

Development, Clubs and Committees: Local Versions of Development Discourse in the Msinga District of Northern KwaZulu-Natal

Pearl Sithole

Introduction

Development has been defined by both social scientists and developers in a way that seeks to incorporate and centralise the ideas of people it is meant to benefit. It has invariably been redefined as something that must be a 'people driven process' and involve a 'maximisation of people's options' in social life. Attempts have been made to emphasise the participatory nature of development, that it should involve all the people it caters for. In this paper I will examine the understanding of development by the people of Msinga and their leaders. I will discuss what development means for Msinga people and their leaders, what they believe the structures that facilitate development for them are, and where those structures are located in relation to structures of leadership. I will also look at the process of taking initiative in the name of development and to what extent that initiative is top-down or bottom-up.

The subject of development has been one of the most controversial in the twentieth century, both in debate and in practice. The logic of development discourse has been questioned in terms of the approach it should take (participatory, relativist, sustainable, progressive, accumulative) and the history of its appearance. On the other hand, many writers, particularly those who adopt a broad worldview of an analysis of development (Frank 1981; Escobar 1997; Illich 1997) have seriously questioned the practical ramifications of what has been accomplished in the name of development. However, it seems that the momentum of this period of which 'development discourse' is a part has not yet given any indication of subsiding. The 'institutionalisation of the Good Samaritan gesture' (Illich & Rahnema 1997:107) seems to go hand in hand with the other current trends underlying relations within and between nation-states, such as the centralisation and institutionalisation of social services, the principles of democracy, and the contradictory ideals of economic growth through free capitalist market principles.

In South Africa, because of the historical trajectory of this country, the state has engineered and overseen the implementation of development. Since the African National Congress (ANC) came to power in 1994, this has been undertaken mainly through adoption of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which, with the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, have been the main policies formulated and used by the African National Congress to address socio-economic challenges. While the latter was developed in 1996 as a strategy to deal with macro-economic challenges, the former was adopted earlier than GEAR to bring economic redress to the people on the ground through the provision of infrastructure and sustainable services to communities countrywide. The RDP is meant to adopt a participatory approach to development, a programme that puts less emphasis on a top-down approach.

However, as will be clear from data in Msinga, a top-down approach is hard to abandon in an institutional setting which has specific quantitative achievements to fulfil to measure success. It seems as if services, resources, and co-ordination are hard to provide without enlisting a development discourse that polarises providers from recipients. Therefore as long as 'development' 'brings' what is not there, it is likely to entail top down relations.

The essence of this problem has long been identified by some writers on development to be the location of development in contemporary capitalist discourse (Frank 1969; 1981). It is a simple situation in which the providers must profit from their giving and those profits are unfortunately gained from those to be developed. The dynamics of this parasitic relationship are different at a local small-scale level from the global (First and Third World countries) level, although both of these contexts are usually part of the same development trend. Parasitic relations seem clearer in the analysis of the global level. A system of patronage between providers and recipients has governed the relations at a small-scale level so that 'development delivery' based on mutual self-interest is achieved.

Despite some relativist talk of decentralisation within nation-states at various points of their evolution, the centralisation of power and of a mandate to look after the social welfare of the state's citizens seems to be behind the institutionalisation of development and the accompanying definitions of it in positivist terms. The RDP document (1994) is not the only one that fails to break the trap of a top-down approach. Although it has some elements that try to break through positivism¹, a report on 'Poverty and Inequality in South Africa' (1998) could not

¹ For example, its definition of poverty seems quite people-centred: 'Poverty is characterised by the inability of individuals, households or communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. Poverty is perceived by poor South Africans themselves to include alienation from

completely avoid positivism, possibly because government commissioned reports must give some indication or inference of how institutions may solve problems. This report therefore talks extensively in terms of measurables such as 'economic growth', 'macro-economic stability', 'a minimal standard of living' in terms of monetary income per month, and other ways of measurement of poverty and inequality. Thus '[p]overty can be defined as the inability to attain a minimal standard of living, measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income required to satisfy them' (1998:8).

However, challenging a positivist approach without suggesting a viable alternative that seeks to be more in line with the situation on the ground may be criticised as unhelpful academic bigotry. Gilbert Rist (1997) examines the conventional definitions of development, identifying in them the basis for a positivist approach. He argues that some sociological definitions of development (which he calls 'pseudo-definitions' p.10) do not go far beyond being merely sociological. He argues that they refer 'to individual (context-bound) experience that can never be apprehended by means of 'external characteristics' (Rist 1997:10). He quotes phrases such as 'realizing people's potential' and 'expanding the range of individual choice' as examples of such 'pseudo-definitions' (Rist 1997:10).

It seems as though there are three approaches that are all essential to scrutinising and undertaking any development venture. First is the approach that Rist (1997) adopts – a broad historical analysis of development as a whole that helps to situate the local situation in broader trends. Second is a quantitative analysis of resources in the development location. This would give a sense of the capacity of resources available to the community. Leibbrandt and Speber (1997) have done an exhaustive analysis of the economic survival of three communities in the Keiskammahoek rural district in the Eastern Cape. Through their approach income is defined not merely in monetary wage/remittance terms, but also in kind, to include, for example, other forms of remittance through buying goods for the household, and income in the form of field production. The approach is quantitative and painstakingly detailed but gives a fuller picture of the economic explorations of people for survival, and a component of comparison in it highlights local economic peculiarities which may be important for developers to recognise. A third approach, one which is adopted in this paper, is that of highlighting trends in socio-economic adaptations by communities in social change. These are important to outline in order to establish the subjective socio-economic aspirations that people hold. These three approaches should complement each other in development research and practice.

the community, food insecurity, crowded homes, usage of unsafe, inefficient forms of energy, lack of jobs that are adequately paid for and/or secure, and fragmentation of family' ('Poverty and Inequality in South Africa: Summary report' 1998:6).

The issue of development in Msinga, as in other remote areas of KwaZulu-Natal, is intended to link the local areas with the whole structure of government. The elected local leaders in Msinga are expected to be important units in the network of development delivery – units reachable to people to facilitate development projects that ought to be people-initiated and government supported. These projects would also be self-sustaining. This paper will show a wedge between development projects that involve the government or outside 'support', and community-based development projects that are sustained by the people who initiate them to meet certain needs. People-initiated development is tied to culturally acceptable ways of help delivery or notions of problem-sharing. Both institutionalised and people-initiated development may have something to do with basic needs and are thus crucial to people's lives, but their organisation and character is very different.

This study was conducted in the Msinga District of Northern KwaZulu-Natal between 1996 and 1998. It was part of a broader research project that I conducted in this district on issues of identity, social inequality and social change. Interviews were conducted with various people who are involved in development and with members of the community. More data was derived from attendance at meetings on development and related issues. Participant observation was also very crucial in producing data that is integral to this analysis.

There are three terms used in this paper that need some explanation and clarification. One is 'chief/s'. This term has been politicised. 'Chief' is not seen by the 'traditional leaders' whom it describes, as an appropriate term to use. They prefer the Zulu vernacular term '*inkosi*' (pl: *amakhosi*) instead. For them 'chief/s' holds the connotations of the colonial roles that were imposed on them – as tax collectors, managers of migrant labour, and so on. The other two terms are *amakholwa* and *amabhinca* (sing: *ikholwa* and *ibhinca*). These very loose terms describe social categories of people as they interact in Msinga. *Amakholwa* are 'Christians', but the term denotes far more than that as it stands for people acting under the influence of modernity and a generally changed lifestyle. *Amabhinca* describes people who mainly practice traditional ways of life in Msinga and are easily identified by their dress codes. However, the latter term can also have derogatory connotations of backwardness or primitiveness depending on the context of its use. These terms, *amakholwa* and *amabhinca*, do not capture the range of variation in possibilities of categorisation of social change in Msinga; they are merely tools in communicative interaction.

Development and Committees

The structures of political governance within the chiefdom (the Tribal Authority) and beyond the chiefdom (the Regional Authority) have existed for a long time as designs

of the National Party government initiated during the apartheid years. These structures were not completely detached from pre-colonial structures, which were frequently used as a building blocks in administrative measures adopted by the colonial government. Since the abolition of apartheid in South Africa, the newly established local government includes democratically elected officials that co-exist with 'traditional' structures in rural areas. While governance of the urban areas - municipal authorities of cities, towns, suburbs and townships - is entirely elected through local elections, in areas where chiefs are authorities of governance, local elections put in place officials whose role is known to chiefs and local people as being that of facilitating or 'bringing' development (*baletha intuthuko*).

Each chiefdom has its 'development officer'. Development officers of chiefdoms were elected in June 1996 after several postponements of the local elections in the KwaZulu-Natal province. They liaise with their chiefs in establishing committees to tend to each sphere which requires 'development'. Each development officer presides over the bigger committee which is called *ikomiti lentuthuko*, the development committee. Under this general committee are smaller committees in charge of designated areas of concern: the water committee, roads committee, health care committee and the electricity committee. These committees are said to be created at various meetings of the people of the chiefdoms, meetings called by chiefs through their *izindunas*.

The ambivalence of the relationship that chiefs have with political parties is well known in KwaZulu-Natal. Development officers seem to be the people whose engagement with the political parties has no tinges of guilt. They are elected through political parties and, unlike chiefs, they do not have many apologies to make about their association with a specific party. In Msinga in 1996 there was great uncertainty surrounding the position of chiefs in the new democratic era as they themselves did not understand what the ANC-led government intended regarding their role in the new dispensation. At that time, chiefs, headmen and other respected members of chiefdoms suggested, during conversations before meetings of the Regional Authority, that the ANC might abolish the 'traditional' inheritance of chiefship in favour of democratic election of the incumbent. Not only were the current chiefs afraid for their eldest sons and subsequent generations but also for themselves in the light of the pending election, as it was not clear how it might affect them. One elderly chief said at one of the meetings: '*Abantu engibadabukelayo mina inina makhosi ngoba nisebancane. Uyabona mina kungeke kusangihlupha nokuchiitha amawolintshi laphaya emgwaqeni ngidayise kanye nabanye ochiitha*' ('The people I pity most are you *makhosi* because you are still young. You see, in my case it would no longer be a problem to sell oranges on the road with other vendors').

This is the background against which chiefs and development officers were soon to establish their 'normal' relations. These relations varied in different chiefdoms.

In certain chiefdoms development officers were to have very close relations with the chiefs. They would engage in no important business related to their role without informing the chief of the plans, proceedings and objectives. In other chiefdoms, however, chiefs and development officers crossed paths through official/instrumental obligations of their duties, but left each other to do their own duties separately.

Around the local election period in Msinga there was campaigning mainly from the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress (ANC). In some parts the ANC did not campaign at all - no posters could be put up advertising their party because of politically motivated vandalism, and their campaign cars with loud speakers persuading people to vote for them did not go to these areas. In Tugela Ferry there was campaigning from both the IFP and the ANC, and this seemed on the surface to be a free and fair campaign. It was only when one asked people about the campaigners for each party, that one suddenly realised that the conversation about the ANC was hard to initiate and sustain. Informants claimed that they did not know the identity of ANC campaigners or where they came from. It was even more difficult to discover whether there were any ANC supporters around. Responses were curt and to the point, nothing was known for sure, no information was given to a stranger. The situation with the IFP was, on the other hand, different. The campaigners were known, their names and their backgrounds were discussed every time they passed by. Their use of chiefs' offices (and sometimes personnel - the headmen and councillors) was no secret, and now and again women would ululate when their campaigning cars passed by covered in party colours.

Chiefs were well aware of the freedom they were supposed to grant all parties to campaign and they and their personnel talked a lot about the fact that 'nobody is blocking anyone to campaign'. Chiefs knew that they were supposed to be 'out of politics' (*bangangeni kwi-politiki*) which they referred to as a 'dirty game'. But the uncertainty about how the party in power at a national level regarded their role and status caused them huge anxieties. The ANC took its time before it made public what it thought of the chiefs, and with the IFP being clear in its stance of supporting them, it was hard for the chiefs not to influence at least the mood, of 'party politicking' for local elections.

After the elections which were won mainly by the IFP in Msinga, it became clear that the elected officials were people whose role was to co-ordinate and bring development within chiefdoms. For some people the fact that a party they voted for won the elections was sufficient to keep them content; but some did not like the fact that they voted without knowing exactly who was likely to take the position on behalf of the party when it won. In one chiefdom there was a lot of gossip surrounding the background and character of the incumbent of this position - with people claiming '*usahlula kubo, noyise waze wamxosha*' ('he has been so much of a nuisance at his home, his father expelled him').

Development officers had a few meetings at Tugela Ferry shortly after the elections in which they were supposedly discussing their roles and were being orientated for them. Working with the chiefs, they called meetings in which committees responsible for different spheres of development were created and those that already existed were affirmed. In one chiefdom, for instance, a committee for water was already in existence, and it had a name and minutes that explained its origins. Although the background was not too clear, it seems that surveyors had already been sent to survey the ground for possible sites of boreholes in the chiefdom. The chief did not seem clear about who sent these *belungu* (white people)², but it was during this time that he created a water committee of people who would attend to matters that these visitors raised.

The people's concept of development

In Msinga, development and modernisation are sometimes inseparable concepts. People talk about development when they mean an increase in the quantity of facilities designed to meet their basic needs - more schools, more roads, more clinics, more water sources - basically the expansion of infrastructure. They also talk about development when they mean the coming of new or modern facilities in their area - electricity, tarring of roads, increase in western buildings and of clothing and people changing habits with the introduction of alternative facilities of e.g. banking in banks not in livestock. Development in Msinga therefore is about increasing useful facilities for the community and introducing new ways of doing things.

Development is often related to and conflated with modernity or civilisation (*impucuko*) - but these clearly do not mean the same thing even in strict local use of these terms. Modernity or civilisation is not what the development committees get together to discuss. The health committees may be involved in the arrangements for a building of a new clinic in the chiefdom, but they are not designed to have much to do with 'development' in the sense of promoting contraception, for example, as a useful product of modernity that helps (or corrupts, as some people think) the society. It seems that there is 'development' in the sense of planning accessibility to all strategic alternatives of living concerns; and there is 'development' in the sense of an assessment of morality of change, in terms of which innovations themselves present as alternatives and in terms of their 'political' origins. The former is observable when the concerns are provisions (of roads, electricity, schools, etc.). The latter is implied when development is talked about in terms of the effects of innovations and alternatives on society (options

² These surveyors left a report at the end of their mission titled: 'Msinga Water Study: Implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme With Particular Reference to Water Services in Umgeni Water's New Supply Area: Msinga' January 1995.

afforded by the availability of contraception, the effects of having good tarred roads, banking and electricity). 'Democratic rights' (*amalungelo*) are even a subject of critical social evaluation these days as a product of modernity. There is therefore, development - the programme of projects; and development - the evaluation of the progress of humans as moral and social beings (or as rational beings who must decide what is good or desirable among many options).

These two sides of development are what is implied in the use of the concept by people in daily life. When asking what the meaning of 'intuthuko' (development) is for people in Msinga, some tend to emphasise the numerous projects/facilities that have successfully been brought to their area, while others mention the same things yet emphasise the change in the kind of people existing today as opposed to a few years or decades back, mentioning the increase in the interest or the quest for professionalised employment among people as one example. Both of these interpretations are implied in most responses.

Tugela Ferry and development

Tugela Ferry is the business and administrative centre of Msinga district. It is here that the magistrates' offices and courts are located together with the offices of social welfare and other government services such as the department of works and the department of education. There is also a police station and a post office. The last four years have seen remarkable growth of commercial activities in Tugela Ferry. In 1996, an upgrading and widening of the road so that the market could be better organised was applauded by people who depend on Tugela Ferry for their economic survival – the street vendors, the taxi owners and business people in general. In addition to the two main supermarkets and a few shops that were already operating in Tugela Ferry, a new shopping complex was built in 1997. This was felt to establish Tugela Ferry as a town on its own. In the complex was a bakery, agricultural products shop, clothing shops, a bank, and a telecommunications shop (with phones, fax machine and photocopying machine). The complex has further re-organised the use of space in Tugela Ferry as it has rank space nearby for taxis to different areas in and around the district. Tugela Ferry also has a hospital, a missionary church, a growing number of beer halls and taverns, and there are negotiations to explore a possibility of a big fuel station.

Tugela Ferry is located on the border between the Mthembu and the Mabaso chiefdoms. The border at Tugela Ferry is actually the Thukela River after which the area was named. Before the existing bridge was built over Thukela River at Tugela Ferry, a boat used to move people between the banks of the river, hence the name Tugela Ferry. The developments described above are located on the Mabaso side of Tugela Ferry. Before the shopping complex was built on the Mabaso side, the Mthembu side had a taxi rank for taxis that take the road from the Mthembu side southwards up

to Greytown. The rank has now been relocated to a built-up area near the shopping complex. On the Mthembu side of the river is one shop and a motor mechanic. He is still operating even though the taxis have relocated to the new shopping complex taxi rank. What seems to be the main occupation of the people on the Mthembu side of the road is the renting of single rooms to workers and students who come from afar but who have to reside in Tugela Ferry for their occupations. Most of the government workers who work for the department of justice have government houses provided for them on the Mabaso side of Tugela Ferry, but others, mainly teachers and high school students, use the rented accommodation provided by the Mthembu citizens of Tugela Ferry. The Mthembu side seems to be a residential area for the well-to-do of Msinga. The houses in this place certainly mark this place as a well-to-do area of the educated. People referred to it to illustrate what they meant by *abami kahle* (the 'well to-do') in Msinga.

Not very far from Tugela Ferry, on the Mthembu side, is a very big wholesale supermarket and agricultural co-operative with a basic fuel service. This iKhwezi Co-operative is owned by all the chiefs of Msinga who believe that it provides cheaper agricultural utilities to their communities. Its committee is supposed to attract further agricultural developments for Msinga people.

From an outsider's point of view, for the emerging town to develop mainly on the Mabaso side could be seen to be a result of the fact that the basic government services had already been developed there. Business people therefore saw a potential where people tend to cluster for these services. However, the leaders of the Mabaso chiefdom see themselves as actively involved in the Mabaso 'fortune' of the emergence of a town on their side of the border. Besides the formation of development committees and an engagement with the government for the funding of some projects, the Mabaso chief and some of his council members have made some deliberate attempts to attract 'development' to the chiefdom. In 1997 an educational trip was arranged by the chief to go and observe some advancements in development in another chiefdom in Utrecht. This followed a ceremony in which a shopping complex site was handed over to the funders, KwaZulu Finance and Investment Corporation (KFIC) and the builder for the building to commence. In 1998 the chief was keen to form a builders' association in his area so that there would be an equal opportunity for all builders in his area to benefit from government projects. However, there were difficulties concerning the registration of the association. Individual builders had problems regarding their qualifications and their mandatory registration with the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBC). The Small Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMME) help desk in Ladysmith had given the chief a guiding document for the formation of the association. However, even though it was formed, the Sihole Builders' Association remains informal because of the above-mentioned problems.

This proves that the leadership of the Mabaso chiefdom does take the initiative in establishing what it sees as development for their people. The enthusiasm emanates

from a desire to gradually do away with the past, the situation from which Msinga has derived a reputation for being a place of feuding factions. Chief Mabaso, being a proud Christian, is very keen to implement development strategies that will instil a progressive attitude in his people, as is seen in the speech delivered at the site-handing-over ceremony in October 1997. After welcoming all the delegates from KFIC, members of the development committees and guests, and thanking them for coming, *Nkosi* Mabaso proceeded to explain the purpose of the meeting. He went on:

I wish we had the media involved here, because it is usually said that *amakhosi* do not know development and actually block it. I am sure that people here today realise that this is untrue.

When we first met with the people from Durban, the people with whom we had our initial negotiations for this project, they connected us with KFIC. We were very thankful because this is exactly what we needed and wished for, for our small town. I would like to tell all our development committees that this is what we mean by development. Now we will not have to go to Greytown for all the things we need. Our kids do not know 'Kentucky' or 'Chicken Licken'³, but now they will surprise us by bringing it home right from here. There will be banks here and we will not have to go too far to get something for our unexpected visitors. We also have pleasure to learn that there will be a taxi rank because it was not good the way taxis parked on the road. We are very delighted about job opportunities because hunger breeds corruption. It makes people end up tending for livestock that does not belong to them⁴. We are grateful for our place, KwaMabaso. We were having faction fights here. I never knew that one day we will come here well dressed, coming to talk about development. Our white brothers here will not understand, but there were guns here, spears all over here and we used to hide all over the place. Sometimes there was not even a chance to go to wash. I therefore truly welcome you and welcome this project to this place....

It is very important for us to co-operate for this project to be a success. God has given us an example of the importance of co-operation in our lives. He gave us two eyes, two ears, two feet and so on. This is symbolic of the importance of co-operation.

Asigeqi magula bakwethu ['We are not emptying all vessels' – meaning, we do not have to say everything today]. We will talk further when we come back to open the complex itself. As I said earlier on, this is only the beginning. Thank you.

³ Fried chicken franchise stores.

⁴ He was referring to livestock theft, which is a common crime.

This is development as understood by Msinga people, or specifically, the Mabaso leadership in the late 1990's. It captures the general understanding of development as I have listened to several definitions of development as 'the education of our children', 'the establishment of hospitals and shopping complexes in our area', 'the *impucuko* ('civilisation') of our people', and so on. The bringing of development has not been untouched by problems. For example, some people have complained that, other than Tugela Ferry, the leadership of kwaMabaso brings development only to Bhubesini. Bhubesini is where the chief's home is and it is where the chief's court stands. The hall, the schools, the big water tank (a kind of reservoir) and the installation of electricity are all projects that exist or are proposed for Bhubesini. The leadership and committees, on the other hand, complain of serious problems in convincing people to pay for the initiative of bringing development. This is given as the reason why it appears as though development goes to specific areas where people are willing to pay to engage in the earliest initiative for service delivery. Some of the more sensitive problems in development revolve around the ownership of land on which there exist businesses in 'tribal areas'. The dynamics of these problems cannot be spelled out in this thesis.

As a case study Tugela Ferry shows the project side of development – the side of the accumulation of resources and betterment of services. It is an important kind of development that is institutionally facilitated to bring infrastructure and access to services to the community. However this discussion turns now to another kind of development which is even more socially embedded and emanates from within the social groups.

Social Clubs

People of Msinga, like elsewhere in rural KwaZulu-Natal, are engaged in clubs that they form to meet certain social needs. These are such clubs as the burial clubs, money stokvels⁵, and food stokvels. These clubs are established as saving schemes that meet certain emergency and occasional needs of social importance. The three clubs that I have mentioned are created to facilitate saving for needy times or important goals or occasions. People save together so as to use social pressure, so that they can be engaged in a *communal effort* to do what benefits them as *individuals*, though quite often on behalf of their families. In money stokvels people contribute equal sums of money to appointed individuals, who put it in a social club account and divide it equally at the end of the year. The beginning of December is a popular time for stokvels to divide up their

⁵ Stokvels were initially rotating credit associations in which people took turns to accept monthly contributions from members of the association. Now the word is loosely used to refer to a group of people who save money together, creating their own rules of their association.

money, which sometimes comes back with bank interest. Other clubs engage in serious money lending schemes to maximise their interest. The money lending stokvels are usually a group people with similar occupations or interests who come together to save together. One stokvel mainly constitute taxi owners⁶, while others are made up of teachers.

The burial groups, on the other hand, tended to be neighbourhood clubs, although not all members of a particular neighbourhood would join. The burial club meetings at Malomini tended to be attended by most women (wives and mothers) of the neighbourhood households near the Tugela Ferry Farm Store. They made monthly contributions to the scheme and in their meetings they discussed payments to the families of members affected by death. Patrilineal households formed around the nuclear households (a woman, her husband and her children) are covered for burial. The parents-in-law of the women are also covered but they need to pay an extra fee if other children or grandchildren in their custody need to be covered.

Food stokvels are mainly organised on friendship lines. Expansion in these clubs takes place as people bring more friends who are likely to share the objectives of the club – in terms of contribution, the procedure, and the kinds of food bought in the end. Food stokvels are also saving schemes in which money is saved specifically for buying food at the end of the year, for the festive season.

Other social clubs serve specific interest groups such as the youth choirs that perform at weddings, funerals and other important social occasions. The Tugela Ferry Catering Club, formed by the youth of Malomini, is hired for big ceremonies for which catering is necessary. Other social clubs are formed to serve a specific purpose and then dissolve. The common one in this regard is the association of women who come together to obtain grass for their thatched roofs. Those in need come together, contribute money to rent a truck and go to the specific area where thatching grass is found. There they work together to cut the grass that will be equally divided among them when they go back home. Women sometimes do weeding in the fields in the same way through short-term associations.

Social clubs are often women's clubs. Whether savings schemes, short-term associations or educational initiatives whereby women teach each other sewing or cooking, social clubs remain dominated by women. This is not because men are excluded, but these clubs are usually about household survival issues that women are faced with on a daily basis as 'managers' of the households.

⁶ This was the only stokvel club exclusively for men that I know of at Msinga.

A top-down approach

A factor that may be disturbing to social scientists who have criticised the top-down approach of many development projects is its persistence through people on the ground themselves. In Msinga my impression was that people have top-down expectations of how development should reach them. In my observation, the first problem is that the local people expect knowledgeable people or the people of some power to engineer the process of bringing development (hence linking development strongly to status). The second is that these 'knowledgeable' people are very selective about when to encourage a participatory approach involving the community and when to act 'enlightened' and 'knowledgeable'.

In my observation a top-down approach is embedded in the institutionalisation of projects, which is itself a necessary instrument for organisation and strategic planning. Development committees create a pyramid out of a chiefdom, with the community at the bottom, the various committees with respective specialisation in the middle range and the bigger development committee or merely a development officer at the top. This pyramid would be comparable to the Tribal Authority as a governing structure of the chiefdom. What makes it different from the Tribal Authority is that the superiority of the Tribal Authority and the chief is a matter of traditional seniority by age and sex and birth embodied in a structural way in the patrilineal background of chiefship. Hence when people talk about '*ubuholi bendabuko*' (directly translatable as 'natural leadership') the rationalisation of the capabilities (or competence) to be offered by an incumbent in terms of how knowledgeable he is (as is observable in the case of elected positions) is downplayed - because a *senior*⁷ fatherlike incumbent *should* act in the interest of his 'children' (the people).

In development committees, superiority is clearly linked to education and the enlightened nature of the 'leaders' involved. It has been my common experience in the field that, on raising the issue of 'development', the issue of 'education' comes up in the discussion, particularly when talking with the 'traditionalists'. One of my informants MaPhahleni spoke passionately about the injustices 'they' suffer at the hands of educated people in the name of development. '*Asive sidlala izifundiswa bakithi ngoba zicabanga ukuthi amabhayi lawa esiwembathayo asenza singabi namqondo*'. ('How we suffer abuse by the educated simply because they think *amabhayi*⁸ which we wear make us stupid'). MaPhahleni and other friends were complaining about a R4 fee that they had paid months back in preparation for some electricity project in the Bhubesini area. It was hard to judge why they expected that something should have happened

⁷ Not the oldest person, but the oldest in the most senior patrilineage.

⁸ *Ibhayi* is cloth that is worn by married *amabhinca* women over their shoulders. Like *isidwaba*, the frilled hideskin skirt, it is compulsory for them to wear as married women.

regarding the matter. But on questioning them⁹ further on the subject it seemed that it was precisely their lack of answers that irritated them and made them bitter about educated people. Things are not made transparent to them and it seems that language becomes vague the more technical it gets. There is suspicion that this is done deliberately to confuse and yet convince them to pay or to agree to be used in projects for which the full benefits are not transparent. In asking about what the R4 payment was actually for, to whom the whole sum was going to be paid, whether it was for actual installation of electricity to houses, or perhaps a small fraction of the cost related to that, all answers were - 'Asazi wemntanami. izona izifundiswa ezazi kangcono' ('We do not know my child, it is them, the educated who will know better').

Most development projects (the institutional, infrastructural meaning of development) and clubs initiated by people themselves (e.g. money and food stokvels, burial clubs - clubs deal more with survival issues) will have leaders - chairperson, active founder or simply an enlightened advisor who will lead without having been elected in any official way. Development projects (especially those that have something to do with the government and are facilitated by a development officer) are more open to criticism doled out to the leader than is the case of clubs that are communally initiated. There is more gossip from one person to the next along friendship lines of confidence than open criticism in the social clubs.

The life of projects and products

There are typically two forms of 'development' organisation in Msinga - those that are run formally and are more impersonal, and those that are less rigidly conducted and are more case-sensitive towards their members. The latter are those whose meetings are often called by word of mouth. There is often no written agenda for their meetings; rules may or may not be written down but are so intrinsic to the objectives they are often describable in an explanation of what the organisation/club is about; and the objectives of the club are directly for the personal interests of those involved. Development projects of the kind that involve government funds such as the RDP projects that have been popular in the last four years KwaZulu-Natal as a whole, tend to be of the first type. They are formal and impersonal (which perhaps should be the case as they are designed for more communal needs), and hence alienating to those not well vested with institutional mannerisms. They are also more prone to abuse and to the power-struggles of those who want to strive to be involved at management level. They involve money which has difficult 'codes' through which it must be accessed - money for which people can either work hard to meet its access requirements faithfully and fulfil its budgeted intentions, or for which they can use cunning strategies to access and abuse.

⁹ This was a conversation with five women.

The end products of these projects are also not as integrated in social nurturing and security as is desirable. The dispersed nature of responsibility for community property alienates these products. While some community schools and halls enjoy the security of being located near respected (perhaps feared) members of the community who look after them, others do not enjoy this privilege. This factor is responsible for broken windows at schools and the school furniture that is found in teachers' homes and cottages, and in houses of other community members. It is also responsible for the failure of projects such as supplying schools with meals and other inconsistencies and failures that are also partly due to unfulfilled promises by the government.

Due to impersonality, on the one hand, implying a dissociation of work process from the character of specific persons (often with the leaders claiming association of the two when the work is properly done, and the people claiming the association of the two when a leader has failed), and, on another hand, the dispersed responsibility for communal property; the condition of community property does not reflect on anyone too directly, even though it may imply the character of the community perhaps to an outsider. This may be due to the impersonality of community identity itself, which is no longer a single identity in a sense of traceable interrelations of those who form the community. Institutional means of enforcing the protection of community property is often not built into the projects that bring the property to the community, thus sustainability of development projects is questionable.

However the alienation of community projects differs according to the motivation and dedication of individuals involved in a specific project and according to the format of its monitoring. Churches are usually the least alienated of community products because they do have a single identity that relates individuals to a group with its own character in contrast to others. Their management centres on the priest who is 'employed' to manage and whose occupational role is to look after the church - the group and the building. Community halls are an example of a 'project' that usually depends solely on voluntary, commitment which varies with individuals. The physical location of community halls in relation to who its neighbours are, is also important for its maintenance. The fate of schools tends to be decided by whether they have principals who take their managerial duties seriously and liaise with their school committees (now called school governing bodies) to keep the school in good social and physical condition. However some school principals tend to be trapped in the dysfunctional relationship of an 'educated' principal and the uneducated and inferiority-complex-stricken school governing body. People's personalities and level of commitment are also factors that determine the outcome of the community property management.

There are therefore three ways in which the embeddedness of the community property within the social nurturing of the society is possible. The first is when paid employees look after the property and projects of the community. The second is observed when the objectives of the 'organisation' incorporate some personalised

benefits for participants e.g. women's savings clubs, burial clubs, etc. The third is when the condition of property reflects the identity of a particular group that runs it, e.g. a church.

Development committees are not sufficiently associated with any of these ways. Development officers are said not to be paid for their job, most of them are teachers (educators) in local schools or are retired from some profession. The competition for election is an important ritual that attributes to them a role of taking responsibility for initiating development projects and of being responsible for facilitating them. Power itself is a strong incentive, and of course people do not believe that development officers get nothing for what they do. Although political parties, which these development officers represent, have strong identities, their parameters are political governance and do not actually exist on the ground for any other social organisation purpose. Therefore their strong identities are not of the sort of a church or a family whose standing as a specific social unit could be damaged and stigmatised as a result of failure at a very local level.

Conclusion

What appears in Msinga as an ontological difference between social clubs and development committees seems to be a more concrete manifestation of the problem observed in regarding development either 'as a subjective feeling of fulfilment varying from individual to individual, ...[or]...a series of operations for which there is no *a priori* proof that they really contribute to the stated objective' (Rist 1997:11). It seems that the institutionally facilitated development has now been given its own status with results qualitatively different from those produced by socially-embedded clubs from which a more personal engagement and fulfilment is anticipated.

It could be accepted that this difference serves different necessities of development and thus they each need to be sharpened as they are. On the other hand, it could be argued that the socially embedded means of development meets the needs of people more meaningfully, and the institutional means of development should learn from or make use of the socially embedded strategies of development. Illich (1997) seems to imply that reliance on institutional development is the fundamental cause of underdevelopment. He argues that:

Underdevelopment as a state of mind occurs when mass needs are converted to the demand of new brands of packaged solutions which are forever beyond the reach of the majority. Underdevelopment in this sense is rising rapidly even in countries where supply of classrooms, calories, cars and clinics is also rising. The ruling groups in these countries build up services which have been designed for an affluent culture; once they have

monopolized demand in this way, they can never satisfy majority needs (Illich 1997:97).

This criticism is directed at the heart of the capitalist system, as in criticising the context within which development is packaged (not just its delivery), the logic of the hierarchical access to resources and the whole system of its institutional management is questioned. There are now studies that try to emphasise the role that Third World countries should play to look after their own development interests rather than 'be helped' by the First World which has its own interests. Chivaura and Marariki (1998), for example, have edited a collection of papers that argue that Africa's problems are not purely economic but historical and social. Writers in this collection argue that only approaches that identify the impact of underdevelopment mainly on what they call the 'Human Factor' can begin to unravel the problem. This paper has outlined how people on the ground regard development. The challenge is to combine these subjective perceptions with broad political questions of development worldwide.

References

- African National Congress 1994. *The Reconstruction and Development Programme* Johannesburg: Umanyano Publications.
- Chivaura, VG & CG Marariki (eds) 1998. *The Human Factor Approach to Development in Africa*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
- Escobar, E 1997. The Making and the Unmaking of the Third World through Development. In Rahnema, M with V Rawtree (eds): *The Post-Development Reader*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers.
- Frank, AG 1969. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Frank, AG 1981. *Crisis in the Third World*. London Heinemann.
- Horton, R 1993. *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Illich, I 1997. Development as Planned Poverty. In Rahnema, M with V Rawtree (eds): *The Post-Development Reader*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers.
- Illich, I & M Rahnema 1997. Twenty-Six years Later. In Rahnema, M with V Rawtree (eds): *The Post-Development Reader*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers.
- Leibbrandt, M & F Speber 1997. Income and Economic Welfare. In de Wet, C & M Whisson (eds): *From Reserve to Region: Apartheid and Social Change in the Keiskammahoek District of (former) Ciskei: 1950-1990*. Grahamstown: Occasional

- Paper Number Thirty-Five; Institute of Social and Economic Research–Rhodes University.
- May, J (ed) 1998. Poverty and Social Inequality in South Africa: Report Prepared for the Office of the Executive Deputy President and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality: Summary Report.
- Rist, G 1997. *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*. London: Zed Books.
- Vilakazi, A 1962. *Zulu Transformations: A Study of the Dynamics of Social Change*. Pietermaritzburg University of Natal Press.