

Sustainability and Sustainable Development as the making of Connections: Lessons for Integrated Development Planning in South Africa

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Abstract

Africa's many developmental problems (poverty and environmental degradation) have to be solved in a sustainable way. However, the complex, multi-dimensional concepts of 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' (SD) can be interpreted in different and even clashing ways by various interest groups and are often used as 'spin' or buzzwords.

The many potential meanings include SD as a process or end point/ goal, SD as inter-generational, intra-generational or inter-species equity, SD as separate ecologically or socially sustainable development or as holistic/ integrated economic, social, ecological, institutional, technological and physical development, SD as conservation (the Green Agenda), SD as development (the Brown Agenda); SD as Human Rights (the Red Agenda); SD as Human Development and as democracy/ participative development. Even when a certain meaning of SD is promoted (such as for instance SD as inter-generational equity or SD as integration as in many South African policy documents), the practical application of the concept rarely conforms to the meaning that is promoted.

One of the conceptions of sustainable development that has the greatest potential for future development in Africa, is that of a collaborative, communicative learning process of 'making connections' and linkages between various role-players -experts,

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disciplines (transdisciplinarity), communities; formal and informal businesses, politicians, officials and civil society (NGOs, CBOs) at local level. 'Integrated Development Planning' can potentially play a role in 'making connections' and in the construction of local meaning regarding SD.

A recent study of completed IDP documents, however, showed a very simplistic and superficial understanding of the concepts of sustainability and SD. These plans also illustrated a lack of knowledge about the theory regarding communicative or collaborative planning and did not try to deal with the underlying conflict regarding the meaning of 'development' and therefore were little more than 'lowest common denominator' plans. This paper will analyse the meanings given to the concept of SD in IDP documents and from this will recommend some lessons for future planning.

Introduction

Africa has many developmental challenges such as high levels of debt [1], trade barriers and agricultural subsidies in the North, economic stagnation, inequity, poverty, underdevelopment, joblessness and an over-abundance of labour (at the same time a growth in mechanisation and technology is making workers obsolete), a brain-drain, a lack of democratic and 'good' governance [2], social unrest and war (White et al, 2001; Leonard and Strauss, 2003). The cost of the unsustainable way in which countries have tried to solve these problems are reversible and irreversible biological and geophysical impacts, environmental degradation, pollution, often due to lack of development and services and local natural resource depletion (wood, coal, animals). Resources are being exported for needed foreign currency to the North (sometimes even at a loss) to countries that are guzzling up Africa's children's share of these planetary resources. In addition Africa has to contend with climate change (mostly caused by over-consumption in the North), adding to desertification, soil erosion and soil depletion due to undeserving trust in the reductionist Green Revolution.

These complex challenges have to be solved within a context of an uneven playing field (due to slavery, colonialism, eras of bad government following de-colonialism, being the pawns of global powers during the cold war and after (Bond, 2001: 19), years of ideological advice from the so-called experts (structural adjustment,

deregulation and privatisation), and globalisation has brought few of the promised benefits (Stiglitz, 2002, Swilling, 2004, Harris and Seid, 2000). Mitlin (2001: 152), looking from a global perspective, bring to our attention ‘the nature of the exploitative economic structures and the inequality and dependency that they create and sustain’.

In addition it seems as if both governments and markets have failed the poor (White et al, 2001: 60). Changing global rules with regard to economic development, trade and debt seem to be ‘kicking away the ladder [3]’ from Africa (Chang, 2002). Africa is also under constant pressure from richer and more powerful nations, the World Bank and the IMF (such as accepting GM- foods [4] or opening up trade without the USA and EU doing the same). This has been described as a new form of colonialism (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000). The world is very a different one from the world that the Developed nations had to contend with while they were developing, exacerbated by the realities of AIDS and global warming.

Khan (2005) argues, however, that it is a misconception that ‘the room for [policy] manoeuvre are ...outside of the sphere of decision making of governments’ because of global political economic factors’. This article is based on the position that, despite globalisation, local communities in Africa do have the power to change their situations through combined effort. Healey (1997: 136) put forward the ‘case for a collaborative approach in developing local strategies for managing co-existence in shared spaces, as a key element in building positive institutional capacities for proactive economic development’. The concept of social capital has also been described as ‘valuable assets that individuals and groups can use to address a wide range of needs and interests, acting as a counterweight to the negative effects of globalisation and uneven access to new information and communications technology’ (HABITAT, 2001: 48).

In the sustainable development (SD)/ sustainability debate, the problem with conventional development is that it has in effect been identified with economic growth, meaning ‘greater levels of business turnover, sales, consumption, exporting , investing and GDP’ (Trainer, 2002; Fernando, 2003: 19). The technical prescriptions for this type of growth are found in the neo-liberal recipe books, namely ‘macroeconomic stability, privatisation and liberalisation (Cornwall and Brock, 2005:

1045). The effect of this, according to Trainer (2002) is that this development under globalisation allocates more land, water, forests, oil and other resources into export markets, leaving less and less resources for poor people to meet their own needs in their own countries. Rich countries are also producing and consuming at rates that are grossly unsustainable, resulting in rapid depletion and destruction of the planet's resources, ecosystems and social bonds. In addition Trainer and others point out that the planet does not have enough resources for all its people ever to rise to the living standards of the rich world (Trainer, 2002; Fernando, 2003).

Also within the sustainability debate there is quite a lot of criticism being levered against the present capitalist system. According to Trainer (2002) in his article 'If you want affluence, prepare for war' 'the economy underlying the way of life taken for granted in Western industrial-affluent-consumer societies is an imperial system involving extreme injustice, oppression and use of terror'. He documents this situation at some length in this article. David Pepper (as cited in Fernando, 2003: 6) considers that '[s]ustainable ecologically sound capitalist development is a contradiction in terms'. Despite this, Dickens (1992: 7, as cited in Fernando, 2003: 8) contends that 'the idea that the solution to these problems [unsustainable development] lies in the overthrow of capitalism, is outmoded'. The solutions have to be found within the system and through changes from within, in democratic, non-violent ways.

Africa has to choose whether to solve their complex, 'wicked' [5], interrelated development problems following the same unsustainable route as the North did (with the belief that economic growth was so important that social and environmental issues could wait), or to try and solve the poverty and development problem in a totally different paradigm, without further promoting unsustainable development. The difficult choice is between short-term economic growth goals versus long-term sustainable development. The challenge is often verbalised in simplistic terms such as 'jobs versus the environment'. Many people, including the poor, still believe in these reductionist views.

At the same time there is disillusionment with 'development' talk and the lack of action and change on the ground. In the words of Nederveen Pieterse (2000: 182) '[d]evelopment thinking ... involves telling other people what to do—in the name of

modernisation, nation building, progress, mobilisation, sustainable development, human rights, poverty alleviation and even empowerment and participation'. The development language used in policy documents by the World Bank and United Nations are often utopian, optimistic and happy, but decades of failed development have made people on the ground cynical with ambitions to change the world. Doubts are being expressed 'over social engineering and rationalist planning as exercises in authoritarianism, and over modernism and the utopian belief in the perfectibility of society' (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000: 187).

SD has been described as difficult not to approve of it, but fraught with contradictions (Redclift, 1994: 17). It is more than a passing fad, and has excited the imagination of many practitioners and communities and it has succeeded in animating leaders and policy makers (Estes, 1993). It is often assumed to be a universal value. Wals and Jickling (2002: 224) declare that sustainability should not be seen as something holy, but that its very slipperiness and complexity makes it an ideal educational tool to stimulate creativity and critical thinking.

There are also those writers that are quite critical of the sustainability movement and see it as the 'latest in a long line of totalising thought since the Enlightenment which claims to be THE only true and moral way of looking at and analysing the world' (Sandercock, 2004). Other examples of 'totalising thought' are Marxism, communism, socialism, liberalism, neo-liberalism, and various utopian models relating to urban form, such as Howard's Garden City, Le Corbusier's Radiant city, New Towns, McHarg's 'Designing with Nature', New Urbanism, as well as procedural/ normative models, such as systems theory, radical planning, collaborative planning and communicative action/ planning (Sandercock, 1998 and 2004). Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (2002: 27 as cited in Fernando, 2003: 7) state 'Many analysts have come to regard it as an insubstantial and clichéd platitude unworthy of further interests or research, and perhaps even more significantly, theorizing of the idea seems to have reached something of an impasse'.

Yet all these negative views do not alter the necessity to 'change the world' (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000: 187). Many people recognise the need for a new development paradigm (Estes, 1993), and it seems as if the still evolving concepts of

sustainability and sustainable development are perceived as this paradigm. Fernando (2003: 28) believes that our views about SD 'are expressions of our positions on ethics, morality, and social justice and of our commitment to political strategies to realize them'. Estes (1993: 12) defines this paradigm of sustainable development as 'the establishment of new systems of personal and institutional renewal that are guided by the quest for peace, increased social justice, the satisfaction of basic human needs, and the protection of the planet's fragile eco-systems'. If we as Africans want to be good forefathers for our children and their children, we need to start giving serious attention to engaging and investigating what sustainable development can mean for us. A lot more people on the planet, as well as fixed national borders, mean that we cannot move away from our environmental problems anymore (the spaceship attitude) versus the earlier frontier or cowboy attitude to development. This planet is the only one we have, at least for the foreseeable future. We need to start investigating how we can change our local circumstances for the better,

One problem is the power of unsustainable development, with the hegemony of neo-liberal capitalism supported by big business, many Northern countries and institutions like the World Bank, IMF and the WTO (Fernando, 2003: 6). Another challenge is that the complex, multi-dimensional concepts of 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' (SD) can be interpreted in many different ways, making it very difficult for planners and communities to know how to strive towards such an elusive goal, even if they do support it.

Accepting then that sustainable development has no one-size-fits-all meaning, the conception that has the greatest potential for future development in Africa, is that of a bottom-up learning process of constructing local meaning for SD and 'making connections' between various 'ideas and people', networking and working together (Innes, 1998; vii). The role-players would include experts from different fields of knowledge and disciplines (transdisciplinarity), communities (who represent local and indigenous knowledge); formal and informal businesses, unions and workers, politicians and officials from different spheres of government, as well as pressure or interests groups and civil society (NGO's, CBO's) at local level. This would be in line with the slogan 'think globally act locally' popularised by the Earth Summit (Allen and You, 2002: xii). In addition, Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992) highlights the role

unions and workers might play in fostering the principles of sustainable development. It targeted the movement's traditional focus on human rights, equity, democracy and fair, decent and sustainable employment (Springett and Foster, 2005). Global alliances between the North and South and between the South and South will be needed as well.

In the words of Scott Campbell (2001: 259) 'our sustainable future does not yet exist, either in reality or even in strategy. We do not yet know what it will look like; it is being socially constructed through a sustained period of conflict negotiation and resolution. This is a process of innovation, not of discovery and converting the non-believers'. Campbell (2001: 259) believes that, in trying to solve development problems (including the promotion of SD), the only solution is often to deliberately reconstruct social reality, through collaborative social learning. McGregor (2004) believes that 'shared knowledge through dialogue and discussion should lead to shared understanding'.

The South African concept of 'Integrated Development Planning' can potentially play a role in 'making connections' and the construction of local meaning regarding SD can provide a learning experience for other African countries. Despite IDPs [6] potential for creating local shared conceptions of sustainable development, this will only happen if the process involves real grassroots participative planning around a broad interpretation of the issue of sustainability. A grassroots participative planning process will not be easy, conflict-free nor will it not be influenced by power (Rue, 2004). According to Jayne (2003: 959), in relation to local economic strategies, 'it is conceptually important, but nonetheless problematic to account for the multiplicity of individual, business, institutional, community, social and other groups' involvement in, interpretation of, or consumption of dominant city images and urban regeneration projects'. However the concept of SD makes it important that the participants start engaging with the difficult issues and conflict underlying SD. In the words of De Sousa (2003: 195) '...the planner does not see her/himself as a 'neutral' expert pursuing social harmony through technical rationality, where disharmony is presumed to be avoidable and even pathological, but to make explicit the conflicts between different social groups and to try to regulate them in a politically transparent manner and through democratic participation, in order to achieve more social justice in the

city and a better quality of life *especially* (even if not *exclusively*) for its least privileged residents’.

This article will address the problem of creating meaning of SD, by first discussing the many potential meanings of the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development (SD). The argument then turns to the role participatory community-based planning can play in advancing sustainable development (with an overview of concepts like collaborative planning, deep and deliberative democracy and citizenship, public participation, conflict management and social capital,) before a synopsis is given of the results of a recent study of the use of the concept of sustainable development in integrated development planning (IDP) documents in South Africa. This study of completed IDP documents showed a simplistic and superficial understanding of the concepts of sustainability and SD, as well as a lack of knowledge about the theory regarding communicative and collaborative planning. The article concludes with a discussion on lessons that integrated development planning can learn from the planning, development and sustainable development literature.

The concepts of sustainability and sustainable development

Sustainability and sustainable development (SD) are the new buzzwords, which are being touted by some as those that will save the developing world. These evolving, multi-dimensional, inter-disciplinary, highly complex and ‘contestable political’ concepts are interpreted in ‘different and even clashing’ ways by various interest groups, often promoting polar opposite or ‘mutually exclusive’ discourses (Hattingh, 2002: 4 and 15; Barrow, 1995: 370) or examples of Orwellian ‘doublethink’ and ‘newspeak’[7]’ (Wals and Jickling, 2002). The concepts are also often used as ‘spin’ or window-dressing in government and business documents, without illustrating any of the internal tensions inherent in the difficult choices that have to be made to attain SD. The use of the concept by local authorities in South African Integrated Development Plans illustrate that no more than lip service is being paid to the concept of SD, while the message in the rest of the documents is ‘business as usual’.

According to Cornwall and Brock (2005: 1056) the language we use is never neutral. Concepts ‘acquire meaning as they are put to use in policies’ and ‘these policies...influence how those who work in development think about what they are doing’. They mention the example of the World Bank, who has ‘the propensity to appropriate and rework terms’ so that internal tensions and ‘[d]issident meanings are stripped away to ensure coherence’ (Cornwall and Brock, 2005: 1056- 1057). The problem with the seductive language of buzzwords is the lack of real understanding underlying this language. The simplistic view of ‘jobs versus the environment’, while it may be very real for many communities, belies the complex truth behind both economic and environmental trends (Steinzor, 1996). According to Steinzor (1996) ‘Over the course of time, a basic fact remains: human beings need natural resources to survive and develop, but resource supplies are finite. Jobs can either be created to accommodate immediate needs, or our economic base can be transformed to last for generations’.

The search for ‘one-size-fits-all development models and recipes’ reminds one of the Orwellian concept of ‘newspeak’, where ‘concepts capable of opposing, contradicting or transcending the status quo were liquidated’ (Wals and Jickling, 2002: 223). Within the SD debate there are many dissenting meanings, such as the radical versus the conservative, mainstream perceptions of how SD is to be achieved, as well as different views around whether or ‘how embedded richer Northern countries are in the fortunes of others’ (Cornwall and Brock, 2005: 1056- 1057). An example to support this last statement is the theory, based on credible evidence, that air particle pollution from Europe and North America may have been the cause of the droughts in the Sahel during the 1970s and 1980s, which eventually culminated in the 1984 Ethiopian famine [7]. This has been ascribed to the ‘global dimming’ effect of polluted clouds (acting like mirrors reflecting sunlight away from the earth). At the beginning of the Northern summer the heat of the sun is needed to shift the rain belt around the equator northwards, bringing monsoon rains to the Sahel (BBC, 2005). Another example of the effect of the over-consumption of the rich is, according to John Revington in the ‘World Rainforest Report’, the fact that the market for ‘super-sized’ hamburgers in the USA is one of the driving forces behind the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. The forest has to make way for cattle ranches for beef exports to the USA (Worldwatch, 2004: 13). A series of reports from the South (Redclift and Sage,

1994:5) have also indicated that the effects of global warming will be more severe for poor than for rich countries.

The idea of sustainability is derived from science, but also highlights the limitations of science to deal with complex phenomena. Many of the natural phenomena on our planet are complex and interrelated processes, with a lack of clear, conclusive proof of the cause and effect between pollution, acid rain, global warming, global dimming and issues such as climate change (Hajer, 1993: 43-76). The cumulative effects of actions also further complicate the issue. This uncertainty makes it very difficult to decide on actions to protect the environment.

Although the two concepts of SD and sustainability are often used interchangeably, O’Riordan *et al* (2000) believes that SD implies an end point, whereas sustainability is more about a pathway or a direction in which to move. Gallopin (2003: 5 - 20) analysed the concepts from a systems perspective and asserted that ‘sustainability of a system can be represented by a non-decreasing valuation function of the outputs of interest of the system considered’, such as the sustainability of the system itself (the preservation of a natural ecosystem such as a pristine forest) or the sustainability of the output(s) of the system (agricultural yield of an agro-ecosystem). Wals and Jickling (2002: 222) feels the concept of sustainability, literally meaning to keep going continuously, is conceptually flawed as it does not provide any clues on mediating between contesting claims between different value systems. De Vries (1989, as cited in Redclift, 1994: 17- 18) sees sustainability as something that can be supported or upheld in a desired state, but conversely could also be seen as enduring an undesirable state of some kind.

The concept of SD is quite different from that of ‘sustainability’ in that the word ‘development’ points to the idea of directional and progressive change. SD therefore implies improvement or transformation of the system in order to improve some of its outputs. Sometimes, we may want to sustain part of the output but change the system. The central question, according to Gallopin (2003: 5 - 20) then becomes what is to be sustained, and what is to be changed. This links us back to the question about the concept ‘development’ as a modernist project of progress and material improvement (growth), often only at the expense and through the destruction of the environment.

According to Redclift (1994: 21) SD has also been perceived as a methodology, a normative goal, even as a model and strategy for planning and management of the environment. De Vries (1989, as cited in Redclift, 1994: 21) sees as part of the SD debate the assumption by some that a blueprint for Utopia (an imaginary place or state of things in which everything is perfect) can and should be made. It should always be remembered that a sustainable utopia can potentially change to a dystopia [8], if it is only enforced in a 'big brother' eco-totalitarian or a one-size-fits-all, apoliticised manner.

These evolving concepts have become so widely used (even overused) and linked to so many different viewpoints, from neo-liberalism, socialism, localism, to radicalism, that they are in danger of becoming emptied of meaning. Redclift (1994: 17) reminds us that it is the very vagueness, ambiguity and possibility of 'doublespeak' that lies behind the concept's popularity, as it can be used in support of varying agendas or as points of legitimation. The seemingly wide-spread support for the concept is ascribed by Fernando (2003: 54) to the fact that capitalism has the 'capacity to configure development according to its own imperative'. According to Fernando (2003: 16) the present context 'makes it inevitable that we think about sustainable development in terms of a universal project of social change under the conditions of capitalist accumulation'. Cornwall and Brock (2005: 1043) illustrate how contested words like 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'poverty reduction' have been mainstreamed and how '[t]he dogma of neo-liberal discourse' distorts knowledge and reality and concepts that once spoke of power relations and politics are often changed into apolitical, one-size-fits-all concepts (Cornwall and Brock, 2005).

The most used definition for sustainable development is that of the Brundtland Commission (the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) in their Report 'Our Common Future', which called for 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This definition has been lauded as for the first time putting SD into the political and economic arena. Redclift and Sage (1994: 4) state that the commission specifically tried 'to counteract the sectoral bias and compartmentalism which had dogged so much work on the environment'. Over time

the use of the concept has evolved and different people have read different issues into this definition.

The definition has also led to further questions, such as the meaning of 'needs' in the definition. Do needs refer to very basic needs (in the Maslow hierarchy), or to the life choices we make? Even the Unmet Basic Needs (UBN) paradigm in poverty reduction focuses not only on subsistence items, but also on deprivation of access to public services such as safe drinking water, health and education (Ngwane, Yadavalli and Steffens, 2002: 545). Other interpretations of basic needs also include, besides physical needs and public services, political needs such as participation in decision-making. This last-mentioned interpretation accepts that economic poverty is closely linked to political poverty. Manfred Max-Neef (2005), the author of the books 'Human scale development' and 'Barefoot economics', supports the concept of 'synergistic satisfiers' that satisfy as many as possible human needs at the same time. This differs from Maslow's hierarchy which was based on the belief that certain higher order needs only became apparent when lower level needs have been satisfied. The needs-driven approach has also been criticised for its focus on the needs, deficiencies and problems of poor communities, and on strategies to address these needs and problems (Emmet, 2000) to the exclusion of a focus on building on existing strengths.

The most popular conception and often used interpretation of SD is still the so-called 'green' agenda, which focus around the importance of the environment. The 'green' agenda, according to Allen and You (2002), is closely linked to Agenda 21, while Hattingh (2002) believes 'that the Earth Summit...Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 represent a large step backwards to a strong anthropocentric interpretation of Sustainable Development. Even within this 'green' sector, various 'shades of green' can be found namely 'dry greens [9]', 'shallow greens [10]' (often the mainstream position), 'deep greens [11]' (Cock, 2004: 2), eco-feminism [12], eco fascism or eco-totalitarianism [13] and environmental pragmatism (Light and Rolston; 2002).

The Brown or urban development agenda again, is closely linked to the Habitat agenda and Istanbul declaration of 1996, which expanded on Local Agenda 21 by including issues of urbanisation, land, housing and urban management (Allen and

You, 2002: xii, Cock, 2004). Mobilization around the 'brown' environmental issues of environmental injustice and 'infrastructural development' issues of urban pollution, sanitation, water, electricity and waste removal, for environmental health reasons, is increasing. In addition the traditional divide between the green and brown agendas is slowly changing into acceptance that, due to increasing urbanisation levels, sustainable urbanisation is the future of ensuring sustainability.

The Red agenda is about human rights and the social justice movement (Fernando, 2003: 25- 28, Cock, 2004: 2). International development agencies are increasingly using rights-based language, but according to the IDS Policy Brief (2003) '[s]ome observers suspect that agencies have appropriated the 'rights' language without changing their underlying beliefs'. According to the rights-based approach, 'all rights, including economic, social and cultural rights [which include political and civil liberties], are considered indivisible, inter-related and inter-dependent' (IDS, 2003). 'Rights-based approaches reveal difficult issues concerning the legitimacy of action, the practice of power and lines of accountability. The full implications of putting a rights-based approach into practice remain to be tested' (IDS, 2003). The Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) contains a great many socio-economic rights, which will remain 'paper rights' unless actively implemented by all three spheres of government.

According to Cock (2004: 2) the 'red-green-brown' agenda has the greatest mass appeal, as it links 'urban and rural environmental activism to struggles for social justice' (Cock, 2004: 2). This fits in with the SD conception of 'holism' and integration of economic, social, ecological, institutional, technological and physical elements of development.

Hattingh (2002), Buchdahl and Raper (1998: 93) and others indicate that the various dissenting conceptions or ideological positions of sustainability/ SD can usually be placed on a continuum (or fault line), with many possible positions between the extremes, such as:

- Anthropocentric (human centred), where humans are seen as the 'sole entities worthy of moral consideration' versus zoo-centric (animal centred), bio-centric

(centred on all life) or eco-centric (nature centred) approaches (Buchdahl and Raper, 1998: 93, Barrow, 1995).

- Egalitarian versus non-egalitarian approach, where in the egalitarian interpretation ‘the emphasis falls on efforts to raise the living standards of the poor and the destitute, while national and global resources should be redistributed in favour of poor countries and individuals’ (Hattingh, 2002: 10). According to Hattingh (2002: 8) sustainability and SD are strongly linked to a fair distribution of resources and livelihoods, with intra-generational justice (between rich and poor) and inter-generational justice (between present and future generations) as important issues. Barrow (1995) adds inter-species equality to the mix. Trainer (2002) makes the following statement about the ‘unjust distributions and the inappropriate development’ in the world: ‘Economic activity and especially development are not determined by reference to the needs of humans, societies and ecosystems. In the present global economy they are determined mostly by market forces. The inevitable result is that the rich get almost all of the valuable resources (because they can pay for most for them) and that almost all of the development that takes place is development of whatever rich people want (because that is most profitable, i.e., will return most on invested capital)’.
- Minimalist versus robust interpretation, where the minimalist interpretation would only focus on the issue of survival of the human species, while in a robust interpretation nature is valued for its own sake, the natural capital of the world is kept intact and the focus is also on quality of life issues, the needs of future generations and the integrity of nature for its own sake (Hattingh, 2002:10-11).
- Narrow versus broad interpretation, which refers to the scope of the subject area covered by sustainability/sustainable development (Hattingh, 2002: 15). A narrow interpretation of SD, would see it as ecologically sustainable development only, while a broad interpretation of SD would cover a wider combination of issues, economic, social, environmental, physical and institutional.
- Bottom-up (grass-roots) versus top-down (‘big brother’) interpretation, which focuses on the level of participation of people on the ground.
- Weak (‘functionalist, mainstream views that perpetuate the status quo’ or ‘ecological modernisation’) versus strong sustainability (‘critical, political and progressive’) (Springett and Foster, 2005: 272 and 276): According to

Wackernagel and Rees (1996: 37) weak sustainability means that society is sustainable if the aggregate stock of manufactured and natural assets is not decreasing, in other words it allows the substitution of equivalent human-made capital for depleted natural capital. Strong sustainability recognises the unaccounted ecological services and life-support functions performed by many forms of natural capital and the considerable risk associated with their irreversible loss. It therefore requires that natural capital stocks be held constant independently of human-made capital.

- SD and different views regarding growth: SD as anti-growth, instead focussing on improvement in quality of life (Hattingh, 2002: 8) or SD as ‘the conservation of growth’ (Sachs, 1999).
- Conservative versus radical models of SD: the conservative model will combine the weak, minimalist, non-egalitarian, top-down and narrow interpretation of sustainability, while a radical model would combine the strong, robust, egalitarian, bottom-up and broad interpretation (Jacobs, 1999: 38, as cited in Hattingh, 2002: 16). According to Hattingh (2002: 16) ‘greens, environmental activists, and development-orientated community-based organizations’ typically support the radical model. Rees (2001: 22) believe that SD require radical changes to the way development is happening today and that mainstream, conservative changes will not be adequate.

Most conceptions of SD support the integrated or holistic nature thereof and this have been indicated diagrammatically in the literature in various ways. One figure is a Yin-Yang figure [14] (combining development and the environment), another indicate overlapping social, economic and environmental spheres where SD is found as the union of the three spheres [15] (the triple-bottom line). A third figure indicates the three spheres surrounded by circles indicating the policy environment and ethical/cultural values (Coetzee, 2002: 2). The model of SD as the integration of the three spheres has been criticised as ‘simply adding economic development, social development and environmental protection together, leaving the internal logic of each sphere intact and unexplored’ (Khan, 2005). Khan (2005) believes that most people see the internal logic as ‘neoliberal ‘trickle down’ economics for the economy, welfarist and/or workfarist poverty alleviation in society, and narrow conservationism

in the environment'. Lowe (1998, as cited in Keen et al, 2005: 13) argues for a nested model, indicating how an economic system is embedded within a social system, and how both are embedded within an ecosystem. An expanded five domain figure (including physical/technical and institutional sustainability) is also used where the model also captures the political/ institutional underpinning of the other four domains (Allen and You, 2002: Pieterse, 2004). Another figure indicates four of these domains (excluding the physical) on the corners of a prism, with the edges of the prism representing a continuum of possible positions between each domain (Valentin and Spangenberg, 1999, as cited in Edén et al, 2000). The South African Cities Network (SACN, 2004) has also developed a State of the South African cities analytical framework, clustering issues within the four areas of a productive city, an inclusive city, a sustainable city (based on green agenda issues) and a well-governed city.

Wals and Jickling (2002: 224) support an emancipatory view of sustainability. They position 'grassroots sustainability', which is open, self-determined and co-created, by active, empowered citizens against 'big brother sustainability' (also called ecototalitarianism) in which SD is closed, predetermined and prescribed, with passive, detached citizens. Grassroots sustainability is based on a deep, and broad interaction, through integrated, participatory, democratic and social learning processes, while big brother sustainability is based on a narrow, deep or shallow interaction, through hierarchical, authoritative, technocratic conditioning (Wals and Jickling, 2002: 224). They also believe that sustainability requires flexibility and the creation of spaces for new ways of thinking, valuing and doing (Wals and Jickling, 2002: 230). These spaces for participation must be minimally distorted by power relations. There must be space for pluralism, diversity and minority perspectives, for deep consensus, but also for respectful dissensus. Space for autonomous and deviant thinking and for self-determination, for contextual differences and for allowing the life world of the role-players to enter the process' (Wals and Jickling , 2002: 230). Hattingh (2002: 13) agrees: that we should 'create contexts and platforms within which we can effectively debate the value choices we make in support of policy objectives such as sustainability/ sustainable development'.

As sustainability deals with complex, cross cutting, inter-generational societal problems (McGregor, 2004), the concept of 'transdisciplinarity' (TD) is also starting

to play an important role (Max-Neef, 2005 and Nicolescu, 2005). Basarab Nicolescu (2002) believes that transdisciplinarity ‘challenges us to fundamentally rethink everything in terms of what has emerged from the most advanced contemporary sciences – quantum physics, quantum cosmology and molecular biology and what this has shown us about nature and the universe’. Transdisciplinarity (TD) complements disciplinary approaches; it seeks the emergence of deeper understanding of ‘that which resists our own experiences, representations and descriptions (another level of reality)’, through interactions and encounters between disciplines. It aims to open all disciplines to that which they share and that which lies beyond them (Nicolescu, 2005). Nicolescu (2005) believes that exploring the intersections between disciplines or fields of knowledge generate new things. The object of transdisciplinarity is to understand the present world, in all of its complexities, instead of focusing on just one part of it (Nicolescu, 2005). McGregor (2004) describes transdisciplinary research as ‘a new form of learning and problem-solving involving cooperation among different parts of society, including academia, in order to meet the complex challenges of society’.

According to Robert Chambers (1997) one of the challenges for planners, other professions and experts in general, is to learn not to transfer their reality to communities in a top-down manner. He believes that ‘[n]ormal professionalism creates and sustains its own reality’ (Chambers, 1997: 34). Chambers (1997: 102) concedes that, ‘[a]s professionals have become more aware of errors and myths, and of the misfit between the reality they construct and the reality others experience, some have sought and developed new approaches and methods in their work’. These new approaches include participatory methods such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA), where there is a two-way learning process.

The role planning can play in sustainable development

There are many forces against SD occurring solely on its own, including market forces and consumerism, global and local power structures and the fact that social and environmental costs are external to markets. One of the characteristics of the so-called ‘free market’ system, according to Trainer (2002), is that, when left to itself so that consumer sovereignty rules, ‘money makes money’ while others are left in a poverty

trap. There are various contradiction inherent in the present paradigm of economic development which gives capital complete freedom to go anywhere in the world and do anything it likes without any interference from governmental regulation, while at the same time restricting immigration, so that labour will never get the same freedom to move to rich countries (Trainer, 2002). Capitalism therefore requires an appropriate institutional and policy framework to safeguard the poor and to promote 'equitable growth' (White et al, 2001: 60).

Important lessons for the relationship between planning and markets can be learnt from Institutional Economics, with a new understanding about the importance of institutions for underlying markets and economic growth. According to Ankerloo (2002: 10) 'the focus on institutions implies that a capitalist market economy cannot be left to itself, but is a social system in need of design and support'. The requirements for the existence of markets are institutions such as property rights, courts to enforce laws and the rule of law. Hernando De Soto (2000) in his book 'The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else' also mentions various requirements for capitalism to work, such as properly documented ownership registers and contract law.

Another important new field is that of ecological economics, which Costanza (1991) describes as 'a transdisciplinary effort to link the natural and social sciences broadly, and especially ecology and economics'. The goal of ecological economics, according to him is to 'develop a deeper scientific understanding of the complex linkages between human and natural systems, and to use that understanding to develop effective policies that will lead to a world which is ecologically sustainable, has a fair distribution of resources (both between groups and generations of humans and between humans and other species), and efficiently allocates scarce resources including 'natural' and 'social' capital'. Ecological economics requires new 'comprehensive, adaptive, integrative, multi-scale, pluralistic, [and] evolutionary' approaches, which also acknowledge the huge uncertainties involved (Costanza, 2003). Ecological economics moves beyond environmental economics, which deals with the challenge that many environmental goods cannot be allocated efficiently by the free market and that development often results in significant and un-priced environmental impacts.

In South Africa, government policy also promotes the concept of a developmental state. Fernando (2003: 22) believes that the state has to be brought back in order to realize the goals of SD, but also warns that too close ties between the state and big business would be counter-productive. In the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) the objects of local government (section 152) and section 153 on the developmental duties of municipalities, include the promotion of the social and economic development of the community. The concept is presumably based on the successful East Asian countries, which focused on massive public investment in health and education and land reform as well as public spending on infrastructure, contrary to the neo-liberal prescriptions of the time.

However, there will always be a tension between the role of the developmental state and people on the ground. The developmental state, in its zeal to develop and implement, often ignores the creativity of people. The answer to this dilemma of authoritarianism often lies beyond the state, but also beyond the free market, in 'civil society'. It is only within civil society that real, bottom-up, empowering and human development is possible.

One of the tools used by the developmental state is planning, but it seems to be a very modernist, rational concept of planning. Modernist planning tries to control reality, believes in progress, a critical distance between planners and the planned, and a belief in meta-narratives (Allmendinger 1998: 233). Rationalist planning can also be described as a form of social engineering and an exercise in authoritarianism. During the heyday of the modernist development project, in the rational comprehensive paradigm, planners believed they could control the context, but did not understand the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the planning process. Planning was seen as an apolitical, value free and technical process, driven by experts, with no thought to the role power plays in any of the processes. Public participation was often a very superficial one-way process, or sometimes a little more consultative, after a plan was already on the table. The plans produced were examples of blueprint planning, which Faludi (1973: 131- 132) defines as 'an approach whereby a planning agency operates a programme thought to attain its objectives with certainty', whereas the process mode of planning is 'an approach whereby programmes are adapted during their

implementation as and when incoming information requires such changes'. According to Holston (1998: 46) modern planning also attempts to plan without contradiction and conflict and in the process fail to consider unintended consequences and diversity (Holston, 1998: 46; Harrison, 2001b: 69).

However, the planning literature tells us that rational, technocratic planning does not work very well when confronted with the uncertainty, rapid change and diversity of the post-modern era. According to Innes (1998:vii) 'Post-modern planning ... designed to deal with the fragmentation, uncertainty and rapid change of the late twentieth century- merges the steps and mixes the roles. Participants do not accept the neutrality of any expertise, but accepts as relevant, if not neutral, knowledge grounded in experience, intuition and stories. They learn that communication is a form of action and that its form and content matter because it changes the participants'. She sees this post-modern mode of planning as a process that 'is driven, not by a search for the best way to achieve a goal, but for a package of actions that participants agree will improve on the situation (Innes 1998: vii). In these collaborative processes, decisions (also called policy packages) and plans are only some of the products – along the way many things happen which are not envisioned by the rational model'. Some of the positive unintended consequences of the communicative, collaborative process are the building of social capital (trust, networks, and new opportunities) and joint social learning. Higgins and Morgan (2000) add further consequences, such as flexible linkages, new roles and relationships, empowerment, capacity building and networking.

This collaborative social learning is part of the paradigm of collaborative (and communicative) planning, in which the 'process' of planning becomes more important than the 'product' of the planning exercise. A recent definition of planning by Carole Rakodi (2000) encapsulates this new vision by defining planning as: 'a process of developing a shared vision, resolving conflict, negotiating consensus and forging new working relationships, in order to carry out a programme of action which will realise the agreed objectives. Such a conceptualisation of planning is based on a more collaborative and inclusive approach to decision-making than is prevalent in political systems based on either representative democracy or authoritarian rule, or in traditional approaches to urban policy and plan making'.

Allmendinger (1998: 227) describes a 'middle way to the nihilistic logic of post-modernity and the stultifying consensus of the neo-modernists'. A more appropriate alternative for dealing with complexity and diversity would be to combine rational, technocratic planning with communicative, collaborative planning, based on Habermas' theory of communicative action and more recently, concepts such as deliberative and deep democracy. Allmendinger (1998: 246) warns against the 'insistence on consensus in a society of increasing difference' and recommends that '[p]lanners should be encouraging opposition as well as searching for agreement'.

Participatory planning and human development

In order to understand the role of collaborative processes in planning, it is necessary to look in depth at various aspects of democracy, participation, human development and the building of social capital. Much can be learnt from experiences in community-based planning. Khanya, a rural NGO (2001) motivate the concept of community-based planning as follows: 'The planning system is a key system for resource allocation. Unless poor people can influence the resource allocation system, the ability to promote sustainable livelihoods for poor people is limited, as is the degree of local democracy'. Khanya's approach to planning is based on the sustainable livelihood principles, meaning people focused, participatory and responsive, based on strengths and opportunities, not needs and problems, holistic, covering all sectors, based on partnerships, economically, socially, environmentally and institutionally sustainable, as well as being flexible and dynamic. Experience in Africa has taught Khanya (2001) that one of the key elements is to ensure that 'people are active and involved in managing their own development'. This community-based planning has to be linked to the legitimate local government system and integrated with existing planning processes to make sure that it is implemented. Further principles are that the community-based planning approach should not be a once-off exercise, but part of a longer, on-going process, that planning be flexible and simple, learning oriented, empowering and promote mutual accountability between community and officials. The plans must be implementable using available resources within the district/local government, there must be commitment by councillors and officials and there must be someone responsible to ensure that it gets done.

For IDPs to play a much greater role in promoting local action towards sustainability, public participation must be seen as something more than an instrumental process to get a plan approved. The participation process should be part of a process to build social and human capital within communities as part of human development, and to contribute to the building of civil society networks. The purpose behind this is to get people to help themselves and to take responsibility and ownership for their own lives, communities, neighbourhoods and jobs, by giving them the knowledge, skills and motivation. This does not however abdicate the responsibility of government in development as in the neo-liberal model (Thomas, 2002). Development should always be seen as a partnership between communities, government and civil society.

The 'Inter-Regional Consultation on People's Participation in Environmentally Sustainable Development', held in Manila, Philippines during June 1989 (as cited in Korten, 1990), made the following declaration (also known as the Manila Declaration on People's Participation and Sustainable Development): 'Current development practice is based on a model that demeans the human spirit, divests people of their sense of community and control over their own lives, exacerbates social and economic inequity, and contributes to destruction of the ecosystem on which all life depends'. The Manila Declaration suggests that a fundamentally different development model is needed, one which does not necessarily involve growth. According to the declaration 'Sustainable human communities can be achieved only through a people-centered development', which is described as development that:

- returns control over resources to the people to be used in meeting their own needs, creating incentives for the responsible stewardship of resources
- broadens political participation, with a base of strong people's organizations and participatory local government, with political and economic democracy as its cornerstone.
- builds within people a sense of their own humanity and their links to the earth, its resources, and the natural processes through which it sustains all life.
- calls for active mutual self-help among people, working together in their common struggle to deal with their common problems, recognizing the

importance of the self-respect of the individual and the self-reliance of the community.

Trainer (2002: 56) argues that 'what matters most is not how much development has taken place, how much wealth has been created or how much economies have grown, but what changes have occurred in the quality of life of those in most urgent need, and what improvements have occurred to ecosystems'. According to him the present situation was summarised in the United Nations' Human Development Report of 1996 which stressed that the poorest one third of the world's people actually experienced a marked long-term deterioration in their real living conditions and that over 1.6 billion people were found to be getting poorer each year (Trainer, 2002: 56).

According to Estes (1993) 'Only the concept of 'human development', currently being promulgated by the UNDP (UNDP, 1992), represents a serious challenge to the primacy of sustainable development in the new hierarchy of development concepts'. He states that according to the UNDP the fullest possible human development can be thought of as both the 'means' and the 'goal' of sustainable development practice (UNDP, 1992:13-25).

Human Capability or Human development has been the United Nation's view of poverty since the first Human Development Report of 1990, prepared by a group of scholars under the leadership of Pakistani-born economist Mahbub ul Haq. They defined development as a process of enlarging people's choices (economic, social, cultural and political) in a much broader sense than other mainstream economists (Martinussen, 1997: 303). The human development notion is based on view that market mechanism is essentially unfriendly to the poor, the weak and vulnerable. This requires public policies to provide services and opportunities as equitably as possible to all citizens, in order to create a link between human development and income growth. Human development is measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), based on view that development means choices in three essential areas: An opportunity to live a long and healthy life (life-expectancy), an opportunity to acquire knowledge (literacy) and an opportunity to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living (income). Over time the concept of human development has been extended to basically all areas of societal development, such as social infrastructure and services, gender equality (since the 1995 Human development

report), equal opportunities for participation in political and economic development, empowerment of citizens and civil society organizations, enabling legal and institutional frameworks, and environmental and natural resource sustainability (Sustainable Human Development).

Amartya Sen's capability approach, in his book 'Development as Freedom' (Sen, 1999) is also part of the Human Development Approach. According to Evans (2002) 'Amartya Sen's 'capability approach' argues strongly for a focus on institutions involving 'public discussion and exchange'. 'The capability approach foregrounds the question of social choice and argues that deliberative institutions – public discussion and exchange – must be central to any theoretical conceptualisation of development, both as a valued end in themselves and as the only fully legitimate means of evaluating other ends' (Evans, 2002: 1-2). According to the human capability approach poverty is more than an impoverished state in which the person actually lives, but also include the lack of real opportunity—due to social constraints as well as personal circumstances—to lead 'valuable and valued lives'. The human capability approach therefore focuses on expanding people's opportunities, by empowering the poor, facilitating their participation in society and enabling them to move upward on the socio-economic ladder.

Lok-Dessalien (1999: 4) points out that the focus on empowerment, participation and enabling creates special operational challenges. 'First, there is no consensus as to what constitutes an enabling and empowering environment, much less what is 'good' participation (i.e. is participation through involvement of larger numbers of people but resulting in less empowerment better or worse than participation of smaller numbers of people that results in greater empowerment?). Second, the expansion of the concept of poverty to include other broad areas of concern, such as participation, actually undermines the usefulness of the concept from a policy perspective' (Lok-Dessalien, 1999: 4).

Participation therefore has an intrinsic value in development. The language of chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000) seems to only refer to participation as an instrumental value. Section 16 of this Act reads as follows:

‘16. Development of culture of community participation.—(1) A municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, and must for this purpose—
(a) encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in—
(i) the preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan in terms of Chapter 5.....’

The White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998: section 3.3) goes beyond this when it states:

‘One of the strengths of integrated development planning is that it recognizes the linkages between development, delivery and democracy. Building local democracy is a central role of local government and municipalities should develop strategies and mechanisms (including, but not limited to, participatory planning) to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups.

However, in most cases this ‘building of local democracy’ or ‘participatory planning’ does not seem to be happening. Allen and You (2002: 3) believe that the ‘structural barriers that have inhibited local actions towards sustainability’ should be addressed. Some of the issues that need to be addressed include the low level of trust communities have in local government (McKenzie and Pieterse, 1999: 20; Thomas, 2002), the belief by people, especially the poor, that they are not able to influence local decision making (Thomas, 2002) and the lack of platforms where the disadvantaged and advantaged can lobby for resources (Beall, 2000).

According to Emmet (2000: 501) ‘conceptions of civil engagement such as community-based or people-centred development, citizen participation and public–private partnerships can be found in many, if not most, of the policy documents of the post-apartheid state. Cernea (1992: 1, as cited in Emmet, 2002: 502) however, identifies a widening gap between rhetoric and reality in the implementation of

community participation. The enthusiasm for people-centered development also seem to have waned since the Reconstruction and Development Plan of 1994 (Emmet, 2002: 501). Although community participation still enjoys a high level of support across various sectors in South Africa, its practice is fraught with conceptual and practical difficulties.

Emmet (2000: 501) examined 'some of the problems and limitations associated with community participation'. These included the 'heterogeneity and fragmentation of many poor communities, the lack of social and material resources and community members' expectations of receiving a return from their involvement in development projects'. Midgley (1986: 158, cited in Emmet, 2000: 504) argue that 'concepts of participation that appeal to western educated middle-class activists do not always conform to the expectations of ordinary people. For many people, participation means sharing the benefits that others in society already enjoy. Why should the poor be expected to give freely of their time for participatory development, when consultants are paid?' Emmet (2000) also argues that it is not community-based approaches that are inadequate, but that their conception of empowerment is limited and does not go far enough in addressing the full implications of the distribution of power. The distribution of power and resources between communities and government structures are often ignored and community-based strategies make unrealistic demands on the already depleted resources of poor communities.

According to Emmet (2000) '[t]here is not just one community, but many different identities within a community'. The management of participatory development is therefore dependent upon the experience and intuition of individuals. There is no 'single, unified methodology for participation', but the form participation takes is highly influenced by the unique social context in which action is being taken (Emmet, 2002).

There are many other structural barriers to participation and sustainable development, including a lack of knowledge and experience by officials and politicians, as well as differences in perception of what democracy and participation really mean. According to Strömbäck (2005: 335) 'democracy can never be reduced to the act of voting 'yes' or 'no' to predefined alternatives every fourth or fifth year'. Concepts such as deep

democracy and deliberative democracy can play a role in helping us to better understand the concept of democracy. 'Deliberative democracy' has been referred to as 'empowered participatory governance, joint planning, problem-solving and strategising involving ordinary citizens' (Evans, 2002: 14; Springett and Foster, 2005). Deliberative democracy has been in the spotlight for the last 15 years (Strömbäck 2005: 336) and can also be defined as follows: 'the notion includes collective decision making with the participation of all who will be affected by the decision or their representatives: this is the democratic part. Also, all agree that it includes decision making by means of arguments offered by and to participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality: this is the deliberative part' (Elster, 1998: 8, as cited in Strömbäck, 2005: 336).

'Deep democracy' moves beyond traditional public participation and refers to efforts, usually by the poor and disenfranchised to claim space and voice for themselves, thereby reconstituting the concept of 'citizenship' in cities and often through grassroots civil society organizations or CBOs, such as saving schemes and slum dweller's associations (Appadurai, 2001: 25). According to T H Marshall (1977, as cited in Holston, 1998: 50) 'Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed'. However, in practice there is always a difference between substantive and formal citizenship. Processes like social exclusion lead to the formation of insurgent citizenship – citizens who as members of the modern state have the right to advance their claims for civil, political and social rights, including rights to the city, rights to difference, rights to safety and in the case of South Africa, rights to the socio-economic development promised by the Constitution.

Democracy needs a large reservoir of social capital among people such as norms of reciprocity, civic engagement and trust (Putnam, 1993, 2000, Rothstein, 2003, as cited in Thomas, 2003). The stronger civil society is, and the more social capital a society has, the more democracy thrives. According to Putnam (2000: 341, as cited in Strömbäck 2005: 336) 'Citizenship is not a spectator sport'. Flyvbjerg (1998: 5) makes a similar point: 'The [Aalborg] case is a lesson in the importance of endurance: democracy is not something a society 'gets'; democracy must be fought for each and

every day in concrete instances, even long after democracy is first constituted in a society. If citizens do not engage in this fight, there will be no democracy’.

The concept of social capital allows us to understand why social relations are resources for development. It has been described as ‘[t]he glue that holds communities together’ (Thomas, 2003: 18). Khanya (1999: 2) defines social capital as ‘[t]he social resources (networks, membership of groups, relationships of trust, access to wider institutions of society) upon which people draw in pursuit of livelihoods’. While social capital can refer to relationships and networks within specific localities (bonding capital), it may also be used to refer to relationships that extend beyond or between communities (bridging capital) (Thomas, 2003: 20). Social capital encompasses social resources of the urban poor, such as family, kinship, social networks, social cohesion, a sense of belonging, social support, norms and social trust, solidarity, reciprocity, interpersonal networks, contacts, knowledge, identity, respect, co-operation, reciprocity, culture, commitment; civil society, involvement in civic activities, organizations of the voluntary association type, community-level networks and organizations (Beall, 2001: 357; Thomas, 2003: 18 -20).

Thomas (2003: 21 and 2002) describes social capital as a multi-disciplinary approach that is ‘a useful umbrella under which all the so-called soft aspects related to hard development outcomes can be grouped’. The concept have attempted to find common ground between economic and social theory, and to transcend the reductionism of economic theory that recognises only one form of capital. The founding fathers of the concept of social capital have been described as the economist Gary Becker (also known for his study of ‘human capital’), the sociologist James Coleman and the political scientists, Robert Putnam. It is however, still a disputed concept with a number of widely divergent definitions. Economists have been lambasted for trying to co-opt and dominate the debate according to Fine (2001, as cited in Thomas, 2003: 18): ‘[R]eferring to the social aspects as capital has allowed the economists to dominate the understanding of social aspects of development.’

Thomas (2002) states that ‘[t]he social capital and development debate centres around a recognition that the development and economic prospects of communities need more than ‘funding’ and resources, namely human, natural and physical capital. Other

factors such as access to information, political stability, social support, education, health, resources, markets, etc. are important'. She investigated the current social capital of the women of Siyanda and their social resources, as a 'basis on which deeper trust and cohesion in the community can be built' (Thomas 2002). There seems to be a lack of involvement of women in community decision-making and a distrust of local government. The women believe that they have little influence on local decision-making. According to Thomas (2002) this 'highlights both gaps and opportunities. Women need to be empowered to be able to participate in the things that affect their lives'. According to her 'a more nuanced, sensitive and appropriate approach to the local participation and inclusion of women in development initiatives' is needed, with specific, targeted mechanisms to begin to change the women's perceptions, such as encouragement and support for their role in activities (Thomas 2002). The example of income generation activities is mentioned as a useful entry point. According to Thomas (2002) 'Expecting [poor] women to actively participate in development committees [or IDP forums] is unlikely to be fruitful, given the lack of trust in local government and the lack of belief in being able to influence change in their community'.

According to Mitlin (2001: 152) one of the major characteristics of social capital is that its supply increases rather than decreases through use, and conversely becomes depleted when not used. For example, trust inspires trust, just as mistrust encourages mistrust. Similarly, when social norms are ignored or social networks not utilised, they disintegrate or become less effective. It should therefore be a very important rule of development that social capital be nurtured and not destroyed. However, very often the budgeting processes used by government contributes to destroying trust between planners and communities when the funding for an previously approved project gets withdrawn for one or other reason after a protracted negotiation process. The deadlines for spending money often do not take into account social processes and limitations. Another example is the destruction of social networks and capital through the way housing is allocated through waiting lists. Financial decisions are sometimes made in a top-down manner without taking into account the social implications of these decisions.

It should be accepted that, like in any political endeavour, in any collaborative process there will be diverse views on how resources should be distributed and problems solved, with the resulting conflict, which will need to be explored and managed. Rue (2004) discusses the possibility of establishing a public space of deliberation (in her case in the field of transport planning) and then state: 'It [public debate] is, therefore, first and foremost an opportunity to express dissatisfaction and frustration. At the same time, public debate represents—perhaps for the same reason—an opportunity to criticize forms of social domination. It thus may give rise to citizen mobilization rather than help contain it, as is often naively expected by its promoters within the public policy administration. Conflict is thus always the actual subject of public debate'. According to Rue, 'public action has become complex because the era of 'either-or' has been replaced by the era of 'and'. In the words of Beck (1992: 1, as cited in Rue, 2004): 'While the nineteenth century was dominated by 'Either-Or', the twentieth was devoted to work on 'And'. Formerly: separation, specialization, efforts at clarity and the calculability of the world; now: simultaneity, multiplicity, uncertainty, the issue of connections, cohesion, experiments with exchange, the excluded middle, synthesis, ambivalence'. Making explicit the conflict between different groups, as mentioned by De Sousa (2003: 195) is a very important step in creating local meaning of Sustainable Development.

Analysis of integrated development plans

For various reasons, including the highly regulated, top down and fragmented nature, the development planning system in South Africa does not (despite policy statements to the contrary) presently promote sustainable development. Planning and development in South Africa have developed out of disconnected compartments (town and regional planning, economic and financial planning, environmental management, development studies, etc) and is unfortunately largely still being practiced as such. Despite the promotion of the concept of cooperative governance between the three spheres of government in the Constitution, it does not yet exist in reality. One example of the lack of cooperative governance can be found in the uncoordinated National 'big brother' laws and policies regarding Environmental Impact Assessments and Heritage approvals, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for Provincial Governments to streamline their approval systems.

Since 1996 integrated development planning has been touted in policy documents as ‘THE’ solution to all South Africa’s developmental problems. Manual after manual have been prepared, more recently about alignment, coordination and integration. More and more, these policies give the impression of being more concerned with budgetary planning than with planning the built or natural environment. The following are just some of the many policy documents regarding integrated development planning:

- White Paper on Local Government, 1998
- A Policy Paper on Integrated Development Planning (October 2000 - DPLG)
- Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000
- IDP Guide Pack of 2001
- Local Pathways to Sustainable Development in South Africa of 2002
- Strengthening Sustainability In The Integrated Development Planning Process of 2002
- Assessment of the IDP Process 2001/2
- South Africa: Human Development Report - The Challenge of Sustainable Development: Unlocking People's Creativity (UNDP) of 2003

The manuals and policy documents and the IDPs themselves also seem to ignore the planning context of complexity, diversity, conflict and rapid change or see the solution to dealing with complexity as rational, technical, systems orientated planning with public participation added to the mix before the plan is approved. Diversity and conflict is rarely explored. A further problem is the time limits within which plans had to be produced, which precluded any real participation.

The analysis of some Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) started as a class project by students in the MPhil degree in Sustainable Development Planning and Management. A variety of IDPs from all over the country, including metropolitan areas, small towns and district councils, were downloaded from the Department of Provincial and Local Government’s IDP Nerve centre (www.dplg.gov.za) and before that, from the Planning and Implementation Management Support Centres (PIMSS)

web site (www.pimss.net). In addition to this I also assessed a variety of IDPs in preparation for a larger study at a later stage. The focus only on IDP documents has its limitations, as many issues were not mentioned in these documents. It was a start, however, that does at least give a preliminary overview of the state of the challenge. More information will be obtained if this research is followed up by interviews with key role players at local levels.

The purpose of this analysis was to assess the quality of the IDPs, as well as the sustainability language and the sustainability content in individual IDPs. The following questions were asked:

- How often was the concept of SD or sustainability used? Were other linked words used, such as human rights, social justice, human development, social development?
- Was the concept used in the vision of the community?
- How was the concept defined and unpacked, if at all? Did they use the Brundtland definition, that of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000) or their own definition?
- Were there specific gaps in the use of the concept, relating to issues such as social or human development, bottom-up development, equity and social justice, issues such as renewable energy, pollution control, water demand management, waste management, and did the report investigate local contribution to global warming and dimming (CO₂ and other greenhouse gases, particle pollution)?
- Does the use of the concept reflect diverse meanings by different interest groups and internal tensions?
- What does the IDP document say about the public participation process followed to produce the vision, mission and objectives? What processes were followed to create local meaning regarding SD and whose meaning was it?

The results of the analysis showed that IDPs are mostly technical, managerial documents (based on scientific rationality) instead of collaborative, communicative processes. Integrated development planning is still seen by many practitioners as

mainly a rational planning process, with varying degrees of public participation and with a definite end-product in mind (the IDP document) which is often little more than a municipal budget and list of 'integrated' (in a very limited sense) projects to be developed by the municipality. The opportunity for the wider community to use the IDP process as a chance to promote sustainability or positive human development, was largely missed. From the discussion of the participation processes in the IDP document, there seemed to be a lack of real participation, capacity building, empowerment, and social learning of all role-players during the IDP process. Most IDPs can be described as 'lowest common denominator' plans, which do not deal with underlying conflicting visions and disagreements about resource distribution, inherent to the concept of sustainability. It only scratches the surface of issues of over-consumption, equity and poverty.

The analysis showed that the word 'sustainable' is presently mentioned in many IDPs, but the understanding of SD seem to be superficial and the concept is often used as jargon or rhetoric. Often the word 'sustainable' was added as an adjective to a variety of concepts which had little to do with the holistic concept of sustainability, for instance 'sustainable financial management', 'sustainable job creation', 'sustainable roll-out of electrification', 'sustainable approach to water conservation' and 'sustainable service delivery'. In actual fact, in the majority of cases where the concept SD was mentioned, it was not unpacked at all and always dealt with as if it was an uncontested subject that had potentially only one meaning. Even when a certain meaning of SD was promoted (such as SD as inter-generational equity or SD as integration), the practical application of the concept rarely conformed to the meaning that was being promoted, as the IDP lacked specific strategies to promote it.

There were also very large gaps in the content of IDPs. Despite it being mandated, few plans included spatial development frameworks, or even spatial strategies, a very important aspect of SD. Very few of the IDPs referred to the role local authorities ought to play in implementing human rights (the Red Agenda of SD) and most documents also showed ignorance of the consequences of the Grootboom Constitutional Court Case and further Constitutional Court Cases for planning in relation to the poorest of the poor. Many of the human and socio-economic rights in the South African Constitution will not be worth the paper they are written on, unless

their practical application are linked to practical implementation of IDPs, Provincial Planning and Development Strategies and national programmes.

IDPs have also been compared to South African versions of Local Agenda 21 plans (Coetzee, 2002), but in reality Cape Town and other municipalities had a parallel system of LA21 plans. Cape Town for instance still has a parallel report 'The State of the Environment', as well as an Integrated Metropolitan Environmental Policy, not mentioned or cross-referenced in their latest IDP. It is a very important requirement of Integrated Development Planning and sustainable development that all the separate so-called integrated reports and policies (Integrated Transport Plans, Integrated Water Policies and Integrated Environmental Policies), as well as other developmental policies outside their jurisdiction (Land Reform), be integrated into a local authority's IDP. None of the IDPs assessed made use of tools such as Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs), or Social Impact Analysis (SIA). Regarding the economic content, very few IDPs made any reference to the informal sector and where they promoted local economic development (LED) initiatives, they seemed to be unaware of the literature on pro-poor LED (Rogerson 2003) and pro-poor tourism (Roe, Dilys and Urquhart 2001). According to the literature, the poor need to be specifically targeted, as mainstream development will usually bypass them.

Lessons to be learnt for integrated development planning

It should be remembered that sustainability deals with complex, cross cutting, inter-generational societal problems (McGregor, 2004). The problems of development are complex, 'wicked' problems (problems of organised complexity) that requires 'complex', flexible solutions and cannot be solved through rational, technocratic planning alone. The diversity in opinions and needs, require a more collaborative learning approach to planning, where experts can learn from communities and communities from experts (without experts transferring their realities onto people). This collaborative learning process should be about making meaning of the concept of sustainable development, as well as about taking creative ideas forward with a deliberate set of actions, making radical changes to the way we are presently doing things, in small steps. There is a need to stimulate debate about issues of sustainability at all levels of society, even if there is a lot of underlying conflict and disagreements.

Conflict should not be seen as something negative, but, if managed well, can be constructive in getting people to air their grievances. It is also the first step in the creation of local meaning of SD.

Participation is both a 'goal' and 'means' of human development and human development should be a very important 'means' and 'goal' of sustainable development practice. Authentic human development requires a different type of participation, with open debate, social learning, innovation and creativity. The participation process should be more than a process to get approval for the plan, but an ongoing dialogue about the sustainable development of the town and its people. The unintended positive consequences of participation (joint social learning, networking, the building of social capital (trust, networks, new opportunities) flexible linkages, new roles and relationships, empowerment, capacity building) should be actively encouraged. There is also a need to address the barriers to participation by some groups, such as lack of capacity, time, money or distrust. Thomas (2002) mentioned the example of income generating projects as a useful entry point to get poor women involved. There are many other techniques, but the present focus on various types of meetings and workshops with the exclusive goal of approving an IDP document is part of the problem. Participation need to be expanded beyond the IDP Forum. Hopefully this will help to address the present mismatch between what people need and what is being delivered to them by an expert-driven development process.

The IDP should be more than just 'the municipality's' plan and budget. It needs to belong to all communities, businesses and other role-players as well, so that businesses, NGOs, CBOs and schools can align their planning with the community's identified needs. It should be remembered that in the real world there is a lot of people, and organizations and a lot of energy already involved in development projects and business investment. How can the IDP process take note of and link with this and not stifle this energy? People are already very busy and need to be convinced that the IDP process will have benefits for them.

The implementation of the plan should also not solely be based on the municipality's resources alone, but also require partnerships and networking between all the other role players. Part of the local authority's job should be to stimulate the networking,

making links and connections between formal and informal businesses, training facilities (colleges, universities, and schools), NGOs, CBOs, churches and communities at local level. It is also important to network nationally and globally as well in the search for locally applicable innovative solutions. There also needs to be real cooperation and networking between spheres of government – the ideal as envisaged by the SA Constitution, but not yet always seen in real life. According to Bertrand and Larrue (2004: 458) cross-sectoral integration requires the raising of awareness and internal training of staff regarding the real meaning of SD, and ‘to learn [how] to work together, to analyse potential actions from different perspectives and understand the constraints of other departments’.

The IDP requires different professions/experts to contribute their expertise, such as development economists, planners (spatial, economic and integrated), management experts, social or community workers, land surveyors, engineers, environmental experts, agricultural experts, tourism experts, business experts, etc. Many of these professional experts may already be on the staff of the local authority, provincial or national sphere of government or may be found in the community. Their different perceptions and realities require attention to the concept of transdisciplinarity, in order to seek the emergence of deeper understanding of the complexities of the present world and to explore the intersections between disciplines and that which lies beyond them. There are already very interesting examples of organizations and networks trying to combine economics, the environment and human development.

The IDP should become a practical, focussed process and product and not a dead structure and another big blueprint and bottom drawer plan gathering dust or only used as a budgeting project. An IDP must surely be about the practical realities of working together to get things done. Instead of trying to do too many things, the focus should be on a couple of basic projects that can teach people about doing things together and kick-start further projects in the future, for instance around pro-poor tourism and small scale agriculture. A more incremental, strategic and action-orientated process should be followed, looking at implementation on the ground. Unless capacity building within a municipality and within communities is seen as important and there is a focus on doing simple, practical things, the assumption is that it will probably always need more and more consultants to write more and more

reports and more and more tasks will be 'outsourced'. Such an expert-driven process will not be to the benefit of communities.

A very important aspect of an IDP would be to institute policies to change unsustainable practices, such as over-consumption, inequity and environmental degradation. This can include projects on greening the city, recycling, green procurement, organic agriculture, eco-villages (Allen and You, 2002), pro-poor local economic development (LED) (Rogerson 2003), pro-poor tourism (Roe, Dilys and Urquhart 2001), circulating money locally (New Economics Foundation, 2002) and rights-based planning (IDS, 2003).

Conclusion

SD is a complex issue that requires 'complex' solutions and strategies at global, national and local levels. Development in South Africa, contrary to what the literature advocates, is still seen as social engineering and top-down housing and service delivery (the Brown Agenda), with very little human development, building of social capital or attention to the environment. In addition, the power of unsustainable economic growth is such that changes at a global level are happening at a very slow rate, if at all. This is however no excuse for doing nothing at the local level.

There are many examples of small local initiatives where people are busy improving their local environments and living circumstances, often in more sustainable ways. Examples include the Lynedoch Ecovillage (Swilling and Annecke, 2004), various organic farming projects in India and Africa (Trainer 2002a, Allen and You, 2002). Further examples can be found around saving schemes (Bolnick, 1993 and 1996), where '[m]ovements such as Shack/Slum Dwellers International have sought to strengthen grassroots organizations, enabling them to become both more independent of external support and, at the same time, more proactive in proposing alternative models of urban development' (Bolnick and Patel 2001, as cited in Mitlin, 2001). Smith (2003) also mentions local initiatives in sustainable development that provide numerous examples of innovative practice, e.g. the building of eco-housing, the development of local, organic food economies, community-based renewable energy and moving local agenda 21 projects onwards. The social entrepreneur Prof

Mohammed Yunus and the Grameen Bank's 'banking for the poor' (www.grameen-info.org) also show how sustainable non-profit development can be. There is a lot of interest in rolling such initiatives out further, reproducing them, and making them more mainstream.

SD requires action at various levels- international, national, regional and local. There are many examples of sustainable global networks, to which IDP processes can link for local and global networking and information exchange. These include the Global Learning Network (www.undp.org/ppp/gln), Shack/ Slum Dweller's International, People-Centered Development Forum (www.pcdf.org), Global Eco-Village Network (Allen and You, 2002: 93), Sustainable Communities in Europe (www.prosus.uio.no/suscom), and also alternative economic networks on Local Exchange Trading schemes (LETS) and local currencies, Post-Autistic Economics Network (www.paecon.net), New Economics Foundation (www.neweconomics.org), International Society for Ecological Economics (www.ecologicaleconomics.org) and the Forum for Economics and the Environment (www.econ4env.co.za).

There is also a wealth of very relevant academic literature on sustainable development, people-managed development, building social capital and joint social learning out in the public domain, but unfortunately a lot of it is not being practised. Major applications by the World Bank and UNDP often seem only to pay only lip service to these theories.

The problems Africa and South Africa are experiencing force us to look at new, innovative, creative and sustainable solutions, where we have to deal with the social, economic, environmental, institutional and spatial challenges simultaneously. For this we need new types of institutional structures and spaces, which allow for bottom-up participation processes, the building of social and human capital and joint social learning, beyond window-dressing and jargon. In these processes people and their capacity for solving their own problems in possibly more applicable, relevant, cheaper and more sustainable methods, should be given a chance. For the concept of 'sustainable development' to have any real meaning, it therefore needs a collaborative, communicative learning process of 'making connections' between people and ideas at local level.

Endnotes

¹ These debts were often taken up by former undemocratic governments, and very little of the money was spent on the people who are now required to pay back the debts - so-called 'odious' debts (Bond, 2001: 140; Leonard and Straus, 2003)

² These concepts are not necessarily defined in the same way as by the Developed World

³ 'Kicking away the ladder' is how Chang (2002) describes the fact that Africa has to develop under a trade and economic regime very different from that which Northern countries had to contend with when they were at similar levels of development. Chang's historical research shows how the economic and trade rules now described as 'bad' development in the neo-liberal paradigm were the general trend a century and more ago.

⁴ The small print of a recent AIDS donation from the USA to African countries included the requirement to accept GM foods

⁵ 'Wicked' problems (as described by Rittel and Webber, 1973; Mason and Mitroff, 1981: 12-13, as cited in Burton, 1987: 55 and 56) are problems of organised complexity - the more attempts are made to solve them, the more complicated they become. They have no optimal solutions and have been described as complex, interconnected, uncertain, ambiguous, with conflictual interests and societal constraints.

⁶ Western Cape Provincial Development Council Act of 1995; Transitional Local Government Amendment Act of 1996; Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

⁷ According to Wals and Jickling (2002: 223) 'doublethink' [as used in George Orwell's book '1984'] means 'ordinary citizens can increasingly hold in their minds contradictory meanings for the same term and accept them both'. Antagonistic concepts can thus be linked in a single phrase, such as 'war is peace', 'peace is war' and 'sustained growth'. Wals and Jickling (2002: 223) state that 'Big Brother's

‘Newspeak’ [also used in ‘1984’] was designated not to extend but to diminish the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum (Orwell, 1989, p. 313). In Newspeak, concepts capable of opposing, contradicting or transcending the status quo were liquidated’.

⁸ According to the climate scientists Dr Leon Rotstain of CSIRO Atmospheric Research, when taking into account the research of Prof Veerabhadran Ramanathan of the University of California in the Maldives on the paradoxical big drop in sunlight reaching the ground due to polluted clouds from India and China (at the same time as global warming), all climate models suggest it had been pollution from Europe and North America blowing across the Atlantic, that caused the disappearance of the rain in the Sahel during the 1970’s and 1980’s, leading to the eventual death of 1 million people and affecting 50 million more (BBC, 2005). The Ethiopian famine was originally blamed on overgrazing and poor land management, but evidence seem to suggest the real culprit was global dimming due to pollution.

⁹ According to Manuel Castells (1998: 64) ‘all Utopias lead to Terror, if there is a serious attempt at implementing them’. He based this view on the history of the Soviet experiment with the Marxist worker’s paradise.

¹⁰ ‘‘Dry greens’ believe in the manipulation of the market place through benign self regulation’ (Cock, 2004: 2).

¹¹ ‘‘Shallow greens’ criticize this reinforcing of the status quo and focus on community based reform, eco-auditing and environmentally benign consumerism’ (Cock, 2004: 2).

¹² ‘Deep greens’ reject ‘the culture-ideology of consumerism and the whole global capitalism project’ (Sklair, 1994: 218, as cited in Cock, 2004: 2).

¹³ Eco-feminism has been described as an alliance between feminism and ecology, based on the idea by Rosemary Radford Ruether that ‘Woman must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationship continues to be one of domination’. She called for

a unification of feminist and ecological interests in the vision of a society transformed from values of possession, conquest, and accumulation to reciprocity, harmony, and mutual interdependence (Radford Ruehler, 1975: 204, as cited in Glazebrook, 2002: 12)

¹⁴ Eco fascism means the top-down imposition of environmental policies (Barrow, 1996).

¹⁵ Naude, 1996, who also refers to the diagram used by Peter Tomlinson during the early drafting of the Cape Metropoles' MSDF

¹⁶ ICLEI, 1996; Lowe, 1998, as cited in Keen et al, 2005: 13

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