

Experiences and Challenges of Community Participation in Urban Renewal Projects: The Case of Johannesburg, South Africa

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Abstract: Urban renewal and inner city regeneration have become critical efforts for the South African government, which has invested in several structures to stem the tide of decline in its nine major cities. Commitment to the alleviation of poverty is a focal point of the renewal and regeneration agenda and will remain so in the future. This effort is motivated by the fact that around 24% of the South African population currently lives on less than USD 1.00 per day, below the poverty line defined by the World Bank. The Central Government has made numerous public commitments to development, a part of which concerns extensive infrastructure investment and service delivery. Communities are expected to participate fully in the planning and implementation of these urban renewal projects. To this aim, participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them. Community participation should be aimed at empowering people by ensuring the development of skills and the creation of employment opportunities. This paper first explores the concept of community participation, and will then look at relevant past experiences in relation to community participation in urban renewal projects. Furthermore, the paper outlines the challenges and problems of community participation in urban renewal projects in Johannesburg, and finally, close with recommendations for the future.

Keywords: Community participation, Urban renewal, Poverty, Unemployment

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, levels of unemployment and poverty are extremely high and remain as two of South Africa's most pressing problems. The unemployment rate is an extremely important indicator of economic and social health and has

been rising steadily over the years. The level of unemployment was 9.18% in 1972, 7% in 1980, 10% in 1985, 15% in 1990, 22% in 1995 (Human Development Report, 2004), 30.2% in 2002, 27.4% in 2003, 25.6% in 2004, and 26.5% in 2005 (Labour Force Surveys (LFS), 2000–2005). The unemployment rate rose rapidly throughout the 1990s, then fell in 2003 and 2004, and rose again in 2005; this is likely due to a drastic fall in the demand for unskilled labour in the formal sector caused by structural changes in the economy as a result of a decline in the importance of the

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primary sector. The high unemployment rate is also a directly contributing factor to inequality and poverty in South Africa (Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2000–2005).

Although the proportion of people living in poverty is shrinking, high population growth in poor countries means that the absolute numbers of poor people are rising. In addition to high levels of unemployment, there is also a widely acknowledged need for housing and municipal infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, streets, storm water drainage, electricity, refuse collection, etc.). Most importantly, it is crucial to realise that there is a great need for physical infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. This problem of infrastructure backlog is aggravated by the apparent lack of capacity and skills at the institutional, community, and individual levels. According to the World Bank (1994), infrastructure can deliver major benefits in economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability, but only when it provides services that respond to effective demand and does so efficiently.

According to Thwala (2007), several projects have been initiated in South Africa over the past 25 years to counter unemployment and poverty, and it is expected that there will be others in the future. From a theoretical perspective supported by experience elsewhere in Africa, there are reasons for considering that properly formulated employment creation programmes based on the use of

employment-intensive methods could be established to construct and maintain the required physical infrastructure, thus creating employment, skills, and institutional capacities. The Urban Renewal Infrastructure Projects have the potential to redress the problems of high unemployment levels and skill deficits in disadvantaged communities. Additionally, these may be achieved through an efficient institutional setup, effective community participation, and construction technology that is pragmatic and innovative in nature.

STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

The paper first explores the concept of community participation in urban renewal projects, and then looks at selected past experiences in relation to community participation in urban renewal projects. Furthermore, the paper outlines the challenges and problems of community participation in urban renewal projects in Johannesburg. Finally, the paper closes with recommendations for the future.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS

The World Bank (1994) defines participation as “a process through which stakeholders’ influence and share control

over development initiatives, and the decisions and resources which affect them". The concept of community participation originated about 40 years ago out of the community development movement of the late colonial era in parts of Africa and Asia. To colonial administrators, community development was a means of improving local welfare, training people in local administration, and extending government control through local self-help activities (McCommon, 1993). However, during this era, the policy failed to achieve many of its aims, primarily due to the bureaucratic top-down approach adopted by the colonial administrations (Common, 1993). Out of these experiences, various approaches were developed that have been more successful and have gained broad support from all major players in the development field (Abbott, 1991).

According to Beider (2007), in public policy debate in the UK, the term community is used in three general senses:

- Descriptive: a group or network of people who share something in common or interact with each other.
- Normative: community as a place where solidarity, participation, and coherence are found.

- Instrumental: community as an agent acting to maintain or change its circumstances; the location orientation of services and policy interventions.

Communities are often defined or described in terms of common characteristics. These may be personal characteristics, common beliefs, activities, and users or providers of services. It is important to understand that common characteristics do not necessarily mean that people sharing those characteristics would identify themselves as a community; this identification requires that they have a common interest around which they can mobilise (Beider, 2007).

Community participation generally is more successful when the community takes on much of the responsibility, as compared to situations in which higher level public agencies attempt to assess consumer preferences through surveys or meetings. In order for community participation to work, projects must include special components that address it directly. Villagers can be recruited to help in all phases of designing, implementing, maintaining, supervising, and evaluating a new water supply and sanitation system, but only if the time, effort, and money are spent to do it right. Special attention must be paid to the development of local committees and governance structures to adequately oversee local participation. These local committees and governing structures direct and

execute development projects, rather than merely receive a share of project benefits. The objectives of community participation as an active process are: empowering the residents, building beneficiary capacity, increasing project effectiveness, improving project efficiency, and sharing of project costs. The framework identifies four levels of intensity of participation: information sharing, consulting, decision making, and initiating action (Abbott, 1991).

This framework has been largely accepted by development agencies worldwide. However, a criticism of the model is that it is "project based" and does not include the full spectrum of community participation approaches. As such, the framework can be defined in planning terms as "means" orientated (Abbott, 1991). The "means" approach views community participation as a form of mobilisation applied to achieve a specific and generally project-related goal (Moser, 1989). The alternative paradigm is the "ends" approach. This approach views community participation as a process whereby control over resources and regulative institutions by groups previously excluded from such control is increased by the legitimacy of the authorities and the nature of development.

In other words, situations in which the legitimacy of the authorities is in question will result in projects where participation is identified as an "end". Situations in which

the development of services and housing is the main objective and which require meaningful participation at a grassroots level are more likely to adopt the "means" approach. It is also possible that a situation will require a combination of the two approaches, such as in South Africa prior to the democratic elections in 1994. The government was not seen as legitimate by the majority of the population. However, the provisions of services and housing were key issues to be addressed (since South Africa now has a legitimate national government, it is now moving towards a means approach, but this is still complex at the community level).

THEORETICAL BASE OF PARTICIPATION

A proper evaluation and understanding of public participation can be better achieved when it is viewed against a theoretical framework built on decision-making. The background includes social organisation, political process (which includes decision-making), planning theories, urban management, and ideologies within the society. Planning theory is perceived as the vehicle through which planners engage in introspection regarding their actions as planners, and focuses on the very nature of the planning process. It examines what distinguishes planners from other fields which also deal with public policy issues,

and entails a continuous search for ways to improve planners' effectiveness in society (Hemmens, 1980).

Currently planners are suffering from a scarcity of compelling and useful theories of planning processes. The rational comprehensive planning model has been attacked from all angles, though it remains intact because of the absence of a competitive set of ideas that can attract sufficient support to supplant it (Hemmens, 1980). This does not mean, however, that the rational comprehensive planning model was or is anti-participatory. As a matter of fact, participation goes hand-in-hand with the concept of "public interest", upon which rational comprehensive planning was based. Planners prior to the 1960's were concerned with helping to guide urban decision-making to reflect "community values" through rational planning (Oosthuizen, 1986). This was based on the assumption that the public interest was the embodiment of community values and that the public interest could be identified.

Locally based community participation in policy and decision-making processes has become a central tenet of government policy (Beider, 2007). In addition, Beider (2007) emphasises that the importance of community participation at different scales of decision-making can be seen as a reflection of the move by central government, (at least in rhetorical terms) from a centralist approach to

policy and decision-making to a 'new localism' that devolves power to regional and local levels and enshrines the participation of local stakeholders and communities in the process.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EMPOWERMENT

In order for rural communities to participate meaningfully in projects initiated with the goal of improving quality of life, it is imperative that they are empowered. The principle of empowerment states that people participate because it is their democratic right to do so (Wignaraja, 1991), and participation also means having power (Tacconi and Tisdell, 1993). According to this concept, participation is the natural result of empowerment. Empowerment is not a means to an end but is the objective of development. In addition to having the power to make decisions, it demands the knowledge and understanding necessary to make correct decisions. Communities cannot make wise decisions if they do not have the required information. Support organisations are required to be sources as well as channels of information to the communities so that they will be able to make informed decisions.

There are many developmental organisations, agencies, and government departments that regard local people as a good source of information. However, these

organisations may limit the people's participation to an advisory role. If this does happen, we cannot talk of participation. According to El Sherbini (1986), power must accompany participation. Arnstein (1969) declared that participation without power "is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless". Swanepoel (1997) alluded that under the banner of participation, people can be used as cheap labour. Decision-making and planning are regarded as being outside the orbit of ordinary people because participation is seen as interfering with the effective provision of basic needs (Spalding, 1990).

Yet, empowerment entails more than having the power to make decisions. It demands the knowledge and understanding needed to make the correct decisions. The development practitioner has a special task in this regard. People cannot be expected to make wise decisions if they do not have the necessary information. The development practitioner must then be a source of information or must be a channel to sources of information, but ultimately, the people must make informed decisions.

According to Kilian (1988), empowerment can be misused; it can become a radical cloak hung around conservative ideas. Empowerment does not mean giving people facilities that were previously denied or were not available to them, or giving them skills that they lack. In its purest form, empowerment means the acquisition of

power and the ability to give it effect. Such power is not an amorphous or indefinable entity. According to Kent (1981), it manifests itself in groups of people working together.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

Infrastructure can deliver major benefits in economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability, but it can only do this when it provides services that respond to effective demand and does so efficiently (World Bank, 1994). Until the end of the 1980's, infrastructure was neglected as a factor in economic growth. Since then, the effect of public infrastructure on the long-run performance of an economy has been debated in the academic literature and public policy circles. According to Aschauer (1988) and Munnell (1992), additional infrastructure investment has a significant positive effect on aggregate and regional economic activity. Other scholars such as Hulten and Schwab (1993) argue not only that infrastructure influences growth, but that other factors are correlated as well. Although correlation does not imply causality, it is significant that economic development and infrastructure are closely associated (Queiroz and Gautam, 1992). While there is no consensus on the exact nature of the impact of infrastructure on growth, many studies on the topic have concluded that the role of infrastructure in growth is

substantial, significant, and frequently greater than that of investment in other forms of capital. A shortage of infrastructure services puts pressure on the public sector for more infrastructures. A capable and willing public sector is essential to deciding when and where infrastructure is expanded. A strategy where infrastructure precedes growth also requires policymakers to make spatial choices about which areas and regions are to receive additional infrastructure. When infrastructure follows growth, the choices are more sector-oriented than spatially orientated. Political choices under such conditions are more likely to involve economic sector interest groups than those that are spatially orientated (Thwala, 2008).

OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN EXPERIENCES IN PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMMES AND THEIR SHORTCOMINGS

The use of employment-intensive public works programmes is not new to Africa. In the 1960s, three countries in North Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria) experimented with such programmes. Although these efforts began initially as emergency relief works programmes, especially in rural areas, they gradually came to acquire a development orientation. The Moroccan experiment, known as National Promotion, was launched in June 1961. This large-scale programme was aimed at enhancing opportunities for the rural unemployed in productive works and slowing the rate

of rural exodus and associated problems. According to one estimate, the programme provided employment for 85,000 workers per month during the peak season and increased GNP by 3.6% (Jara, 1971).

During the period from 1959 to 1960, a large Tunisian works programme known as *Worksites to Combat Underdevelopment* was carried out, with 80% of the cost covered by Tunisian authorities and the remaining 20% provided in the form of food aid from the United States. The employment created in Tunisia's labour force was equivalent to an annual average of 20.7 days per person. Similarly, the publicly-sponsored works programme known as *Worksites for Full Employment* [Chantiers de plein emploi (CPE)] began operating in 1962 as a relief operation in Algeria. It soon acquired a strong development orientation to maximise employment in a project of economic interest, namely reforestation work intended to fight a severe erosion problem. In 1965, the *People's Worksites Reforestation* [Chantiers Populaires de Reboisement (CPR)] was created as a statutory body attached to the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. Since then, the World Food Programme has provided assistance and the scope of projects has been increased to include land reclamation and other infrastructural works.

A variety of employment-intensive works programmes in other countries have consisted of limited experiments

with local self-help projects. In such cases, the local communities proposed the projects, and the state made its technical assistance conditional on execution by the local population. The intent was to get the work done as cheaply as possible, but more importantly, to ensure that the people viewed the projects as their own so that they would attend to ongoing maintenance. In Kenya, over 12,000 kilometres of rural access roads were constructed, and over 80,000 man-years of employment were created. The Kenyan Rural Access Roads Programme is the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Transport and Communications but operates within the national District Focus policy, which gives it great autonomy at the local level. According to McCutcheon and Talyor-Parkins (2003), the methods used there were considered so successful that they were introduced in the secondary roads network (the Minor Roads Programme).

In Botswana, a national programme of labour-intensive road construction units was set up within District Councils, which are semi-autonomous bodies under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Local Governments and Lands. This programme has resulted in the creation of over 3,000 jobs (total employment within the public sector is only 20,000) and the construction and upgrade of nearly 2,000 kilometres of road. In Malawi, the programme is part of the Ministry of Works and Supply. Since its inception, over 3,845 kilometres of district road have been upgraded in 16

of the country's 24 districts. The Labour Construction Unit in Lesotho has been attached to the Ministry of Works since 1977. By 1985, about US \$3,350,000 had been expended for various road construction works (Ibid, 2003).

Therefore, a wide range of techniques for labour-intensive road construction and maintenance has been extensively tried and tested over the past 30 years within different institutional and organisational frameworks. Despite valuable contribution to rural employment generation, many of these earlier experiments in employment-intensive public works in Africa suffered from one or more of the following shortcomings: The ad hoc nature of plans, lacking spatial focus and often without any links to national rural development and infrastructural planning systems; makeshift administrative arrangements and failure to inject sufficient managerial and engineering skills and technical competence into project selection and execution, in addition to choice of technology, resulting in poor project planning, programming, and manpower management; lack of balance between centralisation and effective involvement of local administrations and popular bodies in crucial programme decisions, planning, and implementation; failure to adjust programme operation and intensity to seasonal labour demand for agricultural operations; lack of precision regarding target groups and programming on the basis of inadequate information about beneficiary groups; lack of adequate and sustained

political commitment and allocation of public funds for the programmes; inadequate post-project maintenance arrangements; and inadequate emphasis on and arrangements for reporting of cost-benefit studies and general performance evaluation.

EMPLOYMENT-INTENSIVE APPROACH

According to Bentall et al., (1999), the “employment-intensive approach” is defined as an approach where labour is the dominant resource used to carry out works, and where the share of the total project cost spent on labour is high (typically 25%–60%). The term “employment-intensive approach” indicates that optimal use is made of labour as the predominant resource in infrastructure projects, while simultaneously ensuring cost-effectiveness and safeguarding quality. This involves a judicious combination of labour and appropriate equipment, which is generally light equipment. It also means ensuring that employment-intensive projects do not degenerate into “make-work” projects, in which cost and quality aspects are ignored. The employment-intensive approach is otherwise called the “labour-based approach”, indicating that labour is the principal resource, but that appropriate levels of other resources are used in order to ensure competitive and high-quality results.

The International Labour Organisation (1999) had undertaken comparative studies of employment-intensive vs. equipment-intensive projects, which have shown that the employment-intensive approach has a higher absorptency of unskilled labour (direct and indirect employment), improves income distribution, contributes to an increase in household income and consumption (thereby leading to an increase in national income), saves foreign exchange and thereby does not increase debt, is based on demand at the community level and thus enhances democratic participation, is more cost-effective in low-wage labour surplus economies, and is more environmentally friendly. For example, using a macro-economic model to measure the impact of labour-intensive investment projects on the economy of Madagascar, a study estimated the differential effects of employment versus equipment-intensive approaches on the principal economic variables (i.e., production, consumption, employment, public finance, and foreign trade). The analysis clearly showed the superiority of the employment-based approach, which is 30%–80% less costly, creates 2.5 times more jobs, increases national income and household consumption by a factor of 2.5, and requires only 30% of foreign currency spent on equipment (McCutcheon and Taylor-Parkins, 2003).

The main objectives of the use of maximum employment in construction and maintenance can be divided into long-term development and short-term objectives. Long-term development objectives focus on higher-level productive employment with sustainable growth to match an increase in working-age population, spurring economic growth and alleviating poverty (De Jong, 1995). The choice of employment-intensive technology for accomplishing project objectives needs careful consideration. Special attention must be paid to several factors: the suitability of the design and the possibility of changes in the design in favour of employment intensive technology, the suitability of site conditions, the appropriate mix of labour and equipment, the availability and motivation of labour, the wage rates and incentive schemes, and the achievement of production targets. Technical feasibility also has a major impact on the decision.

URBAN RENEWAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMMES IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA: EXPERIENCES, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS

Public works programmes have a long history in industrialised countries as an economic-policy tool, both as a fiscal measure to expand or contract public spending in periods of unbalanced domestic demand as well as a

short-term measure to alleviate unemployment. In recent years, these programmes have formed important components of special job-creation schemes launched by many industrialised countries in response to either economic recession or rising unemployment among youth (Thwala, 2008).

The challenge of reversing the effects of decades of social exclusion and economic marginalisation in South Africa's townships and informal settlements is a formidable one. A large percentage of the populations residing in the settlements live below minimum subsistence levels. Unemployment levels are very high and income levels are very low. This situation is linked to factors such as poor education levels and lack of skills, lack of formal employment opportunities, and the continuing spatial separation of the nodes from the resources of the urban core of most cities.

The spread of HIV/AIDS, which threatens to weaken and eliminate a very large proportion of the populations of economically active age, is estimated to peak around 2010, though its effects will continue for at least a generation thereafter. Thus, the urban renewal projects, which have a planned seven-year life, will come to an end at about the time when the HIV/AIDS epidemic reaches its peak. The implication is that a very basic challenge for the urban renewal projects is to help re-establish the social

stability, security, and solidarity needed to tackle problems of this nature that provide fundamental hurdles to achieving the broader goals of development. A more specific challenge lies in economic development. The eight urban nodes have a miniscule formal economic base, and what activity does take place is largely restricted to the retail sector. Most of the people employed in formal work commute to the industrial and commercial areas outside the nodal areas. The Johannesburg Alexandra Renewal Project has made an effort to address this with initiatives such as its multi-faceted Local Economic Development (LED) programme, focused both within and outside the area. In terms of programme design, an important challenge of the urban renewal projects is to ensure that development in these nodes does not simply consist of a list of add-on projects. The challenge is to go beyond the fragmented physical delivery paradigm that has prevailed in most areas since the mid 1990s.

Urban renewal and inner city regeneration have become serious issues for the South African government, which has invested in several structures to stem the tide of decline in its nine major cities. Other cities, such as Cape Town and Durban, are engaged in urban renewal projects as well. The City of Johannesburg is currently busy with the Alexandra Urban Renewal Project. The Alexandra Township was established in 1912 and is close to the centre of Johannesburg. It covers an area of over 800 hectares and

its infrastructure was designed for a population of about 70,000. Current population estimates vary widely and have been put at figures ranging from 180,000 to 750,000. There are an estimated 34,000 shacks of which approximately 7,000 are located in “backyards” (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2004). The significant unplanned population has overloaded the infrastructure such that water pressures are low and sewers are frequently blocked and overflowing. Maintenance of such systems is very difficult because the high densities and congested nature of the backyard shack development makes access for maintenance difficult to impossible.

At the official opening of Parliament in February 2001, the State President announced a seven-year plan to redevelop Greater Alexandra in Johannesburg. The estimated budget for the Johannesburg Alexandra Renewal Project is R1, 3 billion over 7 years (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2004). The Project is one of the eight original nodes forming part of the Government Integrated Sustainable Rural Development and Urban Renewal Programmes, and these programmes are one of the main vehicles through which the Government is implementing its objectives of sustainable development and poverty alleviation. The projects are intended to be labour-intensive in their nature so that more people are employed and, at the same time, new infrastructure is built for the community.

The Johannesburg Alexandra Urban Renewal Project seeks to fundamentally upgrade living conditions and human development potential within Alexandra and the wider regional economy, to create a healthy and clean living environment, to provide services at an affordable and sustainable level, to reduce levels of crime and violence, to upgrade existing housing environments, and to create additional affordable housing opportunities and de-densification on appropriate land (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2004).

There are several problems that have hindered community participation in the Johannesburg Alexandra Urban Renewal Projects and which must be avoided in order for future projects to be successful in South Africa: lack of clear objectives linking the short and long-term visions of the programme, and lack of pilot projects with extensive training programmes or lead-in time to allow for proper planning at a national scale. These would have allowed sufficient time to develop the necessary technology, establish training programmes, and develop both institutional and the individual capacities. In the past, projects have seldom been scaled to the magnitude of national manpower needs, and often they have been introduced in an unsystematic and fragmentary style. This often leads to technical hastiness, compounded by incompetence and inappropriate technology selection.

There have also been organisational infirmities and inappropriate administrative arrangements, an imbalance between centralisation for higher level co-ordination and decentralisation for local decision-making and execution of works, and inadequate post-project maintenance arrangements have often undermined the efficacy of the projects (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2004).

These criticisms are largely attributed to a failure to ensure there is an authority with a sufficient stake in the projects and in their continuing effectiveness (lack of community participation and ineffective local government), and in general, the projects have been overly ambitious. This was a result of the lack of appreciation of the time it takes to build the necessary individual and institutional capacities at various levels. Additionally, a lack of clearly defined and executed training programmes that link medium- to long-term development plans ensured that individual skills were not improved. Training, where present, was not particularly appropriate or focussed and has not carried through into project employment.

Yet another problem is a lack of commitment from other community members. It must be emphasised that the Alexandra community is not homogenous and this lead to different views on how development should be undertaken in the area. There are members who view the

development in the area as necessary and others as unnecessary, which poses a challenge to the Urban Renewal project as it is not accepted by all community members.

Another challenge is that the community of Alexandra consists of both local residents and migrant workers. Some of the migrant workers do not stay in the area and instead move to another place. As a result, new community members must be introduced to the project so that they may be involved. The process of community participation thus becomes expensive, as it will take longer than the time agreed upon.

Another historical challenge has been poor communication regarding the community participation process, leading to poor meeting attendance. Methods of community participation employed must be appropriate to the Alexandra community. It was imperative for the affected communities to assist in deciding on the appropriate methods of community participation. It is important to have an idea from the people as to which methods of communication and participation are currently effective in the Alexandra community, and in addition, which structures are effective for community participation to be success.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JOHANNESBURG URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS

One of the most important contributions of the Johannesburg Alexandra Urban Renewal Project is that it has resulted in an improved awareness of the role that must be played by the Alexandra community in the development process. In the past, the community of Alexandra had rejected developmental projects because they were not properly involved during the project initiation stage. A number of key components were identified in the research as important for the successful implementation of Urban Renewal programmes. There is a need for targeting the poor and helping women, and addressing the issues of institutional training, appropriate technology choice, community participation, community management, and cost recovery.

Much of the success in the urban renewal projects was achieved by using appropriate technologies and community-based approaches to projects. The conventional approach to infrastructural development adopted from urbanised, western, developed countries was found to be unsuitable because it was overly centralised and did not reflect local traditions and the need for community participation.

The Johannesburg Urban Renewal experience found that one of the main issues relating to project sustainability is management of the projects after completion, and not just involvement (or participation) in construction. As an attempt to articulate the responsibilities and management requirements necessary to promote local management of projects, the community management approach was developed. In practice, and for a variety of reasons, planning cannot be left totally to officials, specialists, administrators, or experts. Some form of community participation in planning is essential (Atkinson, 1992). Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive community, it is about active involvement and growing empowerment. Development can satisfy basic needs such as housing, water, health care, jobs, and recreation in a way that changes economic, social, and power relations (ANC, 1994). Community participation has proved to be a success in a number of countries, such as in Kenya, Botswana, and Ghana, where community participation was promoted in road construction and storm water drainage projects, among others (McCutcheon, 1995). In Tegucigalpa (the capital of Honduras), the community is involved in planning to meet their own needs and then to take on a management function which ensures that the neighbourhood has safe water at an affordable price (Choguill, 1994). Therefore, community participation in South Africa would also play a major role in

alleviating the enormous lack of services to rural communities, such as sustainable clean water.

It has been argued that conventional services have not been or cannot be extended to the poor as quickly as required. Therefore, communities will have to organise to meet their own needs (Crook, 1991). If participation is pursued, there will be greater possibilities for self-reliance, which will lead to self-perpetuation of initiating projects. In addition, participation means services can be provided at a lower cost (Ibid, 1991). Therefore, community participation should be promoted, especially for poor communities that have little to offer but their labour. The study has shown that decisions originating in boardrooms and applied at the grassroots level are generally not well received by target communities.

Based on the results of the study conducted, it can be concluded that some of the problems in Urban Renewal Projects in South Africa may be avoided via a careful approach to community participation. Community involvement must be based on community members who share the same common interests and goals. The Alexandra community consists of permanent local residents and migrant workers who are mainly tenants. It is imperative to involve both permanent residents and migrant workers in local developmental issues. However, the permanent residents must be at the core of the urban

renewal initiative as they will derive long-term benefits from the project. The validity of claims of representation must be tested as early as possible. All interest groups in the community should be identified and consulted. Holding public meetings or advertising in newspapers may assist in this effort, and publicity material about a proposed programme can be distributed at public meetings. It should not be assumed that spokespeople at public meetings represent the majority or all of the community. Spokespeople may also say what they think outsiders want to hear in order to further their own positions or to be polite.

What must be realised is that in practice, planners may find that they play both roles interchangeably, depending on where they are in the planning process. Linking learning situations to the planning processes is one way to ensure that what people learn is relevant to their situation and to ensure that what is learned is applied and reflected upon as something that can be adapted or re-applied. Friedmann (1993) believes that social learning approaches are appropriate to community self-empowerment since they require substantial departure from the traditional planning practice, which is typically imposed from above rather than generated within the community. This has been evident in the kind of planning practiced during apartheid. The problems faced by the Alexandra Renewal Project are also facing cities such as Cape Town and Durban in implementation of the urban renewal projects.

It is important for consultants to first carefully analyse the approach to facilitating or initiating a public participation process. The following factors may be taken into consideration:

- The number of people likely to be involved
- How people will be employed
- Location of the project in relation to the affected community members
- Resources available for the community participation process
- Level of education of people who will facilitate the community participation process
- The role of women
- The role of Non-Governmental Organisations within the community
- Involvement of community representatives
- The role of youth
- Ways in which community participation has been undertaken in the past
- The role of local Councillor
- The role of different stakeholders.

Another important lesson from the Alexandra Renewal Project is that effective participation in planning and decision-making is an iterative and time-consuming process. Poor planning in the methods of community

participation may lead to increased project cost and delayed project completion. Proper planning and efficient decision-making processes are imperative for community participation to be successful.

The urban renewal projects is intended to fill this gap, but the nodes chosen are themselves very large, containing hundreds of thousands of people, which make it difficult to secure either deep community participation or real economies of proximity in planning and implementation. What is needed is to create governance structures at a level closer to the communities and their organisations. However, it may be difficult to determine whether an individual or organisation is representative of the community. A community organisation that is unrepresentative can cause resentment and conflict, which may curtail a programme. Alternatively, a development committee could be formed. Problems may also arise if the leadership of organisations representing the community changes or if other organisations become more powerful during a programme.

CONCLUSION

Communities should participate in the assessment of resources and in the subsequent choice of technology which will be used for project implementation. Additionally,

communities are highly complex and not single, cohesive units. In the absence of legitimate and effective local government, other representatives of the community must be identified. Over and above the ideals of integration, a test for the URP will be to move from the existing emphasis on physical development to human development in terms of individual and institutional capacities. The capacity of residents of poor communities to break through economic exclusion and participate effectively as economic operators or as skilled workers in the formal economy will be a particularly difficult but important challenge. The success of the urban renewal projects will depend upon whether local government is able to play an effective role in mobilising other actors and their resources around the urban renewal challenge, generating wide commitment to and involvement in the programme.

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