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A GOLF COURSE OR GRAZING LAND: USING PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION AS A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TOOL IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT

The question underpinning this study is why the Tyusha (Evelyn Valley) Development Project, a tourism project in South Africa's Eastern Cape province, championed by developers, failed to materialise. The starting point of the research was whether, as the classic view suggests, the failure of the project was due to lack of community involvement. The interviews conducted indicated that participation was not the issue. The community had been consulted and were part of the wider formative discussions. What held the project back was conflict amongst the community (or project) leadership group. Given the economic potential of the project for a poor village like Tyusha, one would have expected greater cooperation between community members. This is especially the case when there is willingness and support from private capital and local government. Through a close reading of participatory development critiques, the article finds that conflict is part and parcel of community development work. With communication breakdowns in mind, which can impede project success, the article concludes that participatory development communication is a good vehicle to carry the dual mandate of community empowerment and mediation of conflict.

Keywords: participatory development communication, community development, rural tourism, participatory development, conflict resolution, empowerment, social justice

INTRODUCTION

Participation for development and participatory development communication (PDC) are branches of the same tree but, surprisingly, are often thought of separately. This research project, which first investigated whether the seeming lack of community participation in a rural tourism project might have led to its eventual failure, details the usefulness of PDC to

community development projects. This is done by first exploring research findings that suggest that beyond participation the project's key failure was internal conflicts rather than a lack of community engagement. The interviews revealed that the conflict stemmed from competing interests, exclusion, and a lack of cohesive leadership. The struggle for control of the project and maximum financial gain led to faction fights, which ultimately impeded the progress of the project.

As evidenced by this specific case study, conflict has the potential to derail development projects. The failure to anticipate conflict and the absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms in the design of the development project was a problem. Although conflict and its resolution is a factor development practitioners should account for (see Cooke & Kothari, 2001), there is a curious lack of research on conflict dynamics in development work. Critique of participation has observed that these frameworks often naively assume that communities are united, and thus are blind to how conflict affects development projects. As a result, the dynamic of conflict and the critical role that conflict resolution methods can play in effectively organising communities for sustainable development are not accounted for.

It is for this reason that the study offers PDC as a way forward. This is not to argue that PDC is a silver bullet, but to draw attention to the fact that it has the primary tools (communication, active listening, mediation, facilitation skills and problem-solving) described by conflict resolution theorists as necessary for such intervention. With an appreciation for group facilitation, dialogue, mediation, and consensus building (Khumalo, 2021), PDC can play a role in designing projects that are capacitated to deal with conflict. The Tyusha project demonstrates that successful community development requires more than just participation, but participatory approaches that can empower communities to organise themselves to go beyond conflict.

CONTEXT

Tyusha, a small village situated a few kilometres outside Qonce (King Williams Town) in South Africa's Eastern Cape province, is a tourist attraction. It is home to the scenic Amatola Mountains that overlook a world-renowned hiking trail. In addition, the village boasts the Rooikrans and Maden Dams that are popular fishing and water leisure destinations. The beauty of the village and its commercial potential has been recognised by the government and developers. A good example of the efforts to establish tourism in the area is a 2005 feasibility study authored by a group of local developers. The report recommended the Evelyn Valley eco-tourism project, including a lodge, golf course, fish farm, camping sites and chalets. The comprehensive 75-page feasibility report covered everything from fauna and flora to water quality. However, little community involvement was noted. This observation sparked the current research project. The Evelyn Valley Project was apparently a top-down, expert-led process; in other words, the exact scenario that participatory development literature has often cited for development project failure (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). The starting point of this research, therefore, was an exploration of whether the same fate had befallen the Tyusha development. This central point was enriched by rural and agrarian studies which agree that the lack of local consultation can thwart development

interventions, but also warn that a narrow focus on local "mindsets" leads to ignoring wider structural contexts and determinants (Hajdu *et al*., 2020). As a result, our initial hypothesis, that the failure of the project was due to a lack of commitment from the community, was extended to consider that the failure of the development also possibly emanated from the inadequate understanding of local contexts and structural factors affecting livelihoods.

South Africa's socioeconomic outcomes are embedded in apartheid structuring (Kwenda *et al*., 2020). Despite post-apartheid strategies aimed at redressing past imbalances, spatial inequalities persist (Scheba & Turok, 2020). For example, non-former homeland provinces such as the Western Cape and Gauteng enjoy the lowest rates of unemployment and poverty, and the highest rates of education. In contrast, Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, provinces that have a higher share of former homeland areas, are consistently poorest and suffer from higher unemployment rates (Kwenda *et al*., 2020). Current employment statistics are a case in point. While 33.5% (42.4% expanded) of people are out of work in the country, the Eastern Cape registered the highest expanded unemployed rate in the country at 49.7%. Non-metropolitan or rural areas registered an expanded rate of 57.7% (Statistics South Africa, 2024).

The history of racialised dispossession of land in South Africa, which led to homelands and migrant labour, allows us to better understand the need for the project and why its failure is an important developmental issue. The underdevelopment of black areas, which forced inhabitants to seek outside employment, led to the collapse of the rural farming economy (Kwenda *et al*., 2020). Enduring into the post-apartheid period, these dynamics have created an impoverished and unemployed rural population, neither engaged in significant agricultural production, nor able to find industrial employment (Hajdu *et al*., 2020). When studied closely, former homeland areas reveal a historic shift away from a reliance on agriculture and natural-resource-based activities. Although some still tend kitchen gardens, many have abandoned their fields, now relying largely on remittances from family members working in cities, on local (formal and informal sector) employment, and state welfare transfers for their livelihood (Hajdu *et al*., 2020). One would have expected the tourism project, which represented a significant opportunity for local employment, to be an important enterprise for this community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Modernisation and dependency

Although often consigned to history, the modernisation paradigm is important to consider because as Servaes and Servaes (2021) state, despite paradigm shifts, its principles continue to shape practice. Before the emergence of post-colonialism, modernisation was the preferred development model to assist affected countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean (Melkote & Singhal, 2021). It suggested that adopting a Western way of life was the best - if not the only - means to accomplish successful development (Jegede, 2018). Underdevelopment could therefore be eradicated by mechanically implementing Western economic and political systems (Servaes, 1996).

The use of communication in this positivist framework reflected its top-down and linear outlook. For the purpose of development, communication was intended to diffuse Western innovations to the people in developing countries (to inform the masses in these countries) (Melkote & Singhal, 2021).

Opposition to modernisation led to the dependency theory: a framework that criticised modernisation for placing the responsibility for underdevelopment on emerging nations (Frank, 1969). Dependency theorists argued that poverty persists in poorer nations due to continued unequal relations between the West and the so-called "Third World" (M'bayo, 1995). Western-inspired growth and underdevelopment are conjoined forces, or two sides of the same coin. They are part of a global capitalist system that extracts from poor countries for the benefit of wealthier Western nations (Ferraro, 1996; M'bayo, 1995). In this sense, development and underdevelopment are contained in a single integrated capitalist economic system, rather than sequentially related stages of growth (Frank, 1969). Given the deliberate unequal structuring of global finance, underdevelopment is not a pre-capitalist condition that all countries go through, but rather a unique condition that is a result of global relations (Emeh, 2013).

Bottom-up and community voice

The participatory paradigm took the issue further arguing that as there is no one path to growth, and due to the unique nature of needs and challenges, development must be need-driven (Mefalopulos, 2008); and the exercises that should centre the humans involved should concentrate on communities at a micro level (Servaes, 1996; Alakwe & Okpara, 2022). In this formulation, development is viewed as a product of its environment and can only be achieved in collaboration with affected stakeholders (Mwanzia & Strathdee, 2010). This recognises that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to development and that it is at the community level that solutions to community issues should emerge (Servaes, 2008). Participation, therefore, does not only think of development in context, but the transformation of people from passive recipients to active actors in development efforts (Bessette, 2004).

Without the voice of the affected, many projects have faltered (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Programmes fell short because communities were not involved in their design and implementation (Rahnema, 2005). According to the participatory paradigm, successful and long-lasting interventions take place when affected communities can create programmes that are more responsive to their needs (Drèze & Sen, 2002). The ability of affected groups to identify issues that have a direct impact on their lives, as well as their capacity to address them by taking decisions, fosters self-reliance (Inagaki, 2007; Chambers, 2015). Community involvement and self-help build long-lasting community support because participants are able to ensure that a project serves their interests and, as a result, internalise the duty to oversee and manage the programme (Mubita *et al*., 2017).

Self-help and empowerment have expanded on the objective of participation in development. Empowerment identifies that the lack of power among affected community members can be an underlying constraint in the process of social change (Servaes & Servaes, 2021). This critical version of PDC is engineered to go beyond

the instrumental interest of positivistic methodology or the self-understanding (local mindsets) of interpretive dimensions to critique the "socioeconomic and structural impediments preventing people from emancipation due to discriminative and coercive structures and influences" (Melkote & Singhal, 2021: 3). These participatory and empowerment objectives require building understanding, empathy, partnerships and capacity with the beneficiaries of development programmes (Melkote & Singhal, 2021). It is in this outlook that development communication's organising value shines. Development communication, in an empowerment paradigm, is not simply a top-down dissemination of information, but the organisation of social support networks and the facilitation of interactions, aimed at achieving a mutual understanding (Sulaiman *et al*., 2024).

METHODS

In the modernisation tradition, methodology tends to lean towards a positivistic technical and instrumental process meant to achieve tangible ends and generate measurable outcomes (Melkote & Singhal, 2021). Quantitative empirical methods are often applied, and the outcomes of development are readily quantified. The critical interpretive paradigm that influences participatory development approaches emphasises the understanding of people, groups and other phenomena within specific contexts. As a result, the methods opted for should enable thick description, empathy, and self-reflection in practical situations (Kemmis, 2006). The outcomes of its process include many non-quantitative dimensions such as partnership, participation and empowerment (Melkote & Singhal, 2021).

The qualitative semi-structured interviews used to collect the data permitted gathering information about people's viewpoints and experiences. The approach assisted in determining the challenges, experiences, and perspectives of the research participants (Jamshed, 2014). This is in line with the purpose of this study, which was to assess the extent to which community members participated in the project, their views on the challenges the project experienced, and their overall perceptions of the project. The interviews were conducted in isiXhosa, the language spoken at the location of the study (and in which the researchers are fluent). The interviews were translated to English by the researchers. The duration of the interviews ranged between 20 and 60 minutes, depending on each respondent and how much they shared. Each interview was conducted at a meeting place identified by the participants as convenient, usually at home or in a public meeting area. Ten respondents (who experienced the tourism project at varying levels) were interviewed. The participants included ordinary members of the community, civic members, members of the Tyusha Development Trust, the ward councillor, and ward committee members responsible for the area under investigation.

The data was analysed using Clarke and Braun's (2017) approach to thematic analysis which comprises six phases, namely: (i) familiarisation with the data set through repeated readings; (ii) initial code generation; (iii) construction of preliminary themes; (iv) refinement of themes through comparison with coded extracts and the entire dataset; (v) naming and defining themes; and (vi) generating the narrative report of the findings (Clarke & Braun 2017). This exact process was followed: after transcribing the

interviews, the data was coded. Then preliminary themes were constituted. After that recurring ideas or patterns in the responses were refined. The most relevant themes concerning the project's failure – the role of participation, conflict within the community, expectation of benefits from the project, and how these expectations created divisions – were then extracted and the narrative report was generated.

FINDINGS

'Residents were engaged'

One of the first themes constructed from the interviews was that the people in the village confirm knowing about the project. Furthermore, many said they were looking forward to the social development it would bring. A majority of responses spoke to the fact that the village is extremely poor, and desperately needs the tourism project to go ahead.

Mrs Q

A local teacher read a letter she had recently written to Gift of the Givers: We suffer a lot being hit by a series of unfavourable living conditions. These include high unemployment rate, lack of a health facility that is a clinic, a high school, a primary school, which is not at all conducive for little humans. We have fallow land, which can if developed produce, fruit, vegetables, etc. that will help to fight poverty in the whole province. We therefore hereby appeal to your NGO to come and help our poverty-stricken community members by whatever you are capable of offering. We further invite you to come and witness, observe our rich, beautiful environment, which is full of natural resources surrounding us, but ironically, we're unable to benefit from them. These are the historical mountain, two big dams: Piri and Rooikrans. The maize which was harvested from these fields by our grandfathers was said to be of the standard and quality of the one which is produced by the Free State farmers.

Thabo

People from the village wanted this. We thought it would also help with crime and unemployment in the village. We started thinking about the opportunities for employment. So we started believing everything.

Sesethu

When this project was presented to us, we were shown what it would look like and how beautiful it would be. They showed us the entrance to the village. It was nice. The renovations included the police station, which is deteriorating. They said the rivers would have cruise boats for weddings, anniversaries and other occasions. We saw that it would benefit everyone. No one would just sit. The project would make everyone busy.

It is a pity it never came about because it was close to happening. I was already thinking that I will hand in my certificates so that they can employ me. I have worked as an assistant at Grey Hospital. I thought my skills would put me in a good position to get a job in the project. I also did hospitality and have worked at a restaurant before. You see, I was already counting opportunities that I would get when they started pitching the project.

Ngcali

There was a dream around this development. The dream was that our village was not going to suffer anymore, and we could even uplift neighbouring villages. Then 2005 came about because village elders (Development Trust) approached developers to come up with a plan for tourism. They were inspired to act by the village's situation back then (it is even worse now). Our village does not have a high school. Many children end up on the streets. They turn into hobos because parents cannot afford to send them to school in the neighbouring villages. So in the end, very few will pass matric/grade 12. The majority will remain in the village with nothing to do. The people in the forefront thought to establish the tourism project in order to use Tyusha's rich natural resources to create employment opportunities.

What became clear from the interviews was the extent to which the community, as noted in the context section, needed the tourism project to proceed for local employment. Another important point that shone through was agreement that the community had been consulted; however extensive the consultation or participation was, there seemed to be agreement that the community had been involved in shaping the project plans. A majority of the responses indicated that the villagers were not simply passive recipients but active actors who were deeply involved in shaping the project.

Ngcali

The Trust met with developers and investors who then came up with idea to build chalets, conference centres and amusement parks. The Trust also contributed to the discussions and decisions. Residents also got a chance to add input when meetings were called. One such example of community input was when developers presented an idea to plant pecan nuts in the village. The nuts were going to be sold to the Chinese. The community did not agree, and that idea was dismissed. The community also kind of rejected the golf course idea because some community members expressed concern that a would occupy too much of their grazing land. It was eventually moved to last on the list and flagged for more deliberation.

Khanyisile

This development started when we had a series of meetings. We had surveyors that checked the land and produced a report. One of the developers even stayed in the village because he understand the village better. He interacted with the residents. Most people in the village remember him. We reported back to the residents about the decisions on the tourism project. People knew about the project. There were even presentations in public meetings on what the project would look like.

Mthura

I learnt about the Tyusha tourism project through my investment contacts. I then met with a local school principal from Tyusha who told him about the history of fish farming in the village. I then started visiting the village and witnessed first-hand the potential the village held. I then started talking to financers and that was when he started the process of a feasibility study. While assisting with the feasibility study, I stayed in the village for a couple of months because I believe that if you are starting a project you need to know the place and you need to stay with the people so that you can understand them better. You need to know how they think, how they reason, and note their ideas.

When I first got into the project, all I had in mind was a lodge and conference centre because there aren't many in the Eastern Cape. All these other things were added by the village people. The plans to include a fishery, chalets, and quad biking came from the villagers. [We took] the community input very seriously. For example, once the fisheries idea was presented to the development group, they ran with it. They [the investors] sourced fishery experts from Rhodes University who conducted a site visit.

We started this with the community from the onset. So much so that people who did not stay in Tyusha knew about the project. At that time, the village did not have a community hall, so the consultative meetings were held all over. We had consultative meetings with the community at the primary school, with the municipality in town, and with interested stakeholders at other venues. I have the minutes of those meetings.

'Everyone wants the project to be about themselves'

Judging from the community responses, it could be argued that the failure of the Tyusha development was not necessarily a lack of participation. The responses garnered seem to indicate that community involvement was a necessary and important building block of the project. What people pointed to as a reason for the failure was infighting, rather than a lack of engagement. Conflict within the group reportedly worked against progress.

Khanyisile

We are still pushing for the development to happen. Every year, the municipality has a budget for this project. There is R25 million set aside for this project. The community just needs to sign a memorandum of understanding. Money is not the problem. The municipality is waiting on the community. LED (Local Economic Development) can give us money for the project at any time. They are waiting on us to go forward. We are the problem. We need people to put aside their interests. From where I sit, two challenges hinder the development from going forward. I'm looking at government officials and I am looking at the community itself. These are the two parties holding the project back. There is no shared vision. Everyone wants the project to be about themselves. Everyone wants to benefit more than the next person. That is one of the challenges we face.

Thabo

Certain individuals want development to come from themselves; they want something that they can claim. It's all about eating money because certain individuals wanted the project to benefit only themselves. We found out midstream that some individuals had changed the development and came up with another plan, which was not the one we know. They changed the whole project. Individuals were now communicating with people in America. Suddenly the information became sensitive and was only shared with a select few. We were no longer needed. What became clear is that the second development plan was a private deal. Mr So-and-so was the initiator of the plan. He is a businessman that was after money and not development. He came with promises. Some people were impressed by his presentations. All the while, money was being misused, funds were being misappropriated.

Kansi

This project is held back by these conflicts. Each group wants to own it. They hide their interest behind the fact that they are doing it for the community. The problem when it comes to community development is that everyone, no matter who, experts, government, community leaders, etc. are looking for what they can gain. The municipality and funders have all backed away because of the community squabbles. This is what is stopping the community. Everyone wants ownership and attachment to this project. They want to own it, yet on the other side they put on a face saying this is for the community.

There is a chairperson for this, and a chairperson for that. There is a steering chairperson. There are so many structures. A chief is also claiming the village on the another hand. There are ward councillors, steering committees, a development chairperson and many others I do not know about. This creates a disunity and fighting in the village. This is my second term in leadership in the village. They wanted to remove me from the onset. I was contesting bitterly. So can you see that there are cracks in the village? My issue with what is happening in the village is that we fight for unnecessary things. We fight for things that will not give us development or a bright future. Here in the village we do not get along. We do not present a united front. As a result, outside people took advantage and wanted to be part of this. So the number of personal interests also grew. Each person wants to own this project. I guess we don't want it to move forward.

Importance of a critical reading of participatory development

One of the core themes that came from the interviews was persistent conflict and disunity between the community members. What was apparent is that although the residents of Tyusha want to see the implementation of the Evelyn Valley development, differences in opinion and outlook contributed to the delay of the tourism project. Although we were surprised by the result, conflict resolution scholarship suggests that we should not have been. What is true of organisational work is that where there are humans, conflict will inevitably arise (Wahab & Adetunji, 2015). Conflict is inevitable when different individuals and groups come together to address shared social issues. This is worse among members of a community with diverging priorities or stark class differences (Chin, 2020). In a stratified country such as South Africa, with a history of race and class-based oppression, conflicts may arise and persist due to innumerable social differences and competition for scarce resources. Fraught with hierarchies and resultant antagonism, divergent interests in the country can lead to a clash of perspectives (Poplak, 2021).

Critical participation theory has suggested that conflict is worth considering in development work. Post-field work, a thorough reading of this critique was clearly useful to better understand the failure of the Tyusha eco-tourism project. What critics have highlighted is that participation does not happen in a vacuum. Carothers and De Gramont (2013) write that as much as aid programmes embrace participation as a way to address both market and government failures, they tend to ignore the possibility of serious collective action problems and capacity deficits within local communities. Group dysfunction, and/or group dynamics can, therefore, limit what

could be achieved by participatory development (Cooke, 2001). Some problems stem from the fact that inequalities, social hierarchies and power relations, which play out at a national level, are even more entrenched at the local level. As a result, there are often power struggles between ordinary citizens, who risk investing time and resources in development programmes from which they may not benefit, and local elites who often capture most of the programme benefits (Cooke, 2001).

The problem, Williams (2004: 558) argues, is that in its uncritical celebration of "the community", participatory development obscures local power differences. According to Mohan (2001), participatory development discourses tend to homogenise and essentialise the poor. This labelling conceals important differences along lines of class, gender and ethnicity (Mohan, 2001: 160). As Nelson and Wright (1995) observe, an overbearing and all-encompassing conception of "community" is often used by the state and other organisations, rather than the people themselves. It carries connotations of consensus, of a unified whole, while in most instances there is a gap between people – between the haves and have-nots. Often in development projects, the marginalised come up against influential elites who assert a top-down power structure (Chin, 2020). Naively, participatory development has tended to flow towards a consensual view, which conceals the divergent interests at the intra-community level (Nelson & Wright, 1995). Critiques of participation have highlighted that assuming consensus at all times means downplaying any divisions within the community (Guijt & Shah, 1998).

In their seminal edited volume, Cooke and Kothari (2001) call for a conception of participation that takes seriously questions of power and power relations. Participatory approaches can conceal inequalities, and in certain circumstances, strengthen them. Kothari (2001) argues that the naive acceptance of "local knowledge" or "community voice" as some kind of objective truth, often ignores the power relations involved in the production of any knowledge. As such, "participatory methodologies are in danger of reifying these inequalities and of affirming the agenda of elites and other powerful actors" (Kothari, 2001: 152). What counts as local knowledge is often the effect of special kinds of techniques of power, of regulation, and of normalisation (Kothari, 2001). The normalisation of social and cultural rules and codes allows power, often held by a dominant group, to circulate and be expressed in a variety of ways. By unifying and ignoring "dichotomies of power" and the existence of oppositional social groupings (in single communities), participatory approaches simplify complicated social relations (Kothari, 2001).

This critique is important in noting that participation is, therefore, not a simple technical input that easily leads to linear progress. To this end, participatory processes have been increasingly approached as technical, management solutions to what are basically political issues (Waisbord, 2008). Development, and particularly participatory development, stands accused of working as an "anti-politics machine" that negates fundamental political issues related to social stratification and collective action (Ferguson, 1990). The problem with development projects is that although donor programmes are hyperlocal, they are often divorced from local politics (Mohan, 2001). A more useful approach acknowledges the political nature of participatory development and the conflicts that such a dispensation necessarily includes. This suggests that

development projects and their targeted local action must simultaneously address the non-local, or the greater contextual issues at play. Only by linking participatory approaches to wider and more difficult processes of democratisation, and social causes such as women's rights and class struggles, can long-term change occur (Mohan, 2001).

Conflict resolution and participatory communication

Critiques of the participatory paradigm point to a more systematic approach, to a wider institutional impact of participatory techniques and values. Williams (2004) states that both sides of the argument have perhaps focused too much on the minutiae of participatory methods, on questions of whether particular techniques empower or disempower. While important, these issues should not "overshadow a wider analysis of the institutional contexts within which participatory development is located", and the obstacles these contexts produce (Williams, 2004: 566). The systematic approach this article endorses is one that considers local and national power dynamics, by taking conflict and its resolution into project design. In contexts such as those found in South Africa, where intergroup conflict is to be expected given the inequalities and social stratification, this systemisation is much needed. As the interviews point out, the actual task of organising people to effectively share one goal is a difficult social process.

In this regard, we argue that anticipation of conflict resolution should play a significant role in organising development initiatives. Conflict resolution has to be part of any collaborative process. As such, during the design and execution of community development projects, conflict and its resolution is a factor development practitioners should take into account. A way to do this is to employ PDC. The argument we posit is that PDC is a useful umbrella concept and process that allows for participation, community voice, and mediation in development initiatives. It is a crucial tool in rolling out development projects that are both targeted (local specific) and contextual (cognisant of the wider systematic ussies). In assisting the process of designing development in contexts rife with conflicts and social obstacles, PDC is a process for joint message construction within a group aimed at the improvement of their existential situation or achieving a social goal (Mody, 1991). The approach stresses mediating community engagement for the purposes of empowerment and alignment (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). Although these are early musings, PDC's mission to actively engage stakeholders, build partnerships, and achieve consensus in order to effectively address development problems are principles that could potentially assist in conflictual programmes.

CONCLUSION

The principles needed to achieve conflict resolution are similar to those needed for effective PDC. There is a central role played by a facilitator, who mediates a two-way communication. This process is interested in opening dialogue on an issue, and in consensus on a way forward. More research needs to be done in order to operationalise the recommendation. However, the point made is that the failure of the Tyusha Development Project indicates a need for greater emphasis on mediating conflict resolution when designing community intervention initiatives. We posit that

PDC has the ideal elements to achieve this function. Participation in and of itself is important; however, this case study indicates that the critique of this concept is accurate. A naive or consensual version of participation might neglect inter and intra group conflict, which results in a breakdown in communication and relations, and ultimately a failure of collective actions. Development projects of the future should avoid these pitfalls and actively consider how to navigate local power relations.

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