A THREE-FOLD THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

With implications for planning, monitoring and evaluation

By Doug Reeler

**The Community Development
Resource Association, 2007**

CDRA

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"I would not give a fig for the simplicity on this side of complexity. But I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

"Whosoever wishes to know about the world must learn about it in its particular details
Knowledge is not intelligence.
In searching for the truth be ready for the unexpected.
Change alone is unchanging.
The same road goes both up and down.
The beginning of a circle is also its end.
Not I, but the world says it: all is one.
And yet everything comes in season."

Heraklietos of Ephesos, 500 B.C

"My eyes already touch the sunny hill,
going far ahead of the road I have begun.
So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp;
it has its inner light, even from a distance.

and changes us, even if we do not reach it,
into something else, which, hardly sensing it,
we already are;
a gesture waves us on, answering our own wave...
but what we feel is the wind in our faces."

Rainer Maria Rilke

Introduction

People, communities and organisations are already in different states of change, sometimes stuck, sometimes changing incrementally and sometimes undergoing deep transformation. But they are all alive and always in flux, even if that life is invisible to initial observation.

Observation is key. If you are a change agent trying to support or to stimulate change, then before trying to do anything it might be important to know how things are already changing or what is constraining change or what resourcefulness lies hidden, even if you cannot easily see these. Only then might it be possible to see where to do something fruitful, if anything, to contribute positively to the life that is already there.

This article is a contribution to understanding the nature of social change itself. This comes from an adaptive practice that first observes and then works with the existing change impulses, resources and resistances, rather than imposing manipulative changes from above or outside that may or may not fit the circumstances or the will of those who are a part of the situation.

Three Kinds of Change – an Overview

Three kinds of change are described here, focusing on organisations of any kind, but also applying to communities, and indeed societies. As such we believe these to be archetypal change processes, not academic constructs but patterns of change that come from our social DNA as natural processes.

We have named the three types of change a) *emergent*, b) *transformative* and c) *projectable.* These have been observed and described out of many years of work by practitioners of the CDRA, engaging with over a thousand organisations between us. Doubtless, there are more than three kinds of change, but these are the three that have come up again and again. They often exist simultaneously, side-by-side, in different parts of the organisation or community; usually one dominates at a particular time, but as with change, they too change into each other, moving in phases, each preparing the ground for the next.

Let us look at the development of a typical organisation moving through these changes:

    a) **Emergent change:** A new organisation, or a new department in a larger organisation, begins in its pioneering phase, emerging experimentally as it finds its identity and purpose, learning its way into the future by doing, by creative trial-and-error, often running informally by unwritten rules, held

together by the will and personality of its pioneer often in an intense and personal atmosphere.

b) **Transformative change:** As with seedlings, growth of new organisations can be rapid, but at some point the organisation enters its first developmental crisis where the quantity and complexity of the work, and the number of staff, outgrow the capacity of the pioneer or the informal systems to effectively manage. Often the new generation of staff call for visible procedures, systems and policies, for accountable organisation, but this call is resisted by those who have been there since the early days, not least the pioneer who feels a threat to the power he or she has become used to and known for – "things worked so well like this in the past, we just have to get people on board". But a transformation is required that enables a letting go of that informality, an unlearning of the unwritten rules, paving the way for a new regime. This letting go is not simply an instrumental process of installing new systems but about a transfer of power and a shift in culture. It meets resistance which must be faced before the new phase of change can take centre stage.

c) **Projectable change:** The new regime, working in a new, more rational phase, is marked by a more visible and conscious projecting of visions and strategizing and planning the way to get there, enabled by visible, written systems and policies that support a new kind of work.

Emergent change – "The road is made by walking." [1]

"We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another; unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made up of layers, cells, constellations."

Anais Nin

Emergent change describes the day-to-day unfolding of life, adaptive and uneven processes of unconscious and conscious learning from experience and the change that results from that. This applies to individuals, families, communities, organisations

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[1] "Proverbios y cantares XXIX", *Campos de Castilla* (1912); *Selected Poems of Antonio Machado* (Louisiana State University Press, 1979)

and societies adjusting to shifting realities, of trying to improve and enhance what they know and do, of building on what is there, step-by-step, uncertainly, but still learning and adapting, however well or badly.

This is likely the most prevalent and enduring form of change existing in any living system. Whole books, under various notions of complex systems, chaos theory and emergence, have been written about this kind of change, describing how small accumulative changes at the margins can affect each other in barely noticeable ways and add up to significant systemic patterns and changes over time; how apparently chaotic systems are governed by deeper, complex social principles that defy easy understanding or manipulation, that confound the best-laid plans, where paths of cause and effect are elusive, caught in eddies of vicious and virtuous circles. Emergent change is paradoxical, where perceptions, feelings and intentions are as powerful as the facts they engage with.

EMERGENT CHANGE PRACTICE - ACTION LEARNING AS CORE PROCESS

> "The village is like a basket that has been broken and the pieces scattered. The pieces are still there but not everyone can see them. What has been broken can be rewoven slowly and gradually, but only by those who will take the time to stay close to the village people and build trust with them. I know for certain that this can be achieved, even though it must be done slowly and carefully. Eventually the village people are the weavers themselves and they carry the task forward further, further. The basket will be better than before, but first it must be something like the same."
>
> Meas Nee, "What can be Done?"[2]

Where there are less conscious emergent change conditions, the challenge of a developmental practice is to work slowly and carefully, helping people to make conscious their relationships, their stories, the consequences of what their choices, actions or inactions might be and what future possibilities they hold. It is a process to help people to understand their (possibly emerging) identities, to grow and deepen their knowledge of themselves, their self-confidence, their dignity and their relationships.

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2 "What Can Be Done?" by Meas Nee. An extract from his book Towards Restoring Life: Cambodian Villages. 1995, Krom Akphiwat Phum, Battambang/OSB Australia - A poetic story of remarkably respectful facilitation of development in deeply traumatised communities in Cambodia. Available on the CDRA website – www.cdra.org.za

This kind of work can be approached in many ways. Successful practitioners working with emergent approaches very often help people to understand their own experiences, old and current, including their stories or biographies. Through such processes people are encouraged to surface and appreciate their tacit knowledge and resources and in so doing help them to enhance these, to learn their way forward, step-by-step.

The conditions for more conscious emergent change flow most easily and can be productively worked with where internal and external relationships are formed and fairly steady, where issues of leadership and power are largely resolved or are not disruptive. This may well be after periods of change characterised by the other two types of change described below – an image of a fairly healthy social system consciously building on their strengths over time, with the potential to bring balanced change that benefits the whole.

Good practitioners and leaders, intuitively work with both these conditions of emergent change when approaching or working with an individual, organisation or community. They spend time to connect with the life of the people, to learn about what is really happening, or moving, what is possible or not, what hidden resources or resourcefulness exists, what stumbling blocks exist. They ask questions and help to connect people to each other, to bring to light what people have and can build on, building relationship, community and trust and laying the basis for more conscious change and continuous learning from their own and their peers' experience.

There are countless strategies and methods used by practitioners or leaders for approaching emergent change. Many have the action-learning cycle at the core – doing, observing, reflecting, learning, replanning before doing the next thing – in other words an approach that accompanies and seeks to enhance existing change processes and to surface potential through continual learning.

Some of the more developed strategies and methods often associated with emergent approaches include participatory action research, asset-based learning or indigenous knowledge-based approaches, appreciative inquiry, coaching, mentoring etc. Horizontal learning approaches (like community exchanges and other learning networks) are growing at the margins of the development sector and showing particular promise in cultivating collaborative learning relationships as a foundation for collaborative action in diverse circumstances. Many of the more effective contemporary social movements are founded on horizontal learning relationships and networks.[3]

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[3] See Horizontal Learning - Engaging Freedom's Possibilities by Doug Reeler, from CDRA Annual Report 2004/2005 – www.cdra.org.za

Transformative Change – Through Crisis and Unlearning

"The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers."
M. Scott Peck

At some stage in the development of all social beings it is typical for crisis or stuckness to develop. This may be the product of a natural process of inner development, for example the crisis of the adolescent when that complex interplay of hormones and awakening to the hard realities of growing up breaks out into all manner of physical, emotional and behavioural problems and issues. Another is the above example of a pioneering organisation growing beyond the limits of its informal structuring and relationships.

Crises may also be the product of a social beings entering into tense or contradictory relationships with their world, prompted by shifts in external political, economic, cultural or environmental contexts.

Crisis or stuckness sets the stage for transformative change. Unlike emergent change, which is characterised as a learning process, transformative change is more about unlearning, of freeing the social being from those relationships and identities, inner and outer, which underpin the crisis and hold back resolution and further healthy development.

A crisis or stuckness can come in many forms and expressions with deep and complex histories and dynamics. They may be "hot" surfaced experiences of visible conflict or "cold" hidden stucknesses which cannot be easily seen or talked about.

Left alone, crises do get unconsciously resolved over time, tragically or happily or somewhere in-between. But they can also be more consciously and proactively resolved through well led or facilitated transformative change processes.

For practitioners, understanding existing transformative change processes or change conditions demands a surfacing of relationships and dynamics that are by their nature contested, denied or hidden and resistant to easy reading. This reading can take time, effort and require patience and an openness to sudden shifts of perspective as layers

of the situation and its story are peeled away. The real needs for change very rarely reveal themselves upfront. When they are revealed they can provoke real resistance to change and require the people to let go deeply held aspects of their identity, both collective and individual.

TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE PRACTICE - FACILITATING UNLEARNING AND THE U-PROCESS[4]

'Reformers mistakenly believe that change can be achieved through brute sanity'

George Bernard Shaw

Transformative change processes are characterised not by learning, as in emergent change, but by processes of unlearning the deeper foundations of the crisis or stuckness, releasing the situation for new learning and possibly positive change.

While conscious emergent change approaches are underpinned by the action learning cycle, transformative change approaches are underpinned by their own deep archetypes. One of these we call the U process of change.
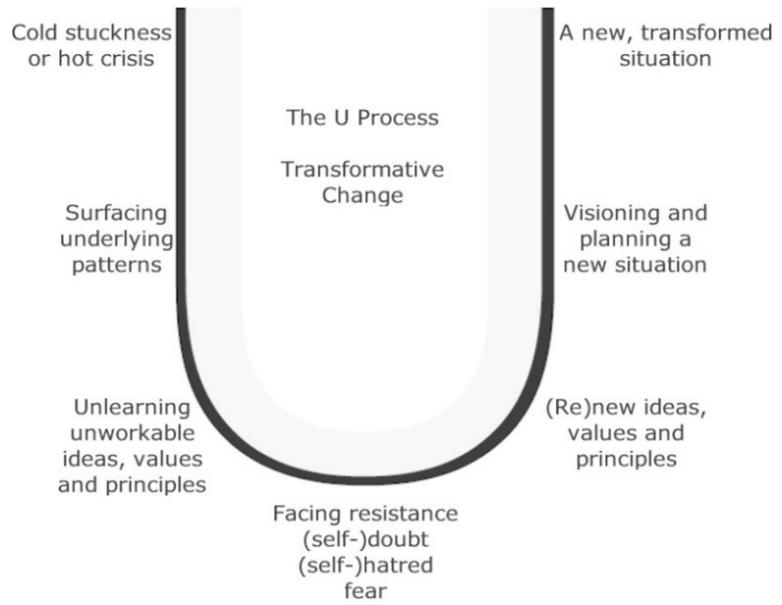
Working with transformative change can only begin once the crisis or stuckness is ripe for resolution – where there is sufficient initial will, in the people and their leaders, to consider dealing with the problem.

A conscious approach using the U process will begin with the need for the crisis or stuckness to be surfaced and to be commonly understood by all involved or implicated.

The practice here is of surfacing the hidden roots, revealing the repeated patterns of behaviour, culture, habits and relationships that unconsciously govern the responses to the experience of crisis that people have. Further work requires bringing to light the deeply hidden and no longer appropriate leading ideas, values, beliefs or principles governing people's behaviours and habits – those that are real rather than the mere stated values and beliefs contained in the values statement.

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[4] The U-process was developed in 1970 by Glasl and Lemson - (see Glasl, F. 1999. Confronting Conflict: A First-Aid Kit for Handling Conflict, Stroud: Hawthorne Press). A different but related version of the U-process has been developed by Peter Senge, Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, and Betty Sue Flowers. Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future. Cambridge, MA, SoL, 2004. We still use the older and simpler version described here, but like the action learning cycle, the U-process is a change archetype that is as old as human development itself.

This is a process of re-examining and consciously facing what people have held to be true or important and choosing whether to change or not, of seeing the consequences of either. This practice, as described this far, is well-known in approaches that seek deeper "attitudinal change". But there is another step, very often absent in theory and practice, where there is the need to deal with the *will to change*. The initial will must be there to consider change but finding the will to actually change is far more challenging.

The U Process

Transformative Change

Cold stuckness or hot crisis

A new, transformed situation

Surfacing underlying patterns

Visioning and planning a new situation

Unlearning unworkable ideas, values and principles

(Re)new ideas, values and principles

Facing resistance (self-)doubt (self-)hatred fear

Often this means working with *resistance* to change, most commonly rooted in fear of what might be lost, of doubt or self-doubt, or of hatred, resentment or self-hatred, the painful residues of the crisis that need to be dealt with. A period or process of grieving what has to be let go of by those whose identities have been vested in the past may be required. Resistance to change stemming from these things needs to be surfaced and dealt with before any real or lasting change can ensue.

Once resistance to change is faced and dealt with sufficiently and the will is freed, there is usually a release of energy, borne out of relief, that enables people to move on into a renewal process of re-founding their values and leading ideas, and then of imagining and implementing a different future – of resolving the future by creating a new situation on new foundations. This may become a process of either emergent or projectable change, depending on the conditions which prevail.

Projectable change – Working with a Plan

> "Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming after all, is a form of planning."
>
> Gloria Steinem

Human beings can identify and solve problems and imagine different possibilities, think themselves and their present stories into preferred futures, being able to project possible visions or outcomes and formulate conscious plans to bring about change towards these.

As human beings (in or out of the development sector) we pursue projectable approaches to our own development, individually or collectively planning and undertaking projects, from small to large. Projectable approaches, through projects, tend to succeed where problems, needs and possibilities are more visible, under relatively stable conditions and relationships, which are not fraught with crisis or stuckness.

Where the internal and external environments, especially the relationships, of a system are coherent, stable and predictable enough, and where unpredictable outcomes do not threaten desired results, then the conditions for projectable change arise and well-planned projects become possible.

Two orientations where projectable change dominate:

One is characterised by a *problem-based approach*, essentially identifying problems and seeking a fix. A broken tap is identified and a fix found. A problem-based approach works logically with plans from the present into the future.

Another is characterised by a *creative approach* of people imagining or visioning desired results, not as a direct solution but as a new situation in which old problems are less or no longer relevant – a leap of imagination into the future. For example, rather than fixing a broken water system, a new source of water may be created or accessed, rendering the broken one an irrelevant problem. A creative projectable change begins in the future with a vision, plans backwards to the present, devising stepping-stones to the desired results. The stepping stones may veer between being tightly planned or loosely described as the people discover their way, guided and motivated by the vision they have created.

Of the three types and conditions of change, projectable change is possibly the easiest to read by practitioners and indeed by communities themselves. We can characterise

the real work of working with projectable change as supporting planning and implementation.

PROJECTABLE CHANGE PRACTICE - THE PROJECT-CYCLE AS CORE PROCESS

"It doesn't work to leap a twenty-foot chasm in two ten-foot jumps."
Anonymous

Projects have an important place in development work. As the quote above suggests, we can and do sometimes need to leap into the future, to plan and implement more boldly and imaginatively. Conventional practice is dominated by a problem or needs-based Project approach. The relevance of the problem solution, the stability of change conditions and the strength and capacities of the people involved may enable such Projects to succeed.

But all too often there is over-planning and enormous effort put into correcting deviations from the plan or justifying non-compliance with signed contracts. Under the best of conditions, given the difficulties of foreseeing consequences and unpredictable forces, large scale social change Projects are inherently risky and often require built-in monitoring and learning rhythms to succeed.

The source of the Project – its real ownership – can have a great bearing on the appropriateness and success. Conventionally, Projects are conceptualised between practitioner and financier or donor and merely customised through participative processes with the "beneficiaries". Essentially NGOs, or similar vehicles for Projects, make approaches to communities and a kind of shadow play begins. A participatory survey or needs analysis is done and you can be sure that whatever is being offered happens to match the priority need of the community who knows from the beginning what it is they can access if they demonstrate their needs in the right way. The community will make it appear so, for how else can they attract support and who can blame them for being so resourceful? The development of this capacity of communities to play the field is often the most enduring impact of our interventions.

Genuinely participative processes are possible using projectable change approaches. Consider this account of practice by Meas Nee, a Cambodian development practitioner, writing about working with rural communities:

"All we do is aimed at helping people to begin to think for themselves again... Whatever action comes from their conversations about their problems, we support it. They are ones who plan and think and solve problems for themselves. An idea will come up and in a few weeks' time it will come up again. After a time, they are pushing us to join with them to do something about it. Often an idea that begins like this

becomes a Project which many of the village people join. So they move beyond numbness and a lot of options develop.

I find that the bond between people is more important than rules suggested from outside. When a Project starts I like the members themselves to come up with rules and the committee to decide on only five or six. Later when there is a problem and a way is found to resolve it I like to ask, 'Have we learned from this? Is there something else we can add to the way we run the Project?'

The first thing is to make relationships, not to make Projects. The major goal of the redevelopment of the community is to help village people to regain dignity and unity."

The lesson here can be applied not only to marginalized rural communities but to any social or organisational change project.

The real challenged posed here is the humanising of project approaches. Externally or top-down projects, however participative in their bringing, often have a hard technical edge and culture that alienate. Projects need to live in the culture and context of people themselves in order to engage their full will.

Interconnecting the Three Kinds of Change

No complex situation contains an exclusive set of change conditions or one particular kind of inherent change process – there are always complex configurations. But certain conditions do dominate and can be said to support or even precipitate one kind of change or impetus over another, to hold the centre of gravity of development processes.

But one or other kind of change or change conditions can and do co-exist with and form a part of the more dominant processes of change. So, for example, a particular developing situation may be characterised as being in a dominant process of emergent change, yet in its parts there may be smaller sub-processes of transformative or projectable change.

Though a particular kind of change may be dominant this will still be subject to the conditions and character of other change forces. For example, a relatively stable community may feel united and confident enough to undertake a development Project but is uncertain of its relationships with local government. Under this uncertainty it might make sense for it to take the change Project forward carefully, with some sense of emergence, or to consider a succession of smaller Projects, rather than a grand Project for change, as relationships with local government stabilise. The same community may also find that some unseen crisis is surfaced through the Project work and have to pause to deal with it as transformative change.

And of course, one dominant form of change paves the way for another to succeed it, as
Heraklietos reminds us "...all is one. And yet everything comes in season."

For the practitioner this means that there is no simple reading of change processes and he or she will need to stay alive to the movement of change – a challenge to keep reading the situation and adjust practice accordingly.

The Challenges of Reading Change

All faculties and great sensitivity must be brought to bear in attempting to read the changing processes of people.

The ability of practitioners or leaders to develop trusting relationships is paramount to successful practices of reading change. This allows people to take practitioners into their confidence, enabling them to see and hear what would otherwise be hidden. Sadly, relationship-building tends to be viewed by many practitioners, especially those under pressure to deliver results, as quick introductions and prep work for the "real work" of implementing Projects, rather than as a fundamental crucible for change.

The ability to work with biography and story is a strong alternative to simplistic analysing of cause and effect. The craft here lies in facilitating and eliciting the true stories or biographies of a social being, its drama, direction and movement. This is key to reading and working with reality, to know both the roots of the situation, its inherent change processes and change conditions and thus its potential for change – both for the practitioner and the people themselves to grasp.

Contained in story is the narrative whole, where experience – life – is reflected intact, to be seen intact and out of which grounded consciousness can be formed and transformed. Without a sense of story, understanding becomes piecemeal, disconnected, ungrounded and misleading. Stories help people to reveal their knowledge, to acknowledge their experience and wisdom, to see the resources and resourcefulness they have but may have been blind to. In developmental work stories and their role in the telling of the past and present and of creating leading images of the future, can become powerful processes for community consciousness and transformation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

"Not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything that can be counted, counts."
Albert Einstein

FOR EMERGENT APPROACHES

In many ways the conscious emergent approaches of practitioners and the PME&R systems that they use to manage their practice are ideally and by definition indistinguishable from each other – the PME&R system is a part of the action-learning cycle that underlies the whole approach.

Initial planning by people themselves, accompanied by the practitioner, is necessarily tentative and may rely on an intuitive or lightly articulated sense of what is possible – perhaps enough to draw the support or agreement of donors. Planning and replanning are done as the need arises, as community resources and leadership emerge to take on the next step, as learnings are made which point the way to what needs to be done next. A more conscious focus may be to achieve particular outcomes, perhaps through "mini-projects" but the real work lies in emergent processes of building identity, relationships, leadership etc. that no project can predetermine or guarantee.

The reflective and learning processes, naturally a part of the approach and done both in the field with the people and back at the office, are the monitoring systems themselves. If appropriate, longer cycles and moments of reflection can be built into the process, culminating in bigger learnings, taking care of the need for evaluation.

To support this, donors and back-donors need an approach that provides resources for intuitively developed plans with broad outcomes, that trusts that something positive may emerge and is willing to invest in that possibility. Sophisticated needs research, PRA workshops and the collection of baseline data etc. may not help to reveal a reality that is still emerging. Connecting culturally, quite often less formally, and building trusting relationships to help people to surface some of what is possible and the next small step to be taken, may be much more fruitful than an emphasis on committees and formal planning and contracting processes. Whilst some degree of formalisation may be necessary, this must enhance rather than substitute for subtler human meeting and contracting.

Core funding, which provides a ready resource to support whatever may arise, to trusted NGOs with a track record, is the most appropriate form of funding. Under emergent conditions of change, newer organisations who have yet to prove their practice may be best served by seed funding and access to quickly tappable further funding as things progress.

However, donors can and should insist that processes of action-learning (observation, reflection, learning and replanning) are consciously part of the change process and are carried out in appropriately systematic ways, and that reports to them should reflect these. A wise funder may ask, not just for edited (read "doctored") funder reports, but rather for access to the action-learning reflective reports of the practice that the practitioners develop or write for each other as part of their own practice. Ideally they may want to see themselves as real partners whose own relationship with the process of change is incorporated into the core action-learning processes, where honesty and quality of learning, the hallmarks of accountability rather than "proof of impact".

Donors can also be learning organisations and ought to be while they are themselves part of the landscape – they may feel invisible because of their relative absence from the field but their presence is always strongly felt.

These emergent paths are made by walking them in a landscape that will not yet support a tarred road. Success and failure should not be issues to judge viability and worth, as both are key sources of learnings and progress. The key measures of accountability would be evidence of thorough action-learning and, of course, financial probity. As far as impact assessment goes this should seamlessly be observed, reflected on and transparently documented as integral to the learning process.

FOR TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

The planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes of the practitioner or facilitator in a transformative practice is characterised by a constant and highly conscious reflective practice, intensive and in-the-moment reviewing, learning, rethinking and replanning of the process itself – PME on your feet. Sometimes this can happen closely with the people and sometimes on your own as temporary facilitator of the process, requiring a great deal of trust in the process by the people.

For the individual, organisation or community itself, specific outcomes are unpredictable beyond the resolution of the crisis, as a new situation arises only in the process of transformation. Neither emergent nor Project-based PME&R approaches will help.

Donors often interpret crisis as failure, usually of leadership, and are unwilling to invest in what they perceive as high risk situations. This is most unfortunate because

it is in times of crisis that the most potential for transformative change and resolution exists, laying a basis for future sustainable growth and development.

Time frames and outcomes are unpredictable and thus donors need to design their support in such a way that it can provide resources as the needs arise, unframeable as they are in neat Projects. Core funding for trusted facilitating organisations is thus ideal.

Evaluations and reports to donors would necessarily be narrative and qualitative, telling the story of before, during and after the change process, assessing impact by the resolution of the described crisis, particularly of the less tangible capacities and relationships that are transformed. They may not be quantifiable but there is usually a rich story of change to hear from the people themselves, where impact can be very clearly felt and witnessed.

FOR PROJECTABLE APPROACHES

Classically the PME&R of projectable change approaches is characterised by Project planning, the conscious management of activities and regular, systematic monitoring against the agreed plan, its outputs and outcomes. Formal evaluation, at end of the Project cycle to account for the Project as a whole and to draw learnings for future or similar Projects, is common.

Different kinds of Projects, where appropriately applied and whether problem- or vision-led, will require different qualities and emphases in their processes of PME&R. A problem-led approach, necessarily based on simpler and more visible problems and solutions, like the building of a school or clinic, will benefit from well-structured plans and processes of monitoring and evaluation. A vision-led approach, which may have an element of discovering the way forward, will need to have more flexibility of methods and time-lines and a greater need for learning from ongoing experience and adjusting plans and even the vision itself, as the realities of putting a Project into practice are brought to bear.

However even problem-led approaches can benefit from regular reflective learning processes as part of the monitoring of activities. These need to be well planned and funded and not, as is often the case, regarded as a nice-to-have but expendable luxury.

Projects are made more effective when held together by shared values, clear contracts and negotiated responsibilities. However, there is a danger if these qualities are led and managed by imposed practices and culture, usually of western managerialist origin. The "committee-fication" of development Projects tends to ignores indigenous or differently cultured modes of Project leadership and management. This can alienate people from Project initiatives and deaden the potential vitality of a development process.

Reporting, in a developmental approach to Projects can also be a distilled reflection of internal and field experiences and should insist that learnings are shared with others, horizontally and vertically.

Donors, responding to the need for Projects, generally feel on more comfortable territory. Things feel more controlled, especially where there is the promise of "specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound results" to report on to their principals, the back-donors. After all Projects do offer lower hanging fruits and are difficult to let go of as a way of working, even where obviously inappropriate. Yet it is quite possible that most development interventions can end up as Projects once the foundations have been laid through emergent or transformative approaches. Indeed, it should be clear that the deeper work of emergent and transformative approaches in laying foundations of identity, of cooperative relationship and of leadership can also lay the basis for future sustainability of the impacts of Projects.

FOR DONOR AND NORTHERN NGO POWER

If a key purpose of development is to shift power in the world, then an honest examination of power relationships within the development sector might be the place to begin.

Many Northern NGOs and resource givers, whether they do capacity development or not, like avoid the label "donors" or "funders" in favour of the more politically correct term of "partners", but this just serves to mask their power from themselves. Donors can be more conscious of their power and the consequences and shadows of that power, rather than be embarrassed by them. In doing so they might find it easier to open more honest dialogues with recipients for exploring different approaches to giving and receiving money more developmentally.

There needs to be more open recognition that Projects, which by definition tie specified monies to specified activities and outcomes by specified dates, enable control by the resource givers that can undermine real ownership - unless the recipients have already found their power, in which case Projects are just a useful and convenient mechanism for resource transfers.

What are some of the alternatives to "partnerships"?

- *Building real trust - for donors and NGOs from the North to take real time to visit, to learn and to build relationships with recipients, "to know what is in their souls". This is a question of attitude and a question of time. In recent years the numbers of recipients per donor field officer has risen dramatically. One donor, who used to successfully manage +/-15 recipient relationships in the South, now has almost 50. In such scenarios Projects are the only way to handle*

such a workload and given the lack of time to build trust, Projects have become an ideal tool for managing mistrust. He admitted that he no longer knows what is really happening as most communications are now through Project reports, many of which he hardly has time to study. Pressures for cost-efficiencies make many field visits cursory and meaningless activities, undermining the development of more accountable human learning relationships between donors and recipients. The irony is that these cost-efficiencies are superficial and it is likely that more funding is wasted than saved over time. Reducing the case load of field officers is a critical path to a more efficient and effective donor practice.

- *As mentioned before and linked to the point just above, core funding, within closer and more accountable learning relationships, is experienced by recipient organisations as most developmental, enabling flexibility and initiative according to changing conditions on the ground.*

- *Donors can see themselves as part of the learning relationships and cycles that need to underpin sustainable programmes – how else can they learn if they are not open to honest feedback from recipients? Building honest two-way learning relationships, which require real time in the field, may go a long way towards moderating the power of donors.*

- *Donors need to re-examine their involvement in "capacity-building" as "partners" which can serve to amplify their power to more dangerous levels. How many "partners" on the ground will refuse or be critical of inappropriate capacity-building initiatives suggested by donors when it comes tied to their funding. For example, as described above under transformative change approaches, the challenge of development might not be a lack of capacity but rather a relationship of power that needs to be surfaced, "unbuilt" and transformed. Used inappropriately or by default, capacity-building can become another mechanism of control.*

  There are no easy answers to the tension between funding and capacity-building. Some developmental donors focus only on their practice of funding and then make available resources for recipients themselves to independently contract for capacity-development or process facilitation services from third parties. In many areas third-party services are not available and so donors create politically separate capacity-development units.

- *We can accept that there are power differences and not hide behind nice-sounding "partner" rhetoric which undermines honest dialogue. On the other hand, many practitioners in recipient Southern NGOs can stop playing the moaning victims and start to find their courage to speak their minds and to help donors and Northern NGOs to understand the realities they face on the ground.*

A Final Word

Change cannot be engineered but can only be cultivated. Seeds must be chosen whose fruits not only suit the taste of the eaters but also to suit the soil in which they are planted, the conditions for their fruition. Processes of change, whether emergent, transformative or projectable, are already there, moving or latent, and must be read and worked with as natural processes inherent to the lives and cultures of people themselves. This kind of orientation, applied respectfully and skilfully, may indeed yield the impact and sustainability that is so desperately sought. Perhaps then our obsession with accountability may be allayed, not because we will have learnt how to better measure impact, but because we will have learnt to practise better, to read change more accurately and work with it more effectively.