CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This research has focused on the potential for alternative approaches to CBO evaluation to funder-driven, externally designed and power imbalanced conventions. Utilisation-based evaluation solutions and principles that contribute both to organisational development and to evaluative answers offer a particular set of challenges. This research asks how evaluation might best contribute as a servant to development, rather than its master. This Discussion Chapter reflects on the results at three levels.

Firstly, technical insights on facilitating evaluation in CBOs are discussed, providing ideas on methodology alternatives based on this research.

The second, longer portion of the chapter highlights some of the principles, attitudes and approaches to development which any method needs to apply in order to be constructive. The implications of evaluation principles for effective development are highlighted as key conclusions of this study. In an overriding theme, the discussion dwells on the contradictions, compromises and conundrums of effective development and surrounding relationships.

The third section of the discussion draws these somewhat disparate thematic areas into a metaphorical overview of the state of CBO contribution and the dynamics of their relationships and evolution. Advocacy, role, impact and developmental outcomes in a CBO context compare organisations with knights, saints, snakes and sheep.

> **Peer Review Discussion Boxes**
>
> Action research is necessarily reflective and collective. For the purpose of this study, much of this reflection was achieved within participatory CBO sessions and in subsequent conversations with mentors (Table 6). In addition, I conducted a peer reflection survey as principles and concepts began to emerge from the data. I invited evaluation, development and facilitation professionals to complete a questionnaire that tested some of the emerging thinking and conclusions (Table 6, Appendix 1). Of 50 professionals invited to participate, a total of 17 responses were received. There was wide variation in their view points. Some views differed from my own conclusions, while others supported them. All were enriching. The responses were analysed for themes using Atlas-ti 5.0 qualitative data analysis software. Since these opinions took the form of a discussion, their inclusion is considered appropriate in this chapter. Peer responses are provided throughout this Discussion Chapter as 'Peer Review Discussion Boxes', providing divergent, thought-provoking perspectives.

5.1 The practice: Towards alternative methodologies for evaluation of CBOs

A great variety of detailed methodological findings are presented in the previous chapter, culminating in descriptions of inward-looking and outward-looking method. The purpose of this section of the discussion is to highlight some elements of these methodologies that warrant further emphasis. The following areas of interest are discussed in the pages that follow:

- Inward-looking and outward-looking evaluation of CBOs

- The use of stories in both forms of evaluation

- The use of metaphor in inward-looking, organisational reflection

- Facilitation of participatory evaluation

- Diversity as it affects facilitation of evaluation

- Practical ethics in evaluation

5.1.1. Inward and outward looking evaluation

The study began with an inward-looking series of facilitated processes with different Gauteng CBOs using Stories and Metaphor. Emerging from the findings of this first phase around the limitations of organisation-centred evaluation on its own, an outward-looking method was attempted in North West Province, based on Davies and Dart's (2005) Most Significant Change (MSC) approach.

The study began with organisation-centred evaluation, and evolved to provide rich detail in organisational evaluation. Internal success criteria from these reflective processes had direct and immediate relevance to management and performance. Effective teamwork, volunteer retention and clear planning, for example, were discussed in detail. One Case Study defined the left and right brain as their administration and the leadership, giving each its own qualities and performance ratings. In terms of internal performance and immediate growth paths of organisations, these reflective methods were practical, accessible and appropriate.

Despite various facilitated strategies to probe and explore, however, these discussions remained superficial with regard to participants' impressions, reflections and insights into CBOs' client experiences of service provision. They revealed little of external or client-centred relevance and the impacts of these organisational efforts remained vague and generally not self-critical (Sen, 1987). This limitation was largely a product of the method. Metaphors for organisations tend to focus discussions on inward-looking analysis (Daudelin, 1996).

Using the same school of narrative, grounded methods, a community-centred, MSC process was conducted in North West province to explore outward-looking evaluation alternatives. The results of the MSC evaluation provided valuable strategic insight on CBO approaches. One of several thematic areas to emerge, for example, was the contested evolution of custodianship of culture from traditional healers and their historic African spirituality, to the leadership and cultural practices of Christianity.

Understanding the strategic importance of these opposing forces, and their needs, perspectives and disagreements, was key to powerful engagement by CBOs in this setting. The evaluation also described the role of CBOs in providing emotional support, information and a sense of inclusion to women with HIV-related challenges, while having far less value to men with similar problems.

While these client perspectives were strategically valuable, these tended to be too broad to have specific relevance to management decisions. Organisation-centred reflection was essential to consider the attributes of CBOs in relation to their context. The study therefore demonstrated a need to compliment outward-looking client review with a reflective, inward-looking interpretation (Sen, 1987; Daudelin, 1996; Lawrence, 2006).

There were striking complimentary differences between organisational reflection using Stories and Metaphor, and Most Significant Change approaches (Table 9). Both were strongly participatory and gave a central role for organisation members throughout the evaluation processes. In combination, these two approaches produce a balance between internal and external perspectives, and appreciative and critical enquiry, while producing concrete plans of action for organisational development.

The inward-looking and outward-looking processes were conducted separately in this research. It was clear that stronger linking between evaluation of organisation qualities and service effectiveness outcomes are important. More assertive reciprocation between inward and outward looking analysis during both processes would better populate our understanding of the connections between actions and outcomes.

Table 9. *Comparing, contrasting and combining Stories and Metaphor methodology with established Most Significant Change methods*

Stories and Metaphor	Most Significant Change	Comments
INWARD-LOOKING: Stories and Metaphors describe the state of mechanisms inside organisations, with relatively little recourse to careful analysis of their impact.	MSC is strongly **OUTWARD-LOOKING**, describing change in the client community, while saying little about the capacity, challenges, talents and processes within the organisations providing these interventions.	Each of the approaches is incomplete with regard the perspectives provided by the other. While they each have value alone, they inform management and strategy most thoroughly if used in combination.
ORGANISATION-CENTRED processes, involving members and staff as the main subject of self-evaluation.	**COMMUNITY-CENTRED** processes, where organisation members interview their clients and stakeholders in their community.	While there is a broad area of overlap, the main respondents of the two forms of evaluation distinguish them.

Stories and Metaphor	Most Significant Change	Comments
Organisations facilitated through **REFLECTIVE SELF-CRITIQUE**. Although appreciative insofar as ensuring that defences are not raised by the attitude or style of facilitation, processes are designed to encourage participants to view themselves critically and constructively.	Almost entirely **APPRECIATIVE**. For the most part, it finds stories of exceptional success and seeks out the factors that create that success.	Both methods use appreciative inquiry. The reflective analysis of Stories and Metaphor requires that any critical interrogation comes from participants themselves, while the facilitator remains clearly neutral.
PARTICIPATION: Organisation members facilitated through a learning and reflection process.	**PARTICIPATION:** Organisation members trained in basic qualitative evaluation and story gathering. They participate as interviewers and data analysts. Community members participate as informants and co-analysts	Outward-looking evaluation is more taxing on organisation members – it constitutes work. Inward-looking evaluation is far more indulgent, giving participants the satisfaction of facilitated introspection and learning.
The **FACILITATOR** holds an organisational reflection and development process, and guides the group through its introspection	The **FACILITATOR** begins as trainer, preparing organisation members for field work. He or she is then the fieldwork coordinator, providing ongoing practical training and mentorship. The final task is facilitation of the analysis and drawing out of learning conclusions.	Facilitator engagement is much longer and more involved for an MSC process. An inward-looking organisation development process can be brief, and is relatively undemanding on facilitation, provided principles of emergent and developmental practice are applied.
PLANNING AND PREPARATION involves agreeing to participation and arranging to meet at the organisation's premises. It is important to ensure that sufficient organisation members, including senior management, can make the time available.	**PLANNING AND PREPARATION:** A few organisation members are asked to commit for several days or even weeks. Training venues and process design need to be prepared in advance. Permissions from local traditional and public sector authorities are required. FGD participants and a community feedback meeting are arranged during the fieldwork.	Again, the investment for a community-centred evaluation using MSC is more involved than the organisation-based process.
RESULTS: The process is strongest in producing management and organisational insight on areas of strength and weakness. Detailed and achievable decisions for organisation development towards greater effectiveness are possible. Impact is based on CBO impressions and beliefs about their community and their role, many of which may be well-founded. The method provides strong data on internal accountability.	**RESULTS**: The process is strongest around strategic and client-relevant insight on areas of local need and progress. Further strategic reflection would be required to consolidate these into planning and organisation development. Reasonable downward accountability data are provided.	For the purposes of management decision-making, both the internal and external situation must be understood.

5.1.2.   Stories

5.1.2.1.   Impact is meaning

Stories are the essence of impact evaluation. Impact in a social setting refers to meaningful change. Whether the change is quantifiable or not, it is the meaning attached to the change that justifies it as impact (McClintock, 2004; Lawrence, 2006).

In complex social situations, meaning is layered. It has physical, social and psychological dimensions, all of which reconstruct an experience or a change, and explain its relevance and impact (McClintock, 2004). For example, while households in this study might have needed practical input, such as physical care, assistance with schooling and basic hygiene, education, housing or medical support, these interventions produce intangible results, like the dignity and ultimate independence of adults, or the opportunity for children to feel that they were 'normal' among other children. If the material support had not resulted in these intangible results, impact would have been negligible.

Stories draw participants' and organisations' attention to their organisational meaning, as well as their individual reasons for being part of this meaning (Bahre, 2007).

5.1.2.2. Story collection

In facilitating stories, the key is to distinguish a meaningful story from noise. Even with strong encouragement to be specific, stories told within organisations in this study tended towards generalisations, such as "Whenever we care for people, we make a difference". Similarly, the majority of stories shared by community respondents in the MSC process began with "The government should …" or "People around here always…." or "Our problems are …." These stories offer little evaluative value. A guided process is required to elicit personally experienced significant change or stories that lead to insights on what success in the organisation means.

5.1.2.3. Collectively analysing narrative

In sharing stories in organisations, it is important to recognise that all stories are fictions (Bryant and Cox, 2004; McClintock, 2004; Grisham, 2006). Our version of any event, our selection of what to tell and where to place emphasis, result in even the most factual account being the teller's fiction.

Since stories form the basis of meaning, their factual basis is less important than the underlying myth they reflect. The 'so what' of these accounts tells us about meaning, values and intent for the organisation, for the community in which they work, and often for the individual relating the story.

Stories have the potential to convey complex social understanding and concepts (Grisham, 2006). Collective story analysis invokes a discussion of these values and world views by taking the fiction of stories, and attempts to reveal the meaning or mythology behind them (Quinn Patton, 1999). Processes such as "Success Means …" achieve this

analysis, as does the MSC process of selecting out and discussing the most significant story or stories of change.

5.1.2.4. Stories as grounded evaluation

One criticism of logical and predictive planning and evaluation processes is the irrelevance of externally motivated, predefined criteria for success (Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Kilby, 2006). Story analysis offers a seamless process through which the criteria for change that are relevant to the organisation and its clients can be crystallised. Using stories, organisation members unravel their impressions of their own performance against their own motivations, criteria and meaning. Further discussion on the extraction and use of grounded criteria for evaluation is provided below.

> The expansion and application of the potential of stories, story analysis, and story-grounded criteria for evaluation, offer an opportunity for evaluation to reflect reality, and inform management and policy from the basis of reality-based evidence.

5.1.3. Metaphor in evaluative analysis

Metaphors are integral to language, culture and thought (Chettiparamb, 2006; Grisham, 2006). Our conversations and conceptualisation of reality are steeped in metaphor. As stories are fictions, so too, words themselves are a metaphor for reality. Much of metaphor is subconscious, so fundamental is it to human thought patterns (Oswick & Montgomery, 1999). We are continuously using forms of metaphor, beyond the obvious metaphors we find in figures of speech. Discrimination and stereotypes in our reactions to human diversity are essentially metaphors of generalisations or assumptions imposed on individuals. Our interpretation of words into concepts, and vice versa, uses language as a metaphor for reality. These metaphors for reality assist as well as obstruct communication between people. It is therefore natural and apt that people and organisations resonate with metaphor (Abel & Sementelli, 2005; Sementelli & Abel, 2007).

Metaphor exceeded expectations in its potential for grounded, nuanced, detailed and sophisticated organisational evaluation. Without exception, metaphors provided meaningful, inspiring, powerful introspection and intense self-analysis. Metaphor provided a lens through which the character, structure, internal strengths and growth areas of organisations could be judged to a deep and precise level (Abel & Sementelli, 2005; Chettiparamb, 2006; Grisham, 2006; Sementelli & Abel, 2007). Metaphor also

placed evaluation into immediate use, and was completely at home in the character and culture of CBOs.

Using an animal metaphor the organisation's 'organs' were labelled in a manner that permitted each participant to grasp its structure and to be guided through a rigorous self-evaluation. A profound understanding of the functions and interactions of the organisation was achieved. Participants viewed the skin of an organisation as its membership, for example; or the tail fin as the driving force of management in mutual support with the lungs of community communication. Metaphor analysis can create a depth of description far more complex, and yet communicable, than any non-metaphorical attempt could achieve (Oswick & Montgomery, 1999).

Metaphor becomes a planning vehicle for outlining Theories of Change (Bornstein, 2006b; Chettiparamb, 2006). They provided opportunities for participants to formulate positive and concrete evaluation recommendations, as organisational development goals.

Sementelli & Abel (2007) point out that despite their value in characterising and analysing organisations, metaphors tend to be static. They have less value in understanding the dynamic, evolving, adaptive contexts of change and relationships. This observation resonates with my findings in this study, where outward-looking, client-focused evaluation of relationships and the outcomes of interventions were not well-captured by metaphor. Used in conjunction with outward-looking processes, however, internal analysis through metaphor warrants firm inclusion in the mainstream toolbox.

The experiences of this study clearly demonstrated the potential for metaphor as a tool for facilitating a shared understanding of organisational dynamics, challenges, values and priorities. Its use in relationship building between partner organisations, and as an integral element to evaluation and reflection, is strongly encouraged.

5.1.4. Facilitating participatory evaluation

Although not always as achievable as imagined (Swidler & Watkins, 2009), CBOs are largely founded in the principles of democratic, participatory, community-inclusive principles (Poindexter, 2007; Abbey, 2008; Mayberry, et al., 2009). Participatory and personal relationships with partners are far more at home in CBOs, than regulated, standardised or dictated communication processes. It is therefore a key principle of organisation and community-centred evaluation that the processes chosen have a strong foundation of participation (Robinson & Cousins, 2004; Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006).

Metaphor, stories, voting and ranking, and community research, as described in the Results Chapter above, are such participatory methods (McClintock, 2004; Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006; Chettiparamb, 2007).

5.1.4.1. Who holds the pen?

Participatory methods have long identified how power within a process resides in 'The Pen'. The person who interprets and captures holds the power to create the results of a collective process (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). Correct participatory theory would therefore expect that participants do the drawing, collage, photography, writing or otherwise represent the results of their discussions.

This did not prove as accessible as one might have hoped. Where participant drawing was attempted in this study, the issue of drawing overwhelmed the purpose of the session. Although their verbal analysis had been rich and thorough, participants were self-consciousness and unadventurous when invited to draw. They tended to capture insufficient detail to provide a visual representation or lasting record of collective evaluation. Similarly, the capture of stories written by participants and MSC field researchers tended to lack detail.

One option might be to replace drawing with a more accessible form of representation, such as collage or photography. Alternatively we might view the act of drawing not as a core expression in itself. Drawing and writing can be seen as a means for probing, facilitating and organising thoughts. The purpose of drawing is to guide conversations that move the group's thinking and self-understanding forward, while transparently and visibly sharing information. Seen through this lens and based on the experiences of this study, the capturing of images and annotation by the facilitator is an appropriate and effective option.

5.1.4.2. Community researchers: participatory learning in action

Although the Results Chapter describes compromises in data quality and data efficiency where CBO members are recruited as MSC researchers, these are offset by the multiple benefits of maximising participation. CBO members can and should have significant involvement and influence in all aspects of the evaluation (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006; Chettiparamb, 2007; Mayberry, et al., 2009). The advantages of increased genuine participation include evolving, continuous, owned and effective organisational learning; accurate and informed story analysis; and the development of skills, confidence and community awareness among participants (Robinson & Cousins, 2004).

Researcher amateurism in participatory evaluation requires that evaluation be light on science and strong on process. Good evaluation must support good management decisions. Good decisions depend on adequate data, moderated bias and sensible cost. They do not need perfect, scientifically rigorous, expensive data. More important to good decisions are clear collective thinking and open honest communication (Baker, et al., 2005).

> An overriding theme emerging from this study is that evaluation is a form of social development communication. Evaluators need to relax. This is almost impossible in a context of predictive, structured, positivist, externally-dictated, power-imbalanced evaluation. Although effective learning and communication are far more achievable with narrative methods, an awareness of purpose over method remains critical. An evaluator's role is not to execute a method. It is to facilitate understanding. To the extent that methods support this, we may enjoy them. We must be cautious, however, of being seduced by method as an achievement in itself.

5.1.4.3. The facilitator

While the wholesale subcontracting of evaluation to external consultants is considered anathema, there are several advantages to inviting a facilitator to support participatory, owned evaluation. Emergent, qualitative, narrative evaluation is aided by personal contact, at least until organisations learn the skills of self-representation (Senge 2006, p. 230). The evaluator in this context is far more a facilitator of learning and communication than an extractor of data (Robinson & Cousins, 2004).

The distinction between subcontracting an evaluator and facilitation must be clearly grasped (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). A subcontracted evaluator is directly responsible for process, analysis, conclusions and reported results. A facilitator guides an organisation through a process of sharing, analysing and reporting for itself, for which it remains primarily responsible.

Few organisations in any sector have the capability to self-facilitate, particularly where processes require reflection on underlying patterns, confronting of assumptions and dismantling systemic negative feedback forces (Senge, 2006, p. 229). The skills of a facilitator are not necessarily those of a conventional evaluator or researcher (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). The role of a facilitator is to help people to own and engage with the issue at hand, while maintaining freshness and challenge in their thinking (Robinson & Cousins, 2004).

Although participation in itself directly and immediately influences CBO decisions, effective facilitation enables the slowing down of these decisions. Unreflective, reactive management decisions do not necessarily optimise learning from experience (Taylor, et al., 1997) (Figure 21).

Effective action learning in evaluation facilitates a pause between hearing about stories of action, … and a planned reaction to this information. In this reflective pause, participants dwell on significance of stories and explicitly draw out new learning. Virtually all unfacilitated decision-making contexts, across

Figure 21 *The Action Learning Cycle again*

Source: Taylor, et al., (1997)

organisations and individuals, have difficulty learning constructively from experience (Senge, 2006, p. 229). More often we react irrationally, change direction unreflectively or persevere unthinkingly. The *learning* in action learning is routinely ignored (Taylor, et al., 1997). Effective evaluation facilitation holds the participants in the reflection and learning pause, enabling meaningful learning to inform the next cycle of action.

Ideally, reporting would not be delegated to an outsider. Organisations themselves should remain the authors of their own processes, and all material emerging from an evaluation should be prepared by participants. This scenario seldom transpires, and reporting seems to be the one function that is most enthusiastically delegated to an external consultant. If a facilitator-evaluator does accept the task of written reporting, he or she should provide far more *gathering* and *representing* of the voices of the evaluation contributors, than *interpreting* or *analysing* (Rhodes, 1996).

Self-facilitation can be learned, as organisations become practiced at confronting their own assumptions and thinking together in creative pathways (Senge 2006, p. 230; Sen, 1987). A future where community-based organisations exchange facilitation services with each other, or provide CBO learning facilitation as their core function, would reflect valuable capacity built in the sector as a whole.
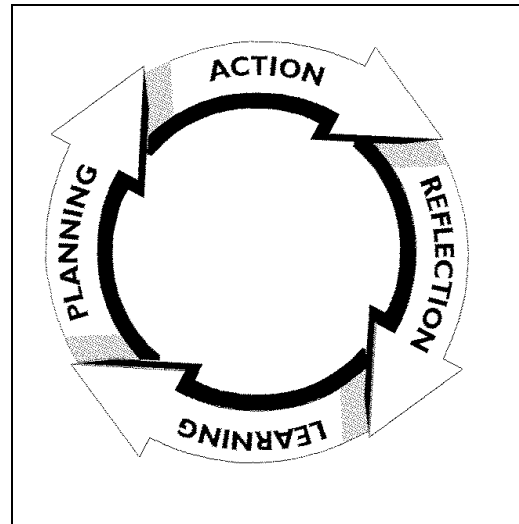
If we regard a facilitator of evaluation as responsible for drawing out the results of self-analysis and self-evaluation, acknowledging the supremacy of internal judgement, where, if at all, does the judgement of the evaluator become relevant? Where does

evaluator meet facilitator? With principles of tolerance, diversity and acknowledgement, at what stage, on what grounds and in what manner, does the evaluator begin to exercise judgement? Do evaluators have any role as judge or critic (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006)?

The question remains uncertain for me. It interfaces with the discussion on funding and power below, where the contradictions of judgement, power and development create direct clashes for ethical practice.

5.1.4.4. Bias and subjectivity

From a perspective of purist evaluation or research quality, several compromises are needed in participatory evaluation, including the concept of bias. Community researchers share little of academia's concern around bias. They select their best clients as community informants, and tend to focus on medical (or relevant sectoral) professionals or volunteers as their most enthusiastic respondents. Even in attempting to reach a range of stakeholders in the MSC evaluation, *shebeens* and churches were often most accessible. These locations select for a certain profile of stakeholder. Least accessible in the MSC study, were people at work or in their homes, and these were largely excluded from the sample.

Bias is unavoidable, and needs to be described and acknowledged (Schein, 1993). Apart from efforts to verify across stakeholder groups and being clear on excluded groups, bias need not discredit the process (Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). The advantages of community drawn researchers in terms of immediate learning, analytical insight and the relevance and ownership of conclusions far outweigh this, and other, compromises (Robinson & Cousins, 2004).

In another dimension to bias, evaluators inevitably interpret and analyse participants' or organisations' stories. While to some extent it is the task of evaluation to interpret and analyse, this carries unavoidable subjective bias. A facilitator may draw conclusions against criteria such as: personal charisma of the leadership; articulateness; harmonious internal relations; clarity on internal needs and the needs of clients; or apparent ability to build partnerships and negotiate resources.

My own criteria began to arise unbidden during these grounded processes. They were deeply subjective and personally biased. I embarked, despite myself, on a continuous assessment, judgement and qualification of the organisations in this study. It drew on my own world view and values, and on the framework of research questions with which I

had approached these organisations. Some of the criteria for effective organisations that emerged from my own preferences included:

- Willingness to hold power (reflected in language of helplessness or control, and ability to see opportunities as opposed to obstacles)

- Space and vision for learning

- Ability for reflection, internal communication and belief in self-actualisation

Another facilitator might have been alarmed at the absence of governance structures, or have been most interested in documented strategic plans.

This unavoidable subjectivity has doubtless spawned the culture of checklists and objectively verifiable indicators which rule today's world of evaluation. In attempting to remove facilitator subjectivity, evaluation practice has paid dearly in terms of meaningful communication (Bornstein, 2006a).

I would suggest that despite systems designed to ensure objectivity, many decisions are still intuitive and relationship-based (Edwards & Sen, 2000). In any interaction, it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, for the facilitator to suspend judgement or to resist interpreting observations. All research is biased by the researcher's lens, which is influenced by the unconscious filters of world view and basic assumptions.

> How do we formulate an evaluation principle to resolve the conundrum of facilitator subjectivity, without resorting to objectivity and generalisation to the point of irrelevance? The three-way tensions between i) objective externally selected criteria; ii) facilitator subjectivity; and iii) organisation-driven criteria, remain a challenge to designing effective power-supporting evaluation.

5.1.5. Diversity as an evaluation concern

Diversity management lies in acknowledging and embracing both difference and similarity (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1997, p. 33). It does not assume a shared understanding or uniformity of interpretation or world view. Assuming agreement with our own world view is a none too subtle form of arrogance and discrimination. Despite this fairly obvious, intuitive observation, interactions between development practitioners occur across organisation and human cultures, standardised against a 'northern' culture of accepted practice. Those not conforming to the pedestal culture need 'capacity building', while the pedestal culture is seldom called to account. The concerns of this research at a strategic level have to do with issues of diversity.

At a practical, methodological level, concerns of diversity are particularly relevant to community development evaluators, who often come from very different life experiences from their clients. The further from a clients' culture an evaluator comes, the less correct his or her frame of reference and behavioural benchmarks can be. We cannot assume that we are correctly interpreting our observations. Stories, metaphor and creative exchange are valuable cultural bridges, aiding communication and building shared understanding in diverse groups (Bornstein, 2006b; Grisham, 2006)

5.1.5.1. Interpreting unfamiliar behaviour

There were several experiences of the impact of diversity during this research. One example was the long, loud, weeping, passionate prayer that I found vaguely shocking. It transgressed many of the cultural norms of reserved, middle-class society. Without a reasonable sample, however, there was little I could say about whether this behaviour was unusual or commonplace. I had no frame of reference from which to draw meaning. It was impossible for me to interpret it with any trustworthiness. Anthropologists may probe, discuss and look for patterns over a period of extended engagement, but evaluators have neither this role, not this luxury.

Researchers refer to participant observation and body language as valid data. This rationale collapses beyond a certain benchmarked range of understood behaviours. These participant observations depend on the perspective and life experience of the evaluator. Had I come from a Sowetan charismatic church, in this example, I would no doubt have understood the emotional style.

> The principle that unfamiliar behaviour suggests for evaluation lies in acknowledging our limits, and resisting trying to over-interpret. In the brevity of our contact, organisational development practitioners and evaluators have no option but to accept a wide range of behaviours as unknowable. We need to accept diversity and realise that, while behaviour has meaning, much of that meaning is beyond what we can understand in the time and conversations we have as facilitators of evaluation.

5.1.5.2. Familiar behaviour

Unfamiliar behaviour, however disconcerting, is far simpler to deal with than familiar behaviour. We can identify our own limitations when faced with the unfamiliar. In terms of Maslow's theory of the four stages of competence, we are consciously incompetent (Chapman, 2010).

How often, however, do we wrongly assume that we are interpreting familiar behaviour correctly, using our own benchmarks? How do we know whether our frame of reference really does apply to those we are observing? Experiences of extremes of diversity and difference, and associated unfamiliar behaviour, are valuable insofar as they raise our awareness of diversity and sensitise us to our assumptions of uniformity.

We risk errors of <u>unconscious incompetence</u> whenever we are faced with diversity (Chapman, 2010). Knowing that we do not understand is useful. Imagining we do understand is far more dangerous.

Part of addressing the challenges of both familiar and unfamiliar behaviour is the facilitator's holding of a neutral position. As external agents facilitators are responsible for holding process. We need to remain neutral and uncritical of content. We need trust and respect for self-analysis by participants, even if their rationale is contradictory to our own basic assumptions and world view. Our interpretation as outsiders has far less reliability than that of insiders themselves. Our role is to prompt, explore and facilitate organisation-centred introspection, and to learn from the thinking and analysis that emerges. This attitude supports sound diversity management and the safer management of familiar and unfamiliar behaviour.

5.1.6. Ethics

Evaluation and ethics are inextricable. As Williams (2002) states, "We [evaluators] are often walking around and occasionally treading on people's dreams. We judge or often promote judgement of those dreams."

An observation of this study is that narrative methods are particularly vulnerable to ethics infringement. Stories of impact can be intensely emotional, particularly in a context of poverty and HIV (Bryant & Cox, 2004; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, 2007; Bahre, 2007; Poindexter, 2007). Participants in this research relived trauma and described the harrowing experiences that are part of the work of a community organisation in our society's most tragic settings. Young volunteers, bereaved families and shocking human conditions were recounted in these stories. There were tears.

Fortunately, the compassion, empathy and ability to contain trauma are qualities that are often found in CBOs. They are part of the essence of their services and integral to their own hardships and support mechanisms as community members (Hilfinger Messias, et al., 2005). Indeed, the incentives for leading and volunteering in these organisations are often emotional (Hibbert, et al., 2003).

What than are the essential qualities in a facilitator in holding emotion? The process needs to accept and contain emotion calmly. A facilitator should neither suppress or feel threatened by emotion, nor give it more energy than is naturally expressed (DiTomaso & Hooijberg, 1996). Contributing his or her own emotion takes emotional attention away from the story holder, and dilutes the integrity of the process. I have colleagues who call the holding of emotion and relationship in facilitated process 'gravitas'. Each facilitator needs to define this for themselves, and cultivate it as a core quality.

In addition to providing a safe environment for individual emotion, narrative engagement can also be an irritant of organisational conflict. An evaluator is responsible for leaving an organisation at least as intact, and preferably rather stronger than he or she found it. However inevitable collapse or conflict might seem, an evaluator does not have the right to precipitate disintegration. Notwithstanding good intentions there are often risks to organisations of which evaluators need to remain aware and responsible (Williams, 2002). This is discussed in detail below as a facet of evaluation organisation development and has important implications for ethics.

A further consideration for ethics revolves around the participatory nature of these evaluation methods, and the implications of this for confidentiality. One of the advantages of outsider evaluation is the anonymity of both evaluator and respondent. In participatory research there is no such anonymity. The evaluation takes place within the flow of communication and relationships among an existing community of people, in a setting of established norms for privacy and gossip. As evaluators, our awareness, strong encouragement and alertness to unethical situations are essential. This can hardly be overemphasised in facilitating a community research intervention, such as MSC. Even with due attention, ethics infringements are very likely.

5.2 The principles: Making evaluation developmental

While ideas on methods involving stories, metaphor and participatory evaluation are recommended for CBO evaluation, this research has clearly demonstrated that method itself does not define developmental practice. Whatever potential a method or approach might have, this is only realised by the skills, attitudes and principles of facilitators, evaluators and commissioners of these methods (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006).

Far more significant than method, are the principles of engagement. Several such principles have arisen through reflection and observation during this study. Equally intriguing, this research has highlighted contradictions, conundrums and perverse challenges. These leave many questions in the evaluation debate. Useful questions, however intractable they might be, are offered here as having as much value, if not more, than useful answers.

These principles and contradictions are raised as outcomes of this research, and areas for further debate and ongoing research. The themes addressed in the remainder of this chapter include:

- Power dynamics and balance in relation to evaluation

- Literacy and language as they relate to power and partnership communication

- Appreciative and accusatory inquiry;

- Evaluation as organisation development, and the associated ethical responsibility of evaluators;

- The evaluation of inward accountability, as it relates to human and organisation development;

- Grounded, realist evaluation of complex, dynamic, unpredictable and intangible systems;

- Funding agencies needs, relationships and responsibility in developmental CBO engagement;

- Contradictions and challenges around capacity building as defined by funding agencies, and as experienced by CBOs;

- Finally, closing a series of themes threaded with contradiction and systems effects, the nature of the shadow in organisational dynamics.

5.2.1. Power in evaluation

Experiences in this research have demonstrated complex relationships of power with process, diversity, learning, openness, appreciation and accusation (Table 10). They reiterate how power balance is inherent in development outcomes and development stakeholder relationships (Fowler, 1995; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Kaplan, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006; Habib, 2008; Dinokeng, 2009; Swidler, 2009). What power gives development practice the authority to demand the invention of predictions in futures murky with speculation, to elicit the creative massaging of experiences into successes against those predictions,

Table 10.	*The power games of the crystal ball*
Power is lost when capable, intelligent, locally knowledgeable development practitioners spend their time: • Attempting to invent indicators to appease imposed, externally designed systems; • Grappling with the fine distinctions between outcome and purpose; • Crafting their observations of impact so that they appear to have predicted those outcomes correctly; • Ignoring the richness of their role in community to meet the lens of predicted outcomes *Source: Konstant & Stanz (2009c)*	

and to expect the presentation of all of these in the firmly loathed practice of written communication (Bornstein, 2006a; Swidler, 2009)?

Community-based development practitioners have power in various respects: their role as suppliers; their ability to provide development; their access to community; their skills in providing services; and essential local knowledge. How does an ethical development practitioner, responsible for carrying out an evaluation that informs funding decisions, engage with organisations in a manner that respects their power and supports their development? How do we avoid purveying the power of funding over the power of service? How do we make funding decisions, without diminishing local power by standing in judgement? How do we select one above another, while building the power of both the 'winner' and the 'loser'?

A conundrum and a socially entrenched reality with which development aid effectiveness must surely grapple at every level, is the association of power with money (Uphoff, 1995; Ebrahim, 2003; Kilby, 2006; Yachkaschi, 2006). Community organisations do not follow typical donor agency procedures when working internally, or when communicating with equals or with partners in a referral continuum (Gaspar, 2000). The only situation which persuades an organisation to follow such procedure is when their compliance is a condition for funding (Abbey, 2008; Walker, et al., 2008; Yachkaschi, 2006*)*. The instant the funding relationship dissolves, enthusiasm for strategy, outcomes and report writing also evaporates (Gasper, 2000; Poindexter, 2007; Mayberry, et al.,

2009). One wonders why they don't say "No" (Swidler & Watkins, 2009). (Discussion Box 1).

Although a compelling question, the power and allure of funding is not the focus of this study. My purpose here requires acknowledging the power imbalance in funded relationships and considering the implications of this for evaluation practice and trustworthiness. This study demonstrates two reasons for the relevance of balance of power to evaluation. Firstly, to the extent that power is unequal in the minds of funder and recipient organisations, evaluation dictated in these funding relationships reinforces inequality and contradicts effective development (Sen, 1987; Bhana, 1999, p. 235; Edwards & Sen, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Ebrahim, 2003; Kilby, 2006; Swidler & Watkins, 2009; Turró & Krause, 2009).

Secondly, power distortion undermines accurate evaluation (Bornstein, 2006a). The less trust, confidence, control and power the organisation feels in a situation, the less likely it is to be sincere, incisive, honest and reflective. In this study, any process that raised defenses, diminished honesty and defeated the trustworthiness of the evaluation (Schien, 1993). Evaluation that leverages the power of money undermines the overall goal of development, as well as its own interest in quality data and accurate insight.

Peer Review Discussion Box 1

"Organisations should be more focused on their 'identity' and clarify what they are...and are not willing to do in order to receive funding."

"CBOs (and countries) that stand up to donor requirements are often given a bad press and yet this should be a key outcome of partnerships."

"My experience is that when CBO's are able to lead the initial relationship and continue to challenge, understand and occasionally say no to funders, that this is liberating for both parties and provides a basis for honest partnership. I also understand that this is often very very hard to do."

"WHY do CBOs look for money and from whom, and what THEY think donors are there for? And what they might realistically expect? What is the CBO expecting the donor to prove? … I think CBOs could be asked about what they would want to have as criteria for deciding on whether to finance them. And then be 'judged' on these. Also to have donors say what they would like to be 'judged' on and then be so 'judged'. Donors have called this tune for far too long without any constructive opposition! I don't believe donors have more power - it is the perception of those without money that "give them power". I like to believe it is more perceptual than real."

During this research I came to regard 'power held' as being apparent through self-awareness and the depth with which organisations interpreted their work in the community. TT offered a particularly clear example of power strongly held. The group was able to receive robust challenges from its own critical thinker. Although the participant who took this role was fierce in his criticisms, the team remained non-defensive, positive and interested. Power was also visible in the organisation's self-assuredness, and a bearing of calm, purposeful confidence. This inner strength was apparent alongside a lack of any source of funding and immense challenges of contributing in to an informal settlement's intractable problems. A core resource for the organisation appeared to be its strong, charismatic leader, and her relationships in

the management team. With relatively little positional status in an unfunded, voluntary collective of community members, leadership was contained in the personal power of the Director.

In contrast, JJ was a large, structured, well-funded organisation where power seemed to me to be held far less emphatically. Participants here were particularly conscious of their personal qualities and challenges, and rather self-serving in their self-analysis: "*We are very caring*"; "*This is very difficult work*". They complained that other players, in particular government departments, were unresponsive to their advances. They found community members uncooperative, even in the care of their own families.

JJ was also in the midst of internal conflict, placing their leader in an embattled position. This illustrated the contrasts between the natures of positional power for leadership, and personal power required by leaders in less structured organisations. Faced with the changing challenges of leading a "maturing" organisation, personal power remains critical for the success in a leadership position, but places new and difficult demands on the charismatic founder leaders of these local organisations.

The question that arose was whether there was an inverse relationship between power and elements of the suite of financial, structural, size and role differences between these organisations, or whether this was an artifact of a small, varied sample. Is it possible that members of small, poor organisations are more confident of their autonomy than those of large, wealthy, structured organisations?

Power shifts as organisations establish, and with it definition and nature of leadership. The intervention of funding creates a powerful driver for these power shifts. As a corollary to funding, evaluative power provides a further dimension to the external forces moulding organisations.

How do we release the systemic self-limiting spiral of: growth > funding > more growth > expectation and dependency on funding > funding focus > diminished core purpose? When combined with the influence held by funders, and their own priorities and purpose as a driver of CBO development, one asks whether these relationships can be developmental.

These are systems effects that are difficult, perhaps impossible to prevent. More assertive internal control, responsibility and leadership by CBOs may moderate them. A far greater sense of funders' trust in organisations is needed. Evaluation that supports qualitative, grounded outcomes and internally generated definitions of capacity are part of the constructive leveraging of systems potentials.

5.2.1.1.   Literacy as a vessel for power

The use of written communication, and even drawing, clearly emerged in this research as a constraint to effective evaluation. Few of the participants, even those who were organisation leaders, were able to clearly, fairly and effectively represent themselves on paper. Many, however, were verbally highly articulate, even in English. Their verbal accounts in this study were convincing and compelling. Participants' ability for verbal communication in their first language would have been still more effective.

Written formats remain uncontested, despite great reluctance on the part of stakeholders to write and its virtual ineffectiveness in communication (Kelly, et al., 2005). Funding relationships depend on a stream of written strategies, concept notes, organisational briefs, plans, progress reports and final reviews (Miraftab, 1997; Kilby, 2006). In response to these demands, CBO leaders generate somewhat incomprehensible and extremely brief written communiqués. To do so involves stressful, uncertain and time-consuming effort. Extracting and using these documents is a source of frustration to funders, reinforcing mutual belief in the inferiority of their funding recipients (Discussion Box 2).

The poverty, development need and unemployment that define the existence of CBOs are invariably associated with low levels of formal education. Few members of community organisations have completed secondary school. The great majority have never had professional exposure in a workplace. If this were not the case, they would not be where they are. The resulting weak literacy and uncertain professionalism of most CBO members may be seen by outsiders, and by themselves, as a lack of capacity.

Writing is just one means of communication. For CBOs it is one of the least effective. Only one out of the six organisations to participate in this study in Gauteng could represent itself accurately in writing. This suggests that if we require accurate, representative and power-enhanced communication with CBOs, then writing should not be the chosen medium. Yet, funders insist on receiving written

> **Peer Review Discussion Box 2**
>
> "Are levels of fiduciary risk analysis dooming groups to 'fail' before they even start? e.g. requiring qualified accountants at community level when most people can barely read/write the national language ; or made so complex that groups will never be able to comply thus reinforcing ethnic perceptions of backwardness
>
> While, needing to develop the fiduciary risk analysis and competency as a joint analysis between funding and grant holder that can include other measures than formal audit type responses and support the development of the more formal skills if required."
>
> "Sorry I don't buy that one. If we are arguing to have people/orgs believe in themselves and count themselves strong then we can also assume an ease with accountability. Being accountable at such a low level (such as donors request - financial, reporting etc) should not be an underminer - albeit an irritation."
>
> "I think many organisations rise up to meet such challenges."

communication, implying that effective communication is less important than adherence to systems and habits. 'Partnership' becomes wishful rhetoric more than a description of a relationship.

Beyond the pragmatic need for effective communication, we, as development practitioners, need to be honest about our own least self-flattering, deep responses to a low literacy written account (Exhibit TT2)? What are our unbidden impressions, rooted in our assumptions about society, when we read primary school level script? My question is a rhetorical and a personal one. It relates to the uncomfortable fringes of our social conditioning around class and education, and has the same source of discomfort as the tensions of global inequity and development dynamics.

The accuracy, detail and clarity in spoken communication naturally elicit a different level of respect and connection. It also conveys the content of the communication far more effectively.

Another interesting perspective on written communication and literacy emerged in the BN Case Study. This organisation's members were exceptionally intelligent and articulate, with a sophisticated ability to analyse and an enthusiasm for philosophy. The Deputy Director had taken university level courses in business management. It seemed likely that they were perfectly capable of producing written reports that were thorough and well-worded. Despite their convincing and educated style, other Case Studies, with less intellectual participants, who had had much less formal education, were at least *as* capable of sensible, pragmatic action. A conclusion of this study is that education and literacy have little bearing on natural organisational capacity. By effectively elevating literacy as an evaluative criterion through its central role in communication, development selects for a quality that has little correlation with effective outcomes.

Writing reinforces the mutual awareness of a lack of literacy and education, in the minds of both the writer and the reader. It is little less than insulting to equate a lack of formal education and literacy to 'uneducation', and a lack of ability in English literacy as 'incapacity'. These are negations, devised by the schooled and the wealthy, and strongly perpetuated by the 'uneducated' and the poor. By elevating skills of language and literacy to a statement of ability, we widen the gap between rich and poor, and undo development. Development practice which deepens assumptions of power difference and inequity are not development. Practices that widen the chasms in self-esteem, communication and power distribution in the minds of people are guilty of 'anti-development'. The insistence on written media for communication does this.

If we are to replace writing as the main medium for communication, technology and culture of interaction needs to invest in accessible, appropriate formats with which organisation members can engage independently of facilitation. In its simplest form, organisation members might visit and engage in person with partners, voice recording sessions and transcribing or sharing audio materials. Basic technologies, but profound shifts in communication culture are essential in order to permit far more effective access between organisations through verbal, visual and personal communication.

5.2.1.2. Language games in the evaluation profession

After several experiments, the question "Success means …?" was found to be most effective in probing for criteria for impact. Wording such as "What struck you about these stories?" or "What is important in this organisation?" proved too abstract or broad. Similarly, terms such as 'Theory of Change' and 'Domains of Change' were an obstruction to learning. By using more explicit terminology, the concepts beneath these terms became far more useful and understandable to CBOs and community members. Abstract language interferes with evaluation and with learning. The careful choice of simple, unambiguous wording makes a profound difference to evaluation results.

An issue as mundane as terminology carries great weight in the global M&E discourse. Training courses focus on terms. M&E practitioners invent, engineer, define and arrange these terms, and then require would-be colleagues to learn them. Organisations see language as an obstacle and a reflection of weakness.

The culture has gained momentum, possibly largely due to the global energy and money being invested in M&E as a profession. M&E receives more attention in professional talking circles than development itself[26].

The option of deleting the vast majority of confusing words from our vocabulary, and translating the rest into everyday terms in numerous languages has not been considered by the M&E conferencing agenda. As practitioners we have an obligation to effective development to do so.

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[26] The conferences of: International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS); International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3iE), European Evalution Association (EEA); American Evaluation Association (AEA); African Evaluation Association (AfrEA); South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) are attended by hundreds of practitioners, drawn from those with the resources to cover the costs of attendance.

5.2.2. Appreciative inquiry

The approaches explored here are all strongly rooted in appreciative inquiry (AI). Evaluation through AI actively seeks out the positive (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 181; McClintock, 2004; Seel, 2006; Avital, et al., 2009). AI assumes that drawing out the positive from both success and failure offers the most valuable insight to the road ahead.

Some of the most profound learning emerges from a positive understanding of failure, or of the differences between what was imagined and what transpired. Disappointment allows us to expand our knowledge of a situation, and therefore to take more appropriate action. To be most effective, appreciative approaches must actively embrace critical self-analysis of potential for growth (Sen, 1987; Gaspar, 2000).

This critical appreciation becomes more complex when an evaluation is conducted in a context of power imbalance, such as is inevitable in a funding relationship. Power balance is integral to AI. The power of power arose clearly in the non-appreciative sessions of this study (e.g. More Of / Less Of). These produced defensive, slightly conflictual conversations. This 'accusatory inquiry' leads to power sensitivities, which lead to defensiveness and relationship distortion (Discussion Box 3).

> **Peer Review Discussion Box 3**
>
> "Even with learning-based and organisation-owned, in my experience, organisations may feel accused, i.e. respond defensively rather than with curiosity and desire to learn."

Any process that elicits defensive reactions is in conflict with constructive communication and accurate, truthful data (Chambers, 1995; Bornstein, 2006a). Defensive responses obstruct sincere introspection. Defensiveness results in bias in the sense that participants close their own thinking, and are less able to reflect honestly on themselves. The facilitator is seen to be in opposition, rather than support. This study clearly demonstrated how inquiry has to be appreciative, and must carefully avoid external accusation if evaluation is to be developmental or the data accurate.

> **Peer Review Discussion Box 4**
>
> "I find appreciative inquiry works really well with CBOs and then after they've told positive stories, ask them what their challenges are. Also celebrate what they have accomplished with limited resources."
>
> "It's important that they recognise their good work as this in turn gives them energy (appreciative inquiry type of thing)"
>
> "An AI approach where we ask what is working well and why may be a good start to any piece of evaluation work."

The importance of AI therefore lies equally in the value of positive reinforcement building on achievements, as in the experience that the converse, accusatory inquiry defeats communication,

reflection and learning (Schien, 1993). Whether a critical question is legitimate is irrelevant if it raises defense and distorts power. In so doing, it risks defeating the overall purpose of evaluation as a function for development and reduces data trustworthiness. It is better left unasked.

A clear conclusion of this study is therefore that all CBO evaluation should be based on principles of AI (Discussion Box 4). While appreciative inquiry is widely accepted as a nice idea, its imperative really lies in the evidence that non-appreciative or accusatory inquiry, however innocuous, severely derails evaluation.

Evaluators need to be sensitive to any shift among evaluation participants towards defensiveness and confrontation. Neutral facilitation which creates a safe space in which to introspect is essential to encouraging honest self-evaluation. Inquiry is no longer appreciative if participants experience accusation, defensiveness or external criticism, whether intended or not.

Appreciative inquiry does not preclude critical self-evaluation by the organisation. It simply requires that this critical analysis is generated from within the organisation (Sen, 1987).

5.2.3. 'Holding' the organisation: Evaluator responsibility

Several of the evaluation experiences with organisations in this study included strains of tension and conflict. A variety of issues arose in different settings. Among them were: role clarity; contested authority; leader manipulation; organisational cultures around consultation or lack thereof; passive resistance; and gender, class and ethnic diversity dynamics.

Experiences in this research demonstrated how evaluation can cause an internal explosion which dramatically shifts an organisation, for better or for worse. Evaluation must be careful of tipping delicately poised relationships, without being available to support their restabilisation. Any conflict that may be brewing in an organisation is likely to surface through evaluation. It needs to be addressed appropriately within that evaluation. Evaluation does not have the right to prematurely or non-constructively amplify those conflicts without time or recourse to rebuilding the organisation. Evaluation should be an opportunity for an organisation to acknowledge that work needs to be done. The facilitator's role is to encourage the power and potential in the organisation to manage its own growth through these phases of discomfort.

Evaluators have disproportionate power for the time invested and the scant knowledge they might glean about an organisation. They risk being an excitable bull in an overly full china shop. To light the fuse of an organisational bomb may take only an ignorant moment, but the consequences on staff, structures, morale, prospects and relationships can be profound. Facilitators of evaluation need to be aware of their responsibilities and limitations, and tread cautiously. It would be unwise to presume to understand too much, know too much, or proclaim too aggressively.

Despite this fairly obvious observation, evaluators do indeed presume, proclaim and sometimes destroy (Discussion Box 5). Critical, assertive and power imbalanced evaluations can be destructive (Edwards

> **Peer Review Discussion Box 5**
>
> "Evaluation processes which hold people to completely unrealistic statements in logframes can be very damaging."

& Hulme, 1995, p. 5; Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab 1997; Lewis, 1998; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Gasper, 2000; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall and Kelly 2007; Bornstein, 2006a, Kilby, 2006). Funders and evaluators who demand changes conceived in their own understanding, may dismiss organisational and individual power and derail the life paths of both.

In preference to the bomb style of organisational intervention, an organisationally sensitive facilitator can catalyse subtle shifts in a situation. In this study, there were opportunities such as clarifying roles, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation's culture and confirming vision and strategy.

A clear principle for elevation from this study has been that there is a broad area of mutually reinforcing overlap between evaluation and organisation development. An ethical evaluation must support OD or it has no right to interact in the life of an organisation. This is a key principle of utilisation-based evaluation and critical change theory (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 173). The usefulness of an evaluation depends on bridging evaluation with organisation development.

Ethical evaluators need to attempt to close even the briefest process with a clear, achievable, optimistic and constructive path forward for the organisation, and a growing belief in its power for self-realisation. Evaluators need to be acutely aware of riding the knife edge between destruction and development. We are first and foremost development practitioners.

5.2.4. Evaluating for inward accountability

This research has highlighted the importance of integration between evaluation and organisational development. It aligns with the contested question of whether CBO funding is intended for organisation development, or simply for the supply of services at community level (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Fowler, 1995; Miraftab, 1997; Senge, 2006, p. 61; NDoSD, 2009a) (Discussion Box 6). Are these organisations and their members are themselves part of the development agenda (Edwards & Sen, 2000)?

The organisations in this study clearly highlighted the distinction between inward, downward and upward accountability (Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006; Kilby, 2006; Eade, 2007).

- Inward accountability is reflected by strengthened organisational systems or culture, and by changes in the lives of organisation members (Turró & Krause, 2009).

- The products of an organisation and changes in the lives of its clients and in the state of its community are a reflection of downward accountability.

- Upward accountability, to government or funders, tends to value the latter (downward criteria) over the former (inward criteria) (Discussion Box 6).

The emerging contention of this study is that far greater emphasis is warranted to inward accountability for CBOs. The leaders and founders of community organisations are community members themselves. The volunteers who staff these organisations are their first clients. In marginalised, vulnerable societies both organisation members and community beneficiaries are clients of an organisation (Turró & Krause, 2009; Hilfinger Messias, et al., 2005; Hibbert, et al., 2003; Stevenson, 2007; Raman, 2005). All too often the

Peer Review Discussion Box 6

"Donor/Investors do not give to organisations to solve problems, meet deficits or to meet needs. Donor/investors give to success measured by output, through input and impact."

"Donors, etc., don't want learning and longer term results but rather more immediate results."

"I do not believe that enhancing individual and organisational self-belief should be a primary or even secondary focus. My opinion is that if a participatory approach is applied, then this is a tertiary outcome. The organisations themselves should adopt a vision of empowerment of the clients or individuals they service."

"No, development is not about raising power, in the sense that, for me, development is what happens to all living things and systems – they develop (involving processes of quantitative change – growth; AND qualitative change).. Development practice is about intervention into that process (sometimes to help unstick it, sometimes to hasten it along, sometimes to guide and assist it. Then that's where enhancing people's and organisations's belief in themselves comes in)."

"If it fails to enhance people and organisation self-belief, the intervention will be reduced to one that is technicist, and, without the support or buy-in of key stakeholders, likely to be unsustainable."

value of an organisation to its members is ignored, dismissed and sometimes even regarded as a failure.

Volunteers may be trained, acquire skills, grow in confidence and finally leave the organisation having found formal, salaried employment (Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall, et al., 2007). In this event, the organisation has achieved the ultimate impact of development: it has absolved a household from participating as a dependent beneficiary of the development industry. More often than being vaunted as an achievement, however, this is viewed as instability, wasted capacity building, high staff turnover, weak volunteer recruitment and poor staff retention (Kelly, et al., 2005). Organisations are seldom credited with their contribution to career path development and the socio-economic upliftment of these households (Eade, 2007; Booth, 2008).

This observation calls for a compromise away from the business model of investing in people as an industrial resource, towards viewing human investment as serving society as a whole. Part of the value of CBOs is as conduit for a flow of individual self-realisation.

A legitimate goal of CBO engagement could be that of expelling people from the volunteer sector and actively supporting their pursuit of 'greener pastures'. This directly contradicts the more commonly held goal of retention of volunteers and establishment of stable CBO staffs. The volunteer retention paradigm amounts to holding people in voluntary organisations for the good of humanity, while the wealthy and employed march past in their life paths. This philosophy embodies a fundamentalist position of servitude, and a culture that regards personal development as distasteful, juxtaposed against global double-standards of the value of wealth.

Although highly controversial, and fraught with suggestion of the poor sharing responsibility for inequity, we might ask how much of poverty is psychological and steeped in the safety of the moral superiority of poverty - a mindset promoted by the volunteer industry. If poverty is sanitised and romanticised and the poor regarded as helpless victims to be empowered and uplifted by the privileged, we leave little space for power to be expressed (Bahre, 2007). If, however, the attitudes and beliefs of both poor and non-poor have a role in the eradication of poverty then development practice must support attitudes and relationships that promote self-realisation of upliftment, socio-economic inclusion and eradication of poverty. It must remove practices where relationships are founded in external control and mutual purchase in inferiority : superiority dynamics. If development culture is not to be self-defeating, then what is

needed are evaluation systems that recognise the role of CBOs in creating pathways out of poverty and dependency.

The challenge in the volunteer, unfunded CBO model is that it depends on organisations and a flow of members in the social welfare system. Designing a strategy around the purposeful use of voluntary contribution from society's poorest smacks of exploitation (Friedman, 2002). In this scenario, volunteers can only reap the rewards of their contribution to society by leaving the sector (Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Kelly, et al., 2005). The volunteer scenario also assumes that a stable core is provided by leaders being prepared to remain within the volunteer sector. They are then altruistically bound to socio-economic circumstances less comfortable than the departing flow of members they train and mentor.

Altruism is a rare and complex phenomenon (Raman, 2005; Haski-Levanthal, 2009). It would be fair to assume that in the absence of the Eldorado of donor funding, far fewer organisations would be vying to provide services (Swidler & Watkins, 2009).

> A development principle and a criterion for CBO evaluation should therefore be the professional and socio-economic development of every person involved with an organisation. These are the unsung systems effects of CBO engagement. A shift of this nature provides its own set of challenges, which require careful thought and experimentation, and pose a further layer of complex and contradictory systems effects to CBO leadership.

5.2.5. Evaluating in complex systems: Realist approaches

The great majority of social processes and outcomes are far more complex than people might anticipate or imagine, either by organisation members or outsiders (Williams, 2002; Abel & Sementelli, 2005; Chettiparamb, 2006; Sementelli & Abel, 2007; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). This research demonstrates how unmeasurable, intangible impacts are the common threads that hold together the various outputs of CBO interventions.

Outputs such as clothing, cleanliness and the availability of a parent figure, for example, all amount to a greater sense of normality for OVC clients and the relief of perceiving themselves as less conspicuousness. Impacts across the range of clients are uniquely relevant in a particular situation and set of human relationships. Interventions are successful to the extent that they retain human responsiveness to individuals, and are respectful of their individuality and the uniqueness of the needs that they experience. Such impacts are difficult to verify, impossible to quantify and not

necessarily replicable. Without them, the work of the organisation, however productive, would have no value.

> As development evaluators, we must resist the temptation to prioritise tangible, measurable outcomes (Uphoff, 1995; Gasper, 2000; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Conlin & Stirrat, 2008). This is in direct conflict with the adage, "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it" which is bandied unchallenged in evaluation conversation[27]. This concept has long been dismissed as incorrect and a distortion of Deming's intent in the business circles from which it emanated[28].
>
> While some outcomes may be tangible and measurable, these are mingled inextricably with intangible outcomes that may be far more essential to impact. The adage could more reasonably be phrased as "Just because you can measure it, does not mean that it matters", and "If you can't measure it, then describe it".

5.2.5.1. Learning the language: standardising and quantifying criteria

Conventional, funder-designed planning and evaluation require that organisations decide on objectives, predict the outcomes of their actions and measure their achievements against these predictions (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 13; Fowler, 1995; Gasper, 2000; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004). Training courses in strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) dwell on the subtle complexities of concepts such as results chains, indicators, outcomes, objectives and monitoring frameworks. In order to communicate with funders, local practitioners are expected to learn and apply this language and these abstract distinctions and definitions (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 9; Ebrahim, 2003; Kelly, et al., 2005; Kilby, 2006).

Ordinarily a CBO might simply have assessed a situation, discussed it as a team and decided on a sensible course of action. Once funded, they must describe the higher purpose of their activities as it aligns with the higher purpose of the funding agency, and elucidating how each step is indeed necessary and sufficient. At the end of a period of time determined by their funders' management cycles, they are expected to refer to indicators they were obliged to invent and measure the success or otherwise of their activities against these indicators whether or not they are appropriate in hindsight. This

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[27] Met with murmurs of agreement at the NGO Conference, 2008.

[28] Various websites describe how Deming is misquoted in this adage.

makes perfect sense to salaried, career-oriented officers whose work life might be devoted to working with tables, reports and systems a great distance from the untidy reality of human lives (Gasper, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006; Kilby, 2006; Abrahams, 2008).

At the lowest level of administration and resource management, a hypothetical monitoring framework might include outputs, indicators and targets as outlined in Table 11.

Table 11.   *Hypothetical evaluation criteria for outputs or activities in an imaginary AIDS support CBO*

ACTIVITIES OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR	TARGETS
To provide social and educational services to vulnerable children	The number of children participating in welfare interventions. School fees paid. School uniforms distributed. Food parcels distributed.	1000 children came to the Christmas Kindness X # School fees paid Y # School uniforms distributed Z # Food parcels distributed

Inputs and outputs can, and should, be monitored and counted in terms of time, activities and costs. These data do not, however, give any indication of whether the services have value, relevance or impact. A higher order of planning and evaluation is needed to understand the achievements of the intervention. Conventional evaluation would ask, "What was the intended outcome of this intervention?" and "Has this predicted impact been realised?"

A conventional evaluation framework for the higher level outcomes and impacts of the programme in Table 11 might resemble those in Table 12. They would ordinarily have been decided at programme inception.

Table 12.   *Hypothetical conventional evaluation criteria for outcomes or impacts of an imaginary AIDS support CBO*

OUTCOME / IMPACT OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR	TARGET
Demonstrably and sustainably improve the quality of life and education for 1000 children within 2 years.	Quality of Life index School attendance and results	50% increase in QOL index 90% attendance at school from a baseline of, say, 40%.

At this point linear logic collapses (Gasper, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006). These indicators, or any others we might have invented, do not necessarily measure impact for all, or perhaps even most, situations. The weightings in the Quality of Life Index might not capture household priorities. School attendance

might increase alongside school gang membership and drug abuse, or school achievement and psycho-social wellbeing might improve in spite of continued poor attendance. By looking for what we imagined the outcomes would be, we are likely to miss what they really were (Gray, et al., 2006; Chaskin, 2009).

> Almost every prediction can, and probably will, differ from reality, and differ from client to client. Development, social change and lives of human beings seldom follow the courses we imagine (Kaplan, 2002; Quinn Patton, 2002). Surprises are the rule, not the exception. Selecting suitable indicators, that are sensitive to the actual impacts of the intervention, in advance, is pure guesswork.

5.2.5.2.   Alternative assumptions: Theory of Change

Systems thinking asks that we recognise and describe the many complex causes, effects, interactions and feedback loops in designing effective strategies for change (Williams, 2002; Senge 2006, p. 157; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008; Rogers, 2009). As a component of systems thinking, Theory of Change is a mechanism that maps out the system in terms of how change is expected to occur from an intervention.

Chris Argyris described how our behaviour is guided by our 'theory in use' (Anderson, 1997). We behave in a certain way because of our beliefs about the world and our action in it. A development intervention is defined by a rationale or a theory for bringing about positive change. Realist evaluators regard interventions as being essentially theories in execution (Pawson, et al., 2004).

Theory of Change is accepted as an established and powerful paradigm through which to design programmes and represent evaluation findings (Chambers, 1999; Edwards, 1999; Reeler, 2008). It is a form of logic modelling, but different from the Logical Framework approach in that it does not assume linear, simplistic cause and effect. It actively seeks to incorporate complexity, rather than attempting to hone it out in favour of simplicity. Theory of Change captures the theory of an intervention, and presents a justification and rationale for a strategy in the light of that theory (Pawson, et al., 2004).

In this study, the organisational Story and Metaphor process helped to describe and clarify the Theory of Change with which organisations rationalise their decisions and priorities (Exhibits TT3, JD4, QN2, DG2, BN7, CL5, MSC2 and MSC10). The intentions of the Oxfam America Gender, Culture and HIV Programme were presented as a Theory of Change (Oxfam America, 2008), and the results of the MSC evaluation of the programme were provided in the form of an adjusted Theory of Change (Exhibit MSC10 and Konstant, 2009a).

Having described a Theory of Change, organisations can then ask themselves whether the assumptions inherent in that theory hold true. The theory itself is not a benchmark to evaluate the success of the intervention. On the contrary, the results of grounded evaluation of the real events are used to correct errors in the theory (Davies & Dart, 2005; Pawson, et al., 2004). When it measures against prediction using predefined indicators, conventional M&E conflates theory testing with performance testing.

One of the participating organisations in this study raised an interesting dimension to Theory of Change. This organisation held a Theory of Change that all outcomes of its work were a result of divine intervention (Exhibit DG2), demonstrating the rootedness of Theory of Change in personal and organisational beliefs and culture. To the extent that an assumption of divine intervention is constructive for DG it is legitimate and relevant in planning. In fact, without due strategy to drawing on divine intervention as a key condition for success, it is very likely that the organisation would indeed be weaker.

> The purpose of evaluation is to help organisations to interrogate and reformulate their Theory of Change. These theories must be tested against reality, accepting that reality too is a fiction read through the lens of belief and culture. A steadily evolving understanding of our complex interactions in a situation emerges as a strengthened and more accurate Theory of Change.
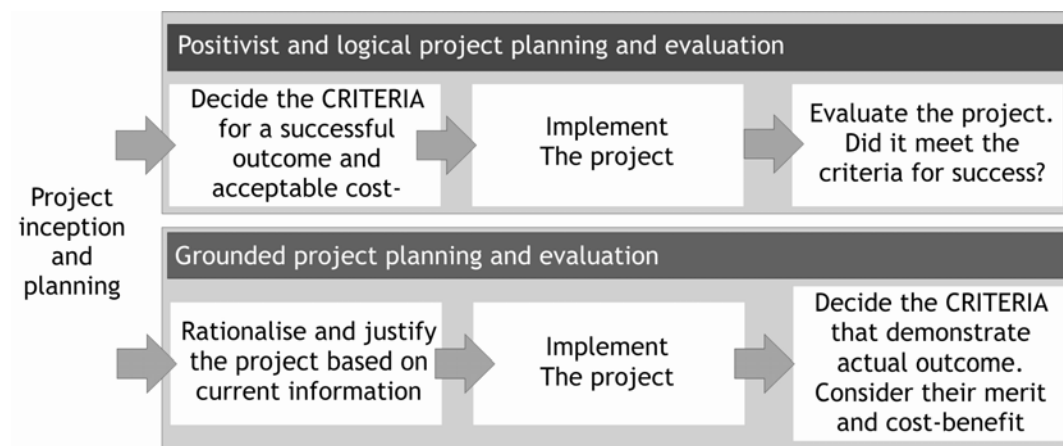
5.2.5.3.   Grounding evaluation criteria

Grounded approaches to evaluation are concerned with testing and correcting a Theory of Change. This cannot be achieved from within the restricted perspective of the same Theory of Change it intends to test: "No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew" (Einstein, cited in Taylor, 2009).

Grounded evaluation begins by defining the broad area of interest surrounding the Theory of Change. Thereafter, participants and evaluators need approaches that are open to observations of grounded, reality-sensitive learning. Without the possible erroneous assumptions of the Theory of Change as a lens, there is opportunity to understand the system flows neglected in the theory, but important to refining the theory (Kelly, 1999; Quinn Patton, 2002; Soal, 2004; Kopainsky & Luna-Reyes, 2008).

> This study has demonstrated how narrative, emergent evaluation produces relevant results to front-line development (Fowler, 1995; Uphoff, 1995; Gasper, 2000; Bornstein, 2006a; Seel, 2006). The use of standardised or predefined impact cannot help but miss

the point (Gasper, 2000, Doyle & Patel, 2008). For criteria to be realistic, relevant, and grounded in experience they must be set later in the planning and evaluation continuum (Figure 22). In positivist approaches criteria are defined at project inception. In a grounded approach, such as Stories and Metaphor or MSC, criteria are freshly defined at significant milestones (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). This simple, fundamental distinction epitomises grounded evaluation.

Figure 22   *Contrasting positivist and grounded approaches to project planning and evaluation in terms of the management cycle in each case.*

5.2.5.4.   *Quantifying outcomes: measuring grounded indicators*

Stories alone may not provide an indication of the extent to which an organisation meets the needs in its community. Neither can they inform us on the volume of need to be addressed and the relative progress being made. Some of the criteria that emerge from grounded evaluation may well be quantifiable. Psychological health, school results, client well-being ratings or treatment outcomes, for example, might hypothetically emerge as impacts, and are measurable. If management decisions and accountability are supported by it, organisation could quantify grounded indicators emerging from qualitative process (Davies and Dart, 2005; Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006).

While appealing, these quantifiable indicators are not without challenge. Even the simplest outcome can seldom be captured into a single, unambiguous, meaningful number or statement (Doyle & Patel, 2008; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). The very

process of attempting to force a complex description into the conventional columns of impact, indicator and target is patently ridiculous (Table 13). To the extent that such columns prevent a trustworthy account of impact, perhaps it is the columns we might consider dispensing with.

Table 13. *Hypothetical grounded evaluation criteria for outcomes or impacts of an imaginary AIDS support CBO*

STORY OF <u>IMPACT OBSERVED</u> IN REALITY	GROUNDED <u>INDICATORS</u> THAT EMERGE POST-INTERVENTION	<u>TARGET</u> ACHIEVED AND SITUATION ANALYSIS
Referrals to services, in conjunction with counselling and support, have increased access to AIDS treatment. Lack of food and travel costs prevent adherence. Treatment outcomes are only marginally improved A need for basic services of food and transport is identified, and advocacy efforts for rights-based service provision intensified. Not yet effective.	Number of patients receiving treatment, for whom referral, food, travel and treatment access were all resolved. Number of patients not receiving treatment, despite solutions to referral, food, travel and treatment access, and reasons for this.	This column is even more challenging: There is no denominator or baseline available for service-constrained treatment access and adherence rates. The constellation of personal, social and infrastructural challenges that can prevent successful HIV treatment outcomes are unique to each individual.

One challenge in quantifying complex social outcomes, whether grounded or not, is a lack of benchmarks or denominators. We seldom know, or can even define boundaries for the volume of community need, comparative average cost-benefit, or a counterfactual[29]. For the most part, organisations can quantify the households and people to whom they *do* provide their services, but they are unlikely to know the number to whom they could, but don't. Intelligent social statistics at local or organisational level are seldom possible or unambiguous to define or measure.

Another limitation to populating grounded quantitative data is that only a small and rather arbitrary range of indicators can be selected from the broad range of meaningful impacts. What can be measured, will be measured, but these are not necessarily the variables that carry the greatest weight. They can be as misguiding as they are helpful.

Finally, impact depends on the individual and unique situation of each client. Effective CBOs need to have the breadth and imagination to solve unique problems. Attempting

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[29] The counterfactual refers to what would have happened without the intervention. Some disciplines use a control to measure the counterfactual. A control is unlikely to work in complex systems with myriad variables, and is often unethical in critical change or development research.

to quantify a variety of unique interactions is pointless unless these quantified data inform management or are necessary to decisions and resource planning.

Neither qualitative nor quantitative methods provide a magic bullet to outcome evaluation. Even in combination, there is no perfect solution. At best, quantifying outcomes offers an opportunity to enrich the qualitative account, and to verify some of the more tangible, if rather *ad hoc*, elements of impact.

For the most part, however, the contention of this research is that we count in order to budget resources and quantified data have little value beyond the activity level in a planning hierarchy.

> Learning is concerned with reflection, porosity and self-evaluation. Data and evidence have their place, but it is the rationale, interpretation and intelligent use of evidence that have relevance. Evidence itself does not warrant deification.

5.2.5.5. *Ownership: whose evaluation, whose criteria?*

Bhana (1999, p. 235) defines empowerment as "*the raised awareness in people of their own abilities and resources to mobilise social action*". The goal of action research is to achieve '*emancipatory action research*' in which organisations and participants engage with their own questions and take responsibility for their solutions (Discussion Box 7). Emancipatory research is the key competency of a self-empowering, learning organisation (Taylor, 1998; Bloch & Borges 2002; Dierolf, et al., 2002; Padaki, 2002). To the extent that front-line development practitioners have little influence over the criteria or process by which they are to be judged, these concepts of responsibility, learning and self-empowerment are being ignored. The very act of making external judgements is in conflict with development.

One of the most valuable lessons to emerge from this research has been that of organisation-centred criteria setting. Criteria for success emerged from Stories of Impact and stories of Most Significant Change. The Health Check and MSC analysis drew out grounded, organisation-relevant criteria for change, performance and organisational qualities. These qualities were also considered, ranked and rated in discussion. They helped organisations to describe the terms of their own success, reflect on their achievements and shortcomings against these

Peer Review Discussion Box 7

"The only evaluation worth doing IS self-evaluation. Key elements: the evaluator reports to the evaluated, even if the donor pays. Ideally, although this needs 'evaluation capacity building', evaluations should be self-managed and self-directed by organisations. Some purely internal (self-evaluation) might involve external perspectives, but all of it should be owned by the evaluated."

standards, and crystallise their purpose and strategy going forward.

> Criteria for success cannot be defined at the inception of an intervention. Projected outcomes should not be contractual commitments. Such expectations of predictable, linear outcomes and impacts from interventions are delusional. Instead, contracting involves discussing a reasonable rationale or Theory of Change, and then sharing an evolving understanding of local need, context and situation.
>
> Criteria for success are therefore best drawn out during and after interventions as emerging criteria. Impressions of achievements against them are grounded in the real potentials, the various ripples of impact, and the opportunities that have arisen. These too are the pulse which informs evaluation.

5.2.5.6. *Funders' criteria checklists*

An organisation's grounded criteria may be very different from those prioritised by funding agencies (Swidler & Watkins, 2009). Transparent, formalised governance structures and rigorous financial systems, for example, are given top priority by funding agencies. These particular capabilities were not identified as a priority by participants and organisations in this research. Neither were they regarded as a prerequisite for effectiveness. In most Case Studies they did not even feature as an organisational function.

Without aligned priorities, how do we compromise between the check listed needs of a funder (Discussion Box 8) and the beliefs and confidence of the organisation in its own needs and capacity path (Discussion Box 9)? Might the organisation's growth path be narrowed by unconscious incompetence: by

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Discussion Box 8

"Funding creates an opportunity for the donor and the organisation to share common values. The CBO offers a donor an opportunity to realise its case for giving. Received funds enable the CBO to act on its values."

Discussion Box 9

"A sense of internal ability is often weakened around financial management and planning on which people can't actually formally deliver. When there are problems it removes what limited confidence they had. Too much audit/evaluation is critical without understanding, especially when funding is given by formal donor organisations.

The trouble is that fiduciary rules are set to deal with the worst cases (and there are many of corruption and sheer waste) which reduces the ability of other groups to develop ways of developing financial accountability. Funders' needs to comply with international standards (even on small grants) reduce the other ways of ensuring accountability through transparency and group/social pressures."

Discussion Box 10

"I think they give up the sense of ability in that they say they are competent when they know they are not. But, sometimes I think the organisations are not so aware of their true capabilities/competence and either over- or under-estimate."

"Organisations do not see themselves as developing … only as doing OK, or not OK. There is often no internal sense of integrity/path/being-becoming .. and therefore only external measures of success or failure."

Discussion Box 11

"All of the organisations I have worked with have recognised the importance of the internal processes and checks and balances that need to be put in place and appreciate the support you provide to build that."

Discussion Box 12

"Misunderstanding or frustration occurs when criteria are given to CBOs without explanation and individual engagement, making it seem very impersonal and at times unnecessary."

its ignorance of what it does not know (Discussion Box 10)? Perhaps external diligence checklists enlighten organisations usefully around their own limitations (Discussion Box 11). Or do they derail an organic, natural process of growth and capacity emergence (Discussion Box 12)? Professional peer review responses suggest a jury in debate around these issues, with the generalisations from some experiences, invariably contradicted by others.

My observations in this study lead to the interjection to the debate that funders' due diligence lists should be drastically rationalised to an absolute minimum, possibly limited to only the most basic reasonable measures to deter and detect fraud.

Beyond this, organisations should set their own diligence criteria. They should be supported, including facilitation and mentorship on request, in exploring and achieving their own capacity development direction. The option not to expand and increase in capacity should be given far more credence. CBOs organisation development should compliment their own evolving vision and goals for impact and outcome, in terms of their own unfolding criteria.

While this perspective may be attractive, the reality is that the drive behind expansion and development for CBOs is often closely related to the drive to enter the funding game. Funding as both cause and effect of CBO establishment and growth adds a layer of systems effects that further entangle an already complex context.

5.2.6. Funding relations

5.2.6.1. Into the funding game

Little or no funding is available or required for the early work of most CBOs (Birdsall, et al., 2007; Kelly, et al., 2005). These organisations are generally founded and staffed by unpaid volunteers. The day-to-day survival of their members is provided through their individual sources. Most are unemployed (Seekings, 2003). Their households may survive on child-support grants, family members' pensions or, for a few, one employed person attached to a household (Nattrass, 2006). This model of unpaid volunteers providing social services in a context of poverty and unemployment is difficult to conceive as possible (Friedman, 2002). It has both moral and operational flaws. Nevertheless, approximately two thirds of the members of CBOs in this study received no compensation for their work, and the great majority of others received stipends less than the legal minimum wage.

The resources that small unfunded CBOs offer are their time and self-taught skills. They may provide basic hygiene and medication support; they might advise and counsel; share information on available services; and encourage clients to access those services (NDoH, 2006). They soon reach the limits of the services they can offer to their clients without funding, and begin to experience a gulf between the needs of their clients and their services. Many deaths from AIDS, for example, are a result of the lack of patient transport or bus fare (Hall, 2007). CBO clients face the most basic of survival needs in terms of food and shelter.

A dynamic CBO leader negotiates many of these solutions through donations in kind, partnerships and public sector social services (Pfeiffer, 2003). More rarely, CBOs are among the activists demanding that needs be met by addressing the causes that prevent public sector service delivery. Commonly, however CBOs regard their role to lie in direct provision of solutions to these problems, a strategy which carries a cost (Harvey & Peacock, 2001).

5.2.6.2. Community service entrepreneurs

Ultimately most CBOs strongly believe that they need an income stream (Birdsall & Kelly, 2005). These may be directed at services, or a need to establish premises for their organisation. They may wish to retain and remunerate staff in order to become sustainable, semi-professional and less exploitative (Kelly, et al., 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

CBOs therefore try to enter the funding game. Some succeed, many do not. They are often only slightly aware, however, of the organisational and personal price they pay (Discussion Box 13) (Bebbington, 1997; Gasper, 2000; Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002; Kaplan, 2002; Mebrahtu, 2002; Bornstein, 2006a; Yachkaschi, 2006; van der Heijden, 1987).

In this study, TT had never been formally funded as an organisation, although some of its members received government stipends for care work. Despite already making a valuable contribution in the community through referral and partnerships, TT visualised a growth path through donor funding. Difficult and frustrating time and effort were invested into trying to write funding proposals and communicate with funders. The leader of the organisation, someone admired and inspiring, spent a great deal of time wrestling with this challenge. She spent less time managing the organisation, and no time on the care and support activities in her community that had originally motivated her. In so doing, she entered a world in which her qualities of charisma, inspiration and

integrity held little sway. It was a world in which she had very little power (Discussion Box 14). The main capacities she would need in the competition for funding were writing in English for the mysterious mindset of a donor audience.

Certainly, every talented person can achieve great things with sufficient effort. Furthermore, practice in literacy might have been very useful to her. I was left wondering, however, whether chasing donor funds in a framework of their rules was a justified use of her charisma, inspiration and even integrity.

While some CBOs evolve towards the funding game, many are formed with more than a thought to the game in their inception (Abbey, 2008, Swidler & Watkins, 2009). They have at least some private sector intent in their original motivation, and are responding to a livelihood and professional niche provided by funding opportunities. They are no less legitimate than any other entrepreneur, and their CBOs are essentially commercial enterprises (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Uphoff, 1995). The opportunities for income and employment, albeit for minimal reward, have inspired the business model of voluntary service provision (Swilling & Russell, 2002; Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

> **Discussion Box 13**
>
> "CBOs will survive if they have skill and internal motivation to survive. I feel very strongly that if CBOs accept funders' money … to 'play' with the funders, they have to 'play' their game....this will not change. This does not mean that the game will be rough, tough and unfair. It is more a question about finding a suitable funding relationship that matches the needs of your organisation."

> **Discussion Box 14**
>
> "If they do not feel comfortable with funders' rules, they need to find alternative sources of funding or funders who are more compatible with them. I do not promote CBOs to play the role of 'victim' in the funding world; there are alternatives and other solutions. Organisations [should] look at alternative sources of fund development. Internal fundraising initiatives, small business ventures, patron development are scarcely found in South African organisations and are all alternatives which have much more internal controls, as well as contributing to sustainability as an organisation."
>
> "CBOs live in the real world, and it's a world of regulations, compromise and growing. They need to develop, change and respond to funders (and to their community members, government regulators, laws, etc.)."

While this may be quite justified in terms of market opportunity, it does have implications for evaluation. If central objectives for the organisation are its fundability and income generation, rather than community development, then appearing to meet the conditions of funding relations becomes paramount in the organisation's strategy (Doyle & Patel, 2008). Funding relations are an end in themselves and a central function of the organisation.

5.2.6.3.   What if there was no CBO donor funding at all?

For most CBOs, no funding is the reality. Despite a lack of funds, TT used partnerships and relationships with organisations such as a housing project, schools and clinics to

provide services to its clients. The organisation viewed its achievements and their impact with clarity and subtlety:

> "They only had one small room, they were a girl and a boy, now they are teenagers and there is no dignity, they needed a decent place to stay."

> "When the school asks the child to take a message to her parents, and she has no parent, the child feels apart. When a child has someone who goes to see her teacher and to take an interest in her, she feels more like all the other children."

A lack of financial resources places certain limitations on the interventions an organisation might undertake. Funding, however, places other restrictions on an organisation's behaviour (Discussion Box 15). Without funding, organisations have no option but to find alternative strategies to achieve their goals. Where the arguably more sustainable and politically expedient approach of addressing human rights and constitutional delivery are served, then development is truly achieved (Birdsall & Kelly, 2005; Gray, 2006; Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Doyle & Patel, 2008).

5.2.6.4.   Supply and demand: The funder dilemma

Funders have to make choices (Discussion Box 15). Financial decisions are unavoidable in dispensing aid (Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Birdsall, et al., 2007; Lehman, 2007).

Both donors and recipient accept that, "If they/we want the money, they/we must expect to comply" (Discussion Box 15). This philosophy is often reversed in the commercial world: "If you want a service, you must expect to pay". The difference lies around complex and distorted supply:demand relationships in the development context (Figure 23).
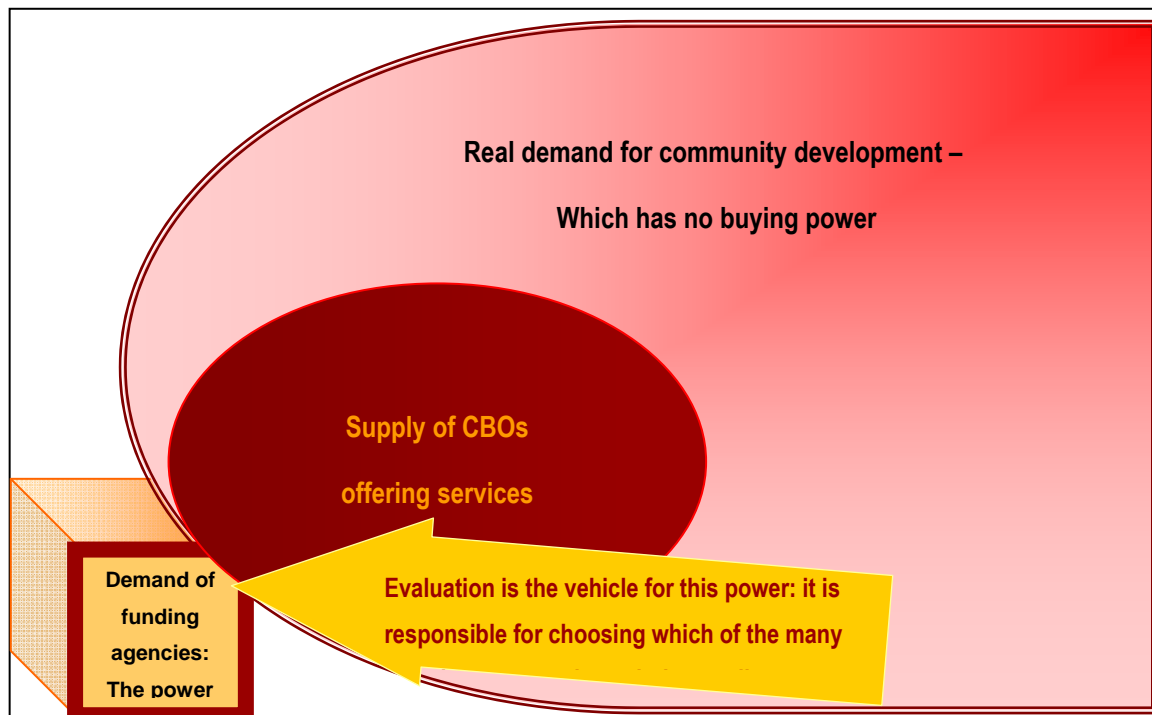
The availability of development services from community organisations (*the supply*) is vast. There are limits to available money. Far more limiting, however, is funders' organisational infrastructure to distribute that money (*the demand*), which is minimal relative to the supply of would-be service providers (Birdsall, et al., 2007). Development is a buyers' market.

> **Discussion Box 15**
>
> "My immediate concern with your question is "evaluation for funding decisions". That direct link between evaluation and funding decision creates a problem upfront."
>
> "Paradoxically funders can feel they have to rationalise and objectivise their own 'judgements' – they have limited resources and there are more possible good recipients than it is possible within their operating paradigm for them to work with. They try to be objective to lessen the emotional/human realities of making judgement which will affect both the CBO's but also the quality of life/existence of end recipients such as HIV/AIDS victims who will ultimately be affected. CBO's need to realise that funders also have a difficult job in deciding and have to do it somehow – otherwise it becomes a cycle of aggressor, victim which makes partnership more difficult."

Figure 23 *Donor agencies' limited capacity, in relation to CBO supply and community need, with the position of evaluation as gatekeeper.*

Source: Adapted from Konstant & Stanz (2009b)

This over-supply of services relative to *funder demand* is placed in a context of drastic under-supply relative to *user demand*, or community needs for these services. In the development market, the buyer (funding agency) is not the service user (community member). This causes irrational forces in the supply and demand model. If aid were apportioned according to community level need, where every service user pressed a "Yes please, I need Organisation X" button in the machinery of development assistance, one wonders how the flow of funding would be different.

As non-users of purchased services, funders do not have a rational basis for deciding what to buy. Instead, they purchase well-meaning theories, plans and strategies. They buy above average English and literacy; convincing administration; and the recommendations of trusted sources. The users of services and the ultimate clients, community members, have no buying power at all.

This amateur supply:demand lens points again to a severe skew in the power vested in the wealthy, and a lack of rational mechanisms that might address the distortion.

5.2.6.5. *Development evaluation: an oxymoron*

Given a buyers' market, development funders can only realistically form relationships with a few of a great many potential suppliers. In so doing, they must select one product and its supplier, over others. Appropriately or not, evaluation has the unenviable task of choosing. This vests great unearned power in the judgements made by evaluators.

Evaluation as part of development practice is placed into contradiction. Evaluation is power, when its consequences are to fund or not to fund. Power is distorted through the experience of judging and of being judged against externally contrived criteria (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Edwards, 1999; Ebrahim, 2003; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Gray, et al., 2006). No number of developmental principles can dismiss the knowledge that an evaluator's judgement externally determines funding outcomes. We have no choice but to judge, and the act of judgement reinforces power imbalance. Evaluation falls into direct conflict with the purpose of development in redistributing power (Discussion Box 16[30]).

Discussion Box 16

...ganisations colouring their reports to funders to appear more fundable. Does it reduce power?

"It also undermines their sense of integrity and a deep seated confidence."

"Any situation that leads people or organisations to the possibility of having to enhance the truth to gain a benefit, opens itself to lies, rather than to truths that lead to true learning and development. This means the organisation may believe that it does not have control, as it may be obliged to enhance stories of diligence and competence in order to deliver what the funder asks for rather what is possible."

"It is an indicator of lack of confidence in what one is pursuing. … It happens especially where the organisation does not want to jeopardize chances of getting funding."

"Yes, and colouring the truth takes needed attention away from 'organisational development' matters."

"CBOs have excellent experiences, … and may overemphasise some experiences, …. I don't feel that this results in the organisation lessening in self esteem, rather more general frustration and resentment towards the 'judge'. "

"They cannot tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and speak of [failures] as a learning experience."

"It is quite normal, and links to issues of competitiveness. There is also the issue of pride. Evaluative info on organisations can be used both to its advantage and disadvantage. Hence the linkage between marketing and lying."

"In my opinion, all organisations, businesses, entities etc will always understate their weaknesses or challenges. This is not specific to the NGO community."

"I think that the beliefs / feelings tied to an organisation's attempt to show itself in the best possible light are often unconscious."

"We all tell stories about ourselves, these are not usually false … In many cases people don't know their weaknesses."

"I think that it makes them feel that reader or audience ends up with a balanced picture because they often get to hear the negative."

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[30] Around half of the questionnaire respondents felt that 'dishonest' would be too strong a term, and that little harm is done in market spin (Discussion Box 15). What remains missing, however, are the opportunities of evaluation in introspection and undefensive, disinterested refection.

Evaluation practitioners need imperfect solutions to a circular question (Discussion Box 17).

As development practitioners and evaluators, are we a cog in the machine of today's world system which cannot live its developmental values (Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab, 1997, Lewis, 1998; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007)? The integrity we might espouse cannot be expressed in the way things work.

How do we judge without judging? How do we evaluate and leave power with the organisation in the face of this logic flaw? How do we compromise? How do we influence change to the system? What are the principles of our practice that might take us closest to facilitating development, rather than obstructing it? As researcher, I have not found a satisfying answer, and I continue to share the potential that lies in a question.

Discussion Box 17

"Is it the colouring of themselves that MAKES them feel that they fall short or is it the feeling of falling short that makes them colour their story of themselves?"

"True, but this is the nature of evaluation"

Discussion Box 18

"The relationship between funder and CBO probably will never be an equal relationship but it a good enough goal. It requires willingness from both sides to give and get."

"CSOs that coherently identify priority gaps and needs will often get a good response from donors."

"BUT this may be accompanied by an internal / external dialogue (whether it is conscious and politically motivated or an ego defence) that devalues the funder and *their* ability (to tolerate complex issues or the nuanced responses of a development organisation to complex circumstances)"

"If the identification of the problem is done collaboratively and the focus is on explaining them to look for solutions, it can take away some of the defensiveness."

"An understanding of power relations is important including both the perspectives of funders as well as of CBOs. I think CBO's can understandably fall into a 'victim' role (often mirroring the dynamic they themselves are trying to help break with who they help)."

"Evaluation should be something that organisations do anyway, ideally; at the very least they should be something that is jointly agreed by recipient and funder. If not I don't think there's any chance of evaluations upholding the power of people and organisations over their self-determination."

5.2.6.6. Funding review and evaluation: not the same thing

Organisations imagine that they cannot be honest, transparent or reflective when effectiveness seems to be financially rewarded more than sincerity (Discussion Box 16). Perhaps they could be (Discussion Box 18), but they do not trust financially disparate relationships. Cultivating trust in these relationships would require that funders demonstrate deliberate and reflective restraint in using the power of money.

Are there ways in which we can redesign the playing field? How do we separate learning from judgement?

Evaluation implies accuracy, research and objective truths. Development evaluation implies learning, organisation development, individual progress and upliftment. All of these are completely undermined by financial incentive.

Can we expect transparency in a context of donor funding decisions? Or would it be better to declare non-transparency, and regard funding relationships as marketing relations. We could label funding proposals and funding 'evaluations' as marketing (Discussion Box 19), and separate them from evaluation and learning. Evaluations commissioned with implications for funding might be more accurately termed as 'funding review' rather than 'evaluation'. These reports could be one of the products of an organisation-commissioned learning process, selecting the market spin from a more reflective learning experience.

I would not expect the funding sector to embrace this suggestion. The discomfort itself illustrates the considerable challenge the development sector faces in finding common ground between donor accountability and CBO organisation development (Fowler, 1995; Gasper, 2000; Gray, et al., 2006). Principles and practice which meet the needs of all concerned could revolutionise grassroots development (Kilby, 2006; Bornstein, 2006a; Abrahams, 2008). More realistically, however, a gradual process of compromise, and of embracing each other's needs and priorities, would better balance these relationships and support rational systems which are pragmatic and meaningful, and yet adequate.

Learning and development evaluation should be commissioned at milestones *after* a committed funding contract, rather than a step required in making that commitment. Programmes or organisations themselves should commission learning evaluations, with the financial support of funders as part of the contractual prioritisation of learning. Within these evaluations, however, they should have the right to censor what is communicated to those funders. The CBO should be assured of confidentiality by the facilitator, with the least flattering parts of their learning outcomes held for internal use. These processes would constitute evaluation.

Funding review is distinct from evaluation. It is the negotiation of a relationship in which an organisation sells itself to funders. Even under a banner of funding review, conventional external evaluation would need to shift its culture substantially to achieve meaningful development. The criteria and process for a legitimate organisation would need to be quite different from accepted standards. Changes to the conventional

expectations around written communication, established infrastructure, proven productivity and absorptive capacity are essential in funding review if the industry is to contribute effectively to development.

5.2.7. What about capacity building?

CBO development practitioners are drawn into the service continuum through their motivation, social mobilisation skills and local credibility. They offer resourcefulness and ability to leverage the resources of passion, time and relationships. Their leaders offer charisma, a sense of contribution and social value, hope and power. These are capabilities that have relevance in the setting of local development.

These are not, however, the capacities that the aid industry seeks to build. A substantial part of so-called capacity building involves instructing organisations in applying externally-designed systems to address externally-contrived inadequacies (NDoSD, 2005; Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). We see an emphasis, for instance, on skills around governance and boards, strategic planning, prediction and linear M&E, and financial management.

In this study, none of the respondents identified any of these as limiting their organisation's effectiveness. Instead, some of the capacity needs that were identified by participants included team work, leadership, management, branding, social mobilisation and motivation for unpaid volunteers. Another group of participants may have raised further areas of learning need.

There is a clear rift between the perceived needs of CBOs for themselves, and the skills gaps (and therefore evaluation criteria) that outsiders define for them. The principle lies less in selecting an appropriate list of qualities, than in assumptions of

> **Discussion Box 20**
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> "Different capabilities and ability to utilise them will vary depending on the situation in which one finds oneself."
>
> "There is a balance in terms of realistically being able to identify the problem and react to it, with recognition of the limitations in place for both the issues and the organisation. E.g. when apartheid ended many anti-apartheid organisations struggled to re-identify themselves in a new environment, some were able to identify new challenges and survived, others were not able and therefore closed their doors. This is not a bad thing."
>
> "Development should be about transformation. But change in/of what? My belief is that it involves changes at various times in a multiple of areas eg. physical, mental, social, political, spiritual, environmental, psychological. Facilitators cannot determine these ends for people as world views change slowly."
>
> "I think interventions should lead to an empowering form of self reflection. They might realise what they shouldn't be doing as well as having increased belief in what they are doing. This should allow change in course of action as well as continuing what they currently do."
>
> "... participatory evaluations recognising the process of evaluation as part of the cycle of an organisation for the purpose of focus and improvement rather than just a check point on a funder's agreement. Some suggestions are for the partners to be provided with a space to discuss their own internal evaluation before the evaluation to see if they are able to identify strengths and weaknesses. One often assumes that this process has been done in the planning of the organisation, but in my experience, CBOs often have weak capacity for comprehensive organisational development processes."

the relevance of standardised, homogenous organisational development paths. Standardised capacity-building programs make little or no use of organisational self-diagnosis or experiences of need. In a grounded evaluation process, participants would prioritise their own unfolding development needs according to limitations they themselves experience (Hibbert, et al., 2003). In order for an organisation to embrace growth, it must have experienced these limitations (Discussion Box 20). While externally designed capacity building formulae might define a valuable set of skills, until the organisation reaches out for these skills itself, they are unlikely to be transformative.

An organisation's relationship with capacity building is distorted when participants associate training with funding, which they frequently do (Pfeiffer, 2003). In the light of this, any curriculum that offers a funders' conceptualisation of capacity would attract dutiful compliance. This may have far more to do with imagined benefit in the funding chain, than in embracing capacity building as a force for organisational development (Gasper, 2000). There is a risk that most capacity building is accepted and appreciated, but not owned, applied or effective in enhancing the organisation (Walker, et al., 2008). As a result, organisational learning seldom follows individual training, a woe expressed across capacity building programmes (Sen, 1987; Hailey & James, 2002; Ebrahim, 2003; Senge 2006, p. 172).

Discussion Box 21
Does funder diligence testing reduce CBO power?
"Yes, definitely"
"Yes! and this, ironically and paradoxically reflects on the CBOs weakness."
"Yes, accountability rules are set for the worst case, and they reduce other ways of ensuring accountability through transparency and group/social pressures."
"Not necessarily. It depends on the relations and on how this is put across (communication). It might actually make the organisation feel good because it has an opportunity to prove itself or discover more of itself, which is important for its growth and development. When such diligence and competence is proved, I think that this can even make the organisation believe more in the power that it is holding."
"If the main compliance problem is weakness of basic systems and skills, maybe that is the primary and real problem to solve. The funder facilitates ways for an organisation to fill key capability gaps e.g. through direct capacity development, mentoring, twinning with other organisations etc."
"No. [Evaluation challenges are] a reflection of organisations' and individuals' lack of organisational skill. Therefore by increasing their organisational and management skill, you impact their confidence levels."
"No. In my experience it often adds value to the organisation and makes them more accountable, it is shocking to see how some CBO's and NGO's operate."
"Not always. If the process of meeting funder criteria is accompanied by capacity building it can be a positive force for building self confidence."

These 'Stepford Wife' organisations are part of the pattern of 50 years of ineffective development progress. Does a proudly compliant organisation constitute development and contribute to it? Many say "Yes", others "No" (Discussion Box 21). Several of my peer discussion colleagues disagreed with my analysis of the negative impact of external capacity building.

For evaluation to impact on effectiveness, it needs to facilitate an owned and profound recognition of strengths, weaknesses and needs that are relevant to the organisation (Hibbert, et al., 2003). Externally-defined, standardised criteria for organisational evaluation, however reasonable, which are not embraced as having value, cannot contribute to a strengthened organisation.

Due diligence relationships need to learn to trust organisations. If the criteria are as reasonable and necessary as their purveyors believe, then organisations themselves will surely reach a realisation that these are the capacities they need to develop.

Specifically, I contend that the murky realms of strategic planning, predicted outcomes and written reporting have no place in development practice as they are normally applied. A dramatic reorganisation of accepted development practice in these areas is needed.

5.2.8. Shadow: the poltergeist of organisation dynamics

Any organisation, or indeed, person, that takes a facet of its culture or personality to the extreme, risks experiencing the shadow side of that facet (Hase, Davies and Dick, 1999; Kaplan, 2002; Reeler, 2008) (Discussion Box 22). Several of the observations in this study demonstrated this phenomenon.

In one of the most compelling examples of the power of the shadow side, religious devotion and service found a masked shadow in resistance, demands and less than spiritual internal relationships. While speaking continuously of the 'grace of God' and 'the spirit working through us' the organisation was crippled by an inability to live out values of respect and consideration for each other.

In another example, the three male founders of a gender rights organisation invited women to join their group in order to live out their values for gender equality. The men shared well-worn routes of conversation around social injustices to men, such as "husband-beating", police ridicule of domestic violence against men and assumptions of men's guilt in cases of domestic violence against women. They were surprised and frustrated to find that the women did not take their passion for these injustices seriously. In a further

> **Discussion Box 22**
>
> "We have to be sensitive of expectations that are created with empowerment and also [of] who is not part of the empowerment and what that will result in. It is argued in South Africa that women's empowerment has directly resulted in men's feelings of disempowerment which has manifested itself in some cases in increased domestic violence."

fracture, the organisation's major decisions tended to be made during passionate, spontaneous, informal conversations among the men. The women communicated differently, in different social settings, and were seldom part of these decisions. The women did not fully share their leadership's enthusiasm and were slightly uncooperative and dismissive. The gender polarisation in this organisation was far deeper than in organisations for which gender was not a central concern.

Shadow reminds us that nothing is ever as good or as bad as it seems. Extremes of 'goodness' often lie juxtaposed to their shadows, with equivalent intensity between their respective light and darkness. When seen through this lens, an evaluator's role in defining and affirming good and bad, or broken and fixed, becomes conspicuously trite.

Where might shadow play a part in facilitated processes? Where are the shadows of our own practice in evaluation and development? How can we be conscious of contradiction in ourselves? In this piece of work, when we attempt to promote organisation-centred participatory evaluation, where do we undermine these very intentions?
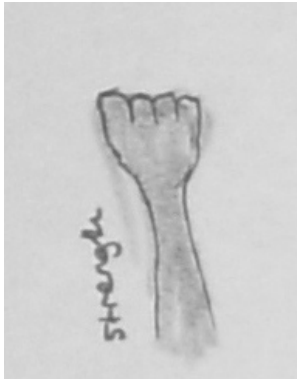
To be alive in a reflective practice, these are some of the questions we need to continuously dare to ask ourselves.

5.3 Development, power and CBO character in metaphor

In a study around Stories and Metaphor, it is appropriate that I use metaphor as a vehicle to draw together my understanding of CBO and development dynamics. This study revealed among participating CBOs the characteristics of knights, saints, snakes and sheep, which are elaborated below.
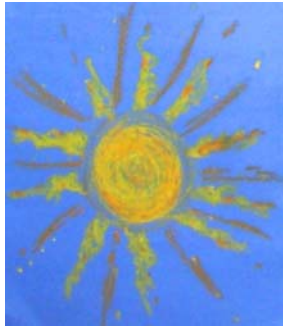
5.3.1. The Knights

Civil society is traditionally associated with advocacy and activism. Civil society was central to achieving South African democratic government in 1994 (Biggs & Neame, 1995). In another example, until as recently as 2002, the South African government denied the validity of the medical science behind HIV and AIDS, and refused to provide anti-retroviral treatment to people with AIDS (Doyle & Patel, 2008). To date, over five million South Africans have died, largely as a result of this policy: essentially genocide by neglect. The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), encouraged by many across civil society and academia, ran a concerted campaign for the right to treatment for several years. Finally, following a constitutional court battle, legislation was passed for provision of treatment through the public health system. TAC is perhaps South Africa's archetypal modern day knight.

Although a rarity, knights, both large and small can be found throughout the NGO and CBO sector (Bebbington, 1997; Hearn, 2000; Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Heinrich, 2001; NDoSD, 2005). The work of knights is to confront the underlying causes for vulnerability (Heinrich, 2001; Friedman, 2002; Abel & Sementelli, 2005; Krishna, 2007; Sementelli & Abel, 2007; Chaskin, 2009). At local levels, CBOs might demand services that are not being provided, advocate where rights are being undermined, or confront for changes to local policy or practice.

The question for practitioners and evaluators is, "Where does each of our opportunities to influence lie?" As development practitioners we automatically find ourselves in a critical change paradigm. Whether evaluator, funder or community organisation every development practitioner needs to reflect the knight. What can we do to address the causes behind the situations in which we work?

5.3.2. The Saints

 Many communities have at least one person for whom no challenge is an obstacle. Saints are those in civil society who refuse to tolerate wrongs, and who meet the immediate needs around them through whatever means they find at their disposal. Examples are numerous. We could cite the unfunded staff of TT whose members, in addition to providing voluntary home-based care services, formally adopted orphaned children into their own families and homes. Some doubled the size of their households. Saints earn their exceptional status by virtue of extending themselves beyond what you and I might imagine possible.

Saints resolve the tragedies that they observe in their own communities by creating relationships. Unlike knights, who confront the underlying systems that create these tragedies, saints draw around them a web of those in need and those inspired to help, to directly address symptoms and improve lives.

Saints and knights share certain characteristics. They tend to be lead by charismatic, passionate leaders for whom injustice is intolerable, and who take it upon themselves to act. Their most powerful resource is often relationships: people who are drawn to them by the opportunity to contribute and to be part of an inspiring vision. They solve problems through finding opportunities for sharing of resources. They bring together those able to provide solutions, with those able to use those solutions. They are highly imaginative in their solutions. They are not easily deterred and are flexible in the means to their end (Kaplan, 2002; Strode & Grant, 2004). Their views are respected and they are likely to be held is some awe by the people who support them.

While many development practitioners may speak the words of knights and saints, and see themselves in those roles, only a small and mysterious proportion of all those who claim this space really are knights or saints.

5.3.3. The Snakes

This is not a negative term, despite our society's connotations. It originates from one of the organisations in this study which, when asked, "What animal is this organisation like?" agreed on the snake.

"Why?"

"We come here angry and afraid, rejected and feared by society. It is in this organisation that we are healed of our fear and we let go of our anger. When we find that peace, and we relax, we show the beauty of a snake's skin and teach society to accept and celebrate that beauty. We offer a safe haven to others who feel rejected, afraid and angry."

This perceptive and subtle self-analysis offers us insight into one of the most powerful contributions of CBOs to society. Those drawn to volunteer come to organisations to meet their own needs, as well as to contribute to the needs of those around them (Hibbert, et al., 2003; Raman, 2005; Stevenson, 2007). The first clients of a community organisation are the volunteers who give it their time and service. In return they may be looking for meaning, an opportunity to contribute to society, and with that a sense of belonging and value.

In addition we hear the yearning for "greener pastures", a poignant image in the dust and squalor of an informal settlement of shacks, dirt paths and putrid ditches. Greener pastures refer to dreams such as employment, housing, sanitation, education, food security: dreams of better times.

CBOs contribute concretely to their members' futures (Edwards & Sen, 2000; Carter & May, 2001; Hilfinger Messias, et al., 2005; Haski-Levanthal, 2009; Turró & Krause, 2009). By engaging in wider society, connecting with colleagues in other organisations with similar ambitions, participating in training courses and gaining formal work experience, many of those who might never have been exposed to a workplace, do indeed find a pathway out of poverty, and into participation in the economy.

To the frustration of training programmes and organisations, greener pastures frequently involve individuals moving from a voluntary organisation to some form of formal employment. Although losing its staff is seldom among the objectives of any community organisation, this constitutes one of the most profound impacts that a CBO can provide. It is a household's escape from cycles and traps of poverty, and the first step on a path to economic participation in society. In situations of intractable poverty,

such escape routes are rare. Where civil society organisations provide these escape routes, they provide development in its most meaningful sense.

The symbolism around celebrating greener pastures is deeper than that of individual lives. A paradigm of emancipation should be reflected by every organisation as the dream for an entire swathe of marginalised South African society that is real and achievable. Evaluation and development rationale should be leveraging this neglected potential.

Inward accountability that acknowledges this contribution is virtually absent from development programmes and their evaluation (Kelly, et al., 2005; Booth, 2008). Capacity building is intended for organisations, and there is generally some annoyance when individuals reap greater benefit than the organisations they represent. While the two may not be mutually exclusive, recognising the value of individual benefit would require a substantial shift in capacity building norms. CBO leaders would become mentors, and volunteerism would be seen as a flow of self-paced internship, offering some justification to the notion.

5.3.4.   The Sheep

The term and role are again not intended to be disparaging. Vast numbers of civil society organisations are formed in response to market niches in the development industry (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Uphoff, 1995). Like sheep, these organisations are lead by the 'farmer' (government or donor agency), which delineates the field (of priorities), places out feed (or financing) and sends the sheep dogs (reporting requirements and application procedures) to herd the flock accordingly (Bornstein 2006a).

Where fodder is made available, sheep organisations converge. Community-based participation in the public sector response to AIDS is a prime example (Russel & Schneider, 2000; NDoSD, 2002; Friedman, 2002; NDoSD, 2003; White & Morton, 2005; Kelly, et al., 2006; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, et al., 2007; Birdsall, 2007). Organisations have flocked towards the offer of stipends for HIV-related services, despite these being below the legal minimum wage (Swilling & Russell, 2002; Kelly & Mzizi, 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). Their contribution has been invaluable. A great portion of the burden of care in the epidemic is met by CBO carers. They may support treatment adherence or palliative care in the community. They provide a mechanism for household level

integration that facilitates access across the otherwise fragmented public sector services of social welfare, health and education (Birdsall & Kelly 2007; Chaskin, 2009). As the front-line service deliverers of state sector support, these organisations lengthen the arms of the state, as well as providing a particular form of support which the public sector finds difficult to provide (Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 4; Miraftab, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; NDoSD, 2005, 2006; NDoH, 2006; Kilby, 2006; Albareda, 2008).

In providing services for the poor on behalf of the state, these organisations depend on state bureaucracy and financing for their rights to engage (Abbey, 2008). This effectively excludes them from a role as knights in political advocacy (Salamon, 1994; Gray, et al., 2006; Lehman, 2007). Relations between service providers and the state are fragile at best, with the members of each feeling threatened and suspicious. If a sheep organisation attempts to be a knight, and address the causes of inequity and poor service delivery, they are seen to be biting the hand that feeds them. They also risk working themselves out of a job as service providers in a setting of poverty and poor public services.

While supporters are likely to hold knights and saints in awe, I more frequently hear polite and sympathetic patronisation of sheep and snakes: "They don't have much capacity" "They really can't manage systems" "They are simple" "They are rural" "He is a village boy". The individuals and organisations seen in this light are 'capacity built' according to the culture and curricula of support agencies. Many come through these processes with enhanced skills and confidence. In some cases the investment bears the snakish fruit of arming individuals with the tools they need to leave the non-profit sector and enter formal employment.

Many organisations also develop basic skills for engaging with the development aid industry. They grow, establish and enlarge themselves. They use these skills to sustain funding relations, to keep themselves comfortable, and to continue to fulfill the valuable roles of snake and sheep.

While sheep and snakes provide useful services at household level, their approach cannot address the underlying causes of poverty and disparity in distribution of resources (Bebbington, 1997, Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hearn, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; NDoSD, 2005; van der Heijden, 1987). These organisations may, in reality, be reinforcing the status quo (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Miraftab, 1997; Senge, 2006, p. 61). By providing a minimum low standard of services, at least possible cost, to people most in need, while meeting their own needs for meaning and survival, they relieve social pressure for

deeper transformation. The most vulnerable have a sense that they are being considered and that there is hope for improvement. Through a sheep's fleece, the brunt of inequity may be softened and the voices of the poorest muffled.

While the alternative, a lack of the most essential of community and household level services, is clearly intolerable, we need to be aware of the costs of purveying a system that ultimately promotes inequality.

Conventional evaluation, development practice and capacity building are designed specifically for sheep. They are part of the infrastructure of the farm itself, and from the perspective of farmers and flock they are 'the establishment'. They are very difficult to change from within the context that created them. It is here that the conundrums of judging without judging, funding without choosing, and the power of money over the power of service are most stark.

Knightliness, saintliness, snakishness and sheepishness

It would be limiting to imagine organisations as purely knights, saints, snakes or sheep. It is more likely that each person and organisation has a quotient of each of these qualities. Part of the nature of an organisation's culture is related to the proportions and weight of each. Organisations continuously compromise between activism, addressing symptoms, internal priorities and funding agency compliance.

> "Every revolution evaporates and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy"
>
> "Bureaucracy is the art of making the possible impossible"
>
> Franz Kafka

It is saints and knights who might ignite change in the world, who confront inequity with integrity and courage (Swidler & Watkins, 2009; Yachkaschi, 2006; Poindexter, 2007; Friedman, 2002). The loss, therefore, of saintliness and knightliness into sheepishness, is a loss that undermines the potential for deep development and fundamental change. It is a loss which quenches the fires of genuine progress and allows the apathy of acceptance, compliance and collusion (Miraftab, 1997; Bebbington, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Gasper, 2000; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Howell, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Robinson & Friedman, 2007; Dinokeng, 2009; NDoSD, 2009a).

What happens, then, to the small or large quotients of knightliness and saintliness that inspire the birth of most community organisations? Part of both the cause and the effect of knights and saints in society is that they tend to believe in their own power to influence, and to exert that power with perseverance and assertiveness until their

objectives are achieved. Knights can only confront power and authority if they have a strong sense of their own power to influence. The weapons most effective in vanquishing knights are relationships and evaluation that diminish this power and replace the inspired with the bureaucratic. As with knights, saints feed their energy with active engagement in society, synergistic opportunities and relationships, gratitude and celebration. Their energy and enthusiasm are defeated by rigid, incomprehensible demands, illogical templates, and management concepts that do not translate in their context.

How does the aid industry and M&E dispel knightliness and saintliness, to create a uniform, obedient CBO flock (FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Hearn, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Kotze, 2004; Eade, 2007)? The typical process:

➢ Many organisations begin with a charismatic leader who has passion for a cause, who refuses to tolerate the intolerable and stands up to act and to lead. At the outset these knights and saints may regard funding as a useful resource, but do not necessarily regard the lack of funding as an insurmountable obstacle.

➢ The first sheepish step is acquisition of belief in the non-negotiable need for funding in order to have power to do good. With this belief leaders begin to court relationships with a sense of pleading, rather than offering their partners the opportunity to share in contributing to society. They begin to doubt their power without the backing of a greater power, a wealthier power.

➢ Before long they have less time and energy to invest in creative solutions, sincere relationships among equals and working directly in the lives of those they are passionate to help. Instead they spend their time on proposals, reports, evaluation templates, monitoring spreadsheets and administration of registrations to various authorities.

➢ Their skills and confidence in production of proposals, reports and bureaucracy is far less than the skills and confidence they once held in addressing the wrongs in society.

➢ In order to be funded, they study what funders prioritise, informing their work in terms of its fashionability more than the needs of their clients. They feel less certain of their own insights into the meaning of change in their context. Their sense of power diminishes. Their belief that they can and will change the world and stand up to inequitable systems erodes. The system that creates the injustices they once fought against, consumes them. They are sheep.

Saints and knights can be effective without written strategic plans, predicted outcomes, objective indicators or targets. They do not provide written reports on their weekly, monthly or quarterly achievements to those who support them. Knights and saints in revolutions have never been on training courses for strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, report writing and filing, governance or financial management. While some of these skills might be useful, we should not delude ourselves that they correlate with effective development outcomes. The most effective of development practitioners, the true knights and saints of the world, have little use for them.

Conventional evaluation must take its share of the responsibility for the destruction of knightly and saintly resources. In order to redress this erosion of power, we need to shift the criteria and emphasis of evaluation (Figure 24).

Increase from conventional 20% to 40%	**Evaluation question about IMPACT:** What difference has been made to people's lives? Describe what success means here? *Quality quelled by: Predicting outcomes. Forcing dignity, hope and opportunity into quantified indicators.* **SAINT**	**KNIGHT** **Evaluation question about ADVOCACY:** How has the organisation contributed to addressing underlying causes of under-development in its context? *Quality quelled by: Complacency. Unwittingly fostering inequity by serving the power games that create it.*	Increase from conventional 0% to 10%
Decrease from conventional 80% to 20%	**SHEEP** **Evaluation question about ACTIVITIES:** Monitoring. Basic budget & audit. Basic counting of services. *Quality quelled by: Cost-benefit analysis. Reductionist quantification of social processes. Attempting to 'count' development.*	**SNAKE** **Evaluation question about MEMBERS:** What achievements have been possible for members, through this organisation? *Quality quelled by: Discouraging personal advancement, dismissing internal impact, while exploiting unpaid volunteers*	Increase from conventional 0% to 40%

Figure 24   *Reconsidering the weighting of characteristics of a development organisation in terms of the role, potential and impact of evaluation*

Source: Adapted from Konstant & Stanz (2009a)

5.4   Conclusion to the discussion

The discussion reflects the complexity and multi-faceted character of the social process of development. In a context of diversity in human condition, organisational nature, global position, alongside wealth and ethnicity, overlain with the interactions of individuals, groups and organisations, we cannot reasonably expect simplicity. It is in embracing complexity and accepting imperfect understanding, emerging outcomes and serendipitous relationships that development achievement lies. The thread that runs through the discussion of the data of this study, and the further literature review, is that of emergence in the systems effects of power and relationship. The results confront the aid industry with a challenge to dramatically transform its culture from entrenched rigidity, to one that is alive to possibility and to the reality of the uniqueness of each situation and setting. This thread is presented in the conclusions below in terms of the concrete possibilities of theory, method and practice.