Praxis

volume one

The first in a series of occasional papers

providing space for community practitioners

to contribute to the global dialogue about

how we build peaceful, just and

sustainable communities

PRAXIS

VOLUME ONE

Preface

by Dave Andrews and Peter Westoby

Working co-operatively in the community

This volume is made up of a number of telling articles written on the topic of *Working Co-operatively in the Community.*

It is a *festschrift* celebrating the three years of the Community Praxis Co-op. The co-op was formed in 1998 by a group of colleagues who worked together in the community for over a decade, and who wanted to create a community co-op to empower people and to strengthen the capacities of groups and organizations in developing peaceful, just and sustainable communities.

We invited Allan Halladay, the much-respected, recently retired Senior Lecturer in Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Queensland, to address the inaugural meeting of the Community Praxis Co-op.

Allan has been a passionate supporter of co-ops in Queensland, ever since he migrated from Canada to Australia. So, at our inaugural meeting, we asked Allan to tell us why he still went out of his way to support co-operative ventures such as ours.

Allan's answer to that question constitutes not only a delightful introduction to this collection of articles, but also an insightful introduction to the philosophy of co-operation that is woven like a golden thread throughout this collection of articles.

Peter Westoby, a founding member of the Community Praxis Co-op, is a community worker who has worked in community development projects in Australia, and overseas, for the last fifteen years.

Peter wrestles with the current notion of community development; seeking to wrest it from the hands of technocrats, who use it as a technique to co-opt people; and restore it to the people, as a process, through which they can struggle, co-operatively, for their transformation.

In his article, on 'Soulful Community Development', Peter seeks to find a way for us to be able to put some participation back into development, and put some soul back into participation, and, in so doing, put some community back into society.

Dave Andrews, another founding member of the Community Praxis Co-op, is a community worker who has worked in community development projects in Australia, and overseas, for the last twenty-five years.

Dave struggles with current trends taking place in the professionalization of community work, which, he argues, are destructive of the very sense of community that they are meant to create.

In his article on ' Vocational Professionals', Dave suggests a way we can re-discover our vocation. A way to reconstruct both the theory and the practice of our professions in the light of our vocation, so as to develop an authentic sense of community with the individuals, neighbourhoods and agencies with whom we work.

The co-op is committed to doing consultancies that empower people and strengthen the capacity of groups and organizations in developing their communities.

In the final paper, 'The Co-op's Reflections on the Role of Consultancy in Building Peaceful, Just and Sustainable Communities', several members of the co-op have attempted to explore how we approach consultancy in terms of our commitment to communities through articulating.

~　　　How we try to do consultancy;

~　　　What you can get from our consultancy;

~　　　Which method we use in our consultancy;

We hope that these articles will provide yet another opportunity for ongoing dialogue, discussion and debate about what it *really* means for us to work co-operatively in the community.

Why I still support cooperatives

by Allan Halladay

Introduction

Thank you for the invitation to be part of the Community Praxis Co-op Planning Day. Your birth as a cooperative is an exciting, encouraging and history making event. It is my intent to share with you five reasons why I continue to support co-operatives.

The way we were

I grew up in Nipawin, a small town in northern Saskatchewan, Canada.

Like most small towns there was a co-op grocery, a co-op lumber yard, a co-op service station, a pool elevator where the farmers sold their grain and a credit union. These were formed to gain some control over the their own lives; to get fair prices for their produce; to pay fair prices at the retail end; and to establish services the market didn't provide.

My brother-in-law worked for a provincial government department called the Department of Co-operatives. His job was the development of cooperatives. In particular he worked with First Nation peoples developing fur co-operatives, fish co-operatives, and power co-operatives.

So you can see co-ops have always been part of my life. For me, they were not some new and foreign phenomenon.

I am sure this heritage is one important reason why I still support co-operatives.

I think some young people growing up in Maleny will benefit from the longstanding co-operative tradition which has developed there over recent years.

Tradition is important. However, I do not think tradition itself is sufficient to maintain a commitment to cooperatives. Nor can it guarantee the survival of co-operatives into the future.

A way of moving towards the 'good' society

I think co-operatives can, and do, make a contribution to the 'good' society. I cannot spell out in detail what I perceive to be the 'good' society but a few comments may help clarify my argument.

My view of the good society would be located in the 'utopian' camp rather than in the 'anti-utopian' camp. I do not look with 'relative satisfaction' nor 'resignation' at the 'current condition of human circumstance'. I do not see it as inevitable. [1]

As utopian thinkers before me, I do not see the immediate choice being, 'between the extension of state power and the extension of individual liberty, but whether or not to leave power in the hands of groups of (people) based upon private concentrations of wealth and social class.' [2]

I think we need to 'keep our eyes focused upon the grim facts of social and economic inequality and oppression which make nonsense of any claim that all individuals are equally free or enjoy equal opportunities for the exercise of initiative and choice.' [3]

I share with other utopians a faith in the future, but, in my view, 'until (greater) equality is established, arguments that focus on limiting the role of present governments are simply disguised pleas to allow the continuance of inequality and oppression.' [4]

Co-operatives are a strategy toward achieving my 'good' society. Let me illustrate from the seven co-operative principles. Because I think they are policies which can move us toward the 'good' society.

1. Voluntary and open membership preserves freedom of choice and guards against exclusion.

2. Democratic member control shares power in a manner

that recognizes the equal worth and dignity of members, rather than treating people on the basis of how much money they have, or how many shares they hold.

3. Member economic control brings greater democracy and equity to the economy as members 'contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperatives'. Members use at least part of the capital as common property and receive limited compensation on the capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members decide on how surpluses will be allocated and personal benefit is only one of the directions in which surpluses are allocated.

4. Co-operatives are autonomous, self help organizations.

5. Co-operatives educate, train and provide information for members and the general public about co-operative procedures and benefits.

6. Co-operatives co-operate with other co-operatives.

7. Co-operatives show concern for their community. They work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

And so I continue to support co-operatives because they have the potential to contribute towards the achievement of a better society.

A way of doing 'good' work

Co-operatives are a way of 'doing good work'. What do I mean by that? Well, all societies implicitly or explicitly organize work in a particular manner. In most cases much of the financial benefits in a society are distributed through employment.

Two of the classical concerns expressed about work are: how to make sure 'workers get a fair share of the results of their work; and how can work be made less alienating and more meaningful.

The famous economist, Fritz Schumacher, in his book on GoodWork. (1979), starts with the assumption that, 'every human being born into this world has to work not merely to keep himself (or herself) alive, but to strive toward perfection. [5]

Shuhmacher then derives three purposes of human work, from this assumption, which can be taken to characterize 'good work'. They are: 'First to provide necessary and useful goods and services. Second, to enable every one of us to

use, and thereby perfect gifts, like good stewards. Third, to do so, in service to, and in co-operation with others, so as to liberate ourselves from our inborn egocentricity. [6]

So I continue to support co-operatives because I think they have the potential to create work; create meaningful work; control the nature of work; and control the nature of work processes such as technology and overtime. At the very least co-operatives should encourage more democratic decisions in these important work policy areas.

A 'better' way of relating to people

Co-operatives are potentially a superior moral way of relating to people. I believe relating to people in a 'co-operative' manner is superior to relating to people in a 'competitive' manner. I know this is considered heresy by many in the year 2000, but just think about it for a moment or two.

Do you like losing? In every competitive situation there is only one winner and generally several losers. It hurts to lose. Is it morally justifiable to organize the whole society in such a manner as to guarantee maximum pain?

I would argue it is morally right to use resources efficiently and effectively, and wrong to waste resources. When I look at the claims that competition is efficient. I am sorry but I am not convinced. Look at the wasted money in advertising by telephone companies in Australia. Look at the waste of all the business failures, partly caused by competition. I think a reasonable case can be argued that co-operation is more efficient than competition.

I think competition is more likely to lead to violence and war and co-operation more likely to lead to peace. Surely that is a morally superior way. Relating co-operatively increases the amount of goodwill and contributes to personal well-being. For example I have continued to associate with real co-operators over the years because I like the way they lived, and treated others, including me.

I must acknowledge the difficulty of acting co-operatively in a society where the dominant ideology is competition, and the preferred mechanism the market.

The pressure to conform to the ideology of competition is diverse, sometimes subtle, and above all relentless. But I continue to support co-operatives because I believe co-operation is a superior moral way of relating to people.

A possible route to spiritual development

I think co-operatives can provide a route to spirituality.

I think that might have been what Schumacher was referring to when he talked about 'liberat(ing) ourselves from our inborn egocentricity, in co-operation with others.'

I am not able to develop in any detail what I mean by spirituality, however let me begin by saying I assume it is an inherent quality in all human beings. [7] For many it involves acknowledging the significance of either the 'Other', 'other', or both, for 'our identity, for the satisfaction of a range of our needs, including self-actualization, and for the power of the transformation of our world.' [8]

Joan Haase and others define spirituality as, '… an integrating and creative energy based on belief in, and a feeling of interconnectedness with, a power greater than self.' present several attributes of a spiritual perspective'. [9]

They decribe three attributes of a spiritual perspective. The first attribute is connected-ness with others, nature, the universe and God. It is seen as unifying the physical, emotional and spiritual dimension of the person. The second attribute relates to a belief in something greater than self and a faith that positively affirms life. The third attribute is a creative energy that is constant but dynamic.

They identify three outcomes of a spiritual perspective. Firstly it provides purpose and meaning in life. Secondly it provides guidance of human values, manifested as conceptual systems and specific behaviour. Finally, it provides self transcendence.

And it is my claim that co-operatives, and their co-operative value stance, have the potential to nurture that type of spiritual growth. They can help the individual transcend the present context of reality. They can help a person to reach out and rise above their personal concerns and the realm of the material.

On the other hand it can be argued that it is only on the basis of a deeply held conviction that we are interdependent with the 'Other', or 'other', that co-operation can occur in a non-manipulative form, in a form which expresses mutuality. [10]

Conclusion

And so I continue to support co-operatives: because of tradition; because they can contribute to the good society; because they may provide a way of doing good work; because they offer a better way of relating to people; and, because they provide a potential route to spiritual development.

In conclusion, a final quip - *'You don't necessarily need to build a co-op to work co-operatively; but you do need to work co-operatively to build a successful co-op.'*

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1 Arblaster, A. & Lukes, S. (1978) p.9
2 Ibid
3 Ibid
4 Ibid, p10
5 Shuhmacher,F. (1979) p.3
6 Ibid, p.34
7 Haase, J. (1992) p.142
8 Halladay, A.(1994) p.2
9 Haase, J. (1992) p.143
10 Halladay, A. (1997) p.5

Soulful community development

by Peter Westoby

How to invoke depth and meaning into our vocation and our communities!

Introduction

Vocationally, my past 12 years have been spent developing as a practitioner of community development*. I have learnt much both practically and professionally. I feel that I can celebrate the past 12 years as time not wasted. I feel a part of a tradition that is practised locally and globally and within that tradition I have met a community of people who are very dedicated to transformation.

I however feel that it is time to pause and reflect on what I see as a trend in my profession. I feel a pang of concern - maybe it is simply a concern about what I am experiencing myself in my practice of community development rather than a crisis within the profession itself. Maybe it is not. I hope that my subjectivity does not lead to readers interpreting my concern as merely a projection - I am hoping that some of what I share in this paper rings true for readers and other practitioners. It is a concern of soul!

Over the past years as a practitioner of CD* (community development) I have seen a worthy tradition become more

and more influenced, perhaps co-opted by a modernist approach to philosophy, work and technique and in the process lose something of its "soul". Let me try and explain.

Habermas describes the modern state as being in a condition of "legitimation crisis" - lurching to and fro from problem to problem developing new techniques to "solve the problems". More and more I see the tradition of CD falling into the same crisis. In some circles it is heralded as the salvation, one of the latest techniques to solving societies' problems, in other circles it is a method that enables us to justify cutting resources or increase efficiency. There are many voices within a diverse discourse that claim community development as theirs'. It is my sense that if the tradition continues down this road it will soon enter into its own legitimation crisis and experience the unfortunate possibility of a backlash. The community development tradition will be sidelined rather than the community development technique critiqued.

It would be clear to readers at this point that I have made a distinction between what I have called the community development tradition and what I have called the community development technique. The latter I have critiqued as being co-opted by the modernist approach to philosophy, work etc. In this approach the "ills of society" are seen as problems that need urgent solutions in much the same way as modern medicine sees the unhealthy body as problematic requiring some form of medicine to fix it up. In this modernist paradigm the healthy body is one without sickness. In the same way our modern world view sees an unhealthy society

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as a problem requiring a technique to fix it up rather than imagining that maybe a healthy society should be seen as one not without problems but one that is aware of the problems and learning to live creatively and imaginatively with them while engaging them holistically.

It is with this in mind that I have written this reflection 'Soulful Community Development'. My sense is that CD has become one of the latest techniques that can solve the problem of our ill society. Governments for so long have been called upon to fix things; they has tried all sorts of techniques, ones of the right, the left and the centre - they have failed. We are experiencing the death of the welfare state, the end of socialism. There has been a mighty shift in focus. As part of this shift in focus there is s stronger emphasis and rhetoric advocating that the 'community must take responsibility', the community must and can solve the problem. I sense that maybe the government and "the community" will have to learn afresh what each of them can and cannot do. Hence the even newer discourse of partnership.

However the point is, that when we recognise that the community must solve its problems often we look to the technique of community development (as defined according to a modernist paradigm) to facilitate the community in doing this. I would like us to consider that this is problematic. I would like us to consider that it is an impossible task, the "stuff and soul" of community is beyond any kind of technique. I would like us to reconsider that the tradition of community development is much less about technique and more about soul and solidarity. CD practitioners cannot solve the problems, they cannot simply "move in" and quickly mobilise a community to solve their own problems. They can only participate along with others in the community in invoking the "soul of community" within each of us - a creative act of solidarity requiring listening, awakening and imagination. In doing this they can play a significant role in calling, connecting, naming, and invoking community. Thomas Moore puts it well:

> "This truly will be a dangerous time, because human community and civility are not, as some would say, humanistic achievements; they are the work of ghosts of memory and the spirits of place, of the genius of things and the soul of culture."
> (Moore, 1996, 149)

It is at this point worth saying that while critiquing the "technique of community development" I am in no way meaning to imply that techniques are not important. Techniques alongside methods, strategies - in fact many of the tools that are a useful part of the community development practitioners' baggage are essential. But they must be put in their place. The techniques are only one part of the "tradition". This is what is meant by "soul": a recovery of the heart of the tradition within which any techniques find their place.

This is a reflection written to all those living in neighbourhoods who concern themselves with community - ie. those who associate themselves with the tradition of community development (even if you never called it that), to residents, business-folk, artists, librarians, community development practitioners, mothers, fathers and many others. It is a call for each of us to take responsibility for the soulful task of community development. All of us have a part to play.

In this introduction I have been careful not to define what I mean by soul, it is too mysterious a quality to be limited to any such task. It is my purpose in writing this reflection to not only allude to what soul is but to actually awaken soul within the reader - a definition will never awaken anything!

"A Soulful People"

There is a common old saying that goes something like this: "It is better to have loved and to have lost than to have never loved at all". It implies that some people have never had to experience both the terrific and terrifying experience of love, and it is a great loss to both themselves and to the world. Plato called love "divine madness" and recognised the great archetypal world of gods and legends that lay deep within our psyches. It has been recognised that romantic love in some way seems to unleash the great powers of these gods. When people "fall in love" they are usually transformed. We can see it in their dreamy eyes, the music that is played, the way they float around the office. This transformation could be said to bring both a kind of death and a new life - even if for only a short period of time. There is a new aliveness that emerges due to the encounter with the god or goddess and a death to the pragmatic, rational world that we spend so much of our awakened hours in. Hence for many of us when "in love" we are animated; the world is full of a whole new sense of wonder, meaning, beauty. At the same time we enter loves "dark sides" with its complexities of fears,

wounds, and pain. Many of the concerns and efforts that we were previously so committed to; our work, our homes, our ideals, suddenly shrink from the centre to the periphery. We are dancing a new dance!

Some observers of love interpret it not so much as about relationships (such a huge concern of us modern folk when we think of love) but as about "soul". Love is often for most of us our initiation into soul. It is the grand opportunity to enter our own inner dramas and mysteries, it is an invitation to explore those soulful parts of us that have remained dormant, quiet, asleep. It is often our first opportunity to encounter our own selves in all our grandeur and complexity as well as encounter the "other" person.

So, why do I talk of love? It is true that love suddenly transforms the ordinary into the sacred. What was previously dreary takes on a kind of dreamy quality. This is the stuff of soul. The transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary. People "in love" notice details, they observe imaginatively, they are aware and attentive. (Of course there is a shadow side to this sudden awareness, the acute perception of love can often be complemented by a kind of blind madness).

This transformation of the ordinary to the extraordinary is the stuff of soulful people. This sudden or gradual transformation of awareness is what gives chance for the birth of community between two people. It is also true when involved in the process of community development. True community can only be born if there is some transformation of awareness and attention. In the same way that love is ignited by touching the archetypal mysteries of our psyches so community can be dreamt of when we have touched base with the soulful need to connect, belong and live a life of meaning with others.

Community in itself can become a fetish unless the people seeking it, nurturing it, and building it can see it or feel it when they encounter it. This is the central reason that to build community we must invoke soul. A soulful people will dream of community and will be capable of either being awakened to community or stumbling upon it. The central thesis of this reflection is that soul is awakened through the practice of bringing attention, awareness and imagination to our selves, our communities and our professions.

Laura Esquivel in her mythical yet tragic novel "Like Water for Chocolate", draws a beautiful picture of the nature of soulful awakening (in this case a sudden awakening of attention, awareness and imagination) and warns of the tragic consequences of that never happening:

> "As you see, within our bodies each of us has the elements needed to produce phosphorus......each of us is born with a box of matches inside us but we can't strike them all by ourselves; just as in an experiment, we need oxygen and a candle to help. In this case, the oxygen, for example, would come from the breath of the person you love; the candle could be any kind of food, music, caress, word or sound that engenders that explosion that lights one of the matches. For a moment we are dazzled by an intense emotion. A pleasant warmth grows within us, fading slowly as time goes by, until a new explosion comes along to revive it. Each person has to discover what will set off those explosions in order to live, since the combustion that occurs when one of them is ignited is what nourishes the soul. That fire, in short, is its food. If one doesn't find out in time what will set off these explosions, the box of matches dampens, and not a single match will ever be lit."

(Esquivel 1989,104)

This is our call, to find out what "sets off those explosions" that will awaken and nourish soul.

Buber talks of the "I-Thou" encounter; it occurs when two authentic selves meet, it is here that Buber senses that we experience true community. It may be in silence, it may be in the midst of chatter; there is no pre-determined form or formulae; we simply experience it. The problem is that only soulful people know that they have experienced it which means many fail to cherish it. Probably a symptom of a somewhat soul-diminishing society is the endless barrage of voices, media images, people. We are so overloaded with relationships that we have lost our capacity to discern a moment of true, genuine encounter with "the other", or if we do discern it, we "move on" so fast that we fail to cherish or celebrate it. In this we miss the true depths of community.

At this point it must be worth saying that those of us who are on that journey or movement from the "I" to the "We", that is, community, often find that there is a central paradox. To move from "I" to "We" paradoxically requires an incredible journey into the depths of "I". "We" or community in no way means a movement away from the self. It may require a confrontation (or put more gently a dialogue) with the ego,

it might require the painful suffering of re-socialisation, it most certainly does require an ongoing encounter with the self. I say this because the whole point of this introductory comment is to say that to move towards community requires a genuine invocation of soul, and a genuine invocation of soul is essentially a very "I" orientated journey of the self.

A soulful approach to community development can in no way then ever move to simply a collectively orientated consciousness, it is acutely aware of and concerned with individuals. Community is much more that simply the sum total of the individuals in the community; psychology and sociology have explored that, yet the reality is that without a whole heap of individuals there could never be community. A soulful approach to community development therefore requires an attention to where people are at in a way that pays attention to detail. We want people to come alive, to fall in love with life and to dance this new dance called community.

So how do we invoke this soul in a way that ignites community? How do people become attentive and aware in a way that invokes soul?

Soul and participation

Alchemy was an arcane process in which raw material (often a base metal) was placed in a vessel, heated, observed closely, heated some more, passed through various operations and observed once again. The goal of the process was a magical product - gold, the stone of the philosophers, a potent elixir.

In Jung's view, however, alchemy was a spiritual practice carried out for the benefits of the soul. It's play with chemicals, heat, and distillation was a poetic project in which substances, colours and other material qualities offered an external imagery for a hidden parallel process of the soul. (Moore 1992,184)

This process of working the stuff of soul, objectified in natural materials, the alchemist called the *opus*, that is, "the work".

Here I feel Jung provides us with a useful signpost that enables us to gain insight into viewing community and participation in a way that can imaginatively invoke soul. It is this *"opus"* that invokes soul in a way that ignites community, it is this work that enables people to become attentive and aware in a way that invokes soul. The plain concerns of community participation are the raw material, the *"prima material",* as the alchemist called it, for working out the soul's matter. We work on the stuff of soul by means of genuinely participating in the things of life. This alchemic view of participation is here to complement what has been said earlier in this refletion. I have said that to experience community we must be soulful people, yet the paradoxical converse of this is that soulful people are made through simply participating in the things of life.

For many involved in development work there is a growing awareness that participation is one of the keys to "success". Many projects, programmes and plans have come undone in various forms due to a lack of participation. I have seen buildings sitting in impoverished communities, a huge potential resource, but empty, unused, wasted. Why? We have an answer; lack of participation. Someone, possibly with good or bad intentions made the decisions without people being involved. Participation might be the answer, but it is not a good enough answer. I have seen soulless projects which are full of participation, yet there is no life, no creativity, no soul!!!

I wish us to stay with the alchemical analogy for the moment, because I feel that it might provide us with some useful insights into the nature of what I will call "depth participation".

The concept and practice of participation could soon become as burdened as the concept of community, a new rhetoric that becomes meaningless. We now see "participatory community development" or "participatory research" tagged onto the headings of project outlines. Why is participation so important? The typical answer is usually related somewhat to process and ownership. People 'develop' through being an integral part of a process; they have a sense of ownership during the process, it is their project or product. At this point I would like us to bring some attention to the why of this process.

In doing this I would like us to consider Jung's notion of the *opus*. Jung describes the *opus* as a work of attention and imagination - and imagination is what leads to creativity. Only when the process of participatory community development consists of depth participation where people do "the work", imaginatively listen to one another, take the trouble to give attention and care and look for creative options together, will community be invoked. Participation in itself does not inspire change or community.

A soulful way of observing depth participation could be

through the window of intimacy. Intimacy requires a vulnerability and depth of participation between people that invokes creativity and imagination. Intimacy has a way of transcending a certain shallowness that is part and parcel of purely rational interaction. Intimacy requires a caressing of touch, listening and attention. If we could infuse our participation with this kind of intimacy we will see an unfolding power emerge, an unfolding of strong community ties - the "work" of intimacy will pay the dividends of deep connections.

Soulful participation is a "work" which sees people enter into the depths of creativity and imagination. Here whole, fresh worlds are revealed. People often begin to envisage new worlds of possiblity in their midst. They start to dream again! An essential outcome of people's participation in soulful development is that they dare to dream again. Such dreaming is the key to soulful development where genuine participation is energised.

In my work as a CD practitioner I have always tried to maintain a framework for development that balances the notion of "objectives" with "dreams". We need clear objectives within which we can think strategically and plan in a participative way, yet we must be careful not to uncritically adopt a business management framework when we are concerned with soul, people and development. Management via clear objectives must be complemented by depth participation in dreaming and experimenting. All of us can

Finally let us return to Jung's notion of *opus.* For Jung, *opus* is the work that an individual does within the process of individuation. It is not work that anyone else can do, it is work that can only be done by the person concerned, with her/his own self. As we consider the "developmental" notion of participation let us be clear that our understanding of depth participation is informed from the perspective of what Raff Carmen calls "Autonomous Development". It is not participation based on the perspective of fitting projects to people or empowering people in the "we must help them" or "we must enable them" mode. In this sense it is not the *opus* of "being reached, being intervened in, being fitted (to projects), being appraised, rapidly or otherwise; in a word, being developed." (Carmen 1996, 51). It is participation that is genuinely about power - the power of people to be creative and imaginative in their autonomous path of development. In this sense the *opus* of depth participation is about people building their own organisations that enable them to transform

personal power into collective power. This is a theme that will continue to inform this reflection.

Soul and community problems

Some time ago, I was struck by Foucault's insight into the historical transition in the discourse on "populations" which has occurred. His thesis is that with the emergence of modern bureaucracy "populations" were gradually "acted upon". A science developed in which the collection of data and the manipulation of sectors of population became central. The "population" rather than we being a part of it, was suddenly seen as "out there". It would be interesting to do a similar study on the discourse of community.

Historically we were all part of communities, but now often the community is "out there". "They" are no longer subjects of their own transformation but objects requiring acting upon. The technique of community development (or more recently place management) requires that we "target" communities, collect data, mobilise participation, analyse the problems and in some way develop workable solution.

Such a framework and such a technique could indeed provide useful data, processes and projects but again I would like to question the fundamental assumptions behind such a paradigm and provide us with some soul-insights that might provide us with some renewed wisdom.

A soulful approach to community development is about a continuous process that concerns itself not so much with "fixing" a central flaw as with attending to the details of community life as well as to major crisis and trends. Such attention was not absolutely necessary within traditional or pre-modern societies. Clear, 'unchanging rules' and traditions maintained the rhythm and beat of community life. There were clear "processes" for dealing with "problems".

Such rules and traditions are no longer so clear; we have become conscious, moving away from an unconscious acceptance of norms, roles and traditions as they were. We have entered a new age of awareness but we still have a lot of "work" to do to understand the responsibilities of our new consciousness.

Part of our taking responsibility for a new attention and consciousness is to recognise that "the problems are not the problems". It is my thesis that the problem is a lack of soul and our community problems are simply symptoms that act as voices calling us back to soul. We have to look with depth

beneath the obvious forms of problems as they manifest themselves to us. What are they saying? I am arguing that the "problems" are symptoms, gifts, calling us to look deeper into ourselves as individuals and groups. This deeper look into ourselves will lead us to soul. Soul is not in itself the solution, it is a quality or dimension of experiencing life in a way that adds depth, value, relatedness, heart and substance. Our answer lies in this depth, value and substance.

We cannot find or care for soul unless we are familiar with its ways; attention and observation are critical - astute attention, an attention requiring deep and discerning listening. We can either see our role as being that of an exterminator attempting to eradicate problems, or we can develop a soulful approach that gives what is problematic back to the community in a way that uncovers its value and invites people to give it attention.

When people in community begin to observe the ways in which the soul is manifesting itself, they can be enriched rather than impoverished. Communities can receive back what is theirs, the very thing that they assumed were so horrible – that they needed to be rid of. When you regard community problems soulfully, with an open mind, you begin to find the messages that lie within the community sickness, the corrections that can be found in remorse and other uncomfortable feelings, and the necessary changes demanded by violence and intolerance.

For 4 years I worked with a team involved in a youth development project in South Africa. Working with these young people invited me into a soulful approach to "development". In one workshop I was asked to consider whether we saw "young people without problems as developed young people". The context of the question was a debate on the philosophy of intervention in the design of implementation of youth projects. From a problem orientated intervention paradigm the focus of intervention was programming to get young people off drugs or alcohol or out of juvenile detention centres ("off the streets") or out of the unemployment queue. We were asked: "Are young people without these problems 'developed' young people?" The answer is of course "No!" A soulful approach to youth development requires much more depth and insight into human need. For young people to develop there are the needs of belonging, anthenticity, a sense of vocation, a sense of mastery over their own lives. A soulful development paradigm of intervention requires a much more holistic

approach to the design of interventions, a design that must integrate many more needs than simply the obvious one to "remove the problem". Much attention is needed.

The parallel for community development is obvious. If we were asked the question: "Is your picture of a developed community simply one that has no problems?", our answer would be "No!". Such a community would be better defined as a sanitised one. A community is much more than the simple the absence of problems. From a soulful approach, a developed community or, perhaps better put, "a mature community" is one that is aware of and attending to its problems within the context of a much more holistic view of its needs, trends and opportunities. A "mature" community is more aware of subtle process of positive and negative energy at work in its midst and how to work with such energies in a creative way. These issues will be considered in more depth, as we consider soul and shadow.

Community and shadow

Communities that lack awareness of "problems" will simply experience their manifestation as "shadow". We therefore ignore symptoms at our own peril. This is true of our bodies, our souls, and our communities. The notion of shadow is again drawn from the work of Jung. It simply means that issues that are not acknowledged and worked with consciously, will be pushed into the shadow realm (or unconscious), only to manifest themselves at a later stage, usually is a destructive way. An ignored symptom will manifest itself eventually! Our own intolerance will eventually be manifest in groups who express their intolerance violently. Our own racism will backfire.

I am arguing that this is essentially true for communities as well. I have seen many examples of it in my life and work. People simply choose to ignore or deny the existence of some destructive energy, and then "bang!!" there is a riot, murder (husband kills wife...), vandalism. A soulful approach to community development requires that shadow be acknowledged both personally and collectively. A soulful approach requires the courage to face ourselves and our communities as they truly are: full of racism, sexism, greed, guilt, violence. Soulfulness requires openness and authenticity. Here is the starting point for creative intervention and transformation. Such acknowledgement of personal and collective shadow leads to a humility and depth that crosses barriers of class, education, gender, and race.

Without wanting to fall into the modernist trap of universalising, I would like to be bold enough to say that beneath all our social constructions and self-constructions we are all much the same. A soulful approach acknowledges this reality with a great humility. The starting place for unravelling shadow problems in our community then becomes unravelling the shadow problems in ourselves rather than the shadow "out there". Let me illustrate how this shift in starting place can lead to a different ethos, strategy and outcome.

Imagine that while working in a community we identify a major problem as youth engaging in vandalism. Now a typical response would be to simply mobilise resources to remove the youth from the community and clean up the mess. That is, the traders and "power brokers" put pressure on the police and courts to take tougher action.

A community development approach would be more "progressive" in that it would utilise a process of relationship building and participation to develop a programme that hopefully channelled the destructive energy of vandalism into creative energies of art, recreation and education/jobs. Indeed, a soulful approach might mobilise the community to develop a sense of solidarity with the young people through the acknowledgement that our collective or individual compulsions and fears have caused young people to lose hope and feel marginalised from their families and communities.

Within this acknowledgement and awareness of our own "shadow" lies the possibility of an imaginative, long-term process of generating transformation together - not just amongst the youth (with projects around art, recreation and education/jobs) but amongst ourselves, (spending less time in compulsive work and giving time to our children; less time in front of the TV and more time eating a meal together or playing soccer in the backyard).

In my experience it is often the individuals, communities, or sectors of the community that look squeaky clean that are experiencing the most destructive energies. Often they are the individuals or groups that are advocating the harshest policy and programme interventions towards those groups that are so obviously experiencing despairing problems. These are the communities that refuse to acknowledge their own shadows and therefore project it onto the "problem". In contrast communities that look more chaotic - where the issues are out in the open - these are the ones that are

struggling to develop a more soulful approach; one of creativity and imagination.

So how does shadow develop? There are many people within our communities that wish there were no problems; they do their best to either remove the problem (using the above mentioned strategy) or else to cover it up. A rhetoric develops. "We do not have homeless youth in our neighbourhood!" Of course there are good reasons why such rhetoric develops; we do not wish tourists to be afraid, we do not wish investors to leave our area. However, these good reasons cannot possibly legitimise rhetoric that points to a strategy leading to shadow. In the long-term the rhetoric and repression will lead to a shadow problem that explodes with much greater destructive impact than could have been previously imagined.

However, it is important that we see shadow in its fullness. For Jung there are two kinds of shadow. The first we have talked of; it is shadow as repressed, negative, destructive energy. The second kind consists of possibilities that have not yet been realised. Jung suggested that there are gifts locked deep within shadow compartments of our psyches. In the same way there are gifts that are repressed into the hidden compartments of our community life. If unlocked, these gifts could bring a healing transformation.

For example, in Australia for many years, the Department of Health adopted an institutionalised policy with reference to people suffering from mental illness. Those classified as sick were simply placed in psychiatric wards. It suited most of us in the community well. There was a clear definition of who was sick and who was healthy; the 'problem' or 'sick' could be removed, our notions of mental irrationality could be projected onto those who were hidden and we could continue living in an illusion of rationality and well-being. In the process our own sickness became shadow. If we are not defined by the system/community as sick we must be well!

Then due to many pressures (primarily budget) the policy changed. Suddenly a de-institutionalisation policy was adopted and people who had been defined as sick and removed from the community were suddenly relocated in hostels in neighbourhoods. There were and still are many ramifications of such a shift in policy. People in the community were scared, people in hostels were still isolated and 'drugged-up'. However, I managed to get involved in a soulful community development process where people in the community 'defined as healthy' by all accounts started

building bridges with those 'defined as sick'. People started having dinners together on Friday evenings, then picnics on Tuesdays; a few of us started a self-help group using the methods of "GROW" (An international self-help movement for mental health). What amazed us through this process was how similar in essence the problems we all struggled with were. Those of us defined as well or rational experienced as much inner chaos and irrationality as did those who were defined as unhealthy. We suddenly all had a safe space to explore what was for some obvious (they had been told for years by psychiatrists) and what had become shadow for the rest of us - our repressed feelings of self-doubt, paranoia, neurosis.

The policy shift led to a community being faced with a group of people who had been removed from our consciousness. In the process of 'meeting' one another we were given a safe place to engage with our own shadows. This is the gift of shadow.

I am convinced that many of us would experience this transformation and healing of ourselves if we were willing to soulfully approach those groups that we are trying to repress into our communal shadow consciousness.

Soul and community myth

It is communities that refuse to acknowledge the shadow that remain soulless. Graffiti is quickly painted over, refuse removed, shanty towns covered over by roads or re-located. Such communities might be sanitised, but they will never be soulful, they will not breathe life.

Listening to the gifts within problems and shadow often initiates us into community building. We move from rhetoric to reality, from repression to acknowledgement, grief, creative imagination and action. From here lies the opportunity for soulful community to be born. In this section I wish to focus on the role of myth and story-tellers in this process of soulful initiation.

For soulful community to be initiated the myth-makers must be re-born. People who can tell the stories of the community (unravel the false myths, often imposed from outside communities, that have dominated people's consciousness) must start to speak and sing. The story-tellers are the memory makers, they can introduce us to our histories as communities; they can link us with the past and lead us into a depth that touches our deepest imaginations and passions. Here lies the energy for transformation.

In Australia I have lived and worked in a community called West End for 10 years. It is an inner city neighbourhood with a rich diversity of lifestyles, cultures, and characters. I remember one day going to a local party that was celebrating the opening of a new co-operatively developed trading shop called "Just Products". During the party an Aboriginal man stood up and started to tell us the story of our neighbourhood. He told us some of the tribal story, painting a picture of the wild grasses, the bush mice, the kangaroos, the Brisbane river as it was with sandy beaches and mangrove banks....the story of the arrival of the White man. Suddenly my sense of my neighbourhood was transformed. The story of my life as it was unravelling, of trying to put roots down in this place, was suddenly connected to the stories of many others.

As people from diverse backgrounds hear such a story we become connected. We all stand on sacred ground and feel a part of something deeper than ourselves. Story takes us out of ourselves, out of the moment; it gives us a sense of perspective and mystery; we are part of an emerging story and tradition. My friend Jason describes this transformed awareness simply: "We are no longer hovering above the earth....we feel a part of it..."

It is important for us as soul-makers to search out such story-tellers. They are in most communities but are often unrecognised. Maybe they are old, or sick; they've probably been around for a long time and for that reason maybe we fail to notice them. They have become part of the furniture. A wonderful soulful project for any community group on neighbourhood centre would be to simply develop a social history of their local neighbourhood. Write it down or put it on a tape; publish it and start educating people about their own community and its rich stories and traditions.

From new myths and fresh stories we can start to re-imagine our communities as places of vitality, vibrancy, life, care. This re-imagining is a huge step in building community.

A college friend of mine worked in a neighbourhood in the Western suburbs of Brisbane for several years. The area was known and depicted to be full of the poor, the unemployed, a migrant ghetto full of violence, crime. It was run down! The media had a way of reproducing such an image and therefore local people perceived it to be so. Every family's objective was to get out as soon as possible.

However, this was a story, a myth. It was a story generated from lack of perspective, lack of perception and lack of soul. My colleague realised this and set about trying to re-tell the

story, re-write the myth. More accurately we should say "broadening the myth". Yes, there was violence, crime, unemployment etc, but there was much more. Another story that my friend started telling was the story of the people of El Salvador; a people with a cultural richness and a political complexity. My friend started talking of Australian Salvadorians rather than 'migrants' or 'refugees'. The perception and perspective started to change and a new story started to emerge. It is now a story of El Salvadorian courage, celebration and solidarity rather than one of 'unemployed migrants' and 'refugees'. With such a change of story, a new myth is generated which gives birth to the energy that can transform communities.

While we have a negative perception of ourselves and our community and false myths dominates our consciousness, we can only experience despair. (That is why reading newspapers daily can be an exercise in despair) Despair leads to hopelessness and a lack of creativity and transforming imagination. Alternatively, a transformation of consciousness, the belief in a new myth gives a new energy. It is energy emerging from a new hope; an exciting soulful awakening that can lead to a new creativity and transforming imagination. Here is where community is initiated.

Soul and power

Up to this point, many readers may have begun to think that I conceptualise communities as homogeneous units or perceive a soulful approach to community development within a voluntaristic notion of social/community transformation. Here I must make myself clear - I do not hold to the naive notion that communities are wanting "to develop" in the same way. Communities are full of different interest groups and many power relationships are entrenched. Any notion of community development that implies transformation, requires an understanding of power and the dynamics of power relationships within communities.

A soulful approach does not imply voluntary change or transformation without the possibility of conflict and confrontation. In fact, quite to the contrary; even within psychological transformation often it is some form of violent experience, something that the psyche experiences as shocking, that leads to the start of therapy and healing. This is often true within a soulful community development approach; it is often the shock of conflict, a sudden manifestation of shadow that can lead to change.

A simple example is the story of Expo 88 in Brisbane city. Expo 88 was to be a huge international affair requiring a large area of land to build exhibition tents for display of culture for many countries around the world. Despite recommendations from a research report that the Expo site be located in another place the state government of Queensland decided to locate this Expo in the centre of Brisbane city - the neighbourhood of South Brisbane. The report made it clear that this option would lead to many homeless people, and transport and construction chaos. However, the politics of inner city gentrification and money sidelined the report. For those of us living in the neighbourhood it was this shock that mobilised action and generated a coming together of people both in the experience of belonging and empowerment.

For those involved in soulful community development the issue of power cannot be escaped. The above story is common, and is unfortunately becoming more common. We want to wake up, for our communities to wake up. We desire shadow to be acknowledged and welcomed; for us to give attention to our greed, intolerance etc. But what do we do if people in the community do not? What if those in power refuse to acknowledge the reality of the poor or have no interest in unravelling false myths?

Returning to the above story; what do we do when the state government sideline reports that have made recommendations based on concerns for people rather than concerns for profit? What do we do when some parts of the community support the process; this is the chance for private landlords to make heaps of cash and for local traders to finally get rid of the poor. At this point there is the need for personal and collective power - a power that can persuade, confront and bring change.

The exercise of political power has moved from the periphery to the centre within development discourse. And rightly so! In my reflection on participation I advocated that our notion of people's participation must be informed from the perspective of autonomous development - that is, autonomous human agency and people's power.

Participation is not about people aligning themselves with developmental interventions and neither is empowerment about people "being empowered". It is about people moving from welfare to control - control of defining their own needs and control of formal power to exercise bargaining power. My point is that when exploring power from the perspective

of soul we must bring a depth of analysis to the power being exercised. Power and abuse of power is often the energy that makes or breaks any development process, whether autonomous or "facilitated". Let us bring attention to this energy or else we will continue to mystify power without a thorough appraisal of it.

Moore and Kornfield provide some useful ideas that give us a way of naming two types of power that enable us to bring attention to this energy. For Moore there is heroic-egotistical power that is in contrast to soulful power. For Kornfield there is unskilled/painful power in contrast to skilled power. The qualities of heroic-egotistical and unskilled-painful type of power are grasping, greed, and inadequacy while the qualities of soulful, skilful type of power are those of creativity, wisdom, vitality, love and compassion.

It is important for us to recognise that when conceptualising power in this dualistic way it is not so much about a moral choice of exercising one as opposed to the other. The actual forms of power will be more of less the same, but there will be a subtle shift in the nature of the power exercised, the energy behind the power. It becomes essential for us to recognise that we have options within the power that we exercise - again the issue is to bring an acute attention to the power we exercise. In providing names for two types of power, we are simply examining what lies beneath our action. It is not a moralistic desire for pure motives - such a project is doomed to fail and lead to disillusionment or delusions. It is a desire for awareness and depth.

Such an examination will enable us to subtly shift the energy behind our community actions. It is my thesis that such a subtle shift will bring depth to our power which will result in greater sustained energy, resilience; even nobility.

If we wish to bring this kind of examination to our exercise of power, we must provide some names for the dangers that lie within unskilled and heroic power. Here are three that I see as essential:

1. *We become what we hate*. Within the exercising of power their lies a powerful shadow. In using energy against an enemy we become, in many ways, the same as the enemy. This is true of psychological power – i.e. an alcoholic that fights against being an alcoholic actually gives energy to the addiction. Your "hating of the alcoholic within" leads down the road of alcoholism. Walter Wink in his groundbreaking theological treatise demonstrates how this

process is equally true within sociological phenomenon. (See Walter Wink: *"Engaging the Powers"*). An example is that the Allies became as evil as the German army during World War II climaxing in the abominable development and use of the Atom Bomb.

2. *Passivity*. Within this danger lie two problems. The first is related to the actual shadow of heroic power. Often egotistically orientated acts of power reflect a deep inner passivity. The outer energy has a shadow of inner emptiness. Soulfully inspired action is goal-orientated action filled with passion and vitality whereas an action that is simply an attempt to flee our own passivity is unskilled. In this kind of action people simply "jump on a bandwagon" - the exercise of power and involvement in action provides a way to bypass the inner journey of connecting to deep values and commitments.

The other problem with respect to passivity is that in our critique of heroic power we can easily move into a mode of insecurity and passivity. As we become aware that within our patriarchal world many acts of exercising power are heroic in nature and egotistical in motivation, we desire to develop an alternative approach to action. Here, there is a difficulty - often the third way that lies between heroic actions and apathy/passivity is difficult to discern - passivity becomes the easy option.

3. *Narcissism*. This danger reflects the problem of heroic self-interest as individuals or a community become mobilised but the mobilisation is not grounded in enough love and sufficiently broad concerns.

The naming of dangers enables us to take precautions. We can question the energy behind our use of power. Are our desires which legitimize our exercise of power simply rationalisations for narcissism? Are they simply heroic attempts to escape our passivity rather than soulful, passionate attempts to build community? Is the power exercised transforming us into the images of our enemies?

In a similar way to engaging in "depth participation" we must engage in a "depth analysis" of the energy within our power. Such a depth analysis requires an understanding of our own innocence, denial and belief. Often we believe we are too innocent to become like the enemy. We deny our own shadows and we hold to the belief that our crusade or exercise of power is grounded in truth. A depth analysis invites us to an honesty that acknowledges not only the

energy of compassion, anger and wisdom but the energy of narcissism, violence and grasping.

We might not be so different from the enemy - in their position we could well do the same - but our entry into an awareness that enables us to debunk our own innocence and be free from our denials will enable us to exercise power with depth.

Conclusion

This reflection has attempted to spark a public conversation that could be invoked by the notion of 'soul' and its 'application' to dimensions of the community development tradition. I write it because of my need to constantly 'pause', re-consider and engage in a conversation around the meaning of our work in new contexts and historical moments. I also do not want to be 'co-opted' by a modernist notion of a technical community development method. To do that I need to maintain a reflective edge. I would like that reflective conversation to be extended. Feel free to respond to this paper and contact us.

In volume II of these occasional papers I will continue this conversation through applying the notion of soul to the role of training in community development as a way of both reflecting on the co-op's training praxis specifically and community based training generally.

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Vocational professionals

by Dave Andrews

The significant trend towards professionalisation

All of us know that most community work is still being done as it always has been done, not by professionals, but by volunteers.

But as I look around me I see a significant trend in community work towards increasing professionalisation.

Many of us have watched with the sociologist Harold Wilensky as we have witnessed the successive stages involved in professionalisation take place.

To begin with people who wanted to be involved in community work just got involved in community work. Then various parties involved in community work pressed for there to be more adequate training . Then those with more adequate training pressed for a professional association. Then those in the professional association pressed for the support of the system to impose certification requirements on the practice of community work.

So now there is the situation where voluntary community work goes largely unrecognised, unless it is under the auspices of professional community work [1].

There are of course many explanations of this trend towards increasing professionalisation.

Some say the increasing trend towards professionalisation is due to an increasing sense of responsibility among community workers. It is simply a matter of community workers accepting responsibility for our area of work and assuming the responsibility to make sure that everything done by everyone in our area of work is done well. After all 'every other profession has carefully defined boundaries to its domains.' [2]

Others say the increasing trend towards professionalisation is due to an increasing sense of desperation among community workers. It's not merely a matter of mapping out our area of work. It's also a matter of staking out our claim to our territory of work and standing up against anyone who would dare to encroach upon our rights to control our territory exclusively ourselves. 'It's a matter of self preservation for practitioners in all fields of public service to draw their own circles within which no outsider may enter.' [3]

Still others say the increasing trend towards professionalisation is due less to need for preservation, and more to the desire for prestige among community workers. It's actually a matter of getting some recognition for the type of work we do and gaining a bit of respect into the bargain. As a matter of fact, 'most (community)workers want professional status.' [4]

Kay Laursen, speaking of the social work profession of which she is a part, is quite scathing about the increasing trend towards professionalisation.

'It is my thesis that professionalism is primarily a quest for power: and that the individuals feel they can achieve greater personal prestige, financial remuneration, and even political power by becoming members of a profession. [5]

Whether Kay Laursen is correct or not - and I'm certainly not in a position to judge other people's motives in the matter - there is no doubt that professionals are an emerging power in community work circles.

And Earnest Greenwood, who wrote a classic paper on professionalism in 1965, noted that professionals have become a class apart from volunteers when it comes to systematic knowledge, ascribed authority, official sanctions, careful trans-actions, and an associated professional subculture. [6]

I know that there has been some doubt over the years as to whether community work professionals are fully developed professionals in this sense [7]. But according to my observations most community work professionals I know display all the essential characteristics of fully developed professionals.

The dangerous features of professionalisation

In 1982 Donald Kraybill and his colleagues published a controversial list detailing the dangerous features of professionalisation that they had observed. [8]

Whether we agree with it or not, I think it can serve as a useful check list for considering the consequences of a preoccupation with professionalisation.

It could be used by any professionals - be they ministers or doctors, counsellors or lawyers, health workers or housing workers, welfare workers or social workers - operating in community work circles .

The first danger of professionalisation is: *Serving the Profession.*

There is a tendency for professionals to serve the profession rather than the people it purports to serve.

There was a time not long ago that the staff and students in the social work department of the university at which I taught used to march in the streets of the city to demonstrate their commitment to human rights. They no longer do so.

In fact ,as far as I can recall, the staff and students went out on strike only twice in the last two years. One time was when the students protested about payment of fees. And the other time was when the staff protested about the payment of their salaries. They used to demonstrate more of a commitment to human rights, now they demonstrate more of a commitment to their own rights.

Socialisation at a social work department such as mine has produced, as Lester Anderson says, 'the autonomous professional who know who they are, are committed to the profession and are motivated to serve as professionals throughout their career'. [9]

The second danger of professionalisation is: *Believing the Ideology.*

There is a tendency for professionals to believe the propaganda of their own ideology.

A colleague of mine works for a church based community organisation. The organisation prides itself on its professional competence. At various times my colleague has heard people say how much better the professionals are, than non-professionals, in providing a good quality service .

Unfortunately their belief in their own competence blinds them to such an extent that they simply cannot see how inadequate the quality of the service they provide really is. And, the irony is, that while the professionals may not be aware of this, the non-professionals are only too acutely aware of the situation. But they are seldom consulted for their views.

We often simply do not recognise the terrible dangers associated with, what another colleague of mine, Bill de Maria, calls 'the dark side of the values we cherish'. [10]

The third danger of professionalisation is: *Utilising the Mythology*.

There is a tendency for professionals to utilise the humanitarian mythology of the profession to rationalise the vested interests of the profession.

For instance there is a well known welfare project that a community work colleague has developed nearby. Not because of a demonstrable need for the particular service. But because of his need to demonstrate his ability to establish a professional service.

It certainly is a most impressive welfare project. It is set in a lovely building with beautiful furnishings and brilliant facilities. It operates on a big budget with a well qualified staff in well equipped offices. It uses an inordinate amount of resources to help the small number of people who utilise its services. But it is a marvellous showcase for the community worker concerned.

'Within all the helping professions' Ruth Krall says sadly 'I have seen issues of power, status, economics... and control shabbily dressed in the language of compassion for clients'. [11].

The fourth danger of professionalisation is: *Fragmenting Reality.*

There is a tendency for professionals to specialise and, in so doing, to fragment reality.

Even in community work, which tends to be more generalist than most professions, people still tend to specialise and, in so doing, to fragment reality.

It is very seldom we deal with the community as a whole. Most of us break up the whole in order to deal with it bit by bit. In so doing very seldom do we deal with people as whole people. Most of us categorise their problems and try to solve them in terms of their various parts.

Many people find it frustrating to run around from one office to another in order to meet the various specialists who can attend to the various parts of their problem. But when their problems are serious, they have very little resources and they are dealing with a lot of stress, the situation is not just frustrating, it's infuriating.

'Specialisation intrudes on all professionals says Donald Kraybill. 'And unfortunately fragmentation is an inherent part of the ...process'. [12]

The fifth danger of professionalisation is: *Separating People.*

There is a tendency for professionals to specialise, and, in so doing, not only fragment reality, but also separate themselves from the reality of other people which they do not share.

Even in community work, which tends to be less specialist than most professions, people still separate themselves from one another as a result of their specialisations.

Recently my colleague's supervisor dismissed a proposal she had worked on with a community group, because the supervisor said my colleague, an unqualified welfare worker, did not have the expertise to put a sound proposal together that only she, a qualified social worker, had.

It apparently did not register to my colleague's supervisor, that the people in the community group, with which my colleague worked, were all capable people, with years of experience, not only in planning but also in implementing the project they proposed, and who thus had developed, with my colleague, far greater expertise than my colleague's supervisor could ever realise.

'A commitment to the professional complex can alienate a person from their neighbour' says Redekop. 'Keeping the profession from alienating you from your neighbours is a very difficult assignment. [13]

A sixth danger of professionalisation is: *Making Mystery.*

There is a tendency for professionals to develop a mystique about their profession.

Apparently community workers think quite mysteriously. At least, they talk about the way they think, quite mysteriously. Some talk about 'closed sets' and 'centred sets' in community work. They don't relate they ' liaise'. They don't just develop contacts or connections like everybody else they develop' networks with key players'. They don't just drop by for a visit: they 'interact'. They are apparently always willing to 'dialogue' and, whenever required, are always ready to 'advocate'. Not 'top down'. But 'bottom up'. It's all a matter of 'O - 1 - 3'. And to most of us that's a mystery.

'Specialised language and verbalised procedures' according to Donald Kraybill, are intended to 'create a mysterious shroud over professional practices', [14]

A seventh danger of professionalisation is: *Protecting Secrets.*

There is a tendency for professionals to protect the secrets of their profession.

Apparently community workers can talk so secretively among themselves that no-one can understand what they are talking about.

Recently a friend found herself at a party for community health workers and their families. She is an informed woman who was looking forward to chatting with people who, like her husband, were community health workers, and who, she thought, would be interested in community concerns in general and health issues in particular. But try as she might she couldn't break into their conversation. She didn't understand a thing they were saying. And they wouldn't speak to her in terms she could understand.

Needless to say my friend and her family left the party early. On the way home she told her husband that she thought it was real irony, that people who were meant to be on about community health, were so unwilling to share the secrets of their trade with the uninitiated, when their work was to share the secrets of their trade with the uninitiated.

According to Ruth Krall, that experience is not exceptional. ' Social workers....fight for the protection of their professional secrets like everybody else.' [15]

An eighth danger of professionalisation is: *Manufacturing Need.*

There is a tendency for professionals who specialise in meeting peoples' needs to manufacture a sense of need in order to secure contract to meet it.

A recent study indicates that some groups of people with disabilities like those with hearing impairment, do not need specialised services, if they can get guaranteed access to generic services, through such a simple expedient as training the general population in a given community to sign.

However the professionals, whose incomes depend on the development of specialised services, still insist on the need for specialised services for the hearing impaired, and resist the transfer of resources from welfare to education in order to train all the children at school in the use of sign language. [16]

'Behind the disinterested masks', says John McKnight, 'are simply the servicers, their systems, their techniques and their technologies - businesses in need of markets, economies seeking growth potential, professionals in need of incomes.' [17]

A ninth danger of professionalisation is: *Abusing Power.*

There is a tendency for professionals to exploit people in need by reporting problems, proposing solutions, presenting treatments and performing services that may be in their best interests, but not necessarily the best interest of their clients.

A recent study of service delivery to disabled people with disabilities shows that they would be much better off with cash transfers to secure services of their choice.

But the professionals, whose control would be affected by direct cash transfers that would circumvent the particular services they provide, have successfully lobbied against the move by their clients, advanced by their self-advocacy groups, for the government to grant disabled people direct cash transfers.

In order to maintain their professional control over their clients, they have deliberately thwarted a move for people with disabilities to gain greater control over their own lives. [18]

'The great danger of the increasing professionalisation of different forms of treatment', says Henri Nouwen, ' is that they become ways of exercising power instead of offering service'. [19]

A tenth danger of professionalisation is: *Avoiding Responsibility.*

There is a tendency for professionals to be responsible only to themselves, not to society, and then, only in terms of the lowest common denominator of their professional association.

A friend of mine was actually reprimanded recently for writing about his community work concerns for the community he works with.

His learned colleagues told my friend that writing popular articles on development, for ordinary people to read, was a sheer waste of time. It was far more important, they argued, for him to publish erudite material in academic journals.

His learned colleagues acknowledged few, if anyone in the community my friend works with, could relate to such material, let alone make much sense of it in terms of their lives. But they dismissed his concerns as inconsequential.

Apparently in his associates' view, it was more important for my friend to be accountable to other professionals, than to answer the questions the people he was working with were asking him about the work.

According to Freidson 'A profession quite naturally forms a perspective of its own, a perspective all the more distorted...by its source in a status answerable to no one but itself. Once a profession forms such a self-sustaining perspective, protected from others' perspective, insulated from the necessity of justifying itself to outsiders, it cannot be expected to see itself and its mission with clear eyes, nor can it be reasonably expected to assume the perspective of its clientele. If it cannot assume the perspective of its clientele, how can it pretend to serve it well?' [20]

The disabling effects of professionalisation

John McKnight is worried that much of the professional work we do not only does not enable communities, it actually disables communities.

McKnight sets out his case quite persuasively in a classic paper called *Professionalised Services and Disabling Help* [21]

McKnight says that service is the biggest business in modern society. In Australia less than 3% are involved in agriculture and only 17% are involved in manufacture; while more than 63% are involved in services of various kinds. Most people in modern society are therefore service producers and service consumers.

McKnight says that the success of the business depends on the service producers turning the service consumers into satisfied customers. For the service producers to make the service consumers satisfied customers, the service producers have to develop professional expertise in meeting the needs of the community. And in the process of developing expertise

in meeting the needs of the community, the professional develops the ability to define the needs of the community and the means by which the needs of the community can be met. The community thus becomes a client. [22]

MeKnight says , that to stay in business, professional community workers must convince the client communities they work for, that their services are indispensable. And in order to do that, professionals try to communicate several propositions to their elients, which distort the truth, but serve the purpose of disabling client communities , and making the disabled client communities dependent on their professional community workers. [23]

The first proposition that, according to McKnight, professional community workers of all kinds try to sell their client communities is: *"You are deficient!"*

McKnight says, communities may have needs, but not all needs are deficiencies that must be filled or fulfilled by a professional service. Some needs may be illusions that people ought to give up. Some may be obligations that people ought to take up themselves. Some may be rights that people ought to struggle for against even expert opinion. And some may be unresolvable problems that people should just accept responsibly, if not happily, as unalterable facts of life. It does people a terrible disservice to define all needs as deficiencies that require professional services to be filled or fulfilled.

The second proposition that, according to McKnight, professional community workers of all kinds try to sell their client communities is :*"You are the problem!"*

McKnight remarks, even where communities may be deficient, it is not good to give people the impression that the problem is simply that they are deficient. They may well be deficient in some area. Most of us are deficient in one area or another of our lives. But sometimes the problems people have aren't caused so much by their deficiencies, as by an emphasis on their deficiencies, that prevents people recognising their capacity to function quite effectively. It certainly does not help communities to describe people as problems.

The third proposition that, according to McKnight, professional community workers of all kinds try to sell their client communities is: *"You haven't just got a single problem, You have an entire collection of problems!*"

McKnight reminds us, it may be better to consider people as having problems, rather than being problems, but it still doesn't do people much good to give them the impression that they are simply a bundle of dysfunctional bits and pieces. They may well have a lot of problems. In fact most people I know do have a lot of problems. But most people I know also have the potential to solve a lot of their problems themselves. It not only does not help, it actually does communities real harm, to deal with people as if they were a set of problems that needed to be taken apart, solved, and put back together again, by somebody else.

The fourth proposition that, according to McKnight, professional community workers of all kinds try to sell their client communities is: *"We are the solution to your problem!"*

McKnight points out that how essentially dictatorial that message is. The client is the problem. The professional is the solution. The people themselves are not the answer to the question their problems pose. Their peers are not the answer to the question their problems pose. The only answer to the question the client asks is the professional. It is not a bilateral process. It is a unilateral process. It is essentially a dictatorial process, under the control of the professional. To which the client submits. It effectively undermines any movement toward democracy in the community.

The fifth proposition that, according to McKnight, professional community workers of all kinds try to sell their client communities is: *"We know your situation!"*

McKnight brings up how totally disempowering that message is. There is no greater power than the power to question. For from the power to question flows the power to find answers. If a professional can take control of the definition of a person's difficulties, the professional can take control of a person's life. From then on autonomy ceases to exist. The citizen becomes a client. The professional assumes the prerogative to decide a person's fate. Communities no longer exercise the right to decide matters for themselves.

The sixth proposition that, according to McKnight, professional community workers of all kinds try to sell their clients communities is: *"You can't understand the problem or the solution."*

McKnight brings out how thoroughly patronising that message is. The language of the professional mystifies both the problem and the solution so the ordinary person cannot evaluate the process for themselves. The only people

competent to evaluate the merit of a particular process proposed by one professional is another professional. The ordinary person thus becomes totally dependent on the professional. So communities can no longer choose whether to be a client or not. They can only choose whose client they will be.

The seventh proposition that, according to McKnight, professional community workers of all kinds try to sell their client communities is: *"Only we can decide whether the solution has dealt with your problem!"*

McKnight explains how completely destructive such a statement is of the last vestiges of human rights. The person has already been reduced from a citizen with inalienable rights to a client with limited rights. Now the person is being reduced further, to become a consumer, with no rights at all, except the right to consume uncritically. The ordinary person is considered to be so deficient that they are not deemed fit to decide for themselves whether or not a particular service has been helpful or not. The professional is everything. The client is nothing. Communities, as such, cease to exist.

To many self respecting professionals McKnight's perspective on the disabling effect of professionalisation might seem preposterous.

No doubt many would argue vigorously about McKnight's notion that professionals are normally not very democratic in their work.

McKnight argues, however, that though many professionals seek a democratic understanding of their role, the evidence seems to indicate that, in spite of community orientated rhetoric, the way they usually work, is not only not democratic but actually anti-democratic and detrimental, if not destructive, to community. [24]

Ann Oakley's recent study of how many people in helping professions treat the people they work with in the community, unfortunately confirms these views, and suggests that there may be more to them than we would like to consider. [25]

Oakley documents some of the disastrous disabling messages that are passed on by professionals to the people they work with in the community. She says people report being treated as children, incapable of making intelligent choices. She says people report being treated like delinquents, unable or unwilling to make normal decisions themselves. The clients report being told what to think and how to feel by the professionals. And they report being reprimanded if they

made too many enquiries about their treatment, or objected for some reason or other.

McKnight says that by treating people like that, professionals deliberately increase their power at the expense of the ordinary people whom they purport to serve. 'This analysis suggests that the disabling effects are intrinsic to modern professional service. Whatever the benefits they might provide, they can only be assessed after recognising them as essentially self interested systems with internally disabling effects' [26]

Kay Laursen, surveying the Australian social work scene, concurs with McKnight.

'It is my contention that professionalism is primarily characterised by self-interest, expressed in a quest for power, economic, social, personal, and political; that professionalism by its very nature makes little difference to the underlying causes of client's problems (it does not, nor does it intend to, change the social structure in any radical way such that the more fundamental causes of problems are dealt with); that when it comes to the crunch, to a choice between "the powers that be" and the welfare of their clients, professionals opt for the former, while simultaneously trying to convince their erstwhile clients that this betrayal is in their best interests; and finally, that professionalism militates against a genuine service to clients because it alienates professionals from their own humanity, and naturally from the common humanity they could share with their client.' [27]

'Thus!' says Laursen, 'I question professionalism itself, in social work as elsewhere, because as a social institution, it seeks only greater power for its members, while offering very little in the form of a genuine human service to people, in return. [28]

Harold Throssell an Australian social worker and writer says: 'In Australia, the Australian Association of Social Workers controls the training courses (in the sense that they have to be approved by A.A.S.W.) and, to a considerable extent, who gets employment: those with particular paper qualifications, regardless of aptitude. The professional organisations (A.A.S.W., N.A.S.W. in the United States, B.A.S.W. in the United Kingdom) model themselves on those established in medicine, law, etc., with their codes of ethics, constitutions, grades of membership, and methods for keeping people out; with more and more full-time officials, minutes, mounting piles of reports. In true Parkinsonian

style, these bodies develop lives of their own: committees proliferate, subscriptions increase, more and more time is spent at seaside conferences. Social action cannot be undertaken until "more research is done", "we have more office space", "we have more secretaries", "the issues are defined more clearly". In reality, political action is resisted in order not to lose the patronage of governments and other authorities, and in order to maintain the prestigious positions of the leading members.' [29]

No wonder Richard Titmuss, quoting George Bernard Shaw, once stated that *'professions are conspiracies against the laity.'* [30]. Ain't that the truth!

A vocation for a new generation of professionals

Henri Nouwen says that 'when we go back to the original meaning of the word "profession" (we) realize that it refers to "professing" one' own deepest conviction".' [31]

It is my conviction that we desperately need to rediscover our vocation, and deconstruct and reconstruct our professions in terms of our vocation.

According to the existential pscychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, 'Everyone has their own specific vocation'. [32] And according to his colleague, in analytical psychiatry, Carl Jung 'To have a vocation is to be addressed by a voice. We hear a voice. We are called.' [33]

While our call may well come to us in our own voice, a still small voice from somewhere deep inside us, 'our vocation acts like a law of God. It makes demands upon us It demands our best, and,at times, even better than our best. To liberate. To redeem. To transform.' [34]

If this is, as I believe, our vocation then, anyone who would aspire to be, what I call, a *'vocational professional'*, would need to be a professional who, in the words of Henri Nouwen, 'dares to claim ... a vocation that allows him or her to enter into deep solidarity with the anguish underlying all the glitter.' [35]

This is, of course, is not easy.

John McKnight considers the notion of a *'vocational professional'* a complete contradiction in terms, and insists that while his analysis is an argument *for* the importance of reform, it is also an argument *against* any possibility of real transformation.

He asserts that 'the disabling effects of professionalisation are intrinsic, (not extrinsic,) to modern professionalised services, and so cannot be ameliorated' under any circumstances. [36]

However, William Doherty, the Director of the Family Therapy Programme at the University of Minnesota, argues that though transformation may be difficult, it is not only theoretically possible, it is actually happening right now.

In his bestselling book, Soul Searching, Doherty tells of an exciting new movement in which professionals are getting together to encourage one another to intentionally pursue a more personally and socially responsible approach to their practice. [37]

Jean Vanier, who works with people who are profoundly disabled, says that the only way that any one of us can become a *vocational professional* is by listening to the cry of the suffering as it echoes in our own soul.

He says if we listen intently then we will quickly learn that 'people have suffered a great deal at the hands of the powerful - doctors, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, and others. They have suffered so much from broken promises, from people wanting to learn from experiments, or to write a thesis, and then having gained what they wanted -recognition, an impressive book, article (or report) - going away and never coming back. (That) they are waiting for someone who really cares, who sees them in the light of love, who recognises their gifts (not just their deficits), who accepts their need for change, but who will accept them just as they are, with no preconceived ideas (of) change.' [38]

It is that cry -'for someone who really cares'- that constitutes our vocation; and it is in the context of that cry -'for someone who really cares'- that we are called to deconstruct and reconstruct our professions.

A process some people call 'de-professionalisation.'

I prefer to call the process 're-professionalisation' rather than 'de-professionalisation because it doesn't require a complete disassociation from everything to do with professionalisation, only a disassociation from the dangerous features of professionalisation.

It requires a disassociation from our professional predeliction for success, and status, and all that stuff. And that requires a disassociation from our professional

predisposition to accumulate a dazzling array of knowledge and skills to impress people. But that does not require any disassociation from the professional prerequisite to acquire an adequate range of knowledge and skills to serve the people we work with.

The purpose of the process of 're-professionalisation' is not to discount the importance of professional competance, but to develop our competence in the context of authentic compassion.

We must make sure that that we don't serve our professions so much as the people our professions purport to serve, and that we don't impose our ideology or explicate our mythology at the expense of people.

We must make sure that that we don't allow the specialities we practice to fragment reality, or separate us from people whose fragment of reality we do not specialise in, and that we don't develop a mystique about our procedures, or protect the secrets of our trade, that could be shared so as to empower people.

We must make sure that that we don't manufacture a sense of need in order to secure a contract to meet it, and that we don't abuse our power in the performance of our duties, or avoid our responsibility to the people in whose name we perform those duties.

We must do our best to make sure we become, what I call, *amateur, radical, and revolutiuonary professionals.*

Amateur, radical and revolutionary professionals

Amateur Professionals

A *vocational professional* is an *amateur professional.*

This is not the contradiction that it might appear to be. Because the opposite of amateur is not professional - it is mercenary. The vocational professional is not a mercenary, but an amateur, at heart.

As David Augsberger says, the notion of an 'amateur' comes from the Latin word 'amator', which in English means 'love', which in this context means 'someone who does something for the love of it.' [39] Hence, anyone who serves others for the love of it, is an amateur at heart.

The amateur professional is a person who is a warm professional. Exactly the opposite of the stereotype of the cold professional. Because their heart is on fire with a desire to help people meet their needs in any way they can. Whether they get paid a lot, paid a little, or paid absolutely nothing at all!

Paul Mercer is an excellent example of an amateur professional. He is a general practitioner, who treats his patients as people and treats people with respect. He takes a lot more time with people than he is supposed to. He gives people not only his attention but also himself. He enters into their struggle, and in the context of their struggle he seeks to serve them, minimising their pain, maximising their opportunities and enabling them to cope with the difficulties they face. He loves the people he works with in the community and, not surprisingly, the people love him.

The medieval medical dictum that Kadushin cites is a motto which Paul Mercer lives out in his community, and each of our communities would be much better off if every community worker tried, like Paul

"To cure sometimes,

To relieve often,

To comfort always" [40]

Radical Professionals

A *vocational professional* is a *radical professional.*

Martin Rein suggests that if we are going to begin to do justice to the people we work with we should develop 'a radical profession.' A radical profession, according to Rein, is not a profession made up of people who are single issue activists, but a profession whose members actively make the people that they work with the single most important issue they are concerned with. [41]

Jack Rothman says there are three types of professional role orientation that he has observed:

(1) a professional role orientation, which 'implies a high degree of concern with professional values and standards'

(2) a bureaucratic orientation, which 'refers to a preoccupation with policies and terms of the employing agency'

(3) a client orientation, which 'emphasises primary attention to the needs of those served by the agency'. [42]

Most social workers, according to Rothman, tend to be orientated more towards bureaucratic concerns, if not professional concerns, rather than to client concerns.

So in order to develop a radical orientation to community work, which treats the people in the community seriously, many community workers will have to develop a radical reorientation to social work.

Developing such a radical reorientation to social work is not easy. It's particularly difficult because the prospect of accountability of professionals to the people they work with, and the mutuality it implies, is often considered ' a dangerous form of role confusion', and 'the world in which we live, has no models to offer to those who want to work towards mutuality'. [43]

In spite of the difficulties, however, Concetta Benn and her colleagues deliberately developed a radical reorientation to their community work in the Family Centre Project in Melbourne. [44]

Concetta Benn and her colleagues systematically tried to reduce the status differential between the professionals and the people they worked with in the project through a devolution of power that was enhanced by an approach that encouraged participation.

The professionals encouraged the people to set the agendas for the project and they encouraged one another to serve the agendas the people set for the project, rather than manipulate the project to suit themselves, or exploit the project in terms of their vested interests.

They encouraged one another to become human resources that could be utilised, within certain limits, by the people, to serve the agendas the people set for the project.

The Family Centre Project was far from perfect. The family's right to participate accrued to them only at the rate the staff conceded it. But there were genuine, ongoing concessions that made increasing levels of participation, by the poor, in decisions that affected their lives, really possible. So in spite of the imperfections The Family Centre Project, the staff managed to facilitate a process of movement towards real 'power for the poor'. [45]

Concetta Benn and her colleagues show us the way forward. We need not be conservative. We can be radical. And, as radical professionals, we can make a significant difference in our communities, in spite of our imperfections,

by focusing on the people we work with, and facilitating a process of movement through the people we were with towards real power for the poor.

Revolutionary Professionals

A *vocational professional* is a *revolutionary professional.*

Robert Chambers suggests that if we are going to begin to do justice to the people we need to work with, we should develop a 'revolutionary profession'. According to Chambers a revolutionary profession is not a profession made up of people who build road blocks, and defend the bastions of one ideology against another, but a profession whose members can break through barriers, and fight against the biases which discriminate against the disadvantaged in our society. [46]

Chambers outlines a number of preferences that affect our participation as professionals in the struggle to do justice to the people we need to work with.

Chambers suggests that when we select the projects we want to work with that we tend to select nice clean projects first and "dirty", "smelly" projects last.

Project preferences

First	Last
Modern	Traditional
Large	Small
Complex	Simple
Regular	Irregular
Quantified	Unquantified
Predictable	Unpredictable
High Technology	Low Technology
High Profile	Low Profile
High Cost	Low Cost
Hard	Soft
Neat	Messy
Clean	Dirty
Nice	Smelly [47]

Chambers further suggests that when we select the time and the place we want to work, that we tend to select "easy" times and places first, and "difficult" times and places last.

Time and Place Preferences

First	Last
Accessible	Inaccessible
Convenient	Inconvenient
Near	Far
Easy	Difficult
Office	Field
Suburban	Urban
Urban	Rural
During Office Hrs	Out of Office Hrs
Day	Night
During the Week	Over the Weekend
Dry	Wet
Cool	Hot
Warm	Cold (48)

Chambers finally suggests that when we select the people we want to work with, we tend to select "rich" people first, and "poor" people last.

People Preferences

First	Last
Rich	Poor
Fair	Dark
Male	Female
Adult	Child
Educated	Illiterate
Influential	Ineffectual [49]

Chambers argues that these preferences, are neither accidental nor incidental. They are, he says, crucial choices that we, as professionals tend to make that profoundly affect our degree of participation in the struggle to do justice to the people we need to work with most, the most disadvantaged people on our planet. Chambers asserts that these professional preferences are reactionary. They not only reflect the dominant values of our society , but they also reinforce the dominant values of our society. To the neglect of the most disadvantaged people on our planet)who do not count for much in the present scheme of things.

Chambers insists that if we are to begin to do justice to the most disadvantaged people on our planet we need to reject the dominant values of our society. He says we need to not only reevaluate our professional preferences, but also actually reverse our professional priorities. He says we need to commit ourselves to a revolutionary option for the poor.

The revolution envisaged does not involve pitting the left against the right, but putting the first last and the last first.

This revolution may be non violent, but it is not without violence. The changes it requires are bloody difficult!

In spite of the difficulties however, I know quite a few young professionals who are doing their best to become fair dinkum revolutionary professionals.

Peter Stewart is a musician who works with disadvantaged groups round Brisbane, through street arts, so as to enable dispossessed people to articulate their rage and act out some of the possible solutions to the problems that enrage them.

Steven Yates and Emma Pritchard, are a doctor and a lawyer respectively, who have chosen to leave highly rewarding and highly remunerative positions in Brisbane to relocate to a low profile town in central Australia in order to help provide much needed medical and legal services for aboriginal communities.

Greg and Katie Manning are a wonderfully well-qualified Aussie couple, a do-it-yourself engineer, and a life-be-in-it physiotherapist, who have moved to India with their two children, Rebecca and Callum, to make themselves available to do community development work with their local counterparts in a city slum.

Peter Stewart, Steven Yates, Emma Pritchard, and Greg and Katie Manning show us the way forward.

We need not be reactionary. We can be revolutionary. And, as revolutionary professionals, we can make a very significant difference in our world.

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The co-op's reflections on the role of consultancy

by Cooperative members

There are plenty of consultants in our modern world. Consulting has been mystified, reified, and multiplied. For members of the Community Praxis Co-op, 'consultant' has been a title we have found hard to get used to, especially when people are talking about us. We have need-ed to reflect on whether we really are 'consultants' - whether there is an approach to consult-ancy that we can truly consider our own.

Co-ops by nature are corporate entities with a conscience. They exist for mutual benefit, and share a commitment to the greater good. Co-ops thrive as long as they continue to explore the meaning of this greater good. At the Community Praxis Co-op, we have chosen to ex-plore the meaning of this greater good for us in terms of 'building peaceful, just and sustain-able communities'.

To be committed to 'building peaceful, just and sustainable communities' in the cut-throat world of consultancy is not easy.

We have learnt the hard way that consultants are some-times contracted as 'hired guns' - to do a job with the kind of resources and within a time line that no client themselves would be able to do with the same amount of resources and time; to produce a report that reflects the predetermined views of the client; to deliver bad news that the client themselves does not want to deliver; to ensure nothing happens; except that by hiring a consultant the client is able to put some distance between themselves and the community and the community's angry outrage.

We refuse to be 'hired guns'. We want to do consultancy for the benefit of both the client and the community. To produce an outcome that truly reflects a commitment to the welfare of all the people whom we consult with. Not a report that ensures nothing happens. But a report that they can do something with. That can help them build just and sustainable communities.

In this paper - written as a collaborative effort by several members of the co-op - we explore how we approach consultancy in terms of our commitment to communities.

We will explore:

~   How we try to do consultancy

~   What you can get from our consultancy

~   Which method we use in our consultancy

~   Where we want to go with our consultancy

How we try to do consultancy

As we have reflected on 18 months of consultancy we have been able to name some of the key elements of our approach. For us this process has been about a constant internal

dialogue about what we do not want to do - particularly some of the old approaches we would like not to adopt - and what we do want to do - especially some of the new options in consultation that we would like to try out .

The first point we want to make is that we want to work as consultants, but never at the expense of the communities we work for. We work within a framework of community development and it would be a contradiction for us to work at the expense of communities.

The second point to make is that we try to *de-mystify* our work. Just because we are called 'consultants', does not mean we should enshroud our work in 'mystifying' language that is so typical of many consultants. One of the key characteristics of many professionals is their tendency to 'mystify' a process. To do a job in a language that ordinary people do not understand. So as to make their clients believe they do not have the capacity to do the job themselves. And to make sure their clients come back to the professionals again in future. However, we believe that the work we do in communities and community organisations should be accessible to anyone. Our job is to ensure that the vocabulary of the language that we use in our consultation - the concepts and the constructs we bring to bear in our

deliberation - should be open, transparent, and readily comprehensible to all the people who are involved in the consultation. Even if it means we do ourselves out of work.

The third point to make is that, in the process of de-mystifying our work, we explain to our clients, while we bring expert skills to consultations, we do not bring expert solutions. We believe the role of experts is to be 'on tap', as resource persons, providing expert help to communities in discovering solutions to their problems, rather than to be 'on top', like a team of omni-competent poly-maths, providing expert solutions to problems for the community.

In community development, the only peaceful, just and sustainable solutions to a problem are community solutions, emerging from the development of a community analysis of their issues, their resources, and the options that they have to resolve their problems. Our role as consultants in a community development tradition is to bring our expertise to bear on the process of community analysis, sharing our personal knowledge and professional skills in that process, so as to ensure the community has the best possible chance of understanding their issues, utilizing their resources, and considering their options.

The fourth point to make is that, wherever possible, we will build local partnerships. In contracting consultants, many assume there are not enough local consultants or that the expertise of the local is not up to scratch when compared to an interstate, or international, consultant. As a result a lot of contracts are not offered to local consultants. And the few that are have local consultants fighting each other in a competitive tendering process. The co-op recognises that these are real problems. Hence we are willing to compete with local people. However, our approach is, wherever possible, to co-operate rather, than compete, by building broadly-based, strongly-competent partnerships with other local consultants. On several occasions we have had the opportunity to hire local people as associates and bring them into a co-op consulting team. The team then brings a synergy of co-op expertise, together with other networks of knowledge and skill that build the local capacity for commun-ity building.

The fifth point to make is that we want our work to be good, not glossy. When joking amongst ourselves we have often referred to ourselves as the 'barefoot consultants'. The image of the 'barefoot consultant' comes from the literature of third work development that refers to the 'bare-foot

doctor', in contrast to the 'well-heeled operator'. The 'bare-foot doctor' is willing to walk from village to village, bringing good medical care to the community, using gentle appropriate technology. While the 'well-heeled operator' rides in a four-wheel drive, stays in a five-star hotel, works in an air-conditioned office, and never gets their hands dirty helping the local people. Without pushing the image too far it simply reminds us that our approach should never replace quality with gloss, substance with style. The image of our-selves as 'barefoot consultants' reminds us to keep getting our hands 'dirty' in the process of helping people, rather than just cutting and pasting 'brilliant' reports.

What you can get from our consultancy

So if you hire us, what can you expect to get from our consultancy?

When you hire 'barefoot consultants' you know what you are getting – no frills! When you hire us you will be getting a straightforward, no-frills, team of people committed to:

Empower, resource, and strengthen the capacities of people, groups and organizations in developing peaceful, just and sustainable communities.

(This sentence is part of the co-op's mission statement)

We are committed to working seriously and systematically. And, at times, that can be painful. But we know that it is joy - not anguish - which sustains us in the struggle. So at the same time as being committed to working seriously and systematically, we are committed to work-ing happily and serendipitously. We always try to put our life into perspective with laughter.

When you hire us you will get a team who take their *work*, not them*selves*, seriously!

Q. How many co-op members does it take to change a light bulb? A. One. But the light bulb must want to co-operate for it to work!

The co-op works with teams that are comprised of cooperative members, associates and partners. The members of the co-op are all well-qualified consultants. And our associates are people with special expertise whom we specifically recruit in order to augment the strength of our teams, by combining their particular specializations with the specializations of the team. And the interdisciplinary nature

of our teams brings a lot of synergy to our consultancies.

Recently a team was put together of two co-op members and six associates and partners that included community workers, social workers, youth workers, agency managers, and town and community planners.

Both co-op members and associates are people who are still practitioners. We are not trying to build a network of people who move on from being practitioners to being consultants. We are attempting to build a network of people who can maintain their work at the 'grass-roots', whilst bringing their 'well-grounded' expertise to our consulting teams. In accessing the co-op a client is accessing the expertise of a whole network of practitioners. We believe that a network of practitioners, with their practice-tested knowledge and skills, is one of the greatest gifts that a group like the Community Praxis Co-op can bring to our clients.

It is important to note: all co-op members but one are involved in local practice, outside of the co-op, in some capacity or other.

Whilst being willing to take on contracts that have regional, national, or even a global scope we hold to the significance of the local. A local focus provides us with the lens through which we look at our work. This does not reflect a romanticisation of locality, it reflects the fact we are rooted in our locality, think globally, but act locally. We always ask local questions. What will it mean for local people? How does this input include local people? How will the outcome impact on local people?

The co-op's national review of Kids Help Line's peer skills program developed a community development typology of peer process models that moved from the personal to the organisational, all the while evaluating the benefits experienced on the local level.

We may have an emphasis on local community work, but we are also a part of a global movement of worker cooperatives. It is a movement committed to self help, freedom of choice, voluntary association, equity, equality and democracy, and cooperation with all other cooperative groups and organisations in the community. So the co-op is formally and in- formally linked to a wide range of alliances with women's and men's groups, peace organizations, nonviolent activists, and environmentalist movements.

Out of our surplus the co-op has not only supported the development of a finance co-op in a local caravan park, but also funded a relief program in El Salvador and a training program in South Africa.

Which method we use in our consultancy

Integrity is an important issue for the co-op. But it is difficult for us to maintain our integrity when the client who pays the consultant understandably expects to be able to call the tune.

The co-op attempts to conduct its work with as much integrity as we can by simply trying to practice respect for everyone involved in the process of consultation.

Our struggle for integrity has been the main incentive for us to seek to develop a specific method in consultation, which would ensure everyone involved in the process, is respected.

The specific method we use is a version of the 'dialogical methodology' made famous by Paulo Friere. The dialogical approach we use involves four separate processes:

- · establishing a dialogue,
- · developing an analysis,
- · engaging the imagination,
- · and negotiating outcomes.

Process 1. Establishing a dialogue

The first stage involves establishing relationships so as to begin to engage in a meaningful dialogue with stakeholders in the consultation.

An initial task is to identify the various voices, and the various perspectives these various voices represent, that already engaged in the discussion of the situation.

A critical task is to identify the voices that are not being heard in the discussion and that need to be given both time and space, legitimation and attention.

The method requires that the consultants bring to the process of establishing a dialogue an understanding of the dynamic of *affirmation-suspicion*.

An engagement in dialogue requires *affirmation,* validating the perspectives expressed. Our assumption is that a view expressed is not only valid from the participant's point of view, but that it also expresses something substantial and

significant about the whole of the matter.

In this context, *suspicion* means working from the assumption that a perspective emerges from a particular point of view, from a particular horizon, and therefore is less likely to repre-sent the truth about a situation, and more likely to express insight, agenda and potential.

Process 2: Developing an analysis

The second stage involves giving voice to the views expressed in ways that move beyond the descriptive and reflect an emerging understanding that has breadth, depth, and clarity.

The image of the holograph would suggest that understanding comes best from assembling, legitimating and attending to as many views as possible at the same time.

This will often involve documentation of some kind or other. As validation, without proper documentation, is often considered to be a total contradiction in a literate society like ours.

The challenge is to not give any voice prominence, but to hold the views in tension long enough for the kind of analysis to emerge which brings enough breadth, and depth, and clarity so as to yield a creative synthesis of understanding which can open up the surprising potential inherent in the conversation**.**

It is often the perspectives that are considered problematic which open up the possibilities

of resolution. Dialogue with our contradictions is required to produce the analysis we need.

Process 3: Engaging the imagination

As consultants engage with the collective wisdom that is embodied within the expertise and experience of a range of stakeholders, it usually becomes clear that the only way forward for a community group or organisation, transcends any single person's particular perspective.

It is the product of the corporate imagination that comes out of intense collective dialogue.

It is worth considering for a moment how an act of corporate imagination is stimulated by the process of intense collective dialogue. The process of genuine, ongoing, open dialogue provides the opportunity of a new beginning that welcomes the expression of contradictory opinions, which taken together, open up amazing new permutations of political possibilities.

Insight comes from the moment when the dialogue moves beyond the recycling of preferences, frustrations, and disappointments, to the studied consideration of the new permutations of political possibilities. The moment is characterized by a pause in the discussion; a moment of silence; a listening to something that was said that usually would not have been heard; the sudden realisation of the significance of the suggestion; and the gradual gathering of the resolve of the group, or organisation, to take the risk involved together in seeking personal growth and social change.

It is vital that when the corporate imagination yields its creative insight that the consultants not only recognize it, but also help the stakeholders in the consultation recognise it as such.

Process 4: Negotiating outcomes

Consultants need to move with the creative insights, that the corporate imagination yields in the process of ongoing dialogue, towards carefully negotiated outcomes. For to do otherwise would condemn liberating ideas to a life sentence on the shelf as just anoth-er recommendation in another report.

Where we want to go with our consultancy

In articulating a dialogical approach to our consultancy process we believe that it is important to be explicit about the 'horizon' that we have as a co-op.

Our 'horizon' indicates not only where we are coming from as a co-op, but also where we want to go with our consultancy.

The Mission Statement of the Community Praxis Co-op clearly defines our organisation and informs our understanding of community and community organisation that is reflected in our method of doing community development and community organisation development.

Horizon 1 : Our Mission Statement

Community Praxis Co-op exists to empower, resource and strengthen the capacities of people, groups and organizations in developing peaceful, just and sustainable communities.

The Co-op operates as an education, training and consultancy agency for individuals, neighborhoods, non-government organizations, and government authorities.

The Co-op seeks to practice traditional cooperative principles, encouraging the development of acceptance and respect, spirituality and compassion, solidarity and participation,

responsibility and competence in the individuals, neighborhoods and organizations with whom we work.

As a result of our work all of us in Community Praxis Co-op hope to contribute to the reduction of exploitative competition, the expansion of productive collaboration, the celebration of unique gifts, and the equitable utilization of our common resources.

Horizon 2 : Our Perspective On Community And Community Development

We bring to our consultancy with communities an ecological perspective, in the context of which, our consciousness of our interconnectedness, and the chance of exercising creativity in the midst of chaos, is crucial.

We believe that healthy communities are not communities without problems, but commun-ities that have the capacity, resources, and resilience to creatively resolve their problems.

Healthy communities are safe spaces; where a person is accepted as a person; where both unity and diversity are respected; where each one can participate in decisions that impact on their lives; where there is a commitment to the welfare of everyone equally; and where there is a commitment to doing justice to marginalized, disadvantaged people, locally and globally.

For us, community development means doing anything, and everything, we can, to facilitate the development of healthy communities characterised by a commitment to the practice of safety, acceptance, respect, participation, equality, love and justice.

Horizon 3 : Our Perspective On Organisation And Organisational Development

We bring to our consultancy with organisations our ecological perspective, which engenders our consciousness of our interconnectedness with these systems, and the chance we have of exercising creativity in the midst of the chaos in those systems.

We are exploring a methodology that fits the current global context of rapid change. Our exploration is taking us into new territory, and we are less sure of what lies ahead than we are of what we are determined to leave behind.

It seems to us that the traditional methodology of strategic planning is not useful in the current global context of rapid change that is producing not only new organisations, but also new ways of organising, new ways of being organisation and doing organisation.   .

We find ourselves more attracted to those organisational development practitioners who say 'chaos theory reigns', so we need to develop completely new paradigms to deal with our new ways of developing organisations.   .

Many old organisations may be static, but many new organisations are not. Our new ways of developing organisations are dynamic. Our organisations can be massaged by our strategic plans, but they can not be managed by our strategic plans. There are simply too many variables that impact on our plans that are beyond our control.

Contemporary organisational development practitioners encourage us to have the courage to acknowledge that there are not only many variables that are beyond our control, but also there are many variables that ought to stay beyond our control. Developing a totalitarian organisation is too high a price to pay to make damn sure that our strategic plan works.

They would encourage us to abandon our old-style organisations with their grand strategic plans, and embrace new-style organisations with their not-so-grand but-more-creative plans. Flexible little plans, that can help organisational stakeholders deal with the unpredictable and complex nature of the moment well enough, so as to understand how they might make the most of it.

Thus we would approach organisational development within a framework that would invite organisations - through their stakeholders - to consider, risk, act, reflect, learn, and adapt.

We would seek to inculcate an action-reflection, continually learning and adapting culture in an organisation. Advocating that 'anything worth doing is worth doing badly to begin with', but 'anything that is good enough to do, in the end is worth doing to the best of our ability'.

The indicator of a good organisation, whether it makes a profit or not, is that it nurtures the best in all the people associated with it, empowering them all to realise their full potential.

Conclusion

This paper expresses the thoughts, feelings and reflections of an on-going internal dialogue amongst co-op members. We have enjoyed 'riding the wave' of our own organisational development and engaging in community development outside of our own localities over the past two and a half years since inception of the cooperative. We have learnt heaps, we have been challenged by communities, clients, associates and partners – there is so much more to learn. We would invite others to engage in this dialogue of trying to understand the nature of this work within a community development framework. Feel free to engage with this paper and contact us via peterwestoby@bigpond.com.

Cheers, Cooperative Members

Contact the Cooperative at -

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E-mail | peterwestoby@bigpond.com |

Notes

Community Praxis Cooperative

Mission Statement

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