed me was that they joined with me in mobilizing and “raising the awareness” of “my community”, namely Medunsa and the Basic Sciences Faculty. I had anticipated a rejection of members of “my” academic community similar to the previous rejection of “my” students. Instead, the community workers accommodated them, as I had accommodated them.

Following the community visit, the rest of the workshop programme flowed easily. We started with a presentation by our visitor from Thailand, Dr Bhothisawang. Next came a set of five-minute presentations by each representative of his or her curriculum and project development. Participants responded to these presentations by emphasizing the need for collaborative relationships between university and community. Project groups could link with outside specialists and share information about available resources, while projects that lacked sustainability could be connected to those that were already making substantial progress96.

96For a review of the workshop proceedings, turn to point 3.1.3 (p. 136) of the Feedback Report, Appendix A.

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These reactions clearly showed that participants realized the value of collaborating with other parties and this was confirmed by the eagerness with which they participated in the proceedings.

The study tour
The study tour entailed an extensive trip through South Africa, including visits to institutions and their projects at Thohoyandu in the North, at Pietermaritzburg, Howick, and the Valley of a Thousand Hills in KwaZulu Natal, and in Cape Town.

I telephoned various institutions to try and finalize an itinerary, and the people I spoke to gave valuable information as to which projects would be interesting to visit. I noticed that the answers they gave me reflected a connectedness, but of an informal kind, with other people, in different disciplines and in different institutions. Some of them even commented that the spontaneous collaboration they enjoyed on this level was in stark contrast with the complicated relationships they had to negotiate with colleagues in their own departments and institutions. Their responsiveness during a very busy time of the year (only two of the nine institutions I contacted turned me down) signalled their enthusiasm for the theme.

The field visits and sharing ideas with the project leaders we met made it clear that we all shared common experiences. Most of the community project workers we visited welcomed discussion about the frustrations they were experiencing. Many of them had to contend with people who talked a lot, but did very little; interpersonal tension involving culture, gender, and personality clashes; power struggles; and nepotism. There seemed to be some consensus that these problems could be partially resolved through training workshops on community development and its concepts and values, participatory management techniques and group work.

It was clear that people in the field had learnt a lot about the conditions that tend to facilitate successful project management. Some of the principles they had derived from this learning were the following:

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97For a discussion on the study tour, see point 3.1.4 (p. 137) and point 4 (p. 138) of Appendix A. Detailed records of the workshops and the study tour projects were excluded from this Appendix in view of space requirements and its relevance to the thesis. Interested readers may request the author for the full Feedback Report.
We need to take into account the transitional nature of communities. People living in rural areas are often interested in farming only to the extent that it will sustain their families and provide sufficient income to finance family members in searching for employment in the city.\(^{98}\)

We should listen to the way in which problems are defined. Also, solutions should be ecologically sound and economically beneficial. People will stay interested in a project and participate in it as long as it provides answers to their problems.\(^{99}\)

A lot is accomplished through processes that are simple, that move fast, that build people's capacity and that are responsive to the quests for input, e.g. responsive and efficient governmental procedures.\(^{100}\)

We should use existing resources and networks to develop and share different inputs.\(^{101}\) Use creative action networks.\(^{102}\) Link with local industry!\(^{103}\)

Be a well-organized community whose members know and respect each other, appreciate their past experiences and work together towards a shared future.\(^{104}\)

Keep data bases and records.\(^{105}\) Document what is being done at local level.\(^{106}\)

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\(^{98}\) Mike Underwood, Centre for Low Input Agricultural Rural Development (CLIARD), University of Zululand, KwaZulu Natal (personal communication, December 3, 1993).

\(^{99}\) Dr. Norman Reynolds, Earth Africa (personal communication, December 17, 1993).

\(^{100}\) Dr. Bisschop, CLIARD, University of Zululand, KwaZulu Natal (personal communication, December 13, 1993).

\(^{101}\) Dr. Norman Reynolds, Earth Africa (personal communication, December 17, 1993).

\(^{102}\) Prof. Gaicher, University of Venda (personal communication, November 29, 1993).

\(^{103}\) Charmain Klein, Environmental Education Resources Centre, University of the Western Cape (UWC) (personal communication, December 13, 1993).

\(^{104}\) Tim Wright, Umgeni Valley Trust (personal communication, December 7, 1993).

\(^{105}\) Derek Fish, The Science Development Programme, University of Zululand (personal communication, December 1, 1993).

\(^{106}\) Thulani Ndelu, Valley Trust, Bothas Hill, Natal (personal communication, December 8, 1993).

\(^{107}\) Prof. Erskine, Institute of Natural Resources (INR), Pietermaritzburg (personal communication, December 3, 1993).

\(^{108}\) Jo Samuels and David Kapp, Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE), University of the Western Cape (personal communication, December 14, 1993).
Enable committees to do short-term as well as long-term planning\textsuperscript{109}. Train trainers\textsuperscript{110}.

Change your attitude - do things locally instead of waiting for things to happen at a national level\textsuperscript{111}.

Use creative approaches, introduce new ideas through traditional concepts\textsuperscript{112}.

I gained tremendous insight into the popular construction of democratic participation and its dynamics in South Africa, and I realized just how important it is to share insights with others and to learn from local literature. Jo Samuels\textsuperscript{113}, for example, explained how the anti-apartheid struggle influenced the practices and conceptualization of democracy and how its application shifted over time.\textsuperscript{114} From these conversations I gleaned the following understanding:

In the early 1980s, a participatory democracy was encouraged by many community organizations. The central concern was participation by the members of the community at large and collective leadership by "the people". Arguments were made for community organization, as opposed to community work, which is conducted by the people themselves. The role of the "expert" was seriously questioned. Worker strikes and the student boycotts similarly emphasized mass democracy, and the mass struggle was interpreted as an ongoing process of joint action by community and trade union organizations together with youth, parents and teachers. Community newsletters such as \textit{Grassroots} sent out a very clear message of UNITE and ORGANIZE\textsuperscript{115}. The underlying assumption here seemed to be that democracy is participatory. Collective leadership was considered more important than the individuals behind them. The authority was seen to lie with "the people" and it was important that the community should speak with one voice through its organizations. Participation seems to have been promoted as a means of mobilizing people to become involved in the struggle for civil rights, and as a strategy to develop members' leadership skills.

Hence, participatory democracy meant working in small, accountable groups. Collective action was brought together through progressive structures such as radical

\textsuperscript{109}Ray Dandala, Ndundulu Service Centre, INR (personal communication, December 6, 1993).

\textsuperscript{110}Hanief Tiseker, Foundation of Contemporary Research, Cape Town (personal communication, December 17, 1993).

\textsuperscript{111}Fuad Fredericks, Environmental Education Resources Centre, University of the Western Cape (personal communication, December 13, 1993).

\textsuperscript{112}CLIARD; Earth Africa.

\textsuperscript{113}Jo Samuels, CACE, University of the Western Cape (personal communication, December 14, 1993).

\textsuperscript{114}This argument was proposed from the study of community organizations in greater Cape Town by Matiwana, Walters and Groener (1989), CACE, University of the Western Cape.

\textsuperscript{115}Matiwana, Walters & Groener (1989, p. 41).
church groups\textsuperscript{118}, trade unions, community organizations and the progressive-alternative press\textsuperscript{117}. While political organizations were banned, these structures provided a mouthpiece for the resistance movement, and created opportunities for enacting organizational roles. It also integrated programmatic action from leftist professional groupings, including journalists and NGOs inside and outside of South Africa. State repression made activists question the issue of leadership. The leadership was the first to be detained and harassed, therefore collective leadership, which was less visible and could rotate, was necessary to enable the struggle to continue. With the government's increased repression of group activities and media censorship in the mid 1980s, many organizations had to operate in a very low-key, semi-underground fashion. Open participation in many organizations decreased, while mass-based organizations, such as the United Democratic Front and the Mass Democratic Movement, emerged. The period also saw increasing militancy from youth groups. The emphasis now shifted to representative democracy and organizational discipline. The interpretation of representative democracy concentrated on democracy as a formal mechanism for group representation, the drawing up of constitutions and meeting procedures.

This input helped me to realize that participation in the community practicum projects had reflected the dynamics of the struggle\textsuperscript{118}. The problem-solving behaviours used by the community participants in my community practicum mirrored the behaviour that characterized the anti-apartheid movement, such as the use of non-participation as a form of resistance, coalition-building, marginalization of those who were seen as oppressive, militant enforcement of rules, and invisible leadership (moving underground). In terms of structure, the anti-apartheid system could be described as a coalition formed in response to a repressive, authoritarian government. But obviously the practices themselves could not be classified as democratic, even though they were being used to bring about a democratic dispensation. Power play is essentially based on authoritarian premises, whatever its goals.

While the conversations with Jo Samuels stimulated me to approach things from a new perspective, my colleague from Thailand often stimulated me by asking challenging questions. For example, he questioned what was meant by "continuity and change" in the title of the 1993

\textsuperscript{116}See, for example, Boesak (1984) and Chikane (1988) regarding the role of South African church organizations and their links with ecumenical church organizations in the anti-apartheid struggle.

\textsuperscript{117}See for example, Louw & Tomaselli (1991); Tomaselli (1991); Tomaselli & Louw (1991).

\textsuperscript{118}From this point on, I refer to this as "the struggle dynamic".
CACE publication by Walters. I again realized the value of talking to someone whose frame of reference was totally different from mine. It forced me to re-examine the very things I took for granted.

Thus while our study tour schedule was demanding, the field visits and discussions with people from diverse disciplines were a rich source of information. I found, once it was all over, that the trip had had a healing effect on me in that I could now relate my experiences to those of others, and that gave me a sense of connectedness. The inputs from the people we had met had helped me make sense of the democratization dilemma and to understand how it fitted into the bigger picture. The dialogue in which I had been able to engage had inspired me to see clearly the premises on which the participatory dynamics of the community practicum rested.

Many of the workshop and study tour participants believed that a solution to problems such as ours required a shift from an adversarial position to collaboration and the pooling of resources.

The feedback workshop
The structure and programme of the feedback workshop elicited active participation. The programme started with a review of the Medunsa workshop, project aims and the report on the role of the sciences that had derived from that workshop and the study tour. Once these matters had been considered, participants grouped and prioritized various development concerns for the purposes of project planning.

From their responses, participants clearly understood networking information to mean "information about the experiences of others that can be related to and compared with one's own". For example, community project participants reacted strongly to the reported interactional constraints experienced by community participants elsewhere, and identified closely with them in this regard. They expressed alarm on hearing how group dynamics in community projects such as the YAAP reflected the struggle dynamic highlighted by Jo Samuels and the CACE research.

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119 As described by Walters (1993, p. 21) at the time, the concept of coalition-building was part of a recent trend in defining organization strategy as used by NGOs internationally. Coalition-building can be defined as the "formation of groups and blocs of different ideological streams and political identifications which unite and interact around a specific set of principles, and/or objectives, and/or strategies".
Accordingly, they called for all participants to commit themselves to teamwork, co-operation and the development of common goals.

I was encouraged by the efforts that were being made towards developing such a practice. This became evident from the ideas put forward and the actions suggested during critical discussion and collaborative project planning by Faculty and community members. I was particularly impressed when YAAP community members raised themselves to the status of experts (instead of arguing, as usual, that we should avoid the term “expert”). Here, they argued that the definition of networks of expertise should include community members who were active in projects because they had developed expert skills through their project experience. They also emphasized the importance of continuing education - community members also needed bursaries and funds for training workshops and courses.

From the direction the discussion was taking, I could see that a networking dynamic was beginning to emerge. When participants were asked for suggestions on how to proceed with the task at hand, they asked for information about the resources and priorities of each other’s communities and departments so that they could compare these and identify commonalities and differences. They also emphasized flexibility in using such information.

Their next suggestion was that a working committee be elected to facilitate a local network of community projects. Two representatives for each participant community and Faculty, and for the Science Student Society, were elected. The committee could co-opt additional members as needed and was to hold meetings once a month. The idea of having two representatives per participant grouping was that this would optimize networking with other representatives.

I was entirely in favour of the launch of a local network. I thought that at last we were getting somewhere. From a personal point of view, I would no longer feel so trapped by having to be loyal to particular organizations and having to please difficult individuals or group alliances for the sake of equal participation. My students would not be compelled to participate in inflexible group interactions such as they had experienced in the YAAP. The students’ community practicum projects and community participation in them could perhaps be more free if both
students and members of various community organizations made proposals for collaborative projects. And perhaps now I could concentrate on what my students and I had to offer, while seeking exchanges with various community projects and organizations. I felt relieved at the prospect of participating in a variety of projects - even though it would be in a different way. The networking experience I had been through had shown me that dialogue with many others about my ideas, problems and aspirations freed me from my restricted views on how to achieve democratic participation. When I shared this with others they, too, gained a more enlightened view. It was even possible that the counterproductive group dynamics I had suffered could dissolve in the co-operative spirit of networking. Networking might, I hoped, turn the political situation at the YAAP around so that the struggle dynamics of the community practicum projects could be replaced by a different style of participation.

In fact, understanding that the community practicum dynamics were part of the struggle dynamics had a definite liberating effect on me. I had gained a new perspective by looking at our ideas about democratic participation as part of a broader ecology of ideas about the democratization of our society. Thus I could see the democratization problem as resulting from a network of ideologies.

I also liked the idea of the problem-determined system developed by Anderson, Goolishian and Winderman\textsuperscript{120}. They maintain that within an objectivist point of view, most treatment theories focus on social role and social organization as the prime locus and cause of problems. By contrast, they propose that a problem is only a problem when defined as such, and attempts to repair the effects of dysfunctional social structures are a product of the meaning systems of those involved. They describe a meaning system as a co-evolution of reality - "an ‘ecology of ideas’ that may be described as the shared cognitive and linguistic material out of which we derive meaning and create realities"\textsuperscript{121}. Hoffman\textsuperscript{122} points out that the notion of a problem-determined system allows one to shift from trying to fix someone or something to tapping into or adding to

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{120}] Anderson, Goolishian & Winderman (1986).
  \item[\textsuperscript{121}] Anderson, Goolishian, Pulliam & Winderman (1986, p. 116).
  \item[\textsuperscript{122}] 1990, p. 12.
\end{itemize}
a "network of meanings". By defining the problem-solving endeavour in terms of a conversational domain, one may open up the system to a plurality of consciousnesses, including one's own as an active partner in the social creation of meaning. In Anderson and Goolishian's non-pathological and non-hierarchical view of therapeutic change, everyone gets an equal opportunity to provide input towards solving the problem.

Networking, as an open exchange of ideas, seemed analogous to this approach. Looked at in this way, a networking approach held the promise of resolving problematic group dynamics. Adhering to the principles of interconnectedness, openness to multiple inputs and dialogue could prevent collective participation from turning into coercive social engineering. Community projects such as the YAAP could broaden their participation and invite the inputs of various community organizations and members. This could place their project members in a better position to challenge, and be relieved of, their heavy reliance on particular stakeholders and problematic styles of participation.
PART 2

TRIAL AND ERROR
CHAPTER 6
EXPLORATION OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL NETWORKING

Developing New Terms of Reference and Group Procedures

The feedback workshop suggested that we should call our network the Medunsa Community Development and Environmental Management Network (I will, however, refer to it as the Network). I agreed to continue in my role as facilitator of the project and also of the newly-formed working committee, with the understanding that the working group members would each play their part and take up tasks as required and determined by the group. I was encouraged by the fact that the workshop decided to elect the working committee from among the representatives who were present, with the express idea that they in turn would stimulate participation in the Network by their different sectors. They insisted on this in preference to requesting communities and Faculty Boards to elect a formally recognized representative committee because they had often observed that representatives elected through formal structures were not always sufficiently committed and that this could result in a lack of progress. We agreed not be bogged down with meetings procedures, committee roles and standard requirements such as insisting on a quorum of members to be present at meetings. Instead, we would invite participants to be flexible in their roles and to conduct open group discussions.\footnote{In Chapter 10, I give a detailed description of how our management of the Network evolved, and of the management positions we devised for the purpose.}

The working committee decided to open its monthly meetings to any newcomers, and held its first monthly meeting without delay. The committee saw these open working group meetings as a vehicle for developing a network in which everyone would share ideas, provide inputs and take part in development tasks. The working committee (which was soon called simply the working group) was continuously joined by new members. Some Network representatives were delegated by their communities, departments, faculties or projects, and some came on their own initiative or tagged along with others. The working group consequently thought it best to define the Network as a voluntary network of autonomous projects that was open to any new incoming participants. It was decided that participants could join the Network when and as they wished,
and that the Network would not manage the affairs of participating projects. Progress did not therefore depend on the need for everyone to move at the same paces and in similar directions. The working group proposed that the Network should be autonomous from university or community structures, and should represent voluntary project participation rather than the community and the university. Thus, the Network took care not to compete with, to replace, or to situate itself hierarchically with regard to community and university structures. It respected that organizations and projects make their own decisions on matters such as internal structures and representation, and left it to them to determine how representative their participation would or could be in the Network. The Network thus sidestepped many of the difficulties inherent in collective decision-making. We did, for example, think it was important to draft a constitution to define what the Network was about, why it had been formed, and what its terms and aims were. This document turned out to be useful in providing information about the Network to new participants, but we never felt it necessary to register it with any University or community authorities.

All in all, the formation of the Network and working group signalled the development of a more free-flowing and tentative kind of participatory formation, in comparison with the structures used in the past (such as steering committees, control boards, executives and so forth).

Fluid, Participatory Problem Solving

The Network activities included monthly meetings at Medunsa. Because new members so often joined the meetings, a standard item on the agenda, initially, was for everyone to introduce themselves, say where they were from and what their projects were. As this procedure became repetitive during the course of the year, a project and resource list was compiled and constantly updated. Another standard item was for project representatives to recount their successes and frustrations at project or community level. These experiences demonstrated that networking, both internally and with relevant resources outside of the Network, was helpful for participatory problem solving. For example, in one community a non-government school could not get the children immunized because they did not have birth certificates. Another community had experienced the same problem, which highlighted this as a common problem of health policy
administration. Participants figured out that local government clinics understood that they should immunize children with immunization certificates which, however, got issued only to children with birth certificates. Once the logic was explained to local clinics through chain work communication, which included a Medunsa community health doctor and the management staff of clinics, the problem was resolved. Clinic staff responded immediately to rectify the situation by issuing immunization cards and immunizing children who did not have birth certificates, and this boosted confidence in the Network and thus also in networking as such. This experience, together with the appearance of a policy climate that favoured community collaboration, also contributed towards opening up communication across various boundaries. Child minders and clinic nurses, for example, started showing a willingness to listen to and assist each other in their work. The episode became a landmark in the Network’s development to which participants often referred, saying that they valued the opportunity the Network gave people from different communities to identify problems of common concern, and to realize that others often had access to information, contacts or resources that could contribute to solutions.

The kind of progress made through the Network was fundamentally different from the projects I had been involved in up to then, where our efforts were aimed at consensus formation and participation was driven by coalitions and conflict. This was quite different from the fluid-problem solving of networking, in which information sharing and people’s creative problem solving abilities were valued.

Exchanging Access to Resources and Information

During its first year, the Network became a liaison base for community-based training and research projects as well as for groups of community projects. Initially, the network idea as such stimulated community project participants to form networks within their own geographical areas. For example, 40 to 60 crèches in each of three different communities grouped together to assess their collective resources, assisted by teams of psychology students. The idea was that this would assist their collaborative development in ways that would enhance the democratic nature of crèche development. These included making it easier to access resources collectively and facilitating collaborative ventures among community groups and outside partners such as
resource providers (e.g. feeding scheme distributors) or research and training institutions (e.g. Medunsa and early learning training institutions).

Here, too, the responsiveness of the networks to the fact that my students and I needed community members to collaborate and participate in the community practicum was very different from the complex, partisan methods we had used in the past.

Networking Loosely Connected Collaborative Action Systems

The working group had suggested that the Network should hold collaborative workshops twice a year. The idea put forward was that these workshops should focus on overlapping needs and resources. Communities were to take turns at hosting the workshops to encourage intercommunity visits as well as to rotate tasks. Ten people from each community were to attend a workshop to act as facilitators or resource persons representing a specific interest in their community.

Running these workshops turned out to be both easy and fun. To illustrate: The first workshop was on home-based food production and project development. It was hosted by participants from a rural village in the area, while delegates came from six communities and from Medunsa. The programme included a project demonstration by the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences of household egg production and the use of certain kinds of goats for milk production in developing areas; a presentation on food gardening by the Department of Occupational Therapy; and a discussion of project proposal writing presented by the Department of Psychology. Proceedings were facilitated by a community member, lunch was prepared by local community women and entertainment was provided by a group for the elderly and by traditional dancers. The food budget was a mere R500, donated by the K Birch Fund connected to the Veterinary Sciences Faculty. Because getting from one community to the other was difficult, Medunsa provided bus transport. To us, this effort represented our various cultural versions of “the economy of togetherness”, and highlighted the value of sharing expenses and tasks according to capacity.

One of the ideas discussed was that workshop participants should act as resource people in their
communities, and this proved especially fruitful. For example, one elderly woman facilitated many food gardens in her community and linked people up to a food garden association for months after the workshop. Even though a major frustration was the lack of running water, participants stimulated food gardening projects among the unemployed, at informal crèches and in voluntary project groups. In addition, community project delegates began facilitating food production projects in their communities, as became evident from the increased requests for poultry production cages and feed received by Network representatives.

The example set by this woman and other community members showed how communities become empowered. I was impressed by the procreative way these individuals imparted their knowledge to other community members, and by the way this enhanced their self-worth and stimulated their development.

Autonomous Versus Interdependent Networks

The Network process also made an impact on the practical training projects of my community psychology students. Their participation in community projects was now extended to various community associations and organizations. During 1994, various crèche associations invited my students to participate in their projects. In addition, I followed a new tactic with regard to the YAAP project. Together with my students I invited broader participation and also sought to broaden the focus of the project. New participants were continuously welcomed into the project and new topics were introduced. Older members resisted and criticized this move, even though their participation in the project was infrequent, and consequently, in their feedback report, the students cautioned members to guard against serving the individual needs of important community members and organizations. The YAAP collapsed soon afterwards, as many of its participants withdrew their support. One youth persisted in trying to regain the project’s livelihood by getting the support of various people who were respected for their contribution to the community’s welfare. He motivated them to form a body of trustees for the project and the subsequent formation of the Youth AIDS Awareness Trust (YAAT) was a significant breakthrough in view of the project’s problematic past. The project could now be registered as

\[^{124}\text{Mabasa et al. (1994).}\]
a legal entity and raise its funding independently of auspice bodies. The Trust members encouraged the new project members’ networking with others and their creative initiatives. This was very different from the way the project’s leading role players, including members of its auspice bodies, had manoeuvred the group in the past to maintain control over their vested interests. The lesson I drew from this was that collaborative action and networking were informed by autonomous functioning and management of one’s own resources - control by others had no role. Empowerment through networking may therefore be essentially about maintaining sovereignty and freedom, and not being subordinate in the act of giving and taking.

The idea of autonomous networks, however, contrasted with the formation of interdependent networks initiated by some participants in the Network.

One of the leading créche owners initiated the idea of forming a regional “Umbrella Créche Association”\textsuperscript{125}, which would serve all community créche associations and their local créches. She actively motivated créche owners from various communities to form community créche associations in their areas and proposed that they all come together as a single regional créche association. She argued that an umbrella association would offer its members networked access to resources such as feeding schemes, créche resource assessments and collaborative organization development. She envisioned that such an association would in turn provide the necessary well-organized, democratically representative clientele for other organizations. Apart from the umbrella association, she also wanted to register what I shall refer to as the “Feeding Scheme Organization” to stretch the government’s feeding scheme to include needy créches and the elderly. Due to her leadership role in the mobilization of créche associations, she acted as my students’ link to créches and their associations. (As mentioned earlier, it had been decided that the students would assist créche owners in forming community créche associations and assessing créche resources). A problem arose, however, with the way she presented one of the student groups to créche owners in a rural village. She encouraged these créche owners in believing that involvement with the students would ease food distribution for the feeding scheme. The members

\textsuperscript{125}This name is a pseudonym.
of this association (I shall call them the “Rural Crèche Association”)\textsuperscript{126}, consequently thought that
the students controlled the distribution of the feeding scheme. The confusion that ensued was
only cleared up when the student group and crèche participants ironed out their respective roles
vis-à-vis each other and the Feeding Scheme Organization\textsuperscript{127}. In clarifying her reasoning to us
afterwards, the leader of the Umbrella Crèche Association cum Feeding Scheme Organization
explained that her introduction was based on the assumption that “one has to be seen to be
offering something in order to gain participation”. This suggested that she wanted to turn our
need for participatory research into a resource that would help her establish an Umbrella Crèche
Association and a Feeding Scheme Organization. She appeared to have conceptualized a network
in which one body (the Feeding Scheme Organization) would channel and barter its unique links
(the Department of Psychology and its services) to others (community crèche associations) and
gain legitimacy through a democratically represented clientele (the Umbrella Crèche
Association).

Although it seemed as though the formation of such a network would facilitate the fair use of
communal crèche resources, I could not help feeling extremely sceptical about it. It felt as though
my students and I were once again getting tied up in problematic group dynamics. It was a relief
that networking meant I could now assess her proposal against the ideas from our experiences
and liaisons elsewhere. I noted that she conceptualized networking in terms of interdependently
connected groups, in contrast to networking autonomously. She seemed, also, to think of
networks as organizational structures hierarchically arranged in interconnected layers that form
a representative democracy.

Promoting Networking amongst Institutions at National Level

One of the aims of the November 1993 multidisciplinary project was to provide a written
Feedback Report to all participants, to stimulate further networking among community
development participants locally and among scientists at different institutions nationally.

\textsuperscript{126}This is a pseudonym.

\textsuperscript{127}Masimula et al. (1994).
Accordingly the Feedback Report gave an account of all the proceedings, the study tour and participants’ inputs. It aimed at providing useful information on community project resources and contacts, with the hope that this would encourage people to identify with the programme of action and would use its information to make contact with others.

This inclusiveness, however, created a predicament when it came to using the Feedback Report as a vehicle for networking development. The document turned out to be very long - 72 single spaced small-print pages. I reminded myself of the visitors’ and participants’ warning that most people do not read reports unless they are very short. One solution was to structure the Feedback Report so that the reader could easily refer to sections of interest without having to read the whole document, for example by providing a table of contents that clearly outlined project proceedings. This led to the idea of presenting the Feedback Report as a kind of a reference document. Initially, at the beginning of 1994, I gave it to the University Development Programme office, Medunsa Faculties, staff, students and local community participants.

The paucity of responses to the Feedback Report contrasted strongly with the recipients’ active participation in the feedback workshop. The lively discussion and spontaneous responses from participants had suggested that they found my report-back on the study tour very stimulating, and everyone had regarded it as important to receive the written Feedback Report. Yet I received only the following responses to it:

One participant provided a correction to the report; some workshop representatives asked for more copies to distribute to their members, or because they had misplaced the original copy; some Deans of Faculties asked for copies to be re-sent to them in response to a report-back at their Faculty Board meeting; some recipients acknowledged that they would not be able to find the time to read or to discuss it; two participants requested more networking information on their special interests; a student from the SRC requested a personal copy and complimented the effort as something worthwhile at Medunsa (which indicated that the SRC had, at least, filed the report for reference purposes).

I realized there were various explanations for these responses and my speculations included the following:

People are, perhaps, more interested in direct participation with others than they are in the actual project aims of developing local, national and international exchanges. Perhaps they enjoy interacting and sharing information without having to exert too much effort. Possibly they are not in a position to embark on exchange projects. Maybe they do not find the need to make any comments - their networking activities may proceed independently. Then again, perhaps few find the Feedback Report useful for
I did not, of course, know whether these speculations were at all valid, but I became anxious about presenting the Report to people outside Medunsa. I felt its length probably made it a dubious resource, and when I discussed this with others and with the development officer attached to the University Development Programme (UDP), I found that they were not so concerned about my failure to provide the report to others elsewhere. Participants cautioned that as the document was not a published report, its information could get scooped by competitors. They pointed out that the lack of response to the report was in contrast with the good progress of and participation in the local Network. These observations persuaded me that it would be more fruitful to put my energy into another workshop as this was likely to have greater potential value to the larger community than the distribution of a written report to external workshop participants and study tour hosts. This led me to suggest a workshop among community development scientists at the Historically Black Universities (HBUs). The UDP officer expressed considerable interest in supporting such a workshop, as it had the potential of taking the local networking process to a national level. We felt that such a workshop would fit in with the idea of local and national networking from an inner centre. In this case it would place HBUs at the heart of development. A workshop such as this could also serve to promote the development of internet infrastructures among the HBUs. The internet was at a rudimentary stage of development in South Africa, and if the necessary infrastructure could be put in place to connect the HBUs to the internet, this would give a boost to their community development researchers. We thought that if the goal was staff and institutional development, participation should represent policy makers, students, staff, librarians and networking specialists. Network development could then be carried out through the development of ideas among these groups, and with their influence and support.

I proceeded to work out a proposal for what I called the HBU Workshop on Community Development and Environmental Management, and forwarded it Medunsa management. I felt confident that the idea would get funding support from the UDP, but management’s response was delayed by certain dynamics in those circles. The HBU workshop proposal was, however, eventually accepted by Medunsa’s UDP Committee in May 1994. This Committee advised the Faculty of Basic Sciences to call for a workshop organizing committee through all the Faculty Boards. This process elicited various responses from people, and I became somewhat doubtful
as to whether the workshop would ever get off the ground. If it took that much time to get a response from one institution, how much time, I asked myself, would it take to get responses from nine other institutions (there were ten HBUs).

During this lengthy process, a number of staff members expressed a concern, which came down to the following questions: “Why had I presented the workshop proposal through the Faculty of Basic Sciences (and not through some other body or department whose speciality concerned community development)? Why had I proposed that the university as a whole invite other HBUs?”

The criticism was that I should have put more ego into my effort. Another question was also raised: “Why had I sent out a call for a workshop organizing committee, together with all the workshop and budget proposals?” This is never done, because it enables people to hijack or lay claim to a project. Part of the concern was that networking was not a good idea because “our organization” should be the major role player in community sciences (and should not attempt to share it with others). Networking would waste our time because people guard their ideas and merely attend workshops to socialize once a year. I would therefore spend most of my time organizing workshops and getting nothing from it.

My reply was: “It is too late for any ego. The idea does not belong to me in any case. How can someone scoop a proposal if they form part of it? I want ideas to be taken up by many others, because this helps to popularize them. I do not care that someone took up a particular project that was proposed by community members through the Network without involving others like me.”

However, some part of the concern touched me. If people could give credit to others for the ideas they happened to take up from them, a trust in networking might yet develop. The Network had no mechanism to ensure such acknowledgement. I asked myself whether one should remain selflessly silent, knowing that at least someone was benefitting from the collaborative efforts of others? Should one, in the name of progress, allow an individual to derive benefit from the efforts of a project that was being selflessly nursed by its participants? What protective measures could be built into networking to control or prevent such exploitation?
These questions also nagged at me with regard to participatory community projects that functioned under the “benevolent” auspices of another organization (such as an “umbrella association”). So often, too, there were a few active people, whilst an individual or a whole group reaped the benefits, made frustrated demands when their progress was slow, and placed the process in jeopardy when its direction no longer suited them. According to Edney, this is called “free riding”\textsuperscript{128}. He describes a free rider in a project for a common good as “one who in some way takes advantage of the group-supporting efforts of others for his or her own ends”\textsuperscript{129}. He points out that free riding may have different meanings in the context of different theories. In Olson’s collective action theory\textsuperscript{130}, free riding can include active exploitation, passive non-contribution, or other manipulations of the system, such as deceptive concealment of relevant information. Interpreted differently, free riding clearly has survival value for the individual (or a collectivity within a larger group). However, a common factor of these various interpretations is that some people adhere to an agreement to do something (e.g. reduce the use of scarce resources) for a common group benefit whilst others do not, but nevertheless gain from the efforts that are made. Edney stresses that free riding poses a threat to the “functioning commons”\textsuperscript{131} such that its consequences for the welfare of the entire group must ultimately be evaluated.

All of this revived my original anxieties. The networking approach I had, as it were, discovered was undoubtedly encouraging and had elicited a continuing dialogue; but I was once again involved in problematic group dynamics. Networking did not take care of the questions of trust, ownership and control over people’s collective initiatives. And why, I wondered, did I seem to have difficulty with networking through organizational channels.

\textsuperscript{128}Edney (1980).

\textsuperscript{129}Op. cit., p.137.

\textsuperscript{130}Olson (1965).

\textsuperscript{131}The term “commons” originally referred to the open grassy areas in some New England towns where livestock owners were once able to graze their animals and the resources were jointly held by all. As long as consumption did not exceed regeneration rates, the system worked, but the addition of consumers beyond a certain point could cause lasting damage to the resource itself. The term is used more broadly now, and resources in a commons can take many forms: food, air, money, and less tangible goods like work or favours in small collectivities. However, the same principle of joint use and of balancing supply and demand apply (Edney, op cit., p. 132). This is referred to again in Chapter 9.
CHAPTER 7
ANOTHER GO AT THE PROBLEM

I was beginning to realize that a shift to a networking mode did not automatically change things. For one thing, the Umbrella Crèche Association had shown me that a network could be arranged hierarchically - one organization could gain control over others and their territories under the banner of democracy and fair resource distribution. I had also seen that despite the free exchange of information in our Network, opportunists continued to scoop information without giving proper recognition to those who had done all the work. I had come to understand how people could find networking threatening because of the possibility that some people might feel encouraged to take a free ride on the group’s efforts. And now my proposal for an inter-institutional network had become entangled in organizational complexities. Thus, once again, I was confronted with problematic group dynamics, this time at organizational level.

At the same time, the ease with which the Network participants exchanged and shared information provided a vivid contrast to these difficulties. In fact, the Network was developing beyond anyone’s expectations, and without too much effort on my part aside from facilitating the process.

Perhaps my problem lay in exchanging information and developing networks through organizational structures. I discussed this “new problem” with my doctoral promoter.

In the second year of the ADP, each student was assigned a specific promoter. At meetings with my promoter, we talked about my progress and the issues I was up against. I valued these discussions because although I thought networking was a solution to the democratization dilemma, I still had to deal with problematic community development dynamics. The help I got from him in achieving a creative resolution to this problem was immeasurable. The following extracts from my research documentation illustrate this. The conversation below had to do with my frustration about the HBU workshop proposal. (In all these extracts, “A” denotes myself, Annalie, and “G” denotes my promoter, Gert.)

G: Why do you want to send out the proposal for a HBU Network? How do you understand networking?
A: I understand networking as exchanges that strengthen everyone. People offer what they have, and draw from others what they lack, and in the process everyone's different resources are being strengthened. I am dreaming about networking agreements internationally amongst institutions. People may exchange visits, information and their ideas on community and environmental concerns. Such a network may assist Historically Black Universities to overcome their drawbacks - they may join some of their resources to accomplish a common purpose. If they unite, they may have a bigger say at policy changes and attract funding.

G: A group of people is being engaged and a system develops with its own norms and membership criteria. How would such a network be structured so as to keep it open without falling into a routine that becomes counterproductive? Would such a network become a coordinating and decision-making body?

A: Our local Network shows that it is important to have a structure that facilitates information flow and that is open to new participants. A few people are needed to carry the administration of the network, rather than a committee. People and their projects make their decisions autonomously from the network. Participants are free to enter and exit the network as they wish.

G: Such an information network may be contrasted with a group of people that establish more permanent associations for their collective decision-making and planning, for example the Committee of University Principals. An information network has a loose structure that facilitates people to know about each other and foster connections at an informal level and not a committee that is prescriptive. It has a very undetermined identity - anything can happen. Networks go for information. Organizations have decision-making committees that have to do with results. An organization of people deals with politics and a network deals with information. The one needs a committee and the other requires a computer.

A: But then how should I proceed with proposing a network amongst organizations? Is that paradoxical - having to propose it through organizational channels? Organizations require that proposals be dealt with through their decision-making bodies, or else they do not support such initiatives. Then again, some academics resist networking because they are scared that people will snatch their information. How can I persuade an organization and its members to accept networking as a way of doing? It seems that I need a good strategy to gain organizational support.

What this conversation brought home to me was that networks operate by facilitating connections and information flow, whereas organizations, as we know them, deal with decision-making and results. I also saw that my frustration with the HBU workshop proposal meant I was overly concerned with how I could steer the process and this, I knew, was counterproductive. I would have to take care that, in creating a new network, I did not become entangled in political power and control games.

Gert explained his "Crux Model" to me. This was a model he had developed to assist

practitioners in their personal professional approach. It proposes (a) that practitioners encounter difficulties when they want to move outside their usual frame of reference, and tend to stay within the bounds of first-order type solutions; and (b) that practitioners may break free of this predicament by enacting the complementary position of her or his style.

This model proposes that professional style be characterized in terms of four categories, namely the epistemic, aesthetic, political and ethical. The positions along any one of the vertical and horizontal dimensions complement each other, as do the two dimensions. Plotting one’s dominant approach allows for the identification of its complement. Enacting the latter facilitates the creative resolution of the problem experienced by the practitioner.

Gert observed that in terms of this model, I tended to become entangled in the interpersonal dimension - hence his proposal that I should be careful not to be trapped in politics. He explained that the political and ethical positions represent the dimension which deals with interpersonal relationships and influence. The epistemic and aesthetic positions, however, represent formal relations and deal with information, meaning and creativity. The said dimensions may be likened to the process and content levels of communication that Bateson\textsuperscript{134} talked about. The process level deals with power, politics and influence while the content level deals with information, connections and patterns.

\textsuperscript{133}Rademeyer (1999).

\textsuperscript{134}1979.

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A: Applying the Crux Model, I recognize that my professional style is based on the value of compassion for people (especially the underdog) and the assumption that healthy relationships are based on equality in power amongst people. My usual approach to community participatory work moved along the dimension of social relations. My implementation of and motivation for networking is often based on power and equity. It seems that my attention remains focused on a concern with social relations. This indicates that I can do well to shift my positioning to formal relations, namely, information flow and creativity.

G: The process of democratization deals with power games. If you relate to others on the level of power, things become very difficult because you are then dealing with a political process. Everyone wants to have the last say. The same was happening with family therapy wherein the therapists work strategically and engage in power games to outwit the family. Bateson and Haley had a big fight about it. Bateson warned Haley that power destroys everything. If you work with pattern and the creation of information, change naturally occurs. Boscolo and Cecchin based their therapy on Bateson’s idea of information. He defined information as a difference that makes a difference. If the therapist asks questions that create relational contrasts, a process of change is generated.

I could not, however, stop worrying about how to deal with negative responses to the workshop proposal from influential people in my organization. My promoter encouraged me not to think strategically.

G: A strategic approach puts one back into the production line, having to manipulate things. As soon as one is focused on a production, one deals with politics. This contrasts with the loose structure of information flow. I find that the generation of creative ideas occurs during informal conversation.

A: But influential universities with good contacts have access to funds and they do big innovative things - people form networks of power. The powerless never really get anywhere. They think that if social structural inequalities are overturned, a democracy can be instituted. However, this is an illusion, because actually the world power blocs determine that governments institute a democracy. Although the anti-apartheid struggle continued for over three decades, South African political rulers only decided to change their scenario with the end of the Cold War. Their war in Angola ended in 1988 when the USA and Cuba entered a negotiated settlement. Our democratic revolution seems contradictory in that the new system is instituted through power and coercion.

G: What does this imply for democratization?

A: A whole new meaning system is required, one that is built on an open and free flow of information and autonomy of participation.

G: Openness and voluntary exchange of information is important. We must move away from democracy as consensus. Democracy as consensual group decision-making is problematic in itself. In a transitional culture no one wants to be prescribed to, like in the case of the rebellious adolescent. If you focus on information flow and appreciate people’s unique strengths, there is a greater chance that people may remain free to do their own thing without detriment to others.

I was beginning to see that to resolve my Personal Professional Problem I would have to pay attention to the premises underlying my personal approach. In particular, I tended to base new ventures on established premises of power and justice, and I therefore had to keep checking that my networking was based on information flow and creativity.

In line with this, it also became clear that I had to redefine the democratization dilemma. I did so by taking into account the premises that I had used in my construction of this dilemma, and came up with the following:

The way I conceptualize democratization poses the dilemma that I approach the process with a mind-set based partly on assumptions that are similar to those of the previous authoritarian system. When I think in an authoritarian way, power is possessed and controlled unilaterally by the "superior". When I think in a democratic way, power has to be distributed or redistributed fairly and controlled by equal parties. The status quo (authoritarianism) is maintained because both authoritarian and democratic thinking share, and move within, a broader mind frame of power and interpersonal positioning.

Our popular construction of a participatory democracy called for equal participation and power from the bottom up (grassroots empowerment). The evolving form of a representative democracy aimed to achieve control and accountability by drawing representatives from various levels of the community. Such a development is likely to be characterized by power struggles, especially if everyone expects to be equally powerful. The alternative is to keep people's actions and initiatives in line by laying down stringent rules. This is reminiscent of Freire's\textsuperscript{136} banking concept of knowledge - it is presumed that information and power can be accumulated and measured in terms of one having more or less than an established standard.

Equality is a normative concept that most supporters of a democracy wish to adhere to. However, in an oppressive system, the meaning attached to equality is that everyone should secure the same qualities as those that successfully clothed the oppressor. Thus it was believed, for example, that for women to become equal to men, they had to assume the traditional qualities of men, aspiring to take the initiative and superior control in the way that men are seen to do. (The same expectations would have applied to the striving for equality between community members and university lecturers.) There is therefore a tendency to focus intensely on inequality, and to deal

\textsuperscript{136}Freire (1972).
with it through methods of control, which may include applying pressure, using force and using power blocs and coalitions in order to gain power. It seems to me, therefore, that part of the problem we had with the YAAP had to do with how to handle difference, rather than with equality.

Linking these thoughts to the Crux Model, a networking mind-set may very well be a natural antithesis to a mind-set focused on power and the dilemmas of the distribution of power. But perhaps this is so only if networking is based on a free-flowing, interconnected exchange, and not on a controlled accumulation of information. The former type of networking assumes that development proceeds through a creative process, rather than through institutionalized control, and that human gain rests on the exchange of resources. The problem with difference may therefore be resolved if we can perceive that difference signifies a context of diversity within which we might find mutually beneficial exchanges. In contrast, our contemporary democratic mind-set assumes that organized participation and control over the fair distribution of resources are required for a good quality of life.

On another level, the problematic conceptualization of democracy in this era entails that any new conceptualization is interpreted through the terms of reference of the old meaning system. The dilemma could be that the ideologies of the two mind-sets propose incompatible thinking, an activity very difficult for human beings, who want the world to be logical. The result is that the established mind frame dominates, with the ideological concepts of the new ideal superimposed onto it in the form of rhetoric. For example, democracy based on equal distribution maintains the authoritarian concept of banking and at the same time superimposes the rhetorical idea that “grassroots participation” and “representative organization building” in such banking activities are democratic practice.

In summary, I made sense of the democratization dilemma as follows:

Faced with the challenge of redressing imbalances, my community participants and I tended to base our construction of democratic participation on social power and control. We assumed that knowledge, information and power were assets that were hoarded and controlled by a few people. Consequently, equity to us meant that these were assets that had to be fairly redistributed. As such, the problem with our conceptualization of democracy in community projects and our struggle for a democratic society was that our shift away from authoritarianism dealt with the redistribution or reorganization of the same kind of activity, based on the same
premises. Seen in this way, our move represented a first-order change. In sharing the same problematic base, problem solving attempts that were directed at the limitation of the system then presented limitations for action.  

From this analysis and redefinition of the democratization problem, the following operational hypothesis may be stated:

A mere shift to networking does not ensure second-order change or a creative solution to the democratization problem, but rather, a radical shift in underlying premises is required. A shift to information flow and an appreciation of difference and creativity are more likely to inculcate the value of networking to the democratization of society.

I may describe my shift in professional style and approach to democratization, as a gentle yet radical approach to social intervention, circumscribed by the following tentative principles:

Start with self
Create a space for dialogue and multiple perspectives
Be intent on information flow
Appreciate people's different resources and creative input
Keep a constant check on the premises underlying one's actions
Make a shift to premises that allow for creative problem resolution.

Networking had been a shift in the right direction, but I had to bolster this new approach by constantly examining the assumptions that I based my actions on. Identifying the premises underlying my professional style and plotting them in terms of the categories and dimensions of Rademeyer's Crux Model was particularly valuable. A shift from the social relations dimension to information and creativity seemed well suited to a networking approach to change.

The Crux Model also made me aware that my shift to information and creativity required a more suitable way of dealing with the development and evaluation of research progress than trying to delineate and control the effects of networking. I therefore undertook to describe and contrast my own networking experiences and conceptualizations and those of participants. At the same time, I would aim to keep checking on the premises underlying our activities.

I also drew on the non-strategic and somewhat non-instrumental technique of circular questioning developed by Boscolo and Cecchin. This is an interviewing technique based on building up

137 Bateson (1979).
information through layering, contrasting and bringing into play many perspectives, on many levels. Their approach was influenced by Bateson’s notion of cybernetic circularity as a model for living systems139. Following Bateson’s idea of template theories, networks of meanings are not always consciously entertained, but seemingly hold the behaviours attached to a problem in place140. Taking the meaning system as primary to the behaviour system, Boscolo and Cecchin look for premises, reference values or guiding principles that are programmed at the level of deep structure and out of reach of conscious mind. By taking a hypothesizing, or probing, stance they hope to discern and enunciate those myths or premises that seemingly hold in place the behaviours attached to a problem. A shift in collectively held premises, called second-order change, may facilitate behaviour change. This technique fitted the formal dimensions of the Crux Model, a model I adhere to.

My new approach to change made me more confident and clear about how to guide and bolster my networking actions and those of others who were part of the Network effort. The benefits of this approach became evident in the efforts of the Workshop Organizing Committee for the HBU Workshop, as well as through the various networking approaches that were developed by Network participants. In the chapters to follow, I will illustrate the creative solutions that participants advanced and how this solved many of the problems I came across with collective networks.

139 Bateson (1972, p. 445) reasons that our attempts to achieve a change in a given variable, located either in self or environment, are likely to be undertaken with selective attention that discloses only arcs of circuits of the homeostatic network surrounding that variable.

CHAPTER 8
EXPLORATION OF NATIONAL NETWORKING

The HBU Workshop Organizing Committee

In chapter 6 I mentioned the proposal I submitted for a workshop on forming a network of institutions among the “Historically Black Universities” - the HBUs. I outlined the difficulties I encountered, and in chapter 7 analyzed my dialogue with my promoter regarding these difficulties. The discussions with Gert were stimulating as well as helpful, and I found myself dreaming about organizations that would allow for creativity.

The new understanding I had gained from the Crux Model was that I could encourage creativity by focusing on people’s unique ideas and strengths, rather than trying to steer a process in a given direction. I started off by telling my campus colleagues - including deans, management staff, Student Representative Council (SRC) members and lecturers - about the problems surrounding the HBU workshop proposal. Many offered their support by asking their deans and the university management about the proposal. This turned out to be quite significant: by the end of May 1994, a month after the proposal was approved, an organizing committee had been formed. It consisted of two delegated staff and student representatives from each faculty; policy-makers from management; coopted members (some from the computer-based education centre); the public relations officer; and the deans as ex-officio members. A significant number of these representatives had participated in the 1993 multidisciplinary workshop and were strong supporters of the Network.

The first meeting of the HBU Workshop Organizing Committee (WOC) was crucial. It was stressed that this was not just another committee - it was essential for members to pledge their personal commitment to the idea of getting an HBU network going. Since I had initiated the proposal, I was asked to facilitate the WOC. I accepted, having once again obtained members’ assurance that each would play an active part and step into any major roles that might arise. I thought I was probably the most suitable person to promote the HBU network idea and yet allow committee members to iron out controversial issues and build onto the idea - and this was also
my challenge.

Although everyone approved of the idea of an HBU network, there was less unanimity as to when the workshop should be held and how to proceed with network development. Some people felt we should postpone the workshop until we had developed strong networking at local level. Ultimately, however, the following counter-arguments held sway:

The workshop was long overdue. Given South Africa's new dispensation, any delay could compromise its relevance as well as that of Medunsa and the HBUs;

We should take a developmental position, and promote development efforts through stimulating action proactively. If HBUs could pool their resources, this would, in turn, stimulate their development at local level;

A local network already existed and was known to exist, although it was not formally recognized. The HBU workshop should be organized by Medunsa as an institution, so that initiatives and concerns that did not form part of the local network could be included. We should promote the development of various networks that might then interconnect. The progress of one would not then be impeded by the constraints of the other, and our efforts would not depend on having to make everyone work together in unison.

From this point onwards, pessimism about an HBU network was countered as follows:

There is much more work to be done than one person, department or university can handle. However, if we network our resources we could collectively achieve something really big.

This reasoning struck me as something of a breakthrough compared with the previous objections to the HBU workshop and to networking as such. It seemed to me that the WOC members were exceptionally well motivated for the task, which included the challenge of organizing and raising funds for a workshop in August or September 1994, a few months away. All the same, I felt anxious about the time factor and shared with committee members my apprehension that:

Working from within organizational structures such as committees more often than not creates the problem of cumbersome procedures in group decision-making.

The WOC members were all tired of meetings, their proceedings and their long documents, and we agreed that we would ensure energetic action by side-stepping bureaucratic meetings

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141 Cf. Chapters 6 and 7.

142 In acknowledgment of the people who served on the Workshop Organizing Committee, their names are listed under point 1.4.5 (p. 152) in Appendix B.
procedures by the following means:

- Meetings were held once a week during the lunch break
- A time limit of one hour was stipulated
- A permanent facilitator (myself) was selected, while whoever volunteered served as secretary
- Minutes were kept to a single page
- Meetings were outcome orientated and progress reports were tabled at each meeting.

At times, I was worried about the success of the venture. The workshop proposal was lengthy and the committee had to turn it into a workshop invitation and programme. Then, too, in a post-apartheid context, the idea of initiating networking among HBUs specifically sounded like “just another anti-apartheid coalition”. Another challenge was to find the speediest way of involving other HBUs. Funding was also a headache, and I started feeling despondent and responsible when, by the end of July, we had still had no positive funding responses. Being the facilitator of the WOC was not always plain sailing!

When I consulted Gert about the mess into which I had led people, he offered the following thoughts to encourage me to move towards information flow and creativity:

Depression is an integral part of power - when you cannot get anything right. Being intent on the rational, and trying to steer things into a direction, is not always productive - it always creates tension. Creativity is something which comes from outside of one. We are only channels for a process that is greater than one. It is like building a water channel - you can only build its walls around the stream.

The analogy of building a water channel reflected on how I could facilitate the group process more effectively. I began to see that the shift in personal style I had to bring about had to involve a completely different way of relating to others.

Then, when a student representative in the WOC picked up my mood and spurred me on by saying: “Don’t let yourself be guided by negativity. Keep on dreaming”, I started recognizing that the WOC offered an environment of support - *I did not have to be so intent on being the strong and helpful one*. I realized that I could not really do much more than pose our problems at WOC meetings, so that members could discuss them and plan appropriate action. I would then follow
this up at the next meeting with a report back and evaluation of results, including sequential problems, repeating the process in a circular fashion similar to the process of action research. In this way I managed to facilitate immense creativity from the group, to elicit quick, decisive action, with individual members volunteering to undertake tasks.

The following illustrates the WOC's creative thinking:

The idea of creating networking among the HBUs specifically, in a post-apartheid context, was vigorously questioned, leading WOC members to phrase the workshop motivation in terms of a need for "vigilant action" by HBUs in order to benefit from South Africa's new dispensation. Use of the word "vigilant" was meant to convey that HBUs had to wake up and prepare for a new democratic dispensation. Another WOC suggestion was that an HBU network should be referred to by a name that would include the idea of a "core", such as "HBU Core Network", in order to conceptualize the establishment of networking on a unique basis from which wider networking, inclusive of others, could radiate. The WOC also argued strongly that the proposed HBU Network should be based on the fact that HBUs had experience with developing disadvantaged communities, whereas their institutional development was not on a par with that of Historically White Universities (HWUs). WOC members linked this with the argument that HBUs could tackle their development challenges by pooling their resources.

Critical reasoning enabled a WOC delegation to turn the workshop proposal of eight pages into a one-page invitation that highlighted the most important propositions of the HBU network workshop143. From these propositions we identified a series of questions about the formation of an HBU Network on which workshop participants’ inputs and discussion could be based. This led to the idea that the workshop design should elicit a collaborative building of ideas about networking through problem-posing questions, alternating inputs from guest speakers with group work. Another idea was that we would provide our invited speakers with the titles for workshop inputs (instead of the other way round). The speakers - all of them busy people - did not seem to mind this and some even said they welcomed it. We explained to all of them that their inputs would form part of a dialogue that progressed through questions to be discussed by workshop participants.

WOC members drafted a workshop programme that set out these questions and the sessions at which they were to be discussed. This went out with the workshop invitation to stimulate people's preparatory thinking, making the provision of a discussion document redundant. The committee

143 See Appendix B for the Workshop Invitation and Workshop Programme.
launched a major fund-raising drive, but decided to risk sending out the workshop invitations before they were sure that funds would be available. The invitation to each HBU was addressed to its Academic Registrar as a policy-making staff member who was, presumably, in contact with all relevant decision makers, staff and student bodies. We assigned the role of workshop convener to our own Academic Registrar at Medunsa. This meant that all we had to do was give the workshop invitation and programme to his secretariat, which sent them out from his desk.

As a back-up to our other fund-raising, the WOC members managed to acquire funds from all their respective Faculties as well as from the Principal’s Fund\textsuperscript{144}.

The process of sending out our invitation highlighted the need for better communication channels amongst universities and up-to-date information on management structures. Major frustrations were postal delays, postal strikes, postal losses and getting all the HBUs to respond by due dates. We had to make many follow-up phone calls and send numerous faxes (a step that could have been skipped if we had all had access to e-mail facilities). In the end, most of the invitations were attended to, except in a few instances where recipients were on leave, had left their positions or were overburdened. When it looked as though we would not achieve our aim of drawing six to eight delegates from each of the ten HBUs, I almost fell into the trap of requiring full representation by all HBUs, and had to remind myself of the free-flowing and uncertain nature of network development.

The HBU Network Workshop

The workshop was held on 23 to 25 September 1994. All HBUs sent and co-sponsored delegates to participate in the workshop. Four HBUs each sent two to three delegates, three sent seven, and three sent nine to fourteen. These delegates represented a fair distribution of policy-makers, staff, students, information systems specialists and librarians, while two institutions even delegated some of their staff union members.

The workshop was opened by Elaine Sacco, the president of a new student body consisting of

\textsuperscript{144}See Appendix B (p. 151) for recognition of workshop sponsors.
all the university SRCs. Professor Colin Bundy, a highly respected South African historian, sketched the development context of the HBUs and the challenges they faced. His input elicited a great deal of lively, thought-provoking discussion, and highlighted the dilemma of achieving democratization from unequal foundations. This opening session also showed us that creative resolutions would be integral to the transformation of our society. It thus captured the polemics of HBU development. One of the most pertinent questions subsequently evolved by workshop participants, exemplifies this:

What kind of networking would not trap us into an exclusive protectionist grouping, yet would create inclusiveness - a network that would not strengthen a system whereby the strong feeds on the weak, or that would not facilitate a mere duplication of the dominant?

Participants committed themselves to the workshop approach, which was apparent from their insistence that each small discussion group should consist of a mix of policy-makers, staff and students from various disciplines, information systems specialists and librarians from different HBUs. Most groups retained the same members in order to work consistently through the programme.

Community development was generally viewed as a process that starts from within the systems we find ourselves in. A strongly argued point was that HBUs should focus on their organizational development first, in order to impact on and enact a leadership role in community development and environmental management. Participants felt that our highest priority should be to re-orientate institutional values, and to redefine our policy and vision in line with democratizing our universities, viz.:

Universities should be made part of the community, and community development should form part of university activities.

Positive observations about an HBU network included the following:

The problems of HBUs bind them together to take action.
As a point of departure, HBU resources needed to be identified. These included ongoing educational and rural development projects.
HBUs would do well to market their resources and to ensure access to this information

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145 Then acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape, and author of many publications and books including *The rise and fall of a South African peasantry*.

146 See for example, the summary of Prof. Colin Bundy’s workshop input on the Historical Background to HBUs and Challenges for Survival and Development, point 2.5.2 (p. 154) Appendix B.
through such networks. Linking and networking were viewed as essential to playing a role in society. HBU's should avoid isolation from each other. Networking could benefit HBU human resource development, through exchanges around themes such as training in education and development, bridging courses, responsible affirmative action programmes, curriculum development, environmental management and the redefinition of contextually relevant academic standards.

The contribution of Vic Shaw, an information technology consultant, further emphasized that campus networks were mostly non-existent and that academics had little networking knowledge. It was stressed that we should therefore take into account the importance of would-be networkers, policy-makers and aid organizations in promoting the concept on campus. Thus another strong point was put forward for networking, viz.:

An HBU network is not only achievable but also essential in order to lobby for funds and networking technology.

The fact that a representative from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) Office of the President attended the workshop showed that our proposal was congruent with government thinking. Dr. Namane Magau, who presented the RDP to the workshop, challenged us to form networks that would be “all inclusive and multi-sectoral”. She sketched the RDP vision, which made a great impression on us all, and put forward the following proposals:

Through linking and networking, we might better be able to coordinate and bring together different skills coherently and to arrive at sustainable development structures. The challenge is how to establish such structures in regions and in provinces, and how to come together to address needs at local, provincial and national levels. What we need to think about creatively is how to have focus groups that will link up with local needs as well as national ones. Human resource development providers such as universities and technical colleges could link up with provincial government through its RDP Office and play a role in capacity building programmes. Participants should think critically about what support their university could provide, review their institutional capacities and the role they could play. The RDP in the Office of the President is asking provinces and government departments to start similar networks.

Dr. Magau also invited workshop participants to send a delegation to the first meeting of “Human Resource Development Providers for RDP” (HRD for RDP) on 3 October 1994. One of the focal issues of this meeting would be how training institutions could contribute to the RDP.

As a way forward, workshop participants proposed setting up a network called HBU-Net. Delegates were to ask for the blessing of their Principal before going on to form their own constitutions or work groups. These groups could work on their university's regional networks as a first priority. As a network, we would get the support of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors.
of Historically Disadvantaged Universities (HDUs)\(^{147}\), and link with others such as the Foundation for Research Development (FRD) and its science forum. It was suggested that the network should be open to voluntary participation and that specific focus groups should be evolved and developed. A “committee” of one facilitator per HBU was elected and e-mail addresses (where available) were provided. The task of facilitating the members of this “committee” would rotate from member to member. It was agreed that the workshop should reconvene each year, and should be hosted by one of the ten HBUs. Accordingly, the host university for 1995 was appointed and the next workshop scheduled for August 1995.

When participants evaluated the workshop, they said they felt its method and proceedings were relevant, challenging and thought-provoking and that they had experienced it as eliciting a spirit of participation. They also felt that drawing delegates to represent policy-makers, staff and students from different fields and disciplines gave a much-needed participatory emphasis.

All HBUs had, however disparately, sent delegates to the workshop, and it was trusted that participants could spread the process. Many factors had played a role in influencing the number and constitution of delegates. The WOC had been informed of a number of these, including:

- Institutional problems where the entire top structure was in jeopardy because of action taken by the student council and staff union
- Time constraints
- Non-functioning SRCs
- Distance and transportation costs
- Manpower constraints
- Clashing institutional commitments
- Not knowing who was doing what on campus
- Requests from interested people to be included after drawing up a delegation.

What this taught us was that we should not view workshop participation as an end in itself.

In general, participants felt that workshop invitations and networking could either be representative, or could encourage voluntary participation while emphasizing transparency and a good flow of communication. What was regarded as being critically important, however, was that policy-makers should allow their voices to be heard in the interests of creating an

\(^{147}\)The term HBU was an alternative to the term “Historically Disadvantaged University” (HDU), which later replaced it. Soon afterwards, the term “Historically Disadvantaged Institution” (HDI) was introduced to include all tertiary training institutions such as technikons and training colleges.
environment that would promote a culture of learning. Another recommendation that emerged was that HBUs should also encourage full student participation in management.

The design of the workshop, with group work alternating with inputs from guest speakers, was well received. Speakers were highly valued and rated as relevant. Participants expressed their appreciation that the discussions were participatory and were not dominated by men or any other authority figures.

Aftermath of the HBU Workshop

The workshop proceedings were written up and provided to workshop participants within a week. Three delegates (including myself as the 1994 HBU-Net facilitator) had been elected to attend the RDP meeting to which Dr. Magau had invited us, and these notes enabled the delegates to draw up a provisional proposal on the vision, mission and proposed activities of HBU-Net, which was presented at the meeting.

The workshop documentation also stimulated discussion on HBU campuses. Although all the universities were busy with student examinations after the workshop, as many as three said they were having meetings to discuss the workshop proceedings. However, the communication among HBU-Net facilitators soon showed that the positive ideas put forward at the workshop were difficult to implement. Some of the concerns the facilitators communicated were:

- How can our creativity in generating ideas be sustained, and how can our ideas be taken through at institutional level?
- With primitive or no networking infrastructures in place, how durable are our systems of voluntary information distribution, without exhausting the initiators?
- How can we maintain a creative balance without getting tied up in problems of collective decision making?

On our own campus, there was much talk of the fact that our WOC consisted of students, staff and policy-makers and that they had managed excellently, as a team, to organize the HBU workshop. People started referring to “the Medunsa community”, which included students, staff

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148 Appendix B contains a record of the summarized workshop proceedings.

149 See point 4.1 (p. 158) of Appendix B.
and policy-makers, and it seemed that we had created a new climate of interconnectedness. This climate supported and was being supported by various autonomous networking efforts on the part of students to encourage the creation of participatory structures at the policy-making level of universities. All of this strengthened and was strengthened by the groundwork laid by the 1993 Multidisciplinary workshop, which came to represent, to many of us, Medunsa’s first and most substantive inter-faculty and inter-community event.

In our role as HBU-Net facilitator during 1994, the Medunsa HBU work group liaised with existing structures about the HBU-Net recommendations; including the Vice-Chancellors’ Historically Disadvantaged University (HDU) forum, the FRD and the HRD for RDP. All expressed their support for the points put forward by the workshop participants. In the following year, we learnt that our efforts had apparently bolstered the allocation of substantial funding to HBUs for the development of their internet infrastructure from international agencies like the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

As to our plan to rotate the facilitation of HBU-Net, the second workshop, in 1995, collapsed (and with this also the HBU-Net-in-the-making). Invitations were sent to all HBUs by the host university, but its facilitator informed us that they had failed to raise sufficient funds for the workshop. They shifted the workshop date and told the other HBUs that they would have to carry their own expenses without subsidization. When only four HBUs responded positively to the invitation, the workshop was called off.

The RDP meetings
As regards the October 1994 HRD for RDP meeting, despite the short notice we had had, this meeting miraculously brought together representatives from 27 institutions from all over the country. A networking vibrancy was evident from the contributions made. People’s ideas seemed to interconnect. It was also refreshing to join hands with government.

Discussions in subsequent meetings of the HRD for RDP revealed the high expectations of

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150 The invitation dated 28 September 1994 was to the 3 October 1994 sectoral meeting on “Human Resource Development (HRD) for the Reconstruction and Development Programme (HRD for RDP)”.

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networking as a vehicle for democratic development. One of the main objectives of the HRD for RDP was to ensure the development of networking, which would, in turn, sustain efficient RDP implementation in the provinces. As a result, much time was spent discussing network formation - how the proposed structures would link up, relate to each other and fit in with existing networks. The group’s proposed guidelines for HRD Providers\(^{151}\) were swiftly incorporated into the RDP policy document.

The structuring of a suggested HRD Providers Council, however, made less satisfactory progress and was eventually put aside. One reason for this was that important HRD role-players were often absent. Another was the high turnover of participants. These factors in themselves frustrated the goal of developing a representative council.

A further concern was that our open-ended gatherings made it difficult for organizational representatives to manage the feedback process. Most of the discussion points required immediate input from representatives, making it impossible to first gather responses from constituent organizations.

The hope that networking channels would be facilitated by the RDP National Unit turned out to be particularly unrealistic\(^{152}\). Provincial RDP officers were over-burdened and in no position to coordinate community forums or to incorporate Human Resource Providers who were not entirely clear about their role in the RDP.

The free exchange of ideas about how to overcome the problem of stagnant RDP delivery was, however, both noteworthy and functional. A major dilemma perceived at the HRD for RDP meetings was the need to bypass bureaucratic procedures and power-building pockets, while recognizing that a lack of organized human capacity to handle legitimate and equitable applications for funds created bottlenecks and filled providers and receivers alike with

\(^{151}\)HRD Provider Institutions were defined as “education and training institutions at all levels and across all sectors (public, private, NGO)”.

\(^{152}\)Draft Minutes of Meeting of Human Resource Development (HRD) Providers (Education and Training Institutions) (Annexure C: Key Problems in Provinces) (7 April 1995), Human Resource Development (HRD) of Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in the Office of the President, Pretoria.
impatience. Suggestions for resolving this centred on establishing mechanisms to make a need public, to facilitate responsiveness, and to direct providers to resources that would be available without delay. This debate stressed good contact links, open communication and information networks. It was suggested that provider consortia could be established to serve specific developmental needs in the provinces. Further resolutions by the RDP office and government included rationalizing the financial institutions of the previous regime and setting up an interim agency, lean and accountable to government, to speed up the channelling of foreign funding for capacity building to NGOs.

In comparison with the failed attempt at national networking, these resolutions seemed significant. Nevertheless, I treasure the insights I gained both from trying to get HBU-Net off the ground and from participating in the HRD for RDP meetings. Some of these insights were as follows:

The failure of our concerted efforts to orchestrate networking at a national level was understandable in the light of the absence of economical, interlinked resource utilization. Our attempts did, however, appear to have contributed to vision building, the provision of funding and the promotion of certain values. It was this collective vision building that inspired people to form various networks, which evolved independently (as opposed to the organization of such networks from a national platform).
CHAPTER 9
EXPLORATION OF REGIONAL NETWORKING

Hierarchical Networks and Territorial Security

During 1995, the founder and leader of the Umbrella Crèche Association insisted that other crèche associations in the area should work through her when inviting the Department of Psychology for their collective organizational development exercise. As I have already mentioned in chapter 6, the Network idea had fostered collective organizational development by crèche owners together with psychology students. In 1994, crèches were encouraged to group together and form crèche associations in their communities or neighbourhoods, so as to assess and develop their resources as a collectivity. This seemed to place the community crèche associations in a better position to identify and solve problems that affected them all. For example, child minder training organizations were invited to workshops for crèche teachers by their community crèche associations, while these associations also tackled shared problems such as inadequate health care services.

The leader of the Umbrella Crèche Association had so far played a leading role in mobilizing crèche owners to form community crèche associations and linking them with my students and me. She also registered and headed the Feeding Scheme Organization, with the idea that these structures would serve each other. Her idea was that an Umbrella Crèche Association, which incorporated all the community crèche associations, would provide the Feeding Scheme Organization with a sufficient number of needy clients who were already well organized into representative community units. She established client bases in three communities in the district, which provided the Feeding Scheme Organization with a channel for receiving maize and funding assistance from the national poverty relief programme of that time, for distribution to the rural poor. The community crèche associations assisted in the distribution of poverty relief to crèches. They assessed needs and provided a list of needy crèches and the number of children looked after by each of them. Their committee members also helped with handing out development funds and food parcels from a central crèche in the community. Thus the combined effort of the community crèche associations made it possible for the Feeding Scheme
Organization to assess, distribute and take responsibility for the poverty relief of a large area.

However, as people got to hear of the Department of Psychology's involvement in organizational development work with the crèches, some of the crèche associations that had not affiliated with the Umbrella Crèche Association approached me directly. When this came to the attention of the Umbrella Crèche Association, its leader made her strong objections known. She wanted all the crèches and crèche associations in that area to work through the Umbrella Crèche Association, and expected me to support this by referring people to her first, before they struck a deal with me. Her problem was that direct access to service providers (such as me) and freedom of association threatened the existence of Umbrella Crèche Association and its purpose, namely, to ensure fair resource distribution within the region through one umbrella association. She envisioned that crèches could collectively manage their communal resources by means of a pyramid formation - local crèches would manage their group affairs through their community crèche association and a representative committee of all of these associations would, in turn, manage group deals through one regional crèche association.

I understood that such an approach fitted in with a conception of democracy as a collection of representative groups that facilitate equal participation and the fair distribution of resources. The Umbrella Crèche Association's position seemed to suit the new South African vision of people-driven democracy through participatory forums at local, regional, provincial and national levels, the underlying assumption being that such a participatory strategy would place people in control of their own destinies. Democratic ideology in the new South Africa promulgates the idea that decision-making should be devolved to "grassroots" level. To ensure "bottom-up", people-driven and people-centred development, local development forums (LDFs) were created as a medium for community empowerment. Forums were to advise local government councils on development needs. Most importantly, they were to be actively involved in planning, implementation and monitoring. Regional development forums (RDFs) would link local forums to provincial offices. Viewed against this background, it is understandable that the Umbrella Crèche Association came into being in order to promote the interests of those involved in child minding.

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However, from the point of view of the psychology students, the Network and myself, freedom of association had to be respected. There was also the riddle of how someone other than ourselves could give permission to liaise with us. To us, networking represented the value of direct access to resource providers and autonomy in managing one’s own project affairs. For example, when a Medunsia-linked community health forum was formed, the MCDEM-Network turned down the suggestion that these two bodies should merge, on the view that projects should be coordinated in order to avoid duplication. However, the participants of the local Network argued that anyone should be free to form their own network, even if their concerns overlapped. The Network took the position that what was important was for projects and networks to have freedom of association and to refrain from guarding their territories antagonistically. For example, we did not mind if our members participated in both the Network and the forum.

To us it therefore seemed as if the Umbrella Crèche Association wanted to play a gate-keeping role with the aim of exercising unnecessary control over crèches and their free association with others.

The Umbrella Crèche Association eventually accepted our point of view that an independent crèche association within their targeted geographic area could liaise with us directly. However, subsequent attempts to meet with this other group, whom I shall refer to as the “Independent Crèche Association”\(^\text{154}\), failed. The crèche owners in this association did not want to make themselves available for participatory sessions during the week. Various considerations appeared to have influenced this flow of events. One reality was that the Independent Crèche Association consisted mainly of affluent crèche owners who held full-time employment elsewhere. A further reality was that the leaders of both associations raised the issue of maintaining trust in a system that included two bodies at loggerheads with each other, while being served by the same consultant group.

These concerns suggested that our network values clashed with the idea of the evenhanded use of communal resources by means of organized group control. For example, if a service was viewed as a communal resource to be regulated by another community group, the autonomy of

\(^{154}\)This is a pseudonym.
the service provider was compromised. On the other hand, if access to resources was not coordinated or controlled, how could equal resource utilization be ensured? One of the two principles would, so it seemed, have to be compromised for the sake of the other.

If fact, according to Edney, the idea of group control over individual utilization of scant communal resources has remained problematic in its application, to such an extent that it has been termed the “commons problem”\textsuperscript{155}. Commentary on the difficulty of managing commonly owned goods dates back to Aristotle, and the problems of fair and efficient distribution of joint resources have been the concern of economists, legislators, and social philosophers for millennia. Edney actually discusses this issue in connection with the phenomenon of “free-riding” in community projects. In chapter 6, I highlighted the threat that the free-rider poses in community projects and networking. People simply do not trust others who may scoop their information or benefit from collective efforts without making an honest contribution. In defence, they may even engage in similar behaviours. Hence, in a context pervaded by a lack of trust, a free-rider is one who in some way engages in a cheating strategy\textsuperscript{156}. “Each member logically realizes that if he or she contributes, others may not; that if he or she does not, others may, and he or she will benefit from the collective good anyway. Therefore, each decides not to contribute”\textsuperscript{157}. As a consequence, in some contexts the collective good is achieved through coercion or outside inducements of some kind. Alternatively, a democratic value (equality) may be preserved at the expense of another (freedom) or vice versa. For example, group members may all choose to restrain their individual freedom for the sake of maintaining an equal dispensation among them\textsuperscript{158}. On the other hand, a small group may be the saviour of a larger group by being more enthusiastic than the others about preserving the collective good, for reasons of self-interest\textsuperscript{159}.

Hierarchical arrangements such as the Umbrella Crèche Association may therefore offer a

\textsuperscript{155} Edney (1980).

\textsuperscript{156} Brubaker (1975).

\textsuperscript{157} Olson (1965, p. 44).

\textsuperscript{158} Arrow (1951).

\textsuperscript{159} Olson (op. cit.).
solution to the commons dilemma if community members are prepared to favour such authoritarian rule, under which members are allotted equal restraint and opportunity, social rank is given to individuals for their services to the group, and the group as a whole gains collective power.

But it did not seem as if the community crèche associations with which my psychology students and I worked did, in fact, favour the idea of working through one regional umbrella association.

Another approach was, for example, offered by a community crèche association in a new informal settlement area, whom I will call the “New Resettlement Crèche Association”\(^\text{160}\). This association did not want to represent their development concerns through another association or civic body. They conveyed their standpoint to the initiator of the Umbrella Crèche Association, even though it was she who had inspired them to form a community crèche association and had introduced them to the Department of Psychology and the local Network. The New Resettlement Crèche Association preferred direct consultation and liaison with others about common concerns because, they said, they had often found that influential intermediaries wanted to protect their territories jealously, and ended up restraining community initiatives by their insistence on being consulted personally and by taking sole credit for group efforts.

According to them, what had boosted their confidence in free and direct networking across organizational boundaries, was the positive response they had observed from the nurses to the local Network’s chain-work communication on the immunization problem. Following this, the New Resettlement Crèche Association undertook various networking initiatives. During participatory resource analysis with psychology students, they examined their history of soured relationships with government nurses and uncovered the negative perceptions some of their crèche association members had of these nurses. They realized that the nurses’ claim that they felt threatened by the constant hijacking of vehicles in the area was justified, and subsequently approached the government clinic, together with their local development committee, to discuss an organized system of community visits. They gained support from community members to erect informal medical shelters in the area for the nurses to visit. They also networked with their

\(^\text{160}\) This is a pseudonym.
local peace committee and the community policing forum to provide security to nurses visiting the area. These initiatives, in turn, gave their team of psychology students a very positive community experience, and the students applauded the crèche association's networking approach to community development in their feedback report\textsuperscript{161}.

Subsequently, the New Resettlement Association preferred to remain a voluntary community association that networked freely, rather than forming or joining control bodies at either local or regional level. Even when they were warned by their township’s greater civic body to operate through the township’s greater civic body and another greater crèche association, they asserted that they had chosen to coexist with others. They explained that they would prefer to cooperate with other crèche associations as an autonomous body if the need arose. They also preferred to network directly with service providers such as government clinics. They thought that each community association or organization should be directly accountable for its community services. They managed to avoid competition for community resources by insisting that each individual crèche should manage its own project resources. They preferred not to handle material goods on behalf of others because they thought this might lead to conflict or allegations of mismanagement among their association members. They entered into collective undertakings only about those social-psychological and health concerns that affected them all. In a nutshell, the New Resettlement Crèche Association preferred fluid networking for cooperative exchanges with a pool of loosely connected resource providers, with each structure controlling its own resource inputs and outputs.

Their approach struck me as comparable to the solution that Edney\textsuperscript{162} proposes to the commons dilemma, namely to stabilize a “system of cooperative trusts” on a foundation of “territorial divisions”. This strategy entails dismantling the commons into the smallest possible units, with individual (or subgroups) responsible for each. This is meant to reduce competition over the resources themselves and allow territory holders a sense of individuality and control. Territory holders are not required to sustain each other. This approach also reduces opportunities for free-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Baloyi et al. (1994).
\item Edney (1980, p. 146).
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riding throughout the system. Such territorial security may promote trust and cooperative undertakings among territorial subdivisions. Successful cooperative trusts are likely to be small: small groups provide more mutual visibility for members, and the benefits of contributing are more apparent to the individual. Gain from such cooperation in turn does not threaten the existence of the pool as a whole when destructive dynamics enter the commons. Thus boundaries are drawn in such a way that fair resource utilization and resource safety become self-regulatory and threat reducing. This arrangement offers the possibility of maintaining a democratic dispensation as well as individual satisfaction.

Apparently, therefore, the various crèche associations addressed territorial security differently from the Umbrella Crèche Association. The fluid, autonomous networking approach to community development was, it seemed, more promising of an optimum democracy than a hierarchical approach.

I noticed yet another dimension to the commons problem in an alternative approach developed by the Rural Crèche Association when they confronted a similar threat. The following dilemma was noted by its members:

Some of the crèches in the community did not become affiliated to the Rural Crèche Association, yet they received food parcels from the Feeding Scheme Organization. These parcels were, moreover, disbursed through the efforts of Rural Crèche Association members. Another cause for alarm was that some of these non-member crèches enrolled larger numbers of children per teacher, charged lower school fees and did not offer cooked meals to children as the Rural Crèche Association’s members did.

The Rural Crèche Association members raised their concern about this when they all chose to commit to common standards to ensure fair resource development. Some members questioned why they should serve others who were not affiliated to their association, who did not commit themselves to similar restrictions and who, as a result, gained at the expense of affiliated members. They resolved, however, not to force crèches to affiliate to their association - a route they could have pursued to try and ensure common standards amongst all crèches. Instead they chose to see the situation as their challenge to attract new members because of the educational

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163 In Chapter 6, I raised the problem about the confusion that had resulted from viewing different associations and groups as interdependent, specifically as regards the psychology students’ community involvement, and the Umbrella Crèche Association’s leading role, in the distribution of the Feeding Scheme Organization’s food parcels, and the formation of the Rural Crèche Association.
benefits their association offered its members. Instead of enforcing comparable standards, they
decided that it was more important to promote and nurture good principles and methods among
crèche association members, on a voluntary basis. Another decision they took was to continue
their community services to poor children in their village through the non-discriminate
distribution of food parcels to crèches. This meant tolerating the consequent unfair dispensation
amongst association members and non-members. In sum, the Rural Crèche Association felt that
efforts to merely institute group control would be tantamount to turning the association into a law
enforcement agency - a position they wanted to avoid at all costs. Instead, they concentrated on
the good norms and standards that their group members chose to uphold in their services to their
community.

I thought this approach reduced conflict in the commons and offered an example community
groups might do well to consider, particularly in our present-day society that suffers from so
much social disintegration and lack of morality. Their approach was, to my mind, in line with
Etzioni’s 164 insistence that “there’s a creative tension between individual rights and the needs of
the community, and any attempt to ‘resolve’ the tension is wrong on the face of it because you
can resolve it only by making one of them dominant”. He asserts that the better society - the more
civil, humane, democratic society - exists when individual rights and social responsibilities are
in careful balance. In an interview with Willards and Fields (editors of *The Futurist* ) 165, he urged
for a move away from the simplistic notion, characteristic of “isms” such as communism and
liberalism, that it is either the state or the individual that must be catered for, and he emphasizes
the need to recognize the social and the moral realms as major mediating factors. He argues that
merely clarifying values and leaving the choices to the beholder is too neutral a position to take.
On the other hand, in the USA, government capacity to take care of the public interest gets
exhausted by special interest groups.

As a solution to the dilemma, Etzioni solicits a “responsive community” 166 as the mediating force


166 Etzioni is the leader of an emerging group of thinkers called the “communitarians”, and editor of a new
between the individual and the state. He challenges civic society to sort out how to teach morality and civility without making it a state religion. Social responsibility, which is not inborn, should be taught by the moral agents of society (the family, or if this is too eroded, an institution, the schools) to encourage civil values and character formation. Members of a community (e.g. a community of medical practitioners) should draw up their own norms rather than just relying on individual conscience or on government decree. He finds it disturbing that in the USA, as the moral infrastructure of society has eroded or been destroyed instead of reformed, not much is unthinkable. The deeper issue, he says, is that no society can have sufficient law enforcers to make it decent, so one has to have a sense that certain things are unthinkable just because they are wrong and not done. "Democracy is a rare plant that grows very slowly in rarefied climates, and it's not easily transplantable. You need a certain character and certain traditions." 167

In trying to draw a conclusion from what I was observing and experiencing, I compared the different crèche associations as follows: The Umbrella Crèche Association operated at regional level, aspiring to organize all community crèche associations within a geographic area for collaborative resource access. They perceived other groups as competition, rather than as a potential pool for resource exchange. By contrast, the Rural Crèche Association and the New Resettlement Crèche Association both operated at community level. The Rural Crèche Association was based in a rural village, and their respect for others and their upholding of norms seemed suitable to the traditional community. The New Resettlement Crèche Association was situated in a peri-urban informal settlement area. Their fluid networking approach seemed typical of modern city life with its diversities. Nevertheless, both associations addressed the "non-cooperative" behaviour of individual crèches by concentrating on a voluntary commitment to the norms set by the group (e.g. self-accountability, respect for autonomy and social responsibility) and on trying to exemplify to their communities the upholding of good health and educational standards. They refused to perceive non-members' participation or the existence of other associations as threatening. As a whole, the various crèche associations used diverse networking approaches to achieve their goals - from monolithic pyramidal 168 networks to value-driven


communicentric and fluid polymorphic networking. The different social structures, I concluded, influenced different reactions to unequal resource utilization.

I also noticed that these structures were in some way similar to structures in broader society. Notably, a hierarchical network formation represented one of the ways in which community members responded to the RDP challenge. Others, however, insisted that community forums and associations should emphasize consultation and cooperation, rather than getting bogged down in unnecessary bureaucratic activities. Critical debate in the HRD for RDP meetings similarly identified the problem of power formation in development affairs. For example, the idea that Local Development Forums (LDFs) should be recognized by local authorities and that they should be the only formation of their kind, was met with concern about the proliferation of gatekeeping structures. It was deemed critical that community groups and Human Resource Development providers should realize how essential it was to play a developmental rather than a political role (e.g. NGOs were plagued by battles about “turf” issues).

Lastly, I realized that the different networking approaches signified the development of alternative ways of thinking about problems involving the common good. In giving thought to the various network formations, it became clear that a shift to a networking mode did not change matters automatically, because some people approached it with the old mind-set of hierarchical control and power intact. Our approach, on the other hand, showed that participants had actually made a radical shift in their collectively held premises. In our particular context, networking shifted to, and was more firmly based on, free-flowing, autonomous exchanges that stimulated participants’ creativity and social responsibility. The various network experiences highlighted that what worked better for us was to soften our intent to control others, accompanied by a respect for both our individual rights (autonomy) and community responsibility (communitarianism). Perhaps this would bring us closer to an optimal democracy.

In other words, the right to manage one’s own project resources is a form of territorial self-control, and this security may strengthen cooperation with others for a common good. Cooperative groups may then foster norms about how their members should behave.
PART 3

CONSOLIDATION
CHAPTER 10
COMMUNITY NETWORKS - THEIR MANAGEMENT, RESOURCES, USE,
STRUCTURING AND PRINCIPLES

My involvement in the local Network\textsuperscript{169} up to March 2000 provided me with a rich source of experience of regional networking and its potential for boosting participatory community development projects. I learnt never to think that if an arrangement worked here and now, it would necessarily work as well for another year or for another network group. Networks are open, unpredictable and forever changing. I do, however, think that MCDEM-Net had particular qualities in relation to (a) network management; (b) size and composition of network participant base; (c) preferred means of communication; (d) how participants valued MCDEM-Net, as well as networking and its uses; and (e) the types of structures we built to promote networking. These qualities co-determined the way in which MCDEM-Net evolved, and I deal with each below.

Managing MCDEM-Net

MCDEM-Net was managed by a Medunsa-based secretariat appointed by the working group in 1994. It comprised two network coordinators\textsuperscript{170} and a treasurer\textsuperscript{171}, who had the resources to manage communication and finances (if any). The coordinators' task was to manage MCDEM-Net, e.g. seeing to it that a venue, a meeting facilitator and a volunteer to take down minutes were available for meetings. The secretariat also had to draft and send out meeting invitations and information documents\textsuperscript{172} to participants. According to the MCDEM-Net constitution, matters for discussion were to be dealt with at monthly meetings, at which people could be appointed to

\textsuperscript{169}From here onwards I will refer to the local Network as MCDEM-Net, in order to distinguish it from other community networks that had developed.

\textsuperscript{170}During the first three years, Professor Colin Stewart from the Community Outreach Unit of Medunsa's Veterinary Sciences Faculty and I served as the MCDEM-Net coordinators.

\textsuperscript{171}Professor Cheryl McCrindle assisted as treasurer.

\textsuperscript{172}I want to express my gratitude to the following people who helped with administrative tasks for the networks: Prof. Colin Stewart and Prof. Cheryl McCrindle (Veterinary Sciences, Medunsa), Charles Kopase (voluntary worker, Radio Channel Med), Richard Maseko (PRO, Medunsa), Valentina Sefike (Voluntary worker, Ga-Rankuwa AIDS Clinic), Kerileng Moloantoa (Family Medicine, Medunsa), and Cecilia Molepo (Nursing Sciences, Medunsa).
manage specific tasks if necessary. MCDEM-Net also held annual planning and evaluation meetings, and participants contributed to suggested focus points for meetings and workshops. There was, accordingly, not much left for the secretariat to discuss, which made it unnecessary for us to hold another meeting over and above the monthly network meeting.

During the first three years, administrative support and expenses were carried mainly by the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences and its Community Outreach Unit, and thereafter by the Department of Psychology. In 1997 we appointed a new coordinator\textsuperscript{173} and a network marketer\textsuperscript{174}. I was asked to stay in the secretariat as its "convenor", a term that suited the function of "calling people to a meeting". Henceforth we often had to adapt the secretariat to changing circumstances. For example, during 1999 we had to make two changes, first by adding more members to the secretariat and then by forming a task group.

Size and Composition of Participant Base

The MCDEM-Net members were an interesting mix of university staff members and community members who managed or participated in voluntary community projects, community research and training, community associations, small enterprises such as farming projects or crèches, welfare and health care projects. Our initial working group of 18 soon expanded to 24 during early 1994, as more community project members from academic departments at Medunsa, further communities, community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government departments joined. Network participants consisted of a continuous flow, incorporating both those who were merely passing through as well as more enduring role players. The number of participants at monthly meetings typically ranged between 20 to 30. Sometimes as few as five people turned up, but the meeting would always proceed. I learnt never to suggest, "let's postpone the meeting, not everyone has turned up" - instead, I took as my motto the maxim that information can be exchanged between two people.

\textsuperscript{173}Charles Khopase, Radio Channel Med, Medunsa.

\textsuperscript{174}Kerileng Moloantoa, Family Medicine, Medunsa.
MCDEM-Net was less active in exchanges with others outside the region in which it was based. However, these exchanges were always of a good quality. They included visitors from other networks and RDP provincial government, an environmental drama training group, international visitors and invited guests who addressed special interests of the network.

At first, meeting invitations were spread by word of mouth and posters. Later, our marketing included a standard letter of invitation which could be distributed by participants, and the network's constitution, copies of which were made available at each meeting. These documents provided information about MCDEM-Net and its meeting dates. It was only in 1997 that CBOs in the area acquired fax facilities, but when this happened, MCDEM-Net was able to communicate with a growing number of participants. To illustrate: during 1997, monthly invitations were sent to 70 university departments, government and community bodies in and outside of Medunsa. Participants from approximately 34 departments and organizations attended the meetings held that year, about half of them from NGOs and CBOs. During 1998, faxed and postal invitations increased to 90, while network participants from 56 participating projects, departments and organizations attended meetings. During 1999, monthly invitations were faxed to 60 organizations outside of Medunsa and e-mailed to 64 university members. Members from approximately 74 departments and organizations participated actively in MCDEM-Net during 1999.

Although one of our aims was to host a home page on the Worldwide Web, e-mail and internet remained out of reach for most of our participants from community and government organizations. Most of Medunsa's offices (including mine) were, however, connected by 1999.

Understandably, then, our interactions were mostly face-to-face. Participants generally also preferred to take part in project introductions and discussions during meetings, rather than providing the secretariat with written project descriptions. We had various attempts at starting a newsletter, which failed because we expected people to provide written inputs. To overcome

175 The Network's standard invitation letter is reproduced in Appendix C.
this difficulty, I included, with the monthly invitation notice, a one-page news brief on the previous meeting and its participants\textsuperscript{176}. One of the brightest ideas\textsuperscript{177}, introduced in 1997, was for projects to take turns at hosting monthly meetings at their site, exposing others to their real situation. Participants praised this initiative as promoting co-ownership of the network. As one participant remarked: “The Network became entrenched in the community”.

Network Resources

The Network depended on voluntary inputs, which we all valued highly. This was evident from the enthusiasm with which Network participants and their organizations hosted meetings. What is also significant is that MCDEM-Net never raised funds for its activities as an entity. Participants arranged for funding assistance for specific events, such as a workshop, from their departmental budgets or special funds. For instance, up to 1996, refreshments at meetings were provided by the Community Outreach Unit of the Veterinary Science Faculty. Later, with the rotation of monthly meetings, refreshments were provided by the hosts. In 1998, participants started to contribute towards refreshments from their own pockets.

Value of MCDEM-Net and Networking

Annual evaluations of the network showed that participants valued MCDEM-Net for the information exchanges it made possible. The following are examples of participants’ appraisals:

\begin{quote}
MCDEM-Net promotes free information exchanges among community project members. While the Network is not a representative body, it does not attempt to replace or duplicate the decision-making of projects, organizations or RDP forums. By being a non-hierarchical body, the Network does not elicit internal power struggles.

Network meetings bring people together, including University members, to identify similar problems, to generate solutions and to gain support and information with regard to relevant contacts and resources.

Community members become acquainted with University research activities and their value to the community. For example, we were made aware of the hygienic slaughtering processes in rural communities by the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences’
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{176}View Appendix D for an example of the Network’s monthly meeting invitation letter.

\textsuperscript{177}This idea was proposed by Henry Mosupi of Animal Herd Health and Reproduction (Faculty of Veterinary Sciences).
research. Abstract knowledge is being made practical by demonstrations on, for example, solar pots.

The Network gives CBOs, government and University members the opportunity to invite each other into their community projects and research activities.

Our open and non-hierarchical network structure encourages voluntarism and the flexible utilization of focused task groups.

Participants also appreciated that the concept of the network encouraged them to engage in their own networking, which took on various forms, such as:

The networking of local resource providers and community associations for participatory community development. A prominent example was the New Resettlement Crèche Association's networked effort with their local residents' association, clinics and community policing forum, which resulted in the erection of health care shelters in their settlement area for immunization services.

Networking for direct assistance from local government and NGOs for community projects. For example, the Ithumeleng Mabopane Food Gardens got land from their local government, an irrigation dam was dug by the Department of Works and seeds were donated by national food gardening associations.

The compilation of a directory and information booklet on local organizations and a calendar of events by the YAAP, together with community stakeholders and a government development agency.

MCDEM-Net had become well known for its promotion of dialogue across institutional boundaries. Participants used it as a vehicle for raising awareness and securing collective interventions. There were frequent calls, at monthly meetings, for everyone to give inputs and suggestions about a community concern and to address the problem as a group. Examples of these included:

An awareness-raising letter to the Department of Health about health care administration problems in the district.

The facilitation of open discussions among community members, their associations and welfare organizations on problems such as the crisis about pension pay-outs and abuse of older people by thugs and family members.

An MCDEM-Net discussion on the increased hijacking of Medunsa vehicles from staff during their community activities.

These discussions and awareness-raising efforts usually elicited positive responses from people. For example, the Department of Health acknowledged our letter, investigated the concerns and advised us of their intention to reform their management system. Our alarm about the hijacking of Medunsa vehicles started a debate on how our values and actions may contribute to crime, e.g.
participants highlighted the fact that, from their history of oppression, community members typically engaged in the buying of stolen goods and the culture of silence, which meant not reporting criminals in their midst. This debate apparently sparked a number of responses from others, such as the action taken by a local taxi association that embarked on an anti-hijacking security-checking campaign in front of Medunsa's entrance gates.

In addition, MCDEM-Net participants initiated inter-organizational awareness-raising and advocacy programmes on some pressing concerns. For example, during 1997, some of us started an inter-organizational project on domestic violence and child abuse. Our initiative followed on a discussion we had with a welfare organization that hosted a network meeting on their domestic violence programme. Their programme was based in a township adjacent to the region in which most of the network participants' projects were located. Participants at this particular meeting emphasized the need to encourage similar programmes in their region, and MCDEM-Net members undertook to stimulate community projects on domestic violence and to approach existing organizations to join hands. Following discussion at a number of meetings, MCDEM-Net adopted domestic violence as its focus for the year of 1998.

Later in 1998, community-based organizations together with psychology students from Medunsa joined forces in a collaborative awareness-raising effort on domestic violence. This developed into MCDEM-Net's first (and most noteworthy) inter-organizational project effort. Participating organizations and institutions included various government departments, police service units, NGOs, CBOs from the different townships and villages, and Medunsa. The project explored how domestic violence and abuse were managed in the communities it represented, and did awareness campaigns at local schools\textsuperscript{178} and with the general public\textsuperscript{179}. This effort, again, was taken up in the course of 1999 and extended to other communities, to the satisfaction of everyone involved\textsuperscript{180}. This inter-organizational effort was heartening, because of the dedication and endless commitment of members from the participating organizations throughout the project, which

\textsuperscript{178} Phale, Maboa, Ngwenya, Motshegwe & Mekhise (1998).

\textsuperscript{179} Matjila et al. (1998).

\textsuperscript{180} Maaga et al. (1999).
stretched over fifteen weekly sessions of approximately four hours each. Each group had its own creative approach, and debates with members of the public, including school pupils and teachers, invariably elicited new questions to be addressed.

Network Structures and Principles

Encouraged by the venture, participants undertook to form a regional network on domestic violence. A number of MCDEM-Net meetings were subsequently dedicated to discussing and planning such a network. We even pulled in our visiting community development specialist, Professor Jerry Wade\(^{181}\), to facilitate two meetings on the development of a purpose and a mission. In fact, the participatory evaluation of the MCDEM-Net in 1998 cited the first autonomous meeting of what participants called the Regional Network against Violence and Abuse (RENAVA), held on 23 September 1998, as MCDEM-Net’s special achievement of the year.

A less welcome outcome, however, was a management crisis that developed soon after we formed our “sister Network”. Firstly, because our members were from the same pool, many of us (including me) now attended two network meetings per month. New members were often confused about the different networks, and some raised their issues indiscriminately at both network meetings. Another problem was that participants were generally not in a position to take up administrative tasks that required resources such as computers, communication infrastructure and organizational assistance. Consequently, both networks relied on Medunsa as its administrative clearing house\(^{182}\). This meant an increase in the MCDEM-Net secretariat’s administrative tasks, as well as the emergence of a number of new management challenges. Accordingly, I raised this matter for discussion at several meetings and at the annual planning meetings of each of the networks.

\(^{181}\)Professor Wade, a visiting community development specialist from the University of Missouri, was a guest of the Veterinary Science Faculty, who kindly shared him with MCDEM-Net.

\(^{182}\)It took me approximately six hours to draft an invitation letter with a news brief, update address lists, and print and prepare the letter for internal mail and fax. I had to do that twice monthly for the two networks, which took up approximately two days per month of my work time.
RENAVA members subsequently chose to introduce an executive committee structure which included members from various NGOs and CBOs, and myself. Meanwhile, MCDEM-Net participants appointed four additional volunteers to be added to the existing secretariat. Two additional members from Medunsa were to assist me with the convening of the network (which we defined as the administrative duties and network capacity development, including the development of a home page), and two members from community associations were to offer their leadership regarding the network’s chosen focus for the year\textsuperscript{183}. These additional secretariat members and an executive committee for RENAVA did give much needed support, but none of them had computers and I still had to take charge of the administrative duties.

Neither of the management structures held executive meetings, because we wanted to continue as in the past. We tended to allocate specific tasks amongst ourselves and appreciated that such an arrangement gave us all greater freedom. Consequently, however, we did not really attend to the management crisis until I called for an emergency meeting with the RENAVA executive members during June 1999. The following account includes excerpts from this discussion, which reveal how we perceived our management problem and our thoughts on possible solutions.

We all noted that both networks were suddenly undergoing a major crisis: arrangements had collapsed at our last two meetings, and RENAVA executive members were not fulfilling their duties. For example, an executive member who undertook to facilitate a RENAVA meeting did not even turn up for the meeting, and did not notify anyone. I was culpable, too: I had not sent out MCDEM-Net invitations.

The following is a description of some of the conversations we had about the crisis. I include, as well, a number of verbatim excerpts\textsuperscript{184}.

"People are just having difficulties with time", Daisy Monyela suggested, when some

\textsuperscript{183}Following on MCDEM-Net’s focus on domestic violence to boost relevant project development, participants suggested instituting a “focus of the year”. As the Department of Welfare had declared 1999 the year of the older person, we followed suit.

\textsuperscript{184}I wish to thank the RENAVA executive members for allowing me to include these descriptions in my thesis, and permitting me to refer to them by name.
RENAVA executive members failed to turn up at the meeting that we had scheduled specially to discuss our crisis. I set up another date and undertook to remind everyone. Daisy offered to pick them up, as public transport was problematic at the time. To our surprise, our next executive meeting started on time.

It turned out that we all excused our lapses on the grounds that we just did not have time during a busy stretch of the year which included major events. We agreed to suspend our general meetings for the moment, to give ourselves a chance to reflect and get our house in order. We thought it was particularly important to do this because, as Jacob Dire (acting chair in the absence of our chairperson, whose workplace could no longer afford his attendance at Network meetings) observed, RENA VA had, at its past two meetings, been at risk of being hijacked by people who wanted to use the network for party political purposes.

Reflecting on our failure to attend to our executive duties, Jacob made the following points:

"This recent crisis does not mean that RENA VA, and for that matter either of the networks, should cease to exist because we allow them to fizzle out, as we had set our hope and ideals on them for achieving specific plans. However, we have to be reminded that we are employed to work for our organizations as a first priority, and that our workplaces demand certain things from us, to be productive in our own places of work, not to attend to what may be viewed as a series of meetings."

Executive members agreed with him. I added these comments:

"Over the past year, you have continually remarked to me about how your organizations have had an incredible increase in clients. It appears that most of our organizations have taken on new projects or expanded their target areas to greater parts of the Odi region. Perhaps RENAVA’s problem is not primarily a lack of commitment, but rather a lack of time and human resources. It seems that we have created a predicament with our expansive development - the growing requirements of our organizational projects and the two networks demand an increase in voluntary activities we can ill afford in addition to our official jobs. The success of the network activities presumably invites more clients, who make greater demands on our existing service organizations, including our networks, which in turn challenges us to expand our activities beyond our capacity."

Executive members confirmed that they had all noticed that their organizations were well aware of this and were, indeed, in the process of enlarging their staff capacity and appointing staff members to networking activities. I enquired: "So perhaps our crisis is over, and we have nothing to be concerned about?"

Mosesoa Moreka, however, raised the following point:
"The problem is that our management of RENAVA is too loose; we should work towards an inter-organizational network agreement in a more formal way. Perhaps we should require network participants to be mandated by their organizations and that they provide written notification of their replacement. We may also request prospective network organizations to make a pledge of allegiance and follow up any forms of irregularities so as to hold people accountable to the network."

Jacob, Daisy and I were concerned that such a proposal would go against the voluntary nature of the networks, and felt that it was the prerogative of an organization to mandate one of its members to attend network meetings, rather than the other way around. We went on to observe that it was important for committee members to be self-motivated, as it is committed individuals who make a network work, rather than a network that makes individuals work.

Mathlodi Mathlaila thought that more formal agreements might actually strengthen RENAVA as an inter-organizational project, and said she had noticed the following:

"There are always new faces at our meetings, who require to be informed about RENAVA and who then drop out after some meetings when they realize that it is not offering funds. This contributes to our meetings becoming boring to some of us - it seems that we are not progressing to a serious programme of action amongst consistent members."

The background to this view was that, over RENAVA's period of development, Jacob had expressed concern over the question:

"How are we to build collective ownership, leadership, commitment and responsibility of an inter-organizational kind, over what constitutes voluntary network participation?"

Jacob usually cautioned me with this warning:

"Whilst I appreciate your free and creative spirit, if things are too free, we may be losing our clout. Besides, people may feel they are doing something that is no-one's job, having no commitment, obligation and not having to show any accountability."

I had started giving way to his ideas, thinking that he would teach me a balanced approach to life - something I needed to rectify my past blunders. I had also noticed that he appealed to those who misinterpreted network leadership as the coordination of community projects by saying, "Let's work in a cooperative spirit, the days of controlling others are long gone".

Along with these exchanges of ours, we had developed the idea that our quest was how to take ownership of something of substance in a new, networked kind of a way. Thus, Mathlodi's accentuation of the importance of a programme of action made
perfect sense. Jacob emphasized that:

"... generally, the idea of RENAVA has been received with enthusiasm, because abuse and violence is a very big problem. Moreover, RENAVA is a brilliant idea that can be sold to schools, the police and all others, so that they join a programme of intervention that is bolstered through participatory research and action. We have spoken about coming up with an intervention programme, which idea we could develop to include the provision of manuals and tapes, and to provide a base for relevant research and training programmes."

We agreed with him that RENAVA had to form part of national and international programmes of action. This would require RENAVA members to take the initiative in arranging relevant inter-organizational inputs, rather than encouraging people to merely join events that had been organized by others.

Mosesoa and Jacob, who had worked on the RENAVA constitution, also questioned whether or not the committee should develop centralized capacity to manage an inter-organizational programme of action. I had always opposed this on the grounds that it would amount to RENAVA being developed into an organization. While another violence prevention CBO would not be wasteful, I was concerned that this could take us back to square one - namely, having to create inter-organizational commitment to networking. In any case, how could an organization be a network and vice versa? On the other hand, considering that our management dilemma centred around institutional capacity development and enduring commitment from some individuals and their organizations to network inputs, this option seemed not such a bad idea. I understood that while networks represent free associations, collaborative project agreements and partnerships amongst organizations are contractually binding. In fact, in our current community development context in South Africa, an inter-organizational project on violence and abuse, for example, may be organized and managed as a consortium amongst a few member organizations and they may incorporate wider networking relationships with others. Such formal inter-organizational project agreements might evoke broader support, possibly providing additional funding and the required organizational capacity.

Thus, the RENAVA executive made strong points for developing the capacity to manage a more formally agreed upon and sustainable inter-organizational programme of action. They underscored the fact that although the two networks were interconnected, there should nevertheless be a clear distinction between the two. Jacob perceived MCDEM-Net as a general base from which community issues and leadership could evolve, while RENAVA had a more specialized concern. He stressed that he valued both networks:
"Our networks encourage participants to drop their guard. This is because we emphasize the exchange of ideas on local project information and experience. In the process, awareness is raised on common community concerns and people are inspired to be creative and to reach out across boundaries. In fact, the concept of a network is a brilliant idea. It serves as a tool for leadership development. By attending network meetings and exchanging information with others in the field, I gain insight into what is going on and a vision as to what should be done. Besides, networks can be used by organizations and people to reach their goals. As you (Annalie) use our networks for reaching student training goals and drawing people into an inter-organizational participatory research programme - so that we can mould your students to the real world - this also develop us and our services, which are being marketed among community members. Even though the openness of our networks makes them easily manipulated by people with either bad or good intentions, our networks encourage critical reflection from which arises social awareness."

I thought long and hard about this debate, and concluded that networks and inter-organizational projects, especially those stimulated by RENAVA, might do well to accommodate different types of relationships. Some of these might involve fluid relationship ties, while others would be more enduring and could even include formal contractual agreements. For example, it might be useful for some of the participating organizations to form a consortium in order to support a shared project capacity. However, my networking experiences elsewhere had shown that, with this type of endeavour, it would probably be better for each consortium member to control his or her part of the deal independently, and for collaborative relationships to be based on respect for the autonomy of each consortium member and any incoming network participants. Such a group would take care not to view themselves, or to be viewed as, the controlling group of any new inter-organizational project venture they might stimulate, and would prefer to base the network’s social services on the principle of self-reliance. They would make it clear that members would participate and bind themselves to network and project agreements on a voluntary basis, and that it was not compulsory for others in their field of operation to work through them.

During the course of 1999, MCDEM-Net also searched for a resolution to its network management crisis. What distinguished MCDEM-Net from RENAVA was that participants were interested in MCDEM-Net as a vehicle for information exchange rather than for undertaking inter-organizational projects around a specific concern. I noticed, as well, that whenever we proposed that our networks should have web pages, participants from CBOs typically responded: “This will be fine, as long as those that do not have access to the Internet can have a printed copy of it”.
This made me realize and raise the point that an electronically connected community network can work properly only if all participants have access to it. Consequently, network participants all agreed that an attractive possibility was for MCDEM-Net to promote the establishment of Multipurpose Community Telecentres (MPCTs), which would serve and develop the networking capacity of community members and local organizations. The development of community web pages would then make a lot of sense. We all hoped that this might promote more information sharing amongst organizations and allow MCDEM-Net to accommodate more community networks, without having to deal with more meetings and committees. I was mandated to search for and invite assistance from organizations that might support us in this regard, which I did.

I invited members from a number of relevant organizations that promote community telecentres nationally. At our MCDEM-Net meeting in September 1999, participants discussed and embarked on the Network’s new Collaborative Telecentre and Community Web Pages Project. A task team was formed to assist community members and organizations to develop telecentre proposals. Our new undertaking posed many challenges, both old and new ones, and opened a new chapter for me in my networking history.

The following incident illustrates one the problems that my collaborative approach to community telecentre development elicited:

A Community Development Forum (CDF), which was not recognized by the local government, gained the cooperation of one of the community’s prominent youth leaders to develop a telecentre proposal for them. They expressed their hope that such a centre would provide them with employment and an income, but did not know much about the whole telecentre business. Their dream was, however, that initiating a community telecentre would give them the legitimacy and recognition they felt they deserved as the community’s new, enlightened leaders. At the same time, some members from the local government made me aware that the telecentre proposal was quite a political issue to them as well, as they suspected that some of the CDF members wanted to use the telecentre project as a rallying point for the coming local government election.

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185 I learnt about MPTCs from a working group on the topic at the conference on Empowering Communities in the Information Society held at Gallagher Estate, Midrand, South Africa from 15 to 17 May 1996. The concept of multi-purpose Community Telecentres refers to a shared information and communication facility for people in isolated rural areas, providing IT and telecommunications facilities, user support and training for members of a community who cannot afford such facilities on an individual basis and/or do not have the skills to use such tools.

186 This is a pseudonym.
I withdrew my support and told the CDF that in my view there was no point in building a telecentre on a foundation of dispute with their local government. In addition, I said that as soon as they tried to control the income generation of those who would have to operate the telecentre business on their behalf, the conflict among themselves and others would, in all probability, escalate.

When I noticed similar tendencies among community groups and individuals elsewhere, I started to pass relevant information on to potential telecentre developers. The recommendation I made (see below) was quite different from the advice usually given to the initiators of community telecentre projects:

(a) Avoid, at all costs, the appointment of a telecentre steering committee that will, in the name of “the community”, “manage” the centre for them.
(b) Base bona fide project members’ business management on principles of direct accountability and autonomy.

What is more, I stopped calling people to monthly network meetings. As Robert (telecentre task team member) said in support of my move: “If there is nothing of importance to put on the table, there is no need to have a monthly network meeting”.

This decision to discontinue my effort to sustain the networks freed me from the predicament I felt I was in, namely keeping something alive that seemed, again, to have become somewhat entangled in interpersonal issues. I never intended any of the networks to signify to me, or to any of their participants, what a church or other organization conventionally signifies. What is important for me is that, even if I am the network administrator and initiator, I can also disconnect from the networks I have created and switch to something new. I am not saying that such intermediary networks are redundant. I have, however, realized that what is important is networking, rather than “The Network”. The magic of a network is that it can be formed, and it can also be dissolved. In fact, I feel that it is my social duty to inform and show others that a network administrator and the remaining participants should not endure their network effort beyond the bounds of their interest and energy. The dissolution of a network does not necessarily mean that it did not provide good benefits, or that it was a failure. Its timely disbanding may, in fact, free its remaining loyal participants to disconnect, so that they may shift and connect with new priorities and formations.
I think this realization is perhaps one of the most important insights that I have arrived at in relation to my research - never to become a true believer or follower of any movement, form or dogma.

Now that I have stopped the network meetings, university members who participated in the networks and networking projects way back in the past have offered me various comments, which generally serve to commemorate our networking experiences. For instance, with the advent of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) at the insistence of the Department of Education, many Faculty members are again enquiring about the MCDEM-Net meetings. Some remind me of our 1993 multidisciplinary workshop and others reminisce about our effort to set up the HBU-Net. They see these as achievements, in that “we developed a cooperative spirit that is being rekindled.”

On the Medunsa campus, staff members have undertaken various networking endeavours - multidisciplinary, inter-departmental and inter-organizational. Examples of these include the following:

- There is participation in an education linkage programme among tertiary institutions internationally
- Medunsa has opened three satellite campuses, and has established many teaching sites that serve the rural community
- Several departments run programmes in collaboration with sister institutions and health consortiums
- The University administration, amongst others, has initiated several telemedicine and other projects related to information technology development
- Medunsa’s institutions for community and research activities are inclusive of all Faculties and it has become popular to invite members from various departments to provide collaborative input into a research proposal, a discussion or training topic, and to share visitors from elsewhere
- Many people are now liaising with me and inviting me into their projects.

As a consequence, I now experience Medunsa as a far more collaborative campus than before. The above-mentioned initiatives were, notably, all independent and by no means part of an
organized or coordinated effort by any network. Most important to me is that I am now part of more free-flowing participatory community development formations.

In an effort to consolidate the various dynamic developments in our networking, I have realized the following points, which may help me in any future networking undertakings.

Firstly, I have learnt that a community network can be managed quite simply by community project members and a voluntary network secretariat with the resources they already have among them. Through as little effort as gathering together on a monthly basis, community project participants can share project information and experiences of problems in the community. We also used the MCDEM-Net as an opportunity to create dialogue across organizational boundaries. Our networks gave me, some of my students and a number of others the opportunity to invite participation in our projects. We also became known to each other, strengthened and increased local knowledge and raised awareness on important matters. Some participants even tried out their own autonomous networking for the purposes of marketing and developing their projects, as well as for networked problem solving in their communities. Taking these achievements into account, I regard networking and our networks as well worth the effort.

However, I must emphasize that meaningful outcomes such as these did require our purposeful time and resources. The MCDEM-Net secretariat had to see to the following: (a) ongoing network administration by at least one person; (b) the continuous drawing in of leadership and creative inputs from people; (c) voluntary assistance from individuals and task teams; (d) the provision of ad hoc project funds and ongoing assistance through the discretionary funds and administrative support of some member organizations; (e) substantial inter-organizational participation; and (f) the ongoing development of both fluid and more enduring linkages.

Furthermore, as our network grew, and when we attempted to host a sister network, the management task became more demanding. Community project participants had to prioritize their network activities, and we became aware of how important it was that everyone should have the capacity to maintain external communication. As the HBU-Net attempt demonstrated, networking with the aim of pooling organizational resources is paradoxical. On the one hand,
entering networks is a way of accessing capabilities that any given focal organization does not have. On the other hand, networking requires dedicated time, human resources and ultimately the organizational development of network capacity.

Our networks’ management crisis brought to the fore a new question which participants and I are now grappling with, namely:

What kinds of internal changes may assist our organizations and our networks to engage in networking activities more effectively?

In fact, from the various network developments, I can identify the unfolding of alternative network structures, all geared towards accommodating community participants with dissimilar networking capacity. MCDEM-Net and RENAVA have evidently cleared the way for the following alternatives: (a) to develop the clearing house capacity of one institution which provides the administrative base for a network; (b) to develop network capacity among some organizations so that they may share the responsibilities of working towards a common network association; and (c) to establish separate decentralized entities which will serve and develop the network capacity of surrounding organizations and community members.

Emerging network theorists use the analytical concept of network position (network centrality187) for the analysis of organizational networks. Applied to our formations, the following structures may be identified: (a) hub-spoke networks in which one organization holds a central, initiating position - for example, MCDEM-Net; (b) peer-to peer networks in which power and authority may be asymmetrically distributed, but with no one dominant, central actor, unless perhaps it is the administrative staff of the network itself (for example, RENA’s inter-organizational programme with an executive committee); and (c) intermediary networks in which a regional entity with decentralized centres that have strong network capacity plays the central role (like the establishment of a web of community-based telecentres, all autonomous, yet committed to a common community networking development programme).

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187 Harrison & Weiss (1998, p.38) define network centrality as the situation where: “A person, group, or institution is more centrally located within its network(s) to the extent that the most (or the most important) information passes through it”.
Our networking developments showed that both the fluid and the more enduring network ties are important. Significantly, it was the free and open structure of our networks that facilitated a continuous flow of new members and substantial participation by many network members. These networks also promoted voluntary exchanges of information and fluid communication across organizational boundaries. Our advocacy efforts were swiftly organized and re-channelled to incorporate new focuses and participants. Yet it was the more enduring relationship-building that sustained and guided the development of the networks. In fact, it appeared to be the mix of strong and weak ties that furthered the two networks.

The above proposition corresponds with recent theorising about networks by Harrison and Weiss, who look at how workforce development CBOs in the United States used inter-organizational networking to act as an intermediary between poor job seekers and employers. These researchers propose that the success of some CBOs was based on the fostering of both strong connections and weak ties to the community and employment providers. This proposition builds on Granovetter's theorising about the strength of weak ties which are rich in information and valued by people especially when they do not find what they want within their existing circles. The development of strong ties, by contrast, assists CBOs to become strongly embedded within the community. Harrison and Weiss found that such ties involved CBOs in active engagement on advisory boards, in curriculum design and in the provision of instructors or training equipment, all of which strengthened the confidence of some employers in the CBOs. They also found that the need for customized, networked mediation has become acute in America. This, they remark, probably characterizes many fields in which community-based groups, training colleges and regional authorities operate in their efforts to fight poverty and discrimination.

Finally, my own networking experiences have continuously demonstrated that networking and network formations are better based on the principles of independence and individual choice. Each individual, project, network association and organization may actually be thought of as a

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188 Harrison & Weiss (1998).

189 1985.
star network\textsuperscript{190}, with its strength built on the assumption of independence and the freedom to disconnect and interconnect swiftly for unimpeded networking\textsuperscript{191}. In fact, the freedom to foster various network ties may be of great assistance when it is necessary to swiftly form projects among the most relevant service providers and clients according to shifting community priorities. Many of our organizational projects may, therefore, actually be operated as networks! Such an approach may perhaps provide a more balanced way of managing interpersonal issues of power and control in community development affairs. These principles of independence and individual choice are accentuated by Peters\textsuperscript{192}, an organizational management consultant, who encourages companies and managers to move beyond orthodox concepts such as “empowerment” and “total quality management”. He urges readers to “[e]radicate ‘change’ from your vocabulary. Substitute ‘abandonment’ or ‘revolution’ instead”. His organizational studies illuminate the strengths of atomization, independence and self-definition to deal with fast-paced change. Another idea he introduces is that of a new dependence: “not loyalty to one’s company, but to one’s network or Rolodex ... The idea of creating an organizational network in a flash by gathering the best talent to exploit an opportunity. Call it corporation as Rolodex”. On completion of a project, the “organization” will dissolve, never to appear again in precisely the same form, constantly re-forming according to need\textsuperscript{193}.

As Harrison and Weiss\textsuperscript{194} observe, it is significant that much of the theory about inter-organizational networking applies equally well to the increasingly collaborative behaviour of private corporations, both within and among countries. It is beginning to appear that for both business and non-business organizations, a new principle is emerging in the brave new world of heightened competition, accelerated movements of capital, information and technological change.

\textsuperscript{190}Kleinrock (1964)
\textsuperscript{191}White (1973, p. 48).
\textsuperscript{192}Peters (1994, p3).
\textsuperscript{193}Op.cit., p. 120.
\textsuperscript{194}Harrison & Weiss (1998).
CHAPTER 11
CONCLUSION

Summary of Research Process

Chapter 1
My motivation for this study started with the problem I had been experiencing with getting university and community members to participate on an equal footing in the collaborative community development practicum I had devised for training the community psychology students whom I taught. In 1993, I joined the Alternative Doctoral Programme (ADP) of Unisa's Department of Psychology in the hope of finding a more suitable way of making a meaningful contribution towards collaborative community development projects. As a member of the programme, I undertook naturalistic action research, a self-reflective enquiry into my social situation in order to improve the rationality and coherence of (a) my own social practices; (b) my understanding of these practices; and (c) the situations (and institutions) in which I perform these practices. I have sub-divided my self-research into three parts: reconnaissance, trial and error and consolidation. The topic of my thesis, “Participatory community development - a networking approach”, indicates that the interest of my study extends to all the different planned, collaborative community development efforts by people from community, university and government institutions, and how a networking approach may assist such efforts.

Chapter 2
On the ADP programme I was expected to start off by describing and illustrating my personal professional problem, and I focused on my problems with undisclosed meanings, group coalitions and militant democratic procedures, all of which I encountered in the community practicum. My case notes were peppered with examples of the defensive reactions to one another of clinic staff, community health workers, youth, university lecturers and students, and with accounts of how our interpretations of each other’s participation in the group usually led to more complications and conflict. I explored how my efforts, and those of my students, to maximize group participation was typically countered by some members’ equally strong investment in various forms of non-participation, which to me looked a lot like teenage rebellion against authority. My
own, unique problem seemed to be that the non-demanding stance I took and the subtle manoeuvres I engaged in made me feel immobilized and disqualified. I and my community participants, I thought, had juxtaposed competing and dominant realities - the one authoritarian, the other futurist and democratic.

Chapter 3
The ADP Philosophy of Science and Methodology seminar prepared us for the constructivist research approach advocated by the programme. Several debates in the philosophy of science have seriously questioned the positivist belief that science is based on neutral observation and is detached from the epistemological context in which it is generated. The alternative notions that have emerged from these debates have radical implications for research; for example, that individuals and professional practitioners all have to acknowledge and work with the role they themselves play in the enquiries they initiate and their involvement in creating the results. Action research was shown to hold the potential for practitioners to become self-reflective through a deliberate process of opening up to the tacit meanings (theories-in-use) by which they approached their professional problems. Research became self-research, assisted through dialogue, so that collaboration with one’s supervisor, peers, clients, students and colleagues became part of the research process and its validation.

Chapter 4
I embarked on problem analysis and generation of alternative problem-solving strategies through action learning, which was facilitated by exchanging ideas with my doctoral group and involved family-of-origin analysis, tape recordings of discussions and keeping a personal journal. Although I linked my tendency to encourage equal participation to my rebellion against intellectual status and rank, a further hypothesis was that I identify with the “orphans of society” as a way of dealing with emotional stress and that I was consequently too heavily invested in community involvement. A possible remedy was to practice irreverence, thus trying to free myself from consensual belief and from buying into (becoming a true believer in) the community participatory model. While at first I found this difficult, I managed to see that manipulating group structure and siding with coalitions actually contradicted my claim that I avoided control over others. It also became clear to me that while my approach to community participation was
politically correct, I was, in fact, saying that MY way of participation was THE way. I realized that I had lost my space for a virtual other.

The outcome of all of this was that I launched a programme of action to promote the idea of networking, which at the time seemed well suited to my need to gain further insight from others about how they experience the “democratization problem”, as well as to the demands of building a democracy.

Chapter 5
I proposed and facilitated a multidisciplinary project venture among university and community members, which assisted me to broaden my community development participation with others. From a study tour in which I exchanged ideas on community projects with people in various parts of South Africa, I gained immense understanding of my practicum’s problematic community participation in relation to the popular construction of democratic participation in the anti-apartheid movement. When I shared these insights back home at a feedback workshop, I found it encouraging that community participants were as relieved as I at recognizing our “struggle dynamic”, and that they wanted to be liberated from this. The election of a working committee to develop a local network of community projects gave me further encouragement, because I thought this would invite a greater variety of participating organizations into our collaborative projects. Networking showed me that when I was open to multiple inputs, I was freed from my restrictive views, and I hoped that this kind of dialogue could similarly enable our projects to shake off their heavy reliance on particular stakeholders and problematic styles of participation.

Chapter 6
The Medunsa Community Development and Environmental Management Network (called the Network or MCDEM-Net) introduced a more open, free-flowing and tentative kind of participatory formation, in comparison with the committee structures used in the past. The kind of progress made through the fluid-problem solving of networking was fundamentally different from past projects where our efforts were aimed at consensus formation and participation was driven by coalitions and conflict. The Network became a liaison base for community-based training and research projects, and people’s responsiveness to each other’s project needs was in
strong contrast to the complex, partisan methods we had used before to gain community participation.

Our new project successes showed me that collaborative action and networking were better served by autonomous projects, but one community crèche leader baffled me by wanting to approach networking in terms of interdependently connected groups. My original anxieties were revived when my proposal for a workshop among community development scientists at Historically Black Universities (HBUs) became entangled in organizational complexities.

Chapter 7

I valued discussing my research progress with my doctoral promoter because, although I thought networking was a solution to the democratization dilemma, I still became entangled in problematic group dynamics. Gert explained his “Crux Typology” which he had developed to assist practitioners, when they wanted to move outside their usual frame of reference, to position and enact the complementary position (epistemic, aesthetic, political and ethical) of their style. In terms of this model, I tended to base new ventures on established premises of power and justice and I therefore had to keep checking that the networking I engaged in was based on an appreciation of information flow and creativity. My new understanding led me to redefine the democratization dilemma, where the status quo is maintained because both authoritarian and democratic minds share, and move within, a broader mind frame of interpersonal positioning. I also realized that I had to make and maintain a radical shift away from those collectively held premises that I and some of my fellow networkers used but did not always consciously entertain, that seemingly perpetuated behaviours attached to the democratization problem.

Chapter 8

As facilitator of the HBU Workshop Organizing Committee (WOC), I encouraged creativity by focusing on the unique ideas and strengths that people had to offer, instead of trying to steer the process in a given direction. My new approach elicited remarkable, creative inputs from the WOC that struck me as something of a breakthrough. For example, each member made a personal commitment to ensure energetic action; we sidestepped bureaucratic meetings procedures; and my lengthy workshop proposal was swiftly changed into a one-page format. I
started recognizing that the WOC offered an environment of support and that I did not need to do much more than pose our problems for discussion, planning, action and evaluation of results, and repeat the process in a circular fashion similar to action research. Our successful workshop effort and the proposed development of an HBU-Net was, however, difficult to sustain, as HBU-Net facilitators could not keep up with information distribution and some had difficulty in maintaining a creative balance without getting tied up in problems of collective decision making. Nonetheless, our effort did elicit, and form part of, a new climate of connectedness, it boosted funding for internet development at HBUs, and it contributed to RDP policy proposals on the importance of building capacity for a network society.

Chapter 9
When the leader of the Umbrella Creche Association proposed that all community crèche associations should work through one regional umbrella association, it appeared that the Network's values of direct access and freedom of association clashed with the idea of organized group control over the even-handed use of communal resources. It was a relief that networking meant I could now assess her proposal, and its underlying premise of hierarchical control, against the ideas from our experiences and liaisons elsewhere, such as my finding that fluid and voluntary networking based on respecting the autonomy of each individual, project and association, prevented conflict and made people more free to collaborate with others. I noticed yet another dimension to an alternative approach to the commons problem, namely that group association members may choose to concentrate on the good standards they uphold in their community service, avoiding at all costs stepping into the role of a law enforcement agency. From a broader perspective, I observed various crèche associations who used different network approaches to address unequal resource utilization and meet the RDP challenge - from monolithic pyramidal networks to value-driven, communicentric and fluid polymorphic networking. I realized that these signified alternative ways of thinking about problems involving the common good, ranging from the old mind-set of power and control, to free-flowing consultation and voluntary group cooperation, encouraging both individuality and social care taking.

Chapter 10
My review of the MCDEM-Net over a period of six years showed that it was managed quite well
on the basis of participants' voluntary inputs and resources, by a small secretariat and a fluid but relatively small group of network participants who favoured face-to-face communication at community project venues. Community project participants from the university, community organizations and government, including myself and some of my student groups, used the Network to (a) share experiences and problems; (b) create dialogue across organizational boundaries; (c) invite participation in projects; (d) become known to each other; (e) build onto local knowledge; (f) raise awareness on important matters; (g) get the inspiration to try out independent networking in our own communities; (h) engage in inter-organizational networking; and (i) on occasion, develop vision and leadership capacities. As the Network expanded and created another network, networking became more demanding, requiring more commitment and management capacity from Network administrators, and requiring community participants to prioritize network activities and maintain external communication. I searched for various structural changes, such as hub-spoke, peer-to-peer and regional intermediary networks, that would assist our organizations and networks to engage more effectively in networking activities. These developments showed me that it is important to foster both the weak and the more enduring network ties. Finally, my experiences continuously demonstrated that collaborative endeavours are better based on the assumption of independence and individual choice - principles that grant freedom to disconnect and switch swiftly for unimpeded networking, perhaps providing a more balanced way of managing the interpersonal dimension of community development affairs.

Discussion

At the beginning of this research project I ventured on a self-reflective enquiry with the hope of improving the way I attempted to gain participation among university and community members in a collaborative community practicum. I have described this study in chapters 1 and 3, and in keeping with the nature of this type of study, my evaluation of the critical issues in my research will be guided by three basic questions, namely

1. Did I improve the quality of my practice for myself and for the people in my care?
2. Have I achieved an emancipated understanding of these practices?
3. What suggestions can I draw from my enquiry that others might find worth attending to?

The quality of my practice

Perhaps the most earnest part of my research was that I strongly related to a personal professional problem I wanted to solve. At the start of the research, I felt disqualified and immobilized as a result of both my non-demanding and my group manoeuvring efforts to gain equal participation among community and university members in the community practicum. The desire to find a more suitable way to make a meaningful contribution towards collaborative community development projects was my primary motivation for the study.

How focused did I stay on my primary aim? Initially, I viewed my problem as a rebellion against authoritarianism. Dialogue with my doctoral peer group about the tacit personal meanings that influence my unique social practice showed me, however, that I was too heavily invested in gaining community participation. When I followed their advice to take a stance of irreverence, I realized that my subtle group manoeuvring techniques contradicted my claim that I avoided control over others and that my politically aligned approach contributed to social isolation. From here on, I embarked on networking as an inquiry into the “democratization problem” as well as with the purpose of finding a more suitable way to build democratic participation. The remainder of my study focused on my exploration of networking as well as various network formations and the underlying premises such ventures are best based upon in order to better facilitate group participation in community development projects.

The process I went through, the findings of which are summarized above, shows that I tended to act on my problems before being very clear about the tacit theory on which I was basing my actions. Instead of doing a thorough fact-finding reconnaissance on alternative plans, I learnt through trial and error, which is perhaps a somewhat complicated way of searching for personal, professional change. I have subsequently learnt to appreciate the value of disengaging, of reflecting critically on my theory-in-use so as to engage anew, and of both connecting and disconnecting. The knowledge I gained from this experience helps me to create a space for a virtual other, to foster dialogue and to maintain a critical awareness of the unspoken assumptions that I often have to radically turn away from. I have thus managed to disturb my one-sidedness and my tendency to get entangled in the interpersonal dimension, trapped in justice and power.
balancing efforts.

Have I managed to describe my problem and convey how it informed my research? I had to rework the account of my research several times in preparation for its final presentation. My research constructions represented what I thought I had done and was aware of at the time. In reworking my text, I found that I tended to make use of generalized terms such as “we”, so I had to reconstruct the text to take cognisance of the role I had played in constructing my research reality. I tended, as well, to merge my observations and interpretations, and I had to rehearse the hermeneutic method of depicting individual constructions as accurately as possible. I was better at comparing and contrasting my research descriptions dialectically. Another tendency was to theorize rather than illustrate my case clearly. I used academic concepts instead of down to earth language. In addition, I am inclined to focus on and operate at more than one project level at a time, which confuses others, including my project participants and my doctoral promoter. I therefore had to make additional, and meticulously clear, project references in my text. In reworking my texts, I also had to be careful not to describe events with insights I gained only later, and I even had to disentangle and rewrite whole sections of my research.

All of this reflected my problems with expressing myself and my tendency to philosophize about life. Writing this research showed me that I not only had to regain my virtual other and develop my ability to dialogue, but I also had to learn new skills, such as how to write in a narrative style and how to select the most crucial information from an abundance of details. These tendencies in my research reflected my unique style, which I had to refine and alter as my research progressed. The final write-up of the research was therefore as demanding as, and formed part of, the self-transformation I had undertaken by embarking on an action research study.

My tape recordings of conversations, my personal journal, case study assignments, my students’ project reports and project documents were particularly useful. These all turned out to be invaluable sources for validating my description of the process. Engaging others in my networking projects, and creating opportunities for them to provide their inputs and evaluations, against which I could validate my own interpretations, also proved to be worthwhile. These opportunities formed part of my research process and included project meetings, feedback sessions and collaborative project evaluations.
From the above, it is evident that my research process was flawed and represents action research done in an individualistic and philosophical manner. My research should therefore not be taken as a model of how action research should be done, but perhaps others may take note of and learn from my efforts to refine my research descriptions.

What assisted me to demonstrate that I followed a system of disciplined enquiry in arriving at my hypotheses? I had a prolonged engagement with my research participants in a naturalistic research setting, which allowed me to build trust with many of them. I gathered various observations from both my project participants and from my own experiences, which enabled me to use multiple sources and methods to refine and examine my hypothesis retrospectively. The reactions of my students and of community members provided strong support for my claims to knowledge. I have presented their responses, and those of my doctoral peers and promoter, in my thesis in short descriptions, quotes or verbatim descriptions of our conversations. I have also presented detailed descriptions of my working hypotheses together with descriptions of the time and context in which they were founded, so as to enable other interested parties to reach their own conclusions about my findings. I have also appended some of my project documents for the reader to refer to, and I have kept recorded materials which can be provided on request.

What gains have I made through a networking approach to participatory community development? The two networks, and networking itself, provided a base from which community project participants and I could share our life-worlds, exchange ideas, take action across boundaries, open ourselves up to the multiple inputs offered by others, get connected and include each other. Networking freed me from my restrictive views on community development participation, and gave many of the participants and my students the confidence to challenge a project’s heavy reliance on particular stakeholders, views or problematic styles. It is this connectedness that gave us a kind of knowledge that is different from control-minded knowledge, embracing interactive knowledge beyond the instrumental 195.

My understanding of my practice
During the first year of my participation in the ADP and action learning, I realized that my

politically aligned approach to participation suggested that I was saying MY way was THE way. I embarked on a networking approach to community participation so as to create a dialogical context that would, I hoped, liberate me and my community project participants from a narrow view and problematic styles. It appeared to me that I had become aware of contradictory tacit theories-in-use in my practice and that I was doing something about it. This process involved a lot of frustration, and I did not find it easy to let go of some of my pet theories. I found it difficult, for example, to take an irreverent stance towards the community participatory model. Then, just as I thought I had found a solution in networking, when I was most impressed with the fluid, participatory problem solving of collaborative networking efforts, I found myself back at square one and getting entangled with participatory dynamics. I found it difficult to move outside of my usual frame of reference and my self-research entailed considerable trial and error on my part.

How, then, did I manage to eventually engage in critical reflection and to explore my tacit assumptions? The ability to explain my own educational development was greatly assisted by dialogue with my peers and doctoral promoter. Debate with them enabled me to open myself up to the tacit theories that I felt somewhat ashamed of. My self-awareness and development required the constructive relationship context that my doctoral peers and promoter offered. They provided me with a space for self-reflection that was removed from the challenging relationships that characterized my professional context. Dialogue with my doctoral promoter also helped me to remain focused on the relevant issues of my enquiry, and to form congruent, undistorted views of myself and my practice.

This research process thus underscores the value for would-be action researchers and supervisors to include a peer group and a research supervisor in their projects. My understanding that my research was primarily about dealing with and accounting for how I construct my research findings was greatly supported by the ADP's Philosophy of Science seminar. Such preparation may be essential for students who wish to embark on a constructivist approach to research, especially where an emancipatory action research study is contemplated.
Rademeyer’s Crux Model\textsuperscript{196} provided me with a useful model in terms of which I could identify the underlying premises on which I based my practice. The critical knowledge I derived from this gave me a platform from which to launch a creative shift. My new approach enabled me to facilitate creativity and free information flow from groups, focusing on the unique ideas and strengths participants offer, instead of trying to steer a process into a particular direction. The Crux Model was also useful in assisting me to create awareness and debate among some of my students and community groups concerning the assumptions they used, and on which they based their collective projects. My consistent awareness of this model also helped me develop an independent ability to navigate my own approach adjacent to alternative approaches to participatory community development practices.

I came to the understanding that merely embarking on a new approach, such as democratization or networking, did not necessarily bring about a creative shift in my problematic practice. In fact, what I was required to do was to deliberately reflect on the tacit theory underlying my practice. It also became evident that my community project participants required a similar process of deliberate debate and awareness-raising and that groups had to reflect on their collectively held premises in order for them to choose and be socially responsible about their community practice.

Thus, although a networking approach to participatory community development did bring about interactive knowledge, it did not represent deliberate attempts at self-reflection. If such self-awareness did occur in some of my network participants, this was part of deliberate awareness-raising and critical debate. Perhaps networking may be used to prepare a context for critical knowledge building in collaborative community projects, by engaging participants in deliberate dialogue about the rational grounds on which they base their collective actions.

Suggestions for improving participatory community development practices

Given the subjective nature of my study I am aware that my findings are unique and relate to a particular interactional context. This prevents me from either generalizing my findings or making firm claims regarding instrumental knowledge for others and society. However, the importance

\textsuperscript{196} Rademeyer (1999).
of useful social knowledge\textsuperscript{197} cannot be dismissed. It is vital to invite and enter into dialogue with others on issues that concern our understanding of how we construct the social world in order to create conditions for a good society.

The networking approach was validated by others who participated in my research projects. The reactions of some of them show that they share my discovery of the various uses of a networking way of doing things. I have already enumerated many of them, but it is worth repeating that we used networking to share experiences and problems, create dialogue across organizational boundaries, invite participation in projects, get to know each other, generate local knowledge, raise awareness on important matters, engage in inter-organizational networking and build a collective vision. We also found that networking requires some resources and the ability to manage complex relationships and to set priorities. Our experiences showed that community networks, structured variously, may be very important for the creation of connections between unequal participants in today's competitive world.

My community practicum became well known to community organizations because of the networking I engaged in, and these organizations requested my students' involvement in their projects. Many people on my campus nowadays network independently and invite me and others into their projects. The university environment has become more open to dialogue and its institutions are inclusive of all faculty members. This has shown me that people have the capacity to act independently and creatively. All they need to do is share their information and experiences with others, which inevitably contributes to shared visions and connectedness. All of these developments may, therefore, well have happened without me and my networking efforts. While this is true, the point is also that our dialogue has created new ideas and new beginnings. Each of us has made a contribution and is part of this process.

Thus to others who are interested in democratizing their research and training practices, I can recommend that networking and networks may perhaps encourage a more open and connected approach to participatory community development than working with groups of people in isolation.

\textsuperscript{197}Park, (1993, p 5).
My exploration of networking as an approach to participatory community development also encouraged debate between members of community organizations and associations, my students and me about the underlying assumptions that best support people’s freedom to engage in collaborative projects. From this debate, I have drawn the following “diathesis” or general guidelines for resolving certain types of problems, which developed from sharing my ideas with my research collaborators, and which I offer to and hope to share with the reader. I found these “ways of managing things” useful in my effort to find a creative approach to participatory community development, particularly one that diverges from consensus democracy and the concomitant political issues of interpersonal power and equality:

A creative change in collaborative undertakings may require a radical shift in each individual’s uniquely held premises, as well as in collectively held premises.

The democratization of participation in collaborative community development may be assisted by a shift from power and control to information flow and creativity.

Collective action may be better grounded on fluid networking, assuming free, direct and autonomous connecting, rather than on control through bureaucratic formations, conventions and consensus.

It may be better for leadership and facilitation of group participation to focus on information flow and creativity, instead of on trying to steer people into a specific direction.

Critical knowledge building of the premises on which collaborative ventures are based may offer community project members alternative ways of dealing with the problems of conflict, cheating behaviours and inequality in the commons; for example, that hierarchical, communicentric and fluid polymorphic networking approaches may vary in terms of how groups create a balance between their social responsibility and individual rights.

Conflicting approaches will continue to coexist, thus some participants will continue to value control and power in group affairs, and problems concerning power differentials will always feature in the field of participatory community development.

The assumption of independence (self-identity, difference, creativity) and individual choice may provide a more balanced way of managing the interpersonal issues of political control and equity in community development affairs.

In this text I have related my findings to those of others reported in both published and unpublished materials. I summarise below the ideas I found particularly powerful in relation to my quest for emancipatory knowledge and change, both on a personal and social level:

198 The use of the concept “diathesis” is put forward by Rademeyer, to signify a disposition, a way of managing things (see Rademeyer as cited in chapter 3).
Taking an irreverent stance, never to become a true believer in regard to any consensual belief or theory.

The idea of circular questioning developed by Boscolo and Cecchin, taking a stance of hypothesizing, or probing, hoping to discern and enunciate those myths or premises that seemingly hold in place the behaviours attached to a problem. A shift in collectively held premises, called second order change, may facilitate behaviour change.

Rademeyer's Crux Model, identifying and enacting a complementary position or dimension, enabling the practitioner to move outside his or her usual frame of reference.

The idea of "corporation as Rolodex", creating an organizational network in a flash by gathering the best talent to exploit an opportunity, dissolving the "organization" on completion of a project, constantly reforming according to need.

Building both weak and strong network ties.

Thinking of each individual, project, network association and organization as a star network, with its strength built on the assumption of independence, affording freedom to disconnect and interconnect swiftly for unimpeded networking.

Reflecting on the suggestions I have offered here, I cannot but conclude that my professional problem remains a very real problem, shared by many others in a great variety of contexts. This problem concerns shifting power relationships and democratizing participation in community development affairs, with which many other community development workers struggle. Practitioners in this field who, like me, have the tendency to base their participatory approach on the political and moral dimension and to take an ideological position, may find it useful to shift, sometimes, to a constructivist approach. A shift to the more formal dimension of the

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199 Cecchin, Lane & Ray (1992, p.9).


201 Rademeyer (1999).


203 Harrison & Weiss (1998)

204 Kleinrock (1964)

205 White (1973, p. 48).


aesthetic and the epistemic\textsuperscript{208}, cherishing one's own and other people's information (difference and identity) and creativity, may offer an alternative and perhaps also more resourceful and socially responsible way of dealing with the problem of inequality in community affairs. To this I can attest on the basis of personal experience.

\textsuperscript{208} Rademeyer (1999).


Association by psychology honours students. Unpublished manuscript, Medical University of Southern Africa, Pretoria.


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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

by

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

This project was formulated with the vision of active participation by the Faculty of Basic Sciences at Medunsa (with subject courses Physics, Biology, Mathematics, Statistics, Chemistry, Bio-chemistry, Psychology and English Communication) in multidisciplinary training and research projects with a community development and environmental management focus; contributing to problem solving and development activities by scientists together with community members; and creating networks of expertise at local, national and international levels.

It adheres to the University's mission to engage itself in community development activities.

The focus of community development and environmental management was chosen because it provides a broad and much needed scope for the contribution of sciences to a holistic approach to development concerns at all levels of community, society and the world. It is a focus that fosters multidisciplinary collaboration and one that shows potential to bring together multiple role players from many fields, such as those from social, health, economic, agricultural/veterinary, technological/engineering and natural sciences.

The project falls within the ambit of the Institutional Programme of the University Development Programme (Foundation of Research Development), which aims to develop the institutional capacity of historically "black" universities through the development of networks of expertise.

2. **PROJECT AIMS**

**Aim 1:**

- to stimulate community environmental management/development training/research projects by the Faculty of Basic Sciences (Medunsa) through networks of expertise and interest groups at local community level (e.g. inter and intra faculty, with non-governmental organizations, community associations and local government

**Aim 2:**

- to create networking at the following levels

**Aim 2.1:**

- national level - by universities, institutions, centres, NGO's, provincial government agencies, etc. within South Africa

**Aim 2.2:**

- international level - by institutions within South Africa with institutions internationally

3. **ACTIVITIES AND METHOD**

3.1 **Objectives for 21 November to 21 December 1993**

Project objectives set for the time period of 21 November 1993 to 21 December 1993 were achieved through the following methodology and activities:

3.1.1 **Specialized Inputs**

During the whole time period inputs were received from a visiting specialist with relevant community development and environmental management experience, namely

Dr Paithoon Bhothisawang, Training Specialist from the Training Division, Community Development Department, Ministry of Interior, Bangkok, Thailand

through workshop presentations, exchange of ideas and a study tour.

3.1.2 **Workshops**

Five workshops were held, during which time
Dr Bhothisawang presented "The Community Development Approach in Thailand: The Promotion of Participatory Democracy and Environmental Management", and participants exchanged information and experiences with regard to the topic of concern.

These workshops took place at the following institutions:

Centre for Science Development, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria (Conference: Global Change and Social Transformation), 23 November 1993

University Development Programme, Foundation of Research Development, 24 November 1993

Faculty of Basic Sciences, Medunsa (Workshop: The role of Sciences in Community Development and Environmental Management), 26 November 1993

University of Venda, 29 November 1993

Urban Foundation (Western Cape Region) and Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (University of the Western Cape), 15 December 1993

Participants included social and natural scientists from government and from universities, and members from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community organizations (COs).

3.1.3 Multidisciplinary and Community Participatory Project Development (Faculty of Basic Sciences, Medunsa)

On 26 November 1993, a visit to the Winterveldt Community in Bophuthatswana exposed approximately 40 Medunsa participants (who had not visited the area before) and the visitor to existing community projects and conditions in the area. This on-site visit was facilitated and guided by health workers from a community-based, nongovernmental clinic and youth from Winterveldt structures, providing first-hand and meaningful information.

Following on this visit, a workshop at Medunsa, with the theme "The role of Sciences in Community Development and Environmental Management", focused on the capacity of people/departments/associations to address community development and environmental management research/training projects, the identification of community development/environmental problems and problem solving strategies.

The workshop brought together 78 representatives from:

- community project participants already linked to Medunsa (i.e., 24 representatives from Winterveldt, Mabopane, Maboluka and Rietgat)
- all Departments of the Faculty of Basic Sciences (27)
- the Department of Medical Physics (2)
- the Teachers Assistance Programme (1)
- the Basic Science Students Society (1)
- the Appropriate Technology Unit (1)
- the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences (Community Outreach and Animal Production Unit) (2)
- Department of Community Dentistry (6)
- Bureau for Student Development (2)
Community Health Department (1)
Department of Clinical Psychology (10)
Academic Staff Development (1)

3.1.4 Study Tour

A study tour on community development and environmental management educational/research/project activities by universities and NGOs in Venda, Natal and the Cape was undertaken by the project leader (Ms A Pistorius) and Dr Bhothisawang from 28 November to 19 December 1993.

Through discussion and field-visits, practical information and perspectives were gathered on:

- areas of specialization
- approaches and methodologies
- new developments and initiatives
- educational materials and courses offered
- networking opportunities
- perceptions with regard to networking
- success relaters
- pitfalls and frustrations

The following universities, projects and NGOs were visited:

University of Venda, 29 Nov 1993
- Science Faculty
- Fish Farm

University of Zululand, Natal, 1-3 Dec 1993
- Science Development Programme
- Dept of Agriculture (Port Durnford Community Project)
- The Centre for Low Input Agricultural Research and Development

University of Natal, 3 & 6 Dec 1993
- The Ndundulu Rural Service Centre, Biyela Integrated Rural Development Project, Ndundulu
- Institute of Natural Resources, Pietermaritzburg
- Nansindlela Research, Demonstration and Training Farm, Inchanga

The Umgeni Valley Project, Howick (Natal), 7 Dec 1993

The Valley Trust, Bothas Hill (Natal), 8 Dec 1993

University of the Western Cape, 13 to 14 Dec 1993
- Science Faculty, Dept of Botany, Environmental Processes Project
- Environmental Education Resource and Information Centre
- Centre for Adult and Continuing Education

The Urban Foundation, Western Cape Region, 15 Dec 1993

Earth Africa, Cape Town, 17 Dec 1993

Foundation for Contemporary Research, Cape Town, 17 Dec 1993

Last-minute cancellations of appointment were made by the following projects/universities:
3.2 Early 1994 Objectives

3.2.1 Medunsa Feedback Workshop, 20 January 1994

A feedback workshop, starting a process of project planning and action by Medunsa and community participants at the beginning of the academic year, was held on 20 January 1994.

The workshop was attended by 87 people, representing the same departments and communities as the previous workshop, as well as additional communities.

During the workshop the following goals were achieved:

- A slide show and reports were provided on the visit to Winterveldt, the previous workshop and the study tour
- Participants grouped and prioritized development concerns for project planning
- Project proposal and fund raising criteria were outlined
- A representative working committee was elected to facilitate ongoing project development

3.2.2 Feedback Report

A detailed feedback report is being made available to Medunsa project participants in order to disseminate information and encourage discussion, inputs, project planning and networking. Due to the interest expressed in the report, this will also be made available to all participants visited during the study tour. The report needs to be properly edited and photographs have to be scanned for inclusion in the document.

A process of ongoing discussion, workshops and meetings is needed in order to plan a way forward.

4. DISCUSSION ON STUDY TOUR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROJECTS IN VENDA, NATAL AND CAPE TOWN

The following questions, related to the aims of the project, were kept in mind during open interviews and field visits done during the study tour:

- How the sciences can contribute to community development and environmental management programmes re. research, training or projects
- How to network amongst different institutions within South Africa
- How to network amongst different institutions internationally, South Africa and Thailand, etc.

The aim of this discussion is to highlight general impressions, common experiences and distinct contributions pertaining to these questions. For more detailed information on each of the projects visited, please refer to the
4.1 How Sciences can Contribute to Community Development and Environmental Management Programmes

Science can contribute to Community Development in many ways with regard to activities such as:

- occupation building
- natural resource and environmental management
- health
- political, social and people's organizations.

(a) Specialization Areas

During the study tour, a vast number of specialization fields applied to community development were noted. Although not absolute, the following list can serve to facilitate quick reference to projects and specialization areas:

Science Development Programmes for Teachers and School Pupils
Science Development Programme, University of Zululand

Environmental Education Programmes for Teachers, School Pupils and Environmental Development Workers
Umgeni Valley Project, Howick
Environmental Education Resources Centre, University of the Western Cape

Ethnobotany
Science Faculty, Dept of Botany, University of the Western Cape
Institute of Natural Resources, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal:
- The Ndundulu Rural Service Centre, Biyela Integrated Rural Development Project, Ndundulu
- Nansindlela Research, Demonstration and Training Farm, Inchanga

Multidisciplinary/Cross-sectional Project Initiatives
University of Venda
Port Durnford Community Project, University of Zululand
Environmental Processes Project, University of the Western Cape

Ecoculture, Bioculture
Fish Farm, Science Faculty, University of Venda

Integrated Agriculture, Agro-forestry, Low-input Developmental and Natural Resources Rural Development Projects
Department of Agriculture, University of Zululand
Centre for Low Input Agricultural Research and Development, University of Zululand
Institute of Natural Resources, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal:
- The Ndundulu Rural Service Centre, Biyela Integrated Rural Development Project, Ndundulu;
- Nansindlela Research, Demonstration and Training Farm, Inchanga
Valley Trust, Bothas Hill, Natal

Appropriate Technology (re water, sanitation, energy production)
Science Development Programme, University of Zululand
Project Water (Umgeni Valley Project, Howick)
Bio-gas & Ecoculture, Fish Farm, Science Faculty, University of Venda
Institute of Natural Resources, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal:
- Nansindlela Research, Demonstration and Training Farm, Inchanga (odourless toilets, water collection systems)
Valley Trust, Bothas Hill, Natal
Primary Health Care, Community Education and Agricultural Development Projects
The Valley Trust, Bothas Hill (Natal)

Community Development Training for Community Organizations
Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape

Training in Local Government for Rural and Urban Community Organizations
Foundation for Contemporary Research, Cape Town

Urban Development Service Based Foundations
The Urban Foundation, Western Cape Region

Community Economics
Earth Africa, Cape Town

(b) A Living Science in Society

Community Development can be viewed as a process that comes about when people (community members, including scientists) gain access to, apply and channel their skills and resources through coordinated collaboration, linking and networking in order to solve problems of the environment and to uplift the quality of life.

Science cannot position itself in isolation from society. "We need a development and a people's development focus to start with. However, development must be sustainable and this is where science plays a very important role, e.g. forms of land use (agro-forestry) that are more sustainable" (Prof Erskine).

Science, therefore, has to be a living science that avails itself to the solution of real life problems (Dr Norman Reynolds, Earth Africa). "We cannot survive on classical subjects" (Prof Szubarga, Faculty of Sciences, University of Venda). For example, the potential of bio-chemistry when focusing on health and the prevention of water-borne diseases is to develop and make accessible affordable water testing kits, together with information on action steps, enabling communities to identify and solve such problems (Project WATER, Umgeni Valley Project). Science development programmes also provide proactive ways of educating our people, from a young age and onwards, on the wonders that science in nature can offer society. For example, a physics interactive laboratory has the potential to let participants discover and understand the application of solar power for energy production (Science Development Programme, University of Zululand).

(c) Science Education for a Progressive Society

Of great importance to the capacity of countries to progress through scientific achievements, is the stimulation and upliftment of science teacher education. We can remind ourselves of the United States of America who upgraded their school science curricula immediately after the Russian Sputnik successfully orbited the moon in 1957. Creative and well-organized training symposia, courses and new modular type degrees for teachers are being developed and offered by institutions and programmes like the following: Science Development Programme and Empangeni Centre for the Advancement of Science and Mathematics Education (sponsored by Shell), University of Zululand; Science Faculty, University of Venda; and Science and inter-faculty ventures by the University of the Western Cape.

(d) Integrated Science

Life's problems do not present themselves in an isolated manner. Problems with the physical environment are interconnected with the social, political and economic environments people live in. Therefore, an integrated approach to the environment is needed. For example, The Valley Trust combined their efforts to treat and prevent malnutrition with agricultural projects, such as the growing of viable crops and nutritious food production, and developed an integrated approach that includes water committees that look after the quality and supply of water, literacy training, the promotion of entrepreneurs and the use of appropriate technology such as odourless toilets and water collection tanks. Projects developed from the perspective of land use, agroforestry and agriculture also include in their approach inputs from other disciplines (e.g. projects by the Institute of Natural Resources (INR) and Centre for Low Input Agricultural Rural Development (CLIARD)). Such an approach is of great importance for locality development.
within a given geographical area, and different development specialist organizations can be linked with in order to gain access to various resources, such as community economists (e.g. Earth Africa), urban developers (e.g. the Urban Foundation) and developers of land works, infrastructure and job creation (e.g. the Independent Trust).

Cross-sectional, multidisciplinary and holistic collaborative ventures represent a new development that is gaining increasing popularity at universities, in their aim to engage themselves in the development of their surrounding communities (e.g. University of Venda, University of Zululand and University of the Western Cape).

(e) Problem-focused Research

Problem focused research has a definite role to play in community development and environmental management. Research approaches by all organizations/institutions visited included a whole spectrum of research methodologies, namely:

- basic, laboratory-type research
- applied research
- surveys
- action and participatory research.

For example, the Faculty of Science, University of Venda, has for the past nine years done laboratory-type research projects applicable to the field by taking into account those variables that play a role within a specific context (e.g. devising control tables for feeding in the field, or for testing of ammonia levels in water).

Applied research that provides models for evaluation of project activities is also of great importance. For example, a statistical programme based on an economic systems analysis/market analysis of input-output could prove invaluable for the development of successful entrepreneurs (Prof Szubarga, Science Faculty, University of Venda). Also, pre and post-evaluation of, for example, the effectiveness of educational inputs such as a slide show can provide feedback for the shaping of interventions (e.g. see teacher training by Botany Department, University of the Western Cape).

The use of surveys on matters such as land use and socio-demographic data prove to be very important in integrated planning of service needs and interventions, directed at specific geographic areas or pertaining to specific target groups (see for example, Institute of Natural Resources (INR) projects).

Creative approaches such as doing action or participatory research together with the community and in the community prove invaluable for problem solving and learning through doing (e.g. refer to CLIARD; the Umgeni Valley Project; Ethnobotany Project, Department of Botany, University of the Western Cape).

(f) User-friendly Information

The process of providing useful research results goes along with the dissemination (or feedback) of its information. Various creative methods are being used, appropriate to specific specialities and audiences or target groups, such as:

- Demonstration units and demonstration models on appropriate technology, agriculture, conservation and land use, at centres, in communities and done by community members (e.g. CLIARD, INR projects, Valley Trust)

- Newsletters, documentation and publication of local research on community development organizations and local government, made available at centres and to members of community organizations (e.g. CACE, University of the Western Cape; Foundation of Contemporary Research, Cape Town)

- Information pamphlets, hands-on action series and packages with workbooks and slides on environmental management for environmental workers, teachers, pupils and youth groups (e.g. the Umgeni Valley Project, Howick; Share-Net; the Environmental Education and Resources Centre, University of the Western Cape)
Games on environmental problems and solutions for literacy training groups and environmental officers doing group work with up to 80 people at a time (The Umgeni Valley Project, Howick)

Project WATER's action kits for water testing and the prevention of water-borne diseases, disseminating research results in such a manner that the user is taken through steps of action and community problem-solving research (refer to the Umgeni Valley Project, Howick)

Interactive physics laboratories and interactive computer science games for experimentation with and demonstration of principles of science for school pupils at science laboratories (Science Development Programme, University of Zululand)

Training for All

Training is an essential way through which skills and confidence are built and can be made accessible to people from different educational levels, through

- in-service training (project based)
- certificate courses
- diploma courses
- degree and post-degree courses

For example, projects by organizations such as the Institute of Natural Resource, the Valley Trust and Earth Africa, provide and arrange for on-the-job training of community members, who then can earn a percentage from profits gained or a salary from project funds.

Certificates for training workshops and courses attended, even though not officially recognized, could add substance to people's Curriculum Vitae, especially if they are provided by organizations with high social regard and credibility (e.g. CACE, UWC; FCR, Cape Town; and Umgeni Valley Project).

A modular training system that draws from existing human and physical resources presents a new challenge for universities. Such a system is particularly relevant to the design of curricula that apply to multidisciplinary fields, such as environmental sciences. Clusters of modules can provide a flexible design of usable degrees with a greater occupational scope than a general science degree, without taking over the role of technikons which do training for specific careers (refer to Department of Botany and Environmental Education and Resources Centre, University of the Western Cape; and University of Venda).

Training methods and workshops that are non-authoritarian and that include experiential and interactive learning are highly regarded for achieving knowledge transformation into applied action. Such methods also suit the democratic values underlying the field of community development and participatory environmental management (for example, see Umgeni Valley Project, Howick; CACE, UWC; FCR, Cape Town; Earth Africa, Cape Town).

People's Projects

The construction of community projects can take on a variety of forms:

- it can be multi-purpose and integrated, or be focused on a particular specialized input;
- it can operate from an organization or institution, or be managed from centres within the community, and
- it can target a specific geographical area, or a specific group of people.

All community projects, however, do make use of committee structures, discussion forums, linking and networking in some form or the other. The use of such an interactional structure is typically aimed at collaborative participation, collective action, multiple and creative inputs and democratic decision making. Invariably, frustrations could result from structures and methods whose livelihood depends on interaction.

The following represents interactional constraints typically experienced:
"meetings, bloody meetings"
good idea, but who is going to take action
one person, too many jobs
interpersonal, interdisciplinary, "inter-cultural" and many inter-tensions
power struggles
voting for friends and "family"
qualified versus unqualified attitudes
highjacking democracy
dilemmas of equality and democracy
fixed ideas
top-down approaches

The importance of, and need for, training workshops on community development, its concepts and values, participatory management techniques and group work were highlighted by most organizations and institutions visited. Examples of organizations that provide such specialized training include: the Centre for Adult Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape; Foundation of Contemporary Research, Cape Town; and the Community Development Department, Thailand.

(i) Success Relaters

Last, but not least, the following experiences/reflections pertaining to success relaters to community development and environmental management projects are to be highlighted:

We need to take into account the transitional context of communities and community members' perception of development (Mike Underwood, CLIARD)

  e.g. low input and integrated rural development planning needs to include the use of appropriate and high technology
  e.g. people living in rural areas often are interested in farming only to the extent that it will sustain their families and provide sufficient income to provide family members the means to look for employment in the city

People will conserve their environment if they can benefit from it, e.g. financially (Prof Erskine, Institute of Natural Resources)

People will stay interested in a project and participate in it as long as it provides answers to problems (Dr Norman Reynolds, Earth Africa)

Link with local industry! (Derek Fish, The Science Development Programme, University of Zululand)

Processes that are simple (Dr Bisschop, CLIARD), that move fast, that build people's capacity and that are responsive to quests for input (Dr Norman Reynolds, Earth Africa)

Responsive and efficient governmental procedures, e.g. with regard to applications for land and loans, could make a real difference to the economic viability of ecologically viable projects (Prof Gaicher, University of Venda)

Properly organized collaboration between the university, NGOs, the community and government shows the potential for the development of relevant policy and planning for a whole area/region (Workshops, Medunsa and University of Venda; Prof Lubout, University of Zululand)

A well-organized community whose members know and respect each other, appreciate their past experiences and work together on a shared future (Thulani Ndelu, Valley Trust)

Documentation of what is being done at local level (Jo Samuels and David Kapp, Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape)
Keep data basis and records (Institute of Natural Resources)

Train trainers (Hanief Tiseker, Foundation of Contemporary Research, Cape Town)

Utilize existing resource and network for the development and sharing of differentiated inputs (Charmain Klein, Environmental Education Resources Centre, UWC)

A change in attitude - instead of waiting for things to happen at a national level we should do things locally (Fuad Fredericks, Environmental Education Resources Centre, UWC)

Use creative approaches, introduce a new idea through using traditional concepts (CLIARD; Earth Africa)

Listen to "what is the problem" and find solutions that are ecologically sound as well as economically beneficial (Dr Norman Reynolds, Earth Africa)

Creative action networks (Tim Wright, Umgeni Valley Trust)

The development of economically viable living areas (Gavin Pote, Ndundulu Service Centre, INR)

Enabling committees to do short-term and long-term planning (Ray Dandala, Ndundulu Service Centre, INR).

4.2 How to Network amongst Different Institutions within South Africa

A number of ideas with regard to networking amongst institutions within South Africa emanated from discussions held with project participants during the study tour. These include the following:

University institutions have the potential to play an important role in community development and environmental management. COs, NGOs, special interest groups, government and service organizations (such as the IDT, the Development Bank of South Africa and the Urban Foundation) should be able to draw on the resources universities can provide. The actualization of such a process could be affected through networking.

Well organized and coordinated networking amongst institutions and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, is indispensable for successful project development, interventions and supportive policy making.

Community project networking could involve a cyclic process within and amongst local, regional and national levels. The benefits of such networking include:

- multilateral exchange of information and/or resources
- capacity building
- development of differentiated inputs/resources
- coordinated planning
- organized action

Networking could be aimed at "grassroots" community participation and organized at local level, extending itself to regional and national levels, and back, no matter from which level the process was initiated initially (see for example, CDD in Thailand). The constitution of such networking forums could involve a committee system with elected representation from all levels involved, so that information flows between and through representatives, to and from the respective levels.

Networks could also be interest based, in which case people from institutions, societies, associations or organizations active in that field would participate through working/study groups, computer networking programmes and forums. Apart from providing different specialized inputs, participants could collect inputs from, or do research on, different geographical areas so that national data-bases are built up. A step further is that the results of work done and suggestions would be fed back to community networks for discussion, input and lobbying for implementation.
4.3 How to Network amongst Different Institutions Internationally, e.g. South Africa and Thailand

The following questions need consideration in order to motivate and propose for international collaborative ventures:

What benefit
What subject matter
How to network
What funding arrangements
Factors of support/obstacles

Ideas already posed by participants include the following:

International linking and networking could involve two or more countries jointly addressing international and mutual concerns (e.g. development concerns). For example, the "Community Approach to Natural Resources Management Project" in Thailand is a collaborative venture between the Training Division of the Community Development Department, Ministry of Interior; the Royal Forest Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives; the Department of Community Development, Faculty of Social Administration, Tammasat University; and a committee of community development experts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States.

Benefits of international linking could include the exchange of skills and knowledge on community development, natural resources and environmental management research and training projects.

Experts could be exchanged in specialist fields.

Approaches could be compared and developed through publications, study tours and conferences.
For example, South Africa could provide input on appropriate technology to Thailand; Thailand could provide input or training on the Community Development approach to South Africa; and exchanges could also focus on such projects as the promotion of community occupation and small business industry, e.g. agricultural production.

Factors of support for international networking could include such matters as: membership with international communities or bodies; membership with developing countries; government participation in the project; and new government policies.

A suggestion was made that one networking proposal could be developed by South African participants collectively.

4.4 Conclusion

Science Faculties at Universities can play an important role in a community development approach to occupation building, natural resources and environmental management, community health and people's organization. Well organized and coordinated networking by role players from various fields within University institutions, community organizations, special interest groups, service organizations and government, is invaluable for integrated problem solving, planning and policy development at local, regional and national levels.

International networking is indispensable for addressing world concerns and can assist the South African community in its drive for capacity building and development.

A networking proposal could be developed jointly through networking actions amongst South African participants.
APPENDIX B
HBU WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
HBU CORE NETWORK WORKSHOP

DATE: 23th-25th September 1994
VENUE: Boulevard Hotel, 186 Struben Street, Pretoria

PROJECT LEADER: A G PISTORIUS
Department of Psychology
Box 182
Medunsa 0204

DATE OF REPORT: 20 October 1994
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1. Introduction
   1.1 Workshop Invitation
       ... motivation, aims, objectives, work method
   1.2 Workshop Programme
   1.3 Workshop Sponsorship
   1.4 Guest Speakers, Guests, Workshop Organising Committee, Organisers, Facilitators and Participants

2. Summary Workshop Proceedings

3. Process Evaluation

   4.1 Provisional Proposal: HBU Core Network (HBUNET)

5. Recommendations
1. INTRODUCTION

The year 1994 signified, to most South Africans, the opportunity to embark on a democratic and people driven process of affirmative change whilst strengthening the continuation of and development of worthy resources.

The workshop on Community Development and Environmental Management HBU Core Network was held on 23th-25th September 1994 in Pretoria. It represented one of the many attempts by Historically Black Universities (HBUs) to embark on constructive development, such as their participation in the UDP (FRD) Science Forum, the Vice-chancellor's Forum of Historically Disadvantaged Universities and the strategic planning forum of five HBUs. This workshop was the first of its kind to have brought together participants from a cross-sectional spectrum, namely policy-makers, staff and students from multidisciplinary faculties and bodies as well as librarians, computer scientists and some staff unions.

Proceedings of this workshop highlighted that a core network amongst HBUs is not only feasible but also essential for the development of policy and human resources, to share information, resources and skills and to lobby for funds and networking facilities. The historical disposition of HBUs binds them together to take action through networking. Such networking will also benefit human resource development needs of the public, private and government sectors of society. Of importance is also regional networking with other training institutions.

This workshop should not be viewed as providing the answer to a problem, but rather that collaborative discussion enables people to develop a vision that guides corresponding activities.

1.1 WORKSHOP INVITATION (MOTIVATION, AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND WORK METHOD)

The following invitation was sent to the management structure of all HBUs in July 1994.

Historically Black Universities (HBUs) need to play a greater role in South Africa's new dispensation. The Medunsa Staff and Student Community proposes a core network amongst HBUs in order to pool resources. You are invited to a workshop with the aim to develop a Core Network amongst "Historically Black Universities" (HBUs), also sometimes called "Historically Disadvantaged Universities"

You are kindly requested to co-ordinate (or to appoint a suitable person to co-ordinate), the selection of delegates from your university. We suggest 6 - 8 delegates comprising active and interested staff and students from the various sciences, librarians, computer service managers, deans of faculties and student representative councils. Please indicate your response to this invitation on or before 8 August 1994 on the registration form provided (for your convenience we include 8 sets of this document for distribution to selected delegates). We also append for your information the provisional workshop programme.

**DATE:** 23rd - 25th September 1994  
**VENUE:** Hotel Boulevard, 186 Struben Street, Pretoria

**WORKSHOP AIM:** to launch a Core Network amongst "Historically Black Universities" (HBUs), also sometimes called "Historically Disadvantaged Universities". The workshop will focus on how HBUs, with their multi-disciplinary research/training projects, can impact community development and environmental management through networking at local, national and international levels.

**WORKSHOP MOTIVATION:** HBUs have to be vigilant in order to benefit from and play a role in South Africa's present dispensation. A community development approach to environmental management is rapidly gaining popularity within the science community, both nationally and internationally. We realise that people's participation is paramount for empowerment, democratic decision-making, integrated planning and implementation of a better quality of life. Also, closer co-operation between different sciences is long overdue, for dealing competently with the transaction between humans and the natural environment.
The advancement of HBUs will be co-determined by their ability to address the development and reconstruction of South Africa's majority of socially deprived (rural and urban) communities. This challenge requires research/training and development of infrastructure/facilities capable of integrated and multidisciplinary science inputs. An HBU core network holds potential for the development of and access to a differentiated resource/knowledge base and empowering for impacting community development and environmental management. Such a core network could benefit local project development and its participants (e.g. community-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local government). HBUs could collaboratively achieve close co-operation with service organisations, NGOs and government, in co-ordinated planning at national level. Alternatively, information on HBU resources (networking facilities, e.g. Uninet) could encourage their utilisation. The drawing together of resources could also further international exchanges in development concerns.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES: a feasible, multidisciplinary, HBU core network, focused on community development and environmental management; collaborative commitment to data bank generation of HBU resources; a network structure to facilitate HBU exchanges; and a draft policy on mechanisms and objectives for national and international networking.

WORKSHOP METHOD: six to eight delegates will be drawn from active and interested HBU staff and students at ten institutions. These delegates will represent various sciences, computer data bank managers, librarians and policy makers. The workshop will be problem-posing, with competent presentations, facilitative of participatory inputs. Please refer to the provisional programme to review the questions to be posed. Displays of HBU activities through the use of posters and/or pamphlets. Workshop proceedings will be documented for further discussion.
### 1.2 WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

#### Friday, 23 September 18:00 - 21:00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18:00 - 18:45</td>
<td>Registration and refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:00 - 19:10</td>
<td>Opening and welcome - Elaine Sacco (SAUSRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:15 - 20:00</td>
<td>Defining the scenario:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Keynote address: Historical background to HBUs and challenges for survival and development - Prof C Bundy (UWC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:05 - 20:30</td>
<td>Defining the scenario:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The concept networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Workshop aims and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Work method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:30 - 21:00</td>
<td>Exposition of Projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Saturday, 24 September 08:30 - 19:30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30 - 10:00</td>
<td>How will HBUs impact, and enact a vigilant role in community development and environmental management?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 10:25</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 - 12:00</td>
<td>What is Uninet, its status quo, and what can it offer in networking? - Mr V Shaw (Information Technology Consultant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 13:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30 - 15:00</td>
<td>How feasible is a core network amongst HBUs (technological and human resource levels)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00 - 15:15</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:15 - 17:00</td>
<td>Towards a policy on mechanisms for, and objectives of exchange (national and international) - Dr N Magau (HRD and Capacity Building, Mr J Naidoo's office of the RDP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00 - 18:00</td>
<td>Cocktails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:00 - 19:30</td>
<td>Drama production on health and the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devil's Den - The Bakhaki Theatre Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Sunday, 25 September 08:30 - 12:00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30 - 10:00</td>
<td>Structuring of a Core network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 10:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 - 12:00</td>
<td>Way forward and Closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3 WORKSHOP SPONSORSHIP

University Development Programme (UDP) of Foundation for Research Development (FRD)  R 11 022
Faculty of Basic Sciences (Medunsa)  R 5 000
Faculty of Dentistry (Medunsa)  R 2 500
Faculty of Veterinary Sciences (Medunsa)  R 3 000
Faculty of Medicine (Medunsa)  R 5 000
Principal's Fund (Medunsa)  R 3 000
Anglo American & De Beers Chairman's Fund (Educational Trust)  R 5 000

TOTAL FUNDS RAISED  R 34 522

1.4 GUEST SPEAKERS, GUESTS, WORKSHOP FACILITATORS, WORKSHOP ORGANISERS, WORKSHOP ORGANISING COMMITTEE AND WORKSHOP DELEGATES

1.4.1 GUEST SPEAKERS

Prof C J Bundy (University of the Western Cape)
Elaine Sacco (South African University SRCs)
Mr V A Shaw (Information Technology Specialist)
Dr N Magau (Human Resources Development and Capacity Building, Mr Naidoo's office of the RDP)

1.4.2 GUESTS

Ms Tselane Morolo (Coordinator: University Development Programme (UDP) of the Foundation for Research Development (FRD))

1.4.3 WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

Mr Leon Jiyana (Basic Sciences Student Council, SRC, Medunsa)
Ms Annalie Pistorius (Psychology, Medunsa)
Mr Clint Raseale (Computer-Based Education Centre, Medunsa)
Dr Orlando Rojas Silva (Community Dentistry, Medunsa)
Dr Mabel Radebe (Psychology, Medunsa)
Mr V M Melane (Personnel Dept, University of Transkei)

1.4.4 WORKSHOP ORGANISERS

Dr Cheryl McCrindle (Veterinary Sciences, Medunsa)
Ms Jolande Pieterse (Dentistry, Medunsa)
Mr O le Roux (PRO, Medunsa)
Mr Samuel Bakhane (Basic Sciences Student Society, SRC, Medunsa)
1.4.5 WORKSHOP ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Contact Address: The Workshop Organising Committee
Community Development and Environmental Management
HBU Core Network, Box 197, MEDUNSA 0204. FAX (012) 5600086

Ms A Pistorius (Psychology, Faculty of Basic Sciences)
Mr C W Berndt (Registrar: Academic)
Prof D J Kocks (Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine)
Dr A Beke (Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine)
Mr K C Dakile (SRC)
Mr L H Letlape (SRC)
Mr S S Bakhane (Basic Sciences Student Society, SRC)
Mr L Jiyana (Basic Sciences Student Council, SRC)
Dr O Rojas-Silva (Community Dentistry, Faculty of Dentistry)
Ms J Pieterse (Stomatological Studies, Faculty of Dentistry)
Prof J V Groenewald (Dean: Faculty of Basic Sciences)
Dr C McCrindle (Production Animal Hospital, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences)
Prof C G Stewart (CSOV, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences)
Dr M D Radebe (Psychology, Faculty of Basic Sciences)
Ms E Shipham (Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Medicine)
Ms E van Heerden (Biology, Faculty of Basic Sciences)
Mr I le Roux (Public Relations Department)
Mr C Raseale (Computer-Based Education Centre)

1.4.6 WORKSHOP DELEGATES

A. UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

Prof A Brimer (Acting Registrar: Academic)
Prof M G G Laidlaw (Computer Science Department)

B. UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

Ms Vannessa Kruger (Sociology)
Mr Mkhalelewazibuko (Development Studies)
Francois Lategan (Agricultural Extension and Rural Development)

C. UNIVERSITY OF THE NORTH

Mr M J Matimela (Nehawu)
Mr K J Maphatane (Nehawu)

D. UNIVERSITY OF TRANSKEI

Ms Jayneetha Kallicharan (Student Representative)
Mr Mxceli Gareth Nkhuulu (Personnel Dept, Nehawu)
Mr V M Melane (Personnel)
Mr A Z Mrara (Geography)
Prof C M Demanet (Physics)
Mr Z Gxabe (Adult Education)
Prof M Mahabir (Business Economics)
Prof Digby Sqhelo Koyana (Criminal & Procedural Law)
Prof W Sasha (Community Medicine)
E. UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

Mr Dumisani Thabede (Social Work)
Mr Ndivhadzo Joel Vele (Computer Services)
Mrs A Joyce Gozo (Library)
Ms Playi Khusi (Nursing Science)
Mr Livhuwani Lyborn Mushasha (SRC, Faculty of Science)
Mr Victor Mmbencwa (Agriculture)
Prof Pablo Weisser (Botany, Faculty of Science)
Prof Ian G Gaigher (Zoology)
Mr Mafanedla Fred Ratshisevhe (PR & Development)
Ms Mmathari Jacobeth Mashao (Legal Theory & Street Law)
Dr Dovhani Reckson Thakhathi (Public and Development Administration)
Mr M Tsedu (Student Representative Development Division)

F. VISTA UNIVERSITY

Mr Samuel Thabang Mothupi (Dept of Science, Vista Mamelodi Campus)
Mr R Cecil Bodibe (Student Development)
Mr Herman Le Roux (Networks)
Mr Jerry Lengasa (Geographical Science)
Ms Noreng Schutte (Geographical Science)
Mr Robert Pearce (Library Services, Mamelodi campus)
Prof Stephanus J Bekker (Sociology)

G. UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Ms Charmain Klein (Dir: Environmental Education Resources Unit)
Mr Shaun Davids (Chairman, ENSOC)

H. UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

Prof Lindisizwe Morris Magi (Geography & Environmental Studies)
Prof Mike Kitshoff (Theology Faculty)
Mr F R Ntuli (Committee Administration)
Dr Nomathemba V Magi (Comparative Education: Science Education Division)
Mr Bhekizenzo Nkosingiphile Mtethwa (Faculty of Law)
Dr Themba Dube (Mathematical Statistics)
Mr Petros Simon Sibaya (SRC)

I. UNIVERSITY OF BOPHUTHATSWANA

Mr Nathan T Molusi (Registrar)
Prof John Simbo (Information Systems)
Ms Leratho Thahane (Biology)
Ms Mamolahluwa Mokoena (Teaching and Curriculum)
Ms Annie Mosiane (Computer Centre)
Ms Ntombi Kambule (Library)
Mr Abel Diale (SRC)

J. MEDUNSA

Mrs Estelle Shiphams (Occupational Therapy)
Prof D J Kocks (Community Medicine)
Dr Andy Beke (Community Medicine)
Prof J V Groenewald (Dean: Faculty of Basic Sciences)
2. SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

2.1 The workshop was organised and facilitated by a workshop organising committee that was drawn from policy makers, academic staff and students from the various faculties of MEDUNSA.

2.2 The workshop was sponsored by MEDUNSA, the University Development Programme (UDP) of the Foundation for Research Development (FRD) and the Anglo-American and De Beers Trust.

2.3 Workshop delegates from all 10 HBUs, representing policy makers, multidisciplinary staff/students, information systems specialists and librarians participated in this workshop.

2.4 The workshop method was to utilise participatory group work with expert inputs from invited guests. It focused on the following issues:

- The historical background to HBUs and challenges for survival and development
- Networking aims and objectives
- How HBUs will impact and enact a vigilant role in community and environmental management
- What is UNINET, its status quo, and what can it offer in networking
- How feasible is a core network among HBUs (technological and human resource levels)
- The structuring of a Core Network
- Evaluation and Way Forward

2.5 Special inputs were received from invited guest speakers. These were:

2.5.1 Opening and Welcome by Elaine Sacco of the South African University Student Representative Council (SAUSRC), who stressed the urgent need to define the role of universities in the reconstruction and development of society through an all inclusive and community participatory process.

2.5.2 Defining the Scenario: Historical Background to HBUs and Challenges for Survival and Development: Key Note Address by Prof Colin Bundy (Vice-chancellor, UWC), who highlighted the dialectic of HBUs as institutions of access by ethnicity, however contributing to democratic transformation of society through its student movements - challenging its survival in a now equal political era, however with social and economic inequalities. As challenges he highlighted: tough strategic planning; the asking of principle questions that look at how available structures and course curricula deal with the new demands; to redefine its relationship with central state, local government, civil society and others whilst striking a balance between university autonomy and accountability; to define exactly their roles in the development of SA, going beyond mere rhetoric; and, to do things differently striking a balance between access and quality.

2.5.3 What is UNINET, its status quo, and what can it offer in Networking? by Mr V Shaw (information technology consultant), who stressed the role of would-be networkers in promoting the concept on campus; getting connected by whatever possible means; pressurising authorities to build proper campus networks; and developing appropriate contacts.

2.5.4 Towards a policy on mechanisms for, and objectives of exchange (national and international) - by Dr N Magau (Human Resources Development and Capacity Building: Mr J Naidoo's office of the RDP), who
challenged HBUs to participate proactively in the RDP, which all of us form part of. She invited three delegates from the forum to a meeting that will focus on how training institutions can engage in presidential lead projects. HBUs could do well to examine if their approach to community development adheres to people driven and empowerment principles, integrated with social and economic development.

Of crucial importance is how to integrate this principle at institutional level and to include partnership with all three role players, namely the private, public and local government sectors.

2.6 Group work on how HBUs will impact and enact a vigilant role in community and environmental management was done. Participants highlighted the need to define environmental management within a holistic context. Community development means sustainable empowerment, addressing community needs through participatory projects. The problems of HBUs bind them together to take action through networking. These problems include a lack of resources and institutional development. As a point of departure, HBU resources need to be highlighted. This includes that HBUs are already active in rural development projects, education enrichment programmes, law clinics/programmes, health programmes, participatory research, research capacity building, community-based education, academic staff and student development, matric and teacher upgrading, and most have some networking facilities. Of priority is to redefine policy and vision that will make universities part of the community; to democratise universities; to have policy on community development as part of their activities; and to take part in the Reconstruction and Development Programme. Linking and networking are very important in playing a role in society. Impact can be made through participatory action, establishing networking with role players to identify needs, engage in proactive projects and minimise duplication (i.e. inter-faculty, inter-training organisations, with community-based organisations, NGOs, government, civil society and private sectors). HBUs could do well to market their resources and to ensure access to their information. Networking will also be to the benefit of HBU human resource development, such as accountable affirmative action programmes, curricula development and the redefining of academic standards.

2.7 The group work on the feasibility of a core network amongst HBUs highlighted that such a network was not only feasible but also essential in order to share information, resources and skills and to lobby for funds and networking technology. Networking could include staff exchange, a database on research, projects, skills, interest areas and unpublished material. Focused interest groups could be developed at formal and informal levels, within and amongst campuses and other institutions regionally and nationally through institutional co-ordination. To ensure such a network, networking facilities need development and most of all human resource development.

2.8 Structuring of the core network, evaluation and way forward

The workshop aim of establishing a core network amongst HBUs was reached. Delegates proposed that a core network amongst HBUs, called HBUNET, be launched. They will seek for the blessing of their relevant bodies, principal/rector, get the support of the Forum of Vice Chancellors of HDUs. They will form work groups and network with other forums such as the FRD science forum so as not to duplicate efforts. An HBUNET holds the potential to bargain for deals as a group and to network with relevant bodies such as the CUP (which has a purchasing consortium) and the FRD.

A resource analysis and the evolution of specific focus and interest groups will be done through participatory action and networking. HBUNET aims will include the development of, access to and exchange of resources amongst themselves and other role players in the RDP at local, regional, provincial and national levels, inclusive of other training institutions, civil, private and government role players. The HBUNET will aim to have networking infrastructure on all campuses and to generate a data bank of HBU resources.

A committee of one facilitator per HBU was elected and main facilitation of the process will be rotated annually. Tasks will include a draft discussion document on networking policy re mechanisms and objectives of exchange and an annual workshop to evaluate its progress. MEDUNSA is presently facilitating and will hand over to the University of XXX. The next workshop will be in August 1995.
2.9 **HBUNET FACILITATORS**

- Prof E J Simbo, Information Systems, University of Bophuthatswana, P/Bag X2046, Mmabatho 8681, Tel (0140) 892169/554, Fax (0140) 25775
- Mr V M Melane, University of Transkei, Personnel, Private Bag X1, UNITRA, Umtata, Transkei. TEL (0471) 3022513; FAX (0471) 3022721; e-mail: melane@getafix.ustr.ac.za
- Annalie Pistorius, Department of Psychology, Box 182, Medunsa 0204. TEL (012) 529 4364/6; FAX (012) 560 0086; e-mail: annalie@mcd4330.medunsa.ac.za
- Prof L M Magi, Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Zululand, P/Bag X1001, Unizul 40, KWANDLANGEZWA 3886. Tel (0351); Fax (0351) 93420/93735; e-mail: lmmagi@unizull.uzulu.ac.za
- Mr Francois Lategan, University of Fort Hare, Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural development, P/Bag X1314, Alice 5700. TEL (0404) 22127; FAX (0404) 31730; e-mail: lategan@agext.ufh.ac.za
- Mrs A J Gozo, Library, University of Venda, P/Bag X5050, Thohoyandou. TEL (0159) 21071, FAX (0159) 22312; e-mail: JGozo@cotton.univen.ac.za
- Charmain Klein, Environmental Education and Resources Unit, University of the Western Cape, P/Bag X17, Bellville 7537. e-mail: charmain@botany.uwc.ac.za
- Mr H Le Roux, Networks, Vista University, P/Bag X634, Pretoria 0001. TEL (012) 322 1303; FAX (012) 322 3243; e-mail: hroux-h@acaleph.vista.ac.za
- Prof Laidlaw, Computer Science Department, University of Durban Westville, P/Bag X54001, Durban 4000. TEL (031) 820 2106; FAX (031) 8202824; e-mail: mlaidlaw@pixie.udw.ac.za
- Mr J Matimela, University of the North, Private Bag X 1106, Sovenga 0727 Tel (0152) 268 2201; Fax (0152) 267 0152

3. **PROCESS EVALUATION**

The workshop on Community Development and Environmental Management HBUs Core Network has put participants through experiences that could easily be omitted from a report whose purpose is to summarise and to evaluate contents and proceedings. However, process reflections are important as they provide comments on where we are coming from, what we are at and our movement into a very optimistic future.

The following process reflections seem noteworthy and indicative of our search for vigilant action together with a spirit of democratisation.

3.1 The workshop planning, organisation and facilitation was a collaborative venture amongst the staff, students and policy-makers of Medunsa as a whole.

Such collaboration was achieved through faculty boards and the Student Representative Council. A workshop organising committee was drawn from policy-makers, academic staff and students from the various faculties, the Student Representative Council and co-opted members such as from the Computer-based Education Centre and Public Relations Department of MEDUNSA. Deans of faculties were ex officio members of the committee.

3.2 Sound but critical belief in the workshop concept prompted risk-taking behaviour and committed action by the workshop organising committee.

Although the workshop organising committee only started to operate by the end June/beginning July 1994, members were determined that the workshop would be held before the end of the year. Members felt that such a workshop was long overdue and that HBUs need to network in order to ensure vigilant development action. Workshop invitations were sent prior to being sure about funding and the committee embarked on an energetic fund-raising drive. Its weekly one-hour meetings and task group meetings were goal orientated and non-bureaucratic. The fact that funds were provided from all Faculties as well as the Principal's Fund, highlights the priority and co-ownership the project elicited from policy-makers, staff and students.
3.3 The process undergone in inviting delegates to the workshop highlighted the need for better communication channels amongst universities and updated information on their decision-making and/or co-ordination structures.

The workshop invitation was sent to the Registrar: Academic or equivalent staff position of each HBU, with the aim that delegates be drawn in a co-ordinated manner with support from top management or policy-making structures. This process generally proved successful in terms of the said aim except for singular instances where such staff were on leave, had left their position or were overburdened with many tasks. Major frustrations were postal delays, postal losses and getting all HBUs to respond by due dates. This resulted in having to make many phone calls and sending many faxes (a step that could have been skipped if we all had access to e-mail facilities and if we then also did not have computer phobia).

3.4 Representative and well-organised participation in the workshop was an ideal that could actually only be achieved once HBUs have such networking amongst and within themselves in place. Many factors need to be taken into account in trying to establish representative support and organised action in ventures that aim at collective decision making. Our experience highlighted to participants that the workshop should not be viewed as an end in itself and that the development of representative participation is part of a flawed process that could become more refined through people-driven organisational practice.

Effort was made to ensure support of the workshop concept from policy-makers at the HBUs from its inception. This was done through posing the workshop invitation through HBU management and, in the case of Medunsa, also through its faculties. It was hoped that such structures would then be able to draw a delegation of participants to the workshop in an organised manner. The following factors include those that co-determined representative participation: where the entire top structure was in jeopardy by actions from the student council and staff union; time constraints; Student Representative Councils not in operation or in conflict with their management structures; transportation costs determining a smaller number of representatives; manpower constraints; clashing interests with regard to commitments on the workshop date; not knowing who is doing what on one's own campus.

3.5 Taken into account the above-mentioned constraints, the workshop successfully brought together delegates from all 10 HBUs. Workshop participants undertook to establish formal support for an HBU Network from their principals and to further participatory inputs on the structuring of such a network on their respective campuses. Also, a facilitator for each of the ten HBUs was elected to ensure continued communication amongst HBUs on their way forward.

3.6 The workshop method of utilising participatory group work with expert inputs from invited guests seemed to have worked well. Inputs from invited guests elicited active and thought-provoking discussion, which created the impression that participants experienced it as challenging. Workshop delegates grouped themselves into five groups that each represented a mix of policy makers, mult-disciplinary staff/students, information systems specialists and librarians from different HBUs. Continuity of group membership was maintained, with a few exceptions, in order to work on the questions that formed part of the focus points of the workshop programme.

The questions were felt to have been too open. However, more narrowly defined focus areas would have required greater special interest participation, which was thought to be the next stage to move toward.

3.7 One most significant impression gained from the workshop's group discussions was that people turned inward and viewed community development as starting from ourselves. For example, the content from group discussions highlighted that, as a first priority, HBUs need their policies and human resources to be developed and need to be in touch with their own resources.

3.8 The timing of the workshop (the proposed date was for earlier in the year) coincided very well with broader changes within South Africa, although it can be said that it almost missed the boat. For example, Mr J Naidoo's office delayed responding positively to our invitation to make a presentation at the workshop, due to work in progress on the RDP White Paper. Also, Dr Magau's challenging input made participants aware that no proposal from HBUs on their role and input into the RDP had been put forward,
while Historically White Universities had done this already. However, the workshop provided an opportunity for the forum to be invited to the first intersectoral meeting of the Human Resources Development for RDP.

3.9 The workshop proceedings report was provided to workshop participants within a week. These proceedings enabled the facilitator and representatives to make a provisional proposal to the HRD of the RDP 3 October meeting on the vision, mission and proposed activities of HBUNET. It also provided stimulation for discussion on HBU campuses through their structures. Although all universities are presently occupied with student examination, at least three universities communicated that they are having meetings discussing the workshop proceedings. Responses to the proceedings tend, however, to be telephonic and verbal, whilst most of them could have been done quite easily through e-mail. This points to the need to provide user courses on e-mail facilities.

4. SECTORAL MEETING OF 3 OCTOBER 1994, HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, MINISTRY IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

4.1 PROVISIONAL PROPOSAL: HBU CORE NETWORK (HBUNET)

INTRODUCTION

"Historically Black Universities" (HBUs) were designed as institutions of access by ethnicity, however contributed to the democratic transformation of society through their student movements, liberal staff and community contact. South Africa's present era of political equality challenges HBUs to redefine their roles in the development of society, whilst they have to deal with problems such as a lack of resources and institutional development. Therefore, the need to take action through the formation of a core network in order to strengthen their ability to develop their resources; to network at local, regional, provincial, national and international levels; and to contribute to human resource development needs through an all inclusive and community participatory process.

VISION

A single university system, accessible and responsive to the human resource development needs of all sectors of society, including government, private and public sectors.

MISSION

Development of and access to HBU resources and networking these with resources from role players in the RDP at local, regional, provincial and national levels, inclusive of other training institutions, civil, private and government sectors;

Networking infrastructure on all HBU campuses and an updated data bank on HBU resources;

Policy and vision that define universities as part of the community and that adhere to people driven and empowerment principles;

Democratised universities as institutions that include partnership with all role players, namely the private, public and local government sectors;

Policy on community development as part of their activities; and

Participation in the Reconstruction and Development Programme.
OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES

The HBUNET plans to achieve the following:

* establish a core network amongst HBUs, called HBUNET
* seek for support from relevant bodies, principal/rector, the Forum of Vice Chancellors of HDUs
* form work groups and network with other forums such as the FRD science forum and strategic planning committees so as not to duplicate efforts
* bargain for deals as a group and liaise with relevant bodies such as the CUP (which has a purchasing consortium) and the FRD
* do a resource analysis of HBU activities and match these with development resources and needs at regional, provincial and national levels, together with other training institutions
* evolve specific focus/interest groups through participatory action and networking with CBOs, NGOs, government and the private sector

PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS HRD FOR THE RDP

a. As a point of departure, HBU resources need to be highlighted. This includes that HBUs are already active in rural development projects, education enrichment programmes, law clinics/programmes, health programmes, participatory research, research capacity building, community-based education, academic staff and student development, matric and teacher upgrading, and most have some networking facilities.

b. Impact can be made through participatory action, establishing networking with role players to identify needs, engaging in proactive projects and minimising duplication (i.e. inter-faculty, inter-training organisations, with community-based organisations, NGOs, government, civil society and private sectors).

c. HBUs could do well to market their resources and to ensure access to their information. Networking will also be to the benefit of HBU human resource development, such as accountable affirmative action programmes, curricula development and the redefining of academic standards.

d. To start planning and doing regional tertiary institution building. Such a network could share resources such as libraries, work on cross-accreditation, plan regional rationalisation and participate in programmes, for example public health and capacity building programmes.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The workshop proceedings have been provided to all HBUNET facilitators, who will liaise with their principals and approach university members for their support and development of the proposed structuring of the network. These proceedings will also be put forward for discussion at the Vice Chancellors’ HDU Forum.

It is also of crucial importance to get inputs from the UDP on the vision, aims, objective and structuring of the Network. Liaison with Mike Lawry (FRD) and consultation with him will also be sought by us with regard to such matters as data bank generation and existing networks.

It is recommended that networking of existing resources and needs be done. Networking would enable HBUs to combine development proposals of mutual concern. Such co-ordinated practice could further the funding and development needs of HBUs, so that they can be answerable to national human resource development practice.
APPENDIX C
MCDEM-NET STANDARD INVITATION

THE MEDUNSA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT NETWORK
Box 182
MEDUNSA 0204

Your Ref:
Annalie Pistorius Tel (012) 529 4364/4366
Prof Colin Stewart Tel (012) 529 4274/4278

INVITATION TO: ALL MEMBERS OF MEDUNSA AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

All community projects, organisations and structures are invited to join the above-mentioned Network by delegating at least two representatives to participate in its monthly meetings.

MONTHLY MEETING DATES: 17 Jan; 21 Feb; 20 March; 17 April; 15 May; 19 June; 17 July; 14 August; 18 Sept; 16 Oct; 13 Nov 1996
TIME: 9:00 - 12:00
VENUE: NUTRITION REHABILITATION BUILDING
(SECOND BUILDING AT MEDUNSA GATE), MEDUNSA

The Medunsa Community Development and Environmental Management Network was launched in January 1994. The Network has a working group that meets once a month, consisting of community project representatives and interested project participants from the various Medunsa Faculties and surrounding communities. It is a voluntary network of autonomous community projects which is open to any new members.

The Network aims at multidisciplinary and inter-community exchanges of information and human resources for participatory action and problem solving. Of particular importance is to gain direct access to information and the development of creative and relevant community research, training and environmental management projects through a people's participatory approach. Its vision is to achieve networks of exchange amongst non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, universities, government, industry and service organisations at local, national and international levels.

Networking activities include continuous cross-sectional need identification, project resource analyses, problem solving and action planning. The Network also organises inter-community workshops that focus on identified needs and resources. Communities take tum to host such workshops. At these workshops, participants are trained as facilitators who then act as resource persons in their community body or project. The Network provides a base for liaison for appropriate community practical projects by Medunsa students and their departments together with community participants / bodies.

Please come and share your project resource information with others.

Yours sincerely,

Annalie Pistorius
Coordinator: MCDEMN
17 January 1996
APPENDIX D
MONTHLY NETWORK INVITATION

MEDUNSA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT NETWORK

MONTHLY NETWORKING MEETING

Date: 1 April '98
Time: 10h00 to 12h00
Venue: Bethesda Family Health Clinic, Zone 7, Ga-Rankuwa

All community project participants from education institutions, student bodies, community associations, government and non-governmental organisations are invited to join the third monthly networking meeting of 1998, focused on

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMWORK INTERVENTION
ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Agenda: (a) Introduction of participants/projects; (b) Elizabeth Johans-Meier & colleague will present the functions of the Baby Therapy Centre, followed by a participatory discussion on forming multidisciplinary intervention programmes; and, (c) a presentation of the Bethesda Clinic by the staff from the Department of Family Medicine (Medunsa) and Sr Kizitu of Christ the New Man.

MCDEM-Net NEWS BRIEF: The 4/03/1998 meeting at Ithuseng Community Centre focused on Intervention Projects on Domestic Violence. Participants included WAWA, NICRO, Dirang Traders, MEDUNSA (Medicos, Departments of Psychology, Microbiological Pathology), Institute for Primary Health Care (Soshanguve), African MCP (Ga-Rankuwa), Channel Med Community Radio, Ithuseng Community Centre, Mabopane Advice Centre, Mabopane Child Protection Unit, Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Department of Arts and Culture. Seth Mguni and Jacob Dire presented the Mabopane Advice Centre. This CBO, established in 1996, provides legal advice including on housing, water & electricity accounts, pension funds, advocacy and project development. Anna Dithane presented the Ithuseng Community Centre which started in 1991. It offers a place of safety for abused children, mothers and families and awareness raising together with the Mabopane CPU. It was agreed that the psychology students' community practical will work together with participating organisations to focus on Mabopane and other areas represented. The need for volunteers to help ICC was highlighted. Faith Mahlanga presented NICRO (National Institute of Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders), an NGO with offices nationally. Its programmes include: diversion, offender integration, awaiting trail, action for safety, support for abused woman, awareness campaigns, legal issues, counselling assistance and the Family Group Conference. Difficulties in the management system of domestic violence include that the interdict has failed people, so also the police system. Some actions that can be taken include police training, calling on the police commissioner, the public protector and the Minister of Safety and Security. Of crucial importance is that we take it upon ourselves to change from within and uncover the real issues that make people do crime.

Kindly book your hosting of MCDEM-Net Meeting dates: 6 May (Microbiology), 3 June, 1 July, 5 Aug, 2 Sept, 7 Oct, 4 Nov.

Enquiries: Cecilia Molepo, Tel 521 4664 or Annalie Pistorius, Tel 012 521 4364, Fax 521 4798.

MCDEM-Net is a voluntary network of autonomous community projects that aims at multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral creation and exchange of information and resources.