

CHAPTER ONE: Developing Sustainability

Sustainable Development, Not Enough

Historic and present day trends in economic development are characterized by concentrated power in centralized hierarchies (such as, global economies of scale). On the one hand, this is indeed the hallmark of progress that took Western society out of the 'dark ages' – a influential historical move for many countries that has produced wealth, technological gains and cross-cultural interactions. Yet, on the other hand, this progress has been, and continues to be, supported by *linear*, extractive flows of resources “from territories to the centre” that do not sustain the very biosphere that supports progress (M’Gonigle, 2000). This economic model has been a key factor in bringing human societies perilously close to severing their connection with the biosphere – the very ecological milieu in which humans and millions of other species exist.

To address today's pervasive ecological and social problems, sustainable development is not enough. M’Gonigle (2000) explains how sustainable development merely tacks environmental constraints onto an otherwise unstructured process of economic growth, and does

little to address some of the pervasive power imbalances (between urban and rural, centre and territory,[12] North and South, etc.). The practice of *developing sustainability*, however, seeks to address these systemic issues, by fostering *circular* economies (where appropriate) that support the biosphere in which human societies exist (M’Gonigle, 2000, p. 7, 10). This points to a more reconstructive path in which new, ecologically based institutions are fostered in a manner that supports and sustains the biosphere (M’Gonigle 1998, 2000).

I build off this analysis, suggesting that developing new institutions, economies and ethics that support sustainability involves finding a balance between circular and linear socio-economic models, and also includes working with the cultural and psychological processes of social change.



Mysore, India

Exploring Growing Edges of Development

Development practices, historically and up until today, do not reflect the entire multi-faceted process of change.

Most development approaches have tended to focus on the tangible, exterior needs of human communities, namely economic growth, medicine, education, infrastructure and technology. While these are important aspects of development, they do not represent the entire spectrum of human needs. Moreover, previous and current approaches to development tend to take cultural principles as universal values, and then assume they be taken up by the recipient society or community (Buckles, 1999).[13] This not only raises questions of ethics, but also of effectiveness for implementation, and points to the need for a way to integrate the beneficial components of previous approaches into a broader and deeper practice of development.

The conventional development paradigm provided a foundation for scientific discoveries, economic growth in certain regions, and new ethical directions for governance and law. Yet, it does not adequately address issues of equity and local ownership, nor does it address the full range of human needs that foster prosperity and cultivate happiness. For example, most of the widely cited indicators to gauge human progress focus exclusively on economic activity; two well-known examples of

Gross Domestic Product and the Index of Leading Economic Indicators. Even the most progressive of indicators fails to account for key issues of sustainability and wellbeing.

The alternative development paradigm, which addresses many of the limitations of the conventional paradigm, is markedly broader, more inclusive and representative of human needs. For example, *The Wellbeing of Nations* by Prescott-Allen (2002), addresses the shortcomings of the conventional indicators of development by combining

indicators of holistic human wellbeing with those of environmental sustainability to generate a more comprehensive picture of the state of our world.[14] The alternative paradigm calls for local ownership and engaging with community people as empowered agents of change.

The alternative paradigm arose to address the limitations of conventional development, for which it does well, but it fails to adequately address several important issues.

While the alternative approach broadens the scope of development to include dialogue, group process and qualitative needs of local communities, it does not sufficiently provide methodologies for working with human interiority (e.g., worldviews, values, self-concept, etc.). Moreover, the alternative development paradigm is almost the photographic opposite of the conventional approach, yet to sufficiently address today's pervasive and complex eco-social problems will require multi-stakeholder collaboration beyond opposition. Both conventional and alternative institutions need to create avenues for this level of co-creative problem solving.

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As the alternative paradigm emerged into new levels of practice, it defused some of the problems and limitations of conventional development, yet it also introduced its own new limitations, in what Habermas called the “dialectic of progress” (Wilber, 1995, pp 202-204). Today’s complex and global issues require that we begin to integrate the achievements of both paradigms, so as to enable appropriate, timely and adequate responses to such issues.

Integrating Previous Approaches

Tibbs (1999, p 5, 15, 21), a consultant in sustainable development, explains:

What is significant in the concept of unsustainability is the idea that the risk we run is not a single crisis, but a crisis of crises: many breakdowns happening simultaneously through our entire environmental and socioeconomic system, and on a worldwide scale...

To address such wide scale collapse, humanity will need a new approach to development, not only to find mechanisms and tools for addressing unsustainability, but also to foster collaborative relationships and mutual understanding within and between human societies.

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Such an approach pulls together the benefits of every era of development, while also integrating and communicating between the diverse disciplines, in search of a future beyond this crisis of crises that Tibbs describes.

How can we recognize the limitations to the former and current development paradigms, and engage in this innovative falling forward, this evolution of development practice? How can we integrate the beneficial features, processes and outcomes of previous development practices to further refine this field of work?

These “limitations” of both conventional and alternative approaches identify some of *the growing edges or entry points* into the very aspects of international and community development that need further refining. My discourse here acknowledges the energy and effort invested in development to date, and seeks to build upon previous and current successes as we move the field of international and community development forward.

Broadening and Deepening Development

Some development consultants and theorists call for a broadening of development objectives and processes. They explain how true development is a never-ending process that has to do with satisfying the basic material needs of people and their intangible, psychological needs (Sirolli, 1999). These psychological needs

make up the qualitative aspects of life — like health, love, respect and safety — that are not included in mainstream development. Community wellbeing involves feelings, ideas, beliefs, emotions and perspectives of individuals within the culture itself, and it cannot be reduced to economic growth and quantitative indicators.

Articulating this broader spectrum of needs requires a broader spectrum of methodologies and practices. In some regions, various psychosocial and psycho-cultural methodologies are employed to address these intangible aspects to community wellbeing, although there is room for much more integration of these methodologies (which I address in Chapter Two).

In addition to broadening development, a deepening of development is also needed. By “deeper”, I refer to the process and features of personal, collective and systemic transformation. How do people become empowered? How does authentic leadership emerge? How can emotional trauma and dispossession be overcome, so that individuals can participate meaningfully in developing sustainability? What fosters shifts in social norms and ethics such that they include sustainability?

To begin to answer some of these questions, I turned to empirical studies in psychological, moral, and cultural development (Beck and Cowan, 1996; Kegan 1995; Maslow, 1968), to evolutionary systems sciences (Laslow, 1987; Koestler, 1967), to Integral Theory (Wilber, 1995, 1996), as well as to practices and traditions in Latin America (liberation theology) and Asia (Sarvodaya Shramadana approach) that work with these very questions. This deeper understanding of development — of

transformation, personal empowerment and emancipatory social change — is a critical piece to developing sustainability.

In a historical overview of development in the following section, I suggest that both the conventional and alternative paradigms of development make important contributions to developing sustainability (diagram 3), yet they fail to adequately include the breadth and diversity of human needs and the depth of transformative processes. An integral approach assists in moving the development paradigm into these new spheres of theory and practice, by integrating interiority, as well as bringing together these positive attributes into one framework.

Conventional Development: Its Advantages and Limitations

Today, the positive impacts of conventional development are unprecedented, with global communication networks, world travel, discoveries in science and technology, and more. Inroads in health care and education are particularly valuable (Thomas, V. et al. 2000, p XVII). These point to the benefits of conventional development today, and these gains cannot be overlooked.

However, many of these benefits are not available to the vast majority of the world’s population — an extremely small percentage of people own a computer, let alone have access to adequate health care. Civil society organizations and development agencies throughout the world realize the limitation of the conventional development model. These critics and concerned citizens call for a fundamental re-assessment of the paradigm of development,

Diagram 3: Examples of some of the benefits from paradigms and practices of development.

Each era of development has both its positive and negative impacts, in what has been called the “dialectic of progress”. The positive contributions of conventional and alternative approaches are brought together in an integral approach to developing sustainability.

Conventional	Alternative	Integral
<p>The conventional modern approach brings scientific rigor, quantitative methodologies, and concrete problem solving for addressing tangible material needs.</p> <p>Characterized by centralized power and extractive, linear flows of non-local resources from territories.</p> <p>Notable advances include technology, medicine, education and communications, as well as contributing to the foundations for democracy, economic prosperity, gender equality and civil rights.</p>	<p>The alternative postmodern approach brings participatory and emancipatory methodologies that engage local beneficiaries as active contributors to, and co-creators of, social change.</p> <p>Promotes and emulates circular economies and heterarchical decision-making; is embedded in, and reinforces, “local”.</p> <p>Notable advances include community-based approaches to natural resource management and local economic sufficiency, decentralized governance, addressing unjust power dynamics, as well as fostering human rights, gender equality and ecological sustainability, among many others.</p>	<p>The integral approach includes the interiority of communities, namely personal wellbeing and cultural integrity, with the objectives of economic security and environmental sustainability, and also works with the transformative processes of personal empowerment.</p> <p>The framework provides enough breadth and depth to include a vast number of development objectives, indicators and methodologies. It seeks to integrate the positive aspects of the conventional and alternative systems.</p> <p>Notable advances include working in self-development along with socioeconomic, political and ecological objectives; working toward shifts in worldviews; offers tools for identifying local worldviews and appropriately translating communications in ways that resonate with local worldviews.</p>

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which has evolved during the modern period of the last 200 years, has predominated the global arena since 1949, and underpins most development practices to date. The limitations are in the system of development, which was formed, and is now informed, by a narrow conception of what development is.

The statistics from the World Bank, for example, show that such “development” bypasses communities to benefit distant proprietors (Thomas, V. et al. 2000, p XIII), and leads to increases in environmental deterioration and depletion of natural resources (Thomas et al. 2000, p 6), not to mention increases in social problems, civil unrest, economic fragility, widespread disempowerment and loss of cultural identity. Edward Oyugi of the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development explains:

In the post Second World War era of the 1960s, 1970s and a large part of the 1980s, much development assistance was given to developing economies in order to maintain politically acceptable regimes and to ensure a continued supply of natural resources that many underdeveloped economies produced or were capable of producing... This was the initial ideological and, therefore, motivational context, within which aid began to distort the natural development and ideological orientation of [developing] economies and societies. (Oyugi, 2004, p 48)

The recent publication entitled *The Reality of Aid 2004*, explains how many developing countries are worse

off now than before they began to attract foreign development assistance: poverty in the developing world is increasing despite increased inflows of external resources even in economies that have attracted the largest share of foreign assistance (Randel, et al. 2004, p 37-54). These increases in the total number of impoverished people are partially due to the exponential population growth in many southern countries, an issue that complicates any development intervention.

Moreover, poverty and vulnerability is compounded by environmental degradation. In a Business Week issue entitled “Global Capitalism: Can It Be Made To Work Better?” (November 6, 2000), John Ruggie, then Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, is quoted blatantly saying “The current system is unsustainable”.



Obudu, Nigeria

These eco-social problems are evident across the world — within and between both “developed” and “developing” nations — to the extent that clearly something is grossly out of balance.

To explore this further, it is important to investigate some of the interconnected limitations of conventional development, namely:

- *A divisive worldview,*
- *The bias of empiricism and quantitative measures,*
- *Structural reform before the human capacity to deal with it, and*

These three limitations have simultaneously lead to gains as well as negative impacts in development, and today, they can be seen as entry points to building an approach that is able to address the current eco-social crisis.

A Divisive Worldview

As people around the world become more aware of the features of the conventional development agenda, an increasingly common discourse suggests that “our

window on the world — our worldview — is somehow distorted, deeply destructive in its impact, and quite insufficient either to understand what is happening to the planet or to do anything fundamentally about it” (Selby, 2002, p 78).

Conventional development is heavily influenced by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific thought that is underpinned by notions of separation, otherness, and domination, as some refer to as the legacy of the modernist mindset.[15]

Selby (2002, p 79) explains,

The dualisms spawned by Cartesian thought (eg. human-animal, mind-body, masculine-feminine, us-them, inner-outer, subject-object; reason-emotion, spirit-matter, culture-nature, teacher-learner) and the hegemonic thinking they inspire also have become ingrained in the western mind-set.

This rise of rationalism was a key part in human development — it gave rise to the scientific approach producing thousands of inventions in technology, separating church and state, and thus fundamentally

A Biased Development

Smith (1995, p 205) describes how:

[Science should be honored] for what it tells us about nature, but as that is not all that exists, science cannot provide us with a worldview – not a valid one. The most it can show us is half of the world, the half where normative and intrinsic values, existential and ultimate meanings, teleologies, qualities, immaterial realities, and beings that are superior to us do not appear.

Goulet (1980, p 481) explains:

This reductionist approach to knowledge leads most development specialists to become one-eyed giants: scientists lacking wisdom. They analyze, prescribe and act as if man could live by bread alone, as if human destiny could be stripped to its material dimensions alone.

influencing ethics, law and governance to this day. Yet, rationality is not merely a Western product, and to reduce it to that not only diminishes its meaning but also universalizes a Western mode. Wilber explains how rationality includes “the capacity to mentally put yourself into the other person’s shoes and then decide to honour or at least tolerate that viewpoint even if you don’t agree with it. ...[this is the] pluralism of rational worldspace...” (Wilber, 1995, p. 207) The shadow side of rationality is how it can be taken as paramount and thus displace or undervalue other ways of knowing.

When the shadow form of rationality is applied to the practice of development, local people are viewed as objects of development not as co-creators of their reality; scientific knowledge is valued as “more true” than other ways of knowing and is used as a prescriptive methodology for objectively analyzing and addressing symptoms of “under-development” (Estrella, 2000, p 3). In this paradigm, “truth” is that which can be measured. Therefore, science is identified as reliable knowledge, and other ways of knowing are deemed less valuable and reliable (Habermas, 1968). With this concept of **knowledge being science**, other ways of knowing (such as indigenous worldviews, traditional ways of making meaning or intuition) are left out of consideration. Instead, Western educated practitioners become the authorities on the development

of another culture and ecosystem, and are contracted to carry out “objective”, “value-free” and “quantifiable” procedures. Explains Jackson and Kassam (1998; p 4):

Conventional approaches relied heavily on outside professional experts to ‘objectively’ assess the technical and management effectiveness and efficiency of development interventions...

This scientific-rational approach has an important place in development, but it cannot be mistaken for the approach. Underlying conventional development is the unstated and unproven belief that progress and development are most effectively measured and defined only in terms of rational, linear, and deterministic processes to the neglect and disregard of additional frameworks or other qualitative and quantitative toolsets that have different emphases.[16] Development cooperation is inextricably linked to other macroeconomic processes, and thus assumes the concepts of capital markets, consumption, and unlimited growth.[17] In this manner, development has become:

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Characterized by urbanization and bureaucratization; the erosion of local economic, social, and political self-reliance; the progressive impoverishment of the rural population; and reliance on huge infrastructural projects...that emphasize centralized, top-down development and mainly benefit those already in control of land and marketing. (Jones, 2003, 188)

The Bias of Empiricism and Quantitative Measures

This focus primarily on material needs, based on quantitative and empirical indicators, is reflected in development outcomes (Boettke, 1994, p 92).[18] Wilber (1996, pp 226-267) says that the root cause to many of today's industrial catastrophes is this dominance of scientific rationality over other important domains of human experience, namely beliefs, traditions, quality of life, spirit, culture. He calls for an integral approach that does not discard scientific-rationality, but rather integrates it with other ways of knowing.

This bias of a one-sided approach favors only one set of indicators — quantitative and economic — which does not reflect the complexity and depth of human systems. A one-sided approach to development creates dependency in communities and societies, as development knowledge and capacity are held by experts not local residents. This mindset of "knowledge being science" erodes other knowledge systems and cultures, and results in inappropriate development projects and large-scale ecological problems. Once development experts leave, what can local people do with infrastructure and management policies designed by foreign experts with different epistemological and technological

capacities? The message becomes one of disempowerment: that experts can solve the community's problems not the community people themselves. While communities and civil society have articulated their dissatisfaction with conventional development, the development agencies are slow to adequately respond.

World Bank President James Wolfensohn on [a visit] to Thailand said:

We have the strong belief that people in this country don't want charity. They want hope, work and to do it themselves'. However, [consequent] Bank initiatives in 'community development' to meet the Thai crisis...still disregard the need for individuals to make sense of the development process on their own terms.[19]

Structural Reform Before the Human Capacity to Deal With It

A paper prepared by the Think Sangha for Sulak Sivaraksa as part of the Lambeth, UK meeting with the World Bank and religious leaders (February, 1998), explains how the essential difficulty in the "development process" is that structural reform has come before the development of human capacity to deal with it. In other words, while human technical capacities span the globe — which is truly an enormous feat — the majority of the human population has not yet developed the consciousness or awareness sufficient to understand the dimensions and ramifications of such global processes, nor the capacities to act accordingly. This has produced unprecedented global environmental degradation, the mass globalization of culture to the detriment of

indigenous cultures and the exploitation of large sectors of society.

To solve today's global complex problems requires worldviews and capacities that can understand and work with interconnectedness. Tibbs (1999) explains,

The concept of sustainability amounts to a call to deal with the entire complex of global problems as an interrelated whole. This challenge goes well beyond the scope of issues individual organizations and governments have had to deal with before, and it demands new ways of thinking and acting... Clearly we have not yet found the right formula or context for the deployment of our knowledge in order to solve these problems.

Silos, development practitioner and founder of the Caribbean Institute, suggests that we need more complex modes of knowing, beyond the current rationality of modern science, to be able to comprehend the scope of problems and to craft creative solutions.[20]

In summary, the paradigm and practice of conventional development as such is not ecologically sustainable in the long term, nor does it adequately meet the basic needs of people in the short term (Ryan, 1995). This approach separates knowledge from experience, and fails to provide a comprehensive analysis of complex issues; as such it cannot provide lasting solutions for most of the world's population. At best, it provides a partial truth and understanding of a much more complex and multifaceted whole.

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Oyugi (2004, p 51) summarizes this well:

The practice of donors throwing money, projects, and external know-how at problems in the South will not bring the desired changes in the lives of the affected populations. Development assistance... must build on a country's historical and cultural circumstances, and must involve a fundamental societal transformation process that money and projects alone can neither stimulate nor sustain.

Alternative, Participatory Development: Its Advantages and Limitations

Alternative development practices, which some refer to as “Paradigm Two” (Barr, 2004, p 89), seek to address the limitations of the conventional model, based upon the desire to sincerely “deepen our understanding of development in a manner that takes into account a much wider spectrum of human needs” (O’Sullivan, Morrell and O’Connor, 2002, p 9).

Emerging interest in alternative approaches is largely a reflection of the international development community’s dissatisfaction with conventional approaches (Estrella, 2000, p 3). Jackson and Kassam (1998, p 7) explain how alternative approaches to development are an attempt to deconstruct the dominant paradigm, to change the power relations in the creation and use of knowledge, thus addressing the larger issues of poverty, inequality and oppression. These more “alternative” or “critical” development agendas (such as Another Development, Community Economic Development, EcoDevelopment and Developing Sustainability)[21] have re-defined development as participatory, people-centered and ecosystem-based, and re-oriented development efforts towards the need for the liberation and recovery of “community” (O’Sullivan, et al, 2002, p. 8-11).

A fundamental principle of these approaches is that people have a universal right to participate in the production of knowledge that directly affects their lives and to take action to meet their needs. These alternatives call for development to be directed by the community, to challenge conventional institutions and societal assumptions, to be attentive to indigenous knowledge and cultures, to honor and incorporate the riches of local knowledge and experiences, and to collaborate in true participatory partnerships (Ryan 1995).

Development, as such, includes not only stimulating economic initiatives or improving quantitative indicators, but also addressing quality of life, nurturing a sense of empowerment and fostering equity, equality and sustainability in society.

These alternative approaches can be referred to as “postmodern” (i.e. as being less deterministic, with no single narrative, more inclusive and

diverse) in relation to their “modern” predecessor (i.e. conventional development). I will explain further in Chapter Two how “integral” differs from both modern and postmodern, in that it draws upon and seeks to integrate the positive legacies of these other paradigms and approaches.

The postmodern alternative approach is essentially a move away from a primarily objective science about others, toward a critical inquiry-in-action by individuals, groups, organizations and the wider community (Reason and Torbert, 2001).

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Participation is essential to such postmodern approaches that seek to create space for dialogue and community processes. Individuals draw upon their own traditional meaning-making structures in collective visioning and problem solving rather than being treated as passive recipients of technical and material inputs, as in the conventional model. Participatory methodologies aim to be inclusive of other ways of knowing, traditional governance systems, local worldviews and cultural norms. Such methodologies include Participatory Action Research, Participatory Rapid Appraisals, participatory learning and action, farming systems research (FSR) or farming participatory research (FPR), Appreciative Inquiry, and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation.



Patricia Eyamba, Calabar, Nigeria

The greatest strength of participatory methodologies is that they are focused around the process of empowering and

enabling local people to analyze and solve their own problems (Jackson and Kassam, 1998, p.3), and building local capacity to understand, value and maintain structures and policies related to development. Such methodologies engage local people, who for decades had been “clients” or “data sources” of development, as participants that are actively engaged in this process of identifying and addressing their development needs. Participatory Evaluation, for example, is described as:

a process of self-assessment, collective knowledge production, and cooperative action in which the stakeholders in a development intervention participate substantively in the identification of the...issues, the design..., the collection and analysis of data, and the action taken as a result of the evaluation findings. By participating in this process, the stakeholders also build their own capacity and skills to undertake research and evaluation in other areas and to promote other forms of participatory development.... [This approach] seeks to give preferential treatment to the voices and decisions of the least powerful and most affected stakeholders — the local beneficiaries...employs a wide range of data collection techniques...both qualitative and quantitative... (Jackson and Kassam, 1998, p.3)

In participatory activities, local people create new knowledge in active collaboration together as “colearners” (Elden and Levin, 1991: 128). With a variety of methodologies, these approaches encourage autonomous thinking and self-empowerment, where participants critically reflect on their self-identities and their assumptions of the culture and society, and act from this new perception of self (Mezirow and Associates,

2000, p. 31). Beneficiaries then become empowered citizens who take on their own development in the manner that is most meaningful to them.

Growing Edges of Alternative

The alternative approach articulates a viable option in opposition to the conventional model, yet a more prominent challenge today is to move development beyond this dialectic of conventional and alternative politics, and toward a more integrative and encompassing path of action. To address broad and deeply rooted development issues, such as poverty and sustainability, we will need to foster collaboration across sectors, drawing upon the beneficial contributions of both modern and postmodern paradigms.

Paul van Schaik, international development consultant for UNICEF, has reviewed the various eras and paradigms of development through the past five decades.[22] He comments on how development has moved through several eras since the 1950s, in its own form of development or evolution. He explains how the 1950s was the *Era of Disease Campaigns* with a focus on individual material needs. Individual needs were gradually seen to be more complex as the political and socioeconomic systems began to be better understood. The 1960s became the *Decade of Development*,

with emphasis on both the individual and collective material needs, where development interventions were seen in terms of “functional fit”, instead of their more complicated and unpredictable nature. The 1970s was the *Era of Alternatives*, although it was again largely quantitative and materially oriented. Once again as each area came to be studied more, and to a degree understood more, interrelations were recognized. The 1980s became the

Era of Child Survival, and thus then the 1990s were the Decade of Children’s Rights. The late 1990s has become the *Era of Donor Fatigue*, in which donors and governments returned to a pre-global state of nationalism stemming from problems at home. He also suggests that this was due to a lack of comprehension brought about from the misguided notion of all perspectives being equal and without a clear juxtaposition of

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“rights” (and justice) to jurisprudence (care and responsibility) at the global level. He sees that the 2000s have to become the *Era of the Integral Approach*, in which the sustainable process of change is seen from an integrative point of view — a view that treats each past perspective as part but not sufficient in itself, and one that explores more deeply the perspectives that include interiority. This approach integrates a broad scope of disciplines and methodologies, and perceives individuals and systems as wholes within greater wholes.

In the remainder of this chapter, I note the limitations and build on the legacies of these former development paradigms, pointing out some entry points for moving towards an integral approach.

Participation, Not a Panacea

Participatory development clearly holds a central place in emerging practices of international and community development.[23] Yet recent analyses of development suggest that it is not always effective in practice (Randel, 2004; Estrella, 2000). From this analysis, it appears that participatory methodologies need further refining in terms of:

- 1) The capacity of practitioners to use participatory methodologies, and
- 2) Understanding participants and the process of empowerment itself.

Need for Capacity-Building and Internalization

Mikaela Gavás of British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) (2004, p 172) explains that while most development actors, whether donors, recipients or implementers, now underline the importance of civil society participation in the development process, the question remains as to whether there has been an authentic shift in development cooperation. To work with

participatory approaches effectively, requires not only a new way of working, but also a new understanding of development — truly another paradigm — that is internalized in our institutions, interactions, attitudes and mindsets. Yet, participatory methodologies can be used superficially while the quantitative conventional paradigm remains.

Mariano Valderrama, of the Peruvian Citizen Proposal Group, explains how the progress made by mainstream development efforts in the areas of participation and empowerment of local people is greater at a conceptual level than in practice (2004, p 158). Reason and Torbert (2001) explain how many practitioners of action research struggle with the shift away from a positivist modern approach:

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...action research has for the past 50 years failed to fulfill its promise, failed to make the kinds of contributions that [have been] advocated, because it has remained caught in an empirical positivist view of academic knowledge as being of value for its own sake.

“Participation”, in this way, is merely used as if it were a toolbox of methods, a technical exercise or a way to mobilize local labor or ideas (Jackson and Kassam, 1998, p. 4), or it is used as merely consultation processes that belie the true meaning of participatory development (Gavas, 2004, p 178). It is heartening to note that most large

development institutions at the national and international levels are including participation in their approach (e.g. the Canadian International Development Agency and the World Bank). And there is also much room for improvement. Some practitioners, for example, say that the participatory processes of the World Bank “are seen as exercises used by the Bank to validate its proposals, without making any commitment to incorporate participant’s inputs, and without defining mechanisms for civil society to participate in, and monitor, their implementation” (Valderrama, 2004, p. 152). Valderrama explains further that while the *concept* might be participatory, in *practice*, participatory processes rarely create opportunities for the local population to share in the collective vision or evaluation of mainstream development programs (2004, p. 153).

Gavas (2004, p 177) offers another example of how civil society sat at the table in elaborating the Kenyan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, but still there was a general lack of understanding about the value and benefits of involving civil society in discussions on policy. An official of the Kenyan Ministry of Planning and Development remarked how “participation” in the process was “purely cosmetic” (Gavas, 2004, p 177).

Even grassroots civil society groups that have a history of working with rural people recognize the need to build practitioners’ capacity for using participatory approaches

with integrity. Syme and Jasser (2000, p. 141) explain how:

In order to carry out [participatory methodologies] effectively,... it is not sufficient simply to use participatory techniques. There must be a real commitment to the philosophy of participation at all levels within an organization, and a full understanding of what participation means and how to apply participatory techniques in an appropriate manner that would ensure full local involvement.

Understanding Participation and Participants

Meaningful participation requires that the individuals involved value participation, are able and interested in participating, are (to some degree) organized and have access to adequate information, and are willing and able to deconstruct and re-construct their personal, familial and community dynamics.



San Salvador, El Salvador

For various reasons, these requirements are not always present. Perhaps the “reality of the stomach” demands that many local people need to make quick decisions for ways to feed their families, and have little time or ability to engage in (slower, longer-term) processes. Perhaps the cultural buy-in to this approach is lacking, as local people may have never had the custom of working in this manner previously. Perhaps certain individuals have a self-concept that inhibits their participation in the group, such as low self-esteem or lack of confidence, which may have been reinforced by years of oppression and poverty. Perhaps they simply do not know how to meaningfully participate. Some of these requirements depend on an epistemology and a moral code that local people may not necessarily have. Other requirements rely upon an education that they might not have yet received.

Various disciplines have examined the social, political and cultural barriers to participation, but less so the psychological barriers such as self-concept, epistemology and emotional health. Moreover, the barriers to participation can be inter-linked, for example, as psycho-social or cultural-political. Barr (2004, p 90) describes how the “culture of silence” in Fiji impedes meaningful participation by local people. This “silence”, or “unquestioning respect for authority”, grew out of the traditional hierarchically-ordered and male-dominated society, and has since carried over into modern times such that ordinary people do neither ask questions nor take initiative but wait for authority figures to act and decide. This phenomenon is compounded by leaders of traditional

community structures who do not value, understand or encourage participation (Symes and Jasser, 2000, p 141).

Another example from Palestine discusses how the political situation in the country has created a “culture of occupation” that makes it difficult for people to see beyond seemingly insurmountable problems that they feel powerless to change (Symes and Jasser, 2000, p 138). This sense of powerlessness becomes a barrier to mobilizing and empowering people to promote change through participation and collective action. This “culture of occupation” is both political and psychological. Symes and Jasser (2000, p 137) suggest that this is

true of other regions with histories of political conflict or popular struggle, yet few studies look at how participatory development can be used in such contexts.

Anecdotal data from colleagues in Africa and Latin America[24] explain from their experience in community work how

participatory methodologies, in and of themselves, are not necessarily sufficient to foster meaningful local engagement. Individuals bring to community meetings their domestic concerns, low self-esteem or emotional trauma, which can inhibit them from engaging and contributing to a participatory process.

Lawrentia Ofre, of Living Earth Nigeria, and Jenny Calderón, of Centro Bartolomé de las Casas in El Salvador, both explain that part of their work with communities includes a form of “informal counseling”, which primarily

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...participatory methodologies ... are not necessarily sufficient to foster meaningful local engagement.
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consists of listening to the local people's stories, worries, traumas and concerns. Only when the individual's trauma is alleviated or his/her worries subside, can he/she can begin to participate meaningfully.

These constraints to participatory development, north and south, suggest that employing participatory techniques, as they have been described and used, may not be enough to foster meaningful local engagement and empowerment. Participants bring their whole selves to a group process — their personal histories, dreams, values, ways of understanding themselves and their surroundings — and the process itself is embedded in a particular cultural and political context. Participation is therefore deeply personal, and is experienced in different ways by the individuals involved. Thus, when individuals participate, they do so in their own ways at their levels of ability — this will not look the same way for everyone, nor will it necessarily be appropriate for everyone. The use of "informal counseling" and other such implicit techniques that complement participation are (usually) neither part of job descriptions nor an explicit aspect of the methodologies used. And yet, even though implicit and almost inextricable from the personalities of practitioners, they are crucial to the success of the work.

Integrating Interiority

In *The Reality of Aid 2004*, Kevin Barr, of the Ecumenical Center for Research and Advocacy, points to the role of awareness in the development process — which he refers to as "conscientization":

Through civic education, or the conscientization methods of social analysis, people can be assisted to become more aware, so that they are empowered. Empowerment then leads to involvement and involvements leads to the transformation of society, in the interests of the needs of all people — not just a few. (Barr, 2004, p.89)

While this is a reduced and simplified description of social transformation, Barr points to how conscientization (or awareness of self, society and self-in-society) is crucial to participants, facilitators and practitioners for fostering involvement, empowerment and true social change. New roles for participants, facilitators and practitioners emerge with the use of alternative or "new paradigm" methodologies, which essentially call for a different way of viewing oneself and others — a recognition of one's own subjectivity as well as that of the different stakeholders involved (Gaventa and Blauert, 2000, p 229; Guba and Lincoln, 1989). This section explores the ways of working with this awareness and subjectivity in participatory development.

When individuals enter into a participatory process, they bring their full selves, their fears and traumas, their beliefs and values, their intentions and dreams. These are the qualitative components of human life — ethical, cultural, psychological and spiritual — that relate to more interior aspects of human experience.[25] This interiority includes all the intangible and subjective aspects of individuals and groups.

Interiority has a real expression in group dynamics; it is where conflicts are rooted and where collective visions arise. Projects seem to be more successful when people believe

in the values behind the development intervention, and have the capacity and commitment to manifest solutions. Personal biases, unstated misunderstandings and hidden agendas, on the other hand, can thwart the success of projects. While holistic approaches to development that address economic, social and ecological needs do exist (such as the Sustainable Livelihoods approach), the success of these approaches is often related to the worldviews and the values — or the interiority — of the social group. Local people infuse development projects with meaning to the degree that they “own” the project and embed it in their culture and belief system.

For example, a composting toilet can be built to avoid water contamination, but if there is insufficient understanding by community people of how the toilet is linked to water contamination or how water quality is linked to health, or if there is little value placed on clean drinking water for others, the toilets might remain standing but unused.[26] Thus, building a structure for avoiding water contamination is not enough; building the capacity and consciousness for avoiding water contamination is also required. To leave out the latter is incomplete and potentially ineffective, and even irresponsible — especially if the development practitioner is aware of the need to tailor the initiative to both the internal and external needs of the local people.

These shifts in worldviews and “ways of thinking” are important for any social changes to occur in the local economy or political context; these shifts uphold and maintain progressive economic arrangements and social institutions. Many civil society organizations working in development or the environment recognize that their project’s success — with implementing alternative socio-political structures, for example — largely depends upon a shift in the worldviews of the people involved in the project. Maslow notes:

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No social reforms, no beautiful programs or laws will be of any consequence unless people are healthy enough, evolved enough,... to understand them and to want to put them into practice in the right way.[27]
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No social reforms, no beautiful programs or laws will be of any consequence unless people are healthy enough, evolved enough,... to understand them and to want to put them into practice in the right way.[27]

With regard to new social institutions and policies that seek to bring forth sustainable societies, Macy (1998, p 21) explains:

These nascent institutions cannot take root and survive without deeply ingrained values to sustain them. They must mirror what we want and how we relate to Earth and each other. They require, in other words, a profound shift in our perception of reality...both as cognitive revolution and spiritual awakening.

Working with qualitative, cultural and subjective data can be complicated, as it involves working with extremely subtle and unseen dimensions of human systems. However, as it is increasingly understood that it is necessary to include interiority in development projects; intangibles are crucial to community wellbeing, and they are inextricably linked with tangible outcomes.

In 1992, the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) began to develop a *grassroots development framework* (GDF) to “collect and assess results data that are not always reflected in more traditional analysis.” (Ritchey-Vance, 1998; Estrella, 2000, chapters 3 and 8). The GDF attempts to capture both the *tangible* and *intangible* results of grassroots development, at three levels of impact: personal, organizational and societal. Each level is divided into the tangible and intangible aspects of the work that NGOs carry out on those three levels with six potential areas of impact. At the personal level, the standard of living and personal capacity are assessed. At the organizational level, the organizational capability and culture are assessed. Finally, at the societal level, the policy environment and community norms are assessed.[28] The IAF have developed the GDF from experience with over 4000 projects in Latin America.

This framework suggests that when local people participate in project planning, intangibles are identified as essential goals and indicators, and they are translated into actions that are meaningful to the community. For example, in work with local indigenous communities in Colombia, Espinosa Alzate (2000, p 103) explains how one of the key goals for the project identified by the community was “the strengthening of local spirituality, religiosity and the cosmic vision of the community’s relationship with nature.

This is viewed in terms of improved education, health and natural resource management.”

Admittedly, interiority is difficult to work with, as it requires dialogical, interpretive and subjective ways of knowing that cannot easily be validated with scientific or objective proof. For those who worry about more local involvement and less scientific direction, there is a resistance to let go of professional standards, irrespective of whether these are relevant or not. The critics of participatory methodologies proclaim how opening up the process to “unskilled” participants compromises rigor, and how the credibility of information declines (Guijit, 2000, p 209). While this may be true in certain cases, it is contradictory to seek to foster empowerment while also denying the very subjective and developmental pathways necessary for the empowerment process. This critique is a call for strengthening our capacities of working with interiority, not a reason to cease inter-subjective and subjective inquiry. Other measurement techniques exist, which use the scientific method but are not empirically based, such as phenomenology and structuralism. Practitioners are encouraged to learn and use techniques, or team with professionals who are skilled in using them.

To sincerely go beyond a reductionist deterministic paradigm and to authentically include cultural and traditional ways of knowing, Wilber (1995, 1996) reiterates how it is essential to include interiority in development practices. In fact, some suggest that neglecting to work with interiority is a disservice to developing sustainability. Ryan’s (1995) research in Latin America and Africa explains how development work does not adequately integrate values and beliefs into the process and practice of development.

Current development strategies, ...tend to ignore, often underestimate, and sometimes undermine cultural values or the cultural environment, which are essential to healthy human development. The question, then, becomes: How can human values and belief systems be properly integrated into the modern economic development paradigm?

Silos (2002) analysis suggests that,

...a neglect of the psycho-cultural aspects of Caribbean underdevelopment and how these relate to its peculiar economic and political institutions has contributed to a very limited and one-sided understanding of the reasons for the persistence of poverty in the region.

Although, development practitioners and institutions increasingly recognize that interiority plays an important role in transformative change and empowerment (Estrella, 2000; Silos, 2002; Esbjörn-Hargens, 2002), questions remain in the development field about how to work with interiors authentically and effectively. How can practitioners build the capacity for this new paradigm? How can participatory approaches honour and include what individuals and cultures bring to a participatory process that is not apparent and visible yet which manifests explicitly in the process and outcomes? How can practitioners use this deepened understanding of

individuals to tailor their use of participatory methods accordingly?

Some Ways to Work With Interiority in Development

Understanding and working with interiority seems to be a gap in our collective knowledge and also a necessary growing edge in the field of developing sustainability. I suggest that to meet this challenge, we need to inquire into:

- 1) How the process of raising awareness occurs,
- 2) What "form" transforms in transformative or emancipatory processes,
- 3) What personal empowerment looks like to the unique participants involved, and
- 4) How certain principles can be promoted while also taking into account the evolutionary context of human social history.

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Some key aspects of this include: fostering better understanding of psychological development, giving space for subjectivity, honouring local spiritual frameworks, and situating development in an evolutionary context. Below I explore why this is so, and then in Chapter Two, I take this discussion further to build a framework of methodologies for working in these areas.

1. Empowerment and Psychological Development

Theorists and practitioners of participatory approaches explain how participation is most effective when it empowers local inhabitants. Practitioners explain how empowerment tends to occur when a process of co-generative dialogue is used to bring participants new insights and understandings about their social world, when participants learn how to learn, and when the process is liberating, in the sense that participants learn how to create new possibilities for action (Whyte, 1991: pp 127-158).

This lofty intention brings up several questions. What does it mean for participants to learn how to learn, and how does that learning emerge into empowered action? How do practitioners create conditions for empowerment? Do organizations and funders adequately understand, commit to, and support this type of work?

Empowerment is a radical and profound experience. To begin with, this move from victim consciousness into a more empowered state (or, from “deficiency needs” to “being needs”) involves deep psychological shifts in ways of thinking and ways of being; these are not easy shifts to make.[29] Moreover, these changes require the emotional



Jiquilisco Bay, El Salvador

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capacity to be able to integrate this new self-identity into family and community dynamics. As local people move away from being dependant and towards becoming participants, problem-solvers and visionaries, the way individuals see themselves and their own roles in community dynamics can fundamentally change. Entering these (often new) empowered and participatory roles requires not only taking on new skills, modifying learning styles or increasing self-confidence, but also changing the way the individual understands herself/himself, her/his world and the relationship between the two (Kegan, 2000).

For practitioners to begin to understand and facilitate this inner process of change requires an understanding of personal growth or psychological development, of adult transformation and the expansion of worldviews. Methodologies from developmental psychology, popular education, transformative learning, action research and liberation theology are only some examples of current progressive approaches that offer a solid foundation for further refining and deepening this work.

2. Honouring Local Beliefs

Shifts in self-identity, worldviews and social relations are often meshed with the deeply held spiritual beliefs of local people and embedded in the traditions and customs

of the community (Ryan 1995; Tamas, 1996; Harper 2001). Many communities (both in the south and north) are guided by a spiritual or religious understanding of reality. To be able to connect authentically with local worldviews, and to foster local ownership of development work, development practices must involve the subjective and inter-subjective dimensions of change. Denis Goulet (1971, p. 362) contends that cultural and religious dimensions should be part of development, and explains that this is why the local community should have a

participatory position along with technical experts in development activities, decisions and responsibilities. Baum (in Harper, 2000, p 82) explains further:

Although Western science plays an important role in such a [development] project, the symbolic meaning and creative energy to make the project work must come from the culture and the religion of the local community.

Any new attitudes or practices must find roots in the dynamic elements of the community's own tradition.

That is to say, to meaningfully engage in a process of fostering "the flourishing of individual persons and their communities", as Horton (2003) mentions regarding the discipline of transformative learning, the practitioner would be wise to infuse the process with indigenous meanings for what "flourishing" is.

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Sravanabelagola Jain Temple, Karnataka, India

The sociologist ... must be open to the possibility that the religious symbols that define the identity of a human community have a transcendent referent; and that the sociologist's own secular presupposition is a Western cultural product rather than a universal truth.

Finally, regarding the cutting-edge discussion on people-centered

Even though many Northern development practitioners have more secular worldviews, to be effective in the subjective and intersubjective domains, the inclusion of teleologies and belief systems is crucial. When working in community development, one does not need to have the same spirituality or religion of the community, but one does need to understand and respect the indigenous belief systems, and give them space to emerge in the development process. Baum (in Harper, 2000, p 81) describes how even though a practitioner may not share the same beliefs, when working in other social systems, one cannot hold secularism as a definitive interpretation of the universe.

development practices (in the Sustainable Livelihoods approach, for example), Kapur (2000) pointedly asks:

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To be able to connect authentically with local worldviews, and to foster local ownership of development work, development practices must involve the subjective and inter-subjective dimensions of change.
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I am left to wonder how this emphasis on 'people centredness' will manifest itself without a more explicit focus on spiritual principles. Are the challenges of tapping into creativity, distributing benefits justly, and providing equal access to opportunities (UNDP 1993) not, in the final analysis asking what motivates people to act, and (perhaps more important) to act compassionately? And does that question not require us to ask what is at the centre of ourselves?

3. Self-Development of the Practitioner

In the section above on *Need for Capacity-Building and Internalization*, it was apparent that the capacity of practitioners to use participatory and emancipatory methodologies is vital to their success.

However, to be able to create opportunities for participation and empowerment using progressive methodologies can be a complex undertaking. Elden and Levin (in Whyte, 1991) explain how the practitioner of participatory methodologies needs to be able to evoke an atmosphere of co-learning, to employ good interpersonal skills, and to have the ability to see systemically or to see patterns (i.e. to see “how things hang together”). Practitioners must be able to find the balance between letting go of ownership of the process and also maintaining some overarching context for and control of the project (Whyte, 1991, pp. 132-133, 140-141). Elden and Levin (in Whyte, 1991, pp. 140-141) explain how participatory action research requires that the outside researcher maintain the broader goals of the project beyond the local theory, as that helps the local actions to be successful. Practitioners have to understand the political and personal barriers to participation, and have to be able to recognize and harness the diverse skills and abilities of the group. Moreover, in using progressive methodologies, the role of practitioners change such that they are no longer the objective observer and are instead engaged

in the co-creative process of change and able to see their own bias and subjectivity in group dynamics (Guba and Lincoln, 1998).

This is a long list, and a tall order for anyone! For that very reason, Elden and Levin (in Whyte, 1991) emphasize the need for practitioners to focus on their own development to be able to hold such a process. In other words, practitioners themselves have to undergo their own internal paradigm shifts to effectively use progressive approaches for developing sustainability. Kegan, (1994, p 304) explains how moving from a modern to a postmodern epistemology can take much of our adult lives, and only if certain life conditions are present. Yet, when these changes do not happen, often the good intentions of alternative, participatory approaches fall short.

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other social systems,
practitioners cannot
hold secularism as a
definitive interpretation
of the universe.*
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Also, to be able to use these new integrative, reflective and learning-oriented techniques effectively requires radical changes in the systems and culture of organizations. Failing to recognize that these are indeed radical approaches “belies some fundamental changes which people are going to have to make in the way that their own organizations operate in order to make the [more progressive methodologies] work smoothly in the field,..and those are the issues which are the most difficult issues to address.”[30]In the flavour of conscientisation, practitioners need to build not just their capacity, but also their own consciousness, to be able to work with

interiority in developing sustainability.

By this, I refer to shifts in worldviews towards a broader frame of reference that cares and considers a wider circle of "others". Not only in terms of other people, nations, social sectors, ecosystems, etc., but also other beliefs, traditions and ways of being that may be different from one's own. By engaging in one's own process of self-development, practitioners come to know these inner shifts experientially, and also become more able to hold the space for such shifts in others.



Isla de Mendez, El Salvador

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... practitioners need to build not just their capacity, but also their own consciousness, to become more able to hold the space for such shifts in others.

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4. Development in an Evolutionary Context

Both the conventional and alternative development paradigms hold their own set of values and perspective about development that underpin the issues that different development agencies and practitioners promote. Daniel Buckles (1999), Senior Program Officer at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada explains in *Cultivating Peace, Conflict and Collaboration in*

Natural Resource Management that many donor agencies and practitioners tend to assume that their principles (such as pacifism, egalitarianism, communitarianism, secularism and rationalism) are universal, and then work to promote these principles in other countries with often very different cultural realities.[31] He notes that these principles are actually culturally based values, and questions the ethics and effectiveness of assuming they be taken up by other countries.

It can be contradictory to promote these principles, or in some cases mainstream them throughout development projects, while also respecting and fostering local ownership of the development process.[32] For example, with community-directed work or recipient-led development, development agencies and practitioners often already have an eye on where the process "should" go (e.g., small-scale business, ecologically friendly activities and equitable institutions). It is assumed that, if allowed to be heard,

communities will select certain healthy choices for themselves. Yet, the definition of "healthy community" is not universal, it may differ from development agencies to local people. In community-directed or recipient-led development, local people may not choose the form of "healthy community" defined by development practitioners; instead of small scale business and local governance, they may choose to enter the modern world, with a TV reality of comfort and a government that can attract foreign investment and provide minimum wage jobs.

Assuming these principles to be universal can create problems in development practice. For example, many development agencies call for mainstreaming gender equality throughout programming, an initiative that stems from international conferences and policies on women's rights and gender equality. To apply gender equality in other cultural contexts is noble and necessary. The delicate point here is not whether this should be done, but rather how it is implemented. It took many developed countries a hundred years for gender equality to emerge as a valid social norm, and thus it may not easily or immediately be taken up by other cultures. Moreover, by

instituting it in development interventions, some may feel that it is a donor-prescribed policy that contradicts the intention to support recipient-led development. Implementation often requires finding a balance between seemingly discordant objectives of promoting such principles and fostering local ownership. Continuing with this example on gender equality, without an adequate balance, Indrani Sigamany,

the Training and Capacity Building Manager of INTRAC (International NGO Training and Research Centre, London) explains:

Gender discussions can be intimidating if the concepts are too alien, and technical terminology can mystify rather than clarify debates within an organization. Every organization will react differently to assumptions being challenged...[33]



Village of Ikun in Cross River State, Nigeria

To assist in implementation, research from systems sciences (Laslow, 1987)[34] and studies in values development (Beck and Cowen, 1996) suggest that societies evolve according to changes in biological, social and psychological conditions, which are interconnected and mutually informing. For example, it took close to a century in North America for the

concept of “sustainability” to enter mainstream dialogue, under specific historical influences and experiences, and it is still not completely stabilized as a social norm in society. This emergent principle of sustainability points to new epistemologies and values, at particular levels of cognitive and moral development, which correspond to changed life conditions. The same goes for gender equality, human rights, solidarity, and so forth.

This body of research explains how fostering healthy expressions of the existing principles and values, as they manifest in the particular culture, can be an effective and ethical way to foster changes in behaviours and values over the long term. For example, to promote ecological conservation in a post-war context may first require working toward social organization to address long-standing civil violence, or working toward gender equality may require first working with men in gender-insensitive traditional structures.

These may seem like lateral moves, yet such an approach acknowledges and honours the cultural context and existing values in that society, and helps to strike a balance between fostering local ownership and promoting external principles.

Each of these four points about working with interiority requires a more complex discussion; each area could become a book in its own right. In the following chapters, I further discuss their implementation in developing sustainability.

In Summary

Each iteration of development theory and practice brings something key to the paradigm and practice of developing sustainability. The conventional modern approach brings scientific rigor, quantitative methodologies, and concrete problem solving for addressing tangible material

needs. The alternative postmodern approach brings participatory and emancipatory methodologies that engage local beneficiaries as active contributors to, and co-creators of, social change. The growing edges of developing sustainability recognize that people’s interiority (feelings, beliefs, worldviews and values) influence and inform decisions, behaviours and systems. Working with interiority in development requires a deeper understanding of psychology, worldviews and belief systems, an understanding of the

evolutionary context of development itself, and also emphasizes the self-development of practitioners.

There are still many questions around integrating interiority in community development. *What role do these unseen subjective domains have in development work? What types of methodologies already exist, or can be developed, for working with intangibles and interiority? How can practitioners better prepare themselves for working with interiority?*

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