

CHALLENGES FOR THE PROFESSIONS IN PROMOTING THE GOALS OF THE RDP

Paper delivered by Mr Bahle Sibisi¹
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INTRODUCTION

The dawning of the new South Africa means different things to different people. To some it means the liberation of the individual from restrictions, to others it means the full development of each human being. Many see it as enhancing their standard of living, while others see it as the dawn of full democracy.

However, to those involved in architecture, planning, engineering and surveying, such as those in your professions, it presents a great challenge.

This challenge is translated into the way in which the professions will contribute towards the delivery of tangible services to a large section of the population through, amongst others, promoting the goals of the Government of National Unity's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

THE ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONS

I think we all agree that the design professions have an enormous contribution to make in the process of facilitating the RDP. As design professionals you have the experience and the know-how to do your job and to do it properly. I am therefore not here today to tell you how to do your job. I am here to share with you the challenge that lies ahead of us - the challenge to promote the goals of the RDP. This is a challenge which faces the new government, the provinces, the private sector and also you as professionals.

The first goal of the RDP is to "meet basic needs". The needs mentioned include job creation, land reform, provision of housing and services,

infrastructure such as water supply and sanitation, transportation, energy, telecommunications and electricity, as well as environmental considerations (RDP White Paper, 1994:8). As architects, planners, engineers and surveyors, you are directly involved in meeting most of these basic needs.

LAND REFORM AS GOAL OF THE RDP

One of the basic needs in which the Department of Land Affairs is deeply involved, is the highly sensitive and politicised need for land reform.

The Department strives to create an equitable and fair land dispensation and to secure and promote the effective use of land as a resource within the context of sustainable development. This is done through an approach to initiate, manage and facilitate the applicable processes democratically and in a participatory, transparent, efficient, effective and just manner, within the framework of the government's RDP.

Land reform at national level mainly consists of two aspects. The first of these focuses on the *restitution* of land to those affected by injustices caused by policies of forced removals and expropriation. In some instances, for example, that of District Six, development initiatives in which the communities are involved were started before the enacting of the new legislation which enables the restitution of land rights. In these cases, where the original properties cannot be restored to the successful claimants, restitution of land rights can be done through the relay of the claims to other land.

The second aspect of land reform at national level is land *redistribution*, which mainly focuses on broadening access to residential and productive

land, both in urban and rural context. This can be done through the productive utilisation of vacant state land and mechanisms to promote equitable access to land. Another way of broadening access to land is through strengthening property rights and ensuring tenure, by promoting the development of alternative forms of tenure and adopting these diverse forms of tenure. Accelerating planning processes and land development which is people driven can also broaden access to land. The need to speed up delivery and at the same time consult the population may sound as a contradiction in terms, but it is the only way in which sustainable development, where the participants accept the product as their own, can take place.

Land reform will be carried out principally by Central Government. However, Central Government will need the assistance of professionals such as yourselves, in consultation with the clients you serve, to carry out the process of land reform.

Land reform does not imply that individuals will have to donate any of their land for redistribution. Land reform does imply exploring innovative approaches to answering questions of participatory consultation in the process of granting access to land to those previously denied. I would like to discuss various means by which you as professionals can contribute to land reform.

THE PROFESSIONAL'S ROLE IN LAND REFORM AS SPELT OUT IN THE DFA

An obvious method of contributing to the promotion of the basic need of land reform, is through the design and planning principles used by your professions. I would like to dwell briefly on a few of these principles as

set out in the Development Facilitation Bill (DFA, 1994) published by Government for comment recently.

If the legislation is adopted by Parliament it would, according to the long title of the proposed Bill, "introduce extraordinary measures to facilitate and expedite the implementation of reconstruction and development programmes and projects in relation to land".

The DFA provides broad principles to guide all forms of land development. These principles relate, for example to the encouraging of the expeditious provision and development of land for residential use and presenting alternative measures aimed at identifying acceptable and appropriate forms of security of tenure, in which the surveyor can play a major role. Such innovative approaches must continue to ensure that end-user finance in the form of subsidies and loans, still can be made available as early as possible during the land development process.

Some of the other principles set out in the DFA relate to the efficient promotion of integrated land development by, for example, promoting the location of residential and employment opportunities in close proximity to each other. Urban sprawl must be minimized in contributing to the development of more compact cities (Development Facilitation Bill 1994, Section 3).

The most significant practical proposals for the property industry is probably the introduction of provincial development tribunals. The tribunals would be responsible for all governmental approvals of land developments under the DFA. The tribunals will give priority to RDP projects, but could address any proposed development.

These are but a few of the principles which will have an influence on the daily work of your professions, and which are available to you to address the imbalances caused by past decisions on the use of land as reflected in the apartheid-city. I urge you to make the principles, as set out in the DFA, your own.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN LAND REFORM

Notwithstanding the design principles, I would like to share certain thoughts with you on how land reform can best be achieved. These thoughts on the process to be followed can be used in implementing any land development, plan or project.

For example, through establishing an appropriate process of planning a town, building, municipal service or of surveying a squatter camp, a community must be empowered to learn about different ways of security of tenure and be able to make decisions about their own services and land reform.

It is in this early stage of planning where you as professionals will be required to actively participate in the process of assisting the community in identifying their needs and priorities and ensuring that what you propose is understood and accepted by the communities for whom you plan. This involves a commitment, at an early stage, to create structures whereby you can understand their needs and share your knowledge with a community, *before* you start the design of a project. In this way they are enabled to contribute meaningfully to: *what* it is you design; *how* it relates to the greater environment; *who* will use it; *how* is it used; *who* will pay for it; *how* it is paid for; *when* it will be delivered; *what* its lifespan is; *where* it is placed; and many more.

Should you fail to effectively establish satisfactory communication with your clients and capture their trust in your abilities to deliver a product which suits their needs as they may express it to you, you will fail to ensure that they effectively buy into the product. The result will be non-acceptance of the product, suspicion and apathy which will be expressed in service payment boycotts, vandalism or at worst sabotage.

It is therefore vitally important that communities are empowered to participate in bringing about sustainable and effective land reform. In contrast to past practice it is evident that the most important party involved in the process of land reform and development,

is the community.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION AS GOAL OF THE RDP

It must, however, be kept in mind that land reform is not the only goal of the RDP that can be promoted by empowering the communities. As you well know, "implementation", or the process of delivery of various goods and services, is also a goal of the RDP. It is my opinion that it is the goal in which *your* professions can make a major contribution, and which is actually dependent on your professional skills.

It is my belief that, through your daily professional activities in meeting basic needs, you are well aware of how crucial the whole aspect of community participation, community empowerment and capacity building is.

In the RDP, it is emphasised that the implementation of the RDP by all levels of Government, parastatals and the private sector must take place through the widest possible consultation and participation of the people involved. Local organisations and NGO's have important developmental functions which require the building of local organisational capacity. The focus is on empowering civil society and enhancing the capacity of community organisations. Only then can one draw on the creative energy of communities to help promote healthy, efficient and effective structures on the ground (RDP White Paper, 1994:48).

The notion of community participation can mean many things to many people. It is necessary that we pause a while to consider what community participation should mean to you as professionals. To illustrate:

"Six men are in a dark place with an elephant which none has seen before but which they are called on to describe. The man who has it by its tail is certain that it is a piece of rope. The man who has the trunk is sure that it is a fire hose. Another, feeling at the tusk, believes it is a spear. The fourth man who has his arms around a leg

thinks they are crazy, it's a tree! The fifth, who has it by it's ear, is certain that it is a huge leather curtain. According to the sixth man they are all wrong, he feels with his arms outstretched: It is a great big wall" (Beck and Linscott, 1991:12).

In considering the above example, it is important to reflect on the wide discrepancies of interpretation and description. The difficulties experienced in the case of interpreting and describing the elephant, are also experienced in interpreting the concept of public participation. Some may see it as an opportunity. Others see it as a threat. Some see it as a problem which translates into time and cost inefficiencies. Some see it as a problem which will impact on vested interests. Others will see it as an opportunity to participate effectively in an appropriate democratic matter.

It is impossible for me today, to put the light on and reveal community participation in all its glory. Let us just for a moment put a torch on and see a glimpse of the issues and very importantly, the inner relationships of what community participation entails.

LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

The first and most important issue is to acknowledge the fact that community involvement can take place at different levels. Kahn indicates that these levels of participation may be understood by way of a so-called participation ladder which is illustrated in Figure 1 (Kahn, 1982:10).

The first two levels at the bottom of the ladder can actually be seen as non-participation. These two levels, known for purposes of this discussion as "manipulation" and "therapy", are substitutes for genuine participation. Both of these can take place where a professional believes he/she has involved the community, but in fact the community has been manipulated into believing that his/her or government's ideas and plans are ideal. This process can typically take place where a community is targeted for therapy to be "cured" for instance of shack dwelling because it is an eye-sore to other

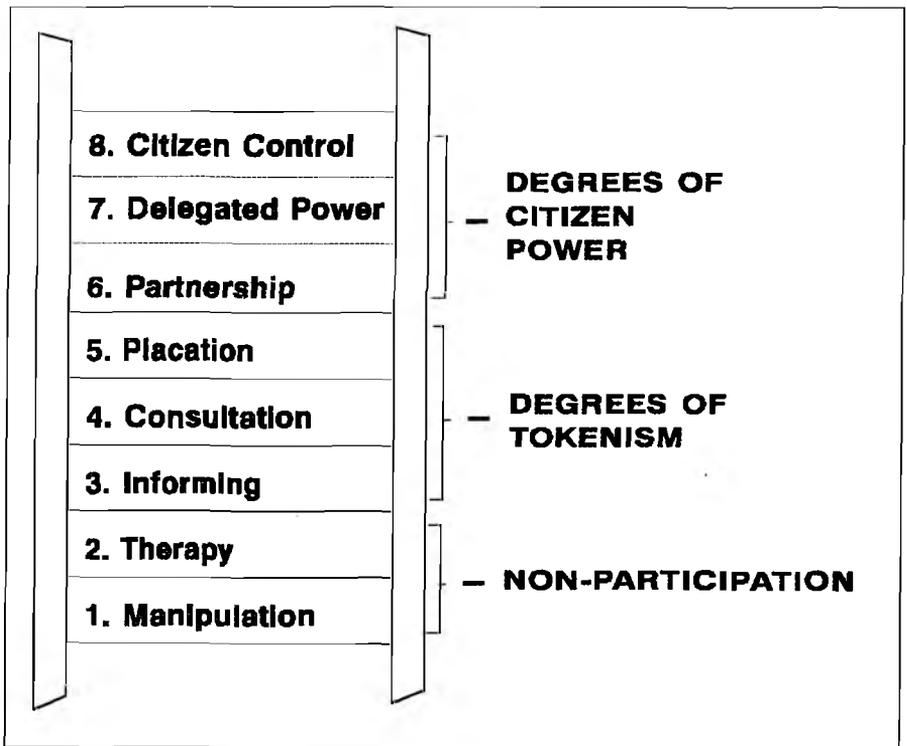


FIGURE 1: Ladder of Participation

residents or is seen to be a health hazard.

The next two levels on the ladder are "informing" and "consultation". At these levels citizens are invited to participate, receive information and comment on the project. It may entail inviting participants to object or make representations in the prescribed form as provided for in planning legislation. The sad thing about this is that communities have no way of ensuring that their views will be heeded by decision-makers. "Informing" and "consultation" are merely forms of tokenism.

The fifth level of participation, "placation", is often perceived as real community participation. Communities are involved in forums and workshops and can in some cases even give advice, but they still lack the power to influence decisions.

It is only in the upper levels of the participation ladder where real community participation begins. This can take place on levels six to eight which are "partnership", "delegated power" and "citizen control". At these levels partnerships are formed, power is shared, there are shared responsibilities and most important citizen control. It is at these levels where communities effectively participate, where they are empowered and where capaci-

ty building can take place.

My challenge to you today is to arrange your professional practice to function at the highest levels on the participation ladder, where one can really promote citizen power.

HOW THE COMMUNITY WORKS

Another issue of importance is to look at the inner relationships within a community. A community consists of people in a specific place. People who live and work together in a variety of groups, for example families, informal groups, voluntary organisations, firms and institutions. It is important to understand that people do not only have a love of place but develop loyalties to these groups and to the community as a whole. It is therefore crucial to identify, understand and work with and respect these groups and relationships, and not treat the community as simply a number of individuals or simply an amorphous group (Connor, 1990:3).

A project very often involves more than one community and it is necessary to make certain that no community or group is left out of the process, for example business sectors and communities with vested interests.

To identify the involved or interested communities and community organisations is a problem that faces many professionals. It must be kept in mind that nobody knows the community better than those who are part of it. It is essential to get help from inside the communities and be sensitive of groupings and interests within these communities. In performing this function it may be necessary to engage the services of a facilitator.

A further issue regarding community participation, is to consider the validity and representativeness of community organisations and representatives. Very often the length of time required to produce a plan and implement it, results in a lack of continuity, changes of the representatives and a fall-off in enthusiasm. One must keep in mind that representatives are usually volunteers or unemployed with the result that their attendance and involvement are directly linked to their employment and political status (Brown, 1994:1-2).

Many of the problems in the process of participation are blamed on unreliable, ineffective or uninformed stakeholders. It is, however, very important for the facilitators, coordinators and those professionals involved, to be sure that the rules of the game are clear and that the expectations of the stakeholders are realistic. Since it is common cause that the personalities may change over the time-span of the project, it is necessary to reflect at each occasion what their role is, what effective participation entails and in particular, that feedback must be ensured with their communities, the organisers and the other participants.

An aspect of community participation which we will have to examine more closely is the relationship between the community and the professional. For community groups to work productively with members of the professions, both need to learn to accept, understand and trust each other, to frankly share their goals, needs, fears, and values and then to agree on how to work together. Communities and professionals cannot be regarded as opponents, or the latter as the saviour of the former. Communities and professionals and all other involved stakeholders must form a partnership and share in the profits as well as the

losses, the responsibilities as well as the opportunities.

The process of genuine public participation is largely a learning experience, by which each participant acquires a more complete understanding of both the issues and other parties' feelings and perceptions about the issues. Each participant is potentially both a learner and a teacher; a growing mutual trust and confidence between the parties is, of course, an essential foundation for learning and creative co-operation.

CONCLUSION

While I have endeavoured to highlight certain aspects of public participation, it is impossible in the short time at my disposal to cover the subject in its entirety. I nevertheless hope that it will help you to better understand the relationships, needs and expectations of all participants. Public participation never just happens. It must be deliberately studied, organized and implemented. It must be kept in mind that it is a complex issue. It involves directly and indirectly all interested and affected groups, including multidisciplinary professionals and other interests. Public participation is a process for which there are no fixed, special or "fast-track" recipes. It is a process unique to every situation, place and community.

I am also aware of the important changes that many of you as practitioners have undergone in the field of public participation. I trust that those experienced in the process of public participation will share their experience with their peers.

I am aware that this change may ask some of your members to redefine his/her professionalism. I am confident that the new approach will challenge us all to resist the temptation to find "quick-fixes" in order to avoid conflict and potential animosity. In essence, the approach I am promoting requires communication and especially communication with the involved communities and potential opponents. It asks of one not just to listen, but to accept the communities' values and value their input.

The approach I envisage asks of each of us, not just to tackle the problem of what we think is in front of us. The process requires of us to switch on the light and try to understand that the goals of land reform and the correct implementation of the RDP in the delivery of goods and services cannot be met without consideration of the people for whom they are intended. The challenge posed is not just what we do and the speed of delivery. The challenge lies in how we do it.

Even though the process is not always smooth and easy, we can gain solace in the words of John F Kennedy who said the following in December 1961:

"All this will not be finished in the first hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first thousand days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But (and there lies the challenge) *let us begin.*" (Gate Research International, 1961:62).

NOTES

- 1 Special Advisor to the Minister of Land Affairs, Minister Derek Hanekom. Research assistance by Mr Robert Lamont Smith and Mrs Elsona van Huyssteen.

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