

Values, Resources and Development : A Perspective from the Northern Province of South Africa

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THE PROBLEM

The value of indigenous knowledge is increasingly recognized when one takes into account the international initiatives and conventions regarding the conservation of natural resources. Although much of this knowledge is included in ethnographic sources, hardly any is used in nature conservation and planning. The availability of such ethnographic information is, however, indispensable to operationalise down to communities at grass-root level. Omara-Ojunga (1992:180) refers to "...difficulties in moving from planning to action" when he discusses the holistic approach. It is therefore of paramount importance that macro planning should be fitted in and adjusted to the thinking framework, values and needs of indigenous communities at grassroots level. In the past resistance to planned change, the introduction of innovations and the failure of projects, were the result of superficial or little knowledge of the world-view and deep-seated values of the local culture.

In this paper the focus falls on the cultural values of people in a particular province of South Africa. From this perspective their perceptions of nature and certain resources will be examined and attention will also be given to what extent these perceptions are reconcilable with resource management and sustainable development.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND INSTITUTIONS TO DEAL WITH THE DETERIORATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Environmental issues have become one of the dominant themes today. The main reason for this

is the growing realization that the natural resources of the earth are in danger of being exhausted to such an extent that the survival of the future generations will be jeopardy. It is therefore not strange that various international conventions have been established, especially in the last two decades, to address this problem.

The effect which the exploitation of natural resources has had on economic growth and development as well as the influence of poverty on the natural environment, was explicitly emphasized in 1972 in Stockholm during the United Nations Conference on Human Environment. At that stage, economic growth and development and the development of social services were some of the most important priorities in developing countries so that virtually no attention was given to environmental problems. In fact, they were mostly ignored (Omara-Ojunga, 1992:174).

One of the consequences of the Stockholm conference was the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which was required to coordinate all environmental actions for better understanding, as well as the improvement of the quality of the environment. International organizations such as the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through its Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme, the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), focused their attention on particular aspects and problems of the relation of human beings with their environment. However, the close connection between nature conservation, resource management and development was for the first time adopted in 1980 with the publishing of the internationally accepted document titled "World Conservation Strategy." In its influential report

"Our Common Future" (1987) the World Commission on Environment and Development focused attention on the concept sustainable development and indicated that conservation and development are not two contradictory concepts, but that they are interdependent since both are essential for providing in the needs of present and future generations.

The new focus of the IUCN and the World Commission on Environment and Development brought about a radical change worldwide, and also in Africa, in the approach to environmental and nature conservation. Nature conservation alone was no longer the only emphasis, for the new approach gave rise to a growing consciousness that involvement in, and assistance of nature conservators to rural communities, adjacent to conservation areas, will also be beneficial to such areas. In addition, there was a growing realization that in order to understand a people's beliefs and values about natural environment, it is of paramount importance to first acquire their cooperation and further, to convince them of the necessity of the conservation of the environment to ensure sustainable utilization of renewable resources and sustainable rural development.

In Africa various projects were implemented to illustrate the interdependence of sustainable utilization of renewable natural resources both inside and outside conservation areas and sustainable rural development. Examples of these projects are the so called Integrated Conservation Development Projects (Brandon and Wells, 1992) and the CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe.

ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Environment conservation was officially introduced in South Africa in 1846 when the Cape government of the time introduced the first legislation for the preservation of certain areas (Bothma, 1995:152). Since then nature conservation has developed through a number of phases, each with its own emphasis, starting with the proclamation of conservation areas and national parks until a national policy was introduced in the early 1990s. The formulation of

this policy was unquestionably precipitated and influenced by the signing of the IUCN Convention and the endorsement of its principles on the environment and nature conservation. One of these principles has already been implemented by some of the conservation areas and national parks in South Africa. The interdependence between nature conservation and sustainable rural development has, for example, been implemented through their Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP) by the internationally well known Kruger National Park which is found in the Northern and Mpumalanga Provinces of South Africa.

During the implementation of the apartheid policy various measures on environment conservation were adopted on land which was opened up for black occupation outside the historic homelands. These areas were declared "betterment areas" to check the deterioration of the soil by the implementation of measures to control erosion and overstocking. In the middle of the fifties the Tomlinson Commission, which was appointed to investigate the practical realization of separate development, recommended drastic agricultural reform measures to alleviate population pressure on the land. To achieve this goal methods to utilize and develop the available agricultural resources were strongly recommended. (Malan and Hattingh, 1975:31).

Concern regarding the deterioration of the environment is, *inter alia*, also reflected in certain legislative measures such as the Act on the Subdivision of Agricultural Land of 1970 and the Act on the Conservation of Agricultural Resources of 1983. The relevance of these acts is self evident if one bears in mind that 85 per cent of the surface of South Africa is used for agriculture and forestry.

The latest development in South Africa on environmental issues is the publication of a Green Paper, "Towards a New Environmental Policy for South Africa". It contains valuable information concerning the goals they have in mind for the improvement of "...the quality of human living environments, including social, visual, natural and cultural dimensions" (Green Paper:16). In one of the subgoals of the Green Paper (see goal 9: meeting basic needs) it is stated that such needs will only be met "...through sustainable

management of renewable resources." And, to achieve this, the use of indigenous knowledge of nature is, amongst others, advocated.

COMMENTS

After all the international initiatives that have been taken regarding the relations of human beings with the environment, and, especially the acceptance and implementation of resource management strategies and sustainable development in Third World Countries, the question can justly be asked whether there is improvement in the quality of life in these countries. The answer is unfortunately negative and there is even talk of "the present environmental crisis" or "an ecological crisis" (see Boersema, 1994:21). During a symposium of the International Research Institute on Food Policy (IFPRI) which was recently (June 1996) held in Johannesburg (South Africa) to discuss the food needs of the people of Southern Africa, a gloomy picture was depicted of the natural resources of Africa. One of the speakers at the symposium of this Washington-based institute indicated that there is an approximately 30 percent deterioration of the agricultural land and grazing and forest areas. Mention was also made of the fact that the per capita food aid has increased from 5 kg in 1980 to 10 kg in 1990.

The mounting deterioration of the natural environment and the concomitant consequences, and also the overall negative expectations of solving the environmental problem, prevail amidst all the development aid that has been pumped into Third World Countries as well as the presence of approximately 80,000 foreign advisors and technical experts, south of the Sahara (Edwards, 1989:116).

From the preceding discussion it is evident that the top-down approach, either through the initiatives taken by international conventions, or by governments through their environmental policies has not rendered the desired results. This approach "...falls squarely within western patterns of thinking, underpinned by certain epistemological and ontological assumptions" (Kotze and Kotze, 1996:5). Men-

tion has been made at international forums and in various sources (see: Foster, 1973 Omara-Ojunga, 1992 and United Nations, 1993) that indigenous knowledge of the environment should also be used by ecologists and other experts in addition to the Western approach to solve environmental problems. Although this is definitely a step in the right direction to obtain the cooperation of communities in the Third World in development projects, the question is whether this will solve the magnitude of environment problems awaiting us.

Lately there is a greater awareness that recognition should be given to more 'fundamental attitudes' towards nature (Zweers and Boersema, 1994:275). This concurs with Norgaard's view that "...unsustainability of past development has an epistemological explanation" (Norgaard, 1994:72). Experience has shown that Eurocentric or Western thinking and epistemological premises alone with its strong emphasis on modernization could not solve the development problems of the Third World. This means that in the search for the roots of the environmental problem of the Third World, African thinking and philosophical views about nature can no longer be ignored. In a recent article on the continuous failure of development projects in the Third World, Kotze and Kotze (1996:5-8) identified the root of the problem as ignorance of the "meaning-given context" of people. This context is described by them as "...an ecology of ideas (referring collectively to past experiences, metaphors, beliefs, values and perceptions and world views)..."

In the next section a few fundamental themes or principles underlying the thinking of some of the indigenous groups in the Northern province of South Africa will come under close scrutiny in an attempt to discover the roots of the environmental problems in the region. In addition, their identification of some of these philosophical themes may also give us an indication how the sustainable utilization of renewable resources can be ensured and resource management should be applied in the future.

INDIGENOUS AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

The Northern Province of South Africa comprises an area of approximately 11.96 million hectares, *i.e.* 9.8 per cent of the total surface of South Africa. Of this area 77 per cent is utilized for grazing purposes, 10 per cent for cultivation, 9 per cent for nature conservation, which also includes a part of the well known Kruger National Park, 3 per cent for non-agricultural purposes and 1 per cent for forestry. The population is estimated to 5,728,252, which is 11.75 per cent of the population of South Africa. However, that does not include the more than 2 million foreigners from neighboring states who are still streaming into the country. The population density is set at 47.9 per km². The corresponding figure for South Africa is 33.3.

The formal urbanization figure is 12.1 per cent while the functional urbanization figure for the province is 31 per cent compared to 65.5 per cent for the whole of South Africa. The unemployment figure is estimated at 48 per cent compared to 32.6 per cent for South Africa. This unemployment figure is the highest of all the provinces. Note that these figures do not include the foreign component in the province. The literacy figure is estimated at 61.1 per cent compared to 61.4 per cent for the whole country.

Most of the agricultural land belongs to white farmers with the result that 88 per cent of the population live on 30 per cent of the land in the former homelands of Venda, Gazankulu and Lebowa. In the latter areas the deterioration of the land is conspicuous due to the population pressure on the land and the unscientific farming methods which are used by most peasant farmers. The average rainfall varies from approximately 700 - 1,000 mm in the east to 300 mm in the northwest of the province. During the severe drought of 1992-1994 the number of cattle in certain districts was as much as 107 per cent above the carrying capacity of the land which, together with the influx of foreigners into the province, put tremendous pressure on the

natural resources in certain parts of the region.

The Northern Province is the least developed and poorest of all the provinces with a human development figure of 0.43 compared to 0.64 for the rest of the country. The personal income per capita is estimated to be R725 compared to R2566 for South Africa.

From the above figures it is evident that there is a need for human resource management so that sustainable utilization of the natural resources will ensure survival for future generations.

Composition of the Population Language Distribution

Coloureds	37,294	0.65 %	Northern Sotho	56.7%
Asian	20,188	0.35%	Tsonga	23.1%
Whites	171,848	3.00%	Venda	11.6%
Blacks	5,498,922	96.00%	Afrikaans	2.7%
Total	5,728,252	100.00%	Tswana	1.5%
			Zulu	0.8%

THE BANTU-SPEAKING PEOPLE OF THE PROVINCE

Three major ethnic clusters can be distinguished, namely Venda-speakers, Tsonga-speakers and Northern Sotho-speakers. The Venda-speaking people occupy the far north and north-eastern parts of the province. The Tsonga people are found to the south and southwest of the Venda on the western border of the Kruger National Park. The Northern Sotho live in the central, northeastern and eastern regions of the Northern Province.

Although the cultures of these groups have been influenced to a considerable degree by the process of Westernization, each of these groups can still be distinguished as a distinct cultural type with regard to their history, traditional religious views and education systems and language. The languages of the various groups are, for instance, unintelligible to each other. In the rural areas each of the three groups is politically divided into numerous chiefdoms, each with its own traditional authority and administration of justice. The Northern Sotho comprise 132 chiefdoms, the Tsonga 31 and the Venda 28. Today these chiefdoms, together with some elected councils, form the local administration in the rural areas of the province.

SOME PERCEPTIONS AND VIEWS ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Human perceptions are not objective observations of reality. Perceptions are a subjective view of phenomena because of the conditioning and experience of people within the context of their own culture. Apart from a group's material life and behavior, culture also includes deep-seated values that have developed over generations. These values can be regarded as the frame of reference or "lens" which they use to evaluate, categorize and to give meaning to other people, things, events and phenomena such as mountains, river, trees, the soil, the sun, the moon, animals and birds (De Beer, 1995:2-8 and De Beer, 1996:1-6). Since this pertains to a group's relations and interaction with these phenomena in their natural environment and even the cosmos, mention is often made of their cosmological values and world view (Kearney, 1984:42-47). Cosmologies and a world view can therefore "...be seen as cognitive and mental impressions, whereby people (and cultures) succeed in surviving and giving life some meaning....The term describes all those ideas on reality, the forces which are at work, and one's own role as a person within reality" (Zweers and Boersema, 1994:24). From this it is clear that perceptions derive from the world view or cosmological values of a group.

From the ethnographic information on the Bantu-speaking people of Southern Africa it is evident that those who have related cultures and historical ties can also share the same world view and cosmological values (see Eiselen, 1966; Coertze, 1985 and Els, 1992). And, it seems as if the same world view is also not confined to the same region, but can even be associated with people of the same continent. Mention is for instance made by various scholars of an Eurocentric and African world view (see Macnamara, 1980; Mbiti, 1975; Orluka, 1987 and Landro, 1989).

During my investigation of the perceptions of Northern Sotho-, Tsonga- and Venda-speakers regarding their perceptions and views of certain natural resources, certain fundamental views and themes were identified. These, amongst others, include a view of the quintes-

sence of life, an anthropocentric world view and an equilibrium philosophy.

A VIEW OF THE QUINTESSENCE OF LIFE

According to the Nigerian, Okafor: "Life is the central and all inclusive concept in African cosmology...the concept of life is not only posed as a religious question, but also a question in the ultimate meaning of the phenomena" (1982:91-92). Mention of the "vitalist" or "life" element in African culture has recently also been corroborated by a South African philosopher (Sono, 1994:16). This view of life is also reflected in the thinking of the indigenous people of the Northern Province. In this presentation attention will be given to these people's particular view of life with regard to water and to the connection between human beings and the soil.

The connection between human beings and the soil is of particular significance. If either of these components is lacking it is believed that their can be no life. This is substantiated by the Northern Sotho saying: *mabu' bophelo* (the soil is life). Land can therefore not be sold, since this is tantamount to "selling your life."

Land is regarded as a gift from the supreme being to be utilized in fulfilling the needs of human beings. Without land people would not have a home, any material for the building of cattle kraals, storage huts, etc., there would be no grazing areas, no crops could be cultivated and there would be no clay for the manufacturing of ceramic containers for the storing of water and beer or for the serving of food. People without land are like a body without a spirit.

This quintessence of life which is reflected in the connection between human beings and the soil, is further sanctioned by the view that the soil is the medium through which they are connected to their ancestors. People who still honor their ancestors believe that the abode of the ancestor spirits is underneath the soil where they lead a similar life to that of their earthly existence. The life link between the living and their ancestor spirits is the chief who is also known as *modimo wa lefase* (the god of the earth). Harmonious relations with the ancestors are of paramount importance for a normal and happy

life. To ensure this, sacrifices to the ancestor spirits are made on a shrine consisting of a small mound of earth, containing a black river stone, a sacred plant and occasionally even a piece of ant heap.

Soil should always be kept in a "normal" condition to ensure that the quintessence of life in it is maintained. However, the close connection between people and the soil can also affect the latter adversely. This is related to the symbolic conditions of "coolness" and "heat". Coolness is regarded as normal, while heat refers to a state of ritual impurity. It is believed that a woman who has had a miscarriage or one who is menstruating or a widow or widower during the mourning period is ritually impure and will contaminate the soil which will result in crop failure. Such an undesirable condition can only be removed by an act of purification. Such a ritual involves the use of water and plants with cooling properties.

Water, and especially rainfall as the source of water, is of paramount importance for survival in an area with variable rainfall. Water resources should therefore be accessible to all people. If there is no rain, life in the soil is adversely affected. It is therefore not strange that the Tsonga personify rain and regard it as the greatest blessing of the ancestry spirits and supreme being. Rainmaking rituals are still performed during droughts in some chiefdoms. These rituals are performed to manipulate the supernatural to ensure that rain is not withheld during the rainy season.

There are also taboos with regard to certain animals, reptiles and birds which should not be transgressed in order to ensure that rain is not withheld by the ancestor spirits or that stormwinds gather and chase away the rain. The pangolin, python and hammerhead can be mentioned in this regard.

Water is also a basic ingredient of all magic concoctions, beer and other sacrifices to the ancestor spirits. Its strong association with coolness ensures that, with the required treatment, the two most important life carrying phenomena, the soil and people, can return to a normal condition after they have been affected by the heat of ritual impurity. Water is therefore associated with the survival and revival of life.

AN ANTHROPOCENTRIC WORLD VIEW

According to the people in the Northern Province the position of human beings in the cosmos can only be understood if one takes into account that humanness is related to the possession of three attributes, namely a body (*mmele*), a breath (*moya*) and a personality or individuality (*seriti*). These three attributes are therefore respectively associated with the physical, existential and social existence of human beings. It is particularly the human spirit which can be regarded as the quintessence of human life of which mention was made in the previous section.

Wild and domestic animals are also believed to possess a body, breath and individuality. But they are ranked below human beings in the cosmos as is the case with everything else. Human beings thus have the central position in the cosmos and this is substantiated by the fact that the whole cosmos was created for the maintenance of human life (Els, 1996:396). This makes human beings dependent on nature, but, on the other hand, gives them an unalienable right to utilize the natural resources in their habitat. Whether this is done in a sustainable manner is not important to the indigenous people of the Northern Province. Trees, therefore, are used as people need them. The supreme being created them and he will ensure that they grow again by sending rain to provide wood, fruits, medicine and shade for the satisfaction of the needs of people. This view concurs with Mbiti's findings that "All natural resources are viewed as having being provided by the Creator in order to meet the demands of man" (Mbiti, 1975: 38-39).

Most wild animals are regarded as dangerous to the lives of human beings. The majority of people who have been questioned feel that wild animals should not be protected in conservation areas or national parks. Such land should be made available to people, since animals can never be more important than human beings (De Beer, 1995:10).

From the research of Els (1996:417-427) it is evident that domestic animals are also kept for their utility value to make life comfortable for human beings. People should care for them, since they provide meat, skins and milk. Cattle are

also used as draught animals for ploughing and are sold giving rise to some people associating their cattle with a bank.

Of all the domestic animals, cattle are people's most cherished possessions. The high value attached to them cannot only be ascribed to their economic value and the fact that a man's status is associated with the number of cattle he owns. Many people in the Northern Province believe that cattle have spirits like human beings and after death also go to the hereafter where the ancestors live. In addition, cattle are also regarded as the highest form of sacrifice to the ancestral spirits. Through cattle, kinship ties and informal contracts are also established in the form of marriage goods and the farming out of some cattle in the care of another man (the *mafisa*-custom). When this close connection between people and their cattle is taken into consideration it is understandable why live-stock reduction schemes for the prevention of overstocking were always strongly opposed. Indigenous people could not understand why human beings around which everything revolves in the cosmos should be dispossessed of their most valuable economic, social and religious asset.

It is also clear that the anthropocentric approach to life of the people of the Northern Province does not mean that the individual has a central position in the cosmos. This is inconceivable in their thinking (see also Landro, 1989:18 about the Afrocentric world view). Human beings cannot survive and live as individuals. From birth the individual is gradually incorporated into an own family, descent group and ultimately into the wider community. All important rituals and ceremonies have communal character. The interests of the individual are also subordinate to those of the community (1975:89). The demand to conform in such a community is often very strong. Sono (1994:12) sums it up as follows:

One has no choice in belonging to this 'whole community.' Chance, not choice, has placed you there; and thus the community becomes your destiny. To break away from such destiny is to define yourself as an alien...Those who remain or thrive in such a community are those who remain silent, who conform, and thus

confirm and affirm their own meaning and identity...

Conformity to the community or group does not mean that this principle is confined to the living members only. Deceased members are also included and should always be respected since as ancestor spirits they can influence the life of the living and even cosmic powers will become evident in the next section. The anthropocentric world view of the indigenous people of the Northern Province is therefore, something totally different from the individualistic humanness associated with the Eurocentric world view.

EQUILIBRIUM PHILOSOPHY

For the indigenous people of the Northern Province the cosmos is viewed as one unstructured whole and no distinction is made between the natural order and the supernatural world. Human beings should strive to live in harmony with these worlds to ensure that the equilibrium is not disturbed. All the elements in the cosmos are closely interconnected and a disturbance of this order can have detrimental effects for human beings and nature. The equilibrium in the cosmos can be affected by disturbed relations between people and their ancestor spirits and by the malevolent manipulation of the unseen magical power in the universe by magical specialists (*baloi*).

Honoring of the ancestor spirits is still a living reality amongst the indigenous people of the Northern Province. This again substantiates the wide recognition of the influence of the ancestors in Africa. Tedla (1995), an African, says in this regard: "In traditional society there are no person who negate or totally abandon the *life-affirming* beliefs and expressions of their ancestors. For to do so is to cut themselves from their roots, their kinship, their context of security."

Recognition of the influence of ancestor spirits in their lives is, however, not confined to black indigenous people who are members of traditional tribal societies. It is intertwined with the beliefs in Christ and the Holy Spirit held by members of Christian churches and sects who are also living in the urban areas. The Zion Christian Church, the biggest independent church in the Republic of South Africa with its headquarters

in the Northern Province, is well known for the syncretistic religious beliefs of its members (Hanekom, 1975:77-80).

In his research on the Northern Sotho concept of illness Kriel (1992:94) interviewed 139 men, 56 women and 61 nurses regarding their belief in the influence of the ancestor spirits. His findings are reflected below.

	Men	Women	Nurses
YES, they still have an influence	132 (95%)	54 (96%)	41 (67%)
NO, they have no influence	6 (4%)	2 (4%)	9 (15%)
NOT SURE	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	11 (18%)
	139 (100%)	56 (100%)	61 (100%)

Honoring the ancestors is based on the belief that the living and the dead can mutually influence one another. They are part of the same descent group or social order, although "...the ancestors are the superior part of the this order" (Monnig). They should therefore regularly be honored to ensure prosperity on earth. If this is not done it can affect the relations between the dead and the living with detrimental consequences for the latter. This can also happen when taboos are transgressed. The killing of the hammerhead (*masianoke*) and the pangolin (*kgaga*) can cause gale force winds and the fertility of women is affected when a python is killed. Even strained and disturbed relations between descendants can lead to the interference of the ancestor spirits in the form of disease and droughts. Only through the making of a sacrifice in the form of a ritual killing can relations and harmony be restored between the ancestors and their living descendants. This will also ensure the restoration of the equilibrium in the cosmic world.

According to the indigenous people of the Northern Province all phenomena including animals, plants and birds contain a power entity or quality (*maatla*). Kriel (1992:108) alleges that *maatla* can be transmitted from a plant or object to human beings by including it in medicines and amulets to cure illnesses and protect them from harmful influences. Another characteristic of *maatla* is that it does not have a lasting affect so that traditional practitioners are continuously consulted for amulets and medicines. The

maatla-element contributes to the healing of people and therefore also plays a part in the harmonious functioning of people in society.

The equilibrium in the cosmos can also be disturbed by sorcerers and witches, who, by the utterance of a spell, may cause evil and destruction. They are feared by all people, even by Christians. They can cause virtually any disaster like car accidents, damage to crops and lightning to strike people. In the latter case it is believed that witches make use of the lightning bird, a bird much feared by the local people.

The only protection against the evil action of witches is the wearing of charms and talismans. They may also be placed in various positions where their influence is needed, for example, inside, under and on top of the roofs of houses or in gardens and agricultural fields.

It is believed that witches contaminate society with their evil actions. In the past the only way to get rid of this evil was by killing such a witch. Today this is forbidden by law, but the burning of people, who are accused of witchcraft each year in the Northern Province, indicates that people will still use old "remedies" to restore the natural order of things. The execution of people by burning them to death has become so serious that a Commission of Inquiry was appointed by the provincial government of the Northern Province in 1994 to investigate the cause of the problem.

It is clear that the views of the indigenous people of the Northern Province regarding causality differ markedly from those of Western people. The causes of events are either ascribed to the influence of the ancestor spirits or the evil intentions of magical experts. This view of causality has implications for resource management strategies and plans for the application of sustainable development as will be indicated in the next section.

COSMOLOGICAL VALUES AND DEVELOPMENT

The question can be rightly asked whether the cosmological values of the indigenous people of the Northern Province are reconcilable with development. If development means the process of modernization that western developers have implemented over the last few decades in

the Third World, then these cosmological values will definitely be insurmountable obstacles to be overcome as has been reported from numerous unsuccessful development projects in the Third World.

Fortunately, winds of change, albeit small, are blowing in the development world. There is a greater realization amongst developers that the "meaning-giving context" or values of people are of paramount importance if they want to bridge the gap between them and the people for whom the development is intended. In this regard Kotze and Kotze (1986:8) say:

The people's meaning-giving context is the only framework within which they can relate to developers. It is the framework within which development initiatives obtain meaning. It will either permit or block development, depending on whether there is a 'fit' between development initiatives and context. People will not be steered, influenced or 'taken with' unless the development initiative has positive meaning within their context.

When one bears this in mind it becomes clear why the live-stock reduction schemes in South Africa was unsuccessful. The reason for this failure is that the meaning and value indigenous people attach to cattle by far surpass the economic benefits which would have come from the implementation of the reduction project.

In the implementation of sustainable utilization of natural resources and resource management, indigenous knowledge, and especially the underlying cosmological values can therefore not be ignored. The indigenous people's view of causality which ascribes the cause of events to supernatural intervention can, for example, be an obstacle to development. Such a view of causality ignores the fact that problems, such as the deterioration of the environment, can often be ascribed to the actions of human beings. There are, on the other hand, certain perceptions of the indigenous people of the Northern Province regarding the quintessence of life and the central position of indigenous people in the cosmos which developers can use to relate to the "meaning-giving context" of people and convince them of the need for sustainable utilization of natural resources. The close connection between human

beings and the soil and the fact that without either of them there is no life could be used to motivate people to conserve the soil, because its destruction will also mean the annihilation of human beings.

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