

**Businesses' social engagement, public relations  
and social development:  
a beyond modernist conceptual model**

by

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2008

# Declaration of original work

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I declare that *Businesses' social engagement, public relations and social development: a beyond modernist conceptual model* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quotes have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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KM Burger

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Date

## Summary

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This study proposes a beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations. This model is based on the premises that social thinking shifted towards beyond modernist thinking, that the same shift is evident in social development and that businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations should be aligned with this shift in social thinking and in social development.

The social shift towards beyond modernist thinking means that it is assumed that people are interdependent on one another for their future survival on earth, and that people and nature are, in the same way, interdependent. Accepting interdependency implies acceptance of 'multiplicity' and 'reciprocity'. This leads society to increasingly expect that businesses should be socially engaged. In developing countries this implies social development. This shift in society towards beyond modernist thinking is echoed in social development discourse: through an an equal-status relationship between benefactor and beneficiary beyond modernist social development enables members of a developing community to develop themselves.

These shifts in social thinking and in the field of social development, has not matured to the same extent in the practice and theory of businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations. The conceptual model proposed in this study addresses this concern. The proposed conceptual model formalises this shift in thinking on a theoretical/conceptual level, which indicates an ecological business-society relationship where the business regards itself as being part of society, where public relations should have a social orientation and where the businesses' social engagement through public relations should be directed towards the improvement of society. Based on this model, guidelines towards the practice of businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations are deduced.

## Key terms

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Corporate social investment; Societal involvement; Social engagement; Public relations; Development communication; European reflective paradigm of public relations; Excellence paradigm of public relations; Participatory development; Corporate social responsibility; Modernism; Post-modernism; Postmodernism

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*- purpose and approach to this study*

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

During the last decades Western societies have evolved from societies predominantly embracing modernist thinking towards societies increasingly emphasising different foci. Modernist thinking<sup>1</sup> is associated with a singular explanation of the world based on a scientific, rational, material orientation, whilst beyond modernist thinking<sup>2</sup> is associated with interdependency and multiplicity that assume plural explanations of the world, an integration of the material and the non-material dimensions of human life, and emphasises non-scientific thinking. A shift in societal thinking, from a singular modernist explanation of the world towards embracing plural explanations of the world (beyond modernist thinking) led to changed social expectations of business.

In line with beyond modernist thinking, and by accepting the notion of interdependency where it is assumed that humans are interdependent on one another for survival and that humans and nature are interdependent on each other for survival (Yearly 1996:131, 135-151; Tempelhoff 2006:1), it is assumed that the whole of society (including businesses) has the responsibility to ensure the survival of humans on earth (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93; Cambridge 2007:197). For this reason society expects businesses to show their responsibility towards the rest of society. In a developing context the businesses' social responsibility implies social development issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Modernist thinking is explained in Chapter 2 (refer to Section 2.2) drawing on the work of scholars such as Paddison (1996:27-28), Macey (2000:111, 167), Megill (1987:340), Olivier (2006), Hamilton (1995:57), Hall (1995a:2) and McLennan (1996:330).

<sup>2</sup> Beyond modernist thinking is explained in Chapter 2 (refer to Section 2.3) and is formulated by combining the arguments presented by various scholars such as Hall (1995a:6), Bocoock (1995:248), McLennan (1996:330), Macey (2000:111), Paddison (1996:27-28), Hamelink (2007:225-227), Alexander (2006:14-15) and Hemer and Tufte (2005:13-14).

A similar shift as the shift in social thinking towards beyond modernist thinking is evident in the scholarly field and practice of social development (refer to Chapter 3), but this shift is not as evident in scholarly studies about businesses' social engagement that seek to address social development through public relations. The dominant form of social engagement of businesses is largely seated in a modernist conception of a competitive business, although some indications are evident in this field that a shift towards beyond modernist thinking is starting to take shape.

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The study is designed to address three main viewpoints: a shift in social thinking towards beyond modernist thinking; a similar shift in social development in terms of beyond modernist thinking; and progress in moving towards beyond modernist in thinking about public relations. This study proposes a move towards aligning public relations thinking regarding social development with a re-orientation towards beyond modernist thinking in terms of the broader viewpoints on social thinking and social development. This is proposed in a beyond modernist conceptual model.

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Although this study covers more than one subfields (namely development communication and public relations), it is primarily seated in the theoretical frameworks of the discipline of Social Development and Communication.

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## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The problem researched in this study is how businesses' social engagement through public relations should take place if it seeks to address social development from a beyond modernist perspective.

This problem is analysed in this study through answering the following research questions:

1. What is beyond modernist thinking?
2. What is beyond modernist social development?
3. How can businesses engage in and enhance social development through a beyond modernist perspective?

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The focus of the research problem and the research questions above, lead to the purpose of this study being to propose a beyond modernist conceptual model for

businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations.

In order to achieve this purpose, the following objectives are set for this study:

1. to identify and describe beyond modernist thinking based on an analysis of the historic evolution and nature of beyond modernist thinking (Chapter 2);
2. to identify and describe beyond modernist social development after an analysis of the main approaches to social development (Chapter 3);
3. to identify and describe a re-orientation in the scholarly field of public relations as it pertains to businesses' social engagement should be made to align it with beyond modernist thinking (Chapter 4);
4. to contribute to the scholarly field of Communication Studies by emphasising that businesses do not need to engage in society through public relations for profit reasons, but may do so out of altruistic convictions and in the process enhances the understanding of social development problems and conditions from a development perspective rather from the perspective of the business (Chapter 4);
5. to combine viewpoints that have been studied previously separately in subfields of Communication Studies; (Chapter 5) and
6. to develop a beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations (Chapter 5).

In achieving these objectives this study emphasises a re-orientation in business thinking about their social engagement, namely to see social engagement not as a mechanism to advance business goals, but as a mechanism to enhance social development.

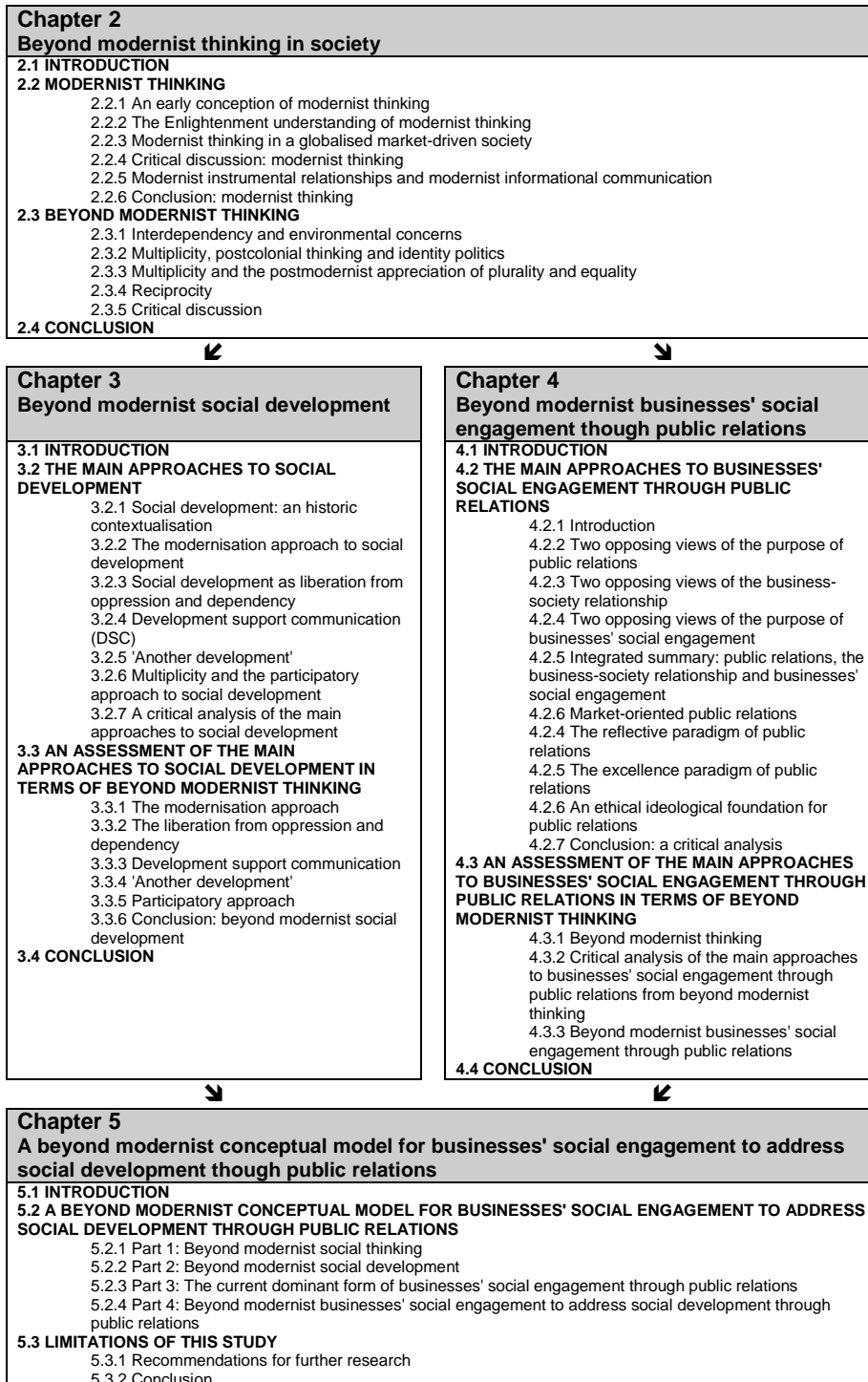
Apart from an introductory chapter, the structure of the argument presented in this study is as follow:

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**FIGURE 1.1** An overview of the outline of chapters

It is indicated in Chapter 2 that a shift away from modernist thinking towards beyond modernist thinking is evident in society. The implication that society has a new type of relationship with business based on this shift towards beyond modernist thinking is further indicated. This discussion of beyond modernist thinking represents the main theoretical underpinnings of this study.

In Chapter 3 the main approaches to social development are discussed and analysed in terms of the beyond modernist thinking defined in Chapter 2 to deduce and describe beyond social development.

In Chapter 4 the main approaches to businesses' social engagement are described and analysed in terms of the beyond modernist thinking defined in Chapter 2 to deduce and describe a beyond modernist approach to businesses' social engagement through public relations.

In Chapter 5 a new beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations is developed as the original contribution of this study, based on beyond modernist social thinking, beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations and beyond modernist social development, which are discussed in the previous three chapters. This aligns beyond modernist thinking of society and social development with that of businesses' social engagement through public relations in such a way that social development is addressed. This chapter is concluded by indicating the contribution and limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

### **1.3 APPROACH TO THE STUDY**

This study is anchored in Communication Studies because both public relations and the communication concern of social development are seen as subfields of the field of Communication Studies.

Two approaches, namely a quantitative and qualitative approach, dominate the scholarly enquiry in the field of Communication Studies. The former represents the mainstream of research in the field of Communication Studies, giving the latter the position of an alternative to the mainstream Communication Studies research (Du Plooy 2001:29). The quantitative approach is associated with a modernist (also



referred to as an Enlightenment) thinking, whilst the qualitative approach originated from newer, so-called cultural-oriented approaches that focus on investigating the non-material dimensions of human life (Bruner 1986:13; Deetz 1995:99-103; Lawson 2001:xxvii, xxix-xxx; McRobbie 1997:238; Miller 2002:13-14; Griffin 2003:11-14).

Although this study is based on a qualitative research approach, a brief overview of quantitative research is given in the next section, firstly in order to distinguish it from the purpose of qualitative research, and secondly because it informs the world view of modernist thinking that represents the point of departure from which social thinking (discussed in Chapter 2, refer to section 2.2) has shifted towards beyond modernist thinking.

### 1.3.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research assumes an objectivist scientific view that is often supported by empirical research (Lawson 2001:xxvii, xxix-xxx; Fourie 2007a:115-120; Littlejohn 2002:28-30; Miller 2002:13-14; Griffin 2003:11-14). This approach Deetz (1995:99-103) associates with modernist thinking

The quantitative approach to social inquiry can be understood through its 'world view'. The world view of a modernist conception is based on an 'objective' world (adhered to by positivists, empiricists, behaviourists, and so on) and is explained by Mark Johnson (1987:x) in his pivotal work, *The body in the mind*, in the sense that the world exists out of objects (each with specific characteristics) that are related to one another (these relationships between objects exist independently of human understanding); that the world simply is what it is, independent of human understanding, and therefore there is only one correct way of understanding it ('a god-like vision'); that this reality has a rational structure, independent of any researcher's beliefs; that the correct reasoning can reflect this rational structure; and in order to describe this objective world, researchers need language that correlates literally with objects and relationships in the world; and to achieve such reasoning, rationality is to use these concepts so that there is a one-to-one correlation with reality; that this means that words are merely arbitrary symbols that are meaningless in themselves and find their meaning only in their relationship with objects in the world; and that rational thought is then simply the manipulation of these symbols.

Johnson (1987:x) points to the consequences of this world view, namely that reason is seen as something that exists independently of the human body; that a break is implied between the researcher (subject) and the external world (object); and that the external world is subjected to the reasoning of the subject's description. These aspects result in this worldview being objectivist in nature. Based on this worldview the quantitative approach deals with general causes and their establishment through procedures to assure verifiable reference (Bruner 1986:13). This means that quantitative research aims to test for empirical truth (scientific standards) based on hypotheses that are proven or disproven to set scientific standards in order to predict the future behaviour or nature of natural phenomena (explained through universal laws) (Griffin 2003:39-43, 44-47; Miller 2002:27). Because such laws are useful in predictions and planning, quantitative approach research has a practical or utility value (Griffin 2003:39-43, 44-47; Miller 2002:27). Such a utility value is characteristic of modernist thinking (Lerner, Meacham & Burns 1988:643-644; Deetz 1995:99-103). The implication is that this type of research is associated with finding statistically reliable answers that are universally applicable and displaying such answers through models and other types of representations that give conclusive answers (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:18-21; Fourie 2007a:106-110).

Studies of communication using a quantitative approach are often aligned with empiricist, behaviourist or functionalist studies, often reducing communication problems to that of the communicator's struggle to communicate his/her point of view (referred to as informational communication associated with a communication strategy) (Deetz 1995:99-103).

Modernist assumptions have increasingly been questioned over the last five decades as it became clear that this method cannot in all cases provide answers to studying social objects (Bruner 1986:13), as is elaborated upon in the next section.

### **1.3.2 Qualitative research**

The focus of qualitative research is not the utility value or particular workings of an object of study (that can be proven and laws deducted to predict the object's future behaviour or nature as is the case with quantitative research), but the relationships between a particular object and other objects; the impact of its environment on it and *visa versa*; as well as the lived experiences of humans such as how people interact

with one another, how social institutions influence people, and how the truth or truths are constructed, as explained below.

Qualitative research investigates the link between aspects before it can be scientifically proven, and is therefore also referred to as a paradigmatic approach (Bruner 1986:13). Qualitative research elicits new understandings of people; it clarifies values in terms of what ought to happen in future; it considers and embodies issues of artistry and aesthetics; it seeks support within a like-minded community of scholars and seeks to reform or change society for the better, making it interpretivist, subjectivist and exploratory, and, at times, critical (Griffin 2003:39-43, 44-47; Miller 2002:27).

A qualitative approach to research also seeks new understandings of phenomena (implying that phenomena under study are problematised and not simplified) and is based on the assumptions of an ontology of free will, an epistemology of multiple truths and an axiology of the impossibility of human objectiveness (Fourie 2001b:232-235; Littlejohn 2002:28-30; Miller 2002:13-14; Griffin 2003:11-14; Neuman 2000:145; Du Plooy 2001:29; Gronstedt 1997:41; Strauss & Corbin 1990:17; Denzin & Lincoln 1994:4-5). Qualitative research is exploratory since it asks 'Why?' and 'What?' with the aim of discovering new knowledge, certain behaviours, or the motivation for certain actions or the reasons for certain symptoms (McQuail 2000:201). Qualitative studies furthermore attempt to understand the situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the setting (Mouton & Marais 1999:204). This means that qualitative research produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification, and are by nature exploratory (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17).

A qualitative research approach is furthermore associated with the growing importance of a rather broad stream of thinkers, including critical theorists, postmodernists, postcolonialists, phenomenologists, hermeneutics and other cultural orientations as indicated by various scholars such as Deetz (1995:99-103), Lawson (2001:xxvii, xxix-xxx), Fourie (2007a:115-120), McRobbie (1997:238), and to a lesser extent Du Plooy (2001:29). If qualitative research is undertaken from a critical perspective it aims to point out that modernism did not bring about an enhanced well-being for all peoples as the modernist project set out to do, often by pointing to the restrictions of modernism and modernist institutions (Eagleton 2004:29; Thompson 1996:222-253; McLennan 1996:348; Paddison 1996:27-28; Hall 1996:282). Apart

from criticising grand narratives such as that of modernism, a large part of the work of so-called alternative scholars point towards opening up new options to enhance well-being, the constructing of individual identity and its newer focus on how individuals forge their own identities amidst ever-changing circumstances and how meaning of life is found as is illustrated in the work of Eagleton (2004:29), Thompson (1996:222-253) and McLennan (1996:348).

Scholars of this newer or cultural-oriented stream of thinking do not propose an overarching method to study problems, since it is assumed that each phenomenon under study is unique and so should the research processes be. This assumption is confirmed by Littlejohn (2002:28-30), Miller (2002:13-14), Griffin (2003:11-14) and Neuman (2000:145) and described by Du Plooy (2001:29), Gronstedt (1997:41), Strauss and Corbin (1990:17), and Denzin and Lincoln (1994:4-5). Such studies often result in critiques, more questions being asked, the opening up of new options, and, at most, derive at guidelines towards options that may help in addressing the problems at hand as is described by Strauss and Corbin (1990:17) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994:4-5), and in more recent times by Fourie (2007a:124-146), Littlejohn (2002:28-30), Miller (2002:13-14), and Du Plooy (2001:29).

Critical scholars do not present a unified voice, but rather criticise grand narratives, such as modernism and other closed-ended perspectives, based on the argument that all the different groups of people are unique and it would be a contradiction to illustrate their suggestions in universal models (as would be the case with the quantitative approach). Scholars using this approach believe that all people are unique and that all cultures are unique, and for this reason a universal method that fits all possible situations and people will be contradictory to their intention with scholarly work.

### **1.3.3 A comparison of research approaches**

Although qualitative and quantitative research approaches have different purposes and functions, they can be successfully combined in research. Qualitative research regularly recommends further studies since they often open up new viewpoints. Although not necessarily proposed by such studies, they are often followed by quantitative scientific studies testing their applicability to different contexts and scenarios.

This means that the quantitative approach and the qualitative approach complement each other, since both provide valuable information through their research, but in vastly different ways. Quantitative research explains the data in order to predict future behaviour, it is a relative simple approach, it tests hypotheses through its research and it has a practical utility value, whilst qualitative research seeks to bring about new understanding, clarifies values, has an aesthetic appeal, is based on a community of agreement, and seeks reform of society, as is illustrated in Table 1.1 (adapted from Griffin (2003:39-43, 44-47) and combined with ideas of Miller (2002:27)):

Quantitative approach has a scientific orientation	Qualitative approach has an interpretive orientation
1. Explanation of the data (why)	1. New understanding (why)
2. Prediction of future events (future: what will happen)	2. Clarification of values (future: what ought to happen)
3. Relative simplicity (simplicity could be aesthetic)	3. Aesthetic appeal (artistry)
4. Hypotheses that can be tested (a way of achieving a community of agreement)	4. A community of agreement (amount of support within a like-minded community of scholars)
5. Practical utility	5. Reform of society (interpretative theory often generates change, impact on society) away from grand narratives (reform is practical)

**TABLE 1.1** Two opposing approaches to research

Against this brief introduction of two opposing research approaches it is explained in the next section why a qualitative research approach was decided upon for this study.

### 1.3.4 The research approach of this study: a qualitative approach

This study integrates three debates that, up to now, have largely taken place in isolation: firstly a social shift towards embracing beyond modernist thinking, secondly a shift in social development thinking, and thirdly a re-orientation in businesses' thinking to act upon a social responsibility to address social development through the mechanism of public relations. A qualitative approach to this study facilitates the aim of this study, because it indicates new research options, such as the integration of these different scholarly fields.

The implication of using a qualitative approach for this study, due to its exploratory nature, is that the arguments offered in this study are not to be generalised, but

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should rather be seen as opening up new options to set the scene for future research. The validity of this study is enhanced through using two of the four types of triangulation advised by quantitative-oriented proponents (Van der Walt & Breet-van Niekerk 2006:349), namely data triangulation (various sources of data) and theory triangulation (a variety of perspectives).

The purpose of this qualitative study is to bring new options to public relations practitioners involved in their businesses' social engagement efforts to practise their work. The beyond modernist conceptual model proposed in this study is recommended as a point of departure if public relations practitioners wish to address social developmental problems through their businesses' societal engagement, but these may not be useful in all cases as it is assumed that each social development situation has unique characteristics. The aim of this study is thus not to give conclusive universal answers, but to propose a new option, namely a new beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement through public relations to address social development problems.

The aim of this study is achieved through various processes, of which the result of these processes is presented as chapters in this study. These processes include consulting a wide variety of sources on the various topics of study, including sources that argue from a variety of theoretical perspectives; and using deductive reasoning.

Deductive reasoning is linked to a qualitative approach to research and involves constructs and relationships between constructs (Du Plooy 2002:27, 82). Deductive reasoning assisted the author to come to a formulation of the construct of beyond modernist social thinking and the beyond modernist constructs of social development and businesses' social engagement through public relations. It also assisted in constructing a beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations.

As qualitative research use reasoning in this way it is subjective (Du Plooy 2002:82) which poses certain limitations to this study. These limitations are that the validity and reliability can not be statistically verified. The validity can be enhanced though by building arguments after reading a wide variety of sources, which has been done in this study.

#### **1.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY**

The main contribution of this study lies in its new beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to social development through public relations.

This main contribution has three implications, namely, to combine separate viewpoints that up to now have mainly been undertaken separately; to point out how businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations can be in line with social thinking; and to provide the opportunity to understand social development problems from a development perspective instead of from a public relations or business perspective.

This means that by following the beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to social development through public relations new possibilities are opened up for making a real contribution to social development on an operational level, but that the conceptual thinking behind this model contributes to the scholarly enquiry of businesses' social engagement to social development through public relations.

This study furthermore emphasises a mind shift from businesses, namely the need for the business not to see social engagement as a mechanism to advance business goals, but as a mechanism to enhance social development.

#### **1.5 EXPLANATION OF KEY TERMS**

As this study requires a mind shift away from conventional views towards beyond modernist thinking, a number of key terms used in this study are explained below as they are used in this study. Other terms not as central as these to the argument of this study are explained as they are introduced throughout this study.

### **1.5.1 Modern, market orientation and globalisation**

The terms 'modern', 'market-oriented' and globalisation are loosely grouped in this study to refer to a particular mode of thinking. These terms are explained in this section.

#### **1.5.1.1 Modern**

The concept 'modern' does not refer to the 'contemporary' but rather to the mindset of liberation that is characteristic of the modern era (that started in 1517 with Martin Luther protesting against the Roman Catholic Church's suppression of individual worship and that culminated in the late Enlightenment period), emphasising individuality, liberation, rationality, a control and power orientation and an instrumentalist view of humans, and which is associated with the secularisation of society (Barzun 2001:3). In contemporary late modern times dominated by neoliberalist globalisation, such modern characteristics are mostly economically informed (Hall 1995a:6; Bocock 1995:248; Held 1996:32-34; Fourie 2001b:595, 597; Hamelink 2002:182-185; cf Robertson 2003:3-6). This means that references to the term 'modern' in this study do not refer to 'contemporary times', but rather to a specific mindset associated with modernism that has clear roots in the establishment of the modern era and got great impetus in the Enlightenment thinking, and was carried into contemporary late modern times. This is confirmed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2 refers) by introducing the arguments of scholars such as Yearly (1996:118), McLennan (1996:330), Macey (2000:111), Paddison (1996:27-28) and Hall (1995b:281).

In some cases scholars equate modernism with Western thinking, but because not all traditional territories associated with the geographical term 'West' subscribe fully to this mode of thinking, as is evident in Chapter 2, such a definitive link is not assumed in this study.

#### **1.5.1.2 Market-orientation, market-driven and market paradigm**

The terms 'market-orientation', 'market-driven' and 'market paradigm' are used in this study to refer to an orientation resultant from modernist neoliberalism and its outflows (refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.2). This implies not only the formal acceptance of neoliberalist policies to deregulate the market and to privatise public service



provision, but also the view that the market as an 'engine for (economic) growth' (Gray 1993:274-275; Gershon 2002:53-69; McRobbie 1997:242 Morley 1997:333-335; Brown 1995:153). Such a market orientation largely affected a change in world discourse away from the political to a trade-market-economic orientation whereby all modern utility and instrumentalism are defined by the market (Gray 1993:274-275; Gershon 2002:53-69; McRobbie 1997:242 Morley 1997:333-335; Brown 1995:153).

### **1.5.1.3 Globalisation**

'Globalisation' came about due to a shift in world discourse from the national to the global and from the political to the economic-trade, enabled by neoliberalism. Globalisation is furthermore associated with the internationalisation and economisation of the world. The effect of globalisation is associated with two parallel streams, the first being the homogenisation of the world, and the second an almost contradictory interest in the local or the particular (McGrew 1996:75; Eriksen 2005:28; Saul 2005:71-80). Such intersection of the global with the local (the global-local nexus or the glocalisation of the world) makes the cultural differences between peoples more pronounced, leading to a new wave of social movements protesting against globalisation and its universalisation effect, in favour of particular (local) views (McGrew 1996:75; Hemer 2005:59-60; Hemer & Tufte 2005:17; Eriksen 2005:28).

### **1.5.2 Postmodernism, post-modernism, and beyond modernism**

The terms 'postmodernism', 'post-modernism', and 'beyond modernism' have significant differences (also refer to Chapter 2).

'Postmodernism' (unhyphenated) is seen as a continuation of modernism in the contemporary late modern times with a particular set of characteristics, whilst 'post-modernism' (hyphenated) is seen as representing a new epoch of utopia after modernity not based on a liberal, modern, capitalistic democracy, but on an altogether other regime (Thompson 1996:225-247; Rajaei 2000:xiii, 4; Held 1996:34; McLennan 1996:344-345). The 'postmodern condition' refers to a social condition of fragmentation (the art of the fragment), a-historicity, parody, a pastiche of seemingly incompatibilities, incoherence, a bricolage of living (collage using 'found' or everyday objects), discontinuity, and with a postmodern identity (Baran & Davis 2003:367; Hall 1996:284-285; Thompson 1996:222, 226, 230; Griffin 2003:28-30; Miller 2002:13;

Littlejohn & Foss 2005:45). Radical postmodernism is associated with the postmodern condition that embraces the market; whilst positive modernism is associated with the postmodern condition of fragmentation where new identities are forged and new types of human relationships are forming (Eagleton 2004:29; Thompson 1996:252).

In this study the grand narrative of modernism is contrasted with a number of new thoughts that are collectively referred to as thinking 'beyond' modernism, including all the above interpretations of postmodernism/post-modernism and some others, such as postcolonialism, post-Fordism, post-industrialism, the information society and so forth. To illustrate such a mindset that is formulated for the purpose of this study, neither the terms 'postmodernism' (a continuation of modernism in contemporary times) nor 'post-modernism' (a new epoch after modernism) could be used because they signify specific meanings. For this reason the term 'beyond modernism' was chosen to include, but not be limited to, postmodernism/post-modernism. The arguments offered in this study are put as alternatives beyond or different to the modern grand narrative, regardless of whether it is located in late modern times (postmodernism), or in an altogether new epoch or regime (post-modernism).

### **1.5.3 Social development**

The term 'social development' is used in this study to refer to the development of a society measured against different variables depending on the particular paradigm (modernisation, dependency critique, participatory/multiplicity approach) from which an argument is presented. The newer conceptions social development includes advancing levels of material development (infrastructural, economic, and so forth) and non-material development (well-being, dignity, and so forth) (Cambridge 2002:149-150; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92-97; Eriksen 2005:27-28).

This position falls within the Development Communication subfield of Communication Studies. In his sense 'social development' forms the context against which 'development communication' should be understood. Consequently 'development communication' investigates how communication can assist social development.

#### 1.5.4 Public relations

The term 'public relations' is used in this study to describe the communication-based function of businesses, which serves both the communication needs of the public and those of the business (cf Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg 2004:4, 58). There is not scholarly agreement whether the communication function of a business should be referred to as 'public relations', 'corporate communication', 'communication management' or 'strategic communication management'. Some scholars argue that public relations should be reserved when referring to the technical focus and not to the managerial and strategic focus, whilst in the excellence paradigm (that enjoys large scale international support) uses these terms largely interchangeably (cf Toth's book *The future of excellence in public relations and communication management: challenges for the next generation* (2007); and *Public relations and communication management in Europe: a nation-by-nation introduction to public relations theory and practice* (2004) edited by Van Ruler and Verčič edited). Due to this confusion, and the excellence paradigm's (that is the most prominent the study field) preference for this term 'public relations' is used in this study to describe businesses' communication function.

In defining the work of public relations various foci are indicated: focusing on the establishing and maintaining of a positive image of the business; establishing and maintaining a positive image of the business, whilst serving the public; and informing the business about social aspects in order to contribute towards the building and maintenance of the public sphere. These conceptions rely heavily on the work of Newsom et al (2004:4, 58), Ehling, White and Grunig (1992:357), Guth and Marsh (2003:427), Caywood (1997:xi), Verčič et al (2001), Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) and Fortini-Campbell (1997:140).

Public relations for the purpose of this study refer inclusively to all the above conceptions, acknowledging both its social and business orientation.

#### **1.5.4 Businesses' social engagement**

A number of terms has been considered to refer to businesses' social engagement. The more established terms are 'corporate social investment' and 'corporate social responsibility'.

The term 'corporate social investment' refers to a specific type of social engagement undertaken by public relations on behalf of a business that expects a return because social involvement from this perspective is seen as a type of 'investment' (Mersham et al 1995:82-87; Newsom et al 2004:3-4, 58; Guth & Marsh 2003:525; Grunig & White 1992:15, 39-40, 60; Grunig, JE 1992:8; Caywood 1997:149; Wilcox, Ault, Agee & Cameron 2000:37, 301; Cutlip, Centre & Broom 1994:14 and 90-91). In Chapter 4 (refer to Section 4.2) corporate social investment is directly linked to social activities of businesses through the public relations function that contributes deliberately to the bottom line of businesses (a return on investment).

As the global acceptance of the interdependency of organisms on earth and thus of business-society interdependency increased, the term 'corporate social responsibility' is increasingly used on the international level. This deliberately links the responsibility of the business not only to its stakeholders, but also to society and the environment (the triple bottom line).

To avoid the connotations attached to the terms 'corporate social investment' and 'corporate social responsibility' the term 'businesses' social engagement' is used in this study to refer to the businesses social responsibility that is voluntary, and not demanded by society in any way. This implies that businesses engage with society for altruistic reasons for the betterment of society.

The term 'business' is preferred in this study to the term 'corporate', not only to include various types of profit-oriented organisations such as corporations, companies, and firms, but to distinguish it further from the established terms: 'corporate social investment' and 'corporate social responsibility'.

## **1.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter outlined the purpose of and background to this study which is to create a new beyond modernist conceptual model that public relations practitioners can use to steer their businesses' social engagement towards addressing social development by aligning businesses' thinking about social engagement with that of social thinking.

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are explained in the next chapter, focussing on a shift in social thinking from modernist towards beyond modernist thinking.

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## Chapter 2

# Beyond modernist social thinking

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter indicated that the purpose of this study is to propose a new beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations and in the process align businesses' thinking about its engagement with society to address social development through public relations with beyond modernist social thinking. In order to create this conceptual model, the aim of this chapter is to conceptualise 'beyond modernist thinking' as it manifests in society.

Beyond modernist social thinking is partly a reaction to modernism, but it also offers answers to the questions unanswered by modernist thinking. As beyond modernist thinking is in this way linked to modernist thinking, an explanation of beyond modernist thinking is presented in this chapter as an alternative to modernist thinking. This chapter firstly discusses modernist thinking in order to set the scene for the discussion of beyond modernist thinking. The evolution of modernist thinking through history is subsequently discussed to provide a contemporary understanding of modernist thinking.

### 2.2 MODERNIST THINKING

As the concept 'modernist thinking' is not static, but has evolved over the last 500 years it is explained in this section from a historic perspective.

In the first place an early conception of modernist thinking is explained; in the second place the Enlightenment conception of modernist thinking is discussed; and in the third place the focus falls on how modernist thinking is viewed in contemporary global



times. Based on this discussion of the evolution of modernist thinking a critical discussion of the nature of modernist thinking in contemporary times is presented in the fourth place, after which, lastly modernist thinking is applied to human communication and relationships.

### **2.2.1 An early conception of modernist thinking**

Generally an early conception of modernist thinking is associated with a quest by individuals to gain greater control and power over their own destinies. This is explained, in this section, by discussing the significance of the religious revolution, the economic revolution and the political (or French) revolution in the formation of modernist thinking.

#### **2.2.1.1 The religious revolution**

In this section it is argued that with the religious revolution modernist thinking became associated with individuality, rationality and democracy.

It is generally accepted that the modern era had its beginning with the religious revolution that started with the Protestant Reformation (Barzun 2001:3; Hamilton 1995:29; Armstrong 2005:119-133). If a date needs to be linked to the beginning of the religious revolution it would be October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther posted 95 propositions on the door of All Saints' church in Wittenberg in search of the truth regarding the Roman Catholic Church's sacrament of penance and the Church's abuse of superstition; and protesting about fraudulent acts within the ranks of the clergy and the offering of salvation for money (Barzun 2001:5; Braudel 1993:349; Lerner et al 1988:482-487). Luther's focus on individuality as opposed to communal worship, as was the practice in the Roman Catholic Church at the time, set off a chain reaction which quickly affected the religious practices of millions of people in north-western Europe (Lerner et al 1988:482-487; cf Hamilton 1995:29). Questioning the religious practices was, before the Protestant Reformation, unthinkable and asking questions introduced a new era of reliance on critical enquiry regarding the *status quo* (Barzun 2001:4; Palmer 2002:12).

The religious revolution not only changed people's religion, but also the forms of worship and the concept of human destiny; and it posed the issue of diversity of individual opinions. It also fostered new feelings of nationhood, raised the status of

vernacular languages, changed attitudes towards work, art and human failure and steered the West away from its ancestral sense of unity and common descent. In addition it caused an extraordinary enlargement of the meaning of 'West', associated with a newly instilled confidence in the power of Western civilisations (cf Barzun 2001:4; Braudel 1993:349-356; Hall 1995b:282, 291; Hamilton 1995:29).

The invention of Gutenberg's movable printing press further emphasised the rational and individual, since it became possible for literate but ordinary Western people to obtain and read the Bible outside the supervision and dogmatic thinking of the clergy, and in the process it introduced a long Western history of secularity (Barzun 2001:4; Palmer 2002:12; Fang 1997:18-40; cf Hemer & Tufte 2005:16-17).

From this introduction to the early modernist thinking it can be deduced that the significance of Luther's act, amplified by Gutenberg's movable printing press, was that it introduced an era of the individual's quest to better his/her future signified by the individual taking control of his/her worship by reading and interpreting the Bible individually, thus giving the individual direct access to God, as opposed to through the medium of a religious leader. Although this took place on the religious level, it represents a general trend of individuals seeking to control their destinies. This paved the way for modernist thinking that emphasises rationality, individuality and democracy.

The power of the individual to carve out his/her own destiny by being individually responsible for his/her faith was not only restricted to the spiritual level, but was echoed on the economic level.

### **2.2.1.2 The economic revolution**

In contrast to pre-modern communal wealth associated with a bartering system, the economic revolution is associated with the acceptance of individual capitalism.

Individual capitalism is seen as a system of production, distribution and exchange in which accumulated wealth is invested by private owners for the sake of gain. This led to the establishment of private enterprises, competition for markets, and business for profit in which labour is based on workers' willingness to compete with one another for jobs, and not on the amount of wealth workers create for their employers (Lerner et al 1988:554; Osborne 2005:91). Individual capitalism represents a clash with the

semi-static economy of medieval guilds in which production and trade were conducted for the benefit of society, based on the assumption that a reasonable charge for services rendered would benefit the individual, as opposed to the capitalist possibility of unlimited profits for individual capitalists (Lerner et al 1988:554; Osborne 2005:91; Hall 1995a:3).

This means that, based on the medieval notion of a common wealth (whereby a community was dependent on the willingness of the populace to work for the benefit of the whole community in exchange for physical, economic and other forms of protection), the individual could now, with the acceptance of individual capitalism, gain individual power through individually enhancing the economic conditions of the self.

At this stage in history state interference in economic activities was standard practice – a practice to be questioned and changed in later years (Lerner et al 1988:554; Osborne 2005:91; Hall 1995a:3). In a quest to expand or increase state wealth cheap raw materials (for instance precious metals that would otherwise have been bought) were acquired in what is called the first wave of colonisation (Young 2001:4-8). This economically inspired first wave of colonisation was introduced by the early Portuguese explorations of the African coast (c 1430-1498) and by Columbus' voyages to the 'new world' (c 1492-1502). This was soon followed by other European territories (Young 2001:4-8). The second wave of colonisation evolved around the expansion of political power, leading to political power struggles between territories that were finally settled in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia acknowledging equality amongst sovereign states; that differences among states are often settled by force since no legally binding higher authority exists; that cross-border wrongful acts are privately handled by those concerned; that no superior inter-state authority exists (legal aspects are in the hands of each state except for a few international laws that are oriented towards establishing minimal rules of co-existence); and the mutual recognition of other states' sovereign equality and right to self-determination (Held 1995:84-86; Hall 1995b:281; Young 2001:4-11).

This means that the introduction of individualist capitalism ultimately inspired private business enterprises and states to find cheap raw materials through colonisation. At this stage in history the relationship between business and the state was that the state was able to interfere with 'market forces' to enrich itself, assuming that such intervention would amount to caring for society. (This view of the autonomous state

was to be challenged in neoliberalist globalised times, to such an extent that it is currently possible for large international businesses to become wealthier than smaller nation-states.) The economic focus of the state, to bring about a better future, became a characteristic of modernist thinking after the economic revolution.

The economic progress of individualist capitalism led to the establishment of a new economically powerful middle class that was increasingly dissatisfied with inherited aristocratic privilege as symbolised by absolutist monarchies and this dissatisfaction ignited the freedom ideal actualised by the French Revolution.

### **2.2.1.3 The political revolution (French Revolution)<sup>1</sup>**

Before the French Revolution absolutist monarchies, such as those of France, Prussia, Austria, Spain, Sweden and Russia, had tight law and order enforcement over its territories, and the rulers' authority was believed to have come from God (Held 1995:82-85). These monarchies began to crumble as merchants and capitalists became powerful, and with the large-scale support of the rest of the populace they started making claims to monarchical rulers' power (Held 1995:84-87; Braudel 1993:357). This led to the monarchical revolution that started with the French Revolution and overthrew the absolutist monarchical governing system in the largest part of Europe (Barzun 2001:3).

Although the French Revolution (1789) was fought on French soil, 'The Revolution' (as the French Revolution is also referred to) represented the spirit of the time in Europe, because a fifth of Europeans lived in France at the time, making France the centre of European civilisation (Barzun 2001:3).

Achievements of The Revolution include the destruction of aristocratic privilege and the acceptance of the principle of inalienable individual human rights in terms of property, liberty, security, resistance to oppression, freedom of speech, religious toleration, liberty of the press, equal treatment, freedom of economic activity, freedom from arbitrary arrests, freedom of economic activity as described in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Charter of 1814 and the French Constitution of 1791 (Hamilton 1995:40, 50-51; Lerner et al 1988:685-692; Barzun 2001:249-255).

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<sup>1</sup> With the increased economic focus, many inventions, as outlined in the next section, spurred the French Revolution and the associated quest for political freedom that led to the overthrow of the absolutist monarchies, first in France, and later in other European territories (cf Macey 2000:111).

resultant changes from The Revolution that improved the well-being of ordinary people indicated that "Europe was on the threshold of a long, secular boom in productivity, improving standards of living, rapid population growth and an explosion in art, learning, science, scholarship and knowledge, known as the Renaissance" (Hall 1995b:281).

This means that after the French Revolution modernist thinking was marked by an increasingly secular nation-state associated with individual human rights that led to democratic thinking. This supported the assumption of modernist thinking that the individual has the power to better his/her situation through private capitalism, and now on the political level could vote for a preferred political party that could carry out his/her wishes with the understanding that the human rights of the individual are protected. This inspired confidence in the understanding that the individual has power over his/her destiny. Modernist thinking, at this stage, was associated with the individuality, political freedom and economic power to carve out the future of the individual. So great was the impact of these changes that they led to a new spirit in people living in Western Europe at the time, referred to as the Renaissance.

The many scientific inventions (cumulatively referred to as the scientific revolution), associated with the Renaissance and the period thereafter, added to the belief that the rational ability of humans can bring about better lives for individuals (Lerner et al 1988:644-645, 654; Janson 1982:548; Hall 1995b:281). This means that the modernist path of the individual taking control over his/her destiny on the religious, economic and political levels gained impetus through the scientific revolution. These aspects culminated in what is known as the Enlightenment.

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### 2.2.2 The Enlightenment understanding of modernist thinking

In this section the Enlightenment understanding of modernist thinking is explained by firstly presenting a brief overview of the scientific revolution, by secondly explaining the implications of the main premises of the Enlightenment, and by thirdly explaining the link between the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution.

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### **2.2.2.1 The scientific revolution and the Enlightenment**

The various scientific inventions spurred a specific mode of thinking in Western Europe, that later became known as the Enlightenment, as is explained in this section.

The pivotal scientific advances associated with the scientific revolution include: Sir Isaac Newton's discovery of the law of gravity in 1687; the first circumnavigation of the globe by Magellan and his crew; the twin discoveries of the 'new world' and, with Copernicus' refutation of the geocentric view of the universe in 1543, the realisation that the earth revolves around the sun rather than *vice versa* (Lerner et al 1988:644-645, 654; Janson 1982:548; Hall 1995b:281). These discoveries and inventions led people to believe that all phenomena could be explained through rational, scientific enquiry, as opposed to supernatural explanations (Lerner et al 1988:644-645, 654; Janson 1982:548; Hall 1995b:281).

The confidence from these discoveries and inventions, combined with the increasing support by rationality, culminated in what is referred to as Enlightenment thinking.

The underlying assumption of Enlightenment thinking is that humans inherently hold the promise of redemption through their own rational ability (Paddison 1996:27-28; Macey 2000:111, 167; Megill 1987:340; Olivier 2006; Hamilton 1995:57; Hall 1995a:2; McLennan 1996:330).

This assumption rests on three premises, namely that rationality and knowledge are to free (emancipate or liberate) humanity from oppressing forces such as ignorance about the world; that such freedom may be achieved by the expansion of knowledge through the scientific method of enquiry; and that it will bring new understanding not only of natural phenomena, but also of human beings, as is elaborated upon below.

The early part of the Enlightenment is marked by individuality, individual interpretation of phenomena and the courage of the individual to expand knowledge, as opposed to an explanatory model of society (or of the universe) in which humans merely exist, as was the case in pre-modern societies (Hamilton 1995:55-57; Lerner et al 1988:643-644; Macey 2000:111; Paddison 1996:27-28). This focus on the individualist-rationalist has been referred to as the first premise of the Enlightenment, and is a central point in many Enlightenment scholars' work. They argue that

'knowledge is power'; that humans should 'dare to know', advocating a 'free play of the mind' or a mind free from the 'obscuring haze of religious ideology' (Snyman 1993:166; Lerner et al 1988:643-644; Hamilton 1995:56-57). New knowledge was seen to be in contrast with "and superior to, 'distorted' forms of thought, such as ideology, religion, common sense, superstition and prejudice" (McLennan 1996:330). It was believed that new knowledge

"promised' ... the prospect ... of an unending era of material progress and prosperity, the abolition of prejudice and superstition and the mastery of the forces of nature based on the expansion of human knowledge and understanding" (Hall 1995a:2).

With the emphasis on new individual knowledge it was believed that society would be bettered (McLennan 1996:330; Snyman 1993:166; Hamilton 1995:57). Such emphasis on new knowledge or new ways of understanding was associated or seen as symbolising progress (Gray 1993:287; Macey 2000:111; Paddison 1996:27-28). As a result of the progress imperative of the Enlightenment, society came to be thought of as broadly progressive in character (McLennan 1996:330).

From this discussion it can be deduced that the promise of prosperity, material progress and a bettered life for all represent one of the biggest foci of the Enlightenment and subsequent modernist thinking. In the quest for such progress new knowledge that would better the human condition had to be found, with the effect that established forms of knowledge, such as the past and ancient and religious wisdoms were discarded and rejected. This understanding was carried into the rest of the modern era where the constantly new is strongly emphasised as it is thought to symbolise progress. Because these aspects were overshadowed by the promise of progress and freedom brought about by new knowledge, the Enlightenment represents a turning away from the spiritual, sense-making ethical understanding of the world.

New knowledge led to the accomplishments of the scientific revolution instilling an even deeper confidence in rational ability (Macey 2000:111, 167; Megill 1987:340; Olivier 2006a). It was accepted that the scientific method was the only valid method of enquiry (referred to as the second premise of the Enlightenment) whereby natural phenomena were investigated based on the assumption that empirical and materialist knowledge was pre-eminent and needed to be discovered (Hamilton 1995:36; Megill 1987:340; Olivier 2006). English philosopher of science, Sir Francis Bacon, advocated the scientific method of enquiry, which could furnish certainty, by using the inductive method of observation with the aim of formulating generalisations

(Lerner et al 1988:654; Littlejohn 2002:21-29). It was thought that it was possible to make lawful statements about phenomena after an analytical study that entailed making evident the exact operations used in scholarly observations (Littlejohn 2002:21-29). Such a hypothetico-deductive method or the variable-analytic tradition (we can best understand complex things in terms of fine analysis of the individual parts) holds that questions are developed, hypotheses are formulated, hypotheses are tested in controlled manipulated situations, and that these inform the formulation of theory that are often seen as laws and predictions (Littlejohn 2002:21-29). For this reason Cottingham (2003:37) argues that modern science sees "the universe is a closed causal system in which all events are certain and determined beforehand".

The scientific method implies that since one singular truth exists in nature and it merely needs to be 'discovered', 'unveiled', 'uncovered', or we are to 'find out how it works' through the rational application of the scientific method (Griffin 2003:9-10; Miller 2002:27). Since the truth exists apart from the researcher/knower it is possible for the knower to be objective in uncovering the truth about the particular phenomenon under investigation (Littlejohn 2002:26-29; Paddison 1996:27-28). The scientific method thus assumes that knowledge is something outside the knower, that it is scientifically observable and natural and physical (Littlejohn 2002:21-29). This led to the understanding that knowledge is only valid and valued if it has a direct or indirect physical utility or practical value (Lerner et al 1988:643-644; cf Deetz 1995:99-103). This gave rise to the Enlightenment focus on utility.

Another change in discourse came with the scientific method's focus away from the particular (local, community level of knowledge) to a universal objective truth (grand narrative) in a quest of making progress (Hamilton 1995:29; Paddison 1996:27-28; Snyman 1993:3). This gave rise to Enlightenment thinking being associated with a grand narrative that excludes other narratives.

An implication of the first two premises of the Enlightenment is that since such a strong belief in the power of human reason exists, the non-material (such as cultural, spiritual, moral-ethical, super-natural and non-physical aspects) was negated because it could not be problematised by the scientific method (Snyman 1993:3; Paddison 1996:27-28; Olivier 2006).

Based on the discussion above, it is the opinion of the author that Enlightenment thinking came about in a quest to liberate humans from oppressing regimes by



acquiring new knowledge. In a quest towards knowing, the rational aspect of humans became increasingly emphasised. From this rationality the scientific method is deduced, which investigates material phenomena, negating the value of the non-material because it could not be studied through the scientific method. At this stage the only valid knowledge was knowledge that was useful in discovering phenomena that were useful for understanding the world. This meant that knowledge had to have a utility value, because it had to be instrumental in achieving progress. This understanding of knowledge effectively excluded other narratives, including those that allowed moral-ethical debates. Another change brought about by the Enlightenment was the constant search for new knowledge that was enshrined in modernist thinking as valuing the new, the constantly renewed new as new knowledge became known.

The implications of these assumptions are that:

- rational knowledge is the only acceptable knowledge;
- non-material (metaphysical, cultural, spiritual) phenomena do not exist (or are not valuable) since they cannot be objectively studied because they are not materially tangible;
- rationality is the only valid method of enquiry;
- knowledge should have a direct or indirect practical value; and
- new knowledge is emphasised since it symbolises progress.

Critique against modernist thinking is voiced by critical scholars<sup>2</sup> and postmodernists<sup>3</sup> alike, who argue that by only accepting the scientific method as the only valid method of generating knowledge other methods of enquiry are deemed invalid, meaning that knowledge derived at through other methods are lost to humanity (Eagleton 2004:29; Thompson 1996:222-253; McLennan 1996:348; Paddison 1996:27-28; Hall 1996:282).

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<sup>2</sup> Based partly on Marxist political economy reasoning, Western Marxism or neo-Marxism emerged in the wake of the defeat of the revolutionary working-class movements in Germany, Austria, Italy and Hungary through the work of a group of critical theorists mostly associated with the work of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt (Frankfurt School of thought) (Macey 2000:139, 396; Negus 1997:71; Held 1980:40-42). Although Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer were prominent proponents, other mainly German-Jewish intellectuals are also associated with the Frankfurt School and dominated critical theory in the period 1920-1960 (Macey 2000:139, 396; Negus 1997:71; Held 1980:40-42). The main focus of these scholars was to preserve the initial spirit of modernity, namely to better the human condition by freeing it from oppressing forces, but they, through the modernist mode of thinking that emanated from the Enlightenment thinking, essentially objectified humans by subjecting them to the capitalist processes such as illustrated by exploitive worker-employee relationships (Macey 2000:139, 396; Negus 1997:71; Held 1980:40-42; Snyman 1993:160).

<sup>3</sup> The term 'postmodernism' has various meanings as is discussed in the second half of this chapter, but in this context it is used to incorporate all the various different nuances of so-called postmodern studies.

Another point of critique by both critical scholars and postmodernists is that the epistemology of objectivity allows for studying relative small parts instead of the whole, but often neglects the broader interrelatedness of parts since all the parts are not equally known (as is explain by the hypothetico=deductive or variable analytic assumption) (Littlejohn 2002:26-29; Griffin 2003:9-10; Miller 2002:27; Lawson 2001:xxvii, xxix-xxx). This means that small-scale research forms the basis of this method and that it often leads to a partial or fragmented understanding of the world. To achieve a greater understanding of how such parts function together, postmodernist scholars argue for the inclusion of other forms of knowledge and research methods (Macey 2000:111, 167; Baran & Davis 2003:368; Thompson 1990:100), whilst critical scholars favour studies that are suspicious of given power relations evident in critical studies' investigation of power relationships.

The greatest point of critique against using the scientific method of enquiry as the only way of bringing about knowledge, the author contends, is that it effectively excludes other modes of knowing, and thus knowledges that can only be brought about by such other modes of knowing. In this way addressing issues of morality and ethicality, for instance, cannot be achieved through the scientific method.

The third premise of the Enlightenment assumes that it is possible to apply the scientific method to studying human subjects. Enlightenment thinkers argued that the science of humans, like nature, may be reduced to a clear universal aspect assuming that human beings could be known in the same way as nature due to human nature being essentially the same (Paddison 1996:27-28; Lerner et al 1988:649-651, 154; Hamilton 1995:21-22). Contradictory to the freedom drive of modernism, the third premise of the Enlightenment led to the assumption of the universality of humankind described by critical scholars as the 'universal man'<sup>4</sup> focussing on the 'few clear points' humans have in common (Rogers 1994:122; Thompson 1996:228; Littlejohn & Foss 2005: 239-249; Macey 2000:111).

Criticism against this view of humans is voiced by both postmodernists and critical scholars in the sense that this third premise of the Enlightenment is as deterministic as the first two premises in its over-emphasis of the universal innate characteristics of humans. In the process the newer views of humans, that appreciate the difference between humans, is negated (Miller 2002:24-25; Griffin 2003:11; Littlejohn 2002:28-

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<sup>4</sup> Although also described by Adorno and Horkheimer, Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* made him a cult figure in the 1960s student movement in the United States and Europe (Rogers 1994:122; cf Thompson 1996:228).

29). The universalising determinant ontology of humans holds that humans are reactive and passive due to them being innately determined, and that humans do not have a choice in their (re)actions – a position that effectively reduces humans to rather homogeneous non-actional beings (Littlejohn 2002:28-29; Miller 2002:24-25; Griffin 2003:11).

This means, the author contends, that according to an Enlightenment perspective, that only the dimensions of humans that can be studied through the scientific method are worth studying, and that the other dimensions of humans are negated. These include the dimensions that enable culture, identity, morality, ethicality, spirituality and so forth. A further implication is that humans are universal (the same) as is explained below by critical scholars' arguments.

Based on the assumption of the universality of humans, an instrumentalist view of humans emerged in Western Europe, paired with a technical and utility focus (Deetz 1995:108; McLennan 1996:330; Macey 2000:111; Paddison 1996:27-28). The implication was that humans were used in service of other humans, since humans were not valued as having intrinsic worth, but for their contribution to the wealth accumulation of capitalist employees (Osborne 2005:91-92; Fine & Saad-Filho 2004:15-16; 39-40). Because only the material dimension of humans are studied, the ontology on which these arguments rest is that of determinism which assumes that, because humans' material aspects are the same, they will react in the same way to the same stimuli (Griffin 2003:23-25; Miller 2002:13; Littlejohn & Foss 2005: 239-249).

Critique of such an instrumentalist view was first articulated by the Frankfurt scholars who argued that it was 'dangerous' to humanity in the long term, because social problems were reduced to technical reasoning instead of researchers searching for answers in the non-tangible, moral-ethical aspects of society (Negus 1997:71; Snyman 1993:160; Snyman 2004; Bocoock 1995:267). By criticising an instrumentalist control-oriented view critical scholars effectively criticised the modernist reductionist view of humans that negates the non-material, spiritual, ethical and moral aspects of life (Schroyer 2003:viii; Snyman 1993:160; Megill 1987 340-341; cf Armstrong 2005:8-9). Such a reductionist view furthermore deprives people of their authenticity and individuality (Schroyer 2003:viii; Snyman 1993:160; Megill 1987:340-341) and is explained, inter alia in Adorno's *The jargon of authenticity* (1973). Critical scholars further argue that an instrumentalist view of humans reduces humans' capacity for

*ekstasis*, aesthetics, spirituality, ethicality and moral thinking (Schroyer 2003:viii; Snyman 1993:160; Megill 1987:340-341; cf Armstrong 2005:8-9). Supporting this critical position Megill (1987:341) argues:

"Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida speak of an 'edifying' discourse - a discourse designed, as Rorty puts it, to 'take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings'. To make the same point in another way, these writers are trying to encourage our capacity for *ekstasis* - that imaginative ability that we possess to transcend our own situations, to get outside ourselves in time and space. This is a highly important project, for it is precisely the capacity for *ekstasis* that enables us to function as moral beings, allowing us to see *ourselves* in the guise of those upon whom we act".

This means, Macey (2000:7) contends, that critical scholars criticised modernist thinking for separating humanity from "the natural world and from their potentially universal essence" or of the meaning of human existence. Such separation is evident in the disenchantment of the world as traditional beliefs made way for a unified complex of religion, and with the collapse of the metaphysical under the impact of a substantive reason of the instrumental rationality which subjects means to ends (meaning that all actions are justified to meet a specific goal) (Macey 2000:260; Armstrong 2005:8). For this reason critical scholars argue that the modern organisation of life prevents the world from being rendered a humane place (Snyman 1993:160).

Critical theorists' sentiments opposing the central definition of the truth<sup>5</sup> that interprets alternative modes of knowledge and other narratives as 'insane' or 'incoherent' and is echoed by postmodernist scholars who argue that a singular grand narrative contradicts the initial inspiration of the Enlightenment that wanted to open up possibilities as opposed to a pre-modern central definition of the truth by the figure of authority (Thompson 1990:100; Macey 2000:111, 167; Baran & Davis 2003:368). Postmodernists value a variety of knowledges, as opposed to the elitist scientific knowledge of philosophers and academics, even if it means the knowledge portrayed by the market predominates (McLennan 1996:332).

Postmodern scholars add to the debate that the modernist way of knowing (reason, logic, scientific, objectivist) is not sufficient for knowing the social world. The social conditions changed the concepts, and categories used to make sense of society should also change. Therefore postmodern scholars prefer an entirely different way of reflecting on human existence (McLennan 1996:328; Baran & Davis 2003:367).

<sup>5</sup> It is such a central definition of the truth that critical scholars of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer, called the 'monsters of modernity' (Macey 2000:167).

They further suggest that social scientists should 'deconstruct', examine and even discard some basic ideas and aspirations of social science since a scientific view proved inadequate to the study of human phenomena, implying a need to revisit the Enlightenment project (McLennan 1996:328; Thompson 1996:253; Lyotard 1984:28).

The contribution of postmodernism is creating an awareness of and an opportunity for modernist thinking to question and to reflect on its being, inherently offering a critique of the "the inner conscience of the wider western, industrial, capitalist project" (McLennan 1996:342-345). This is essentially a critique of the West for putting itself *above* other cultures, as McLennan (1996:345) explains:

"How vain, when you come to think about it, is the claim to have 'unlocked' the secret of universal reason, a claim made by a tiny handful of people and states amongst the vastness of the world's people and cultures?"

"Just because the West has often sought to impose itself on the rest of humanity does not mean that its core ideas have universal validity. Looked at it this way, the increasing *questioning* of modernist ideas from within a 'radicalized modernity' parallels the more general weakening of western imperialism. The cultural decline of these 'advanced' nations means that a correspondingly more significant place must be taken by other peoples, other cultures and other philosophical ideas than 'western' ones - whether these others be conceived as 'Eastern', 'Southern', 'non-white', 'Third World', 'peripheral' or whatever."

Based on these viewpoints it is deduced by the author that after the Enlightenment modernist thinking became associated with rationality, the scientific method and its attendant preference for objectivistic knowledge, as well as with the assumption that social phenomena (humans) can be studied by the same scientific method as natural phenomena. This ontology (view of humans) holds that only the material dimensions of humans can be studied through the scientific method. This poses a reductionist view of humans, because humans are effectively reduced to their material dimensions. A further implication of such objectivist ontology is that, by excluding non-scientific methods of study, non-material knowledge is lost. Such non-material knowledge includes cultural and metaphysical aspects, such as religion, morality and well-being. Negating the non-material that gives rise to morality and ethicality led to the unquestioning acceptance of the universality of humans which implies that humans can be used as instruments because they are universally the same, and thus replaceable. This means that the reductionist view of humans associated with Enlightenment thinking assumes an instrumentalist relationship between humans.

Modernist thinking as defined after the Enlightenment permeated the rest of modernity, not only by preference for the new, rational scientific knowledge, control, and utility, but also for its instrumentalist view of humans, in which the non-rational,

non-material dimensions of human life were negated (Gray 1993:287; McLennan 1996:330; Macey 2000:111; Paddison 1996:27-28), as will be elaborated upon in the next section.

### **2.2.2.2 The industrial revolution, mass production and the 'universal man'**

The industrial revolution with its new inventions in the fields of metallurgy, chemistry and electricity dramatically enhanced human life, but the reductionist Enlightenment view of humans that gave rise to the instrumentalist view of the 'universal man' puts a question mark over the great discoveries and inventions associated with the industrial revolution, as is explained below.

The many new discoveries and inventions particularly in the fields of metallurgy, chemistry and electricity came to be known, in retrospect, as the industrial revolution (Lerner et al 1988:728-733; Braudel 1993:374-378). The industrial revolution should not be seen as a single event that took place simultaneously throughout Western Europe, but rather as a number of coinciding processes that took different forms in different locations, spanning the era from the 1700s to the 1900s (Hall 1995a:9; Braudel 1993:274).

The discoveries and inventions associated with the industrial revolution drastically changed society by enabling good health, higher life expectancy and an enhanced standard of living, resulting in large numbers of people becoming urbanised and working in the newly-built factories to produce large quantities of identical products in a Fordist, assembly-line fashion (Allen 1996:184-185; Braudel 1993:374-378).

At the end of the 1900s the factory system was well-established, a system based on Fordism: many overworked men working in smoke-stacked industrialist factories producing *en masse* identical products which marketed to the masses that were thought of as being essentially universal (Allen 1996:193; Baran & Davis 2003:244-245). Such a Fordist regime represents, according to Allen (1996:184-185) and Hall (1997:224), a fragmentation of workers' labour skills in assembly line-based factories.

The many new products on offer, resultant from the industrial revolution, raised humans' standards of living of humans, coinciding with increasingly healthy living, enabled by discoveries and inventions in medicine. This created larger populations in Europe, which, in turn, demanded that more products be manufactured (Lerner et al

1988:749-780, 845; Braudel 1993:374-378). These new economic activities contributed to strengthening the economically powerful middle class, further underlining class consciousness between economic groups; stimulated the search for new markets; increased volume of production; and required a reorganisation in many spheres of society to provide a freer supply of capital and to ensure a more efficient labour force (Lerner et al 1988:749-780, 845; Braudel 1993:374-378).

The Fordist assembly-line production resulted in the mass consumption of identical products by the so-called mass consumer society. The mass consumer society notion is undergirded by the assumption that people have the same or similar needs or that people are essentially the same, as described by Horkheimer and Adorno's 'universal man' notion (Rogers 1994:122; Allen 1996:184-185, 192-193; Baran & Davis 2003:223; Thompson 1996:228; Braudel 1993:374-378; Hall 1997:224).

Fordism not only assumes that the public is the same and thus represents a reductionist view of humans, downplaying individual and cultural differences between public groups, but also reduces 'humans' to 'workers' in assembly lines where each person does a repetitive task (Allen 1996:184-185; Hall 1997:224). This practice is criticised by critical scholars for dehumanising people because they are reduced to commodities in the accumulation of wealth process through low wages and exploitive relationships (McLennan 1996:328-348; Lerner et al 1988:777; Negus 1997:71).

Modernist thinking after the industrial revolution was associated with the following characteristics derived from the work of Olivier (2006a), Macey (2000:259), Hall (1995a:15-16), Hall, Held and McLennan (1996:3), Armstrong (2005:121) and Boccock (1995:248):

- a rational, conceptually universalising understanding of the world due to its emphasis on the scientific method of enquiry;
- a sovereign (Westphalian) nation-state with its coercive threat of military and war;
- a secular society with bureaucratic, impersonal law enforcement apparatuses resulting in a cold, harsh, regulated and impersonal society;
- valuing the industrial processes of a Fordist regime and the resultant mass consumption by the essentially universal mass society;
- emphasising progress, as symbolised by the new that promised positive change (often challenging the traditional in a quest for progress); and

- supporting the industrialist concept of the individual as sovereign and universal (essentially the same) in terms of industrial processes, but with acknowledgement of the particular gaining importance.

It is argued by the author that the industrial revolution continued the path of modernism originated by the Enlightenment, namely progress based on scientific discoveries and inventions. This drastically enhanced human life in terms of material needs, but the negation of the non-material reduced large parts of the population to assembly-line factory workers that were not valued in terms of their humanity, but in terms of their contribution to their employers' wealth accumulation. This illustrates earlier Frankfurt scholars' concerns about the instrumentalist view of humans, based on the ontological position of the universality of humans.

After the industrial revolution nations could choose their future directions, which could have been one, or a combination, of mass consumption focussing on the economic future, dominance focusing on political aspects of society and/or social security focussing on the human condition of society (Braudel 1993:384). Different nations chose different options in unique combinations. The USA and the UK emphasised an instrumental rationality embodied in neoliberalism, whilst the westernmost part of Europe opted to balance social security with an economically responsible future. These paths developed in parallel, but the mass consumption ideology that culminated in neoliberalism became the dominant discourse of the world.

The next section investigates how the economic focus of contemporary globalised neoliberal times influenced the concepts of modernist thinking.

### 2.2.3 Modernist thinking in a globalised market-driven society

Modernist thinking became, in contemporary late modern times, more economically oriented than before, as the world discourse shifted with neoliberalism from politics to an economic-trade focus as businesses internationalised and started to make inroads into the power traditionally held by governments (Robertson 2003:3-6; Hamelink 2007:225-227).

This section shows that modernist thinking increasingly gained a market orientation (also referred to as a shift away from a political focus to an economic-trade discourse) by discussing the notion that neoliberalism led to a market-driven world

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and that this resulted in globalisation, which defines a market-driven world in terms of its characteristics: homogenisation, integration, centralisation and universalisation.

### **2.2.3.1 Neoliberalism affects a market-driven world**

Neoliberalism is largely attributed to the trickle-down theory, which assumes that if business were given free reign to accumulate wealth, wealth would ultimately 'trickle down' to improve the economic condition of the rest of society, thus balancing individual greed by social good (Brown 1995:146-151; Calkins & Vézina 1996). This understanding became influential both at the level of government economic policy and at the level of popular debate when answers were sought for socio-economic problems after the Second World War (Brown 1995:153; Hertz 2001:20-22). By the late 1970s and early 1980s a new free-market and anti-statist approach became dominant in many countries, with the United Kingdom and shortly afterwards the United States of America, under the respective leaderships of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, formally adopting neoliberalist policies in the late 1970s (Wheen 2004:9-12; Brown 1995:153).

The underlying assumption of neoliberalism is the notion that greed can be good for society, and for this reason the market should be deregulated and freed from government interference to enable businesses' wealth to trickle down to the rest of the populace (Brown 1995:153). Neoliberal economic principles limit state interference in the free market system, thus effectively liberating trade from regulation, which in turn, causes the internationalisation of economic activity (Gray 1993:274-275; Gershon 2002:53-69; McRobbie 1997:242). Actions taken by neoliberalist governments to stimulate economic growth of the private sector focus on enabling international (or across-border) trade by liberating the market through deregulation and by cutting state expenses through the privatisation of state 'burdens' (Saul 2005:71-80; Fourie 2001a:112-118; Gray 1993:275; Gershon 2002:54). Such free market capitalism is based on rewarding new and innovative enterprises, practices, products and services through measures such as a reduction in corporate and individual taxation (Gershon 2002:54; Hertz 2001:22; Gray 1993:275). For these reasons neoliberalism (also referred to as Thatcherism, Anglo-Americanism, EurAm, free market, or *laissez faire* capitalism) is associated with phrases such as the 'right to choose', 'freedom of the market', the 'value of enterprise' and business being the 'engine for growth' (McRobbie 1997:242; Gray 1993:274-275; Morley 1997:333-335). The role of the state was then reduced, mainly to create

enabling conditions for private business enterprises to accumulate wealth (Hertz 2001:23).

It can be argued that neoliberalist thinking that reduces the power of the state, to influence economic processes, opposes the earlier view of a Westphalian state in which government control was emphasised. Neoliberalists abandon state control and state interference in market processes. Neoliberalism assumes that private business enterprises should be enabled to accumulate wealth, since such wealth will trickle down to the rest of the populace through wages, taxation and so forth. In the process state expenses are cut and, where possible, privatised, whilst the market is deregulated to enable businesses greater freedom to accumulate wealth.

The internationalisation of trade through free market capitalism was further advanced through developments in communication, media and technology, but mostly by the 1990 opening up of Tim Berners-Lee's World Wide Web to non-US military users (Rajae 2000:5-6). This led to the internationalisation of UK and USA-based businesses, soon followed by businesses located in other territories, as shown below.

Free market capitalism encroached on areas that had traditionally embraced other economic and political systems in territories such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and in the largest parts of Latin America, East Asia, India, most of Africa, and in many European countries to become the dominant international economic system (Hamelink 2002:167-169; Hertz 2001:19, 23-24, 35-37). For this reason Morley (1997:333-335) argues that the concept the 'West' includes a fair number of territories not traditionally associated with the 'West'. Hertz (2001:25) therefore argues that the Soviet bloc was vanquished not by capitalism, but by the 'Coca-cola bottle' (neoliberalism) in its 70-year-old battle. Soon afterwards, the 'tiger economies' of Asia, namely Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea (and later China) opened up their markets to free market capitalism, and "entered into licensing agreements and joint ventures and utilised the capital or technology of foreign corporations and investors with notable success" (Hertz 2001:26). Only a few parts of the world, such as some parts of continental Europe and Asia, resisted neoliberalism, as Hertz (2001:29-30) argues:

"The ruthlessness of the Anglo-American model never sat well with most Continental European politicians, who still value the underlying principles of the social model - solidarity achieved through comprehensive welfare systems and economic co-operation, and a belief that the economy should be regulated for the sake of society -

and instinctively feel laissez faire capitalism, with its emphasis on deregulation and privatisation, to be excessive."

Against this background, showing firstly that the acceptance of neoliberalist policies affects the internationalisation of business, and secondly that the resultant market-driven society is currently the dominant understanding of the world, it is argued that modernist thinking in contemporary global times, is marked by a market orientation.

The next section indicates that the internationalisation of business led to globalisation that, true to the nature of modernist thinking, focuses on the economic, emphasising a market-driven modernist society to an even greater extent.

### **2.2.3.2 Globalisation<sup>6</sup>**

Studies of 'globalisation' focus on three aspects, namely integration, the compression of time and space, and global relationships (Saul 2005:19-20; Brinkman 1999; Soros 2000 130; Thompson 1996:247).

The first focus of studies of globalisation falls on the integration aspect of globalisation. Combining the arguments of various scholars (Giddens in Fourie 2001c:595; Eriksen 2005:26; Saul 2005:19-20) globalisation is seen as a process affecting a growing number of people all over the world on a daily basis by disembedded organisations, (international organisations not embedded in one country) ranging from financial, political, governmental, educational and cultural organisations to media organisations, that provide people with input that contribute to their perceptions and understandings of reality and of the world. An understanding of a universal community of humankind has further been reawakened by the understanding that the earth is a 'single place' or a 'single community of fate' through 'surface events' such as the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union, transition from an industrial view to post-industrialism, the global diffusion of democratic institutions and practices and the intensification of worldwide economic patterns, as well as financial, technological and ecological

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<sup>6</sup> Robertson (2003:3-6) associates the first wave of globalisation with the time up to the industrial revolution, the second wave of globalisation with the period during and after the industrial revolution, and the third wave with the period of globalisation starting in the 1960s. Each of these symbolises a new wave of trade developing on a wider scale, from the local level to the regional trade associated with the economic liberation into a monetary system (the so-called economic revolution) and to a global level (Robertson 2003:3-6; McGrew 1996:65). The third wave of globalisation is associated with the formation of transnational companies enabled by neoliberal thinking that coincided with the opening up of the World Wide Web to the public in 1990, as well as many other technological advances (Robertson 2003:3-6; Fourie 2001a:112-116; Rajaei 2000:5-6).

interdependence (McGrew 1996:62, 65; Rajaei 2000:xiii ). Globalisation thus defines a far more complex condition than earlier civilisations, namely one in which patterns of human interaction, interconnectedness and awareness are reconstituting the world as a single social space (McGrew 1996:65). In such a single space more economic opportunities for large multinational companies are evident (Robertson 2003:3-6).

A second focus of studies of globalisation that supports the one-world understanding is the focus on the compression of space (or distance) and time that is enabled by electronic communication opportunities that have led to greater interconnectedness among people (Fourie 2001c:598-596; Alexander 2006:14-15; Hall 1995a:15-16; Morley 1997:327).

A third focus of elucidating globalisation is on relationships, when McGrew (1996:63) and Baran and Davis (2003:367) argue that globalisation changes power relations on the political, social, organisational and interpersonal levels, evident both above (or larger than) the nation-state, and below (or smaller than) the nation-state. The changing relations between multinational corporations and governments are that smaller governments are economically less powerful than some of the large multinational corporations, questioning the power and ability of such nation-states to withstand economic pressures in a sovereign manner (Ramsaran & Price 2003; McGrew 1996:65). The influence of multinational corporations, in many cases, exceeds that of the state, often being associated with the creation of a monoculture of consumption (Eriksen 2005:26; Ramsaran & Price 2003).

These foci of globalisation do not necessarily explain the origins of globalisation nor does its impact or future, John Ralston Saul (2005:19) imply when he defines globalisation as "an inevitable form of internationalism in which civilization is reformed from the perspective of economic leadership. The leadership here is provided not by people, but by the innate force of economics at work; that is, the marketplace".

After Saul's understanding of globalisation, and in combination with arguments mentioned above, globalisation can be understood as being driven by market forces that are given free reign, and with the effect of integrating various cultures of the world at an increasing rate that transcends the borders of time and space. So powerful are the forces of the free market that the power of the state and its military is diminished, changing the conception of the nation-state.

The increase in the power of business and a decrease in the power of the state are evident as the dominant social discourse shifts from the political to an economic-trade orientation (Hamelink 2007:225-227; Saul 2005:232-236). The decrease in the power of the nation-state is associated with a decline in the influence of nation-states over its citizenry through its privatisation of state assets and the liberalisation of markets, especially through deregulation, with a resultant increase in the power of business as state borders are opened up for foreign trade and investment (Hamelink 2007:225-227; Brown 1995:153; 2004:9-12; Saul 2005:36-40). Hertz (2001: 52-53) offers reasons why the nation-state can no longer protect its citizens: corporations are playing governments off against one another for better and more lenient terms; corporations threaten to withdraw their business from a country if they don't receive the preferred treatment, which in turn, impacts on the levying of taxes, which is the most fundamental right of the nation-state and a potential means of redressing social and economic inequality. The impact of such non-collection of corporate taxes is that governments are not able to meet public service obligations and often burden individual taxpayers, more often with the result that the rich and skilled leave the country (France's upper-level income tax rates are 47% whilst Britain's were only 35% in 2001) (Hertz 2001:55-56).

This leads to the fear that economically powerful businesses want to exert their power and effectively threaten democracy<sup>7</sup> (Saul 2005:140-148; Held 1996:23; Hertz 2001:5, 51; Gray 1993:287; Oosthuizen 2001:135-136). It is, however, argued by Hertz (2001:51) that democracy could be lost if economic success is an end rather than the means to other ends, and it seems that "people have lost sight of the fact that economic growth was supposed to have a higher purpose - stability, increased standards of living, increased social cohesion for *all*, without exclusion".

Another inherent critique against a free-market system is that an increased gap or widening inequality between societies seems to be emanating from the system (Held 1996:23). Such inequality between the haves and the have nots are evident in worker patterns; between governments and business as have been discussed above; and also among nation-states or among regions. Inequality among, especially, industrialised nation-states and regions that are not industrialised to the same extent

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<sup>7</sup> To illustrate the power of large companies, Hertz (2001:7) states that the sales of General Motors and Ford are greater than the GDP of the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, and 51 of the biggest economies in the world are corporations, and only 49 are nation-states.

is a further possible outflow of neoliberalism and its globalisation processes. Various scholars (Imade 2003; Ramsaran & Price 2003; Held 1996:25) point out that an imbalanced or asymmetrical power relationship between the developed, industrialist 'north' and the 'south' exists that marginalises and further disadvantages the 'south' in terms of increased gaps in income, increased environmental degradation, loss of sovereignty, cultural imperialism, and so forth. Some scholars (Fourie 2001c:616-619; Hertz 2001:39-41, 44) warn that if this type of society is sustained only a handful of nations, ruled by business cartels, will be left on earth.

In analysing the current situation that might point towards these future scenarios, Negus (1997:73) argues that, within a globalised world, the "capitalist corporation seems to enjoy an almost omnipotent form of domination" through its commodification of public expression and other cultural forms by its communication of messages seeking to "standardize everything into a global mode", and in the process it enhances such capitalist corporations' accumulation of wealth. Not only individual scholars, but also UNESCO criticised such practice. They argue that businesses pose a threat to cultural diversity across the world (Negus 1997:79). This situation was foreseen by John Stuart Mill who warned against the 'tyranny of the majority', and by Adorno and Horkheimer as modernist thinking bringing forth 'monsters of its own' if the truth is centrally defined through one dominant view or grand narrative (Macey 2000:167).

Following these arguments Hamelink (2007:225-226) concludes that the intention of the neoliberal agenda is to advance business' economic goals at all costs, regardless of its effect, by making liberal-permissive claims such as protesting against social correctives for the free market. In a world dominated by an economic-trade discourse great emphasis is placed on material greed, to such an extent that economic competition is associated with elements of war in which all possible means (including imperialist expansion) are utilised to sustain the unstable accumulation of wealth process of oligopolistic and monopolistic businesses (Brown 1995:146-151; Held 1980:41-42).

The shift from liberal democracy to neoliberal globalisation is a hegemonic relationship, which has been associated with a type of colonisation (Newsom et al 2004:58; Griffin 2003:287; Deetz 1995:110-111). Gray (1993:274) offers a summary of the hegemonic project of the neoliberal agenda:

"The New Right has in its theorizing failed to grasp the historical and cultural presuppositions and limits of the kind of civil society they seek to maintain, restore or enhance. And this theoretical neglect has disabled the policies of governments animated by the thinking of the New Right, in that policy [...] has been concerned almost solely with securing the legal and economic conditions of market competition and thereby of general prosperity, and has only rarely and inadequately addressed the cultural conditions that undergrid and sustain a stable market order. In so far as the New Right ever nurtured a hegemonic project, this has been compromised in political practice by the blind-spot it has contained regarding the importance of the culture of individualism of which a market economy is only the visible part."

Based on the above discussion, it can be argued that the dominant discourse in contemporary globalised societies is market-driven, giving modernist thinking a distinctive market or economic orientation. This situation is discussed critically in the next section.

#### **2.2.4 Critical discussion: modernist thinking**

Based on the discussion above it can be argued that modernist thinking in contemporary times is essentially seated in an Enlightenment mode of thinking that is market-driven, as is evident from the following six main points:

- Firstly, Enlightenment thinking that endured into later modernity assumes that the world can be known through rationality (embodied in the scientific method). This means that non-physically verifiable aspects cannot be studied, and that other methods that can reveal knowledge, are negated. It further means that knowledge is embodied in the material (physically verifiable), that knowledge pre-exists before the researcher starts any investigation, and that the interaction between the researcher and the object of study does not influence the object under study. For this reason small-scale investigations into the workings of a particular object and its reaction when confronted with another object of study (such as two chemical substances) can be studied, and from such studies universal rules can be deduced by following the scientific method's generalisability requirements. It further means that deductions can be made about the behaviour of natural objects, predictions of future behaviour can be made and these could thus be controlled and manipulated to be used for the benefit of humans.
- Secondly, the Enlightenment assumptions associated with rational, scientific thinking form the basis of modernist thinking, namely that rationality is privileged over non-rational modes of thinking (such as pre-modern thinking), that knowledge

should have an utility value (to control), and that knowledge is instrumental to progress. Rationality, scientific knowledge, utility and instrumentality are the prime characteristics of modernist thinking.

- Thirdly, it can be argued that modernist thinking is marked by a control orientation after the scientific revolution's argument that the truth can be discovered through the scientific method and then nature can be known and controlled. This poses a technical focus underlined by an instrumentalist way of thinking – to use or exploit aspects for a particular purpose and not to value the aspect itself. Modernist thinking is thus essentially utility-oriented, or, in other words, if something does not have a utility or practical value, it lacks value.
- Fourthly, the essential characteristics of modernist thinking (utility, rationality, technicality, science, instrumentality) are applied to thinking about human beings, and thus only the rationally verifiable aspects of humans are considered. The effect is that the non-rational aspects of humans (such as emotions, religion, morality, ethics, beauty, and so forth) cannot be studied through the scientific method and are therefore not regarded as important. This means that the non-material (cultural, spiritual, ethical and moral aspects) existence of humans is negated, in favour of the material (and biological) dimensions. It can thus be said that the grand narrative of modernity negates the non-material existence of humans. Critical and postmodern scholars criticise modernist thinking's neglect of the non-material since it disables the capacity for empathy, morality, ethicality and understanding the non-material part of life, resulting in a sterile view of humans. This is supported by the author as a criticism of modernist thinking.
- Fifthly, the increased focus on progress through rationality sanctions different interpretations of knowledge, because only scientific knowledge with a utility value is seen as valid, largely negating religion, aesthetics, emotions, ethics, morality, values, and so forth. Modernist thinking is furthermore not only concerned with studying the material dimension of human life, but with the enhancement of material life. Such a focus is one-dimensional in the sense that the non-material dimension of human life (the spiritual or metaphysical aspects) is negated as not valid. On the contrary, it is seen as invalid. This poses a reductionist view of humans as humans are reduced to material aspects only.



- Lastly, modernist thinking can be criticised for its one-dimensionality and its materialist view of humans. This one-dimensionality is achieved through an absolute belief in rationality through the scientific method. This method discards the importance of non-material phenomena and of human existence to such an extent that it holds an instrumentalist and universalist view of humans. This amounts to the objectification of humans. These concerns are raised by critical and postmodern scholars in order to preserve the original ideal of enhancing the well-being of society through modernisation.

In conclusion it can be argued that modernist thinking is characterised by a quest for progress to emancipate individuals so that they can determine their own futures, be it on the spiritual, economic or political level. It is furthermore characterised by a rational mode of thinking represented by the scientific thinking that was believed to enable individuals to know all phenomena. It was assumed that such knowledge would give the individual even more power and would enable a better life. In this sense modernist thinking is associated with rationality, universality, instrumentality, utility, progress, power and control. It is also marked by a material focus. Modernist thinking became a grand narrative that was believed to be the only way of bettering the future for all people. In western societies this became the dominant mode of thinking, effectively sanctioning other modes of thinking. Critique of modernist thinking is that it negates other knowledges and modes of thinking, especially non-material knowledge that could enable morality, ethics, spirituality, cultural freedom, social justice and so forth. Due to modernist thinking's negation of the non-material dimension of human life, it is labelled a one-dimensional grand narrative.

With the advent of globalisation these characteristics of modernist thinking are steered in an economic direction with the effect that rational scientificity, one-dimensionality, universality, instrumentality, progress, power and control are used in service of economic wealth expansion.

This gives rise to instrumental human relationships and using human communication as an instrument to steer human relationships to the advantage of the economically powerful, as is explained below.

### **2.2.5 Modernist instrumental relationships and informational communication**

Apart from the characteristics of modernist thinking explained in the previous section, modernist thinking is associated with modernist instrumental relationships and modernist informational communication. This section explains how modernist thinking, which is associated with the objectification of human beings due to humans being regarded as universally the same, based on their shared material (biological) characteristics, manifests in modernist instrumental relationships and modernist informational communication. It is firstly argued that modernist relationships are instrumentalist in the sense that humans are exploited for a particular purpose and secondly that modernist human communication is equally instrumentalist, labelled as modernist informational communication.

#### **2.2.5.1 Modernist instrumental relationships**

In the previous section it was argued that modernist thinking is associated with a reductionist view of humans (negating individual differences as well as the non-material, non-physical, non-natural aspects such as the moral, the ethical, the spiritual, the emotional), based on an objectivist ontological understanding of humans (universally the same). It was further argued that such an ontology is criticised by critical and postmodern scholars as one-dimensional because it negates dimensions of human life that are not material (those non-material dimensions of human life that enable humane-ness).

In this section the implications of such a modernist ontology for human relationships are discussed and illustrated by the nature of modernist human relationships within an urban modernist environment and between employer and employee.

In modernist cities a social system based on a similitude of consciousness and a set of common beliefs made way for modern societies where people are rationally organised through institutions characterised by a cold, impersonal rationality as societies started focussing on status, legal contracts, and individual ownership of property (Macey 2000:260; Martin-Barbero 2006:913). In such modern societies legal rules supported by the threat of coercion impose a uniformity of beliefs in a society dominated by an increasingly sharp division of labour (Macey 2000:260). To illustrate this point, Macey (2000:260) and Baran and Davis (2003:58) describe the difference between a predominantly pre-modern sense of community (a dense network of

personal relationships based heavily on kinship and direct face-to-face contact, unwritten norms and mutual interdependence) and modernist societies (in which people are bound together by relatively weak social institutions based on rational choices, laws, formal regulations, and formal impersonal social relationships) (Martin-Barbero 2006:913).

Instead of being based on customs as in pre-modern communities, modern societies are governed through extra-familiar and legally-oriented political apparatuses and governmental institutions that are cold, harsh and impersonal (Held 1995:72; Macey 2000:260). The resultant society is one that accepts a bureaucratic, rational administrative system to regulate law and order within its national borders with no organic solidarity, since an unnatural sense of nationhood and the treat of military power to deviant behaviour hold people together (Macey 2000:167; Held 1996:16; Martin-Barbero 2006:913).

The effect of such an externally regulated society is that the sense of 'community' is replaced by a regulated 'society' since the sharing of property, religion, customs, beliefs and tradition is disappearing, leading to the loss of organic solidarity (Macey 2000:260; Martin-Barbero 2006:913).

This holds major implications for other human relationships, as is illustrated through the example of the modernist instrumental relationship between worker and employee below.

Critical scholars' concern with instrumental reasoning critique the notion of using humans as means to ends (Deetz 1995:100-108; Negus 1997:71). When such a technical-instrumental orientation of society is applied to the relationship between the worker and employer it means that the worker's remuneration is not determined by the worker's contribution to employers' accumulation of wealth, but by what he/she agrees to work for, often leading to exploitive relationships between worker and employee (McLennan 1996:328-348; Lerner et al 1988:777; Negus 1997:71). If a worker works too hard the one day, he/she cannot do the same the next day and will probably not be profitable to the employer who may decide to dispose of the worker (Osborne 2005:91-92). In this argument the treatment of workers as commodities is criticised, because it is argued that human workers have more value than labour only, and in the process the objectification of workers is criticised.

Such objectification is described in the Marxist and critical thinking traditions<sup>8</sup> as workers being separated not only from ownership of the means of production, but also being alienated from themselves and, in the process, being reduced to being less than complete human beings (Rogers 1994:104; Macey 2000:67; Fine & Saad-Filho 2004:15-16; 39-40).

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Consequently it can be argued that the modern organisation of life is marked by rules and regulations that were formulated and are enforced from outside society (although often by delegates or elected people), and these are often applied universally to all societies governed by such laws. This negates, in many cases, the individuality of people, because such a universalising ('one-size-fits-all') approach is followed for different societies. Because of the law enforcement apparatuses of the bodies governing societies, and the inorganic nature of such societies, people often feel alienated or disembedded. Such an impersonal modernist society exercises control through laws, regulations and rules. Based on this discussion it can be said that the modern organisation of life is one of conforming to externally created boundaries, with the risk of alienating people from their authenticity.

Such external control is reflected by the relationship between the worker and the employee in the sense that the employer values the worker only insofar as the worker is able to contribute to the wealth accumulation process of the employer.

It can further be argued that when a worker makes a product that is appropriated by the employer for capitalist gain, the worker is used to enrich the employer financially and is paid little in return. The worker who makes such a product is dehumanised and seen as 'labour' instead of as a human being. In other words, the worker is seen as a commodity, contributing to the worker's feeling of being alienated from his/her work, other people and from him/herself. For this reason it is argued that an instrumentalist view of humans debases human relationships from a genuine concern for the other. From the example of the relationship between worker and employer it is argued that the one-dimensionality of the grand narrative of modernist thinking

<sup>8</sup> In the production processes used in capitalism the human worker is objectified since he is seen as merely a small part in the big wheel of capitalism as was identified and explained by Karl Marx in urban areas in the early 1900s (Rogers 1994:103; Braudel 1993:547-550). Marx saw how the working class suffered in his native Germany and argued in favour of a classless society in which the root of suppression, namely the class system, should be eradicated. Marx's main criticisms against capitalism in *Das Capital* (1867) was that workers do not share in profit; the value of products in a capitalist society is not related to the amount of labour that goes into it; workers are paid as little as competition for employment allows; and the profit goes into the pockets of members of the capitalist class and not to the workers. Because workers have nothing to sell but their own labour, they become nothing more than commodities in the marketplace (Rogers 1997:103; Macey 2000:242; Lerner et al 1988:876-877; Braudel 1993:547-550; Brown 1995:152). Marx thought that work, instead of freeing people, reduced them to wage-slaves in an industrialised stage of capitalism (Braudel 1993:549; Brown 1995:152).

results in exploitive relationships that are essentially about exerting power, because humans are seen as instruments to achieve goals. It is further argued that humans have a utility value in relationships, which results in the objectification of the human. This type of relationship is referred to as a modernist instrumental relationship.

Modernist assumptions are not only evident in modernist human relationships, but also in modernist informational communication, as is explained in the next section.

### **2.2.5.2 Modernist informational communication**

The previous section argued that modernist human relationships are essentially instrumental in achieving capitalists' accumulation of wealth. In this section it is argued that modernist communication is also instrumental in the sense that it is used to exert influence.

Modernist informational communication has its origins in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century notions of the autonomous individual "engaging in the attempt to influence others, with the hope of some invisible hand in the marketplace of ideas leading to collectively good decisions" (Deetz 1995:101). Essentially, modernist informational communication<sup>9</sup> is based on the key political practice of influence-centred transmission (Deetz 1995:101, 106).

Modernist informational communication is often reduced to matters of strategy (a post-World War II phenomenon that dominated the 1980s) in which communication problems are reduced to the dominant group's problems in conveying their messages (Deetz 1995:102).

This means that modernist informational communication is associated with the reproduction of the dominant group's or person's views to maintain hegemonic relations governed from an asymmetrical power relationship between the business

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<sup>9</sup> Work done in the socio-psychological and cybernetic traditions of communication theory and research is aligned with the ontological and epistemological positions of objectivism (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:40-42). Scholars of the socio-psychological tradition see communication as interpersonal influence, expression, interaction and influence, since humans are essentially seen as responding mechanisms; whilst scholars of the cybernetic tradition describe communication as information processing, since humans are seen as adaptive agents (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:42-44). Such communication is aimed at influencing others and communication is reduced to attempting to influence and not necessarily to understand the other nor to have a reciprocal relationship with the other (Deetz 1995:101, 106). For this reason it is generally referred to as the informational perspective (Deetz 1995:101, 106). Such an information-based interaction does not necessarily rely on one-directional flow of information (for example of giving orders), but also on two-directional flow of information, for example the scientific persuasion for the two-way asymmetrical public relations views that are only undertaken to influence, and not to establish a genuine relationship. In such 'communication' Deetz (1995:101) explains that the other is allowed or even requested to make 'expressions', but not to communicate. This Deetz relates mostly to power control situations such as the communication of businesses.

and the public. The implication is that communication is seen as an instrument to exert power over the other. Because the other does not influence the communication process in a meaningful way, it amounts to simulated communication that allows only for expressions and not for the possibility of true reciprocal influence by both communicating parties. This means that expressions simulate reciprocal communication that implies a genuine concern for the other communicating party, in the sense that it is aimed at leading to mutual understanding, with the effect of limiting the notion of communication to expressions and transmission of information (or even the transmission of meaning) (Eagleton 2007:171-174; Verčič and Van Ruler 2002; Verčič 2001; Verčič 2007).

The underlying communication process of modernist informational communication is asymmetrical and influence-oriented, thus making it persuasive. In this sense persuasion is transactional; involves more than one person; is a symbolic meaning-construction act that results in voluntary changes in the beliefs, attitudes and/or behaviours of the person/group of less power; which changes can be based on rational or emotional considerations; and create alignment between source and receiver on the source's terms; implies using symbols; modifies the judgements of others with the aim of steering them in intended directions; is a particular process of change that mostly results from shared, symbolic thinking activity that is influenced by the more powerful position; is a process of influence or seeking influence; and is deliberate (Benjamin 1997:9-10; Gass & Seiter 2003:24-30, 34).

Modernist informational communication can be one-directional or two-directional asymmetrical. One-directional communication or the transmission of information is described as a process of sending and receiving messages or transferring information from one mind to another (Miller 2002:11; Griffin 2003:21-35). This is based on the early communication theory that assumes, following modernist thinking, that human beings are inherently the same (cf the 'universal man' notion of the Frankfurt School) governed by innate universal characteristics, and are thus responding mechanisms or information processors (cf the work of scholars working in the socio-psychological and the cybernetic communication traditions) (Pace & Faules 1994:5; Griffin 2003:23-25; Littlejohn & Foss 2005:239-249). In reality one-directional communication rarely occurs in situations other than brief encounters of giving orders (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:239-249). The more common type of modernist informational communication is that of two-directional asymmetrical communication. Such communication involves one-directional or linear communication followed by

feedback from the recipient of the message in a process that negates the possibility of a symmetrical relationship between communicating parties (Rensburg & Angelopulo 1996:26-32; Tubbs & Moss 2003:7-10). Although such communication is two-directional it remains based on an asymmetrical power relationship. This is referred to in the public relations literature (Dozier 1992:290-333; Newsom et al 2004:4; Wilcox et al 2000:17-19; Kotler, Brown, Adam & Armstrong 2004:608) as asymmetrical two-way communication that is essentially influence-oriented.

In recent times communication has been increasingly commodified, in the sense that businesses deliberately manipulate the public culture in order to enhance profit through cultural intermediaries such as public relations practitioners and the profession of advertising (Baran & Davis 2003:331; Narunsky-Laden 2007a).

Based on this discussion it is argued that modernist communication is essentially instrumentalist, because communication is seen as an instrument to exert power and to control, with the aim of enriching the business. For this reason it is argued that communication is not used as a process to understand the other, but rather to extract money from the other. This is evident in the contemporary emphasis on commercial messages. Modernist informational communication is inherently influence-oriented. This view represents a reductionist view of communication and of relationships, namely an attempt to influence rather than to seek mutual understanding. Modernist informational communication often coincides with modernist instrumental relationships that are also influence-oriented and instrumental, and are often actualised through modernist informational communication.

### **2.2.6 Conclusion: modernist thinking**

Modernist thinking took shape over the last 500 years - evolving different aspects at different times to emancipate the 'West' on the religious, economic, political and social levels.

The religious revolution that started with the Protestant Reformation paved the way for liberating the individual from communal worship to where the self had the power to read the Bible individually from the personal perspective as opposed to that of the clergy. Such individual power was enhanced by the invention of Gutenberg's printing press that printed the Bible and other books. Because books introduced a liberated society where individuals gained power through their own sheer will to become

literate and to read, the invention of the printing press has been referred to as the aspect that steered the 'West' away from 'ignorant' communal pre-modern living to an era in which the individual has access to information and thus the power to take fate into his/her own hands to determine the future. It is argued that this was the beginning of the individualistic, democratic and human rights-oriented regime associated with modernist thinking.

This drive gained further impetus with the economic revolution's monetary economic system (as opposed to bartering) that steered the sentiment away from the 'common good' or 'common wealth' of communities towards individual capitalism. The implication was that the harder the individual worked the more money and power was within his/her reach. The confidence accompanying such power largely paved the way for the French Revolution that, together with other political revolutions, make up the monarchical revolution. After the French Revolution, democracy and individual human rights were introduced, which coincided with the abolishment of absolutist rights of monarchies and other aristocratic privileges. This means that through reason, politics, wealth and power people could carve out their own futures, as opposed to a future dictated by birthright. This power of individuals to take control over their fate is associated with modernist thinking.

These ideas associated with modernist thinking culminated in the scientific revolution and led to the formulation of an Enlightenment mode of thinking. The Enlightenment is essentially associated with the conception that all that is reality is material, negating non-material (such as cultural, spiritual, ethical and moral) aspects; that reality exists outside the researcher, negating the interactive influence of the researcher; and that such reality can be known through rationality. These assumptions were applied to studying social phenomena (humans) through the scientific method, implying that all non-material aspects and dimensions of human life are negated, reducing humans to matters of biology. Such an overarching emphasis on rationality and materiality marks Enlightenment modes of thinking. An outflow of such thinking is that since all that is reality is knowable and material, patterns of behaviour can be deduced and described by laws that predict future behaviour. This informed the Enlightenment's control-orientation through rational, scientific knowledge, and the concept that everything there is to be known can be known, and that such knowledge will result in a type of 'master plan' that enables an understanding of the whole universe. For this reason it was thought that all knowledge should have a utility value to make progress in knowing the universe. It



can therefore be said that modernist thinking is associated with an emphasis on materialism, rationality, individuality, universalism, instrumentalism, the technical and the utility of material phenomena.

This rationally-oriented mindset permeated the rest of modernity and gave rise to the industrial revolution, the formulation of neoliberalism and later globalisation that gave contemporary modernist thinking its distinctive market orientation.

Before neoliberalism the role of the state was associated with governing, protecting and enabling its citizens, and in a neoliberalist context it is seen as enabling businesses' accumulation of wealth after the assumptions of the trickle-down theory. Coinciding with such a shift from a political to an economic focus, the sovereignty of states in the Westphalian sense of the word is threatened.

In contemporary times modernist thinking is associated with a progressive freedom drive and with valuing the new, the secular, and the material. Modernist thinking is instrumental, essentially individualistic, rationally oriented and power-driven. Following the Enlightenment the rational was thought to redeem people from pre-modern oppressing regimes. This emphasis on the rational, and later the material, led to the neglect of the other dimensions of life (such as religion, spirituality and other non-material dimensions of life), making modernist culture essentially secular.

The free-market system assumed by neoliberalism is based on the assumption that individual greed will contribute towards the progression or betterment of society. This influences human relationships and human communication. One of the most evident characteristics of modernist relationships and communication is found in its instrumentality.

Modernist instrumental relationships are evident on the individual level where human relationships are essentially instrumental so that, for instance employers use workers as instruments to assist in their accumulation of wealth without adequate remuneration. Based on the universality of humankind (after Enlightenment thinking) human relationships on the individual level tend to be influence-oriented, enhanced by influence-oriented modernist informational communication. On the global level, coinciding with the internationalising of business (accelerated advance in electronic communication systems and the large-scale acceptance of neoliberalism as the dominant economic system of the world) non-Western territories are integrated in the

cultural orientation of the West. This means that human relationships on global level also have, similar to relationships on individual level, instrumentalist tendencies, namely cultural imperialism in the sense of a Westernisation of the world.

Modernist thinking in society can be summarised as follows: it is associated with one-dimensionality that excludes other modes of thinking; it is rationally seated in scientific thinking; it emphasises the technical; it is instrumentalist; it is universalist; it focusses on the utility value; and it only acknowledges the material dimension of human life - in that modernist instrumentalist relationships use humans as instruments to achieve the objectives of the dominant party and modernist informational communication is used to exert power.

This dominant modernist thinking is increasingly challenged by beyond modernist thinking which is explained in the next section.

### 2.3 BEYOND MODERNIST THINKING

In the previous section modernist thinking was described as being a grand narrative that holds the prospect of explaining all there is to explain, and to know all there is to know. Because modernist thinking is only able to describe the material dimensions, and not the non-material dimensions of humans fully, it merely offers a one-dimensional universalist description of humans. This one-dimensionality of modernist thinking is associated with negating the non-material dimensions of human life that potentially could enable morality, ethics, spirituality and justice. Modernist thinking is further associated with instrumentality, evident in instrumental human relationships and informational (influence-oriented) communication.

Out of the criticism of the shortcomings of modernist thinking a new mode of thinking, beyond or different to modernist thinking evolved, that, instead of emphasising the material dimensions of human life, as is done by modernist thinking, emphasises the non-material dimensions of human life in a quest to integrate the material and non-material dimensions of human life. This shift towards a non-material orientation is described differently by various scholars as the 'cultural turn' (Hemer & Tufte 2005:17), an 'intellectual revolution' (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93), or 'new times'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cf Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques's *New Times: the challenging face of politics in the 1990s* (1989) as is explained by McRobbie (1997:238).

(McRobbie 1997:238; Hall 1996:286) that appreciates an 'integral image of the world' (Müller 2007:8-9). This new stream of thinking in society is associated with new social phenomena such as debates regarding the environment, postcolonialism, postmodernism and finding meaning in life, particularly evident in the work of Allen (1996:170-200) McGrew (1996:62-96), Thompson (1996:222-250), Eagleton (2007:140-174), Hall (1996:274-314) and Yearly (1996:131-151).

For the purpose of this study, the concept of beyond modernist thinking is based on the combination of the essential elements of various streams of thinking that contributed to the formation of contemporary societies, namely interdependency and environmental concerns; multiplicity, postcolonial thinking and identity politics; multiplicity and the postmodern appreciation of plurality and equality; as well as reciprocity.

### **2.3.1 Interdependency and environmental concerns**

In this section the evolution and nature of the understanding of the interdependency of the world, or 'the world as a single organism' consisting of diverse but interlinked parts, is explained.

Based on the arguments of the environmentalist social movement and the Green Movement that both oppose irresponsible industrialist processes, the belief took root in the 1970s (Schumacher 1973:3-10) that the earth's natural resources should be cared for to enable an enhanced quality of life for current and future generations (Yearly 1996:131, 135-151; Tempelhoff 2006:1)<sup>11</sup>. Although the Green Movement consists of various smaller groups, each with a different focus, Yearly (1996:131) is of the opinion that they collectively argue that the world's resources are being depleted at an increasing rate, often due to pollution and other human activities, to such an extent that the world's future ability to sustain life on earth is threatened.

Questioning the sustainability potential of the world population gained prominence in UN debates (SustainAbility [sa]; Schumacher 1973:3-10; Cambridge 2007:197). In the late 1960s and especially in the 1970s it became generally accepted that the world's people are interdependent and that social development decisions in one

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<sup>11</sup> Environmental concerns started to gain prominence on the public agenda in the late 1960s and 1970s and can be grouped as concerns about waste and air pollution, earth-bound wastes, and depletion of (natural) resources (Yearly 1996:122-131).

nation-state or region has global significance that became evident in aspects such as cross-border wars and the resultant refugees to other areas, the depletion of fisheries, and also in global warming (Cambridge 2007:197)<sup>12</sup>. This notion is explained further by Servaes and Malikhao (2005:93):

"The basic assumption is that there are no countries or communities that function completely autonomously and that are completely self-sufficient, nor are there any nations whose development is exclusively determined by external factors. Every society is dependent in one way or another, both in form and in degree."

The 1972 United Nations' Stockholm Conference (also referred to as the International Conference on the Human Environment) focussed international attention on environmental issues, especially relating to environmental degradation and transboundary pollution (Kruckeberg 2002:196-199; cf Yearly 1996:149). Over the decades following the Stockholm conference, this concept was broadened to encompass a large variety of environmental concerns, largely informing the understanding that regional or local environmental problems can pose serious broader international repercussions, such as undermining the economic base and the social fabric of weak and poor countries; the generation or exacerbation of social tensions and conflicts; as well as the stimulation of greater flows of refugees (Kruckeberg 2002:196-199; Yearly 1996:149).

The understanding that all peoples, territories and states are 'linked' was emphasised by the UN sustainability thinking (Foundation for Business and Sustainable Development [sa]). In documentation about sustainability the concept of sustainability is described as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" Foundation for Business and Sustainable Development [sa]).

The global concern for the earth's future and the interdependency of regions is underlined by the United Nations' conferences that not only focussed on environmental issues, but also on social issues, as illustrated by the topics of the 12 major conferences since 1990<sup>13</sup>. Through "the conference process the entire

<sup>12</sup> This is in direct contrast to the sovereign assumption of the modernist state, also referred to as the Westphalian state (discussed in Section 2.2).

<sup>13</sup> These are: the World Summit on Children (also referred to as the Children's Summit) held in New York in 1990; the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (also known as the Earth Summit or the Rio Summit,) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992; the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993; the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994; the World Summit for Social development held in Copenhagen in 1995; the Fourth World Conference on Women (or the Women's Conference) held in Beijing in 1995; the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (also referred to as the Habitat II Conference) held in Istanbul in 1996; the World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996; the UN Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States held in Barbados in 1994; the International Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held in Cairo in 1994; the Ninth UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of

international community has come together to agree on shared values, on shared goals and on strategies to achieve them", illustrating the interconnectedness of the world through the participation of the 185 UN member states (UN [sab]). It is further argued in the UN documentation (UN1997d) that these global conferences made a long-term impact by mobilising national and local governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to take action to address major problems that manifest on a regional or global scale.

Through the workings of the UN the understanding that the world is interlinked was established and, in so doing, it was argued that both the First and the Third Worlds had important contributions to make, as is explained below.

Mainly through the mechanism of the UN, but also through other ventures, the First World was criticised for being ruthless in its utilising of resources; its high consumption rates (of especially energy); and the creation of waste (especially hazardous and toxic waste), that cumulatively led to an emphasis on recycling and the search for energy-saving applications (Yearly 1996:149; Calkins & Vézina 1996; Kruckeberg 2002:196-199). The high consumption rates of non-renewable natural resources, not by private households but by businesses in industrialised countries, is directly attributed to the market paradigm's domination of world thinking, and represents a growing social discontent with the hegemony of big business (Cambridge 2007:197-198; UN 2005b; UN 1995).

The Third World was criticised for not paying enough attention to the production of food and the manufacture of economically viable products on the path to becoming self-sustainable (UN 2005a; UN 1995; Yearly 1996:149; Calkins & Vézina 1996). Although the 'north-south' debate was reiterated, the 'southerners' added that they were concerned about businesses not being sufficiently socially responsible and it was thought that businesses could be involved in the enhancement of the well-being of societies, especially where population growth, poverty, hunger and war were concerned (UN [sac]; Kruckeberg 2002:196-197). Together these arguments ignited a paradigm shift within the social, governmental and business environment.

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Offenders held in Cairo in 1995; and the Ninth UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX) held in Geneva in 1996 (Cambridge 2007:195; UN 1997a; UN 1997b; UN 1997c; UN 1997d; UN [saa]; UN [sab]; UN [sac]; UN 1995).

Although the UN workings emphasised the link between business and the natural and social environment, one of the first prominent links made between business and the environment was when the well-known agricultural principles of overgrazing, over-utilisation and depletion of natural resources were applied to business<sup>14</sup>. Through the workings of the UN it was argued that 'sustainability' is the biggest challenge for business, suggesting that businesses should not solely focus on profit-making, but should also incorporate the concepts of balance, limitations, and 'to know when you have enough' in business practices (Lopez 2004).

Embedded in such a paradigm shift is the argument that the peoples of the world (civil groups, NGOs, governments and businesses) should form partnerships to better the well-being of all peoples, effectively suggesting a different way of thinking about business than what is implied in neoliberal capitalism (UN 2005a; UN 2005b; Cambridge 2007:177-178). The UN's workings further spurred businesses on to contribute towards solving problems by being socially and environmentally responsible (such as cleaner and more efficient business processes, being less energy intensive, more equitable, and to help provide in the basic needs of people such as food, energy, housing, fresh water and health), whilst pursuing their profit goals (Yearly 1996:122-130).

Born out of a need to assist developing societies in enhancing their well-being, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of June 1992 (also referred to as the 'Earth Summit' or the 'Rio Summit') and its coinciding Global NGO Forum, emphasised the interlinkedness of environmental and socio-economic aspects, as well as linking these to the social developmental problems experienced in the world (UN 1997b). Whilst it was generally accepted by then that environmental and social concerns need to be addressed concurrently since they are interlinked, the actions at Rio added social development issues to the debate, formulating a plan or agenda for international action to address environmental, social

<sup>14</sup> Throughout the years many business leaders have been involved in major ventures such as the following: the International Chamber of Commerce proposed its business manifest as a set of 16 principles and actions leading business to sustainability (the International Business Council established the World Industry Council for the Environment (WICE) as a cross-sectoral group of 90 business leaders concerned with environmental challenges); chief executives of 50 of the world's leading corporations, together with the Swiss industrialist, Stephen Schmidheiny and the influential Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) published revolutionary ideas in the book, *Changing Course* (in 1995) (the BCSD and WICE merged to form the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, WBCSD); in the United Kingdom, the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum placed social responsibility on the environmental debate agenda; the German industrialist, Georg Winter, formed BAUM as well as the International Network for Environmental Management (INEM), focusing on practical environmental management solutions; and a strong partnership developed between the business world and the United Nations' Environmental Programme (UNEP), involving businesses and industries from developing countries and transitional economies (this later led to the UNEP banking initiative and the UNEP insurance initiative) (Foundation for Business and Society [sa]).

development and other social issues that would guide international cooperation and policy development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This plan, Agenda 21 (associated with the UN's millennium goals), was adopted by more than 178 governments that focussed on social and economic dimensions, natural resources, strengthening the role of important groups and partnerships between them, and the means of implementing Agenda 21 (Earth Council 1992; Hemer & Tufte 2005:18; Mefalopulos 2005:248; UN 2005c).

The UN's millennium goals include the eradication of poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, the improvement of maternal health, combating HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global consciousness for social development (Mefalopulos 2005:248). Agenda 21 further emphasises the importance of partnerships and cooperation on local, national, regional and international levels, by various parties such as developing communities, NGOs and other civil groups, business and governments (UN 2005a; UN 2005b; Cambridge 2007:197-198; UN 1995).

The incorporation of these concerns into business strategies was actualised with the term the 'triple bottom line' in 1994, arguing that it is possible for businesses to be responsible to society and the environment and still show the desired economic responsibility to their shareholders (Battem & Fetherston 2003:8; SustainAbility [sa]; Foundation for Business and Society [sa]). The triple bottom line is based on the premise that the traditional bottom line of business, namely financial success, be expanded to incorporate a social and environmental responsibility as part of the normal functioning of business (SustainAbility [sa]). The connectedness of the three legs of the triple bottom line can be described as the economy being created by humans and needing humans to manage it, to work in it and to consume products, as humans are dependent on the economy for financial wealth creation and the economy is dependent on the environment (for natural resources), and the environment is dependent on both the exploitation and management of humans and the economy (SustainAbility [sa]). At this stage it became clear that a mind shift away from seeing 'growth at any price' as a guiding principle for market-driven societies was necessary in order to make authentic and enhanced human life and well-being possible (Gray 1993:250; Yearly 1996:131; Visser & Sunter 2002:15-16).

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At the 2002 follow-up UN world conference, namely the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg 10 years after the Rio Summit, world leaders had the opportunity to make suggestions towards the practical implementation of Agenda 21 (Johannesburg Summit 2002). In a report on the progress towards Agenda 21 by the Third World and particularly South Africa, it was pointed out that companies were not sufficiently involved in social and environmental concerns, and that more partnerships should be formed with various role players, such as government, social development agencies and community groups (Johannesburg Summit 2001). It was proposed that partnerships should be formed to address the world's social and environmental concerns, instead of each entity pursuing its own concerns (such as business focussing on its private profit concerns, and governments on their public power concerns) (Cambridge 2007:197-198).

Based on the above discussion it can be argued that the notion that all the parts of the world are interdependent evolved out of the environmental concern that the world's natural resources may not be able to sustain human life in the future if it continues being exploited at the current rate. This environmental concern, coupled with the realisation that what happens in one country may have an impact on other countries (for example wars that cause refugees to flee to neighbouring countries, or air pollution that causes global warming), gave great impetus towards the formulation of the interdependency notion assuming that all the peoples of the world are linked, connected and interdependent. This led to the realisation that planetary and social responsibility is necessary to sustain life on earth, and that this is not only to be addressed on government, but also on international level (through, for instance, the UN and its various mechanisms), on local, as well as on business level. In reaction to these debates it is suggested that partnerships towards alleviating the worlds' problems be formed among all the role players, namely governments, business and civil society. The implication of this suggestion for this study is that businesses are expected to co-address, with other social institutions, the world's social, especially developmental, concerns. The outflow of this argument is that society expects business to get involved on social level and to address social problems and society regards business as having a social responsibility to do so.

In the next section the second element that contributes towards the formation of beyond modernist thinking, namely the multiplicity emphasis of postcolonial thinking and identity politics, is discussed.

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### 2.3.2 Multiplicity, postcolonial thinking and identity politics

Postcolonial thinking is mainly attributed to postcolonial literature, especially through the Latin American 'literary boom' of the 1970s, during which writers of literature incorporated the 'colonial other' into the scheme of the European modern novel, not only as ornamental figures, but as a subject, often showing their synchronicity in the fusing of myth and history (Hemer 2005:60). This literature deals with questions of cultural identity and the remaining colonial structures of the postcolonial world and questions the success of modernist thinking due to its enslaving of non-modernist groups of people (Hemer 2005:61). Postcolonial literature further pointed out the contradiction between the underlying assumptions and the often-unwritten colonialist ideologies (Hemer 2005:61; Eriksen 2005:36-37). Postcolonial writers showed that issues of race, class, gender, sexuality and other cultural manifestations are and were subject to forces of colonialism, rather than striving towards a modernist liberating state (Fourie 2001b:207).

After the work of postcolonial writers, postcolonial thinkers situated and understood phenomena within the context of larger unequal geopolitical histories of global and cultural power (Fourie 2001b:207). Postcolonial thinkers furthermore brought it to the attention of the wider community that the normative of being modern (or Western<sup>15</sup> as they mostly argue) is enforced upon other cultures and, in effect, negate their being through such a 'colonial gaze' (Fourie 2001b:207). Postcolonial thinkers further pointed out that colonised peoples' interpretations of the world are sanctioned by their colonisers, essentially marginalising the being of colonised peoples, effectively sanctioning multiplicity (Hemer 2005:61). Postcolonial thinking thus acknowledged the effect of 'othering' and its legacy in a group of people, as was pointed out by the pivotal work of Edward Said, *Orientalism* published in 1978 (Eriksen 2005:36-37; cf Said 1978:1-4). Against this background Fourie (2001c:175) argues that postcolonial theory is furthermore concerned with:

- the structures of (theoretical and methodological) knowledge production and how knowledge is circulated because it is assumed that indigenous knowledge is suppressed by modernist (and in this case, mostly Western) cultures;
- the historical foundation of cultural power on issues of race, class, gender, sexuality and nationality;

<sup>15</sup> If 'modernism' and 'Westernism' are used as synonyms as is most often found in postcolonial arguments, alternatives of Westerners against modernism are ignored. For this reason it is preferred in this study to use the term 'modern' to refer to a particular mindset, traditionally found in the 'West'.

- the contexts of colonialism (colonialisation, globalisation, the role of information, communication and technologies) and their impact on power, culture and knowledge; and
- neo-colonialism, arguing that postcolonial theory is not only relevant to historical accounts of knowledge production, power, race, gender, and so on, but are also relevant to contemporary societies.

The consequence of postcolonial thinking, with its focus on the historical and contextual aspects, is that it brought under the world's attention the diversity and multiplicity of cultures of the world (Hemer & Tufte 2005:15-16; Eriksen 2005:36-37). The diversity became especially evident as the colonisers and indigenous cultures were juxtaposed in colonies. In many cases the creolisation of the two cultures took place and led to hybridisation and the formation of new multiple cultures (Hemer & Tufte 2005:15-16; Eriksen 2005:36-37).

Postcolonial thinking gave rise to identity politics<sup>16</sup> that is associated with efforts to protect the cultural identity of marginalised groups by criticising modernist thinking and its outflows, as is explained in this section.

Identity politics is practised by politicians, social groups and activists, separatist nationalist movements, historically oppressed minorities demanding equal rights, dominant groups trying to prevent minorities from gaining access to national resources, as well as anti-modern counter-reactions to the individualism and hegemony embodied by globalisation, that collectively refer to the multiplicity of cultures and modes of thinking (Eriksen 2005:28; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93). Identity politicians seek the defence of the weak against foreign domination; nostalgically attempt to retain dignity and a sense of rootedness in an era of rapid change; follow a strategy of exclusion and an ideology of hatred; and are an outflow of socialism expressing the collective strivings of the 'underdog' (Eriksen 2005:28).

According to Eriksen (2005:28-29) and confirmed by other scholars (such as Littlejohn and Foss (2005:40-41) and Cambridge (2007:197-198) identity political drives share the following ideological features:

- the competition for scarce resources by mobilisation for economic wealth,

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<sup>16</sup> It is important for the purpose of this study to take note of postcolonial thinking because the dependency paradigm of social development discussed in Chapter 3 (refer to Section 3.2.4) grew from its sentiments and its criticism against the modernisation paradigm of social development.

- political power, symbolic power and, most importantly, recognition;
- the political symbolism and rhetoric (especially cultural symbols and kinship terminology) that downplay the difference between individual personal experiences, collective experiences and group history;
- ethnic nationalism, politicised religion and indigenous movements that favour the interests of privileged segments (or classes) of such groups, implying that similarity overrules equality;
- evolving images of past suffering and injustice; and
- in some cases historical facts and first-comers being contrasted with invaders.

Although identity politics brought a new understanding of the world, it is not free of criticism. Criticism against identity politics is that the social complexity in society is often reduced to a set of simple contrasts in its under-emphasis of smaller cultural differences (local distinctiveness) in an attempt to outline the 'demonised other' (such as the coloniser or the homogenisation effect of globalisation) (Eriksen 2005:27, 29).

The diversity of the cultures of the world became an even more emphasised topic in public and scholarly debates in the 1980s when it was realised that the globally dominant modernist thinking does not influence non-modernist cultures in a one-directional fashion (McGrew 1996:62-95). This reinforced the understanding that modernist thinking in global times is associated with universalisation, homogenisation, integration and centralisation (Held 1996:16; Hemer & Tufte (2005:13-14)<sup>17</sup>).

It was realised that globalised modernist thinking firstly interacts with local cultures, and secondly that such interaction brings forth new cultures on both the local and global level (McGrew 1996:62-95). The formation of new cultures resulting from the intersection of the global and local is referred to as 'glocalisation' (Hemer 2005:59-60; Hemer & Tufte 2005:17). After the formulation of the concept glocalisation, globalisation became associated not only with universalisation, homogenisation, integration and centralisation, but also with a parallel trend towards the particular, differentiating between cultures, fragmentation, and decentralisation, effectively pointing towards the multiplicity that exists in contemporary societies (Held

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<sup>17</sup> Universalisation is evident in universal consumer fashions; homogenisation is evident in surface appearances and institutions of modern social life; integration is evident in the formation of multinational institutions; and centralisation is evident in the centralisation of power in multinational institutions and large political forces such as the formation of the European Union (Held 1996:16; McGrew 1996:92-95; Hemer & Tufte 2005:13-14).

1996:16)<sup>18</sup>.

This means that the universalisation, homogenisation, integration and centralisation threads of globalisation are resisted (by some cultures favouring the particular; differentiating between cultures; fragmentation and decentralisation) by juxtaposing cultures. This offers many opportunities for forging new cultures and identities (Held 1996:16), referred to as the syncretisation or forming of new hybrid cultures and identities (Hall 1996:311-314).

Based on this discussion of postcolonial thinking it is argued that the critique voiced by postcolonialists against modernist thinking echoes the critique against modernist thinking voiced by postmodernist and critical thinkers, namely that modernist thinking sanctions other (non-modernist) interpretations of the world, making modernist thinking one-dimensional, and that it poses a reductionist view of humans because their non-material dimensions are negated<sup>19</sup>. An even more important contribution of postcolonial thinking to the formation of beyond modernist thinking is that it underlines the fact that other (non-modernist) cultures exist, and that the intersection of modernist thinking with other modes of thinking brings forth new modes of thinking beyond the modernist. It can be argued that the main contribution of postcolonial thinking and identity politics to the formation of beyond modernist thinking is that they firstly, by accusing modernist thinking of negating other modes of being, stimulated an understanding of the diversity of cultures of the world, and secondly, increased awareness of the non-material dimensions of human life, such as culture and the impact of cultural domination on identity formation. Identity politics further underlined the hybridisation of local cultures, as local cultures are confronted with global modernist cultures. The notion of 'glocalisation' furthered an awareness of the diversity of cultures. It contributed to accepting that a variety of cultural options are brought forth by the intersection of global modernist culture with particular local cultures.

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<sup>18</sup> Particularisation is associated with emphasis on the local and on the uniqueness of cultures; differentiation is associated with highlighting the differences between cultures; fragmentation is associated with the differences in preferences of different groups and different cultures; whilst decentralisation is associated with local and coherent groups (such as ethnic groups) taking control over their futures (Held 1996:16).

<sup>19</sup> This argument is echoed in the dependency theory of social development and development communication, assuming that the patterns of global relations are dominated by 'Westerners' contributing towards underdevelopment and less favourable living conditions of peoples in non-Western territories (Cambridge 2007:193-194) (as explained in Chapter 3).

The term 'glocalisation' do not only signify the hybridisation of cultures (as modernist global culture impinges on local cultures), but also to the ability of local cultures to influence the modernist global culture and, as well as to the renewal of local cultures.

In the next section this hybridisation of cultures is further elaborated upon in terms of postmodernist appreciation of plurality and equality.

### **2.3.3 Multiplicity and the postmodernist appreciation of plurality and equality**

In this section multiplicity and the postmodernist appreciation of plurality and equality are discussed in terms of the fragment opposing grand narratives, culture, knowledges and identities.

#### **2.3.3.1 The fragment opposing grand narratives**

The essence of postmodernism lies in its discarding of a grand narrative (or its singular one-dimensional explanation of the world, especially modernist thinking, illustrated through its opposition to teleology, utopia, Marxism, Freudianism, modernism and various totalising metatheories stemming from the Enlightenment); its rejection of public norms, inherent values, authoritative standards, consensual codes and traditional practices; and its resultant embrace of diversity, pluralism, and minor, plural narratives or interpretations of the world in its celebration of fragmentation, diversity, hybridity, multiplicity, plurality, populist culture, indeterminacy, and the particular, as pointed out by various scholars such as Lyotard (1984:xxiv), Eagleton (2004:29), Thompson (1996:222-253), McLennan (1996:348), Baran and Davis (2003:367), Hall (1996:282), Chen (1997:310), Hebdige (1997:179-194) and Olivier (2006).

Postmodernism's opposition of grand narratives and its resultant celebration of plurality, diversity and fragmentation is a reaction against a rational mode of thinking, similar to the reaction of the nineteenth century's Romantic Movement to the one-dimensionality and rationality of the Enlightenment (Thompson 1996:248). As the Romantic Movement proposed a cultural focus to counter a rational or material focus, postmodernism currently proposes the same (Thompson 1996:248).

Although postmodernist culture seems to present, on the surface, a unified discontent with grand narratives, it is associated with fragmented everyday life

(Thompson 1996:226). This means that postmodernism enjoys the fragmentation of narratives focussing on popular culture (as opposed to high culture associated with the arts) (Thompson 1996:226; Hebdige 1997:174; Eagleton 2004:29). Illustrating the emphasis on the fragmented, the spirit of postmodernism has been described as 'the art of the fragment' because postmodernism inherently celebrates pluralistic, diverse and fragmented cultures (Eagleton 2004:29; McLennan 1996:348). This fragment-oriented culture of postmodernism is especially associated with a populist culture "close to everyday life, to the market place, to consumption and to the new popular culture of the media - a culture which renounces purity, mastery of form and élitism, and is more playful, ironic, and eclectic in style", involves "a multiplicity and mixing of styles and codes, forsaking modernism's attempts to impose a unifying or overarching (meta-)theory or grand narrative" (Thompson 1996:226). In illustrating postmodernism's fragmentation and emphasis of everyday life, it can be stated that postmodernism revels in fragmentation, and discontinuity. Preferring difference over uniformity it disassociates itself from meta-language, grand narrative or meta-theory through which all things can be connected, represented or explained and it values local factors or partial explanations, especially the micro-politics of power relations in different social contexts and in relation to specific discourses, language games or interpretative communities (Thompson 1996:229; McGrew 1996:63). In postmodernism posing a fragmentation of modernist thinking, it pays close attention to marginalised views (referred to as 'other worlds' and 'other voices' of women, gays, blacks, colonised and other groups of people with their own histories) (Thompson 1996:226-229; Baran & Davis 2003:367).

Due to its emphasis on everyday cultures and on the fragment, postmodernism is characterised by the dominance of image, appearance and surface-effect over depth; the blurring of image and reality in a media-saturated world; the preference for parody, nostalgia, kitsch and pastiche (the continual re-working and quotation of past styles); and a preference for the popular and the decorative over the brutalist or functional (Hall 1997:227; Thompson 1996:222). Such an over-emphasis on the immediate, the surface and the image, erases a strong sense of history, the slippage of stable meanings, and the proliferation of difference (Hall 1997:227-228).

The postmodernist appreciation for the fragment and in the process, diversity and plurality, is evident in its view of cultures.

### 2.3.3.2 Cultures

In its opposition to the modernist grand narrative and its one-dimensionality (singularity), postmodernist culture is associated with a fragmented culture (Hall 1996:226, 276-277; Hebdige 1997:174; Eagleton 2004:29). In this sense culture is not universal (the same) but postmodernists deliberately seek to diversify in particular ways in different places, and keep on changing their culture deliberately before it can form a dominant culture (as did the culture associated with modernist thinking) (McLennan 1996:348; Thompson 1996:222-253). For this reason postmodernism is associated with a diversity of constantly changing cultures that are particular to a particular group of people (Narunsky-Laden 2007b). It is often eclectic in combining seemingly inconsistent elements to forge new cultures (Baran & Davis 2003:241, 244-245; Thompson 1996:226). Postmodernist culture further assumes that no one particular culture has higher status than another (Narunsky-Laden 2007b).

This means that postmodern culture is essentially a living critique of the culture of modernist thinking. In this sense it focusses on the smaller, particular, diversified, constantly changing cultures of people. This leads to the notion of culture being understood as constantly changing, that a multitude of cultures are appreciated, that they are all seen as being equal, and that culture is associated with popular (the people's) culture. This cultural orientation emphasises the non-material dimension of human life, in deliberate opposition to the material emphasis of modernist thinking. This postmodernist appreciation of the diversity and equality of culture is evident in accepting the diversity of knowledges.

### 2.3.3.3 Knowledges

Postmodernist culture appreciates diversity of knowledges as this is associated with the viewpoint that modernist thinking limits non-material knowledge, while the non-modernist understanding of knowledge, not scientific and rational, is negated (Hemer 2005:61; Fourie 2001c:207; Eagleton 2004:29; Thompson 1996:222-253; McLennan 1996:348; Paddison 1996:27-28; Hall 1996:282). Postmodernists argue that modernist knowledge cannot satisfactorily explain non-material phenomena such as well-being, dignity, respect, morality, ethics, beauty, aesthetics and so forth (Eagleton 2004:29; Thompson 1996:222-253; McLennan 1996:348; Paddison 1996:27-28; Hall 1996:282). For this reason, they argue that knowledge should not be limited to rational, scientific knowledge, but should include other types of knowledge (Hemer

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2005:61; Eriksen 2005:27-28; Eagleton 2004:29; Thompson 1996:222-253; McLennan 1996:348; Paddison 1996:27-28; Hall 1996:282).

This means that postmodernism is associated with plurality of knowledges that are not sanctioned by rationality and scientificity, meaning that postmodernism embraces the diversity and equality of the variety of cultures. In the same way it appreciates a diversity and equality of various identities.

#### **2.3.3.4 Identities**

Postmodernism is associated with the appreciation of a diversity of identities, in the sense of plurality and equality, being acceptable. This position is based on the newer social theories arguing that a person's identity does not remain static throughout life, but is constantly changed and shaped by various aspects (Hall 1996:284-285). Because the subject's identity constantly changes it is referred to as a decentred subject (Thompson 1996:222, 226).

The following major developments gave great impetus towards the formation of the decentred understanding of the self, namely that the self is constantly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed: the belief that the self is shaped by social factors; research on the influence of people's unconscious on their being; the formulation of new theories of language referred to as the linguistic turn; the realisation that social institutions and factors influence people's actions; and the awareness created by various social movements of the singular explanations given by modernist thinking (Hall 1996:189, 285-288). After these developments in the later part of the 1900s, it became accepted that a singular, static self-concept offers unacceptable explanations of identity, and that various aspects constantly influence the self-concept (identity) (Cottingham 2003:18; Eagleton 2007:51-52).

Initially the aspects influencing identity were thought to be social aspects only, as described by the social constructionist argument. From this perspective identity is understood to be constructed through social interaction with other people. In the process the self-concept is shaped or constructed through relationships with other people not only once, but constantly, leading the self to be constantly in flux (created and recreated) through verbal and non-verbal language (a process referred to as



symbolic interaction)<sup>20</sup> (Griffin 2003:59; Littlejohn & Foss 2005:82-83; Baran & Davis 2003:245). This means that the self-concept is a constant bridging of the gap between the 'inside' (the self) and the 'outside' (natural and social environment) with the effect of 'stitching' (*suture*) the self into a social structure (Hall 1996:276). The individual is thus 'located' and 'placed' within the structures of modern society influencing the identity and meaning of the life of the self (Hall 1996:284; cf Wasserman 2008:251-253).

Postmodernist thinkers assume that identity is hybrid and constantly shaped, not only by social aspects, but also by other aspects. Based on the constantly changing subject associated with a decentred subject, a hybrid (or postmodern) identity refers to the situation where the self is composed of various varied and contradicting factors that constantly 'pull' the subject in different directions (Baran & Davis 2003:241, 244-245). Such 'pulling' takes place through the interaction with various factors that not only include significant others (such as family and friends as in the sociological understanding of the self), but also other factors such as the mechanical and informational technology, the finance industry and the disposition of global capital flow (currency markets, national stock exchanges and multinational institutions), people who are moving around in the world (guest workers, tourists, refugees, immigrants, etc.), the media, as well as ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements (in the areas of freedom, rights, welfare, sovereignty, representation, democracy, and so forth) (Appadurai 1990; Narunsky-Laden 2007b).

A vast array of outflows result from such constant influence or 'pulling': for some it is exhilarating liberalism; to some it brings exotic and varied ways of life; for some it implies caring for the vulnerable; for some it means that the weak should be exploited to enrich the self; for some it comprises a search towards integrating the material and non-material or symbolic dimension (communality, ethics, morality and culture) of human life; for some it leads to sexuality growing into erotic obsession; for some it results in religion becoming fundamentalist (such as the Kabala or Scientology) or manifesting in 'woolly practices' (meditation and massaging); and for some it means that culture is constantly colonised by commercial forces that effectively turn culture that used to be public, private and now public again such as the commercialisation of religion (Eagleton 2007:39-43, 48-51; Hall 1996:276-277).

<sup>20</sup> The sociological concept of identity is, in the socio-cultural Communication Studies tradition, studied in terms of constructionism and symbolic interactionism, which assumes that identity is created in 'enactment' with the social reality and producing and re-producing social orders that shape identity through human interaction and human communication (Griffin 2003:28-30; Miller 2002:13; Littlejohn & Foss 2005:45; Wasserman 2008:249-251). Meaning of life is derived from such interaction (Eagleton 2007:51-52).

A radicalised extreme form of such a hybrid (or postmodern) identity is described by the so-called 'schizophrenic' identity where the subject is composed of various incompatible selves that pose a loss of coherence if the diversity of everyday popular culture and its superficiality are emphasised. The appreciation of fragmentation and a-historicity causes a loss of rational and social coherence in favour of cultural images and social forms and identities marked by fragmentation, multiplicity, plurality and indeterminacy. Consequently postmodernism becomes an eclectic movement of parody and pastiche that embraces diversity and plurality of cultures. Thus it represents a form of liberation in a fragmented movement of diversity, associated with a cultural malaise symptomatic of deeper social and political malaise in the 1980s and 1990s (Thompson 1996:222; 226; Hall 1996:284-285). This loss of coherence influences the subject's identity or self-concept in the sense that the self is seen to be fragmented, or composed of several contradictory or unresolved identities, because the process of identification, through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities, has become more open-ended, variable and problematic, leaving the individual without a fixed, essential or permanent identity, due to the subject's constantly changing context and generally a more 'pluralised' nature (Hall 1996:226-277; Baran & Davis 2003:367). Because the self is fragmented, incomplete, incoherent and composed of multiple 'selves' in relation to the different social worlds inhabited, worlds with histories that are constantly 'produced' in process, the 'subject' is constantly placed or positioned differently, which results in such constant 'pulling' of the subject in different directions. This leads to a constantly changing identity of the self (Hall 1996:276-277; Hall 1997:226), discontinuity, fragmentation, rupture and dislocation as prime characteristics of the postmodern condition and a postmodern identity (Hall 1996:274, 279; Baran & Davis 2003:367). Such a constantly shifting of identity contributes to the individual having 'an inability to work things through' or an inability to understand the world coherently and historically (Thompson 1996:229; Baran & Davis 2003:367). Because this self-concept is effectively a compilation of changing and seemingly uncorrelated aspects, it is also referred to as a 'schizophrenic' identity (Thompson 1996:230; Baran & Davis 2003:367). Such a partial identity cannot enable anyone to see outside his/her ideological position(s), leading to a fragmented view of the world in which the critical reflective ability of humans is lost (Hall 1996:282). From this point of view life has no other meaning than living itself, making a search for meaning of life irrelevant (Eagleton 2007:53-55).

Partly out of critique against the fact that this radical position of postmodernism identity cannot answer the question about what identity is, and partly out of newer research on the power of human agency (the active process of [re]creating the self) a newer formulation about how identities are forged came to the fore (Narunsky-Laden 2007b; Appadurai 1990; Morley 1997:329). This newer formulation holds that not enough credit is given to individual human agency by postmodernism and earlier views. The argument is that individuals have agency and choose to expose themselves to particular factors that influence their identities and other aspects of their lives (Eagleton 2007:140-151; Cottingham 2003:28-29; Narunsky-Laden 2007b; Appadurai 1990; Morley 1997:329). This means that people have the agency to deliberately allow particular factors to influence their identities and concepts of meaning of life (Narunsky-Laden 2007b). Because people do not seem to be 'lost', as is the case with the schizophrenic argument about a hybrid (or postmodern) identity, people in a postmodernist world have individual human agency and subsequently do not feel threatened. They are therefore characterised by reciprocity and permission by the other to be what he/she chooses (Narunsky-Laden 2007b).

Based on the above discussion it is argued that postmodernism, born out of the opposition to the grand narrative of modernity, is essentially associated with the fragment and with plurality, equality and diversity evident on the cultural, knowledge and identity levels. This presents an appreciation for the non-material, as opposed to the modernist appreciation for the material.

In the next section this appreciation of the non-material is elaborated upon as it manifests in questions around the meaning of life that implicate reciprocity.

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#### **2.3.4 Reciprocity**

The term 'reciprocity' is associated with aspects such as ethics, morality, spirituality, love, the Golden Rule, justice, loyalty, gift, legitimacy, the act of giving with the aim of enabling people to achieve maximum spiritual growth, hospitality, equal power, nurturing relationships, happiness, well-being, free agent, the gift of giving, and generosity (Calkins & Vézina 1996; Eagleton 2007:147-149). Essentially this is based on the assumption that the most essential parts of one's self concept is non-material well-being (happiness) and this is only to be found in living reciprocally by having reciprocal relationships with others (other people, a metaphysical entity, nature, and

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so forth) (Eagleton 2007:140-151, 171-174). Various scholars explain this differently, as elaborated below.

Eagleton (2007:171-174) draws on the analogy of a jazz group to explain human identity and meaning of life and reciprocity, in the sense that members of the group are happy in themselves but they also give each of the other players the gift to be happy, symbolised by each playing a unique melody in tune with the rest, with the result that the music itself is enjoyed and does not have the purpose of finishing.

Calkins & Vézina (1996) associate reciprocity with conservation of the earth, with co-operation instead of competition among people, generosity to help other people who have less, to live socially and ecologically justly, and to decentralise and deconcentrate power. This, they argue, applies to individual people and also to businesses, where the latter will imply environmental responsibility and social responsibility by assisting in community development, offering humanitarian aid, sponsorships, community care and debt annulment (Calkins & Vézina 1996). They argue that, in opposition to modernist thinking's focus on the material dimensions, the abovementioned non-material (or spiritual as they refer to it) dimensions of human life are actualised (Calkins & Vézina 1996).

Other scholars (such as Morley 1997:329 and Hall 1996:277) support this argument, emphasising that such reciprocity makes authentic and meaningful living possible. Similar to Eagleton's view, but with a deliberately added religious-spiritual attribute, is Cottingham's view (2003:28-29) which proposes a combination of being humane, acting in a morally justifiable ethical way, being rational, and being spiritually oriented shaping one's self concept.

Reciprocal relationships, as explained above, are enabled by constitutive communication. The main purpose of constitutive communication is to bridge the gap between the self and the other in an attempt to reach mutual understanding between communicating parties (Deetz 1995:107). This means that both parties are actively involved in an attempt to understand the other through the production and reproduction of shared meaning (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:204-207). This makes this type of communication dialogic and collaborative constructions of the self, the other, and the world, thus making collective decisions in the process (Miller 2002:11-12; Craig 1999:124-128). From this perspective the self is produced and reproduced, and social knowledge and social structures are created (Miller 2002:11-12). In this sense

constitutive communication is not seen as a secondary phenomenon that can be explained by antecedent psychological, sociological, cultural or economic factors, but the primary, constitutive social process that explains all these other factors (Miller 2002:11-12; Craig 1999:124-128). The political attention of constitutive communication is to "describe how the inner world, outer world, social relations and means of expression are reciprocally constituted with the interactional process as its own best explanation" (Deetz 1995:107). In this sense interactional refers to dialogue that is two-directional and symmetrical in the sense that both communicating parties have equal status (Griffin 2003:32-33, 174-175; Mersham et al 1995:45). This means that constitutive communication is not only a product of prior communicative processes, but an 'enactment' of relationships (Deetz 1995:106). Constitutive communication can only be achieved if the emphasis falls on a true dialogical relationship where both communicating parties have equal status and where the dialogical relationship is based on humane assumptions, in what is called a reciprocal relationship (Deetz 1995:99-107; cf Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). This is in contrast to modernist unequal power relationships that cannot lead to mutual understanding between communicating parties.

From this discussion it is evident that constitutive communication and reciprocal relationships are intertwined, as reciprocal relationships are associated with the humane where constitutive communication is used to bridge the gap between the self and others. This understanding associates constitutive communication and reciprocal relationships with beyond modernist thinking that is based on reciprocity, accepting the other and an attempt to understand the other. From this perspective reciprocal relationships and constitutive communication gives meaning to human life.

### **2.3.5 Critical discussion**

In this section it is argued that in contemporary societies various new streams of thinking are evident, of which interdependency, postcolonial thinking and identity politics, postmodernism, and reciprocity and the meaning of life are most prominent.

Interdependency was associated with the realisation that humans are interlinked (what happens in one region of the world often impacts on another), and that they are interdependent on one another and on the natural environment for their survival on earth.

Postcolonialism was associated with marginalised groups of people pointing towards their political marginalisation as oppressing their cultures. They placed the possibility of a diversity and equality of cultures and identities on the international agenda. These represent the non-material dimension of human life.

The postmodernist appreciation of plurality and quality of cultures, knowledges and identities which celebrates the fragment in opposition to grand narratives, furthered the cause of postcolonialism and identity politics which emphasise the non-material dimensions of human life.

Collectively postcolonialism, postmodernism and identity politics emphasise the non-material and the multiplicity of existence by pointing out the one-dimensionality of modernist thinking. In this way they emphasise their own appreciation of diversity and equality of a variety of aspects.

Equality can be associated with reciprocity and a quest to find meaning in life. It was argued in this section that various views exist on how meaning is found in life, but all point towards reciprocal relationships. Reciprocal relationships with other human beings are enabled by constitutive communication that is aimed at establishing mutual understanding between communicating parties by 'bridging the gap between the self and the other'.

This discussion is summarised in Table 2.1:

<b>Interdependency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humans and nature are interlinked and interdependent for future survival</li> <li>• Groups in society are interlinked and interdependent on one another for future survival</li> <li>• Groups in society have a responsibility towards one another</li> <li>• Social expectations of business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Business is part of society</li> <li>○ Business should be socially involved</li> <li>○ Businesses should form partnerships with other social institutions to address matters of social and environmental concern, including social development aspects</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Multiplicity: postcolonialism and identity politics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasises the non-material</li> <li>• Plurality and equality: cultures, knowledges, identities</li> <li>• Multiplicity</li> </ul>
<b>Multiplicity: postmodernism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasises the non-material</li> <li>• Appreciation of the fragment in opposition to grand narratives</li> <li>• Plurality and equality: cultures, knowledges, identities</li> <li>• Multiplicity</li> </ul>
<b>Reciprocity and meaning of life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasise the non-material</li> <li>• Reciprocal relationships</li> <li>• Constitutive communication</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2.1** *The formation of beyond modernist thinking*

Collectively the characteristics listed in Table 2.1 are referred to, for the purpose of this study as beyond modernist thinking.

As many characteristics are overlapping, they have been contextualised in terms of three aspects, namely interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity. This means that beyond modernist thinking is seated in the understanding that humans are interdependent on one another and interdependent on nature for future survival on earth. This realisation of the interconnectedness or interlinkedness of groups of humans, and of humans and nature causes vulnerability towards the other, but also the power to enable the other. In this study it is termed as responsibility towards one another. This vulnerability, power and mutuality are described by the term reciprocity that gives rise to reciprocal relationships enabled by constitutive communication. In this sense reciprocity is associated with caring, ethics, morality, spirituality, love, the Golden Rule, justice, loyalty, gift, legitimacy, equal power, nurturing relationships, happiness, well-being, free agency, the gift of giving, generosity and the act of giving. Within a reciprocal relationship constitutive communication is aimed at understanding the other, or bridging the gap between the self and the other, which amounts to mutual understanding. This means that communication and relationships are intertwined. Reciprocity engenders an awareness, acknowledgement, acceptance and celebration of diversity on various levels, such as the cultural, knowledge and

identity levels. Coinciding with the acceptance of diversity, equality is assumed. It is furthermore assumed that the diverse cultures are equal, that the diverse interpretations of knowledges are equal in status, and that there are various interpretations of human identity. This emphasis on the non-material dimension of human life furthermore assumes the plurality of knowledges, meaning that knowledges other than scientific rational knowledge is acceptable. In this sense the non-material is associated with culture, identity, knowledges, ethics, morality, spirituality and so forth. This emphasis on the non-material dimension of human life is to make society aware of this dimension in opposition to the one-dimensional material focus of modernist thinking. Although creating an awareness of the non-material, beyond modernist thinking seeks to show that both the non-material and material dimensions of human life are necessary.

With the realisation that the different aspects of earth are interdependent and based on the notion of reciprocity, it is assumed that business is part of society, implying an interdependency between business and groups in society as they are part of the same society. This gives rise to an increasing social expectation that businesses should be socially involved.

This understanding is graphically illustrated in Table 2.2 below:

<b>Interdependency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humans and nature are interlinked and interdependent for future survival</li> <li>• Groups in society are interlinked and interdependent on one another for future survival and thus have a responsibility towards one another</li> <li>• Groups in society have a responsibility towards one another</li> <li>• Social expectations exist of business to be socially engaged, because business is part of society</li> <li>• Business forms partnerships to address social concerns</li> </ul>
<b>Multiplicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material and non-material (culture, identity, knowledges, ethics, morality, spirituality) dimensions of human life</li> <li>• Plurality of knowledges and identities, diversity and equality of cultures</li> </ul>
<b>Reciprocity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring, ethics, morality, spirituality, love, the Golden Rule, justice, loyalty, giving, legitimacy, equal power, nurturing relationships, happiness, well-being, free agency, gift of giving, generosity, genuine concern</li> <li>• Vulnerability and power in relationships</li> <li>• Constitutive communication: bridge the gap between the self and others</li> <li>• Conflation of constitutive communication and reciprocal relationships</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2.2 Beyond modernist thinking**

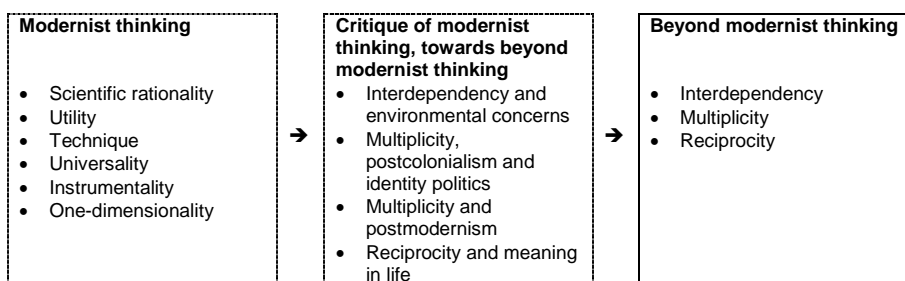


## 2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes a shift in social thinking, from modernist thinking to beyond modernist thinking. Modernist thinking has evolved over the last 500 years to the contemporary one-dimensional concept that excludes other modes of thinking; is rational and seated in scientific thinking; emphasises the technical; is instrumentalist; is universalist; focusses on the utility value; and only acknowledges the material dimension of human life. Therefore modernist instrumentalist relationships use humans as instruments to achieve the objectives of the dominant party and modernist informational communication is used to exert power. In a modernist global neoliberal context these characteristics remain, although they are steered towards serving the dominant economic-trade discourse.

Increasing criticism of modernist thinking, especially by the environmental movement, postcolonialism, identity politics, postmodernism and a quest to find meaning in human life led to the formation of what has been labelled, for the purpose of this study beyond modernist thinking. It was argued that beyond modernist thinking is primarily associated with interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity. This means that it is accepted that the world consists of many parts that are interrelated and interdependent on one another for future survival, that these parts are different but equal and that the nature of the relationship between these parts is reciprocal. In this sense reciprocal relationships are associated with constitutive communication.

This shift is graphically represented below in Figure 2.1:



**FIGURE 2.1** From modernist to beyond modernist social thinking

The contribution of this chapter was firstly to indicate the social shift from modernist thinking towards beyond modernist thinking, and secondly to critically discuss the notion of beyond modernist thinking.

In the next chapter this mode of thinking is applied to the field of social development.

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## Chapter 3

# Beyond modernist social development

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter argued that a shift in society from modernist thinking to beyond modernist thinking took place. This represents a shift to a non-material (cultural, spiritual, ethical and moral aspects) focus based on interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity as evident in reciprocal human relationships and constitutive communication. Based on the acceptance of interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity, a shift in social relationships took place, resulting in society expecting businesses to be part of society and to engage with society, which in a developing context such engagement with society implies social development.

The main focus of this chapter is to investigate whether a similar shift from modernist thinking to beyond modernist thinking is evident in social development. To ascertain whether such a shift exists, the main approaches of social development are investigated, followed by a beyond modernist approach to social development.

### 3.2 THE MAIN APPROACHES TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

This section firstly presents a contextualisation of the notion of social development followed by a comprehensive discussion and comparison of the main thrusts of the various approaches to social development.

#### 3.2.1 Social development: an historic contextualisation

From an historical perspective, social development has gained great impetus since the Second World War when not only Western Europe but large parts of the world, as Cambridge (2007:183) points out, was in a state of despair:

"At the end of World War II, the human condition was bleak. The destruction caused by the war in Europe and the pervasiveness of poverty in Europe's colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean meant that millions of humans were living without adequate

housing, health care, and food."

The United Nations (UN) was founded to address the world's social problems after the Second World War and this led to the formal beginning of social development aid in Third World countries<sup>1</sup> (Cambridge 2007:184). At this stage social development aid was guided by the US's Four Point Plan of 1949 (Sonderling 2006:545; Shah & Wilkins 2006:557). These early beginnings of social development coincided largely with the rise of political emancipation (de-colonisation and political independence) of most colonised countries (Cambridge 2007:184).

After the Second World War it was thought that humanity possessed the knowledge and skills to relieve the world's suffering, poverty and food shortages primarily through the vehicle of transferring Western scientific and technical knowledge of agriculture, commerce, industry and health (Cambridge 2007:189-190; Waisbord 2005:80; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92) to the Third World. Since the transfer of knowledge and economic and infrastructural aid successfully led to rebuilding Europe after the war, it was considered the best option to address the Third World's social development problems (Waisbord 2001:1).

These early beginnings of social development aid took place during the de-colonisation and the post Second World War Cold War periods. During the Cold War both the USA and the then Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) used the vehicles of social development and humanitarian aid to advance their ideologies by sketching different options for the future through social development (Cambridge 2007:183-184, 189-190). To illustrate this point Cambridge (2007:183-184) argues that as part of such an aid strategy the USA made major investments in Iran, Turkey, India, Pakistan and other areas bordering the former USSR in order to contain the USSR. For the sake of ideological expansion the early beginnings of social development were marked by public diplomacy and government propaganda in which both official government channels and unofficial channels, such as social development aid, were used to advance political ideologies (Straubhaar & Boyd 2007:143-145).

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Third World' was first used during the 1789 French Revolution to refer to people in poverty lacking political power, and since then it has been used to indicate spatial actors (where oppression is based on race, ethnicity, class or gender) or to economic distance or dependency on the global capitalist economy or to spaces of anti-colonial political struggles (Shah & Wilkins 2006:559).

Based on the idea of using social development to further ideologies, the nature of early social development (especially in the late 1950s and in the 1960s) was 'top-down' where social development messages were formulated outside the developing community with the understanding that the developing community should modernise in order to be seen as developed (Cambridge 2007:189-190; Hemer & Tufte 2005:14). At this stage social development was mainly associated with a 'systems model of communication', functioning as a 'science to produce effective messages' as an add-on to agricultural extension programmes, and was conceived primarily as a tool of top-down social development projects (Waisbord 2005:77).

The former USSR and the USA promoted different modernisation ideals. The former USSR and its allies felt that progress was to be achieved through revolutionary socialism, since true progress can only occur in a socialist society (Cambridge 2007:170-171). It was thought that socialist transformation should replace inequitable economic practices with more egalitarian ones until society would progress materially and spiritually with the aim of the 'withering away of the state' (Cambridge 2002:150-151). From this perspective communication was seen as an instrument of educating developing communities to foster their own understanding of the diverse phenomena and processes that are taking place in social life, by increasing their levels of general education in assimilating and carrying out laws and general principles and in struggling with revolutionary and bourgeois ideologies that are foreign to socialist norms (Servaes 1995:40; Cambridge 2007:189-191).

Similar to the former USSR, the USA expanded its ideological support through social development aid and in the process sought to expand its access to markets and raw materials (Cambridge 2007:184). The USA defined social development as the "replica of its own political-economic system and opening the way for the transnational corporations. At the same time, the developing countries saw the 'welfare state' of the North Atlantic nations and the ultimate goal of development" (Servaes 1995:40). Against the workings of the USA during the Cold War period the earliest and most easily identifiable framework for social development, namely the modernisation approach to social development (also referred to as the dominant paradigm), took form. Essentially the modernisation approach to social development equated modernisation with social development, hence the name of this approach (Hemer & Tufte 2005:16; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92-103).

In reaction to criticism of the modernisation approach to social development, namely that it forces modernisation on developing communities, two broad approaches to social development evolved, namely the dependency critique that led to the liberation from oppression approach to social development and the participatory approach to social development (Servaes 1995:40-45). Both coincided with the social shift in thinking associated with the 'cultural turn' (also referred to as the 'intellectual revolution' or 'new times' in Chapter 2). The dependency critique laid the foundation for an array of approaches to social development that emphasised 'participation' in various ways (Servaes & Milikhao 2005:93). These manifestations are not clearly demarcated and can thus only be isolated and discussed separately in this chapter for heuristic reasons, as they do not in all cases belong to different historical periods, nor are exclusive to regional boundaries, nor rest on entirely exclusive assumptions.

Partly in reaction to the modernisation approach to social development and partly true to the liberation ideology that has its roots in neo-Marxist thinking, criticism of the modernisation approach to social development was initially expressed by colonised peoples associated with the non-aligned movement in the form of the dependency critique (Cambridge 2007: 189-193; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92-93; Obregon & Mosquera 2005:234-237). The criticism against the modernisation approach to social development is that it is used as an instrument to modernise non-modern people in a process of 'social engineering' (Hemer & Tufte 2005:16). Out of the dependency critique a 'power taking' ideology of social development evolved in which liberation of oppressed people was sought through political revolutionary force in the name of social development, thus linking this approach to social development to the revolutionary political struggle (Thomas 2006:476-479). This approach was largely based on Paulo Freire's notion of conscientisation that has to do with liberating and educating the self (Thomas 2006:476-477). In this process liberation emphasised popular participation in interpersonal communication and by using the (mass and local) media to vocalise popular concerns (Riaño 2006:447-450; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:466-468).

The focus on popular participation, communication media, and the underlying communication process in social development still remains a main concern in the discourses of social development (Thomas 2006:476-479; White 2006:482; Habito-Cadiz 2006:427; Servaes 1995:40-41). This focus manifests in different ways in the newer approaches to social development.



Against this background the main assumptions and nature of the main approaches to social development, according to Servaes (1995:39-47) and Gumucio-Dragon and Tufte (2006:v-xxxvi), are discussed in the rest of this section:

- social development as modernisation;
- social development as liberation from oppression and dependency;
- development support communication (DSC);
- 'another development'; and
- the multiplicity or participatory approach to social development.

### **3.2.2 The modernisation approach to social development**

In this section the modernisation approach to social development is firstly discussed in terms of its nature and the type of relationship and communication implied, and secondly in terms of the critique of and decline in support for this approach social development.

#### **3.2.2.1 Main assumptions**

Proponents of the modernisation approach to social development assume that the Third World was, in the mid 1900s, in a similar pre-industrialised stage as Europe in the 1600s and that social development meant that the Third World's progress towards modernisation had to be speeded up by helping it to 'catch up' with the West in the quickest possible way (Cambridge 2007:189-190; Waisbord 2001:1). It was thought that such linear universal social development would, similar to the monarchical revolution, economic revolution, Enlightenment, scientific revolution and industrial revolution, need rational scientific technical knowledge to enable the Third World to modernise (embodied by industrialisation, commercialism and consumption of goods) (Melkote 1991:36; Cambridge 2007:189-170).

The way to achieve social development was to remove 'barriers' to development and to compress the 'catching up' time through getting developing communities to modernise through the introduction of modern methods and techniques into the everyday lives of developing communities (Servaes 1995:40). This notion was introduced into Third World developing communities through the scientific knowledge generated outside the developing community in modern Western countries and then diffused to developing communities through extension workers in the fields of health

and agriculture (Servaes 1995:40; Melkote & Kandath 1996; Baran & Davis 2003:366). These pro-development information, knowledge, innovations and skills were thought to be 'productive' and 'useful' in the process of modernisation (Melkote & Kandath 1996). The developing countries were attracted to social development as new technologies promised the possibility of economic wealth and the creation of physical infrastructure (Servaes 1995:40). This aligned social development with infrastructural and economic development (Servaes 1995:40).

Based on the above discussion it is evident that this approach is underpinned by the modernist emphasis on the economic, progressive, utility, technical and rational assumptions that seek to advance the material dimensions of human life. The universalist assumption of modernism is evident in the modernisation approach's view that social development is the same for all people (universal), that it follows a linear path and that all people want to develop to the same state.

A further modernist characteristic is that the difference between cultures is seen only as the degree of social development (measuring the success of social development in quantifiable terms such as the GNP, literacy levels, industrial base and urbanisation) implying that the transfer of capital, ideology, technology and information is appropriate (Servaes 1995:40).

As modernist thinking is associated with a grand narrative that negates and suppresses minor narratives, social development agents who adopted this approach designed social development projects from their own perspective, consequently disregarding the needs and objectives of the community or beneficiaries and effectively steering them into accepting the modernist grand narrative mode of thinking (Melkote 1991:38; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92). In the process modern (Western and externally created) values such as democracy, citizen participation, multi-party states, national unity, physical and psychic mobility, and change were fostered and largely led to the replication, to a large extent, of the Western donor country's values and culture (Melkote 1991:38; Carlsson 2005:195). This led Servaes and Malikhao (2005:92) to argue that:

"This mainly economic-oriented view, characterized by endogenism and evolutionism, ultimately resulted in the *modernization and growth theory*. It sees development as an unilinear, evolutionary process and defines the state of underdevelopment in terms of observable quantitative differences between so-called poor and rich countries on the one hand, and traditional and modern societies on the other."

The modernisation approach to social development is furthermore understood as producing a replica of the donor country's cultural-political-economic system, effectively modernising the world in such a way that it paved the way for the transnational corporation (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92). This is underlined on the cultural level where social development effected a consumer culture in non-Western societies that do not necessarily, traditionally have such a culture, in the process creating new markets and opportunities to harvest cheap raw materials (Cambridge 2007:183; Straubhaar & Boyd 2002:139-153; Baran & Davis 2003:366). In this sense the modernisation approach to social development implanted the culture of the donor country onto the developing countries, and in the process created new patron-client relationships between donor country and developing country (Carlsson 2005:195). This means that the relationships between the development facilitator and the developing community within the modernisation approach to social development are essentially instrumentalist, in the sense that the developing community is steered towards becoming a replica of modern societies (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92, 94-95; Malan 1996:10).

For this reason it can be deduced that the modernisation approach to social development is manipulative and views the developing community as an instrument to foster modernisation. This modern instrumentalist view of social development and the relationship between donor of social development aid and the developing community is supported by an instrumentalist view of communication, as elaborated below.

Apart from pro-modernisation messages transmitted by extension workers through face-to-face interactions with members of the developing community, the mass media (mostly radio) were used to diffuse pro-modernisation messages that were created outside the developing community with social change in mind (Cambridge 2007:189-190; Waisbord 2005:80; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92; Carlsson 2005:194-195). This change orientation of the modernisation approach to social development was based on product marketing trends of the time, referred to as the 'diffusion of innovations' trend (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:94-95). Criticism against the diffusion of innovations mode of thinking is that messages are designed by an external change agent and diffused into a developing community and that effectively amounts to communication and social development having an authoritarian character (Waisbord 2001:1-7).

Building on the diffusion of innovations thinking of the modernisation approach to social development it was thought that if people with empathetic, mobile personalities could be influenced to adopt new innovations they would advocate these innovative ideas to the rest of the community, and in this way the process of modernisation could be accelerated (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:94-95; Mefalopulos 2005:150-152). In this *two-step flow of information model* the first step was to diffuse innovations to community leaders and the second step was premised on them diffusing it to the rest of the community (Mowlana & Wilson 1990:58; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:94-95). The two-step flow of information process assumes that the mass media spread new information fast, and so was thought the best way to make people aware of new innovations, but when the individual has to choose between adoption and rejection, interpersonal contact with other members of the community is more likely than mass communication to persuade people to adopt new innovations (Servaes 1995:44; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:94-95; Mefalopulos 2005:150-152). In this sense the mass media were seen a 'mobility multiplier' and a 'teacher for change' (Servaes 1995:45). The aim of this top-down authoritarian communication used by the modernisation approach to social development was to 'integrate' the developing community with the donor of social development aid and to 'reform' developing communities by creating a climate of acceptance for exogenous ideas and innovations (Melkote 1991:15).

The underlying model of communication is modernist in the sense that it is influence-oriented due to its reducing the developing community to passive recipients of information created by 'outside experts' (Malan 1996:5, 14). The mass media were seen as agents of modernisation leading research to focus on the social-psychological characteristics considered necessary for transition from a traditional to a modern society (Melkote 1991:92; Morris 2005:123-126).

From the above discussion it can be deduced that the underlying political will of the communication, associated with the modernisation approach to social development is in line with the informational communication perspective sketched in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2 refers), in which the focus of human communication falls on the communicator's needs and problems in influencing the other (the recipient of communication messages).

The next section will show how criticism of the modernisation approach to social development led to a decline in support of this approach.

### **3.2.2.2 The decline of the modernisation approach to social development**

Towards the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s the modernisation approach to social development was criticised for not bringing about sustainable social development and for its pro-modernisation ideology (Melkote 1991:22-36; Mowlana & Wilson 1990:19-20; Sonderling 2006:553). The reasons offered were similar to the criticism of modernist thinking in the sense that the non-material aspects of the developing community are negated, as elaborated below.

The modernisation approach to social development assumes that traditional societies do not have complex social structures, traditions, culture, histories or communication systems, which justifies manipulation of the existing traditional communication and social systems to achieve the goals foreseen by people outside the developing community (Servaes & Malikhaio 2005:92-103; Sawhney 2002:36-40). For this reason it is argued that the modernisation approach is a form of 'social engineering' (Hemer & Tuft 2005:16). As this approach takes place on national media level it can be argued that it would promote social developmental information sufficiently on local levels (Shah & Wilkin 2006:558).

The modernisation approach to social development is furthermore seen as a process of Westernisation because of its Western, technical and rationalist focus, amounting to an ethnocentric, mostly Western bias in the transfer of skills, technology, infrastructure and culture (Waisbord 2005:1-7, 79; Obregon & Mosquera 2005:234-237; Sawhney 2002:36-40). This Western bias is further evident in the fact that social development is measured in terms of economy by using economic growth indicators such as GNP and per capita income (Shah & Wilkin 2006:558; Melkote 1991:130-137; Waisbord 2001:1-7). A related problem with this approach to social development from a modernisation approach is that it often fulfils the administrative needs of the social development industry (Shah & Wilkin 2006:558).

The type of communication used to advance modernist social development is referred to as being vertical in nature, authority-based, top-down, expert-driven, non-negotiable, well-intentioned but highly prescriptive, international, non-African, anti-traditional, modernist, biased to the transfer of innovations, pro-persuasion; pro-literacy, neglectful of the importance of culture, tradition, political and social factors, promoting imperialism, Eurocentric, and product- and profit-centered that it amounts

to Westernisation, as indicated by Melkote (1991:36), Servaes (1995:40-41), Malan (1996:5, 14) and Servaes and Malikhao (2005:94-95).

The effect of the modernist (or Western) bias of modernisation approach to social development was that the particular developing community did not take ownership of top-down, externally created social development efforts, thus leading to the failure of this approach to bring about sustainable social development (Melkote 1991:130-137; Waisbord 2001:1-7).

### **3.2.2.3 Critical discussion**

Based on the preceding discussion it can be argued that the main premise of the modernisation approach to social development is to assist a developing community to 'develop' towards becoming a replica of a developed country in terms of economic growth and economic systems, political system, transfer of information and technological development, urbanisation, social structures, culture, ideology and communication systems. This aligns development with infrastructural, economic and other types of material social development that are materially visible and measurable, associated with modernisation. This early approach to social development followed processes similar to those used to rebuild Europe after the Second World War, which resulted in a transfer of information and technology to beneficiaries of social development efforts and is based on tested western-European and north-American ideals of social development.

Furthermore, the main assumption of the modernisation approach to social development is that modernisation equates social development with the understanding that modernist thinking underlies the modernisation approach to social development.

This means firstly that on an epistemological level the universality of humans and human needs are assumed, which, in turn, implies that humans are reduced to their material needs measured in economic (GNP as indicator of social development) or in other measurable material terms. As social development needs were regarded as universal it was thought possible to devise techniques to assist in the process of social development. This technical orientation is characteristic of modernist thinking.

Secondly, it means that the link between social development and modernisation implies an informational orientation to communication. This is evident in the modernisation approach to social development as the focus is on persuasively conveying technical information to developing communities.

Summarising, it can be said that the modernisation approach to social development is rooted in the ontology of universality, which views communication as instrumentalist in convincing developing communities to modernise. The nature of social development and the role of the development facilitator are informed by such instrumentalism, whereby development is aimed at modernisation and development facilitators are persuading communities to modernise.

Increasingly alternative voices on social development and the relationship between donors of social development aid and developing communities were heard, largely coinciding with postcolonial thinking associated with 'new times' (or the 'cultural turn' or the 'intellectual revolution' as is discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3 refers). The approaches to social development associated with this more recent social thinking are discussed in the following section. The first of these approaches to be discussed is the dependency critique that gave rise to the understanding of social development as liberation from oppression.

### **3.2.3 Social development as liberation from oppression**

In the previous section it was argued that in the late 1960s the modernisation approach to social development and its communication increasingly came under attack from several fronts, both operationally (the fact that very little sustainable social development was brought about) and ideologically (in line with modernist thinking).

This section firstly discusses the understanding of social development as liberation from oppression and dependency in terms of the context of the dependency critique, secondly explains the notion of social development as liberation from oppression, and thirdly presents a critical discussion.

### **3.2.3.1 Context of dependency critique**

The social concern regarding the effects of modernisation and its material emphasis (discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2 refers) was echoed in social development thinking that resisted and distanced social development from modernist (and neoliberalist) thinking that proposed social change through social development (Hemer & Tufte 2005:15). Instead of focussing on material aspects, this new wave of thinking about social development emphasised the cultural aspects of human life (Cambridge 2007: 189-193; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92-93). The main proponents of this new thinking about social development were associated with the non-alignment movement and the extensive debates of the work of the UNs Economic Commission for Latin America that was concerned about modernist cultural transmission to non-modern communities (associated with cultural imperialism) in Latin American, India, Africa and in Islamic regions (Cambridge 2007: 189-193; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92-93; Obregon & Mosquera 2005:234-237).

Out of these debates that criticise the modernisation approach to social development for its coincidence with modernist thinking and attendant cultural imperialism, a new approach evolved. This approach essentially argues that the modernisation approach to social development leads to developing communities becoming dependent on the benefacting communities, as explained in this section.

After the mid 1960s criticism of the modernisation approach to social development, which pointed to the developing communities becoming dependent on the donor countries through social development, culminated in the dependency critique offered by the dependistas (Cambridge 2007:194; Sawhney 2002:39-40; Servaes 1995:40; Obregon & Mosquera 2005:234-237). The dependistas argued that dependency was not unique to the social development context, but started with colonisation during which not only precious metals and other raw materials were plundered and tribute was extracted from colonies (Sawhney 2002:39-40). For this reason dependistas argued that the effect of colonisation was that the colonies' economic situation deteriorated to such an extent that they became underdeveloped and dependent on colonialising powers' economies (Cambridge 2007:194; Sawhney 2002:39-40). From a dependency perspective underdevelopment is attributed to colonisation (Cambridge 2007:194).



The thesis of the dependistas was that the periphery (developing community) attempts to replicate the socio-economic and political structures of the centre (donor country) (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92). The centre's capitalist system prevented the periphery from growing "out of the shade of the centre"; meaning that as long as the central economy remained strong in the minds of the developing communities, the dependent economy could not develop independently and the division of labour, technology and economics remained (Servaes 1995:41-42). They argued that dependency was maintained by various factors such as exploitation of the peripheral areas in colonial times for raw materials and currently in terms of labour (referred to as global Fordism) as well as the mass export of relatively cheap raw materials due to the peripheral areas not having the economic skills to process raw materials into goods and to market such goods themselves (Cambridge 2007:194; Hemer & Tufte 2005:17).

The dependistas further argued that the historic and contemporary patterns of global economic relations were dominated by the industrialised 'north' and that that prevented the peripheral areas from economically 'uplifting' themselves, contributing further to the underdevelopment of the developing 'south' (Cambridge 2007:194; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93; Hemer & Tufte 2005:17). This means that the dependistas were concerned about the effects of dependency on the peripheral territories' social development status and linked social development to overcoming problems associated with dependency (Hemer & Tufte 2005:17).

The dependency critique of social development coincided with the general period of de-colonisation and critique of modernism that introduced a 'cultural turn', in which, instead of emphasising the material dimensions of human life, the non-material, embodied in the term 'culture', was emphasised (Hemer & Tufte 2005:14; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:92-93; Obregon & Mosquera 2005:234-237).

This means that the dependency argument formed part of a general structuralist re-orientation of the social sciences and social thinking that focussed on the cultural, as opposed to emphasis on the material dimension of human life only as represented by modernist thinking.

The dependency critique furthermore coincided with the movement towards a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the late 1960s and the 1970s that was largely enabled through the workings of the UN, postcolonialism,

identity politics and the general anti-modernist social sentiment evident in the social movements associated with 1968 (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93; Cambridge 2007:189-191; Obregon & Mosquera 2005:234-237; Eriksen 2005:27-28; Hemer 2005:59). Arguments shared by these various groups are that each community has the right to self-determination and cultural autonomy and because these were not met, social development was seen as a political struggle to bring about cultural autonomy and equality (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93; Cambridge 2007:189-191).

These groups further rejected the modernisation approach to social development for it upholding the West as the norm and in the process justifying their intervention in 'underdeveloped' areas; for following the modernisation approach's development models' linearity; for its Western ethnocentricity; for collapsing the diverse communities of the 'south' to a single monolithic space for development intervention; for its understanding that technologies are 'neutral'; and that the 'south' should follow the model of the 'north' (Shah & Wilkins 2006:558). The modernisation approach to social development furthermore misses distinctions between countries, essentialises groups into homogeneous categories (typically at the level of nations rather than communities), and assumes that experience of poverty, gender and other social conditions are similar across historical and cultural contexts (Shah & Wilkins 2006:558). In colonial times this northern 'spatial will to power' were mimicked by the colonised elites leading to them exerting their superiority in their countries or communities with, in many cases, the result of abusing minority or indigenous rights in their countries (Shah & Wilkins 2006:558). The outflow of these debates was that independence of nations from their colonisers, self-determination and cultural identity became new emphases for countries, expressed in their will to carve out their own paths and cultures through social development (Carlsson 2005:211; Cambridge 2007:193-194).

These debates that coincided with the postcolonial era gained new impetus from the formal introduction of neoliberalist policies in the UK and in the USA in the late 1970s, which accelerated globalisation. It was feared that globalisation would further curb the cultural autonomy of developing countries, and tend to bring about cultural hegemony through the control-oriented communication processes of large businesses (Carlsson 2005:204; Hemer & Tufte 2005:18). Two outflows of this assumption are evident. The first is that globalisation and its associated multinational businesses will lead to the degradation of cultural discourse in the public sphere, because globalisation brings about the economicalisation of society instead of critical

discussions (Deane 2005:177-178; Duvenage 2007:332-334; Habermas 1989:48-56). The second outflow is that the media focus their attention on parts of society that have the biggest spendable income, with the effect that the voices of the developing, marginalised and poor are not represented in the mass media (Deane 2005:177-179; Duvenage 2007: 332-334; Oosthuizen 2001:135-136; Fourie 2001a:123-133; Hamelink 2007:225-226). This means that the developing world is largely forgotten in both the public sphere and in the commercial media that could have played a large role in creating a healthy public sphere, but which is rather directed towards increasing profits of large media groups (Deane 2005:180-183).

This shift towards commercialism and media imperialism was foreseen more than half a century ago, in 1946 (one year after the founding of the UN), when through the workings of the UN, the 'free flow of information' principle was agreed upon amongst members of the UN (Carlsson 2005:194). "It was with the founding of the UN and UNESCO that norm-setting in relation to information and communication was elaborated on an international plane". Initially this principle focussed on the protection of the human right to information, but more recently on the voluntary international regulation of the telecommunication industry (Carlsson 2005:194).

Inspired by postcolonial thinking the non-aligned movement in the 1970s demanded the establishment of a new international information be establishin order to redress the chronic imbalances of information flow from the 'north' to the 'south' and a general disrespect for the Third World peoples' cultural identities (Carlsson 2005:195-196). This argument was based on the hegemony of transnational communication companies and the inequitable distribution of communication resources among regions of the world (Carlsson 2005:195-196). The tumultuous change in the world oil market (also referred to as the 'OPEC crisis' or 'fuel crisis' of 1972) broke the USA's position of near-total dominance and gave the oil-rich non-aligned countries an unprecedented bargaining position in challenging the prevailing power relationships at the time (Carlsson 2005:195, 197).

From a position of power the non-aligned movement was instrumental in proposing a 'new world information and communication order' that was to democratise the global information flow; to assist in decolonisation (self-determination, national independence and cultural identity); to point out monopolisation (setting limits on the activities of transnational communication companies); and to put social development on the international agenda through national communication policy, the strengthening

of information infrastructure, journalism education and regional information-sharing cooperation (Carlsson 2005:197). This position was supported by the UNESCO-commissioned MacBride report, *Many voices one world*<sup>2</sup> strengthening the independence, self-determination and cultural identity arguments of the non-aligned movement (Carlsson 2005:199; Fourie & Oosthuizen 2001:417-426). At this stage the Third World was seen as developing and calls for action targeted the industrialised and First World countries to assist in social development (Carlsson 2005:199; Fourie & Oosthuizen 2001:419-426). After the oil crisis had been resolved the bargaining advantage of the non-aligned and the rest of the Third World countries waned and the demands for change in the global information-flow situation were disregarded, with the result that only the social development element of the initial Third World demands remained on the international agenda (Carlsson 2005:202-203; Fourie & Oosthuizen 2001:419-426).

The concerns of these early dependistas served as a basis for understanding social development as liberation from oppression.

### **3.2.3.2 Social development as liberation from oppression**

Based on the dependency critique and the thinking of postcolonialism Paulo Freire (1996:125) argues that oppressed people are united in their struggle for liberation, but maintain a dualistic relationship with their oppressors:

"They are forms of action which exploit, directly or indirectly, one of the weak points of the oppressed; their basic insecurity. The oppressed are insecure in their duality as beings which 'house' the oppressor. On the one hand, they resist her or him; on the other hand, at a certain stage in their relationship, they are attracted by him or her. Under these circumstances, the oppressors easily obtain positive results from divisive action."

Based on such a dualist and dependency relationship with the oppressors in which the cause of underdevelopment were seen as lying outside the developing community, the Freirian liberation notion of social development as liberation from oppression emerged. It was thought that as the root of oppression is external to the developing community, the developing community needed to be made aware of its oppression through a process that Freire calls conscientisation, followed by revolutionary liberation that is largely equated with social development, as explained in the section following.

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<sup>2</sup> The full title of the document that came to be known as the 'MacBride report' or 'Many voices one world' is *Communication and society today and tomorrow, many voices one world, towards a new more just and more efficient world information and communication order*, published by UNESCO.

Freire argued that active participation in identifying and verbalising aspects around oppression is liberatory (Thomas 2006:476-477; cf Freire 1996:125). Freire associated this process with conscientisation which implies a critical reflection on situations and conditions that cause oppression rather than liberation, freedom, emancipation, struggle, transformation and change (Thomas 2006:476-479; White 2006:482). Following the Freirian liberation notion of popular active participation in verbalising opinions, an alternative to the modernisation approach to social development emerged, in which social development is not associated with modernisation but with a political struggle (often revolutionary), which liberates people from oppressors (Riaño 2006:447; Thomas 2006:476-477; Servaes 1995:41-42). In this sense 'liberation from oppression' refers to a power struggle towards liberation between the people and the oppressors (often the colonisers) (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:464-474); or between the people and a social system such as the patriarchal system that oppresses women (Riaño 2006:443-453); or a system that favours the urban (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:466; Riaño 2006:448).

From the liberation from oppression approach to social development social change is to be actualised through popular participation in social actions, making the oppressed group agents for social change who often actively seek the just implementation of civil and human rights (Riaño 2006:447). Before actions to correct oppression can be taken by the group, awareness of the source and workings of their oppression and resultant subordination is to develop. This process associates this type of social development with the awakening of consciousness in the subordinate through social movements (Riaño 2006:447). Social movements of this nature often seek to alleviate oppression through the processes associated with democracy (Riaño 2006:447). In this sense democracy is associated with the practice of freedom to define the individual's and the group's present and future history as a collective freedom-seeking project that coincides with the transformation of oppressive conditions (Riaño 2006:448). Social movements for social change are in the social development context associated with participation that is viewed as one dimension of a condition for social change (Riaño 2006:448).

As with other approaches to social development associated with the 'cultural turn', 'new times' or the 'intellectual revolution' (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3), the liberation

from oppression approach to social development is associated with the notions of 'participation' and 'communication', as is explained below.

The communication associated with the liberation from oppression approach to social development is intertwined with the notions of democracy, participation and empowerment. In this sense empowerment refers to the individual and collective capacity and right to transform and affect change (Riaño 2006:448). As this approach to social development embraces democracy, and thus by implication popular participation, the democratisation of communication is seen as a crucial element of this approach to social development. It is assumed that the democratisation of communication and the free flow of information will respond to the needs of all to transmit and receive information and to see their views and groups represented in the media (Riaño 2006:448). In this sense the democratisation of information is linked to the democratisation of societies and the understanding that such democratisation is to be achieved through democratic communication activities (Riaño 2006:448). Proponents of this approach link the group's need for democratised communication and information to the global context after the arguments put forth by the UN's MacBride Commission (Riaño 2006:449). The MacBride Commission's report argued for a free and balanced flow of global information and suggested actions to achieve this objective in what is referred to as the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93; Cambridge 2007:189-191; cf Obregon & Mosquera 2005:234-237). In this vein democracy in communication and information (or using communication and information towards the greater good of humanity) involves the right to acquire and produce information and the opening up of spaces for construction of people's (popular) cultural spaces (Riaño 2006:448; Hamelink 2007:225-227). In this sense the liberation from oppression approach to social development is associated with 'breaking the silence' (Riaño 2006:447-450).

In order to utilise such spaces the oppressed needs to be individually and collectively empowered through building communicative capacity, because it is thought necessary that the group be actively involved in the production of meaning through the communication process (Riaño 2006:447). For this reason the need for popular and increased control and ownership of the process of social change, insofar as communication is concerned, is emphasised (Riaño 2006:447). Democratised popular communication is the focus of the liberation from oppression approach to social development and involves communication on interpersonal, group media and

mass media levels, as elaborated below.

On an interpersonal level of communication amongst group members, the liberation from oppression approach to social development is associated with horizontal message delivery and a multidimensional flow of messages (Riaño 2006:447). In the process of communication all communicators assume the role of being both sender and receiver of communication. Messages are cyclical and dialogical to ensure popular communication (Riaño 2006:447).

Apart from interpersonal communication amongst members of the group being horizontal, the liberation from oppression approach to social development seeks both horizontal communication and mass participation in mediated communication associated with popular communication. This is aimed at providing a language and an infrastructure of communication that is owned, operated and controlled by the oppressed group (also referred to as the non-professionals) (Riaño 2006:449). This takes place on 'group media' as well as on mass media levels.

On group media level popular communication processes are participatorily committed to social organisation and mobilisation with the methodology starting at local level by analysing the individual's historical situation to awaken and transform individual awareness and consciousness in the hope that this will lead to action and involvement in social struggles and movements by grassroots organisations (Riaño 2006:449). In this sense, participation is a means whereby a group obtains control over the process of communication measured in its involvement in most of (if not all) the stages of planning, design, production and diffusion of mediated messages (Riaño 2006:448). Group media include posters, sound-slide productions, cartoons, audiocassette productions, radio and video productions (theme identification, research, script development, photography, editing) such as soap operas, documentaries, dramas, leaflets, forums and information programmes, and community newspapers developed by small groups to foster group interaction through the production of mediated messages as well as through the discussion of such messages after exposure to them (Riaño 2006:449-450, 469; Slim & Thomson 2006:455). The messages circulate around the life situations of group members, include the sharing of personal experiences, are liberatory in nature and their purpose is to help identify common endeavours and actions (Riaño 2006:449-450; cf Slim & Thomson 2006:455). For this reason it is argued that group media may help

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raise a critical consciousness amongst group members of their oppressed conditions (Riaño 2006:449-450).

Within a situation of oppression, be it dependency or not, group media are used as a catalyst for political participation. This is achieved through community mobilisation by participatory means such as low level mass communication with a profoundly anti-statist (in the sense that it assumes that existing state structure needs to be removed or fundamentally altered) populist ideology, the latter serving as the glue for populist solidarity (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:466). Currently electronic means are often used to disseminate messages and to communicate, often associating politically challenging social change processes with the illegal importation of communications hardware. In strong states with elaborate forces of coercion and persuasion, and with powerful centrally controlled mass media where limited opportunities for alternative political mobilisation exist the economic orientation resulting from such communication shifts the focus of the mass communication media from entertainment to political mobilisation and political persuasion (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:466). In a situation increasingly more and newer forms of communication technology become available, control is impossible because of the nature of new communication technologies, the development of international communication systems and the resultant international flow of messages (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:469). Some technologies, such as audiotapes, video cassettes, copy machines, personal computers, and fax machines carry within themselves the means for reproduction, making state control of small media an impossibility (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:469).

In the sense of using small or group media it becomes increasingly difficult to separate culture, identity, media and politics as "in processes of political change, many indigenous cultural resources may be mobilized and developed to create a cultural resistance with political impact against would-be hegemonic regimes" (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:473). Traditional cultural forms (music, poetry and so on) are in the process often combined with the mass media (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:473). This means that culture becomes politicised to create a culture of resistance and "entertainment can be a powerful vehicle for political gathering and mobilization" (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:474). This implies the formation of revolutionary group identities which often re-create the past to build a sense of collective memory, so effectively rewriting a



collective identity and the politicisation of 'tradition' (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:474).

Group media and critical-consciousness approaches apply similar strategies and methods, based on the goals of individual and group liberation from oppressing conditions. Founded on Paulo Freire's teachings and liberation theology, in which communication and education serve as agents that awaken the individual's consciousness to his or her oppressed situation by community animation and activation or by organisational process and change, the group members themselves become agents of change (Riaño 2006:450; cf Freire 1996:25-50). Here media production becomes a process of consciousness in which group members come to accept that they are part of the problems and part of the solutions to their problems, and then achieve a stage of liberation at which they express commitment to group organisation – this growth process is parallel to the process by which the group develops the message (Riaño 2006:450). This horizontal communication process is based on the principles of group access to media production and decision making (Riaño 2006:448).

On a commercial mass media level, proponents of the liberation from oppression approach to social development argue that the representation of a particular group in general, but also in the media, should be changed, because changed perceptions can assist in the liberation of a particular group (Riaño 2006:448). This can be through popular education in ways the media could be used to further social change to the advantage of the oppressed group (Riaño 2006:447). The implication is that the liberation from oppression approach to social development encourages the development of alternatives to commercial media and to the vertical, one-way, dominant communication system, supporting the creation of local group participatory processes of solidarity and identity in the active production of cultural meanings from oppressed groups (Riaño 2006:448).

Riaño (2006:451-452) offers three criticisms of the liberation from oppression approach to social development, as explained below.

Firstly, the liberation from oppression approach to social development runs the risk of instrumentalising participation and reducing empowerment to an end in itself, thus disregarding the power and conflict dimension in which processes of participation take place (Riaño 2006:451).

Secondly, the liberation from oppression approach to social development is defined in terms of non-tangible outcomes such as learning and consciousness raising (Riaño 2006:451). These tend to be weak at fostering social action for the improvement of economic conditions to obtain tangible changes (Riaño 2006:451). In the light of worsening living conditions in some parts of the Third World such non-tangible outcomes (disconnection between educational goals and tangible changes) can reduce trust in participatory processes in the light of desperate tangible conditions such as the increasing gap between rich and poor, increased state repression of social movements, inability of states to respond to their constituencies, magnitude of environmental and health crises, increase of conflict around ethnic and territorial issues and rapidly changing conditions of daily life, which continuously challenge simplistic associations, and formulate new dilemmas for concepts such as empowerment and participation (Riaño 2006:451).

Thirdly, participatory communication (grassroots leadership skills and a public discourse that emphasise the voices of the powerless) are not a measuring instrument for effective grassroots participation, but rather for democratic leadership such as the content of the popular discourses, the nature of representations, the ways in which "leaders and movements use and control communication media, and the ways the facilitators intervene and assume or manage their differences (of gender, race, class and status) in the process" (Riaño 2006:451-452).

Fourthly, dependency and liberation from oppression approaches to social development mean that the broader context in which social development efforts are situated is not directly addressed. In this vein, Servaes (1995:42, 45) points out the dependistas' argument that the cause of underdevelopment lies outside the developing community (often on international level) and therefore social development needs to make community members aware of their oppression and help them cast off the oppressors, and then social development will follow naturally. This means that proponents of the dependency critique dissociate themselves from the world market by opting for a self-reliant position (Servaes 1995:42).

### **3.2.3.3 Critical discussion of social development as liberation from oppression**

The preceding discussion indicates that the dependency critique of social development and its recent manifestation of social development as liberation from

oppression should be understood against the background of postcolonialism with people in colonised areas struggling for cultural identity and cultural autonomy. This approach criticises social development used as an instrument to modernise Third World countries.

Even though the dependency critique and the liberation from oppression approach to social development are collectively seen as revolutionary, both in political thinking and in method as it emphasises the developing group's conflict with the donor of social development aid, it is the author's opinion that the dependistas deserve credit for pointing out the failures of modernisation. Although the dependistas indicated the failures of the modernisation approach to social development, they focussed on the external variables of underdevelopment, almost ignoring the internal factors. These external variables had to do with the historic power politics of the 'north-south' debate.

Both the modernisation and dependency approaches to social development focus on socio-psychological problems within developing communities: modernists argue that the developing communities should be enabled to accelerate their catching up and dependistas and liberationists (liberation from oppression proponents) argue that the oppressive external socio-economic factors should be removed through the developing community's conscientisation process which names their oppression and asks for revolutionary liberation from such oppression.

This socio-psychological remedy for underdevelopment proposed by the liberation from oppression approach for social development focusses on articulating and communicating the oppressed group's views of everyday lives, circumstances, and the negative impact of oppression (associated with the process of conscientisation) and it is thought that this process itself will be liberating. The emphasis is thus on communication that is to take place in a participatory, dialogical and horizontal manner on interpersonal level amongst members of the oppressed group; on mediated level through group media that is approached in the same way; and on mass media level associated with the oppressed group having access to ownership and production of mass mediated messages. It is assumed that participatory communication is liberatory and that local knowledge (amongst which are the everyday lives of oppressed groups) will be able to assist in social change. For this reason social change on the political (or power) level is thought to be caused by emphasising the power within the individual and oppressed group. This means that,

although the reason for oppression is seen as outside the developing community, mostly on international level (for example colonisation and the unequal power illustrated by the NWICO and the 'north-south' information-flow debate) the remedy for underdevelopment lies on local level where the community should liberate themselves through communicating the process of conscientisation.

It can hence be concluded that the cause for underdevelopment according to the dependency and liberation from oppression approach to social development is external and by conscientizing oppressed people about the cause of oppression they will liberate themselves. This means that social development is equated with liberation from oppression as a universal or simplistic assumption within oppressed communities as the differences between various conditions of oppression are not indicated. The communication used is participatory, but only in order to achieve conscientization after which it is persuasive in nature. The use of communication media is thus seen as instrumental in liberation from oppression, focusing on small, little, group, revolutionary, or alternative media for conscientization purposes. The role of the development facilitator following this approach is to be instrumental in the conscientization of the community by persuading them to participate in the process.

The emphasis of dependency critique on the community, self-reliance, participation, and communication gave rise to a fast array of newer approaches to social development that are discussed subsequently. The first of these approaches to be discussed in this chapter is development support communication.

#### **3.2.4 Development support communication**

The development support communication approach arose out of dissatisfaction with the ineffectiveness of many UN-sponsored social development projects that were designed outside the beneficiary country and did not take into account the real needs, culture or context of developing communities with the consequent waste of time and money (Cambridge 2007:191; Waisbord 2001:5).

In the 1980s 'development support communication' or the 'project support communication' (PSC) commissioned by the UN's Development Program (UNDP) and the UN's Children's Fund (UNICEF) under the leadership of Erskine Childers, emphasised that communication is a necessary ingredient for implementing social development efforts (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte 2006:xxvi; Cambridge 2007:191).

Erskine Childers pioneered communication as an integral component of UN development programmes, largely based on 'knowledge sharing' in what he called development support communication (DSC) (Colle 2006:495). Childers argued that problems in the implementation of a social development project are usually related to problems of communication (Colle 2006:496). He further argued that the communication and media used in social development should be appropriate to the audience (Colle 2006:498). In this vein six different types of development support communication needs were identified, namely: informing the public about its social development needs and motivating it to identify further needs; informing and motivating national officials in the public sector regarding the development project; increasing interdepartmental awareness on governmental level and motivating follow-up decision makers and financial controllers in governments to authorise further steps; training the people involved in the project (cadres or instructors) in communication skills such as films, slides, better charts and other printed aids; providing training and research around the dissemination of information; and providing support for the project's communication on local level (Colle 2006:499-502).

This emphasis on communication steered DSC to focus on support for the social development project on national (governmental) level; creating communication for village level; encouraging governments that receive UN development aid to use DSC specialists; and advocate special skills (not often found in governments' communication divisions) that are needed around the particular developing community/village to counter governments' urban, middle-class and often Western bias (Colle 2006:503).

DSC further focusses on ensuring that the communication messages are constructed in such a way that the target population (developing community) receives and believes the messages (Colle 2006:498; Sonderling 2006:498). Proponents of DSC assume that failures of national development programmes can often be prevented if the communication infrastructures of national governments are expanded and improved; if national authorities are re-oriented towards development support communication; if national information personnel are trained or re-trained; and if a system and resources developed by the 'UN-family' is used (Colle 2006:506). It is further thought that DSC involves the use of communication techniques to elicit the voluntary and active participation of people in social development planning and programmes (Cambridge 2007:191; Waisbord 2001:5). The Food and Agriculture

Organisation (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) often use participatory communication techniques combined with broadcasting to empower farming communities and increase health knowledge (Cambridge 2007:191).

Sonderling (2006:547-552) voices a number of criticism against the DSC approach to social development.

Firstly, that the impression is created that no social development can be attempted without the full participation of the developing community in communication programmes, and that through social development projects the developing community should be made receptive towards the right communication (Sonderling 2006:548). This means that in a particular way the DSC approach to social development effectively uses persuasive communication to persuade the developing community and the government officials of a developing country to accept social development messages (Sonderling 2006:552).

Secondly, that in its emphasis on the communication aspect, specifically on constructing communication messages that reach the target population, social development problems are reduced to problems of communication and dialogue, negating the political and historic relationship between the 'north' and the 'south', who currently are often the donors and benefactors of social development aid (Sonderling 2006:547-548).

Thirdly, that communication workers of DSC do not acknowledge if they can't establish full community nor government participation as this would point to their individual inability as development workers, implicating the self-sustaining nature of the so-called development industry (Sonderling 2006:550-552).

Based on this discussion it can be deduced that the DSC approach to social development emphasises the role of communication in social development to the extent that social development problems are reduced to problems of communication, negating the complexity of the international context of social development. While so emphasising communication, community and government participation in assisting outside donors is seen as a mechanical or instrumentalist process; communication media are used as tools for social change; and a reliance on expert knowledge is emphasised. This does not protect the DSC approach to social development from critique against the modernisation approach to social development in terms of its

inherent Western-bias orientation. This means that with social development it is understood that the developing community participates in creating persuasive messages of communication after they have been persuaded by development workers to do so. It thus assumes the universality of humankind (regardless of whether modern or developing) as they have the same social development goals. Communication is viewed as instrumental in creating acceptance of scientific knowledge (modernisation), but it become participatory after the developing community has been persuaded to take part in the process of creating mediated messages. This means that the DSC approach is based on persuading the developing community to accept the process of modernisation, often through small media that seek simulated participation. Although the DSC approach to social development emphasises communication and participation it is still essentially instrumentalist as was the modernisation approach to social development. The role of the development facilitator in the DSC approach to social development is to oversee the processes of communication based on simulated participation.

The emphasis on the circumstances that gave rise to problems of social development, communication and participation introduced into social development thinking by the dependistas, was launched on theoretical level by the formulation of another development, described in the next section.

### **3.2.5 'Another development'**

In the 1980s scholars and social development experts started talking about 'another' type of approach to social development that poses an 'alternative' to the modernisation, dependency and liberation from oppression approaches to social development in the sense that cultural identity, self-reliance, access and participation were emphasised as key concepts (Carlsson 2005:211; Cambridge 2007:194-495). The assumption that the world was interdependent (a well-established understanding of the 1980s) largely coincided with the formulation of 'another development' (Cambridge 2007:195; Carlsson 2005:211; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte 2006:xx-xxx).

The term 'another development' was first used by the Dag Hammerskjöld Foundation of Sweden and coincided with the general understanding at the time that the non-material (as opposed to the modernist-emphasised material) dimension of human life is equally important in the quest for enhanced well-being (Cambridge 2007:195; Carlsson 2005:211; Ascroft & Masilela 2006:425). This understanding reinforces the

view that the material and non-material dimensions of human life must be integrated. This is underlined by the UN proclaiming the 1990s the 'decade of culture', which resulted in culture becoming a key concept in social development discourse and introduced an era in which the communicative aspect of social development received great attention (Hemer & Tufte 2005:17; Carlsson 2005:203-204).

Proponents of 'another development' argue that social development is a multidimensional and dialectic process that differs from one society to another due to the unique cultural identities of societies (Servaes 1995:43; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte 2006:xx-xxx). This underlines the multiplicity notion that is associated with interdependency. 'Another development' rests on three pillars, namely on the eradication of poverty; on endogenous and self-reliant change; and on environmental responsibility (Servaes 1995:42; Cambridge 2007:195). 'Another development' not only focusses on the poor of the world, since it also partially "grew from a dissatisfaction in the 'consumer society' with what is sometimes termed 'overdevelopment' or even 'maldevelopment'" (Servaes 1995:42). 'Another development' is, furthermore, based on human rights, equity, rational use of the environment, social deliberation and consensus, democratic participation and the introduction of different degrees of structural change (Villaneuva 2006:587). This means that it seeks to integrate the material and the non-material (and thus cultural) dimensions of human life (cf Carlsson 2005:203-204). The principles of endogenous problem perception, problem solving and self-reliance that reinforces the developing communities' own strengths and resources play a prime role in decentralising structural transformations and transferring decision making from the urban centres to the villages (Ascroft & Masilela 2006:425).

According to Servaes (1995:42-43) and largely confirmed by Servaes and Malikhao (2005:93) 'another development' is based on the following principles: that

- the basic material and non-material human needs should be met;
- social development should be endogenous (stem from the 'heart' of each society and so reflect its values and future vision);
- communities should rely on their own strengths and resources (members' energies as well as the natural and cultural environment);
- the ecological aspects should be taken into account;
- a participative democratic process of all levels of society should be used; and
- structural changes (often in the form of social relations, economic activities and



their spatial distribution, power structure, conditions of self-management and participation in decision-making by all living in the community) should be included in social development thinking.

Some scholars argue that 'another development' is a product of European development thinking and thus has a strong empowerment focus that emphasises basic needs and rights for Third World people (Ascroft & Masilela 2006:425); others argue that it is based on universal principles that are not only supported in northern Europe (such as the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in Sweden and the Green political party in Germany), but also elsewhere, due to its endogenous focus (Servaes 1995:42).

Based on the above discussion it can be argued that the underlying assumptions of 'another development' are aligned with that of the interdependency notion that gives this approach to social development its multidimensional and integrated orientation. The outflow of multidimensionality is not only appreciation of the diversity of cultures, but that cultures have equal status. 'Another development' seeks to address both material and non-material aspects of social development. True to the interdependency notion that acknowledges the interdependency between people and the natural environment, 'another development' seeks to address social development in an environmentally responsible manner. The operational outflow of these basic assumptions (interdependency, integratedness and multidimensionality) of 'another development' is that social development is approached endogenously. This means that the need for social development should be a need of the developing community before any social development processes can be undertaken, and the development benefactor should merely assist the developing community to achieve its social development needs. On a practical level it could mean assisting the community with the identification of such needs and facilitating the process of providing in such needs through the work of a development facilitator, but the developing community should have ownership of the development process. The role of the development facilitator is further to facilitate enabling conditions and structures in which the developing community can develop itself.

Two critiques against applying 'another development' approach to social development is that it is "just too intimidating" due to the lack of Third World capacity to implement it; and that it is theoretical, academic and European (thus foreign) to many Third World developing contexts (Ascroft & Masilela 2006:524-426).

These criticisms do not altogether negate the contribution of 'another development' to the evolution of contemporary thinking on social development, due to its strong emphasis on the non-material dimension of human life (in contrast to the material infrastructural or economic development of modernist social development).

In summary it can be argued that 'another development' assumes diversity and plurality on an ontological level; displays confidence in people's ability to determine their own futures and affords them the right to do so (endogenous emphasis); does not seek universal causes of and solutions to social development problems but accepts that these are unique; seeks solutions on both material and non-material levels of human life; proposes a participatory democratic process of society on all levels; and is ecologically responsible as it assumes the interdependency of all people on earth.

As 'another development' represents a rather theoretical understanding of social development the role of the development facilitator is not defined part from it being presumed that s/he will oversee the process of development. Based on this theoretical understanding newer approaches to development communication investigate the practicalities of social development and the role of the development facilitator, as explained below.

### **3.2.6 The multiplicity or participatory approach to social development**

Based on the theoretical assumptions of 'another development' multiplicity or participatory approach to social development evolved. This section discusses this approach in terms of its main assumptions; its key foci of participation, liberation, conscientisation and self-reliance; and participatory communication; after which a critical discussion of this approach to social development is presented.

#### **3.2.6.1 Main assumptions**

In contrast to the relatively simplistic views of the early approaches to social development, the term 'multiplicity' signifies the complex nature of social development where the focus not only falls on the community but on the circumstances over which communities in their developing state has no control to influence the level of social development (Carlsson 2005:211-212; Servaes &

Malikhao 2005:93; Mefalopulos 2005:158-159; Waisbord 2001:3-15).

The participatory approach to social development does not focus on the historic and structural reasons for underdevelopment in an inward orientation (such as the dependistas and the liberation from oppression approach), but accepts the 'global problems, local solutions' understanding that focusses on local conditions in a global world, such as matters of identity and meaning, democratic processes and a regard for human rights without ignoring the relationships of international interdependency (Carlsson 2005:211-212). This means that the participatory approach to social development is born from the understanding that people are not underdeveloped due to external factors only (such as colonisation or cultural imperialism for instance) but also due to internal factors, leading to the thesis that by addressing a combination of internal and external factors sustainable social development should be sought (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93). For this reason it was thought to study both the periphery ('bottom-up' or community-driven approach valuing the self-development and 'felt needs' of local communities) and the centre (international political and cultural economic hegemonic issues) separately, but also combined as they relate to global, national and local levels (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:93). In this way, paired with emphasising both the material and non-material dimensions of human life, this approach has been associated with a 'holistic' approach to social development (Hemer & Tufte 2005:19). This means that not only the conditions within the developing community, but also the larger social environment, are addressed through participatory social development processes that emphasise the individual's self-reliance and capacity to deal with larger structural problems which cause dependency and domination of Third World communities (Riaño 2006:447).

An implication of this understanding is that each social development process will be unique, based on the unique cultural context, the indigenous knowledge frameworks, the existing social, cultural and political aspects, and the indigenous communication systems (Waisbord 2001:3-15). This makes social development programmes unpredictable both in terms of process and in the results of the process with the effect that the facilitator, benefactor or donor of social development loses control to the members of the developing community (Servaes 1995:43; Mefalopulos 2005:158-159; Eriksen 2005:36-37).

Respect for the uniqueness of developing communities and an appreciation of the 'other' enhances the cultural identity of the developing community (Mefalopulos

2005:158-159; Eriksen 2005:36-37). From respect for the other and his/her culture and traditions flows acceptance of the equal status between the benefactor of social development and the developing community, assuming that reciprocity and endogeny (endogenous social development and communication) guides social development with the effect of a so-called community-oriented approach to social development (Waisbord 2005:79). This is believed to assist social development towards self-reliance, which means that members of the developing community are encouraged to take ownership of their own development processes (Mefalopoulos 2005:158-159; Eriksen 2005:36-37).

Illustrative of the multiplicity of aspects emphasised in the participatory approach to social development is the assumption that social development seeks a change in material conditions (ownership to the means of production, access to resources, access to credit, terms of relationships to the market, clothing, shelter, and economic ventures); in non-material conditions in terms of the strength of the people's organisation (number and composition of membership, incomes, attendance of meetings, values, consistence with avowed principles); in the practice of democratic decision making; in individual members' personal growth (self-confidence in exercising their responsibilities); and in the impact of the project on society at large (Habito-Cadiz 2006:427-428).

Based on the main assumption of a multiplicity of aspects impacting on social development, the participatory approach to social development assumes community participation.

### **3.2.6.2 Participation, liberation, conscientisation and self-reliance**

The participatory approach to social development has its roots in the liberation thinking of Paulo Freire, who proposes that liberation is to be achieved through authentic participation in social change processes through dialogical communication to achieve critical reflection and self-evaluation, as is argued in Section 3.2.3. Although the participatory approach to social development is less revolutionary than the Freirian assumptions, it is based on the rhetoric and practice of liberation, freedom, emancipation, struggle, transformation, change, and the preferential option for the poor (Thomas 2006:476-479). This is what White (2006:482) calls 'power to the people', or 'power people' instead of the revolutionary 'power taking' associated

with dependency thinking. It further assumes that people have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives (Riaño 2006:447).

From a participatory approach to social development perspective 'participation' assumes that people, if given the opportunity and after acquiring the appropriate knowledge necessary to develop their own strategies, have or can gain the ability to determine the course of their own lives (White 2006:482).

White (2006:482) explains community participation from a participatory approach to social development, assuming that people

"congruent with their own human potentials, inner life forces and cultural identity, can generate their own source of power – whatever power necessary to accomplish the objectives they set for themselves and their community. Those external development catalyst/activities which aspire to lead people to develop and explore their own power sources must hold a central belief that people are also intellectually capable and have the communication competencies to organize their lives in a more liberated manner. But when this does happen, they must be prepared to back off and allow the 'liberationists' to explore further on their own."

Such exploration should be non-hierarchical, non-formal, fully democratic, often different to all previous forms of organisations and methods of work, and is cooperative (Thomas 2006:480). This aligns the participatory approach with the Freirian process of conscientisation. Conscientisation refers to a critical consciousness that is to be activated by a critical awareness of one's situation, the environment, identity, talents and alternatives to achieve freedom (White 2006:482). In the process of participation answers are not necessarily the outcome, but the process of participation enables individuals to express and achieve a better understanding of thoughts and socio-economic conditions (Habito-Cadiz 2006:427). In this process the role of an external social development facilitator is to broaden people's perspective, to encourage collective behaviours and to help people formulate and articulate their thoughts systematically and logically (Habito-Cadiz 2006:427).

Through the expression of thoughts developing people gain a critical consciousness of their thoughts and their environment. This actualises their empowerment as they generate their own power and unite with others in making demands that are mutually beneficial (White 2006:482). This interplay of the communal and the individual within a participatory social development context is explained by Bordenave (2006:421) by a person being a unique individual and, at the same time, a member of a community. This individual and collective empowerment is associated with generating an

individual source of power to achieve objectives collectively set (White 2006:482). "A community of self-reliant people will be capable of diagnosing its own problems, of developing innovative solutions and of fostering development diversity that is relevant, culturally sensitive and ecologically sound and sustaining" (White 2006:484). It is further believed that empowerment in the course of social development efforts should be directed to assist the growth of a sense of self-confidence in the process (White 2006:482). In this sense empowerment does not only mean moving out of a condition or sense of deprivation or oppression, but also a positive holistic outcome of self-discovery, successful human interaction and the ability to engage in dialogue (White 2006:482). Confidence to engage in group processes is itself a liberating action (White 2006:482). In this sense participation has to do with self-strengthening and self-improvement in a group where the process is more important than the product (Habito-Cadiz 2006:427). This process implies the integrity of people, of their culture, the enactment of personal values and the aspirations to preserve identity, not only on individual level, but collectively in a raising of consciousness that unleashes community energies for massive and organised social development action (White 2006:482; Habito-Cadiz 2006:427).

Empowerment manifest on both material and non-material levels.

On the material level empowerment is associated with self-reliance that leads people to participate in development programmes as a means to gain control over economic and political forces that impact on their lives (Riaño 2006:447). In this sense self-reliance is focussed on strengthening local economic resources that will enable the community to be more self-sufficient to the point of providing indigenous employment opportunities (White 2006:483). Empowerment thus encourages organisational and sociocultural change through influencing processes of public policy making (Riaño 2006:446).

On the non-material level empowerment is associated with power, community, integrity and/or identity that are signified by the term 'self-reliance'. Self-reliance is an integral part of participation, both as outcome and as part of the process (White 2006:483). Therefore it can be argued that participation is an act of self-reliance that must be accompanied by self-confidence so that people can move out of dependent relationships (White 2006:483) by enabling people to take control of their own lives (Riaño 2006:446). When people are becoming self-reliant their behaviour changes from apathy to action; from dependency to independence; from alienation to

involvement; from intolerance to tolerance; from powerlessness to assertiveness; from defensiveness to supportiveness; from manipulable to self-determined; from other-directed to inner-directed; and from ignorant to knowledgeable (White 2006:484). In a particular way, as in the discourse of liberation from oppression, collective identities and tradition are re-created through social development programmes (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:474). A focus on the daily lives and lived experiences of a community sheds light on the connections between areas of social development focus, that the specialist (one-dimensional) focus of the development agency often does not see (Slim & Thomson 2006:457).

Against the background of seeking to influence public policy proponents of the participatory approach to social development argue that access to the public sphere is important, as the influencing of the public policy-making process is largely made possible via the mass media's contribution to the public sphere (Deane 2005:177-178, 180-183; Thomas 2006:479). One such aspect, that proponents of the participatory approach to social development seek to put on the public agenda by debating it in the public sphere, is the cause of a just world community defined by a more humanistic approach to solving the world's problems than the modernisation approach to social development (Thomas 2006:479).

In order to achieve a more human approach towards solving the world's problems, Shah and Wilkins (2006:556) argue that it is useful to explain social development in terms of the geometries of space or spatial actors (such as nation states, regions, transnational configurations); sites or key institutional sites where development policies and programmes are formulated (such as government ministries, intergovernmental organisations also referred to as INGOs); and vectors or linkages among institutional and spatial actors as these imply a multiplicity of aspects that are implicated in the social development discourse. Explaining issues of social development in terms of geography brings out the divisions, linkages and relations of power among actors and institutions (Shah & Wilkins 2006:556). If explained in terms of these geometrics development processes can be explained against their political and historic context, directing the public attention to rights and resources, which, in turn, emphasises self-determination, the autonomy of minority communities, locally relevant cultural and social practices, and the decentralisation of social development (Shah & Wilkins 2006:560). For this reason Shah & Wilkins (2006:558) propose that social development debates should view aspects of cultural space, territory, identities, progress and social change in ways that are not circumscribed by

geopolitical boundaries (Shah & Wilkins 2006:560). This means that social development should focus on local, national and international aspects of rights and resources for sociocultural groups and in the process the possibility of linkages among spatial actors across geopolitical boundaries are opened up, and access to resources (or the capacity) to activate power through economic, political, social and cultural means are gained (Shah & Wilkins 2006:560). These aspects could be placed on the international agenda via the mass media, thus influencing public policy and for this reason access to the public sphere is needed.

Based on this discussion it can be argued that the participatory approach to social development acknowledges the one-world argument that what happens in one part of the world impacts on other parts as explained by the interdependency notion in Chapter 2. This discussion points towards the participation approach to social development that aims to empower people to become self-reliant on both the non-material (cultural, identity) and on the material levels (addressing circumstances such as public policy matters).

In order to address change on both the material and non-material levels participatory communication is used.

### **3.2.6.3 Participatory communication**

The early approaches to social development assumed that the reason for underdevelopment was a lack of knowledge and for this reason early social development models focussed on knowledge systems, knowledge generation, knowledge transfer and targeted knowledge acquisition, giving rise to a knowledge transfer orientation in such development efforts (White 2006:484). Although the newer approaches to social development do not negate the value of knowledge they oppose the enforcement of irrelevant knowledge on developing communities and focus instead on knowledge generation, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge sharing (White 2006:484).

The participatory approach to social development assumes that a "partnership between scientist and people at the grassroots [level] provided a stronger case for knowledge generation and application via useful and contextual research and practice. By setting up continuing dialogue, both parties of the development action modified their positions regarding knowledge and resulting knowledge bases" (White



2006:484). An even more important outcome of knowledge sharing is the feeling of worth and equality that develops out of such human interaction, leading to the acceptance of the Gramscian term 'indigenous intellectual', recognising the status and value of grassroots people and of a scientist enlightened about local knowledges (White 2006:484). For this reason it is argued that "unless people can acquire knowledge and other 'tools', such as confidence and ability to produce their own knowledge, they will be unable to play out their own struggles for local control and self-reliance" (White 2006:484). In this vein Thomas (2006:475) argues that participation "primarily signifies sharing in an activity or process that was traditionally organized and implemented in hierarchical or exclusive ways. Often it happens through a political choice and is therefore largely a political activity. Its logic stems from changed epistemological, political and theoretical positions that emphasize a community, dialogue, reciprocity and understanding based on mutual respect". This means that the idea is that the developing community takes ownership of the social development efforts, that the processes around social development are participatory, and that the communication between the benefactor of social development aid and the developing community is also participatory (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:98; Carlsson 2005:199).

This interlinkedness of communication, knowledge, information and communicative behaviour (White 2006:482) that aims to achieve self-reliance and empowerment is evident on both the interpersonal and (community and mass) mediated communication levels.

On an interpersonal level, participatory communication is associated with liberation. In this vein it is argued that truly liberated persons are characterised by supportive communication behaviour, as "True liberation brings with it a solid sense of the self, an active concern for one's self in relation to others and an inner life force that pushes toward meaningful human relationships, listening and catalyzing action toward shared goals" (White 2006:482). For this reason it is argued that participatory communication is essential for building a community, provided that communication needs are based on a realistic and pragmatic understanding of the potentials and limitations of participation (Thomas 2006:475). This means that communication evolves from people as a mirror of their aspirations and needs, rather than being imposed externally (Thomas 2006:475). Participatory communication allows people to be subjects of their own development (oriented towards achieving own goals and ideals) and not simply objects of technology or processes as is the case in early

approaches to social development (Thomas 2006:475). Elaborating on the social function of participatory communication Huesca and Dervin (2006:430) argue that participatory communication is simultaneously message, raw material, dialogue, a tool for building social networks and a popular form of engaging with one another. Participatory communication is further marked by oral testimony with the power of authentic expression that 'burns from the heart' and cuts across barriers of wealth, class, power and race (Slim & Thomson 2006:454). Participative communication implies listening, with the obligation of hearing, as reciprocally the same is expected when it is the turn of the other party to speak, thus making participatory communication reciprocal, dialogical and cooperative (Slim & Thomson 2006:454-455). This cooperation not only contributes to consciousness raising about social development problems but in allowing people to express their daily life situations, builds confidence in equal-power communicative situations (Slim & Thomson 2006:457). The latter lead to a democratisation of idioms and opinions so that debate can take place in a relatively power-free environment (Slim & Thomson 2006:458). For this reason Bordenave (2006:426) argues that:

"Participatory communication can be defined as that type of communication in which all the interlocutors are free and have equal access to the means and to express their viewpoints, feelings and experiences. Collective action aimed at promoting their interests, solving their problems and transforming their society, is the means to an end."

This understanding of dialogue is based on Freire's work, which, in turn, is based on Martin Buber's work. Buber used an 'I-Thou' analogy to describe a situation of dialogue, mutual respect, openness, and give and take as the keys to 'community' in which the self and the other are accepted and affirmed and through such acceptance, both the 'I' and the 'Thou' are liberated and enhanced (Thomas 2006:477; cf Griffin 2003:222-223; cf Littlejohn & Foss 2005:206-207). In the 'I-Thou' relationship both the 'I' and the 'Thou' meet and come into being through interaction, based on the argument that "All life is relational, and only in terms of mutuality and meeting can human life achieve meaning and fulfilment. The dialogic encounter born of relation applies to one's life with nature, with other people, and with 'the eternal Thou', who is addressed in every Thou" (Thomas 2006:477). This is in contrast to the 'I-It' relationship of monologue, inequality, objectivity and detachment which is the root of alienation and estrangement from other people, nature and God – a feature of modern (nonhuman) existence (Thomas 2006:477; cf Griffin 2003:222-223; cf Littlejohn & Foss 2005:206-207). In his work, Buber rejected both individuality and collectivity in favour of community, expressed through the 'I-Thou' dialogical relationship (Thomas 2006:478; Littlejohn & Foss 2005:206-207).

The communication process, coinciding with the participatory or multiplicity approach to social development is participatory in nature and aimed at creating a climate of mutual understanding between benefactors and beneficiaries since it is based on dialogical, horizontal, contextual communication, that is liberatory and interactive (Malan 1996:5-6; Waisbord 2001:36). Participatory communication should elicit open discussion and self-expression and could serve as a tool for diagnosis of community problems, open-ended self-expression and self-management towards self-development (Servaes 1995:46-47; Malan 1996:5-6, 14-17; Melkote 1991:262-270; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:94-95). In an authentic participatory process nobody dominates the process of communication, and people in powerful positions may cede status and power to the majority of the participants, since equitable sharing of political and economic power will lead to structural changes in the redistribution of power (Servaes 1995:45-46; Malan 1996:5; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:94-95). Participatory thinking is closely associated with face-to-face communication which focusses on the communication process as an exchange of meanings, making community and seeking to bridge the gap between the self and others (Servaes 1995:46; Malan 1996:5). Development workers should thus respond to, rather than dictate to communities the path of social development (Servaes 1995:46).

In this way the cultural identities of local communities are not only acknowledged but also valued (Servaes 1995:45-46; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:91-95). Such an approach to the communication associated with social development stands a better chance of ensuring ownership-taking of social development programmes, aimed at sustainable social development by the developing community (Cadiz 2005:146; Melkote 1991:134).

The participatory approach to social development is based on knowledge-sharing between benefactors and beneficiaries of social development programmes through small scale communication that is within a beyond modernist social development context referred to as a 'grassroots' orientation (Melkote 1991:263; Malan 1996:5-6; Waisbord 2001:5-15). This makes the process of social development inclusive, problem-oriented (integrating revolutionary and evolutionary elements), problem-posing, and participatory in nature (Servaes 1995:43; Waisbord 2001:5-15). This approach owes its name, namely the participatory approach, to the latter characteristic. It is in line with constitutive communication, illustrated by its preference

for using participatory communication and participatory or community media (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:99).

It is thus proposed that a multiple approach be taken to social development within an awareness of relationships in which the material, the symbolic and the affective are all included and encompassed in communication (Massoni 2006:527). For this reason Massoni (2006:526) views the purpose of participatory communication as producing meaning based on bonds with one another. This means that relationships associated with the participatory approach to social development are based on reciprocity which values the humanness of the developing community (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:99; Waisbord 2001:5-15).

Such horizontal dialogical communication is referred to in this study as constitutional communication. Constitutive communication within beyond modernist thinking is associated with reciprocity in general and with reciprocal relationships, as discussed in chapter 2.

Participatory communication not only implies interpersonal communication, but also mediated communication, be it on community (small media) or mass media level, as explained below.

A variety of terms are used to refer to mediated communication. Some scholars refer to 'little' or 'small' media to distinguish them from the traditional 'mass' media; whilst others choose the term 'big' media to refer to the mass media that are predominantly supportive of the ideology of the economically and politically powerful such as business and the state, with the effect that 'small' or 'little' media refers to group or mass media in which messages are constructed by the community through participative processes (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:465; cf Slim & Thomson 2006:454-455). The former meaning merely distinguishes between types of mediated communication in terms of the size or reach of the medium, whilst the latter distinguishes between types of mediated communication in terms of the level of community participation (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:465; cf Slim & Thomson 2006:454-455). This means that two sets of criteria may be used in the social development field to classify mediated communication. The participatory approach to social development distinguishes among types of mediated communication in terms of the latter, namely the degree of community participation

and its accessibility to the developing community (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:465).

Regardless of the size or reach of the media, mediated communication includes free newspapers, community radio and television channels, citizens' video, community computers, and so on, developed by pressure groups, political organisations, counterculture *aficionados*, local communities and minority groups (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:465). These self-managed, sometimes dissonant, media are distinguishable from conventional mass media as they are marked by being vehicles of direct community participation in the mediated communication process and are the extension of voices of groups and ideas that exercise and uphold the notion of democratic free speech based on the plurality of voices (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:465). This points towards the population production of communication messages by which the public comes into being through voicing its own opinions in opposition to voices mass mediated by state and private corporate organisations (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:465). Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi (2006:467) argue that an autonomous, citizen-directed, participatory debate, independent of the state in a social and cultural space (or communicative environment where opinion can be voiced freely, where people may gather to debate and create politics) underlies social and moral-ethical transformation. This means that access to the means of production of media messages is necessary for transforming the listener to a speaker or purveyor of messages (Thomas 2006:478). This would dramatically revolutionise the role of the mass media as the political attitudes of people using this type of media are changed from "a fatalistic, naïve and weak mindset to a fearless and positive people-sustained vision of the future", whilst the attitudes of the controllers of the media also need to change (Thomas 2006:478). This is in itself empowering as people are 'breaking the silence' in a process of knowledge creation and acquisition that will enable them to take control of their lives (Riaño 2006:447-450). Participation will further help define community needs by granting the population a voice in setting priorities and action agendas, and thus need to control the (traditional) media, its messages and ideally its ownership in order to encourage people to make use of available resources and encourage them to take advantage of useful information presented in the media (White 2006:484; Riaño 2006:446). Participatory media can contribute toward such space as oppositional to the state, as potential sites of struggle, as carriers of already familiar forms of communication and symbol systems, as structures that are embedded in everyday life that are very hard to control (Sreberny-Mohammadi &

Mohammadi 2006:467). This serves almost "as a 'virtual space' that temporarily connects people through the use of shared printed material, visual slogans or electronic broadcasts. In situations where people are disallowed somatic solidarity" (to assemble, demonstrate, march physically) these media can help foster an imaginative social solidarity, often as the precursor of actual physical mobilisation (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 2006:467).

The use of these smaller media is associated with the North American and European notion of community media that represents small-scale media used primarily by minority groups to make their voice heard in a collective exercise of democracy (Riaño 2006:450-451). Community media were developed, mainly in the mid 1960s, in North America and Europe and are seen as communication creating a platform to minority groups to exercise democratic rights of information and speech (Riaño 2006:450). Participatory communication for political community action aims to provide the means to express the claims and protests of communities and the advocacy of their rights (Riaño 2006:450). One such example is in Catalunya, Spain where community media increased from 1 local television station in 1981 to 94 stations in the mid 1990s through which Catalan cultural identity is expressed, providing alternative information (Riaño 2006:450). These community media are based on the principles of flexibility, informality and pluralism, as they represent a variety of social groups such as senior citizens, women, children, artists, political and environmental activists, and Latin American and African immigrants (Riaño 2006:450). Apart from opening up avenues for human rights, community media also offer an alternative to the mass media which are either influenced by the state or by commercial interests (Riaño 2006:450). For this reason community media are associated with the main tenets of access and participation as they are specifically related to the concepts of citizens in the public sphere and their capacities and rights to access the public resource of media systems (Riaño 2006:450). In this sense participation in communication is associated with access to media in order to advance democracy through the public's involvement in production, management, planning and decision making (Riaño 2006:451). This implies that the possible publics will obey equal conditions of access to the media, while disregarding the specific and marginal conditions of many social groups and their (low) levels of knowledge of media organisations, of economic and social power and their lack of media skills (Riaño 2006:451). As a social corrective media skills and training to marginal groups is suggested (Riaño 2006:451).

This means that mediated communication from a participatory approach to social development through access to the media provides developing communities with a voice. For this reason it can be argued that participatory processes involve giving minorities or 'hidden spheres' a voice, and the portrayal in the media of their everyday lives and lived experiences not only gives them a voice and is thus emancipatory but makes others aware of their circumstances (Slim & Thomson 2006:456-457; cf Servaes & Malikhao 2005:98). This includes addressing circumstances that prevent developing communities from reaching their goals, by enabling them to gain access to expertise, information, monies and other material and non-material resources that can enable social development (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:98; Mefalopulos 2005:158-159; Eriksen 2005:36-37). This means that the opening up of public space or of the public sphere for social development debates form part of the strategy of the participatory approach to social development. Participation is associated with information and participatory communication is a basic human need and right and one of the most important enablers of social development (Servaes & Malikhao 2005:98). Full and democratic participation of the developing community is further associated with a healthy public sphere (Deane 2005:177-178, 180-183; Servaes & Malikhao 2005:98; Carlsson 2005:199).

Various scholars point out the vulnerability of the participation approach to social development (often referred to as distorted participation), as elaborated below.

Firstly, the manipulation of the participatory process by organisers or prominent members of the community with assertive personalities or by the donors of social development aid or by governments is often disguised by simulated participative processes (Thomas 2006:478; Bordenave 2006:427). This could be due to a lack of trained personnel in communication skills (Thomas 2006:478).

Secondly, the participation approach may be flawed by dogmatisation and following of pre-determined procedures (often initially instituted to ease the evaluation and reporting back to the donors who are in a position of power) (Thomas 2006:478, 481).

Thirdly, participation may be used to avoid decision-making by endless meetings and assemblies (referred to as 'participationitis'), effectively opening up the possibility of authoritarian leaders that mislead people to think that their drive towards decision-

making is in the best interest of the community whilst it is manipulated to serve their own needs (Bordenave 2006:428; cf Thomas 2006:478).

Fourthly, one medium may be absolutised over another (e.g. popular theatre) (Thomas 2006:480).

Fifthly, the unequal distribution of benefits and the violation of traditional practices that it often creates may lead to more conflict (Riaño 2006:447)

Lastly, participation may be banalised in the sense that everything comes to be called participation, "from requesting a radio station to air a certain piece of music, to donating money for a campaign on AIDS. To prevent the banalisation of participation the world participation should be reserved for only joint efforts of people for achieving a common objective previously defined by them." (Bordenave 2006:428).

To overcome these vulnerabilities White (2006:484) argues that it should be kept in mind that:

"'Genuine participation', fortunately and unfortunately, is driven by human compassion, unselfish motives, sensitivity to the feelings and worth of others, supportive communication, openness to change, and the shifting of responsibility and power. Sceptics say it is unrealistic to have an expectation of 'genuine participation'. Optimists say we *can* create a new reality that honors cultural human right and operates within a contextual environment which is tolerant of diversity and sensitive to human needs. It is possible to blend diversity and achieve common goals in the course of development."

This means that the purpose of the participatory processes associated with the participatory approach to social development is to liberate people from their oppressed state through a process of conscientisation, emancipation and self-reliance in which interpersonal and mediated communication is used both to serve as an expressive state and to create an awareness in the public sphere of the circumstances of social development. This means that the participatory approach to social development functions on the community level in the sense of empowerment, but also on the larger social level or environment to address conditions that curb social development.

#### **3.2.6.4 Critical discussion of multiplicity and the participatory approach**

Based on this discussion it can be argued that in the participatory approach to social development the needs and interests of the developing community predominate; that



it is participatory and endogeneously directed; that it is based on knowledge sharing between benefactors and beneficiaries of social development efforts; that it is participatory and endogeneously directed; that the community is actively involved in the planning processes such as deciding on the expertise and information needed; that the communication is dialogic, horizontal, contextual, emancipatory and interactive; that the unique cultural identity of the developing community is respected and that all social development is in symbiosis with their world view; that the indigenous cultural knowledge framework and local wisdoms are used; that social development is holistically aimed at improving the entire quality of life and not only the material (such as the economic and infrastructural) aspects; and that self-development and self-empowerment are valued.

It can be concluded that the participatory approach to social development is seated in the notion of interdependency because of its appreciation of diversity of cultures and the interrelatedness of developing communities and the greater world society. It displays sensitivity to the diversity of cultures and to the world views of developing communities evident in its emphasis on endogenous self-development and self-empowerment. The participatory approach to social development is further associated with the unique cultural identity and indigenous cultural knowledge framework as it relates to the larger circumstances created by the social environment. This means that the participatory approach essentially functions on community level in terms of empowerment, but also on the larger social level in terms of making the peculiarities of the circumstances public and seeking options for addressing these. The participatory approach to social development is associated with both community and mass media that seek to give minority groups the opportunity firstly to voice their opinions, and secondly for the general public to hear and act upon these. This means that the underlying assumption of the communication approach of participation is that the diversity of voices undergirds democratic processes.

Although on a practical level the role of the development facilitator is not spelt out deliberately it can be assumed that the production of communication messages through community media should be facilitated by development facilitators who understand the dynamics of the community, otherwise large scale democratic processes that are envisaged cannot take place.

### **3.2.7 A critical analysis of the main approaches to social development**

#### **3.2.7.1 The modernisation approach**

Based on the discussion presented in this section it can be argued that the modernisation approach to social development equates social development with modernisation. This assumes that the ontology of universality which is evident in this approach rests on the universality of social development needs. Communication is seen as instrumental in bringing about modernisation.

#### **3.2.7.2 Liberation from oppression and dependency**

The dependency critique and the liberation from oppression approach to social development assume, unlike the modernisation approach to social development, that the cause of underdevelopment is external to the developing community. It furthermore assumes that liberation equates social development and that once a community is aware of its oppression (by a process called conscientisation) it will cast off liberation and develop. It assumes that all forms of oppression are universal and that communication is instrumental in alleviating oppression. This means that regardless of whether it is referred to as small, group, revolutionary, or alternative media it is used for conscientisation purposes.

#### **3.2.7.3 Development support communication**

The development support communication approach to social development emphasises communication to such an extent that social development problems are reduced to problems of communication. For this reason it emphasises communication, by seeing participatory communication as a process in which the developing community participates in the creation of communication messages in such a way that the target population are persuaded by such communication messages. It is instrumentalist in the sense that communication is seen as instrumental in bringing about social change in the desired manner, namely the transfer of technical information. It thus simulates participation and participatory communication. It is furthermore universal in the sense that it takes into account only the cultural and other specific aspects of the particular developing community when formulating persuasive communication messages, but it assumes that social development is universal. This universalist principle is not unilaterally emphasised as

it distinguishes between development workers, donors, governments and developing community.

#### **3.2.7.4 'Another development'**

In contrast to the early and relatively simplistic understandings of the notions of social development, 'another development' assumes that social development is the interplay of a complex array of elements, making it a complex understanding of social development. It assumes the diversity and plurality of humans on an ontological level and holds that social development should be endogenously directed as developing communities have the ability to determine their own futures and that it is their right to do so. It thus does not seek universal causes and solutions to social development problems but accepts that each developing situation is unique. It furthermore seeks solutions to development problems both on the material and non-material levels of human life. In its approach to communication and participation it is undergirt by a preference for democratic rights and responsibility towards people and nature, aligning it with the interdependency notion.

#### **3.2.7.5 The participatory approach**

'Another development' provides a theoretical basis for the participatory approach to social development. The participatory approach assumes 'multiplicity' which means that a complex and vast array of elements is at play in social development processes.

On the local level it is liberatory, participative, conscientisation oriented, emancipatory, and seeks self-reliance, but the greater context in which a developing community is situated is taken in account. This indicates that the role of the development facilitator functions on both the internal or community level and on the external or contextual level.

True to its acceptance of multiplicity, it seeks both material and non-material social development and it assumes the plurality and diversity of humankind. The participatory approach to social development furthermore supports democratic, participative communication processes to ensure both conscientisation and public awareness. It further seeks to influence policy-making processes that can enable social development. It relies on community and mass media to give minority groups

the opportunity to voice their opinions, and for the general public to hear these, and through this process of plurality of opinions in the media enhances democratic processes.

This discussion is summarised in Table 3.1 below:

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	Modernisation approach	Dependency and liberation	Development support communication (DSC)	'Another development	Participatory approach
<b>Social development</b>				Formatted: Centered	Multiplicity On the local level it is participative, conscientious, emancipation, self-reliance Greater context taken into account Material and non-material
<b>Ontology</b>				Formatted: Centered	diversity of
<b>Communication, information, knowledge, participation</b>				Formatted: Centered	atic, participatory communication processes both conscientiousness and awareness. Seeks to influence making processes that lead to social development Community media and networks to give minority groups opportunity to firstly voice opinions, and secondly hear it. This diversity of voices grids democratic processes

**TABLE 3.1 A summary of the main approaches to social development**

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### **3.3 AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MAIN APPROACHES TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN TERMS OF BEYOND MODERNIST THINKING**

In this section the approaches to social engagement are assessed in terms of their coincidence with beyond modernist thinking. The preceding chapters argued that modernist thinking is associated with rationality, instrumentality, a technical orientation (scientific, rational, technical knowledge), the universality of humans, and a progress and economic emphasis; whilst beyond modernist thinking is associated with an emphasis on the non-material dimensions of human life such as the cultural, spiritual, ethical and moral aspects in a quest to integrate the material and non-material dimensions of human life. This is underpinned by reciprocity, an appreciation for diversity and constitutive communication and reciprocal relationships, as expressed by the notions of interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity.

Against the background of the main characteristics of beyond modernist thinking the approaches to social development discussed in the previous section are assessed in the rest of this section in terms of their coincidence with beyond modernist thinking.

#### **3.3.1 The modernisation approach**

The modernisation approach to social development represents a variety of aspects that excludes it from the proposed beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations. These are the reductionist views of humans based on their universality that can be associated with an ontology of determinism; the cultural bias of the modernisation approach to social development that favours the development facilitator and his/her modernist culture, which signifies that this approach does not embrace diversity; and its instrumentalist view of humans in the sense that it is assumed that they wish to modernise.

This approach to social development is further associated with modernist thinking because of its influence orientation evident in its preference for using informational community; its rationality orientation; its treating of human beings as universally the same (social development in all communities are the same, and all people develop in the same way); its preference for scientific knowledge; its universalist view of human beings resulting in instrumentalist relationships between the development facilitator

and developing community; its focus on technical information that has an utility value (as was conveyed by health and agricultural extension workers); and its material orientation (development should be visible and measurable - in most cases in economic terms expressed by the GNP).

For these reasons this approach to social development it is not in line with beyond modernist thinking and is thus not to be considered towards inclusion in a beyond modernist conceptual model.

### **3.3.2 The liberation from oppression and dependency**

The second approach to social development discussed in this chapter is the dependency critique and the liberation from oppression approach to social development.

Mainly for the reason that the dependency critique is essentially a critique of the modernisation approach to social development that does not pose, on the operational level, a well-defined contribution towards social development, this approach is not considered as a basis for the beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations, which is the aim with this study.

The liberation of oppression approach to social development, on the other hand, does pose a well-defined method to social development, namely that as the cause for oppression lies outside the community, the community should be made aware of the cause of oppression through conscientisation. This means that awareness and discovery of the power within the individual and group are thought to lead the community towards liberation. This approach to social development emphasises the non-material dimensions of human life, aligning it with beyond modernist thinking. These non-material aspects include concern for self-reliance, empowerment, critical consciousness and the quest towards 'unleashing' the power within the individual to cast off oppressive forces. It is also not based on instructional communication as is the modernisation approach to social development in which technical knowledge diffusion is equated with communication as it is reliant on dialogical communication in a participatory manner within the oppressed group, but in which this communication is nevertheless instrumental in the sense that it is persuasively directed towards nullify the source of oppression, making this type of communication modernist by

being instrumentalist. The liberation of oppression approach to social development further views oppressors as universal and oppressed people as universal, distinguishing between only two groups of humans.

This is a move away from the modernist universal ontology of the modernisation approach to social development, but is still not in line with the appreciation of diversity and plurality to the same degree as beyond modernist thinking, although some of its elements are used in the multiplicity or participatory approach to social development.

### **3.3.3 Development support communication**

The communication of the third approach to social development, namely the development support communication (DSC) approach, is as instrumental as is the modernisation approach to social development, but it uses the term participatory. In effect, the community is motivated to participate in the formulation of mediated communication directed towards persuading the community to accept mostly technical developmental information. This amounts to simulated participation, as the messages do not originate from the developing community. This aligns due to its instrumentalist nature, the communication approach with modernist thinking. The DSC approach does, however, acknowledge that this process differs from community to community as the circumstances, culture, traditions, etc. differ from community to community, which effectively aligns it with beyond modernist thinking as the diversity and plurality of culture is acknowledged.

### **3.3.4 'Another development'**

'Another development' is the fourth approach to social development discussed in this chapter, and coincides with beyond modernist thinking in the sense that it assumes ontological diversity (diversity in culture); acknowledges that nature and humans are interdependent and that different groups of humans are interdependent; that democracy, reciprocity and human rights underlie the communication and behaviour of social development; and that both the material and non-material dimensions of human life need to be addressed through social development. This rather theoretical approach forms the basis for the participatory approach to social development.



### 3.3.5 Participatory approach

Largely based on the principles of 'another development', the participatory approach to social development assumes 'multiplicity'. This term signifies the complex nature of social development based on the understanding of plurality and diversity of all aspects of human life, aligning this approach to the ontology of beyond modernist thinking. It is based on the notion of participatory undergirt by accepting democracy as the better option for organising human life, evident in its communication patterns that are, on both interpersonal and mediated levels, based on reciprocity that on the practical level manifests in dialogical, participatory, two-way, equal status constitutive communication.

Constitutive communication with its reciprocal nature is in line with beyond modernist thinking. As the cultural aspects that include dialogical communication, participation, democracy, emancipation, self-reliance and empowerment are emphasised this approach to social development is associated with beyond modernist thinking. This approach is further associated with holistic thinking that is, in turn, a term used to refer to the interdependent nature of various aspects of earth, nature and humans, the material and non-material aspects of social development, and the complexity of international and national and community relationships, which aligns it with beyond modernist thinking that assumes diversity and plurality.

### 3.3.6 Conclusion: beyond modernist social development

The preceding sections argued that beyond modernist social development should be based on the theoretical assumptions of 'another development' as executed through the participatory approach to social development. This means that beyond modernist social development should be based on the ontology of free will and plurality (as opposed to determinism) that assumes multiplicity. In this sense multiplicity means the appreciation of diversity, plurality, equality of humans, and that the material and non-material are appreciated. The notion of multiplicity means that the causes of underdevelopment and other social development problems should be investigated on multiple levels (on community, regional, national and international levels; as well as on material and non-material levels). Based on multiplicity reciprocity, in terms of human relationships and communication, is appreciated, giving beyond modernist social development its distinctive participatory nature. This means that constitutive communication is dialogical and that the communicating parties have equal status.

The role of the development facilitator is important in each of the approaches to social development. The modernisation approach to social development aims at persuading the developing community through development facilitators to adopt modern practices; dependency thinking and liberation from oppression seeks to mobilise, through the process of conscientisation, critical thinking about the impact of oppression on the everyday lives of the members of the developing community in which the role of the development facilitator would be to facilitate the participatory formulation of communication messages; development support communication the role of the development facilitator is persuasive because this approach to social development seeks, through a simulated participatory process of formulating the communication messages to persuade members of the developing community to adopt scientific information. 'Another development', on the other hand, forms the theoretical basis for the participatory or multiplicity approach to social development as is based on democratic participation of all members of the community under the guidance of the development facilitator. In the participatory or multiplicity approach the work of the development facilitator would be on community level (focussing on conscientisation processes on both interpersonal and community media levels) and outside the developing community (focussing on the formulation of messages for a wider audience).

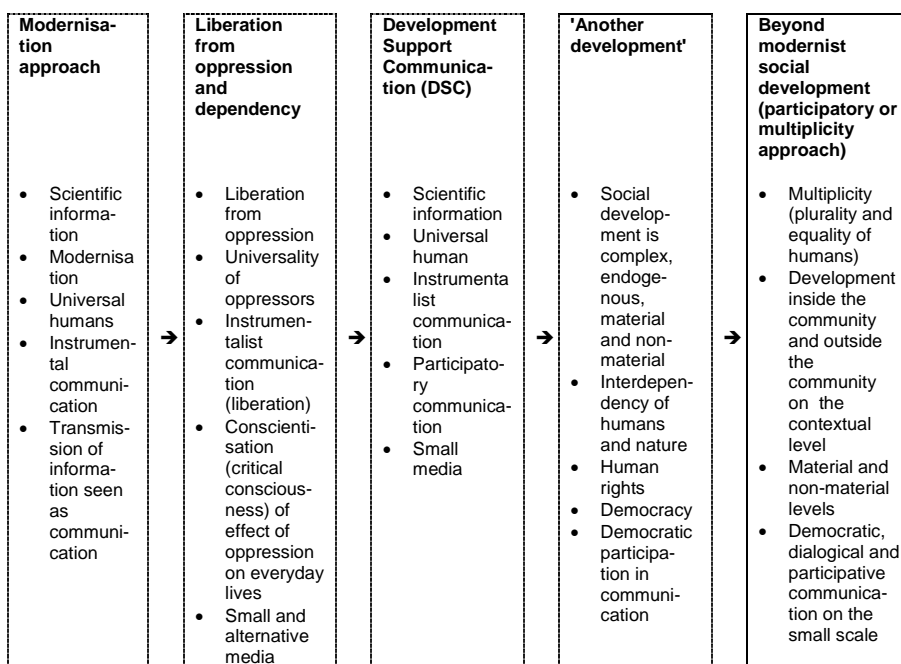
### 3.4 CONCLUSION

The previous chapter indicated that a shift in social thinking took place from modernist thinking to beyond modernist thinking, associated with interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity. It was argued that societal thinking shifted to the base of accepting the interdependency of all the parts of the world, be they social or natural, for the future survival of all people on earth. Based on the notion of the interdependency between all parts of the world, it was concluded that all the parts of the world are different and have equally important needs (multiplicity), and a reciprocal relationship between the parts of the world should exist.

This chapter argued that a similar shift took place in social development; from the modernisation approach to social development (associated with modernist thinking as the name of this approach indicates); to the liberation of oppression and dependency approach to social development; to the development support

communication approach to social development; to the theoretical approach of 'another development'; and finally to the participatory or multiplicity approach to social development. The latter coincides with beyond modernist social thinking due to its emphasis on multiplicity and participatory communication that is based on reciprocal relationships and constitutive communication that are linked in Chapter 2 with multiplicity, reciprocity and interdependency. Against this background this chapter has argued that the participatory or multiplicity approach that is embedded in the theoretical assumptions of 'another development' represents beyond modernist social development.

This shift in approach to social development is graphically illustrated below in Figure 3.1:



**FIGURE 3.1** The shift towards beyond modernist social development

The contribution of this chapter lies not only in identifying this shift from the modernisation approach of social development to a beyond modernist social development; but also in showing that this shift coincides with the shift in social thinking indicated in Chapter 2. A further contribution of this chapter is that it reveals options towards the operationalisation of beyond modernist social development, that

in turn, indicates the direction of businesses' social engagement through public relations.

This operationalisation involves a complex process of social development on two levels: the social development needs of a developing community should be addressed both inside the developing community and outside the developing community. Inside the community the process of conscientisation should engender a critical awareness of the factors impacting on social development and problems should be actualised; and outside the developing community, on the external contextual level, factors disabling social development should be addressed. Beyond modernist social development further implies that both the material and non-material dimensions of social development should be addressed. In order to achieve this, a participatory process is advocated, by which the community members take ownership of their own social development process, because of its higher success rate in the past in achieving sustainable social development compared to other approaches to social development.

In conclusion it is argued that the shift that took place in social thinking from modernist thinking to beyond modernist thinking is also evident in social thinking. This line of argument is extended to the next chapter to determine whether a similar shift is evident in the field of businesses' social engagement through public relations.

	<b>Modernisation approach</b>	<b>Dependency and liberation</b>	<b>Development support communication (DSC)</b>	<b>'Another development'</b>	<b>Beyond modernist thinking: participatory or multiplicity approach</b>
<b>Social development</b>	<p>Accepting well-prepared scientific information, effectively modernising</p> <p>Social development measured in economic terms</p>	Liberation from oppression (and dependency)	Accepting well-prepared scientific information, effectively modernising	<p>Complex, endogenous, material and non-material levels</p> <p>Interdependency: responsibility towards humans and nature</p>	<p>Multiplicity</p> <p>On the local level it is liberatory, participative, conscientisation, emancipatory, self-reliant</p> <p>Greater context taken in account</p> <p>Material and non-material levels</p>
<b>Ontology</b>	Universality of humankind (regardless of whether modern or developing)	<p>All developing communities are universal; as are all oppressors</p> <p>Distinguish between oppressors and developing communities</p>	<p>Universality of humankind (regardless whether modern or developing) as they have the same social development goals</p> <p>Distinguish development workers, donors, governments, developing community</p>	<p>Plurality and diversity of humankind</p> <p>Human rights, democracy</p>	Plurality and diversity of humankind evident in an appreciation for different kinds of knowledges
<b>Communication, information, knowledge, participation</b>	<p>Instrumentalist (informational communication) in modernisation</p> <p>Information and communication equated</p> <p>Transmission of information seen as communication</p> <p>Knowledge transmitted</p>	<p>Communication is instrumentalist (informational communication) in liberation</p> <p>'Small', 'little', 'group', 'alternative', or 'revolutionary' media for conscientiation purposes</p> <p>Conscientiation of effect of oppression on everyday lives</p>	<p>Instrumentalist (informational communication) in creating a climate of acceptance (modernisation), but participatory after developing community persuaded to take part in the process of creating mediated messages</p> <p>'Small' or 'little' media – community takes part in creating persuasive communication messages where the community feel part of it (simulated participation)</p>	<p>Democratic participative communication processes</p>	<p>Democratic, participative, dialogical communication processes to ensure both conscientisation and public awareness. Seeks to influence policy-making processes that can enable social development.</p> <p>'Community' (small and mass) media that, in contrast to mass (commercial, government or other) media, give minority groups the opportunity firstly to voice their opinions, and second for others to hear it. This diversity of voices undergirds democratic processes</p>

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## Chapter 4

# Beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

It has, thus far, been indicated that a shift in social thinking causes society increasingly to expect from businesses to be socially involved. This expectation coincides with beyond modernist thinking that represents the integration of the material and the non-material (such as cultural, spiritual, ethical and moral) aspects of human life. It has further been indicated that beyond modernist thinking is associated with multiplicity and reciprocity that imply an interdependency between people, with the resultant preference for constitutive communication and reciprocal relationships. It has also been indicated that this shift in social thinking causes society to expect of businesses ~~to~~ be socially engaged, based on the understanding of interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity.

The previous chapter indicated a similar shift in thinking, from a modernist approach to social development (also referred to as the modernisation approach to social development) to a beyond modernist approach to social development, based on interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity.

This chapter will analyse the main approaches to businesses' social engagement through the mechanism of public relations and will seek indications of a similar shift in thinking. To achieve this aim the main approaches to businesses' social engagement through the mechanism of public relations will be discussed in the first part of this chapter. In the second part of this chapter the main approaches will be assessed in terms of beyond modernist thinking. From this assessment the conclusion of this chapter indicates that thinking about businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations has not yet ~~made a large scale re-orientation shifted t~~owards beyond modernist thinking.

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## 4.2 THE MAIN APPROACHES TO BUSINESSES' SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS

### 4.2.1 Introduction

Based on an historic contextualisation of public relations as a pivotal point in the business-society relationship, this section describes the main approaches to public relations and their subsequent positions about businesses' social engagement. These approaches include: a market-oriented approach; the reflective paradigm; the excellence paradigm; ~~and~~ arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation for public relations; as well as a new reformulation-- of the excellence paradigm.

The market-oriented approach is the dominant approach to businesses' social engagement through public relations as it fundamentally coincides with a market-driven society; whilst both the reflective and excellence paradigms deliberately seek to pose an alternative to a market-oriented approach. Coinciding with the social thinking that is increasingly embracing the non-material dimension of human life, arguments evolved towards an ethical ideological foundation for public relations. This section therefore presents the context in which public relations, businesses' relationship with society and social engagement could be placed. For heuristic reasons these are juxtaposed, indicating two opposing views of public relations, two opposing views of the business-society relationship and two opposing views of the purpose of businesses' social engagement.

### 4.2.2 Two opposing views of the purpose of public relations in businesses

This section presents an historic contextualisation of businesses' social engagement through public relations. It indicates that at different eras in history public relations favoured either the business or the public. This means that during different phases of the evolution of public relations either the business' interests were the focus of public relations and during other phases ~~the~~ public relations ~~were~~ favoured the public interest. This contributed to the understanding that public relations (in a variety of ways) have to balance the interests of the business with those of the public.

The ancient roots of public relations provide a background for public relations that focus on the business interest. During ancient times public relations were marked by a spokesperson on behalf of a powerful entity, such as a middle person between the king and the populace in the Middle East, Egypt and Rome (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic 2007:273; Bates 2006:5-6). This promotional focus of early public relations was evident in US public relations at the turn of the previous century when publicity largely characterised the manufacturing of news (press agency) through 'advertising' and other public relations methods steered by journalists-in-residence in response to muckraking journalism (Ihator 2004; Bates 2006:7-8). These influence-oriented practices were largely introduced into public relations by showman P. T. Barnum, but also through the work of the Committee on Public Information in the US, led by George Creel, that had to unite public opinion behind the WW I effort through a nationwide propaganda campaign (Mersham et al 1995:5; Ihator 2004; Bates 2006:12).

Due to its emphasis on the press, this is referred to as a press-agentry orientation. This orientation changed with the establishment and growth of big businesses (in which the owner was no longer the manager of the business) to public relations that did not create any type of publicity except specifically positive publicity for the business (Grunig & Grunig 1992:228; Mersham et al 1995:4-5). In this phase of history public relations were seen as informing the public on behalf of the business with the aim of creating positive publicity for the business (Grunig & Grunig 1992:186). These influence-oriented early beginnings of public relations, described as *The engineering of public consent* (1955) by the 'father' of public relations Edward Bernays, influenced the persuasive understanding of public relations (Mersham et al 1995:5).

Muckraking journalists' concern about unethical business conduct, unfair elimination of competitors, and the inhumane treatment of employees were carried into the twentieth century and gained momentum at the time when educational levels generally increased and with the rise of the economically enabled middle class after industrialisation with its resultant increase in social activism which articulated social concerns in the public sphere (Ihator 2004; Bates 2006:15-19). Higher levels of education amongst the general public contributed to both the increase in activism and the formation of non-governmental and non-profit organisations associated with the 'third sector' (Ihator 2004). The rise in the social activities of the third sector and increase in social activism (or pressure) after the Second World War led to greater

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social support for freedom, social justice, and fairness guarded by the social 'watchdogs' of the third sector and social activist groups (Ihator 2004).

This change in the power relationship between the business and society is evident in the way public relations definitions in the first part of the previous century incorporated aspects such as the contribution of public relations to the social good, acknowledgment of the diversification of society, and goodwill as well as socially responsible conduct on the part of business to such an extent that the 1990s, in organisational management terms, is called the 'era of power sharing and empowerment' (Hynes 2005:4-14; Ihator 2004; Bates 2006:15-17). At this time public relations gained the dual focus of balancing the communicative needs of both the business and of society (Ihator 2004; cf Grunig & White 1992:53).

In order to showcase their good relationships with society, illustrate their good intentions towards society and demonstrate the level of their social responsibility, businesses in the Anglo-American regions of the world resorted to donations in the form of philanthropy and charity to society (Juholin 2004). In the European context businesses' social engagement was not related to charity or religious considerations as in the North American context, but rather to the business ideology and entrepreneurship that dates back to the 1800s and predates the managerial revolution of the Anglo-American tradition that later came to realise that it was good business practice to acknowledge society (Juholin 2004). In Europe the social responsibility of business is associated with the 18<sup>th</sup> century's industrialisation embedded in the fair treatment of employees (wages, employment possibility, housing for workers, schooling, health care, religious services) (Juholin 2004). This European phenomenon was motivated partly by businesses' self-interested need of a stable workforce, but also by a "genuine desire to improve people's living conditions" associated with the north-western European welfare state (agreement societies) (Juholin 2004).

With the increased economic competition of globalisation and the new technological advances made in the field of telecommunication in recent times, the sociological orientation of businesses and public relations was supplemented by a renewed interest in the influence-orientation of business (Ihator 2004). Illustrative of this is the late 1900s' scientific orientation which measured the effectiveness of business and of public relations messages as part of the businesses' strategic and marketing orientation (Ihator 2004). This coincided with increased competition due to

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globalisation, the resultant downsizing of large businesses to become 'lean and mean' (with the production side of businesses outsourced to areas of cost effective labour), referred to as global Fordism by Allen (1996:194), with the effect of retaining the managerial, logistical and communication aspects as part of the centralised full-time operations of the business (Schulz, Tannenbaum & Lauterborn 1994:45; Ihator 2004; cf Held 1996:35). At this point communication and logistics were central to businesses as it became evident that, due to technical advances, very little product differentiation was evident and the most distinguishing elements of a product were the logistics and communication around products (Schulz et al 1994:45). These new developments illustrate the increased competition brought about by globalisation, with the resultant renewed business-focus (and thus influence-orientation) of public relations (Ihator 2004). This business-focus of public relations, in response to increased competition due to globalisation enhanced by new technological developments that enable international communication systems, turned public sentiment against business. This turn was caused by the perception that businesses increasingly act in self-interest and negate their social responsibility (referred to as anti-social behaviour) (Ihator 2004).

Against this background it is generally accepted that businesses should show their social care in one way or the other, depending on the nature of the society in which a business operates (Juholin 2004). In north-European social welfare societies it is part of a longstanding tradition that businesses' social responsibility is engrained in business philosophy, but in the north-American tradition businesses deliberately seem to seek social consent as it cannot be assumed that business philosophy is socially responsible (Juholin 2004). For this reason businesses' social responsibility receives great attention in North American literature (Juholin 2004). To avoid blurring the distinctions among various historical phases of business development of the social consciousness in different regions of the world, Juholin (2004) argues that currently businesses' social responsibility either have an owner (business) orientation; a stakeholder (public/social) orientation; or a wide responsibility orientation born in the philosophy that in the long term it is good for business to do social good. These categories are confirmed for South Africa by Mersham et al (1995:82-87), by whom the last is associated with enlightened self-interest. The understanding that doing good to society is good for business is further confirmed by Mersham et al (1995:87-88), Koten (1997:149) and Harris (1998:22), who adds the dimension that businesses' communication function (including public relations and in

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some cases advertising) is largely responsible for the execution of businesses' social engagement.

Based on this discussion it is evident that a complex relationship exists between business and society, and thus between public relations (as mechanism that executes the businesses' social engagement) and society. In different regions of the world these complexities differ. The purpose of public relations differs according to these regional, historical and philosophical complexities. It can be said, though, that although public relations are traditionally associated with influencing the public, this is not the case with public relations in all regions. Although an influence-orientation is prominent, public relations gained in the previous century, a sociological focus largely due to anti-business social sentiments.

In Table 4.1 this discussion is graphically presented:

	<b><i>Purpose of public relations</i></b>
<b>A business orientation</b>	Persuade the public through informational communication to support the business
<b>A social orientation</b>	A social focus

**TABLE 4.1** *The purpose of public relations*

These two seemingly opposing foci on public relations give it its distinctive dual focus in which public relations are seen as serving both the business and society.

#### **4.2.3 Two opposing views of the business-society relationship**

A competitive business-society relationship is based on the premise that the business sees itself as separate (or autonomous) from the natural and social environment (Grunig & White 1992:42-43). The effect of such separation is that the autonomous business is remote from society and sees itself in competition with society (Mersham et al 1995:38). This type of business focusses focuses so much on economic progress and competition that it justifies its position of dominance and subordination of society (Grunig & White 1992:42-43). Such a relationship with society is based on individualism and is a struggle for the survival of the fittest (Mersham et al 1995:38; cf Deetz 1995:33).

The separation between business and society is illustrated by a non-personal or even hostile business-society relationship (Grunig, LA 1992:496; Griffin 2003:258;

Littlejohn & Foss 2005:240-242). This is referred to as an asymmetrical worldview associated with an asymmetrical relationship between the business and society, that leads the business to see itself as essentially separate from society (Grunig & White 1992:43). In systemic terms this is explained as follows: an asymmetrical business orientation is marked by a preoccupation with the self (an inward focus) enabling the business to focus on exertion of its power on others, and engagement with society is primarily self-serving in the sense that it often invites information from the public that is later used to persuade the public more convincingly (Grunig & White 1992:43; Mersham et al 1995:38-40). This inward and competition orientation is unhealthy, self-inflated and essentially narcissistic (Grunig & White 1992:44-45).

Similar to the asymmetrical relationships fostered by a competitive orientation the communication associated with the business-society relationship is also asymmetrical due to its influence-orientation (Grunig, LA 1992:496-497; Deetz 1995:100-102).

This discussion is summarised in Table 4.2 below in which a competitive business-society relationship is associated with domination or subjugation of society due to an isolated view of the business. In a competitive business-society relationship, businesses have an inward (or internal) orientation described in systemic terms as a closed system. Relationships and communication are essentially asymmetrical (competitive and individualistic) making them instrumental in increasing profit. Such influence-oriented communication is referred to as the informational view of communication.

<b>Competitive business' relationship with society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domination or subjugation of society</li> <li>• Sees itself in isolation</li> <li>• Internal (inward) orientation</li> <li>• Closed system</li> <li>• Relationships with other groups of people is seen as competitive and individualistic</li> <li>• Asymmetry</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence orientation</li> <li>• Informational view</li> </ul>

**TABLE 4.2 A competitive business-society relationship**

It is subsequently argued that a competitive business-society relationship sees itself in competition with society. This amounts to an instrumentalist view of humans, namely that the business uses society to reach its goals. This is justified by the business because it does not regard itself as part of society. Such a position justifies

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businesses' domination of the natural and social environment, effectively leading to the business competing with social groups in a quest to accumulate wealth. Such an individualist conception means that the business does not see itself as part of a community, but rather as being separate from an impersonal society (such an impersonal society is a characteristic of modernist thinking as explained in Chapter 2, Section 2.2). The type of communication used to orchestrate instrumentalist relationships is often associated with modernist informational communication (explained in Chapter 2, Section 2.2). In juxtaposing types of business-relationships the position that opposes the business-society relationship as a competitive relationship is an ecological relationship.

The ecological business-society relationship assumes that the business is part of society as it is associated with openness, harmony and cooperation (Mersham et al 1995:38-39; Grunig & White 1992:42-44). This business-society relationship is described in systemic terms as an open system, in which cooperation between business and society is valued and where conflict is resolved through mutual adjustment (implying a moving equilibrium) (Grunig & White 1992:43-45; Mersham et al 1995:43-44). Grunig and White (1992:43-44) and Mersham et al (1995:39) argue that 'inter-group liberalism' is a characteristic of symmetrical organisations, in which inter-group liberalism refers to open negotiation among interest groups and wants to take the interests of society into account. Inter-group liberalism further challenges, these authors argue, governments and corporate structures that are not responsive to social needs, and it acknowledges the diversity of groups in society. This orientation implies an outward orientation in which all the parts of a system are predisposed to operate as adaptive and adaptable parts of a larger system (Littlejohn & Foss 2005:40-41; Van der Walt 2006:118-119). This implies that the business has an outward orientation.

In contrast to the self-inflated, self-oriented essence of competitive asymmetrical businesses, businesses preferring symmetrical relationships have a positive self-regard that results in reciprocity and equal-power relationships (Grunig & White 1992:44-45; Eagleton 2007:147-148). This type of business-society relationship is social, not just in terms of staff but also in terms of social elements such as valuing equity, autonomy, and innovative behaviour (Grunig & White 1992:43-44; Mersham et al 1995:39).

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This argument is summarised in Table 4.3 below in which an ecological business-society relationship is associated with the business seeing itself as part of society with the resultant harmonious and cooperative relationship with society described by an open system marked by mutual adjustment and adaptation. This relationship is essentially symmetrical with the resultant constitutive communication based on symmetrical dialogical two-way communication aimed at mutual understanding. This is referred to as constitutive communication.

<b>Ecological business' relationship with society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business part of society</li> <li>• Harmony and cooperation</li> <li>• Open system: moving equilibrium with other systems leads to adaptation and adjustment</li> <li>• Symmetry</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutive (dialogical two-way symmetrical) communication</li> </ul>

**TABLE 4.3 An ecological business-society relationship**

In summary it can be said that the ecological business-society relationship is associated with the view that the business is part of society and therefore has a harmonious and cooperative relationship with the other parts of society. In systemic terms this is described as mutuality, or symmetry, that manifests in dialogical two-way symmetrical (constitutive) communication. This is in contrast to an instrumentalist business-society relationship associated with a competitive view, in which the business effectively competes with society for wealth and seeks to extract wealth from society through asymmetrical relationships and (informational) communication. Deetz associates informational communication and asymmetrical business-society relationships with modernist thinking and constitutive communication and symmetrical relationships with beyond modernist thinking (see Chapter 2, Sections 2.2.5 and 2.3.3).

This discussion is summarised in Table 4.4 below:

	<b><i>The business-society relationship</i></b>
<b>A business orientation</b>	A competitive business-society relationship
<b>A social orientation</b>	An ecological business-society relationship

**TABLE 4.4 Two opposing views of the business-society relationship**

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#### 4.2.4 Two opposing views of the purpose of businesses' social engagement

In the debates on businesses' social engagement a similar juxtapositioning of views is evident and the opposing views are described as a shareholderist and a socialist (or social consciousness) view.

A shareholderist view, prominent in the first half of the previous century, arose from the 'strong capitalism' position that it is not responsible stewardship, and is inappropriate and ethically dubious to use shareholders' funds for social causes. This point of departure equated altruism with 'theft' from shareholders (Valor 2007). This position changed in the middle of the previous century, especially in the UK and US, when it was assumed that businesses' social engagement could result in long-term gain for shareholders, with the subsequent change in corporate laws forcing managers to accept the duty of improving social welfare and so aligning a profit orientation with community interest as a long-term interest-raising strategy (Valor 2007; cf Mersham et al 1995:84). This amounted to a utilitarian view of businesses' social engagement in that it was associated with an increase in businesses' financial performance (Valor 2007).

In contrast to the shareholderist view, the socialist view originated from socialist proponents but changed in the 1980s with the fall of the Berlin Wall (Valor 2007). Based on socialist ideas this sociologically oriented view coincides with tax incentives given to businesses in Europe and the USA if they were socially involved by different forms of monetary benefit transferred to society. This was done to encourage business to take up their responsibility towards society (Valor 2007). Criticism against this position is that businesses now assume the social welfare role of governments (Valor 2007). This is in line with the criticism against the neoliberalist-induced free market system (discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3). Consequent upon this criticism businesses should not be entrusted with the task of distributing wealth as they will fail to maximise welfare due to their strategic utilitarian position regarding their social responsibility (Valor 2007). This is evident in their choice of social causes to support as they tend to support causes that provide promotional benefits for the business and that do not necessarily address the most urgent social ills or problems (Valor 2007; Mersham et al 1995:84-95). Another, but related, criticism is that the percentage of net profit directed towards social benefit is minimal, effectively supporting the argument that businesses' social engagement seems to be a token activity that often originates from a promotional (such as advertising, marketing,

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public relations) budget (Valor 2007). In ~~defense~~defence of the utilitarianist shareholder view, it can be argued that this is the system enabled by governmental neoliberalist policies which encourage public-private partnerships towards social needs both in developed and developing countries; that state-organised efforts to address social needs are not in all cases addressed towards the common good of society; and that community-relationships could be bureaucratised with subsequent negative effects on social capital (Valor 2007).

It is hence argued that the shareholderist view holds that businesses' social engagement is to be used as a strategy to increase profit, whilst the socialist view criticises such practice.

#### 4.2.5 Integrated summary: public relations, the business-society relationship and businesses' social engagement

This section provides an integrated summary of the following aspects discussed in the ~~previous~~s sections:

- two opposing views of the purpose of public relations;
- two opposing views of the business-society relationship; and
- two opposing views of the purpose of businesses' social engagement.

In the beginning of this section it was argued that although the focus of early public relations was promotional or influence-oriented, it gained a social focus in response to changed social thinking.

In the second part of this section these two foci of public relations were related to a particular business-society relationship, namely associating influence-oriented public relations with a competitive business-society relationship; whilst a social focus of public relations was associated with an ecological business-society relationship.

In the last part of this section the shareholderist and socialist views of businesses' social engagement were discussed. The shareholderist view shares similarities with a competitive business-society relationship and a business focus of public relations in the sense that society is viewed as instrumental in enhancing profit; whilst a socialist view points towards a non-instrumentalist view or rather a social orientation or consciousness similar to that implied by an ecological business-society relationship.

A competitive business-society relationship is associated with informational communication aligned with a modernist mode of thinking; whilst an ecological business-society relationship is associated with constitutive communication aligned with beyond modernist thinking.

This discussion aligns the shareholderist view of businesses' social engagement with the competitive business-society relationship, with its business-focussed public relations which originated in modernist thinking and its utility or instrumentalist view of society; whilst a socialist view of businesses' social engagement is associated with an ecological business-society relationship, with socially focused public relations rising from beyond modernist thinking and its sociological orientation (see Table 4.5 below).

	<b>Social thinking</b>	<b>Public relations</b>	<b>Business-society relationship</b>	<b>Businesses' social engagement</b>
<b>Business orientation</b>	Modernist thinking	Business focus through informational communication	Competitive business-society relationship	Shareholderist view is modernist due to its utility or instrumentalist view of society
<b>Social orientation</b>	Beyond modernist thinking	Social focus through constitutive communication	Ecological business-society relationship	Socialist view is beyond modernist due to its social orientation

**TABLE 4.5 A business versus a social orientation of businesses' social engagement through public relations**

Against the background of these two juxtaposed views the main approaches to public relations (namely a market-oriented approach, the initial formulation of the excellence paradigm, the reflective paradigm; ~~and~~ arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation for public relations; as well as a new reformulation of the excellence paradigm) are analysed in terms of their association with these views.

#### 4.2.6 Market-oriented public relations

Public relations traditionally has a dual function, in that it serves the interests of both the business and the public (Ehling et al 1992:357; Guth & Marsh 2003:427-430; Caywood 1997:xi; Harris 1998:145; Verčič & Van Ruler 2000; Verčič 2007), although the dominant form of public relations is influence-oriented (Mersham et al 1995:4, Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Grunig & White 1992:42). The latter form is described in this

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section, in what is referred to as market-oriented public relations that favour the business over society, thus neglecting the traditional dual focus of public relations and largely disregarding the interests of the public.

This argument is presented by discussing, firstly, the main assumptions of market-oriented public relations, and, secondly, the operational manifestations of this approach and their impact on the businesses' social engagement.

#### 4.2.63.1 Main assumptions and the business-society relationship

Market-oriented public relations essentially support the market, meaning that they are employed to enhance the profit of the business. Market-oriented public relations are undergird#undergird by the so-called conservative and pragmatic social roles<sup>1</sup> of public relations that describe the nature of market-oriented public relations as explained below.

If the role of public relations is defined by the conservative assumption, public relations are aimed at defending the business or maintaining the *status quo*. Public relations justify and defend the privileges of the economically powerful (the business), and public relations, like politicians, are essentially 'articulate apologists' for a social system that, in some cases, support inequalities (Grunig & White 1992:51-52; Grunig, JE 1992:8). This defensive and protective outlook of public relations effectively defends or protects asymmetrical relationships (Mersham et al 1995:42). Since it is assumed that the business has a powerful effect on society and is in competition with social groupings and with other businesses, military terms, such as 'arsenals', 'armories', 'weapons', 'strategy' and 'opposition' are often used to describe this type of public relations (Grunig & White 1992: 43-45, 51-52; Mersham et al 1995:43-44).

If public relations are to fulfil a pragmatic social role, their purpose would be to serve or add value to the commercial interest of business (Grunig, JE 1992:8). This implies that society is perceived as being composed of competing groups, target audiences and markets from which commercial advantage is to be won (Grunig, JE 1992:8). From this perspective other businesses are seen as competition and are thus to be

<sup>1</sup> Of the six social roles of public relations, namely the pragmatic, conservative, neutral, radical, idealistic and critical social role (Mersham et al 1995:41-44; Grunig and White 1992:39-40 and 60; Grunig, JE 1992:7-9), only the relevant roles are discussed in this section.

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neutralised, implying an asymmetrical relationship between business and other social groupings or businesses. Since public relations are seen as a business function they would have the same asymmetrical relationship with the public, resulting in asymmetrical communication being used by public relations practitioners (Mersham et al 1995:42; Grunig & White 1992:51).

These two social roles or presuppositions of public relations represent the dominant paradigm of public relations practice which associates public relations with an asymmetrical world view that is influence-oriented (Mersham et al 1995:4; Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Grunig & White 1992:42). An asymmetrical view reduces public relations from its dual focus of serving both the public and the business (Grunig & White 1992:53), to serving the business only. Businesses that see the relationship between them and society as one of dominance and subordination, since they experience a distance between themselves and the public, predominantly use asymmetrical communication (Grunig & White 1992:43). This usage can be associated with the neoliberalist interpretation of the fittest business surviving (cf Grunig & White 1992:43). Such a persuasion orientation to public relations aims to convey pro-business messages to the public that leads to the perception that public relations manipulate the public for their own benefit (Mersham et al 1995:4; Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Grunig & White 1992:42).

From this discussion the author deduces that the conservative-pragmatic social role of public relations, in which public relations practitioners side with the business, has the effect that they defend and subscribe to the business position of domination and subordination of society. For this reason this type of public relations is associated with an asymmetrical relationship with society, in which the business, and per definition its public relations, assume a separation between society and the business, and also assume that the domination and subjugation of society is therefore justified.

Such an inward orientation has been associated, in ~~previous Section~~ **section 4.2.3**, with a closed systemic view, asymmetrical relationships, an influence orientation and the neoliberalist assumption of survival of the fittest, and is associated with the modernist ~~thinking~~ **thinking of the previous section (3.2.2.4).**

#### **4.2.3.2 Operational manifestations of market-oriented public relations**

The conservative-pragmatic social role of market-oriented public relations is exemplified, on the operational level, by discussing the *press agency model* of public

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relations, the *public information model* of public relations, the *two-way asymmetrical model* of public relations, as well as integrated communication. This section argues that these models, which describe public relations, predominantly rely on informational communication.

The earliest model that described the nature of public relations is the *press agency model*<sup>2</sup> (as implied in Section 3.2.2), that originated in the 1800s and focussed on generating mass media coverage, publicity and promotion for the business by using any means necessary (this included deception, trickery, and public stunts) (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig 1995:41; Grunig & Grunig 1992:287; Newsom et al 2004:26). The emphasis on media coverage was so strong that even negative coverage was valued but if this model were currently practised the focus would be on conveying positive information regarding the business to the public in a one-way communication process (Dozier et al 1995:41; Mersham et al 1995:37-38), which in this study is associated with informational communication. In the propagandistic communication represented by this promotion-oriented model, the truth was not regarded as essential (Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Grunig 1997:286; Grunig & White 1992:39). This model did not emphasise any research other than press clippings and if press clippings were used they rarely determined the nature of publics or the effect of public relations (Mersham et al 1995:37-38; Grunig, LA 1992:512). In a 1989 USA study it was found that the *press agency model* was then the most widely used model for practising public relations (Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Grunig & Grunig 1992:305, 306). This model is currently most often used in the fields of sports public relations, theatre public relations and in product promotions, and to a lesser extent in governmental public relations departments (Newsom et al 2004:28-31; Grunig & Grunig 1992:303; Mersham et al 1995:37).

Changes within the business context led sentiment to shift away from this early understanding of public relations ('the public be fooled') into an era of 'the public be informed' as described by the *public information model* of public relations (Grunig & Grunig 1992:186). This shift largely took place in response to muckraking journalists, who, in the late 1800s, attacked large corporations and government agencies through their journalistic writings (Grunig & Grunig 1992:288). In response businesses and government agencies hired 'journalists in residence' to write press

<sup>2</sup> In 1987 Olasky argued that, before press agents came on the scene, businesses had had symmetrical relations with the public (although he didn't use the term symmetrical), and feminist scholars have criticised Grunig and Hunt's models saying that women who practiced public relations in the early history of the USA appear to have practiced symmetrical public relations (Grunig & Grunig 1992: 290).

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'handouts' that explained the actions of businesses and disseminated generally truthful and accurate information to the public (Dozier et al 1995:41; Newsom et al 2004:26; Mersham et al 1995:38). The *public information model* is based on a one-way communication process in which information that is generally accurate but favourable to the business is supplied to the public (Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Grunig & White 1992:39; Grunig & Grunig 1992:290). This was effected by good media relationships, because it was believed at the time that good media relations generated favourable publicity (Dozier et al 1995:41). Journalists-in-residence were hired as public relations practitioners to contribute to good media relations by producing news releases, whilst control other media such as newsletters, brochures and direct mail is also used by practitioners following this model (Grunig, LA 1992:512; Grunig 1997:286; Grunig & White 1992:39; Dozier et al 1995:41). Little research was done, but public relations departments mainly set readability tests and undertook readership surveys, (Mersham et al 1995:37-38; Grunig, LA 1992:512). In a 1989 USA study the public information model was found to be the second most used model amongst public relations practitioners (Guth & Marsh 2003:9). This model is currently often found in governmental public relations, in organisations in the field of the natural sciences, in non-profit organisations, as well as in structured companies (Mersham et al 1995:37-38; Grunig, LA 1992:512; Grunig & Grunig 1992:303, 305). Although it originated earlier, the influence orientation of public relations described above is still one of the most prominent forms of public relations in contemporary society (Mersham et al 1995:4; Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Grunig & White 1992:42).

From the above discussion it is argued that both the *press agency* and *public information models* view the business as producing and disseminating information to its publics, implying one-directional communication mostly through the mass media. These models require little research and do not emphasise strategic planning towards creating a favourable image of the business. Public relations are, from this viewpoint, based on a one-way communication process with the aim of publicity seeking, often by diffusing positive information in order to persuade the public of a viewpoint. The value added to the business by public relations is that of publicity: in the case of the *press agency model* any type of publicity, whilst in the case of the *public information model* only positive information about the business. This makes the public relations practitioner an information diffuser who transmits information to the public accepting a rather one-directional view of communication.

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Although these models originated in earlier times, their underlying assumption of changing the perceptions of the public is characteristic of market-oriented public relations, because they primarily aim at benefitting the business. Spurred by recent changes in the business environment, notably the wide-scale acceptance of neoliberalism that led to the current global internationalisation of business, a newer form of public relations evolved, described by the *two-way asymmetrical model* of public relations.

The *two-way asymmetrical model*, a response to the many changes that took place in world discourse and in the business sector in recent times, represents a newly dual focus in public relations in the sense that public relations developed, in addition to a technical focus, a managerial-strategic focus in which the persuasive element of communication messages is emphasised (Juholin 2004; Newsom et al 2004:26; Guth & Marsh 2003:7; Wilcox et al 2000:3-10; Hynes 2005:21). Public relations based on this model emphasise a greater research focus than earlier models, and can be used to describe the ever changing preferences, needs, aspirations and mindsets of the public as well as to test the effectiveness of scientific persuasive messages (Grunig & Grunig 1992:288; Dozier et al 1995:41; Mersham et al 1995:37-38). The *two-way asymmetrical model* of public relations uses research to develop messages that are likely to persuade the public to behave in a way that benefits the business by evaluating attitudes and perceptions, often through questionnaires and other research methods (Mersham et al 1995:37-38; Grunig & White 1992:39; Grunig, LA 1992:512; Fortini-Campbell 1997:141). Dozier et al (1995:41) argue that the *two-way asymmetrical model* aims to 'engineer consent', since feedback from the publics are used by the organisation to persuade the public, making this approach essentially influence oriented and asymmetrical. The asymmetrical mindset dominates the practice of public relations, and the public's perception of public relations is that they seek to manipulate the public for the benefit of the organisation (Grunig & White 1992:39-40). In a 1989 USA-based study the asymmetrical two-directional communication model was ranked first in order of preference among practitioners although respondents could not always execute it due to a variety of logistical reasons (Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Grunig & Grunig 1992:306). This type of public relations is currently mostly used in competitive business and in public relations firms (Grunig & Grunig 1992:303, 305). Although the communication process associated with this model is two-directional, it is asymmetrical because only communication that benefits the business is allowed and the business always dominates such communication (Mersham et al 1995:37-38; Pavlik & McIntosh 2004:406).

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It is therefore argued that the three models of public relations described above, the *press agency model*, the *public information model*, and the *two-way asymmetrical model*, all imply an asymmetrical business-society relationship effected through public relations. The communication associated with asymmetrical relationships ~~foeusses~~focuses on the communication needs of the business (such as message creation, channels of communication, audience characteristics, and factors influencing receptiveness to transmitted messages). This means that such communication is aimed towards persuading and manipulating public perceptions, attitudes and behaviour for the benefit of the business, making this type of 'communication' amount to informational communication (as explained in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.5). This deduction is further underlined by the awareness that informational communication is not aimed at reciprocal dialogue (where both communicating parties are open to being persuaded), but rather at a situation in which the business extracts information that can be used to better formulate its own persuasive messages, from the public. For this reason it is argued that the asymmetrical two-directional communication model amounts to simulated, and not symmetrical two-directional communication (referred to in Chapter 2 as informational communication). The motivation for embarking on such asymmetrical two-directional communication, apart from gaining information to be used in message construction, is that it symbolises a relationship with the public.

Steyn (2003:14) argues that a symbolic relationship aims to make the public feel that it has a relationship with the business and so they tend to be more loyal to the business. In order to achieve a symbolic relationship, "symbolic communication messages and organisational behaviours [are combined] to initiate, build, nurture and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and stakeholders" (Steyn 2003:14). The implication is that the focus on building a symbolic relationship between the business and its stakeholders falls on symbolic communication supported by business behaviour. This means that in building relationships with society, public relations assume that informational communication instead of constitutive communication can lead to building a good relationship with society. The author is of the opinion that such relationship-building thinking amounts to nothing more than informational communication done in such a way that society does not realise that its communication with the business is symbolised instead of real constitutive communication.

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Furthermore, market-oriented public relations, described by the conservative-pragmatic social role, that aims at defending and enhancing the business' goals are, currently and globally, due to the increased competitive pressure caused by the internationalisation of business and increasingly embodied by the practice of integrated communication. In globalised societies the public is better educated about their preferences than previously and business leaders are increasingly starting to place a greater premium than before on communicating with their publics (Schulz et al 1994:45; Harris 1998:200-201). For this reason, a number of scholars (Schulz et al 1994: xvii, 4-11; Allen 1996:184-185, 192-193; Gronstedt 2000:8-9) describe the current era as a 'new age of the customer' or a 'customer century'<sup>3</sup> associated with branding, relationship management (or marketing) and integrated communication. Coincidentally public relations have increasingly adopted a strategic approach in which its focus turns to strategic thinking on a managerial level (Deetz 1995:221-248; Harris 1997:91; Ries & Ries 2002:239-266).

Apart from this increased managerial-strategic status of public relations, the traditional advertising and marketing communication fields found it problematic to establish a beneficial relationship with the public by means of traditional techniques with the result that they increasingly incorporate traditional public relations techniques in marketing strategies (Harris 1997:91; Ries & Ries 2002:239-366). This has led to the practice of integrating marketing communication, advertising and public relations messages to portray a unified message about the business (Schulz et al 1994: xvii; Kotler et al 2004:608). From this perspective it is assumed that if all the communication messages ~~(not only from advertising, marketing and marketing communication, but also from public relations and other communication-related functions of the business such as non-verbal communication symbolised in the architecture and corporate colours)~~ regarding a business are integrated and coordinated consistent and aligned messages will result that will be more convincing to the public than earlier ideas of how to construct messages (Caywood 1997:xiv; Schulz et al 1994:xvii; Kotler et al 2004:608). From this perspective integrated communication centralises, harmonises, coordinates, integrates and synchronises communication messages concerning the business' brand (what the business stands for and what defines the business) (Hanekom 2006:241-242; Du Plessis 2006:374). The rationales behind the alignment of messages are firstly that the human brain

<sup>3</sup> In public relations literature market segmentation divides general society into 'publics', whilst in advertising and marketing communication thinking the earlier term 'client' is increasingly replaced by 'customer'. To overcome the possible confusion in terminology as public relations are increasingly integrated into marketing functions, the terms 'public' or 'publics' have been used, except in cases specific to advertising and marketing communication.

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automatically integrates the separate advertising and public relations messages and if these are aligned, the overarching business message is reinforced; and secondly that a particular member of the public may belong to more than one niche market (target group or public) implying that non-aligned messages might be confusing to the public, whilst aligned messages are not only non-confusing but reinforce the message (Harris 1997:93; Gronstedt 2000:6, 19-20). This means that the business' communication planner needs to imagine how the public would perceive the different messages about the same business and its offerings (Gronstedt 2000:6, 19-20; Schulz et al 1994:69, 83). This thinking illustrates the argument towards a 'customer orientation', mentioned earlier in this section.

The anticipated result of integrated communication is that the public feels that it has a relationship with the business, because the public feels (through carefully planned communication) that the business understands and knows its particular niche market (often enabled through interactive communication methods) and it is thought that this is likely to result in that niche market loyally supporting the business (Gronstedt 2000:8-9; Harris 1997:91; Kotler et al 2004:49-52, 608). Various scholars (Newsom et al 2004:4; Wilcox et al 2000:17-19; Kotler et al 2004:608; Schulz et al 1994:xvii; Harris 1998:3, 5; Wilcox et al 2000:19) argue that such aligned or synergistic 'customer-oriented' symbolic communication (which employs scientific persuasion) will enhance profit.

In creating such synergistic messages, the role of public relations is largely seen as building a brand, whilst advertising maintains the brand (Ries & Ries 2002:239-266). Public relations result in people opening up through (informational) communication programmes that unfold over a long time; that launch and build a new brand slowly by targeting significant groups directly; that take longer to show results, are less expensive and have deeper impact than advertising; and that lend credibility to the communication process and the brand; whilst advertising should maintain a brand through constant mass media awareness through campaigns with a natural humorous appeal (Ries & Ries 2002:239-266). This means that integrated communication combines public relations' relationship-building ability with paid advertisements that are primarily aimed at persuasion (and are understood as such by the public) (Guth & Marsh 2003:424; Ries & Ries 2002:239-266; Newsom et al 2004:13-14). Various scholars expand on this understanding, seeing public relations as building trust in a flexible, cost-effective manner; as being credible and trustworthy especially if journalists support the business (the halo effect) or through third party

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endorsements; as maintaining relationships over a long time span; as bringing a sense of urgency to messages, especially when conveyed through the news media; as creating excitement around an advertising campaign; as making business news between advertising campaigns; as extending promotion programmes; as being easily adaptable (since public relations can work in concert with advertising, direct mail or sales promotion); and as being oriented towards smaller groups of people (Ries & Ries 2002:239-266; Ehling et al 1992:357; Harris 1997:93-103; Harris 1998:6, 16, 20, 33, 219).

Integration of the communication functions of a business is assisted by new technological applications enabling the computerisation of information regarding the public, in order to simulate a relationship with the public by treating it as real human beings that are unique (Harris 1997:93). Technology allows the communication of the business to be personalised, creating the impression of a reciprocal relationship between business and public. This position is supported by the understanding that not the product alone, but the quality and nature of the rapport, the empathy, the dialogue, the relationship and the quality of the communication with the public distinguish one business from the next (Harris 1997:93).

In its extreme form market-oriented public relations are referred to as marketing public relations (MPR). Marketing public relations pose a reductionist view of public relations, as opposed to it serving both the business and the public, limiting public relations to marketing, publicity and sponsorships (Ehling et al 1992:357; Guth & Marsh 2003:427-430; Caywood 1997:xi; Harris 1998:145; Barker 2006:168; Verčič and Van Ruler 2002; Verčič 2007). In this sense the practice of MPR ~~feusses~~focuses on building relationships with the public with the intent of persuading it, as opposed to building symmetrical reciprocal relationships (Guth & Marsh 2003:429-430; Harris 1998:145). This amounts to public relations being reduced to a 'marketing tool' (Van Ruler & Verčič 2002).

As mentioned by Schulz (1994:45) at the beginning of this section, the business landscape is changing: due to the processes of globalisation, the businesses' communication, logistics and management are increasingly emphasised, with the effect that public relations seem to be evolving in the direction of advancing the profit interest of business. In this sense in an integrated approach to all the communication functions of the business has brought advertising and public relations closer together since advertising agencies have started incorporating public relations techniques into

the 'customer century' to support the brand-building exercise through strategically advised persuasive two-directional communication (scientific persuasion). This trend is associated with a market-oriented view of public relations that aims at primarily serving the business instead of the traditional dual focus of serving both the interests of the business and the public. From an integrated communication approach the public is seen as instrumental in the business' success, and for this reason public opinion should be influenced, making the communication employed into informational communication.

As public relations in a market-oriented society can be seen as a profit-enhancing function, so can the social investment aspect of the work of public relations, because it is found that businesses that embark on social engagement activities are better supported by the public than those who do not, as explained in the next section.

#### **4.2.63.3 Businesses' social engagement through market-oriented public relations**

This section discusses businesses' social engagement through public relations, firstly by examining the rationale for businesses to become involved in society through their public relations function, and secondly as this involvement is exemplified by the most prominent practical approach.

Mersham et al (1995:87-88), Koten (1997:149) and Brønn (2007) argue that if a business portrays itself as caring for society it is generally better supported by the public than businesses that do not portray themselves as caring for society. Koten (1997:149), Mersham et al (1995:87-88) and Brønn (2007) further argue that businesses can portray a positive and ethically attractive identity by showing their care for society. This has been called 'marketing the corporate soul' (Harris 1998:22)<sup>4</sup>.

Portraying the business as a responsible citizen is often done by promoting the business' values and reputation, most often illustrated by the business becoming

<sup>4</sup> It is acknowledged that this is not the only possible reason why CSI is embarked upon, and that these may have a positive impact on the community.

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involved on societal level (Brønn 2007).<sup>5</sup> The most prominent practical approach of portraying social care through public relations is corporate social investment (CSI).

CSI is associated with a businesses' social engagement as executed by its public relations function and is used as an umbrella term to refer to different foci such as corporate philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, enlightened self-interest of business, social accountability, social contract, social sponsorships, and social interest, as described by various scholars such as Mersham et al (1995:82-87), Newsom et al (2004:3-4, 58), Guth and Marsh (2003:525), Grunig and White (1992:15, 39-40, 60), J. E. Grunig (1992:8), Caywood (1997:149), Wilcox et al (2000:37, 301), Cutlip et al (1994:14, 90-91) and Adkins (2005:49, 118-120). CSI primarily refers to donations given to a social cause (Mersham et al 1995:85-87).

The practical approach for CSI programmes is based on the traditional 4-step plan for communication process which underlines the understanding that CSI is often seen as a persuasive public relations campaign (Mersham et al 1995:167-188). In such a 4-step approach, the first step of a CSI programme involves environmental assessment or scanning (by ensuring that the business is ready for such actions in terms of corporate philosophy and policy documentation, that the business or organisation has the ability to deliver CSI programmes; that these actions will benefit the organisation in terms of markets and image; that in the long term support from the organisation is secured; that employees have the ability or talents to embark on the particular project; that the business' management supports the project; and by ensuring media support for the project). The second step is to identify the benefiting community (identify the best community to get a 'return on investment'); set up a profile of the benefiting community; identify the community's primary social problem and its possible solutions; obtain buy-in from the business' management and from the community; appoint a programme coordinator; and do detailed planning and cost estimates. The third step involves the implementation of the plan (the negotiations with the beneficiary community and to determine the best way to go about to achieve objectives); and the fourth step involves the evaluation of the success of the CSI programme from the business' perspective. As is evident from the above four-step plan the beneficiary community's needs may be addressed but the control and ownership of the programme rest with the business, because the reason for

<sup>5</sup> Opposing this view is that public relations should not use social engagement only to support the business' goals but to balance the interests of both the business and the public: social engagement might be a natural consequence (as discussed later in this chapter).

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implementing such a CSI programme is to enhance business profit by using CSI as an opportunity to portray the business as a caring member of society. From this perspective CSI is handled by the function of public relations as a business transaction in the sense that the organisation 'invests' in the community and this investment is 'returned' as a positive image of the organisation. This stance is echoed by Harris (1998:25), who stated that "good citizenship is good public relations and good public relations is good for business".

Within an integrated approach to public relations, CSI is often combined with marketing communication and advertising approaches such as social marketing and cause marketing or cause-exploitative marketing (Koten 1997:163; Harris 1997:102). These techniques do not necessarily have unique discernable characteristics with clearly demarcated borders, and sometimes coincide with other corporate philanthropic efforts such as emphasising the business' mission, vision and values, corporate community investment, activities aimed at enhancing the business' reputation and integrity such as environmentally sound behaviour, as well as image marketing by which charitable causes are linked to the business (Koten 1997:150, 161; Harris 1997:93-103; Adkins 2005:37-40; Kotler et al 2004:49-52; 608). The main characteristic that most of these techniques share is that they are aimed at enhancing the profit margins of business, or in other words, that business invests in society (for example, in monetary terms, through sponsorships, through time and energy of staff) and expects a return on such 'investment' (for example, in terms of media exposure, or to use evidence of goodwill in its communication in a quest to enhance the business' reputation).

In summary it can be said that as market-oriented public relations are business-oriented at the cost of the dual focus of public relations, the businesses' social engagement, executed by market-oriented public relations, is marked by a business orientation. Similarly to market-oriented public relations having a business-orientation, the social engagement, executed through public relations, has a business orientation. This amounts to using social engagement to enhance profit. This aligns the social engagement of businesses, executed by market-oriented public relations, with a competitive business-society relationship. In section 3.2.1 it was argued that a business orientation assumes a business orientation to public relations, to the business-society relationship, and to the businesses' social engagement, which, in turn, is associated with modernist thinking.

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In response to the limitations of market-orientation of public relations various newer approaches developed that seek, in various ways, answers to the dilemma of public relations balancing the interest of the public and that of the business. These approaches that are discussed subsequently, are the reflective paradigm, the original formulation of the excellence paradigm, arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation for public relations, and the reformulation of excellent public relations.

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#### 4.2.4 The reflective paradigm of public relations

The reflective paradigm of public relations is described in the European Body of Knowledge (EBOK) Study commissioned by the European Association for Public Relations Education and Research (CERP), which, which in January 2001 became the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) (Verčič, Van Ruler, Bütchi & Flodin 2001; Verčič 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

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The reflective paradigm of public relations<sup>6</sup> does not only pose an opposition to market-oriented public relations, but assumes a rather specific type of public relations. Essentially the researchers of the European Body of Knowledge Study<sup>7</sup> criticise modernist public relations for dominating the field of public relations, thus negating other forms of public relations (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Verčič et al 2001; Verčič 2001). (This echoes critical scholars' criticism of the one-dimensionality of the grand narrative of modernity, the author observes.) The EBOK researchers also argue that the number and the availability of market-oriented public relations text books support the dominant position of market-oriented public relations (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). Another strong point of criticism against market-oriented public relations is that they reduce the role of public relations to a 'marketing tool' (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

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Apart from criticising market-oriented public relations, the EBOK Study describes a

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<sup>6</sup> In the literature emanating from the EBOK Study market-oriented public relations are associated with the USA and reflective public relations with Europe. Although this position is not negated in this present study, care has been taken not to limit market-oriented public relations to the USA, or to disregard other orientations to public relations in the USA. Similarly, in this study the term 'reflective' public relations is chosen over 'European reflective' public relations so as not to exclude other orientations to public relations in Europe as t-he reflective paradigm is merely one of the paradigms of public relations that exist in Europe. Nevertheless, great evidence exists in the 'American' literature that the market-oriented model of public relations is dominant in the USA (Kruckeberg 2002:188-196; Hynes 2005:4-14; Newsom et al 2004:26; Verčič 2007; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Grunig & Grunig 1992:303, 305).

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<sup>7</sup> The aim of EBOK was firstly to compile a bibliography of the existing body of European writings on public relations; and secondly to investigate the nature of public relations in Europe (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič 2000; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). The latter part of the EBOK study is a study in its own right but also in response to the pervasiveness of the market drive (what they refer to as the American) thinking about public relations taught at many European universities (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič 2000; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

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different paradigm of public relations found in Europe, labelled the reflective paradigm of public relations. The reflective dimension of the work of the public relations practitioner gives this paradigm its name (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002) as explained in the next section, after which the attendant view of (constitutive) communication and reciprocal relationships with society is discussed. This section concludes with a critical discussion and options for businesses' social engagement, since the EBOK report does not specifically focus on this aspect of public relations.

#### **4.2.4.1 The main assumptions of the reflective paradigm**

The European reflective public relations paradigm is based on the assumption that society consists of various interdependent entities (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). The interdependent assumption grew out of the environmental concern that the non-renewable natural resources of the world are being depleted and that such an untenable situation should be addressed by all peoples of the world, making all such peoples interdependent (discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1). The corresponding business-society relationship is that of reciprocity, cooperation and harmony, which are, in turn, reflected in the nature of the communication used by this paradigm, as argued at the beginning of this chapter (see Section 3.2.2).

Based on this assumption, the reflective paradigm of public relations took root in Europe. For this reason, the primary focus (or dimension) of reflective public relations is socially oriented in that it investigates the nature of society (represented in the word choice of the 'public' and not the market-oriented phrase of 'publics') and to convey such sociological information to the organisation's leadership (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). This means that the primary task of reflective public relations is to inform the business about societal matters (such as social trends and social needs), born out of accepting the interdependence of business and society (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). Such a sociological understanding (or social consciousness) opposes market-oriented public relations' interest in the public's taste that is to be capitalised on by business, and on the grounds that it is socially oriented, various scholars (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002) suggest that the associated interdependency notion is appreciated. (Chapter 2, Section 3.2.2 associates the interdependency notion with beyond modernist thinking.)

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The secondary focus (or dimension) of the reflective paradigm of public relations is to assist members of the organisation to become communicatively competent (referred to as the educational dimension) so that staff is prepared to interact with other members of the society to which they collectively belong (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

Both the reflective and educational dimensions guide the execution of the managerial and operational aspects of public relations that ensure good relationships between the business and the public through communication processes (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

The reflective dimension of this particular paradigm of public relations is captured in the German term for public relations, *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*, and its Scandinavian counterparts (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* literally means "working in public, with the public and for the public", in contrast with the mainstream or dominant market orientation's view of public relations as the "management of relationships between an organization and its publics" (Verčič et al 2000). This translation is confirmed by other scholars, such as Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) and Verčič (2007). The term *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* does not refer to the 'public' or to the 'publics' of a business, but rather to the 'public sphere' in which public relations are "not only about the public sphere, but for the public". Public sphere implies that the 'quality and quantity' of the public sphere are affected by public relations and its co-produced activities (Verčič et al 2001; cf Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). The 'quality and quantity' of the public sphere have to do with public opinion (*öffentliche Meinung*) and not with an aggregate of individual opinions in terms of poll results (Verčič et al 2001). Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) argue that the public sphere refers to "the foundation on which democracies were built" and thus serves as a type of political authority that is the foundation of reflective public relations. Such a political authority has historically been ingrained in Europe in the opposition to monarchic rule, expressed in the monarchical (or French) revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Barzun 2004:3).

This understanding of public relations makes it, similar to journalism, a contributor to the free flow of information and to the growth of the public sphere both in size and level (Verčič et al 2001). The fact that public relations contribute to the quality of the public sphere legitimises them and gives them the distinctive European character (Verčič et al 2001; cf Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

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~~Apart from such a democratic imperative, the focus of reflective public relations implies an understanding of the cultural and sociological context of the society in which the business functions, and is linked to the social license to operate (Verčič et al 2001; Newsom et al 2004:60; Caywood 1997:xi-xiii). The reflective public relations tradition thus focusses on broader social issues and on a concern for the implications of business behaviour since it impacts on the public sphere (Verčič et al 2001). This means that reflective public relations focus on the reason for public relations' existence and its implications ('Why?'), whilst market-oriented (American and South African) public relations are preoccupied with the execution of public relations (by focussing, for instance, on the level of work — the technical, managerial, strategic levels) giving it a technique orientation ('How?') (Steyn 2003). The reflective public relations tradition thus places great emphasis on the values of the organisation, which determine the direction and implications of the organisation (why the organisation behaves in a certain way, for instance, why an organisation would become involved in socially responsible actions, why the public sphere is implicated, and so forth).~~

~~The reflective understanding of the term 'public' refers to the public sphere and public matters from a position of social consciousness that contrasts with the market-oriented public relations view that refers to the 'public' as "a summarized amount of people which can be segmented" or that the business seeks to influence (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). The understanding of a separation between the business and the public is equally criticised by scholars such as Dozier et al (1995:47-50) and Deetz (1995:99-103).~~

~~This distinction between market-oriented public relations and the reflective public relations tradition is further evident in the vernacular terms for 'public relations'. Since many reflective public relations practitioners and academics want to distinguish their work from the persuasive market-oriented public relations thinking, a distinction is made between the terms 'information' and 'communication' whereby 'communication' refers to the process of human interaction that seeks mutual understanding and 'information' refers to strategically planned information aimed at influencing the other (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Verčič et al 2001).~~

~~In the next section this distinction between 'communication' and 'information', found in the reflective paradigm of public relations, is related to the distinction made in~~

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~~Chapter 2 (see Sections 2.2.5 and 2.3.3) between informational communication and constitutive communication and between instrumental relationships and reciprocal relationships.~~

#### ~~4.2.4.2 Business-society relationship: reciprocity and constitutive communication~~

~~In the European scholarly tradition 'communication' and 'relationships' are not to be separated as they are intertwined because both are seated in the notion of reciprocity (Verčič et al 2001). To illustrate this point Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) and Verčič et al (2001) argue that the concepts 'communication' and 'relationship' are increasingly described in market-oriented public relations literature as separate concepts, breaking with the longstanding view, fundamental to Europe, that "communication is the bedrock of public relations".~~

~~Based on this thinking, scholars formulating the reflective paradigm of public relations argue that in the market-oriented tradition of public relations the concepts of communication and relationships are separated because they have lost their original function of bringing about an enhanced well-being by bridging the gap between the self and the other in an attempt to bring about reciprocal understanding, but are currently rather used as instrumental in persuading the public to support the viewpoint of the business. This is evident in market-oriented public relations' literature which increasingly describes public relations as a relationship-building profession that adds value to organisations by enhancing the willingness of markets, audiences and publics to support the organisation, meaning that public relations are employed to support the profit margins directly, through strategically managing relationships (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Newsom et al 2004:4, 354; Guth & Marsh 2003:7). This is underlined by the trend to integrate the various communication functions of the business' communication, essentially reducing public relations to marketing public relations (MPR) in support of the business' goals (Newsom et al 2004:4; Wilcox et al 2000:17-19; Kotler et al 2004:608; Schulz et al 1994:xviii; Harris 1998:3, 5; Wilcox et al 2000:19). As explained in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.5) this type of influence-oriented communication is associated with the term 'informational communication'. This means that market-oriented public relations use 'communication', not to refer to mutual understanding (i.e. constitutive communication) as in reflective public relations, but to refer to the strategic management of 'relations' with the public to make such relations profitable or give them a strategic purpose for the business~~

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~~(informational communication is also called purposeful communication by supporters of such an approach to public relations), which implies that public relations are reduced to a 'marketing tool' (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Guth & Marsh 2003:427; Caywood 1997:xi). This is illustrated by linking communication and relationships to terms such as relationship management, communication management, image management, reputation management, relationship building, stakeholders, publics and activists, all of which underline a separation between the business and society (Verčič et al 2004).~~

~~In contrast to such a purposeful, informational, influence-oriented view of communication associated with market-oriented communication, many European countries, especially Denmark, Finland, Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden, view the core of public relations as having a social sensitivity encapsulated in a sociological orientation (Verčič et al 2001; cf Harris 1997:92-93; cf Kotler et al 2004:39). For this reason Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) argue that the claim made in market-oriented public relations literature that relationship building could be done through persuasive, purposeful or strategic communication is "outright [...] nonsense [...] in the light of the major part of the European social scientific tradition".~~

~~Based on this discussion it can be argued that the terms 'communication' and 'relationship' are not only differently used in market-oriented and reflective public relations, but that the different usage of these terms signify different understandings of public relations. The next section investigates how the reflective paradigm of public relations views businesses' social engagement.~~

#### **4.2.4.3 Businesses' social engagement through reflective public relations**

~~The EBOK Study of the reflective paradigm of public relations does not report directly on the social engagement of businesses through public relations. For this reason the author deduces, from the main assumptions of the reflective paradigm of public relations, the following position regarding businesses' social engagement through reflective public relations.~~

~~The reflective paradigm assumes an interdependent world, thus acknowledging the interdependence between the business and its natural and social environment. As explained in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3), the implication of the interdependency notion is that people are mutually vulnerable to one another, making each person both~~

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powerful in the sense that s/he has the power to help the other in a reciprocal manner.

A relationship between business and society that is based on the assumption of interdependency would acknowledge that the business is part of society, which implies that it should strive to have a harmonious reciprocal relationship with society. Within this context the purpose of reflective public relations is to gain a sociological understanding of society and to allow that society to inform the business direction. It is further seen as part of public relations that the public sphere (critical debate about topics of importance to the public, such as the enhancement of physical and non-physical well-being) be built and maintained. From this discussion it is evident that the focus of the reflective paradigm of public relations falls on interdependence, harmony, cooperation and reciprocity, so that it coincides with the reciprocal relationships through constitutive communication that are explained in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3). This underlines the importance of a social orientation to the reflective paradigm of public relations.

The social engagement of reflective public relations is *per se* encapsulated in the nature of such public relations, and is an understanding of the public and matters of public interest that implies a social engagement. Seated in reciprocal relationships and communication, the work of reflective public relations practitioners would be undertaken in a symmetrical, dialogical, democratic, reciprocal manner using constitutive communication (to bridge the gap between the self and the other). This means that other social engagement efforts, if undertaken, apart from practising public relations from a reflective paradigm, would be to enhance the public sphere and the well-being of society, not as in the case of market-oriented public relations, for the gain of business, but for the sake of society.

Guidelines towards a social engagement approach deduced from this discussion, based on the assumptions of interdependency, firstly point towards a particular relationship between business and society (reciprocal), and secondly to the purpose of public relations (reflect on sociological aspects) within an approach of cooperation and harmony. Businesses' social engagement efforts as executed through this type of public relations will, most probably, not only focus on the social environment in isolation, but would also consider the natural environment, and most importantly, through a sociological understanding aim to enhance the public sphere because that enhances the well-being of society. As this view of businesses' social engagement is

~~associated with an ecological business-society relationship, which is also a sociological orientation of public relations, it coincides with the socialist view of businesses' social engagement (see Section 3.2.1). This means that the reflective paradigm is opposed to market-orientation public relations.~~

#### **4.2.5 The excellence paradigm of public relations**

~~This section discusses the excellence paradigm of public relations (derived from the 1992 Excellence Study<sup>8</sup> report) in terms of: its main assumptions; the business-society relationship of this paradigm; the businesses' social engagement through the excellence paradigm of public relations; and a critical discussion of the public relations paradigm.~~

##### **4.2.5.1 Main assumptions and business-society relationship**

~~Similar to the reflective paradigm of public relations, proponents of the excellence paradigm of public relations claim that it is based on interdependency, multiplicity, reciprocity and an open systems approach, as explained in this section. This explanation evidences that excellence is essentially viewed as the reconciliation of formerly juxtaposed positions on the business-society relationship and communication.~~

~~The main objectives of excellent public relations, as defined by the Excellence Study of 1992, are that they seek to serve both the interest of the public and of the business; to develop mutual understanding between the business and its publics; to contribute to informed debate about issues in society; and to facilitate dialogue between the business and its publics (Grunig & White 1992:53, 56; Hong & Ki 2007; Meath 2006). Through the reconciliation of serving both the public and society, this paradigm of public relations actualises the dual focus of public relations. Such a dual focus brings about possible conflicts because of the various and sometimes opposing views held in society and voiced by different social actors and by the business, but Grunig and White (1992:53) and Clarke-Hill, Li & Davies (2003) argue that these can~~

<sup>8</sup> The notion of excellent' public relations is a result of a large-scale ten year study mainly in the USA, Canada and the UK of 'good' public relations practice that seeks answers to questions of how and how much public relations contribute towards organisational effectiveness and the characteristics of excellent communication departments (Grunig 1997:286). This study was commissioned by the Research Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and was reported upon in *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (1997) (Grunig 1997:286). The term excellence was chosen in the Excellence Study because at the time of the study it represented the latest thinking (it was a "buzzword"), but the term 'quality' could have been equally valid (Grunig 1997:288). Public relations and communication are used as synonyms in the Excellence Study report (Grunig 1997:288).

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~~be reconciled through negotiations and compromise and that such reconciliation will ultimately enable social progress.~~

~~Proponents of excellent public relations furthermore understand that society is more complex than a simply 'us-them' relationship acknowledges because staff members of the business are part of society. This is exemplary of the game theory (Mersham et al 1995:40) which argues that in a plural society it is not necessary to clarify the paradoxical tension of cooperation and competition in business relations, but that the tension between these should be managed (Clarke-Hill, Li & Davies 2003).~~

~~The reconciliation of loyalties to both the business and society is explained in terms of the mixed motive or divided loyalty argument that rests on the assumption that people who work for a business, including public relations practitioners, are simultaneously part of (or living in) society and work for a business, and if the business' efforts impact on the society of their staff it may lead such people to have divided loyalties<sup>9</sup> (Mersham et al 1995:40). The challenge is to harmonise such divided loyalties, thus finding a balance between pure conflict (competition) and pure symmetry (cooperation or collaboration), although the business would mostly wish to direct such potentially conflicting interests to the advantage of the business (Grunig & White 1992:245-246; Clarke Hill, Li & Davies 2003). This understanding is supported by Mersham et al (1995:40):~~

~~"Organisations do indeed want public relations people to work in their interest. They do not want to give in to all outside demands on the organisation when they believe the organisation's position is right. No responsible manager completely rejects return on investment. Corporations are not charitable organisations".~~

~~As staff members reconcile their divided interests (their workplace and the society in which they live), so the public relations function can also reconcile business interest with public interest. The work of public relations practitioners implies that, in such cases, they should persuade the public to support the business, but this should be done ethically (Grunig & White 1992:245-246). To ensure that such actions are ethical they should be based on the generalised norm of reciprocity and should use ethical communication practices and situations, as explained by the Habermasian ideal communication situation, elucidated below.~~

~~Proponents of the excellence paradigm base their ethical arguments on the work of Alvin Gouldner (1960:173-174) who supports the generalised norm of reciprocity.~~

<sup>9</sup> The mixed motives or divided loyalties argument is a concept from game theory that was introduced into public relations theory in 1991 by Murphy's work (Grunig and White 1992:245-246).

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~~Grunig and White (1992:39) and Mersham et al (1995:40) argue that the Excellence report shows that, in the long term, the symmetrical world view is more 'effective' than the asymmetrical world view since businesses get more of what they want when they give up some of what they want. Gouldner (1960:173-174) explains the generalised norm of reciprocity as meaning that people are 'more ready to receive than to give benefits', making them essentially egoist or self-oriented (cf Koeszegi 2004). In such egoism altruism is evident through reciprocity since 'you give because you want to receive' (Grunig & White 1992:46; Mersham et al 1995:40-41; Koeszegi 2004; Clarke-Hill, Li & Davies 2003). If applied to businesses it means that businesses are more ready to give something to society because they expect that society will give something back to business (return the favour), in other words society will reciprocate the business' giving (Mersham et al 1995:40-41; Grunig & White 1992:46; Koeszegi 2004). The opposite is also true: if the public is treated badly by business, this will also be reciprocated by the public (Grunig & White 1992:48; Koeszegi 2004). Gouldner (1960:173-174) deduces from this argument that the norm of reciprocity could stabilise social systems, making the norm of reciprocity a 'starting mechanism' for social relations or an assumed type of behaviour that allows social actors (business and society) to deal with each other when they have had no prior contact.~~

~~Based on a generalised norm of reciprocity, various scholars (Verčič et al 2001; Newsom et al 2004:60; Caywood 1997:xi-xiii) argue that the Excellence Study states that businesses obtain approval from society to pursue their goals, often referred to as a 'social license to operate' or obtaining the consent of their publics. Through this generalised form of the norm of reciprocity, the researchers of the Excellence Study are of the opinion that the business is in a specific way part of society, giving the public the right to scrutinise privately owned businesses (Grunig & White 1992:47; Mersham et al 1995:40; Newsom et al 2004:150). This means that the excellence paradigm holds that the business should give up some of its goals in order to gain public support (Grunig & White 1992:53).~~

~~An implication of this reasoning is that it is justified, from a business perspective, that the business becomes involved on societal level (and gives money for social causes) because, if it does so it will financially do better.~~

~~Based on this understanding Grunig and White (1992:9, 45) and Clarke-Hill, Li and Davies (2003) argue that excellent businesses can be simultaneously competitive and cooperative, or blend self-interest with public interest, thus accommodating~~

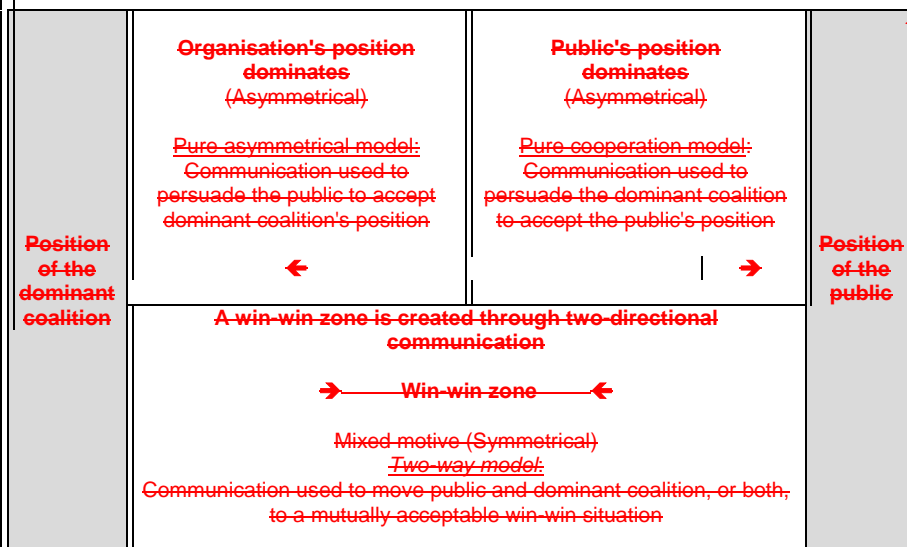
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~~mixed motives or divided loyalties actualised through the generalised norm of reciprocity. This is qualified by James Grunig (1992:10) who argues that although asymmetrical and symmetrical views are both entertained by the excellence paradigm of public relations, symmetrical relationships and communication are preferred over asymmetrical relationships and asymmetrical communication. In some cases it may be necessary for the public relations function, although it is part of the dominant coalition (management), to persuade either the management of the business or the public to change opinions, combining the two-way asymmetrical model of public relations and two-way symmetrical model of public relations into a new model, the two-way model (Dozier et al 1995:48-49; cf Bishop 2006; cf Hong & Ki 2007). This means that, although it is part of the dominant coalition (management of the business), the public relations function treats the dominant coalition as another public that can be influenced by communication programmes (Dozier et al 1995:48-49). This further implies that asymmetrical tactics could also be used in specific situations to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for a win-win situation as long as it takes place within a larger symmetrical organisational worldview (Dozier et al 1995:50; cf Bishop 2006; cf Meath 2006). This view of Dozier et al (1995:48) of the two-way model is presented in Figure 4.1:~~



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**FIGURE 4.1** ~~The two-way model of public relations~~

~~Figure 4.1 indicates that, although prior to the Excellence Study, it had been thought that public relations were either symmetrical or asymmetrical, and that public~~

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~~relations essentially negotiated the position of the business by 'balancing' the interests of both public and business, it is now generally accepted that symmetry and asymmetry do not necessarily pose opposites (cf Dozier et al 1995:47). It is furthermore assumed that using both the symmetrical and asymmetrical worldviews and both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication can contribute towards social progress, and enhance the ethicality of this approach to public relations (Dozier et al 1995:47). This means that the dual focus of the excellence paradigm of balancing the (sometimes conflicting) interests of the public and the business is enabled by its combining two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical views (Grunig 1997:290-293; cf Bishop 2006; cf Clarke Hill, Li & Davies 2003; cf Meath 2006).~~

~~In communication situations in which the power situation is equal, this stance of balancing symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships and communication is practical, but when the business goals and the views of the public do not coincide, this idealistic position could be rather problematic, in the sense that in many cases the business assumes more power than society does or can. To remedy the possibility of the business exploiting society in situations in which the business and society hold different views, the Excellent Study suggests using both the options sketched by Gouldner and Habermas as explained below.~~

~~Gouldner (1960:173-174) maintains that in situations of significant power differences, egoist motivations may lead the more powerful to obtain benefits without returning them, but in such situations the party with more power should still treat the other fairly and expect reciprocal treatment. In cases of unequal power relations or in non-egalitarian societies, an ethical relationship between business and society, based on the principles of openness and dialogue, will lead both communicating parties to agree on what is right or wrong, true or false (Grunig & White 1992:58-60; Mersham et al 1995:44-45). This will make the interaction ethical, even when one party has mixed motives such as being convinced that he/she is right, as long as he/she is also convinced that the other's convictions should be respected (Grunig & White 1992:59-60; Mersham et al 1995:44-45).~~

~~The Excellence Study explains Gouldner's guidelines of openness and dialogue further by referring to the Habermasian ideal communication situation. According to Habermas (1989:48-56) the ideal communication situation argument not only looks at the internal logic of the communication, but also into the sociological power situation or context in which communication takes place. This ideal communication situation or~~

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~~context is based on an ethically legitimate situation that emerges out of an attempt to reconcile the material dimension of human life with the non-material dimension (including cultural, spiritual, ethical and moral aspects) by asking for a communication situation that is cognitively and ethically moral (non-material level) and scientifically moral (material level); that is deontologically ethical (the good is preferred over the bad); and that demands that such communication should take place in a situation that is morally justified so that the better argument can win (formalistically ethical) (Duvenage 2007:340-342; Habermas 1989:48-56).~~

~~Based on the work of Gouldner and Habermas, the excellence paradigm holds that although mixed motives or divided loyalties and unequal power situations are evident in many instances, businesses' behaviour should still be ethically justifiable. Gouldner's work is applied by the excellence paradigm in arguing that even in situations where the business assumes more power than society, the business should still act ethically and that ethical behaviour is more beneficial to the business than immoral and unethical behaviour. Based on the work of Habermas, the excellence paradigm holds that an attempt must be made to reconcile the viewpoints of the business and of society to a situation in which the good can win over the bad and in which the better argument can win over the weaker argument because it is ethical.~~

~~To reinforce the generalised norm of reciprocity in the form of 'give to gain' as formulated by Gouldner, James Grunig (1992:10) adds that outright manipulative or persuasive communication should not be used because it is not ethical and a manipulative or persuasive situation is mostly 'bad for business':~~

~~"Philosophically, we believe that symmetrical public relations is more ethical and socially responsible than asymmetrical public relations because it manages conflict rather than wages war. But, pragmatically, our literature review shows that symmetrical communication programs also are successful more often than asymmetrical ones and contribute more to organizational effectiveness."~~

~~The implication of the generalised norm of reciprocity for the excellence paradigm is that a combination of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication should be used, as is suggested by the *two-way model*. This model, scholars further argue, manages conflict, aims at improving understanding and builds relationships by combining elements of scientific persuasion (two-way asymmetry) and two-way symmetrical communication to come to a negotiated dialogue which uses two-directional communication (Grunig & White 1992:39, 42; Grunig 1997:290-297; Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Wilcox et al 2000:164; Hong & Ki 2007; cf Bishop 2006).~~

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The discussion of the excellence paradigm indicated that excellence in public relations is achieved if preference is given to symmetrical public relations based on symmetrical relationships and symmetrical communication. At times asymmetry may be used, but care should be taken that the communication situation, especially when the business negotiates from a position of power, is ethically justifiable as suggested by the arguments above. Using the Habermasian ideal communication situation in such situations means that businesses should have stronger arguments than the opposition it wishes to persuade in a negotiation process, but one should keep in mind that, within such a persuasive situation, the business should give up some of what it wants in order to gain some of what it wants (as explained by Gouldner in the generalised norm of reciprocity). This puts excellence thinking in a particular situation in which it is, almost contradictorily, morally and ethically sound and persuasive, and prefers symmetry over asymmetry because it allows the business most frequently to win a negotiation process. From an excellence perspective this amounts to effective 'communication' in which good 'relationships' are maintained with society. The excellence paradigm of public relations' specific interpretation of communication and relationships are further critically discussed below.

In the literature two sets of criticisms are voiced against this *two-way model* of the excellence paradigm of public relations in which symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships are simultaneously entertained, pragmatic to the situation. The first set of criticism deals with the generalised norm of reciprocity and the second with the unequal power situation in non-egalitarian societies, as discussed below.

Firstly, the excellence paradigm's interpretation of the norm of reciprocity differs drastically from that of other scholarly work. The excellence interpretation of the norm of reciprocity is a generalised form of the Golden Rule ('Do unto others as you would have them do unto you') which makes the former inherently selfish or egoist since businesses only do good to society if it benefits them, as pointed out by Gouldner (1960:173-174). In contrast to such a generalised position about reciprocity, other scholarly work (Calkins & Vézina 1996; Eagleton 2007:147-149) associates the term 'reciprocity' with aspects such as ethics, morality, spirituality, love, the Golden Rule, justice, loyalty, gift, legitimacy, the act of giving with the aim of enabling people to achieve maximum spiritual growth, equal power, nurturing relationships, happiness, well-being, free agency, the gift of giving, and generosity (as elaborated in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3). This latter position, that does not generalise the norm of reciprocity, is

~~based on an awareness of a type of interdependency between the business and society that is regarded as more important as the profit of business (Calkins & Vézina 1996).~~

~~Based on this discussion of the first point of criticism of the business-society relationship proposed by the excellence paradigm of public relations, it can be argued that the excellence paradigm of public relations generalises the notion of reciprocity within the business context, as the danger is that it might be understood as an ethically justifiable 'give to gain' strategy. The dilemma of excellent public relations is exemplified when it attempts to maintain symmetrical relationships with society and simultaneously be market-oriented.~~

~~Secondly, the excellence paradigm's interpretation quest for reciprocal relationships (even if generalised) in a non-egalitarian (non-reciprocal) business environment is problematic. A large-scale study amongst US corporations found that ethically justifiable relations between business and society could be jeopardised by a lack of self-evident truth to build ethical thinking on; that this model is impractical when read within market-oriented societies where all parties are not equal; and that many post-bureaucratic relatively egalitarian organisations did not survive the market-drive emphasis in the US (Griffin 2003:297). This is exemplified by Stanley Deetz (1995:99-103), who argues that businesses privilege managerial interests over the interests of cultural identity, community or democracy, since managers in US corporations have primarily operated from a philosophy of control and are thus inherently undemocratic with the effect of effectively damaging democracy.~~

~~Based on this discussion of the second point of criticism of the business-society relationship proposed by the excellence paradigm of public relations, it can be argued that from this perspective the public relations function is associated with unequal power situations and thus does not seek a reciprocal situation, but merely manipulates the notion of reciprocity for profit-oriented reasons.~~

#### **4.2.5.2 Businesses' social engagement through excellent public relations**

~~The Excellence Study did not report in any detail about businesses' social engagement, apart from emphasising that businesses have a social responsibility, and that it should be guided by the generalised norm of reciprocity as businesses seek to minimise their impact on social level by giving something to society and in the~~

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~~process seek to obtain a 'social license to operate' (Grunig & White 1992:7; FBSD 1999e; Verčič et al 2001; Newsom et al 2004:60; Caywood 1997:xi-xiii). Mersham et al (1995:41) add that businesses using excellent public relations emphasise social responsibility programmes to show businesses' willingness to engage with society, and in a particular way the norm of reciprocity safeguards the business against its own power.~~

~~Based on both these discussions it can be argued that the social engagement of excellent public relations will most probably also assume a combination of asymmetrical and symmetrical power relations and communication. This does not exclude the possibility that businesses' social engagement through excellent public relations is a real social concern nor that it could be a real business concern. It is argued that businesses' social engagement aligns excellent public relations with either the shareholderist or the socialist view to businesses' social engagement (discussed in Section 3.2.1) depending on the motivation of the business to become socially involved.~~

#### **4.2.7 The reflective paradigm of public relations**

~~The reflective paradigm of public relations is described in the European Body of Knowledge (EBOOK) Study commissioned by the European Association for Public Relations Education and Research (CERP), which in January 2001 became the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) (Verčič, Van Ruler, Bütchi & Flodin 2001; Verčič 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Van Ruler & Verčič 2004:1).~~

~~The reflective paradigm of public relations<sup>10</sup> does not only pose an opposition to market-oriented public relations, but assumes a rather specific type of public relations. Essentially the researchers of the European Body of Knowledge Study<sup>11</sup> criticise modernist public relations for dominating the field of public relations, thus negating other forms of public relations (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Verčič et al 2001;~~

<sup>10</sup> In the literature emanating from the EBOOK Study market-oriented public relations are associated with the USA and reflective public relations with Europe. Although this position is not negated in this present study, care has been taken not to limit market-oriented public relations to the USA, or to disregard other orientations to public relations in the USA. Similarly, in this study the term 'reflective' public relations is chosen over 'European reflective' public relations so as not to exclude other orientations to public relations in Europe as the reflective paradigm is merely one of the paradigms of public relations that exist in Europe. Nevertheless, great evidence exists in the 'American' literature that the market-oriented model of public relations is dominant in the USA (Kruckeberg 2002:188-196; Hynes 2005:4-14; Newsom et al 2004:26; Verčič 2007; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Grunig & Grunig 1992:303, 305).

<sup>11</sup> The aim of EBOOK was firstly to compile a bibliography of the existing body of European writings on public relations; and secondly to investigate the nature of public relations in Europe (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič 2000; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). The latter part of the EBOOK study is a study in its own right but also in response to the pervasiveness of the market drive (what they refer to as the American) thinking about public relations taught at many European universities (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič 2000; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

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Verčič 2001). (This echoes critical scholars' criticism of the one-dimensionality of the grand narrative of modernity, the author observes.) The EBOK researchers also argue that the number and the availability of market-oriented public relations text books support the dominant position of market-oriented public relations (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). Another strong point of criticism against market-oriented public relations is that they reduce the role of public relations to a 'marketing tool' (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

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Apart from criticising market-oriented public relations, the EBOK Study describes a different paradigm of public relations that exist in some parts of Europe, labelled the reflective paradigm of public relations. The reflective dimension of the work of the public relations practitioner gives this paradigm its name (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002) as explained in the next section, after which the attendant view of (constitutive) communication and reciprocal relationships with society is discussed. This section concludes with a critical discussion and options for businesses' social engagement, since the EBOK report does not specifically focus on this aspect of public relations.

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#### **4.2.7.1 The main assumptions of the reflective paradigm**

The European reflective public relations paradigm is based on the assumption that society consists of various interdependent entities (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). The interdependent assumption grew out of the environmental concern that the non-renewable natural resources of the world are being depleted and that such an untenable situation should be addressed by all peoples of the world, making all such peoples interdependent (discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1). The corresponding business-society relationship is that of reciprocity, cooperation and harmony, which are, in turn, reflected in the nature of the communication used by this paradigm, as argued at the beginning of this chapter (see Section 3.2.2).

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Based on this assumption, the reflective paradigm of public relations took root in some parts of Europe. For this reason, the primary focus (or dimension) of reflective public relations is socially oriented in that it investigates the nature of society (represented in the word choice of the 'public' and not the market-oriented phrase of 'publics') (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Van Ruler & Verčič 2004:6).

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**The purpose of reflection is to assist in the legitimisation of the business (Hölstrom**



2004:121-122). Such reflection is regarded as part of the businesses' self-regulatory system against the background of the business from a poly-contextual perspective (Hölstrom 2004:122). Reflection is enlarging the traditional duties of public relations from a mono-contextual perspective to a poly-contextual perspective that enables the business to see itself within the context of a larger society (Hölstrom 2004:122). In contrast with a mono-contextual perspective, a poly-contextual perspective furthermore enables the business to experience and understand larger contextual rationalities, worldviews and other concerns about the societies in which it functions (Hölstrom 2004:122). This is related to the expanded view of the business from only a stakeholder concern to a social and environmental concern as is expressed by the triple bottom line (Hölstrom 2004:122). Societies are in contemporary times poly-centred and by changing towards reflection the "core demand" from societies that businesses align themselves with a poly-centric approach such as reflection, is adhered to (Hölstrom 2004:126). Reflection thus not only impacts on public relations but on the business philosophy (Hölstrom 2004:128), that in turn enhances social trust that are based on reciprocity (Steyn & Bütchi 2003:11). Reflection is furthermore seen as a communication pattern which opens up the possibility of seeing conflicts between interests in society as productive dynamics in a broader perspective (Steyn & Bütchi 2003:11). Such reciprocity is achieved through symmetrical communication that is used not only for gathering information, but also in terms of business reporting to society a variety of aspects (Hölstrom 2004:128). This has the effect of legitimising the business in a way that is in line with the principles of the triple bottom line and interdependency (Hölstrom 2004:128). The consequence of reflection is that the values of the business is expanded from the economic to incorporate that what economic, social, ethical and environmental views important to the societies in which it functions (cf Steyn & Bütchi 2003). This view of reflection leads the primary task of reflective public relations to be informing the business about societal matters (such as social trends and social needs), born out of accepting the interdependence of business and society (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Hölstrom 2004:128; Van Heerden 2004:64). The consequence is a greater 'outside' or 'public' orientation by understanding the public's view (Van Heerden 2004:64).

This sociological understanding (or social consciousness) opposes market-oriented public relations' interest in the public's taste that is to be capitalised on by business, and on the grounds that it is socially oriented (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002) as it links the sociological understanding directly interdependency. (Chapter 2,

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Section 3.2.2 associates the interdependency notion with beyond modernist thinking.)

From a reflective perspective, information about society is conveyed by the public relations function to the organisation's leadership (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002) and back to society. This represents the expressive task of reflective public relations (Steyn & Bütchi 2003:11). The purpose of the expressive task is to prevent at least mistrust and to enable co-existence, if mutual understanding between the business and society cannot be achieved (cf Steyn & Bütchi 2003:11).

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The secondary focus (or dimension) of the reflective paradigm of public relations is to assist members of the organisation to become communicatively competent (referred to as the educational dimension) so that staff is prepared to interact with other members of the society to which they collectively belong (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

Both the reflective and educational dimensions guide the execution of the managerial and operational aspects of public relations that ensure good relationships between the business and the public through communication processes (Verčič et al 2001; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

The reflective dimension of this particular paradigm of public relations is captured in the German term for public relations, *Offentlichkeitsarbeit*, and its Scandinavian counterparts (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). *Offentlichkeitsarbeit* literally means "working in public, with the public and for the public", in contrast with the mainstream or dominant market orientation's view of public relations as the "management of relationships between an organization and its publics" (Verčič et al 2000). This translation is confirmed by other scholars, such as Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) and Verčič (2007). The term *Offentlichkeitsarbeit* does not refer to the 'public' or to the 'publics' of a business, but rather to the 'public sphere' in which public relations are "not only about the public sphere, but for the public". Public sphere implies that the 'quality and quantity' of the public sphere are affected by public relations and its co-produced activities (Verčič et al 2001; cf Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Van Ruler & Verčič 2004:5). The 'quality and quantity' of the public sphere have to do with public opinion (*öffentliche Meinung*) and not with an aggregate of individual opinions in terms of poll results (Verčič et al 2001; Van Ruler & Verčič 2004:5-6). Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) argue that the public sphere refers to "the foundation on which

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democracies were built" and thus serves as a type of political authority that is the foundation of reflective public relations. Such a political authority has historically been ingrained in Europe in the opposition to monarchic rule, expressed in the monarchical (or French) revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Barzun 2001:3).

This understanding of public relations makes it, similar to journalism, a contributor to the free flow of information and to the growth of the public sphere both in size and level (Verčič et al 2001). The fact that public relations contribute to the quality of the public sphere legitimises them and gives them the distinctive European character (Verčič et al 2001; cf Verčič & Van Ruler 2002).

Apart from such a democratic imperative, the focus of reflective public relations implies an understanding of the cultural and sociological context of the society in which the business functions, and is linked to the social license to operate (Verčič et al 2001; Newsom et al 2004:60; Caywood 1997:xi-xiii). The reflective public relations tradition thus focuses on broader social issues and on a concern for the implications of business behaviour since it impacts on the public sphere (Verčič et al 2001). This means that reflective public relations focus on the reason for public relations' existence and its implications ('Why?'), whilst market-oriented (American and South African) public relations are preoccupied with the execution of public relations (by focussing, for instance, on the level of work – the technical, managerial, strategic levels) giving it a technique orientation ('How?') (Steyn 2003). The reflective public relations tradition thus places great emphasis on the values of the organisation, which determine the direction and implications of the organisation (why the organisation behaves in a certain way, for instance, why an organisation would become involved in socially responsible actions, why the public sphere is implicated, and so forth).

The reflective understanding of the term 'public' refers to the public sphere and public matters from a position of social consciousness that contrasts with the market-oriented public relations view that refers to the 'public' as "a summarized amount of people which can be segmented" or that the business seeks to influence (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002). The understanding of a separation between the business and the public is equally criticised by scholars such as Dozier et al (1995:47-50) and Deetz (1995:99-103).

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This distinction between market-oriented public relations and the reflective public relations tradition is further evident in the vernacular terms for 'public relations'. Since many reflective public relations practitioners and academics want to distinguish their work from the persuasive market-oriented public relations thinking, a distinction is made between the terms 'information' and 'communication' whereby 'communication' refers to the process of human interaction that seeks mutual understanding and 'information' refers to strategically planned information aimed at influencing the other (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Verčič et al 2001).

In the next section this distinction between 'communication' and 'information', found in the reflective paradigm of public relations, is related to the distinction made in Chapter 2 (see Sections 2.2.5 and 2.3.3) between informational communication and constitutive communication and between instrumental relationships and reciprocal relationships.

#### **4.2.7.2 Business-society relationship: reciprocity and constitutive communication**

In the European scholarly tradition 'communication' and 'relationships' are not to be separated as they are intertwined because both are seated in the notion of reciprocity (Verčič et al 2001). To illustrate this point Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) and Verčič et al (2001) argue that the concepts 'communication' and 'relationship' are increasingly described in market-oriented public relations literature as separate concepts, breaking with the longstanding view, fundamental to Europe, that "communication is the bedrock of public relations".

Based on this thinking, scholars formulating the reflective paradigm of public relations argue that in the market-oriented tradition of public relations the concepts of communication and relationships are separated. This, they argue, are because public relations has lost its original function of bringing about an enhanced well-being by bridging the gap between the self and the other in an attempt to bring about reciprocal understanding. Reflective scholars further argue that public relations is currently often used as instrumental in persuading the public to support the viewpoint of the business. This is evident in market-oriented public relations' literature which increasingly describes public relations as a relationship-building profession that adds value to organisations by enhancing the willingness of markets, audiences and publics to support the organisation, meaning that public relations are employed to

support the profit margins directly, through strategically managing relationships (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Newsom et al 2004:4, 354; Guth & Marsh 2003:7). This is underlined by the trend to integrate the various communication functions of the business' communication, essentially reducing public relations to marketing public relations (MPR) in support of the business' goals (Newsom et al 2004:4; Wilcox et al 2000:17-19; Kotler et al 2004:608; Schulz et al 1994:xvii; Harris 1998:3, 5; Wilcox et al 2000:19). As explained in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.5) this type of influence-oriented communication is associated with the term 'informational communication'. This means that market-oriented public relations use 'communication', not to refer to mutual understanding (i.e. constitutive communication) as in reflective public relations, but to refer to the strategic management of 'relations' with the public to make such relations profitable or give them a strategic purpose for the business (informational communication is also called purposeful communication by supporters of such an approach to public relations), which implies that public relations are reduced to a 'marketing tool' (Verčič & Van Ruler 2002; Guth & Marsh 2003:427; Caywood 1997:xi). This is illustrated by linking communication and relationships to terms such as relationship management, communication management, image management, reputation management, relationship building, stakeholders, publics and activists, all of which underline a separation between the business and society (Verčič et al 2001).

In contrast to such a purposeful, informational, influence-oriented view of communication associated with market-oriented communication, many European countries, especially Denmark, Finland, Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden, view the core of public relations as having a social sensitivity encapsulated in a sociological orientation (Verčič et al 2001; cf Harris 1997:92-93; cf Kotler et al 2004:39). For this reason Verčič and Van Ruler (2002) argue that the claim made in market-oriented public relations literature that relationship building could be done through persuasive, purposeful or strategic communication is "outright [...] nonsense [...] in the light of the major part of the European social-scientific tradition".

Based on this discussion it can be argued that the terms 'communication' and 'relationship' are not only differently used in market-oriented and reflective public relations, but that the different usage of these terms signify different understandings of public relations. The next section investigates how the reflective paradigm of public relations views businesses' social engagement.

#### **4.2.7.3 Businesses' social engagement through reflective public relations**

The EBOK Study of the reflective paradigm of public relations does not report directly on the social engagement of businesses through public relations, apart from arguing, as Hölstrom (2004:130) associates it with corporate social responsibility, rather than seeing social engagement as a self-oriented approach as other approaches might. As the social engagement of this approach is not widely debated, the author deduces, from the main assumptions of the reflective paradigm of public relations, the following position regarding businesses' social engagement through reflective public relations.

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The reflective paradigm assumes an interdependent world, thus acknowledging the interdependence between the business and its natural and social environment. As explained in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3), the implication of the interdependency notion is that people are mutually vulnerable to one another, making each person both powerful in the sense that s/he has the power to help the other in a reciprocal manner.

A relationship between business and society that is based on the assumption of interdependency would acknowledge that the business is part of society, which implies that it should strive to have a harmonious reciprocal relationship with society. Within this context the purpose of reflective public relations is to gain a sociological understanding of society and to allow that society to inform the business direction. It is further seen as part of public relations that the public sphere (critical debate about topics of importance to the public, such as the enhancement of physical and non-physical well-being) be built and maintained. From this discussion it is evident that the focus of the reflective paradigm of public relations falls on interdependence, harmony, cooperation and reciprocity, so that it coincides with the reciprocal relationships through constitutive communication that are explained in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3). This underlines the importance of a social orientation to the reflective paradigm of public relations.

The social engagement of reflective public relations is *per se* encapsulated in the nature of such public relations, and is an understanding of the public and matters of public interest that implies a social engagement. Seated in reciprocal relationships and communication, the work of reflective public relations practitioners would be undertaken in a symmetrical, dialogical, democratic, reciprocal manner using

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constitutive communication (to bridge the gap between the self and the other). This means that other social engagement efforts, if undertaken, apart from practising public relations from a reflective paradigm, would be to enhance the public sphere and the well-being of society, not as in the case of market-oriented public relations, for the gain of business, but for the sake of society.

Guidelines towards a social engagement approach deduced from this discussion, based on the assumptions of interdependency, firstly point towards a particular relationship between business and society (reciprocal), and secondly to the purpose of public relations (reflect on sociological aspects) within an approach of cooperation and harmony. Businesses' social engagement efforts as executed through this type of public relations will, most probably, not only focus on the social environment in isolation, but would also consider the natural environment, and most importantly, through a sociological understanding aim to enhance the public sphere because that enhances the well-being of society. As this view of businesses' social engagement is associated with an ecological business-society relationship, which is also a sociological orientation of public relations, it coincides with the socialist view of businesses' social engagement (see Section 3.2.1). This means that the reflective paradigm is opposed to market-orientation public relations.

#### **4.2.8 The initial formulation of the excellence paradigm of public relations**

This section discusses the initial formulation of the excellence paradigm of public relations that is derived from the 1992 Excellence Study<sup>12</sup> report, in terms of: its main assumptions; the business-society relationship of this paradigm; the businesses' social engagement through the excellence paradigm of public relations; and a critical discussion of the public relations paradigm.

##### **4.2.8.1 Main assumptions and business-society relationship**

Similar to the reflective paradigm of public relations, proponents of the excellence paradigm of public relations claim that it is based on interdependency, multiplicity,

<sup>12</sup> The notion of excellent' public relations is a result of a large-scale ten year study mainly in the USA, Canada and the UK of 'good' public relations practice that seeks answers to questions of how and how much public relations contribute towards organisational effectiveness and the characteristics of excellent communication departments (Grunig 1997:286). This study was commissioned by the Research Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and was reported upon in *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (1997) (Grunig 1997:286). The term excellence was chosen in the Excellence Study because at the time of the study it represented the latest thinking (it was a "buzzword"), but the term 'quality' could have been equally valid (Grunig 1997:288). Public relations and communication are used as synonyms in the Excellence Study report (Grunig 1997:288).

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reciprocity and an open systems approach, as explained in this section. This explanation evidences that excellence is essentially viewed as the reconciliation of formerly juxtaposed positions on the business-society relationship and communication.

The main objectives of excellent public relations, as defined by the Excellence Study of 1992, are that they seek to serve both the interest of the public and of the business; to develop mutual understanding between the business and its publics; to contribute to informed debate about issues in society; and to facilitate dialogue between the business and its publics (Grunig & White 1992:53, 56; Hong & Ki 2007; Meath 2006). Through the reconciliation of serving both the public and society, this paradigm of public relations actualises the dual focus of public relations. Such a dual focus brings about possible conflicts because of the various and sometimes opposing views held in society and voiced by different social actors and by the business, but Grunig and White (1992:53) and Clarke-Hill, Li & Davies (2003) argue that these can be reconciled through negotiations and compromise and that such reconciliation will ultimately enable social progress.

Proponents of excellent public relations furthermore understand that society is more complex than a simply 'us-them' relationship acknowledges because staff members are part of society. This is exemplary of the game theory (Mersham et al 1995:40) which argues that in a plural society it is not necessary to clarify the paradoxical tension of cooperation and competition in business relations, but that the tension between these should be managed (Clarke-Hill, Li & Davies 2003).

The reconciliation of loyalties to both the business and society is explained in terms of the mixed motive or divided loyalty argument that rests on the assumption that people who work for a business, including public relations practitioners, are simultaneously part of (or living in) society and work for a business, and if the business' efforts impact on the society of their staff it may lead such people to have divided loyalties<sup>13</sup> (Mersham et al 1995:40). The challenge is to harmonise such divided loyalties, thus finding a balance between pure conflict (competition) and pure symmetry (cooperation or collaboration), although the business would mostly wish to direct such potentially conflicting interests to the advantage of the business (Grunig &

<sup>13</sup> The mixed motives or divided loyalties argument is a concept from game theory that was introduced into public relations theory in 1991 by Murphy's work (Grunig and White 1992:245-246).

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White 1992:245-246; Clarke-Hill, Li & Davies 2003). This understanding is supported by Mersham et al (1995:40):

"Organisations do indeed want public relations people to work in their interest. They do not want to give in to all outside demands on the organisation when they believe the organisation's position is right. No responsible manager completely rejects return on investment. Corporations are not charitable organisations".

As staff members reconcile their divided interests (their workplace and the society in which they live), so the public relations function can also reconcile business interest with public interest. The work of public relations practitioners implies that, in such cases, they should persuade the public to support the business, but this should be done ethically (Grunig & White 1992:245-246). To ensure that such actions are ethical they should be based on the generalised norm of reciprocity and should use ethical communication practices and situations, as explained by the Habermasian ideal communication situation, elucidated below.

Proponents of the excellence paradigm base their ethical arguments on the work of Alvin Gouldner (1960:173-174) who supports the generalised norm of reciprocity. Grunig and White (1992:39) and Mersham et al (1995:40) argue that the Excellence report shows that, in the long term, the symmetrical world view is more 'effective' than the asymmetrical world view since businesses get more of what they want when they give up some of what they want. Gouldner (1960:173-174) explains the generalised norm of reciprocity as meaning that people are 'more ready to receive than to give benefits', making them essentially egoist or self-oriented (cf Koeszegi 2004). In such egoism altruism is evident through reciprocity since 'you give because you want to receive' (Grunig & White 1992:46; Mersham et al 1995:40-41; Koeszegi 2004; Clarke-Hill, Li & Davies 2003). If applied to businesses it means that businesses are more ready to give something to society because they expect that society will give something back to business (return the favour), in other words society will reciprocate the business' giving (Mersham et al 1995:40-41; Grunig & White 1992:46; Koeszegi 2004). The opposite is also true: if the public is treated badly by business, this will also be reciprocated by the public (Grunig & White 1992:48; Koeszegi 2004). Gouldner (1960:173-174) deduces from this argument that the norm of reciprocity could stabilise social systems, making the norm of reciprocity a 'starting mechanism' for social relations or an assumed type of behaviour that allows social actors (business and society) to deal with each other when they have had no prior contact.

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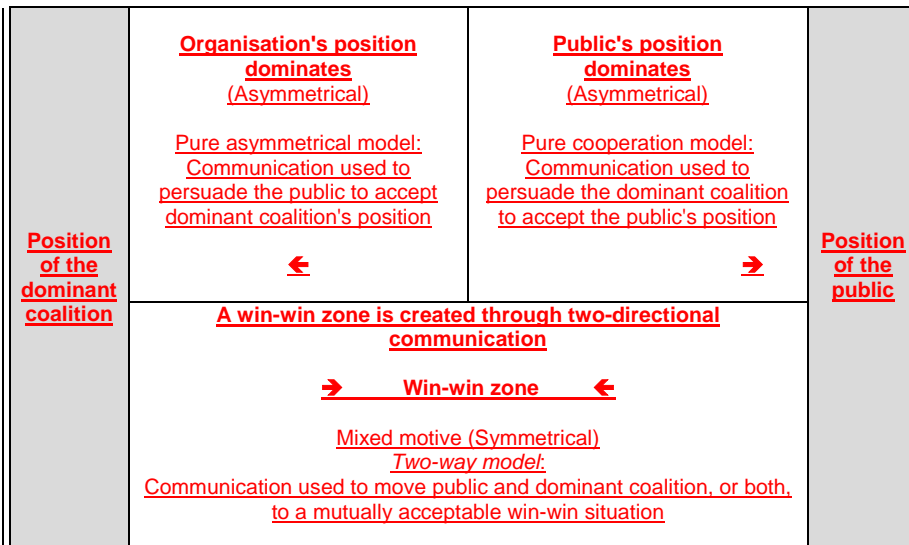
Based on a generalised norm of reciprocity, various scholars (Verčič et al 2001; Newsom et al 2004:60; Caywood 1997:xi-xiii) argue that the Excellence Study states that businesses obtain approval from society to pursue their goals, often referred to as a 'social license to operate' or obtaining the consent of their publics. Through this generalised form of the norm of reciprocity, the researchers of the Excellence Study are of the opinion that the business is in a specific way part of society, giving the public the right to scrutinise privately owned businesses (Grunig & White 1992:47; Mersham et al 1995:40; Newsom et al 2004:150). This means that the excellence paradigm holds that the business should give up some of its goals in order to gain public support (Grunig & White 1992:53).

An implication of this reasoning is that it is justified, from a business perspective, that the business becomes involved on societal level (and gives money for social causes) because, if it does so it will financially do better.

Based on this understanding Grunig and White (1992:9, 45) and Clarke-Hill, Li and Davies (2003) argue that excellent businesses can be simultaneously competitive and cooperative, or blend self-interest with public interest, thus accommodating mixed motives or divided loyalties actualised through the generalised norm of reciprocity. This is qualified by James Grunig (1992:10) who argues that although asymmetrical and symmetrical views are both entertained by the excellence paradigm of public relations, symmetrical relationships and communication are preferred over asymmetrical relationships and asymmetrical communication. In some cases it may be necessary for the public relations function, although it is part of the dominant coalition (management), to persuade either the management of the business or the public to change opinions, combining the *two-way asymmetrical model* of public relations and *two-way symmetrical model* of public relations into a new model, the *two-way model* (Dozier et al 1995:48-49; cf Bishop 2006; cf Hong & Ki 2007). This means that, although it is part of the dominant coalition (management of the business), the public relations function treats the dominant coalition as another public that can be influenced by communication programmes (Dozier et al 1995:48-49). This further implies that asymmetrical tactics could also be used in specific situations to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for a win-win situation as long as it takes place within a larger symmetrical organisational worldview (Dozier et al 1995:50; cf Bishop 2006; cf Meath 2006). This view of Dozier et al (1995:48) of the *two-way model* in presented in Figure 4.1:

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**FIGURE 4.1** *The two-way model of public relations*

Figure 4.1 indicates that, although prior to the Excellence Study, it had been thought that public relations were either symmetrical or asymmetrical, and that public relations essentially negotiated the position of the business by 'balancing' the interests of both public and business, it is now generally accepted that symmetry and asymmetry do not necessarily pose opposites (cf Dozier et al 1995:47). It is furthermore assumed that using both the symmetrical and asymmetrical worldviews and both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication can contribute towards social progress, and enhance the ethicality of this approach to public relations (Dozier et al 1995:47). This means that the dual focus of the excellence paradigm of balancing the (sometimes conflicting) interests of the public and the business is enabled by its combining two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical views (Grunig 1997:290-293; cf Bishop 2006; cf Clarke-Hill, Li & Davies 2003; cf Meath 2006).

In communication situations in which the power situation is equal, this stance of balancing symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships and communication is practical, but when the business goals and the views of the public do not coincide, this idealistic position could be rather problematic, in the sense that in many cases the business assumes more power than society does or can. To remedy the possibility of the business exploiting society in situations in which the business and society hold different views, the Excellent Study suggests using both the options sketched by Gouldner and Habermas as explained below.

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Gouldner (1960:173-174) maintains that in situations of significant power differences, egoist motivations may lead the more powerful to obtain benefits without returning them, but in such situations the party with more power should still treat the other fairly and expect reciprocal treatment. In cases of unequal power relations or in non-egalitarian societies, an ethical relationship between business and society, based on the principles of openness and dialogue, will lead both communicating parties to agree on what is right or wrong, true or false (Grunig & White 1992:58-60; Mersham et al 1995:44-45). This will make the interaction ethical, even when one party has mixed motives such as being convinced that he/she is right, as long as he/she is also convinced that the other's convictions should be respected (Grunig & White 1992:59-60; Mersham et al 1995:44-45).

The Excellence Study explains Gouldner's guidelines of openness and dialogue further by referring to the Habermasian ideal communication situation. According to Habermas (1989:48-56) the ideal communication situation argument not only looks at the internal logic of the communication, but also into the sociological power situation or context in which communication takes place. This ideal communication situation or context is based on an ethically legitimate situation that emerges out of an attempt to reconcile the material dimension of human life with the non-material dimension (including cultural, spiritual, ethical and moral aspects) by asking for a communication situation that is cognitively and ethically moral (non-material level) and scientifically moral (material level); that is deontologically ethical (the good is preferred over the bad); and that demands that such communication should take place in a situation that is morally justified so that the better argument can win (formalistically ethical) (Duvenage 2007:340-342; Habermas 1989:48-56).

Based on the work of Gouldner and Habermas, the excellence paradigm holds that although mixed motives or divided loyalties and unequal power situations are evident in many instances, businesses' behaviour should still be ethically justifiable. Gouldner's work is applied by the excellence paradigm in arguing that even in situations where the business assumes more power than society, the business should still act ethically and that ethical behaviour is more beneficial to the business than immoral and unethical behaviour. Based on the work of Habermas, the excellence paradigm holds that an attempt must be made to reconcile the viewpoints of the business and of society to a situation in which the good can win over the bad and in which the better argument can win over the weaker argument because it is

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ethical.

To reinforce the generalised norm of reciprocity in the form of 'give to gain' as formulated by Gouldner, James Grunig (1992:10) adds that outright manipulative or persuasive communication should not be used because it is not ethical and a manipulative or persuasive situation is mostly 'bad for business':

"Philosophically, we believe that symmetrical public relations is more ethical and socially responsible than asymmetrical public relations because it manages conflict rather than wages war. But, pragmatically, our literature review shows that symmetrical communication programs also are successful more often than asymmetrical ones and contribute more to organizational effectiveness."

The implication of the generalised norm of reciprocity for the excellence paradigm is that a combination of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication should be used, as is suggested by the *two-way model*. This model, scholars further argue, manages conflict, aims at improving understanding and builds relationships by combining elements of scientific persuasion (two-way asymmetry) and two-way symmetrical communication to come to a negotiated dialogue which uses two-directional communication (Grunig & White 1992:39, 42; Grunig 1997:290-297; Guth & Marsh 2003:9; Wilcox et al 2000:164; Hong & Ki 2007; cf Bishop 2006).

The discussion of the excellence paradigm indicated that excellence in public relations is achieved if preference is given to symmetrical public relations based on symmetrical relationships and symmetrical communication. At times asymmetry may be used, but care should be taken that the communication situation, especially when the business negotiates from a position of power, is ethically justifiable as suggested by the arguments above. Using the Habermasian ideal communication situation in such situations means that businesses should have stronger arguments than the opposition it wishes to persuade in a negotiation process, but one should keep in mind that, within such a persuasive situation, the business should give up some of what it wants in order to gain some of what it wants (as explained by Gouldner in the generalised norm of reciprocity). This puts excellence thinking in a particular situation in which it is, almost contradictorily, morally and ethically sound and persuasive, and prefers symmetry over asymmetry because it allows the business most frequently to win a negotiation process. From an excellence perspective this amounts to effective 'communication' in which good 'relationships' are maintained with society. The excellence paradigm of public relations' specific interpretation of communication and relationships are further critically discussed below.

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In the literature two sets of criticisms are voiced against this two-way model of the excellence paradigm of public relations in which symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships are simultaneously entertained, pragmatic to the situation. The first set of criticism deals with the generalised norm of reciprocity and the second with the unequal power situation in non-egalitarian societies, as discussed below.

Firstly, the excellence paradigm's interpretation of the norm of reciprocity differs drastically from that of other scholarly work. The excellence interpretation of the norm of reciprocity is a generalised form of the Golden Rule ('Do unto others as you would have them do unto you') which makes the former inherently selfish or egoist since businesses only do good to society if it benefits them, as pointed out by Gouldner (1960:173-174). In contrast to such a generalised position about reciprocity, other scholarly work (Calkins & Vézina 1996; Eagleton 2007:147-149) associates the term 'reciprocity' with aspects such as ethics, morality, spirituality, love, the Golden Rule, justice, loyalty, gift, legitimacy, the act of giving with the aim of enabling people to achieve maximum spiritual growth, equal power, nurturing relationships, happiness, well-being, free agency, the gift of giving, and generosity (as elaborated in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3). This latter position, that does not generalise the norm of reciprocity, is based on an awareness of a type of interdependency between the business and society that is regarded as more important as the profit of business (Calkins & Vézina 1996).

Based on this discussion of the first point of criticism of the business-society relationship proposed by the excellence paradigm of public relations, it can be argued that the excellence paradigm of public relations generalises the notion of reciprocity within the business context, as the danger is that it might be understood as an ethically justifiable 'give to gain' strategy. The dilemma of excellent public relations is exemplified when it attempts to maintain symmetrical relationships with society and simultaneously be market-oriented.

Secondly, the excellence paradigm's interpretation quest for reciprocal relationships (even if generalised) in a non-egalitarian (non-reciprocal) business environment is problematic. A large-scale study amongst US corporations found that ethically justifiable relations between business and society could be jeopardised by a lack of self-evident truth to build ethical thinking on; that this model is impractical when read within market-oriented societies where all parties are not equal; and that many post-bureaucratic relatively egalitarian organisations did not survive the market drive

emphasis in the US (Griffin 2003:297). This is exemplified by Stanley Deetz (1995:99-103), who argues that businesses privilege managerial interests over the interests of cultural identity, community or democracy, since managers in US corporations have primarily operated from a philosophy of control and are thus inherently undemocratic with the effect of effectively damaging democracy.

Based on this discussion of the second point of criticism of the business-society relationship proposed by the excellence paradigm of public relations, it can be argued that from this perspective the public relations function is associated with unequal power situations and thus does not seek a reciprocal situation, but merely manipulates the notion of reciprocity for profit-oriented reasons.

#### **4.2.8.2 Businesses' social engagement through excellent public relations**

The Excellence Study did not report in any detail about businesses' social engagement, apart from emphasising that businesses have a social responsibility, and that it should be guided by the generalised norm of reciprocity as businesses seek to minimise their impact on social level by giving something to society and in the process seek to obtain a 'social license to operate' (Grunig & White 1992:7; FBSD 1999e; Verčič et al 2001; Newsom et al 2004:60; Caywood 1997:xi-xiii). Mersham et al (1995:41) add that businesses using excellent public relations emphasise social responsibility programmes to show businesses' willingness to engage with society, and in a particular way the norm of reciprocity safeguards the business against its own power.

Based on both these discussions it can be argued that the social engagement of excellent public relations will most probably also assume a combination of asymmetrical and symmetrical power relations and communication. This does not exclude the possibility that businesses' social engagement through excellent public relations is a real social concern nor that it could be a real business concern. It is argued that businesses' social engagement aligns excellent public relations with either the shareholderist or the socialist view to businesses' social engagement (discussed in Section 3.2.1) depending on the motivation of the business to become socially involved.

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#### 4.2.96 An ethical ideological foundation for public relations

This section presents arguments towards a new ethical direction for public relations, and exposes the main assumptions and the business-society relationship implied in such arguments.

Based on ethically justifiable considerations, Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2007:280-187) and Holtzhausen (1995:235-241) argue that public relations should find a new ethically justifiable direction, which Holtzhausen (1995:235-241) calls 'postmodern' public relations, and Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2007:280-187) call an 'ethical ideological foundation'. Such a new ethical direction is necessary to public relations to remain ethical amidst global crises caused by poverty, malnutrition, population growth, hunger, war, a damaged global environment, population growth, genocide, terrorism, tension due to issues of control of technology, and increasing tensions between cultures, class and nationalities due to the processes of a globalised economy. Their arguments are not remote from the arguments of various scholars (such as Kruckeberg 2002:196-202; Hamelink 2007:335-337; Schumacher 1973:249) that against this background of interdependency businesses (and by implication public relations) should take note of the dire needs of the world population.

Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2007:287-288) contend that it would not be ethically justifiable if public relations do not persuade the management of the businesses they work for to address such social development and other social problems. They further argue that an ethical ideological foundation for public relations needs to be found and that it should be based on individual public relations practitioners' social consciousness. Such a social consciousness should be derived from a critical consciousness of the worldviews, values, ideologies and belief systems of the individual public relations practitioner, about the business s/he is working for, and of society, they continue. Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2007:287-288) are furthermore of the opinion that on the small scale, on a day-to-day basis, each individual public relations practitioner should carry with him/her a social consciousness into the business. This could be done by public relations practitioners alone but should preferably be done in combination with advertising practitioners, they further argue. Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2007:288) feel so strongly about such a critical consciousness that they are of the opinion that it would lead to the greater professionalisation of the public relations profession.

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In order to develop such a critical consciousness public relations practitioners need a kind of 'de-tachment' (or independency) from the business (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic 2007:288). The reason offered why such a 'de-tachment' is necessary for public relations practitioners and not necessarily for other staff (including managers) is that public relations practitioners are (or should be) educated to be sensitive towards sociological (or societal) issues; have a knowledge of society; have knowledge about the nature of public relations; know of the effect of the business on society; and be aware of the businesses' social responsibility towards the larger society (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic 2007:288).

Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2007:288) take the argument of an ethical ideological foundation for public relations further by arguing that public relations practitioners are powerful in the sense that they are symbol-producing members of their businesses. This means, Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2007:288) assert, that the public relations practitioners' individual values and worldviews can play a large role in the creation, interpretation, change and implementation of the business culture. Because of their relative power it means that public relations scholars and practitioners can challenge the mainstream (market-oriented) public relations practice and literature (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic 2007:288).

This view is in line with other scholars' work. In the literature (Kruckeberg 2002:188-196; Hynes 2005:4-14; Newsom et al 2004:26; Verčič 2007; Verčič & Van Ruler 2002) it is argued that the one-dimensional focus of the dominant form of public relations practice (that gives primacy to the business over the public amounts to an asymmetrical business-society relationship and subsequently to an influence-oriented communication and social engagement), should be questioned because this view reduces public relations to a mere marketing tool; reduces reciprocal relationships to instrumental relationships; reduces reciprocal communication to influence (informational orientation); reduces social engagement beneficiaries to instruments used for profit; and that its social engagement benefits do not bring about enduring benefits for society.

In contrast to such a one-dimensional market-oriented view of public relations that serves only the needs of the business and not those of society, arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation of public relations imply that public relations practitioners should act as change agents within businesses in order to contribute towards making the world more humane.

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Based on an ethical ideological foundation it can be deduced that, in order for public relations to be ethically justifiable, public relations practitioners should be socially engaged towards bringing about a more humane society. One implication of an ethical ideological foundation for public relations that the author can foresee is that the dominant global thinking (modernism) and other smaller streams of thinking (beyond modernism) should be studied and that an understanding of them should be carried into the business by individual public relations practitioners. This means that it is the 'business' of public relations practitioners to be critically and sociologically educated; that they should constantly keep updating their understanding of these issues; and that they should act as change agents within the businesses that they work for, not only to make the business ethically more sound, but also to change society towards the humane.

In other words, the ethical ideological foundation for public relations assumes that public relations practitioners should have a critical social consciousness; should convey social information to the business; and that they should influence the business in a particular way that is ethically justifiable (if it is not already the case).

The first point, to have a critical social consciousness, is evident in the reflective paradigm of public relations and thus only new to public relations as understood from other paradigms. Both the modernist public relations and the excellent paradigm of public relations imply a particular engagement with society, especially in terms of information being gathered from society. Proponents of the ethical ideological foundation further argue that a critical social consciousness which aims to steer the business towards being more humane, is to be included, and this is not part of either modernist public relations, or of excellence public relations. In the reflective paradigm of public relations elements of it are found in arguments that it is the business of reflective public relations to build, enhance and maintain the public sphere, because it is assumed that a healthy public sphere is healthy for society. In this sense the reflective paradigm of public relations wants to better society. This is associated with a radical and idealistic social role of public relations.

The second point, to convey social information to the business, is evident in the reflective paradigm of public relations and thus not altogether new to public relations. It is also evident, in a particular way, in modernist public relations and in the excellent paradigm of public relations. Market-oriented public relations practitioners would

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gather such information with the aim of persuading the public (or the particular segment thereof); whilst the excellence paradigm of public relations is more neutral about the purposes of such information (either for the good of the business, or that of society, or both).

The third point mentioned above, namely to influence the business in a particular way that is ethically justifiable (if the business is not already ethically justifiable), is not implied in modernist public relations. Within the excellence paradigm of public relations the possibility of changing the business to be more ethically justifiable is not altogether excluded, but not addressed as a main concern; and it is not spoken of in the reflective paradigm of public relations, although it might not be opposed either.

It is argued that the social engagement aspect of an ethical ideological approach to public relations is implied in its nature and can thus not be separated from the nature of the ethical ideological approach to public relations, namely to change society for the better in a reciprocal manner, based on the arguments of interdependency. This is in line with the socialist view of businesses' social engagement (discussed in Section 3.2.1) due to its sociological focus which seeks the betterment of society.

Finally, in brief, it can be said **that** the ethical ideological approach to public relations is concerned with bettering society through a critical social consciousness. The ethical ideological foundation of public relations is undergirt by the interdependency notion that affects reciprocal human relationships and constitutive communication. These elements are in line with the participatory or multiplicity paradigm of social development and could thus be included in a beyond modernist conceptual model for public relations to address social development through businesses' social engagement.

Recently a reformulation of excellent public relations that seeks to counter for the shortcomings of the initial formulation of excellent public relations has seen the light

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#### 4.2.10 A reformulation of excellent public relations

The reformulation of excellent public relations<sup>14</sup> maintains a number of key points of the original formulation, but is enriched by incorporating some ideas mainly from reflective public relations and arguments toward an ethical ideological foundation. The reformulation of excellent public relations furthermore indicates areas that need to be researched further.

The key points of the original formulation of excellent public relations that are maintained in the reformulation of excellent public relations are firstly the notion of a win-win situation, where public relations should ensure that both the interests of the business and society be sought; and secondly that this win-win situation be achieved through symmetry (cf Plowman 2007:90-93; Hagan 2007:421-423).

In the reformulation of excellent public relations certain ideas of the initial formulation were changed or nuanced. These centre around the business-society relationship in terms of power and the purpose of public relations.

Firstly, the rather difficult task of public relations to serve both the interest of the public and that of the business is problematised in the reformulation of excellent public relations. It is argued that a greater social awareness is necessary, and that the social awareness process should be undertaken for strategic reasons to prevent losing social trust (cf Spicer 2007:31-36). Related to this position is the argument that public relations should gain greater social insight (Steyn 2007:166-167; Heath 2007:42-47). This could be done, Heath (2007:58-59) argues, by deliberating incorporating into excellent public relations the social awareness element as is explained by the reflective approach, and in the process problematising the relative powerful situation of the business in society. This, Heath (2007:43) argues, will mean that the public sphere should be enhanced by excellent public relations. Simultaneously Heath (2007:42) warns that the legacy of the initial work of James Grunig (as proponent of the initial formulation of the excellent approach) on symmetrical business-society relations should not be neglected.

<sup>14</sup> The reformulation of excellent public relations is presented in Toth (2007) as *The future of excellence in public relations and communication management: challenges for the next generation*. Although this section relies on this collection of chapters to indicate the elements incorporated in the reformulation of excellent public relations, various other sources are used to delve deeper into these elements.

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Secondly, following on from these views about the powerful position of the business, the position of power of the public relations within the organisational structure is problematised. There is not agreement whether public relations should retain its relative position of power within the organisational structure by remaining part of management (often referred to as the dominant coalition) or whether public relations should take on a greater activist role, (cf Steyn 2007:137-168; Berger 2007:222-223; 225-226. An activist role of proposed by Bowen (2007:287) and by Holtzhausen (2007:365-366) could be seen as investigating power and conflict in society, between the business and society, and that it will bring a greater understanding of society to the business. An additional argument is that taking care of activist groups would mean not only taking cognisance of strategic but also of moral stakeholders of the business (cf Spicer 2007:31).

Thirdly, the reformulation of excellent public relations seeks to incorporate a wider range of theoretical positions, to gain greater insight into the work of public relations. It is argued that rhetorical knowledge could be included, for instance, by using arguments, counter-arguments and in such a way that the public sphere is enriched (cf Heath 2007:43).

Related to this point of widening the scope of theories that public relations theorists draw on to investigate the position and purpose of public relations, a number of directions for future research are opened up by the reformulation of excellent public relations. These circle around the local circumstances of societies in which a particular business functions, namely social culture, social development, language particulars, activism, the role of the mass media, internet and new technologies, information infrastructure, literacy rates, as well as access to the media (Wakefield 2007:551-554). Huang (2007:244-252) largely supports this view, by stating that more research is needed in terms of the particular cultures and other contextual factors in which a particular businesses functions (she points out that her research found that in some instances symmetrical communication used by the management and public relations can be seen as characteristic of a weak leader). Sriramesh (2007:519-523) also puts forth a plight towards investigating cultural aspects such as the link between cultural aspects related to interpersonal trust, relationship patterns, high/low content cultures, political systems, globalisation, activist values, ethnocentrism and multiculturalism of the particular local societies in which a business functions. Sriramesh (2007:519-523) further argues that public relations can be enriched from other theoretical fields such as feminism, rhetoric and

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postmodernism. This theoretical expansion is necessary, Ströh (2007:166) argues, to understand the increasingly complexity of societies. Steyn (2007:166-167) underlines these notions by putting forth that in the South African environment, marked by multiculturalism, the particular cultural and other conditions in which a business functions should be studied.

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In summary it is argued by the author that the reformulation of excellent public relations has maintained its preference for symmetry and serving both the needs of the business and society, but it incorporated views earlier formulated approaches to public relations. It incorporated the idea of and enhanced public sphere and seeking a greater understanding of society emphasised by the reflective approach to public relations; as well as some ideas of the ethical ideological foundation for public relations by emphasising activism and seeking ways to handle it.

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Based on the above, it is evident that the only reference of the reformulation of excellent public relations to the businesses' social engagement is that it emphasises gaining knowledge of society; it stresses, amongst other things, the importance of social development; and that social encounters should be facilitated in such a way that a win-win situation that serves the interests of both the business and society should be achieved.

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#### **4.2.117 Conclusion: a critical analysis**

The first part of this ~~section~~ chapter sketched a business versus a social orientation to public relations, the business-society relationship, and businesses' social orientation. It was argued that a business orientation is associated with public relations being used as an instrument to persuade the public towards the businesses' perspective, to view the public as being instrumental in enhancing profit with the associated competitive business-society relationship and to use the businesses' social engagement to enhance profit as explained by the shareholderist view of businesses' social engagement. This means that a business orientation is associated with an instrumentalist view of society. In Chapter 2 an instrumentalist view of society is associated with modernist thinking. A social orientation, on the other hand, was associated with public relations having a social orientation, an ecological business-society relationship and a socialist view of the businesses' social engagement.

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Against this background this section discusses the main approaches to public relations and their implications for businesses' social engagement through public relations.

#### 4.2.11.1 Market-oriented approach

In a market-oriented approach to public relations the role of the public relations practitioner is seen as contributing towards the maximisation of profit, with the effect that public relations efforts (including social engagement) are directed towards profit maximisation. This implies a shift from the traditional dual business-society orientation of public relations to a business-only orientation that amounts to a reductionist view of the role of public relations. This means that from a market-oriented approach public relations are effectively reduced to a marketing tool in service of profit goals. A market orientation is described by the conservative-pragmatic social role of public relations, in which public relations primarily support and defend the position of the business. This stance towards public relations can be criticised because it poses a reductionist view of public relations as they are reduced to a marketing tool (serving primarily the business, instead of serving both the interests of the public and the business). This, furthermore, threatens the autonomy of public relations. The market-oriented approach to public relations is related to a business-society relationship seated in the assumption that the business is separate from society and is justified in dominating and subjugating society, thus using society as a profit-enhancing instrument. This poses an instrumentalist view of humans, as humans are used as instruments to enhance profit. This is true for this type of public relations and for this type of public relations' execution of the businesses' social engagement, in which social engagement is seen as an investment on which a return is expected. This approach to businesses' social engagement, often termed corporate social investment, thus expects that in return for social engagement some benefit such as social goodwill is expected by the business.

This poses a reductionist view in various respects. It poses a reductionist view of humans because humans are seen as mere instruments to enhance profit. It further poses a reductionist view of public relations as these are reduced from their dual business-social orientation to a business-orientation only. A reductionist view is also evident in the understanding of communication because it is reduced from referring to mutual understanding (constitutional communication) to influence (referred to as informational communication). It also poses a reductionist view of human

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relationships as it is based on simulated relationships instead of on reciprocal relationships, reflected in its asymmetrical orientation to communication with the public.

Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.5) argued that an instrumentalist orientation to human beings is a characteristic of modernist thinking, as is informational communication. As both the public and the beneficiaries of businesses' social engagement through public relations are seen from an instrumentalist perspective, a market-orientation to businesses' social engagement is associated with modernist thinking.

#### 4.2.117.2 Reflective paradigm

The reflective paradigm, as a second approach to public relations, assumes that the business is part of society. In the public relations literature this assumption is associated with an ecological business-society relationship based on harmony and cooperation, as is the case with the excellence paradigm of public relations. The practical manifestation of an ecological business-society relationship of reflective public relations, however, differs greatly from that of excellent public relations. In contrast to the generalised norm of reciprocity, reflective public relations assumes that since the business is part of society, public relations are primarily socially oriented in the sense that the main dimension or task of public relations is to bring to the business a sociological consciousness and that public relations should enhance the public sphere. In systemic terms this would be associated with an open systems approach. The social roles describing this approach to public relations are **idealistic role** (due to the reciprocal social relationships sought), radical and critical (because the public sphere seeks to be bettered). It is also assumed by proponents of the reflective paradigm of public relations that what they call dialogical communication (called constitutive communication in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3 above), is associated with reciprocal relationships. Due to the sociological orientation of the reflective paradigm of public relations, to its association with constitutive communication, to its preference for an ecological business-society relationship and to its interest in bettering society (through a healthy public sphere) this approach to businesses' social engagement is aligned with beyond modernist thinking.

#### 4.2.117.3 Excellence paradigm

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Proponents of the excellence paradigm of public relations claim that their views are seated in an ecological business-society relationship in which harmony and cooperation predominates, and in which an open systems approach is determinant in the sense of a moving equilibrium and mutual adjustment in a cooperative manner. At the same time they argue that their arguments are based on the generalised norm of reciprocity, which is simplified as 'give to gain' thinking. The implications of their arguments are that some form of reciprocity is envisaged, but based on the premise that if this is not done, the business would not gain during a negotiation process. In such negotiations ethicality is prominently actualised by the Habermasian ideal communication situation. On the other hand, it is argued that the generalised norm of reciprocity provides a platform for ethical business and public relations behaviour.

The seeming contradiction of symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships is combined in the *two-way model* of public relations in which preference is given to asymmetrical relationships and communication, but in which it is acknowledged that in some cases no choice is left to public relations practitioners but to use asymmetrical relationships and communication. The results are that this dual role of public relations is described by a combination of idealistic, conservative and pragmatic social roles. It is idealistic in the sense that it seeks reciprocity in a market-driven society; it is conservative since it defends the position of businesses, even in cases of the businesses' privileged power situation; and it is pragmatic in the sense that it values market-orientation.

The implication of this position is that excellent public relations serve the business more often than they serve society, aligning this approach to public relations to market-oriented public relations' focus on the business in a particular way, but not equating it with market-oriented public relations. Tendencies of the shareholderist view (that is essentially utilitarianist) are evident when businesses' social engagement is executed with the intention of enhancing profits; whilst tendencies of the socialist view of businesses' social engagement are evident when social engagement is used towards the betterment of society. As the excellence paradigm of public relations is associated with a win-win situation that fosters relationships that are beneficial to both business and society, and also in its social engagement, it can be assumed that social causes are selected that will most probably enhance businesses' profit. This aligns the excellence paradigm of public relations and its associated execution of businesses' social engagement more with the shareholderist

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view than with the socialist view, with a resultant tendency towards modernist thinking.

#### 4.2.11.4 An ethical ideological foundation

~~Arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation for public relations~~ consists of various ~~arguments-ideas put forth by different scholars towards an ethical ideological foundation for public relations.~~ The combined argument of the various proponents is that public relations should seek the betterment of society, and that they would be unethical if they are not doing so, given the desperate situation of many people in the world. Such an appeal places this approach in the cadre of an ecological business-society relationship as harmony and cooperation are envisaged. In such empathy to the plight of people, a large degree of reciprocity is assumed, as well as multiplicity (acknowledging that not all people have the same problems), and interdependency (realising that problems such as global warming and globalisation are concerns that touch all people). They argue that public relations practitioners should have a critical social consciousness that evaluates worldviews, the ideologies and values of society, of business and of public relations. This should inform the work of public relations practitioners to change businesses from within to address social problems. Due to the imperative of this approach to public relations to change society for the better it can be associated with an ethical position. It uses influence-oriented communication to persuade business management to change and it uses constitutive communication to identify social problems.

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The traditional social roles implied in arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation for public relations include the idealistic social role (due to the reciprocal relationships implied), the critical social role (public relations practitioners should have a critical social consciousness), and the radical role (since it seeks to change society for the better). Due to its sociological orientation and quest to better society this approach to businesses' social engagement is mostly associated with beyond modernist thinking.

#### 4.2.11.5 A reformulation of excellent public relations

~~The reformulation of excellent public relations maintains the key points of the initial formulation of excellent public relations, namely that public relations should balance the interest of the business with that of society in executing public relations duties.~~

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This, it is argued, will bring a win-win situation to be brought about symmetrical relationships and communication.

Additions made to the initial formulation of excellent public relations include a greater incorporation of a social consciousness in the work of public relations to such an extent that it facilitates greater dialogue in society through an enhanced public sphere. This idea emanates directly from the reflective paradigm of public relations.

Although not fully incorporating all the ideas of arguments towards an ethical ideological framework for public relations, the reformulation of public relations incorporate ideas such as focussing on activism.

The social engagement of public relations practitioners following this reformulation of excellent public relations is not clearly defined, but following the argumentation above it can be assumed that it should be done in such a way that a win-win situation for both the business and society should be reached. It is furthermore proposed that this be achieved through symmetrical relationships and communication.

In Table 4.6 the main characteristics of the main different approaches to public relations and their approaches to the execution of the businesses' social engagement are listed:

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	<b>Market-oriented public relations</b>	<b>Excellence paradigm of public relations</b>	<b>paradigm of public relations</b>	<b>Moral foundation f</b>
<b>Business-society relationship</b>	•	•		
<b>Public relations' social involvement</b>		•		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social role-idealistic (re-characteris and critical-radical (wa</li> <li>• Moral in the-critical soci-wants-</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	•	•		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combination-communic-communic-social cont-communicati-seeking busin</li> </ul>
<b>Modernist/ beyond modernist thinking</b>	•	•		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beyond m</li> </ul>

**TABLE 4.6 A summary of the main approaches to businesses' social engagement through public relations**

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### 4.3 AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MAIN APPROACHES TO BUSINESSES' SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS IN TERMS OF BEYOND MODERNIST THINKING

This section assesses the main approaches of businesses' social engagement through public relations in terms of beyond modernist thinking. This is done by firstly revisiting beyond modernist thinking in contrast to modernist thinking; secondly by assessing the main approaches of businesses' social engagement through public relations in terms of beyond modernist thinking; and thirdly by deducing elements of businesses' social engagement through public relations that are to be used in the proposed new conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations.

#### 4.3.1 Beyond modernist thinking

Chapter 2 (Section 2.3) argued that modernist thinking is essentially associated with the grand narrative of rationality and instrumentality, and negates the non-material dimension of human life. When applied to the communication field modernist thinking results in valuing instrumental relationships and using informational communication to communicate. This means that humans are seen as instruments to be used towards exerting power through influence-oriented communication.

This is in contrast to beyond modernist thinking that is associated with a general opposition to the one-dimensional material focus of modernism, as well as a preference for the non-material dimensions (as explained in Section 2.3). This leads beyond modernist thinking to integrate the material and non-material dimensions of human life, with the result that the cultural, spiritual and ethical aspects are emphasised. Beyond modernist thinking is thus also associated with interdependency, multiplicity (diversity and equality) and reciprocity (reciprocal relationships and constitutive communication). The nature of human relationships and human communication associated with this line of thinking is seated in a conscious awareness of the other and of the vulnerable position of the self to the other, but simultaneously of the power to assist the other.

The previous chapter indicated that the following characteristics of beyond modernist thinking should form the basis of the proposed new conceptual model for beyond

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modernist businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations:

- interdependency (responsibility and vulnerability);
- multiplicity (diversity and equality); and
- reciprocity (reciprocal relationships and constitutive communication).

If businesses align themselves with beyond modernist thinking their relationships with society will reflect a similar appreciation of interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity. This position is aligned with the ecological business-society relationship in which an ecological business-society relationship is characterised by reciprocity, generosity, harmony, cooperation, multiplicity and plurality, within an open systemic context of constant mutual adaptation and change. Seated in a beyond modernist concept is the imperative that businesses should become involved on social level to address social change (see interdependency arguments in Section 2.3.1). Section 3.2 also argued that the mechanism of public relations executes businesses' social engagement in many businesses.

#### **4.3.2 Critical analysis of the main approaches to businesses' social engagement through public relations from beyond modernist thinking**

In this section the main approaches to businesses' social engagement through public relations that were summarised in Table 4.6, namely market-oriented public relations, the reflective paradigm of public relations, the excellence paradigm of public relations, and arguments towards an ethical ideological approach for public relations, are critically assessed against the characteristics of beyond modernist thinking (mentioned above).

##### **4.3.2.1 Market-oriented approach**

The market-oriented approach to businesses' social engagement through public relations has three main characteristics.

Firstly, that market-oriented public relations and the associated social engagement of business are associated with a competitive business-society relationship in which the business seeks to dominate and subjugate society and is executed, amongst others,

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through public relations. This is not in line with the beyond modernist thinking's interdependency notion of responsibility and vulnerability to society.

Secondly, that the competitive business-society relationship is undergirt by the shareholderist view of businesses' social engagement and is associated with market-oriented public relations that assume an instrumentalist view of humans and is utilitarian. Both instrumentalism and utilitarianism are prime characteristics of modernist thinking and for this reason market-oriented public relations are not in line with beyond modernist thinking that values reciprocity.

Thirdly, that the communication associated with market-oriented businesses' social engagement through public relations has an informational orientation to human communication. Informational communication is largely associated with instrumentality because the aim is not mutuality or reciprocity but rather to influence the other communicating party. This position is closer to modernist thinking than to beyond modernist thinking. This view is further underlined by the technique orientation of market-oriented public relations, a prime characteristic of modernist thinking.

Based on these three objections to public relations, the business-society relationship and understanding of communication of market-oriented businesses' social engagement through public relations, it is argued that this approach is not in line with beyond modernist thinking.

#### **4.3.2.2 Reflective paradigm**

The reflective paradigm of public relations and its associated execution of businesses' social engagement has three main characteristics.

Firstly, it assumes that the business is part of society. This means that an ecological business-society relationship is evident as harmony and cooperation are sought in the business-society relationship. Social engagement of businesses also coincides with a sociological orientation associated with a socialist view of businesses' social engagement. This is in line with the reciprocal imperative and interdependency notions of beyond modernist thinking.

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Secondly, it assumes that the primary function of the business-public relations is to reflect on society, and these which-reflections are to be conveyed to the businesses' leadership and are to inform the work of public relations towards enhancing the public sphere. This imperative implies an inherent social engagement born from a reciprocal and interdependent relationship with society, aligning this position with beyond modernist thinking.

Thirdly, it assumes that communication and relationships are not to be divorced, making its communication constitutive. Constitutive communication is associated with beyond modernist thinking.

Based on this discussion, the author deduces that the reflective paradigm of public relations and its associated social engagement is associated with beyond modernist thinking.

#### 4.3.2.3 Excellence paradigm

The excellence paradigm of public relations and its associated businesses' social engagement has three main characteristics.

Firstly, it is based on a generalised norm of reciprocity that means the business gives to society to gain from society. This amounts to instrumental mutuality or reciprocity and is not in line with the interdependency notion that assumes interdependency among all parts of society (including between the business and society). This means that the excellence paradigm is not fully associated with beyond modernist thinking.

Secondly, it emphasises the management of strategic and profitable relationships. This does not align the excellence paradigm with beyond modernist thinking that seeks reciprocal relationships.

Thirdly, although giving preference to both two-way symmetrical communication (associated with reciprocity) and to two-way asymmetrical communication (associated with influence-orientation, instrumentality and not reciprocity) the reflective-excellence paradigm acknowledges that the latter may be used in times of conflict of interests. If two-way symmetrical communication is mostly used, this element of the excellence paradigm is associated with beyond modernist thinking,

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and if two-way asymmetrical communication is mostly used this element is closer to modernist thinking.

Based on this discussion, the author deduces that the businesses' social engagement, executed through the excellence paradigm of public relations, is closer to market-oriented public relations than to beyond modernist thinking, depending on the use of the generalised norm of reciprocity and the communication approach.

#### **4.3.2.4 An ethical ideological foundation**

Arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation of public relations and its execution of the businesses' social engagement have three main characteristics.

Firstly, it assumes that the task of public relations is to be socially involved by assessing the ideology, values and worldviews of society, the business, and public relations, in order to change society for the better. The inherent social focus of this approach to public relations and of its approach towards bettering society and the circumstances in which people live, assumes an interdependency of all the aspects of society. This aligns this approach with beyond modernist thinking.

Secondly, this approach's concern for the betterment of society implies reciprocity. This is evident in the sociological orientation of businesses' social engagement that is associated with a socialist view of businesses' social engagement. This is in line with beyond modernist thinking.

Thirdly, this approach seeks to enhance the public sphere. Since the public sphere is associated with debating diverse opinions it can be deduced that this approach is associated with the diversity implied in beyond modernist thinking's multiplicity characteristic.

From the above it is evident that the reflective paradigm of public relations and arguments towards an ethical ideological approach of public relations are aligned with beyond modernist thinking.

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#### 4.3.2.5 A reformulation of excellent public relations

The reformulation of excellent public relations it incorporates the main elements of the reflective paradigm of public relations and arguments towards an ethical ideological approach of public relations. This aligns it largely with beyond modernist thinking. This alignment is however not complete, as a number of shortcomings are evident.

Firstly, no deliberate incorporation of the interdependency notion is evident that is one of the key elements of beyond modernist thinking.

Secondly, some of the scholars whose work make up the reformulation of excellent public relations critique the reformulation for neglecting research about the particular cultural situations in which a business functions. This neglect is probably due to the reformulation of excellent public relations being mostly concerned with determining an universal position regarding the purpose of public relations. The implication is that a large scale re-orientation by incorporating multiplicity and true reciprocity (instead of a generalised norm thereof which imply 'give to gain') has not been made by the reformulation of excellent public relations.

Based on the arguments offered in this chapter, elements of the reflective paradigm of public relations and arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation of public relations are incorporated. The following section combines the main elements of these two approaches to businesses' social engagement through public relations to form in a conception of beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations. On the surface level these seem similar to that of the reformulation of excellent public relations but are attributed to the original sources (the reflective paradigm and arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation of public relations) due to their links with interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity. What is incorporated from the reformulation of excellent public relations is the critique that some of its scholars indicated, namely taking the specific cultural and development context in account when social engagement is sought.

#### 4.3.3 Beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations

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It has been argued that beyond modernist public relations and its execution of businesses' social engagement are associated with interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity. This section discusses these concepts as they relate to beyond modernist social businesses' social engagement through public relations.

Within the context of beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations interdependency implies that the business is part of society and for this reason has an ecological relationship with society. This means that a mutual responsibility and vulnerability towards the other members of society exist and is illustrated by a harmonious and cooperative relationship. This is described as an open systems approach in which the businesses' social engagement has a social orientation.

In this social orientation, guided by the term multiplicity, the diversity and equality of members of society are taken as a point of departure. This means that inter-group liberalism exists when it is firstly acknowledged that different groups exist, and secondly that their claims are to be taken seriously. Multiplicity implies that not only the material but also the non-material dimensions of human life should be considered by businesses' social engagement. In this sense the non-material aspects include that public relations practitioners should firstly have a critical consciousness about ideologies, world views and the values of society, business and public relations; and secondly that these aspects should be debated in the public sphere. A healthy public sphere provides opportunities for different social groups to voice their different opinions about social concerns.

Within the context of a beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations reciprocity implies that reciprocal relationships exist between the business and society and that constitutive communication forms the basis of the work of public relations. This implies that the particular cultural and developmental conditions of the society in which the business functions and seeks social engagement, should be taken in account.

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#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

Following the discussion in the previous two chapters in which it was argued that a shift took place, both in societal thinking and in thinking about social development, this chapter suggests that, although indications ~~–~~that a similar shift has started in businesses' thinking about social engagement through public relations, exist a large scale re-orientation has not taken place~~this shift is far from complete.~~

The shift in social thinking and in thinking about social ~~development–engagement~~ essentially represents a move away from a simplistic understanding of the world (modernist thinking) towards an appreciation for multiplicity (beyond modernist thinking), based on the understanding that all the groups in society are interdependent on one another for future survival on earth. This acceptance of interdependency gave rise to an appreciation of multiplicity (or the diversity and equality of people), which, in turn, leads to reciprocal relationships and constitutive communication.

This shift is not emphasised in the same way and to the same extent~~evident~~ in businesses' social engagement through public relations. This means that businesses are not able to fully respond to social expectations because businesses' thinking is not aligned with that of society.

The main finding in this chapter is that businesses' current, dominant, market-oriented understanding of social engagement through public relations is essentially based on competition between business and society leading to business subordinating and subjugating society. It was argued that there is a divide between business and society that, in systemic terms, is described as an open system. Because of this view business expects public relations to support and promote business, and in the process negates the dual social-business focus of public relations. This type of public relations is described as being based on a conservative-pragmatic social role using informational communication to sustain the businesses' position of power through its social engagement. Although this approach is instrumental and universal, it was indicated that it is not in line with the beyond modernist social thinking and social development that appreciates interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity.

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In contrast to this market orientation, ~~three~~four other approaches towards businesses' social engagement through public relations were discussed. It was indicated that the following elements of these approaches are more aligned with the shift of social thinking and of social development towards beyond modernist thinking.

Firstly, the main premise of businesses' social engagement through the initial formulation and the new formulation of excellent public relations is that public relations should be based on reciprocity as a generalised norm. However, this does not represent a ~~complete large scale re-orientation~~shift towards beyond modernist thinking as it ~~still~~mostly acts in the interest of the business as opposed to that of both the business and society, which is essential if reciprocity were based on interdependency. For this reason it was argued that excellent public relations as mechanism to execute businesses' social engagement, represents merely a (small) ~~step imulated shift~~ towards beyond modernist thinking.

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Secondly, the reflective paradigm of public relations as mechanism to execute businesses' social engagement relates more to the social shift towards beyond modernist thinking that embraces interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity. This approach proposes symmetrical dialogical two-way communication, which represents a genuine reciprocity between business and society. Traits of multiplicity are also evident in the approach to businesses' social engagement through public relations as ~~it~~public relations seeks to enhance the public sphere, while the public sphere arguments are concerned with a diversity of opinions about matters of social concerns. This approach does not, however, elaborate on its understanding of the public sphere, or on how it should be enhanced. For this reason it was argued that limited movement in the direction of appreciation of multiplicity is indicated in this approach.

Thirdly, arguments towards an ethical ideological foundation emphasised diversity in its quest for businesses to gain a better understanding of the society in which they operate. To understand social conditions this approach recommends that dialogical asymmetrical two-way communication be used. Although an indication of a particular kind of reciprocity is proposed, this approach does not clearly indicate how this should be achieved. Hence it is argued that this approach represents a more significant move towards beyond modernist thinking, but does not represent a complete shift re-orientation in businesses' thinking about social engagement through public relations.

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Fourthly, the reformulation of excellent public relations emphasise a greater knowledge of the particular society and the local circumstances in which the business functions. Some of the scholars whose work are incorporated in the reformulation of excellent public relations critique the new formulation by saying that more research is needed into the specific circumstances in which a business functions. These could be gaining information about the culture, technological, development, languages, literacy, activism, media access, political system, globalisation, ethnocentrism, and multiculturalist of the particular societies.

Based on the above arguments it can be argued that progressa movement in t in the direction of a social shift towards beyond modernist thinking (based on interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity) is evident. It is, however, argued that these approaches to businesses' social engagement through public relations de-are not totally aligned ed with beyond modernist thinking. This indicates that a discrepancy or a 'gap' exists in the theory of businesses' social engagement through public relations if it is measuedmeasured against beyond modernist thinking. In order to fill this 'gap', a genuine sense of interdependency between business and society, a greater appreciation of multiplicity (plurality and equality) in terms of business and social groups, and an authentic reciprocity between business and society are needed. The next chapter will indicate how this 'gap' can be addressed by a new conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations in terms of a re-orientation towards a beyond modernist perspective.

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	Market-oriented public relations	Initial formulation Excellence paradigm of excellent public relations	Reformulation of excellent public relations	Reflective paradigm of public relations	Ethical ideological foundation for public relations
<b>Business-society relationship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive business-society relationship</li> <li>Separation between business and society</li> <li>Subordination and subjugation of society</li> <li>Described by a closed systems theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Claims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecological business-society relationship: harmony, cooperation</li> <li>'Open system': moving equilibrium with other systems, cooperative, mutual adjustment</li> </ul> </li> <li>Generalised norm of reciprocity (give to gain)</li> <li>Relationship management: build and maintain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to the initial formulation of excellent public relations, but a greater awareness of the importance of and changes in the business-society is evident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecological business-society relationship: harmony, cooperation</li> <li>Interdependence and harmonious and thus sees itself in interaction with society</li> <li>Reciprocity</li> <li>'Open system'</li> <li>Ethical due to a social orientation</li> </ul>	
<b>Public relations' social engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservative-pragmatic role</li> <li>Defends businesses' privileged power situation</li> <li>Promotes the business</li> <li>Negates the dual business-society focus of public relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balance business and public goals, giving primacy to the business</li> <li>Preoccupation with being ethical</li> <li>Social role of public relations: characteristics of idealistic (generalised norm of reciprocity) with some conservative (defend business) and pragmatic (market driven) characteristics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is realised that this of even greater importance that was initially indicated</li> <li>Recommendations are made that the particular circumstances be investigated, such as culture, political system, language, and multiculturalism, access to the media, globalisation, and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflective responsibility (reflects on society)</li> <li>Convey such information to business</li> <li>Contribute to and maintain public sphere</li> <li>Social role of public relations: idealistic (reciprocity) with some characteristics of critical (social and critical consciousness) and radical (public sphere enhance)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social role of public relations: idealistic (reciprocity) with some characteristics of critical (social and critical consciousness) and radical (wants to better society)</li> <li>Ethical in the sense that it has a critical social consciousness and wants to better society</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influence oriented informational communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A combination of asymmetrical and symmetrical communication to be qualified by the Habermasian ideal communication situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symmetrical communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constitutive, dialogical two-way symmetrical communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combination of approaches to communication: constitutive communication to learn about social contexts, and informational communication if necessary when seeking to persuade the businesses' leaders</li> </ul>
<b>Modernist/beyond modernist thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modernist thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modernist/beyond modernist thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modernist/beyond modernist thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beyond modernist thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beyond modernist thinking</li> </ul>

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TABLE 4.6 A summary of the main approaches to businesses' social engagement through public relations

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## Chapter 5

### A beyond modernist conceptual model

- *for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations*

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters indicated a shift towards beyond modernist thinking in both social thinking and social development. In the field of businesses' social engagement through public relations the beginning of a similar shift in thinking was indicated, but it was concluded that this shift is partial and ~~does not represent a re-orientation as is evident in is thus not completely aligned with the shift in~~ social thinking and in social development. This chapter, therefore, indicates how ~~the shift such a re-orientation~~ can be achieved, and how the discrepancy between social thinking and social development thinking on the one hand, and businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations on the other hand, can be eradicated. These sets of thinking are aligned in this chapter through the proposal of a beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations.

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#### 5.2 A BEYOND MODERNIST CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR BUSINESSES' SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT TO ADDRESS SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS

The main premises of this study are based on the argument that a shift towards beyond modernist thinking took place, both in terms of social thinking and in thinking about social development. It was argued that this beyond modernist social thinking is mainly associated with interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity.

In the conceptual model presented in Figure 5.1 it is indicated, by way of summarising arguments presented in preceding discussions in this study, how the

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elements of interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity manifest in beyond modernist social thinking and in beyond modernist social development, and how they should manifest in beyond modernist businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations.

This model is presented in four parts: the first defines beyond modernist social thinking, the second defines beyond modernist social development, the third indicates the current dominant form of businesses' social engagement through public relations, and the fourth shows how this current dominant form should change towards beyond modernist thinking.

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It is subsequently argued that by following this model, businesses' thinking about their social engagement to address social development through public relations can be aligned with that of beyond modernist social thinking and thinking about social development. This model therefore indicates how the gap between businesses' current thinking about its social engagement through public relations and beyond modernist thinking can be bridged, which represents the main contribution of this study to the scholarly fields of Communication Studies and Public Relations.

The main aspects of each of the parts indicated in the model are briefly discussed in the following sections.

### 5.2.1 Part 1: Beyond modernist social thinking

The first part of the model indicates a shift towards beyond modernist social thinking that is based on interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity.

Accepting *interdependency* means that, for future survival on earth, humans are dependent on one another and on nature. Based on this understanding it is accepted that the future survival of people on earth depends on accepting that groups of people are interlinked in the sense that what happens in one region of the world impacts on another. The interlinkedness of people leads to the understanding that groups in society share a responsibility towards one another to ensure their collective survival on earth. The increasing emphasis on beyond modernist thinking in society, that assumes interdependency among people, resulted in the understanding that business is part of society, which, in turn, created the social expectation that businesses should be socially engaged as business and society have a responsibility towards each other.

*Multiplicity* refers to accepting multiple understandings of knowledge, culture and identity, as well as the equality of this diversity or plurality. On the level of knowledge multiplicity means accepting that not one single mode of thinking, such as modernist thinking with its focus on scientific knowledge, can bring about all knowledge. Instead it is accepted that various truths reveal various aspects of a phenomenon, be it scientific knowledge, rational knowledge or any other form of knowledge, such as non-material knowledge (including culture, identity, knowledges, ethics, morality, spirituality). Subsequently multiple knowledges are acceptable and of equal status in beyond modernist thinking. On cultural level multiplicity refers firstly to the diversity of

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cultures that are accepted, and secondly to the view that such cultures are regarded as equal. The latter means that no one culture is regarded as superior to another. The implication is that no culture needs to modernise in order to be valued. On the level of individual human identity, multiplicity means that various ideas are held of how identities are forged; that different identities exist; that new hybrid forms are constantly forged; and that all such identities are equal in status. By valuing the multiplicity, the diversity (focus on the material and the non-material dimensions of human life, knowledge, culture, identity) and equality of different modes of thinking, ways of being and ways of knowing the world are assumed.

*Reciprocity* implies reciprocal relationships and constitutive communication. In the new beyond modernist conceptual model, reciprocity is associated with the following terms: caring, ethics, morality, spirituality, love, the Golden Rule, justice, loyalty, legitimacy, equal power, nurturing relationships, happiness, well-being, free agency, the gift of giving, generosity and the act of giving with the aim of enabling people to achieve maximum spiritual growth. Subsequently reciprocal relationships imply not only mutuality (or a genuine concern for the other) and a vulnerability to the other, but also the power to enable the other, making reciprocal relationships both empowering and powerful. These reciprocal relationships are enabled by constitutive communication that is aimed at achieving mutual understanding between communicating parties whereby the gap between the self and the other is bridged. Constitutive communication enables reciprocal relationships, resulting in the divide between human relationships and human communication being disregarded, effectively meaning that human relationships and human communication are conflated.

Similar to the shift in social thinking towards accepting interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity, the second part of this model represents a shift towards beyond modernist thinking social development.

### **5.2.2 Part 2: Beyond modernist social development**

Part 2 of the model indicates that the main premise of beyond modernist social development is based on multiplicity and reciprocity.

Within a beyond modernist framework social development is associated with *multiplicity*, i.e. accepting the plurality and equality of humans. Multiplicity further

means that social development should take place both inside the community and on the contextual level outside the community; that both the material and non-material dimensions of human life should be sought to be developed; and that democratic, dialogical and participative communication should be used. Based on multiplicity it is accepted that social development is a multi-faceted complex process, assuming that all social development problems are unique and that the reasons for social development problems lie not only on either the internal community level or on the external contextual level (international, regional and national), but in most cases on both levels and in different combinations in different developing communities.

*Reciprocity* is evident in the participatory focus of beyond modernist social development. Participation in the context of social development refers to the understanding that the developing community should participate as much as is possible in the social development efforts, as it is assumed that participation leads to the developing community taking ownership of their own social development processes and that such social development efforts stand a better chance of leading to sustainable social development.

The third part of this model indicates that the current dominant form of businesses' social engagement through public relations is not aligned with beyond modernist social thinking.

### **5.2.3 Part 3: The current dominant form of businesses' social engagement through public relations**

Part 3 of the model indicates a discrepancy between social expectations based on beyond modernist thinking and businesses' thinking about social engagement through public relations.

In order to align businesses' thinking with beyond modernist social expectations, businesses need to shift away from the dominant form of businesses' social engagement through public relations in which society is capitalised on for the sake of increasing the wealth of the business. From this currently dominant perspective of businesses' social engagement through public relations, the business has a competitive relationship with society that justifies the subordination and subjugation of society. This is explained in systemic terms as a closed system in which public relations seek to promote the businesses' needs only, negating the dual social-

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business focus of public relations. From this perspective public relations fulfils a conservative-pragmatic social role based on informational communication. This means that the role of public relations is to be instrumentalist in expanding the wealth of the business.

A shift away from this dominant form of businesses' social engagement through public relations, in which the interest of the business takes precedence over that of society, is proposed in this study, particularly in developing contexts. Subsequently the particular, cultural and developmental conditions of society should be emphasised.

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Part 4 of the model indicates how this dominant form of thinking about businesses' social engagement through public relations should change, in a developmental context, to address social development.

#### **5.2.4 Part 4: Beyond modernist businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations**

Part 4 of the model indicates what the nature of businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations should be if it is aligned with the shift towards beyond modernist social thinking and beyond modernist thinking about social development. By following this model progress towards a re-orientationa complete shift towards beyond modernist thinking of thinking, following beyond modernist principles, about businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations is made.

This part of the model indicates that this shift should take place on three levels: firstly a shift in thinking of the business' social engagement; secondly in terms of the businesses' social engagement through public relations; and thirdly the way in which businesses' social engagement through public relations should be directed to address social development. These three levels are subsequently discussed.

##### **5.2.4.1 The businesses' social engagement**

In this section it is indicated that the total a re-orientation in business thinkingshift of the business regarding its social engagement should be based on beyond modernist social thinking. Based on arguments presented in earlier chapters of this study, the

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nature of beyond modernist businesses' social engagement is discussed in terms of the variables indicated in the model, namely interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity.

Firstly, *interdependency* implies that a beyond modernist business-society relationship assumes that the business is part of society. This has been described as an ecological business-society relationship that is associated with a harmonious, reciprocal and cooperative relationship between the business and society in which all parts of society (including business) are engaged with one another. Subsequently the business should engage with society because it sees itself as being part of society. In systemic terms an ecological business-society relationship is described as an open system, in which: the business has an outward (or social) orientation; it is accepted that, if social circumstances and expectations change, the business has to adapt to such changes and visa versa; this adaptation will effect further changes (referred to as a moving equilibrium with the resultant constant mutual adaptation).

Secondly, *multiplicity* should be evident in beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations acknowledging firstly the diversity of different groups in society and secondly accepting their equal value and importance. Multiplicity should further be evident in beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations' concern for democracy by giving prime importance to the enhancement and maintenance of a healthy public sphere and emphasising that each individual (including staff of businesses) should have a critical consciousness regarding matters of ideology, worldviews, values and belief systems of the self (public relations practitioner and the industry of public relations), the individual business (and businesses in general), and of society (including its various cultures). Multiplicity further means that particular cultural and developmental conditions, should be investigated, and an effort should be make to understand multiplicity on a cultural and developmental level.

Thirdly, *reciprocity* should be evident in beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations in the underlying assumptions of its relationship with society, referred to as reciprocal relationships that are enabled by constitutive communication. In this sense the concepts of relationship and communication are conflated as the one enables the other. Reciprocal relationships are enabled by constitutive communication that is aimed at understanding the other or at bridging the gap between the self and the other. This type of communication is dialogical, two-

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directional and symmetrical and the traditional roles of communicating parties, sender and communicator, are interchangeable. It also takes place in a non-threatening, equal-status situation.

Similarly, the public relations that execute the businesses' social engagement should be based on interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity as the basis of beyond modernist thinking.

#### **5.2.4.2 The businesses' social engagement through public relations**

Beyond modernist thinking assumes that: the business is interdependent on society (evident in an ecological business-society relationship that emphasises harmony and cooperation); that both the business and society are of equal value although different (multiplicity); that reciprocal relationships exist through constitutive communication (reciprocity); and that businesses seek to engage with society through public relations.

The model indicates that public relations seek to engage with society in the following ways: reflecting on society (through a critical consciousness of the ideology, worldviews, values and belief systems of society, business, and the self); conveying social information to the business; and enhancing the public sphere where reflective information is publicly debated. Consequently three of the conventional 'social roles' of public relations are combined to describe the particular role of public relations in businesses' engagement with society: the *idealistic social role* holding that the business should maintain symmetrical (referred to in this study as reciprocal) relationships with society; the *critical social role* holding that a critical consciousness be sought; and the *radical social role* holding that change is sought in the sense that the public sphere be enhanced to support democracy and for the improvement of a critical consciousness in society. Care should furthermore be taken to understand the multiplicity of the cultural and developmental aspects of a particular society.

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#### **5.2.4.3 The businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations**

It is argued that if businesses' social engagement through public relations seeks to address social development, it should be based on beyond modernist thinking. This line of thought implies that the activities of the businesses' social engagement

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through public relations should be channelled towards addressing social development. The model indicates that this should take place on two levels, namely *inside* the developing community (on community level) and *outside* the developing community (on contextual level). These two levels are subsequently briefly outlined below to highlight the role of the business through public relations in each. It should be noted that the role of public relations is to arrange for a particular social development initiative to be undertaken within the business, but does not necessarily mean that the public relations practitioner physically executes the social development initiatives. This task may be delegated to another person such as a social development facilitator, who may or may not reside in the developing community itself.

- The main focus of the role of public relations in addressing social development on behalf of the business *inside the developing community* (or on community level) is to enable the process of conscientisation. Seated in the liberatory discourse, the process of conscientisation implies the development of a critical consciousness within the developing community about the nature of social developmental problems, and their effect on the community members' everyday lives. Developing a critical consciousness about the nature and effect of social development problems is based on a participatory communication process in which all members of society rely on constitutional communication to narrate their life stories. This is done on both interpersonal and on mediated levels. On a mediated level community media are often used as they are cooperative and non-formal. Community media include the following mechanisms: citizen (or community) video, community computers, political organisations, leaflets, posters, sound-slide productions, cartoons, audio-cassette productions, radio and video productions (theme identification, research, script development, photography and editing, and include genres such as soap operas and documentaries), dramas, leaflets, forums, information programmes, community newspapers, community radio and community television. Here the term 'community media' does not refer to the size of the media, but rather to the understanding that community media serve a different purpose than the conventional governmental and private corporate mass media, namely to present alternative communication messages that relate to the community. Through community media, community members are exposed to other community members' opinions and are encouraged to discuss them in order to assist with the enhancement of a critical consciousness that forms of core of the process of conscientisation. Underlying the community members' production of

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communication messages is the understanding that various types of knowledges, in opposition to only rational scientific knowledge, are accepted.

Constitutive communication is used in discussing, on the interpersonal level, the messages portrayed by the community media to bridge the gap between the self and others in the sharing of information and in the quest to understand the other (mutual understanding) community members. The implication is that all the community members' opinions should be voiced, and those who do not have opinions be given the opportunity to develop them if they wish to do so. In this way a dialogue for understanding the other is created. The formulation of community media messages furthermore helps communities to develop a sense of cultural identity and a sense of belonging, a process that is in itself liberating and thus developmental. Other non-material aspects that are developed in the process of social development include empowerment and self-reliance. The terms empowerment and self-reliance are linked to liberation and conscientisation both of which can only be achieved through participation. The implication is that mass democratic participation is envisaged as it is argued that liberation from the problems of social development can only be achieved through identifying and criticising social problems, relating these to aspects on both community and wider contextual levels before solutions for these are sought. The process of conscientisation is not only liberatory, but also empowering in the sense that the community generates its own power in the process of verbalising opinions and social development goals (on both individual and community levels). This spurs community members on to be self-reliant in the sense that they feel they can achieve their social development goals. This is subsequently perceived as self-strengthening and self-improving and assures the community's dignity, identity, culture and self-confidence.

The role of public relations in the process of conscientisation, on behalf of the business, on the internal community level is either for the practitioner to actualise the process him/herself or to delegate this function (such as to appoint a development facilitator to actualise the process of conscientisation). The implication is that public relations should enable the process of conscientisation through assisting community members in telling their everyday life stories that collectively lead to the construction of a community narrative that identifies the social development problems of the community, explores various options for alleviating these and sets social development goals. Not only does this assist in

the strengthening of a group identity, but also creates a sense of belonging to a community. This process does not necessarily exclude conflict mediation if one or more community members seek to gain undue power from the process.

- *Outside the developing community* (on contextual level) the role of public relations, on behalf of the business, is essentially to bring the social and other contextual conditions that hamper social development to the attention of the broader community with the hope that it will take action. This action could be on national, regional or international level as prevailing conditions in those can impact on the community level of a social development initiative.

The contextual awareness could be achieved by applying the community-mediated messages conducted on community level to a larger scale (such as screening community video messages on international level). This does not exclude the business (through public relations or through a development facilitator) being involved in the facilitation of the production of messages for the conventional mass media, for instance by facilitating community access to the means of production and to the technical skills to produce media messages. The business could furthermore be involved by buying space and time in the media to air programmes or to place advertisements strategically in the media. It may also involve convincing media owners of the worthiness of the case of the developing community.

An outflow is that the public relations practitioner should ensure that community members are trained, so that they are able to produce messages that would get wider exposure than only on community level. From an operational perspective this could be done through community media, governmental media, public media, commercial private media, presenting formal proposals, producing of documentation (such as writing proposals, compiling brochures, or writing and presenting speeches) to institutions or groups of people (such as sponsors of social development programmes, governmental policy makers, and/or the international public in general) or to attend meetings, as well as by assisting in the negotiation of conditions that can address social development problems.

Regardless of whether social development is aimed at the internal community level or the external contextual level, it should be borne in mind that social engagement by public relations should be based on interdependency, multiplicity and reciprocity.

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### 5.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study was to propose a beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations, which was discussed in the previous section. This represents the largest contribution to this study.

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Other contributions of this study include: describing beyond modernist social thinking and beyond modernist social development; indicating how progress towards a re-orientation in thinking towards beyond modernist thinking can be made in thinking about businesses' social engagement through public relations if businesses realise that social engagement can be made for the sake of social development and not to advance business goals; describing beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations through public relations; and combining viewpoints that have previously been studied separately in subfields of Social Development and Communication.

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### 5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Because this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature it does not propose a universal methodology for public relations to execute businesses' social engagement to address social development. Although the proposed conceptual model can serve as an important guideline to comprehend the role of public relations in businesses' social engagement to ensure that social development is addressed, it should not be dogmatised into methods as the social development processes of each community is unique.

A further limitation of qualitative research, and thus of this study, is that it is, to a large extent, subjective and interpretive in nature, with the implication that the model proposed in this study is not empirically tested. It is, however, important to note that it was not the purpose of this study to test this model empirically, but to investigate, on theoretical level, the possibility of aligning businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations with beyond modernist social thinking and thinking about social development, as this represents groundbreaking work in the field of public relations. For this model to have empirical value it should be refined

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for specific contexts into instruments that can be used to measure the degree of beyond modernist thinking evident in businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations.

The arguments presented in this study have been constructed from a theoretical point of departure in order to indicate a general theoretical direction in which thinking about businesses' social engagement through public relations has to evolve in order to address social development. For these reasons these arguments are not to be generalised or applied universally, neither for public relations nor for the context in which businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations are executed.

As the purpose of qualitative research is to provide an opportunity for in-depth reflection on a particular phenomenon it often opens up new research possibilities, as indicated below.

#### 5.4.3.1 Recommendations for further research

It is recommended that the applicability of the beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations proposed in this study be investigated for further application to specific developing communities, such as South Africa. The implication of investigating the applicability of this model for South Africa is that it should firstly be ascertained what the dominant approach of businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations is, and secondly how widespread this dominant approach is. The appropriateness of this dominant approach for a partly developed, partly developing country such as South Africa should be debated and alternative approaches to public relations in South Africa should be investigated. This could be done by describing and measuring the dominant approach to businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations against the main assumptions of the various approaches indicated in this study and especially against the assumptions of the proposed conceptual model.

A second option for further research is to investigate whether the beyond modernist conceptual model proposed in this study could be used to advance social development within the developmental state context or any other collective measures to address social development within a particular country. In a developmental state

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the assumption is that all social development initiatives are combined into a single large-scale collective effort aimed at alleviating social development problems. The conceptual model proposed in this study can assist in setting guidelines for businesses' social engagement in a developmental state context, as it firstly inherently criticises the dominant form of businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations for its business orientation instead of a social orientation; and secondly proposes the theoretical direction for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations. As stated in the previous section it was not the purpose of this study to empirically set and test guidelines towards a practical methodology, but if such research were undertaken, it would also be useful towards the developmental state notion.

A third option for further research indicated by this study is to investigate the impact of the trend of First World countries to replace social development aid with foreign direct investment on social development in terms of the business-society relationship, as well as on the approaches to public relations and businesses' social engagement<sup>1</sup>. This means that as social development aid is reduced, an increased social expectation could be that businesses should become increasingly socially engaged and take on an enlightened social responsibility, especially in developing countries where they should then address social development problems to a greater extent than is currently the case. These social development efforts would benefit if the guidelines set out in the conceptual model proposed in this chapter are taken as point of departure.

### 5.4.3.2 Conclusion

This chapter indicated that the shift in social thinking and the shift in thinking about social development from modernist thinking to beyond modernist thinking are evident. It was further indicated that a ~~total shift re-orientation in thinking~~ towards beyond modernist thinking in the thinking about businesses' social engagement through public relations, especially as it relates to social development, has not been made. It was argued that this is due to the current dominant focus being on

<sup>1</sup> The shift from social development aid to foreign direct investment as a form of humanitarian aid is illustrative of the shift away from a political to an economic-trade discourse since the passing of the Cold War has made the need to persuade the developing world to modernise, in the capitalist sense, obsolete (Hertz 2001:27; Hemer & Tufte 2005:14-15; Hamelink 2007:225-227). Such a shift towards direct foreign investment introduces a shift in social development thinking towards developing communities being forced to be integrated or to integrate themselves into the economy (Hertz 2001:27). This underlines the importance of the UN processes' Agenda 21 that calls for partnerships between business, governments, civil groups and developing communities towards addressing developmental and other social problems (Cambridge 2007:197-198).

competitive relationships between business and society, marked by a separation between business and society in which public relations and businesses' social engagement are used to promote the business, rather than to serve the developmental interest of society.

Based on the beyond modernist understanding of social thinking and of thinking about social development, a beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations was proposed in this chapter. This presents the main contribution of this study to the scholarly fields of Communication Studies and Public Relations.

Other contributions of the study are that it presents a systematic presentation of the history of the formation and the nature of beyond modernist social thinking; presents a comparison of the main approaches to public relations; presents a comparison of the social engagement of businesses proposed by the main approaches to public relations; provides a beyond modernist view of public relations; provides a beyond modernist understanding of businesses' social engagement through public relations; provides a benchmark for the evaluation of businesses' social engagement efforts that aims at addressing social development through public relations; indicates a direction by which to align the theory and practice of public relations; indicates a starting point for further research in this area as the conceptual model could be used as a theoretical basis to develop regionally-based practical guidelines towards businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations; and opens up the possibility for empirical research to ascertain the applicability of the conceptual model in various contexts.

Finally it is argued that by following the beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations, the UN's recommendation that the business sector should form partnerships with other sectors to address social development, is supported. Against the background of this UN recommendation, businesses engage with society because they regard it as their responsibility to the society of which they are part and are interdependent on. Applying this beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations will most probably benefit businesses' bottom line in the sense that it impacts positively on the reputation of the business as a responsible citizen.



The proposed beyond modernist conceptual model for businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations widens the scholarly fields of Communication Studies and the subfield of Public Relations. These two fields are widened in the sense that ~~it~~the model not only emphasises the theoretical arguments of interdependency, reciprocity and multiplicity, but also points towards practical guidelines on how to approach businesses' social engagement from a beyond modernist approach in an ethically justifiable manner that is socially responsible, as social enhancement is the purpose of such social engagement. It can be said that the contributions of this study are not only on the theoretical level, but also set the basis for practical applications. This study expands the boundaries of what is acceptable as the norm - social engagement only enhancing the bottom line of the business - by proposing a way to change businesses' views to enhance society. The main thrust of this study therefore supports the view of Hall et al (1996:4) that *the very idea of what lies at the edge of, and beyond, modernity changes the experience of living in the modern world and sets an exciting and powerful agenda for social theory and research.*

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**MODERNIST THINKING**

**Social thinking**

**BEYOND MODERNIST THINKING**

**PART 1:**

**Beyond modernist social thinking**

Interdependency

- Humans and nature; groups of humans are interdependent
- Responsibility towards one another
- Social expectations of business to be socially engaged, because business is part of society
- Business forms partnerships to address social concerns



Multiplicity

- Material and non-material (culture, identity, knowledges, ethics, morality, spirituality) dimensions of human life
- Plurality of knowledges and identities, diversity and equality of cultures

Reciprocity

- Caring, ethics, morality, spirituality, love, the Golden Rule, justice, loyalty, gift, legitimacy, equal power, nurturing relationships, happiness, well-being, free agent, gift of giving, generosity, genuine concern
- Vulnerability and power in relationships
- Constitutive communication: Bridging the gap between the self and others
- Conflation of constitutive communication and reciprocal relationships



**PART 3:  
Current dominant form of businesses' social engagement through public relations**

- Competition, subordination and subjugation of society
- Separation between business and society
- Closed system
- Promotes business
- Negates dual social-business role
- Informational communication
- Conservative-pragmatic social role



**PART 4:**

**Beyond modernist businesses' social engagement through public relations to address social development**

Businesses' social engagement

- Interdependency: complete (not simulated) ecological business-society relations based on genuine (not simulated) cooperation and harmony as it is accepted that the business and society are interdependent for future survival (business is thus part of society). Business is not a dominant role player that seeks social exploitation.
- Multiplicity: diversity and equality of groups in society exist. This means that business and the rest of society are seen as having equal power.
- Reciprocity: based on interdependency and multiplicity, it is accepted that reciprocal relationships through constitutive communication should be the norm between business and society.

Businesses' social engagement through public relations

- Reflecting on society and conveying such reflection to the business
- Enhancing public sphere
- Critical consciousness (values, world views, ideologies, values of the self, business and society)
- Idealistic social role: symmetrical relationship with society
- Critical social role: critical consciousness
- Radical social role: seek positive social change towards democracy and public sphere

Cultural and developmental conditions are not universal, the particular should be investigated

Businesses' social engagement to address social development through public relations

- o Material and non-material levels
  - o Inside the developing community (on the community level)
    - \* Community participation
    - \* Conscientisation
      - Critical consciousness of the cause and impact of social development problems
      - Through individual, everyday life stories
    - \* Community narrative
      - Collection of individual everyday life stories constructs a community narrative about the cause and impact of social development problems
      - Posing possible solutions
  - o Outside the developing community (on contextual level)
    - \* Mass media
    - \* Presentations and documentation
    - \* Institutions, influential groups, donors, governments, general public



**Social development**

**PART 2:**

**Beyond modernist social development**

Multiplicity

- Plurality and equality of humans
- Material and non-material levels
- Inside the developing community (internal) through community participation to actualise a process of conscientisation and to produce a community narrative
- Outside the developing community (contextual or external)

Reciprocity

- Democratic, dialogical and participative communication

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FIGURE 5.1 A beyond modernist conceptual model to address social development through public relations

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