

**DRC Family Forum**  
**Secretaries brainstorming at Lake Malawi, 5-8 August 2016**  
**Transformational Community Development**

Jurgens Hendriks, NetACT, [hjh@sun.ac.za](mailto:hjh@sun.ac.za)

**PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT<sup>1</sup>**

**1 The Big Disappointment**

The Enlightenment<sup>2</sup> and modernity<sup>3</sup> led to a Western culture that dreamt of a new prosperous world able to overcome the problems of the past. This belief was based on human reason (the modern *man*) and modern science being able to solve the remaining problems of our world by making use of capitalism, science, technology and social control.

However, at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the unshakeable hope of the 1960s and the liberation movements is losing its momentum as the world is moving into a post-modern<sup>4</sup> state of mind where scepticism again surfaces. Poverty is not solved ... **Discuss and list the major problems of our present world.**

**What will be a Christian or faith response to the huge disappointment? Why did it fail?**

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<sup>1</sup> The notes is a summary of chapter 4 of: Myers, Bryant L., 1999, *Walking with the poor; principles and practices of transformational development*, New York, Orbis. 91-110.

<sup>2</sup> An European intellectual movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries emphasizing reason and individualism rather than tradition. It was heavily influenced by 17th-century philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, and Newton, and its prominent figures included Kant, Goethe, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Adam Smith.

<sup>3</sup> As a historical category, modernity refers to a period marked by a questioning or rejection of tradition; the prioritization of individualism, freedom and formal equality; faith in inevitable social, scientific and technological progress and human perfectibility; rationalization and professionalization; a movement from feudalism (or agrarianism) toward capitalism and the market economy; industrialization, urbanization and secularization; the development of the nation-state and its constituent institutions (e.g. representative democracy, public education, modern bureaucracy) and forms of surveillance (Foucault 1995, 170–77). Some writers have suggested there is more than one possible modernity, given the unsettled nature of the term and of history itself. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernity> (downloaded 4 August 2016).

<sup>4</sup> **Postmodernity (post-modernity or the postmodern condition)** is the economic or cultural state or condition of Western society which is said to exist *after* modernity. Some schools of thought hold that modernity ended in the late 20th century—in the 1980s or early 1990s—and that it was replaced by postmodernity, while others would extend modernity to cover the developments denoted by postmodernity, while some believe that modernity ended after World War II. The idea of the post-modern condition is sometimes characterised as a culture stripped of its capacity to function in any linear or autonomous state as opposed to the progressive mindstate of Modernism. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernity> (Downloaded 4 August 2016).

## 2 Faith based Transformation

If we make a wish list for the kind of transformation that we need, this may be a summary of such a list:

From what?	To what?	Relationship involved
Lost soul	Saved soul	With God
Dying body	Nourished body	With self
Sick body	Healed body	With self
Broken mind	Restored mind	With self
Unjust social system	Just social relationships	With community of others
Violence	Reconciled relationships	With community of others
Decaying creation	Sustaining world	With environment

What needs to be transformed in our broken world? Are any one of these transformations complete, sufficient?

If we say that we believe in the Kingdom of God and if Jesus Christ's presence is about the Kingdom of God, how should we explain it, what does it mean to us?

Shall we take the coming of the Kingdom of God as our point of departure when speaking of development and when looking at different "transformational development frontiers of approaches that were put forward in the development debate?" [Note, the change in the key question that is asked. The Reformation asked "How do we get saved?" The emerging question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is about God and the Kingdom of God. *Missio Dei*]

## 3 Development as transformation: Wayne Bragg

Among evangelicals, who for quite some time focused on salvation without much attention to social action, the 1983 Wheaton consultation and the **characteristics of transformational development** outlined by Wayne Bragg, was a major breakthrough and evolution.

Life sustenance	... meeting basic human needs
Equity	... equal access to goods & opportunities
Justice	... in all relationships
Dignity & self-worth	... all are valued as being made in the image of God
Freedom	... from external control, oppression, liberated in Christ
Participation	... in own growth and liberation
Reciprocity	... poor & non-poor learn from one another
Cultural fit	... respect different cultures
Ecological soundness	... care of all creatures and creation – our mother earth valued.

#### 4 People –centred development - David Korten

Korten confronted the Western economic growth-centred development.

<b>Growth-centred development</b>	<b>People-centred development</b>
Material consumption	Human well-being
Wants of the non-poor	Needs of the poor
Corporation or business	Household
Competition	Community
Export markets	Local markets
Absentee ownership	Local ownership
Borrowing and debt	Conserving & sharing
Specialisation	Diversification
Interdependence	Self-reliance
Environmental cost externalized	Environmental costs internalized
Free flow of capital and services	Free flow of information

Korten diagnosed the problems of our societies: poverty; environmental destruction; social disintegration.

He used 4 key phrases that plays a key role in development: process; capacities; sustainable and just; consistent with their own aspirations (about identity).

He emphasized the importance of theory, of a philosophy of development. Example: what are the root causes of poverty? What are your values and what do you want to attain?

Korten's four levels of development became well known and are valuable tools: Relief work, community development; sustainable development and then a people's movement (check page 98).

How do you address the spiritual side of development? You need to! Christian values are really important in the transformational development quest. How do one use it in secular society! Quite a challenge!

## 5 Alternative development –expand access to social power – John Friedman

There are several really important points of departure or even principles in his approach:

- The cause of poverty is the limited access to social power by the poor.
- The poor must take part and take ownership in meeting their own needs. Use a bottom up approach and not from the government (top-down) free gifts approach.
- The household needs to be empowered... it needs to cross the following eight boundaries and have access to:

Social networks	Information for self-improvement
Surplus time	Instruments of work and livelihood
Social organization	Knowledge and skills
Defensible life space	Financial resources

- Households should be networked with social networks that will empower them, examples: churches, women's guild, youth groups, sports clubs, microfinance, any type of political / social organizations, agricultural –, transport -, irrigation organizations, neighbourhood watch etc.
- The two most critical transformational frontiers for households to access are the civil society and political community domains. They give access to economic and political power.
- Global context changes: declining state power and growing economic powers. In order to have access to power the household need civil society and political community access.
- BLIND SPOTS: The typical Western liberal approach assumes the power of the “good” and is unrealistic about the influence of sin and the lack of spirituality in the economic and political world.
- POSITIVE: evangelicals shy away from the economy and political as if the gospel does not have to influence it!

## 6 Development as responsible well-being - Robert Chambers

He use five words or key concepts of which the first describe the goal of development, the next two the means upon which development rests and the last two the principles involved that make development work

1. Responsible well-being	Neither super rich nor dirt poor – but responsible living
2. Livelihood security	Basic needs are met; food and livelihood security
3. Capabilities	Of people enlarged ... through learning, practice, training, education ....
4. Equity	Human rights, gender equity....
5. Sustainability	Economically, socially, institutionally, environmentally

Positively his five concepts give a good summary of development but critically one can once again say that it is based on Western, liberal thought that underestimates selfishness and of the lure and influence of power and absolute power itself.

## 7 Development as a Kingdom response to powerlessness - Jayakumar Christian.

- Christian confronted the “web of lies” inherent in the worldview of our day. He says it pin the poor down in powerlessness. This powerlessness is the result of a systematic socio-economic, political, bureaucratic and religious processes or systems that disempower the poor.
- Transformational development must reverse this process by:

1 Deal with the relational element of powerlessness and build covenant communities (congregations) that challenges all boundaries and barriers.
2 Deal with the forces that create and sustain powerlessness at micro-, macro-, global and cosmic levels
3 Re-read the biblical story as an alternative reality with which to challenge the present reality. Dream, imagine, God’s new heaven and earth and begin living it.

- Establish truth and righteousness from the biblical source material ... study the Word.
- Create hope proclaiming the alternative reality of the Kingdom of God... and liberation!
- Unmask the marred identity of the poor by rediscovering the *imago Dei* identity. Re-establish the dignity of the poor and equity among all.
- Address inadequate worldview lies (like with gender, castes ...)
- Discern the truth and unmask the principalities and powers ... spiritual disciplines.
- Develop a methodology for doing theology, for discernment.