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Re-making the world



Re-making the world

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A special thank-you to Fatima Gabru

We would also like to thank all the people who shared their stories with us (their names appear in the booklet) and to the following for their feedback, comments and contributions:

Ivor Baatjes
Andrew Bennie
Nompumelelo Cebekhulu
Eunice Christians
Lungile Dube
Yolanda George
Mudney Halim
Mondli Hlatshwayo
Farrell Hunter
Hayley Jasven
Sonya Leurquain-Steyn
Joyce Malebo
Mawushe Narwele
Vanessa Reynolds
Irna Senekal
Magdalena Skippers

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Design and Layout: Rabia Benefeld

Printing: Fingerprint Co-operative Ltd.

Published by DVV International in association with the following



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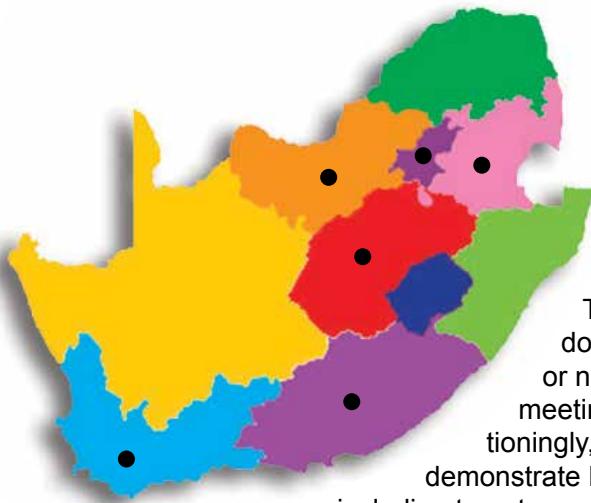
Part 1

People 'doing'



Abalimi Bezekhaya farmer, Cape Flats

This booklet is dedicated to, and is about, all the ‘ordinary’ women and men who have been pushed to the margins of the political and economic mainstream. Despite facing forms of exclusion, discrimination and hardship, daily they demonstrate their resilience and agency against an oppressive system, sometimes flourishing as they do so.



In this booklet, we will meet some of the people described above as we read about how they ‘make their lives’. Many others, in South Africa and globally, who we will not meet, are also ‘making a life’ or ‘doing’ outside of the formal labour market and (il)logic of capitalism. The many productive activities people do (despite often having inadequate or no resources) are not simply about the meeting of basic needs, although unquestioningly, meeting basic needs is vital. People demonstrate love and connection to others, including to nature; people find meaning (oftentimes spiritually); and show the importance of having value, worth and dignity in their lives. John Holloway describes this as ‘another form of doing [which] pushes against the creation of capital and towards the creation of a different society’ (2010, p. 85).

We met many people, particularly women, doing care and house work for their families and neighbours every day. In De Doorns (Western Cape), we visited the Hex Valley People’s Centre which supports community members with free medication. We met farmers (from a number of villages in the Port St Johns area, Eastern Cape) who work with the Is’baya Development Trust. The farmers grow fruit and vegetables and collectively decide on a price for their produce so as not to compete but to co-operate with each other - there is no under-cutting of one by another. In Oshoek (Mpumalanga) we visited a community vegetable garden where vegetables are grown to feed children at the crèche and older people whose children have passed on. We also saw a bridge, constructed by community members, to help children cross a river to get to school. These same community members made a dam to conserve water to use for gardening.



In Freedom Park, Evaton North and West, and Sebokeng (Gauteng), we met young adults running reading clubs and assisting children with homework.

In Orange Farm (Gauteng), we met a group of women (Itsoseng Women’s Project – Wake Up) who recycle waste and run a crèche. Sis Gladys explained to us that the garden that was initially started by the women was not only

a space to plant and grow food, but it became a space for them to discuss social problems and to try to find solutions together. Some of the women brought their children and babies to the garden as they had no childcare. Then the group decided to start a crèche - some women looked after the children while others worked in the garden. Silvia Federici writes about urban gardens as ‘far more than a source of food security’ (2012: p. 141). They are meeting points where people engage in social activities and exchange knowledge.

Poor – By poor, in this booklet, we mean those who are lacking in their material conditions; lack access to basic needs and services; and who are marginalised from the mainstream.

We do not mean ‘poor’ in any other way such as of spirit or mind. Although many people are uncomfortable with the term, movements of the poor in South Africa deliberately use the term to describe themselves.



We met many farmers (mainly female) who share their knowledge and skills with others, such as an Abalimi Bezekhaya farmer (Cape Flats, Western Cape) who told us that when she goes back to her home in the Eastern Cape, she is greeted with: 'Nanku umlimi esiza' (*Here comes the farmer*). Her family, friends and other community members know she will teach them what she has learnt. She also said to us: 'Ndiyasithanda isitiya, nangoku, ndisithanda kakhulu. Ndiyasithanda' (*I still love the garden, still now, I'm so passionate about it. I love it*).



Noqhekwana Village, near Port St Johns (Is'baya Development Trust)



Abalimi Bezekhaya farmers, Cape Flats

We met people in Ikemeleng (North West) who use alternative ways to generate power in the absence of electricity. Solar panels are used to power television sets and to charge cell phone batteries. Car batteries are used with energy converters to power most household appliances.

Following are stories from a few people involved in the kinds of ‘doing’ described above. First we hear from women in The Women’s Circle:



COMMUNITY, HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT
PAYING TRIBUTE TO WOMEN OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUND
HUMANITY – FAITH – PAIN – LAUGHTER – SUCCESS
TEARS – GOALS – LOVE – FAMILY – FUTURE – DREAMS
SMILE – PASSIONS – TIME – SEXUALITY – FEAR – PEACE
UNITY – DIVERSITY – HAPPINESS – FRIENDSHIP
CARING – SHARING – HOPE

The Women’s Circle (TWC), set up in 2006, is a network of community-based learning circles on the Cape Flats, Western Cape. Circle members are poor and working-class women of all ages. Most are unemployed and economically insecure. Topics dealt with are identified by the groups and include issues such as drugs, gangsterism, domestic violence, child abuse, unemployment, housing and health.

Learning is participatory and based on REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) which involves identifying and naming the issue/s, reflecting on it/them; and acting for change. REFLECT is an approach which:

- is overtly political and not ‘neutral’;
- respects and values people’s existing knowledge and experiences. However, this does not mean one cannot challenge others’ opinions or prejudices;
- involves creating a democratic space - one in which everyone’s voice is given equal weight. This needs to be actively constructed, as it does not naturally exist;
- involves a continual cycle of reflection and action - it focuses on the practical and the connection to lived realities;
- uses a wide range of participatory tools;
- happens on an ongoing basis;
- expects the facilitator to engage in the process alongside the participants, subjecting her/his behaviour, experiences and opinions to the same analysis, rather than standing outside as teacher and judge. Ideally, the focus of the process should be towards self-organisation, so that groups are self-managed where possible rather than being facilitated by, or dependent on, outsiders.

Adapted from: <http://www.reflect-action.org/node/37>



The Women's Circle

My name is Bernadette Isaacs

I became involved in The Women’s Circle in Delft in 2007 just after I lost my job. One of my neighbours invited me to go to the circle. The group is involved in gardening, using land at the local school. We are looking forward to having our own vegetables, but we need more people to help because we also do community work. We also motivate people to use the cooker bag to save energy and water. In the circle, we all bring something to put into the pot, which cooks while we work. Then we all eat together and we can also take home a bit. The food is healthy and helps people to save money and not go to the soup kitchen lines. Being part of the circle has got me to become more involved in the community. I can now talk to people in the community and share information on where to go and how to do things for ourselves. I am more independent.

My name is Amina Rajap

I am from Statice Heights Women's Circle. I have been working in my community for 36 years. My passion is to help and assist people. I joined The Women's Circle because it was all about community and it is not only about making a difference in other people's lives, but also myself. Our circle is involved with the cooker bags. We all bring something so that we cook the food while the circle members visit the elderly. The Early Childhood Development project we are doing helps keep the children from roaming the street, especially when the parents are on drugs. We have a vegetable garden and a herb garden. We also get people to do health and human rights workshops, and sewing for the youth and the elderly. We are unemployed people in the circle. All the different programmes add value to my life and we make a difference in the community. I can add value to the circle by uplifting others as I have been uplifted through education in the workshops. We need a centre to make it work better so that we can meet everyday and do more projects.



My name is Farlin Safodien

I reside in Surrey Estate and was introduced to The Women's Circle by my late Mother, who passed away in July 2016. She was a member of the Statice Heights Women's Circle and invited me to a women's day event. I discovered that the women were doing what I was trying to do on my own and trying to help others to learn. From that moment, I knew I was home. What better way to celebrate being a woman instead of working by myself, I was now working with other women where each one has something different to offer. We are involved in many activities and workshops, including the cooker bags, which is very interesting and very beneficial to me, the group and the community. The bags are made from recycled material and save time, but more importantly saves electricity. Statice Heights is not a financially strong community so these families save a considerable amount of money on electricity by using the cooker bag. The programmes teach us to look after ourselves and the community, and we are growing as people. We are keeping the children off the street and we feed them by pooling what we have, which is not only food but the skills we learn that are helping us in the home too. Being part of the circle has opened many doors and I have gained a lot of knowledge, which can be used to help others. Working together, hand in hand, sharing knowledge, empowering each other - having more of this will make the circle and the communities better.

Anne Baron from Seawinds, Retreat

Western Cape Seawinds Circle is part of the Prevention In Action Violence Against Women and are caregivers to the sick and elderly. We have a health committee, do food gardening and we cook in cooker bags where everyone brings a potato or what they have so that we all can eat. When we meet we first put the food in the bags because some people are hungry. Then we all eat when the session is finished and we can give our neighbours also as it is everybody's food. I also use the bag at home. It helps when the money is low, because electricity is expensive and when sometimes I come home from working in the community the food is finished. Being part of the circle has added value to my life. I facilitate HIV/Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and abuse workshops and I have been part of economic development workshops. It is also helping us all start a project that can earn an income and help the vulnerable people like the elderly and the children.

My name is Anthea Booysen and I live in Voorbrug, Delft

I was invited by my Mother to see what the Circle is about. Now I am involved in the cooker bags and the food garden projects. It will be good if we could get more space and more volunteers for the garden. If people help they get a share of the vegetables and we can cook it in the cooker bags. We all bring something to put in the pot and that is the catering for the workshop where we talk about what we are doing. When we are finished we all eat from the pot in the cooker bag. I have learnt to communicate with other people and lost some weight because we have learnt about health. I now have more confidence in myself and have learnt to care about others and what they need. I have learnt how to start a business in groups and how to work with others. Through The Women's Circle I have learnt how to plan a workshop; I can now do that and facilitate in groups. We also help each other to translate the different languages we speak and help those who can't write. Or, when we have problems we can go to each other for help and we can help the community with information when they have problems.

CO-OPERATIVES



About 800 million people are members of co-operatives in 85 countries globally. 100 million people are employed by co-operatives. Restakis argues that the co-operative movement is by far the most durable and most powerful grassroots movement in the world. Many people do not realise that there are more people working within co-operatives than in all the world's multi-national companies combined (Restakis, 2010, p. 3).

BEGINNINGS

When the Industrial Revolution forced many skilled workers into poverty in the early 19th century, weavers and artisans banded together to form the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, the first modern, consumer-owned co-operative, selling food to members who couldn't otherwise afford it.

WHAT IS A CO-OPERATIVE?

A co-operative (co-op) is a group/association of people who voluntarily co-operate (do something together) for their mutual social, economic, and/or cultural benefit. Co-operatives are based on the

values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

CO-OPERATIVES ARE ABOUT:

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic member control
- Autonomy and independence
- Co-operation among co-operatives
- Concern for community.

(From: Baatjes, 2014, p. 16)

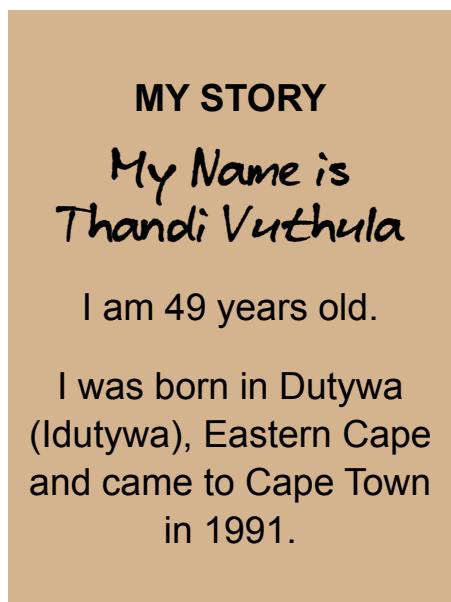
In South Africa, there are many so-called 'co-operatives' which are not really co-operatives at all. They are actually small businesses which do not operate according to co-operative values or principles. (There are also examples of 'real' co-operatives).

Now we hear from Thandi, Fezekile, Sanele, Wiseman, Wendy, Mr Monde and Phindiwe about their co-operatives:

SAKHULWAZI

Phillipi Women's Agricultural Co-operative (we build knowledge)

Started in August 2015



My aim was to seek better employment opportunities. I reside at my late Mother's house with my two children and my two siblings. After I lost my job I was approached by Mama Rose Makhosa who was involved in an NGO. After her explanation about her involvement, I decided to join her. She taught me how to plant organic vegetables and to do beading.

In 2015 we were encouraged by the government to start a co-operative because funding for setting up an NGO was difficult. We then established a co-operative where we practised different initiatives, such as sewing, beading and planting vegetables.

We have five members in management who look after the co-operative's daily business. By getting involved in Sakhulwazi Phillipi Women's Co-op, I hoped to gain knowledge and skills to become self-reliant and improve my living standards. My involvement in Sakhulwazi has helped me improve my independence. I am now fully-equipped, I am now able to start my own business. I am also busy attending other educational trainings.



Our co-operative is involved in planting organic vegetables and different groups do different things like sewing, beading, health work, bag design and catering. We have young women and men volunteers who assist elderly people by fetching their medication from the local clinic. The sewing group is making handbags and pinafores from off-cut materials. Their 'market' is the local people and people visiting the Sakhulwazi Co-op. They are looking at events where they can take the beading and sewing to sell. At the moment they are doing well to sustain themselves.

At first the co-operative got assistance from the NGO but now we are struggling to survive. I think the Department of Agriculture should intervene by giving us a grant to pay for office equipment, manure, seeds and plants. At the moment we are operating on a small piece of municipal land, which we are not happy about – the space is not big enough for us. This land has been leased from the City Council for 15 years. We are not quite clear what will happen after that. The Department of Land Affairs can identify more land for us to operate on more permanently - that could be a solution for our dream.

This co-operative has a vision and high hopes to develop its members further.

IKAMVA LETHU

Agricultural Co-operative

Started in December 2015

OUR STORY

*Ferezile, Sanele, Wiseman, Wendy,
Mr Monde and Phindiwe*

The Ikamva Lethu Agricultural Co-operative, with women and men members from age 19 to 52 years, was created to fight negative lifestyles, and promote better ways of living for our community. It was also created to help provide jobs for the youth in our community. Gender inequalities are one of the key issues we work at addressing. We hope that by farming organic vegetables we can improve the health of residents and customers.

We are a well-skilled group and have more than enough knowledge to run an agricultural co-operative. We produce fresh organic vegetables to supply surrounding supermarkets, pre-schools and crèches. We are strong enough to compete with other vegetable sellers in the area. The co-operative promotes our work and helps health community workers that give assistance to the elderly (like fetching medication at local clinics). We are always exploring new ways of operating and to ensure that we have good, responsible leaders who we help to develop.

We see our co-operative as a strong way to help alleviate poverty in our community. All members take part in ongoing trainings that assist us developing ourselves. Abalimi Bezekhaya and the University of the Western Cape are playing a good role in teaching us gardening skills.

The surrounding churches and school land is not enough to achieve our dream. We have been visiting the Department of Land Affairs, Western Cape, putting forward our request to identify communal land for our use. Up to now, we have no positive responses. The land we are currently using is land that we have leased from the City of Cape Town.



Now we go to the Free State and hear about Naledi Village and what is happening there:

THE RUSTLERS VALLEY

Development Initiative

Rustlers Valley Farm is situated 23 kms from Ficksburg in the Eastern Free State. This farm is probably best known for the Rustlers Valley Easter Rock Festival held there for many years. The farm was **devastated** by fire in 2007 and, following the death of the main shareholder in 2008, the property remained largely **dormant**. A portion of the land is occupied by the residents of Naledi Village, who for several **decades** had worked on the farm. In 2013, Earthrise Trust bought the farm - its vision being to use the land to develop an **integrated** participatory partnership approach to building sustainable rural communities and it made a commitment to transfer a portion of the land to the residents of Naledi Village. This process of land transfer of 42 hectares is currently underway.

devastated – mostly destroyed

dormant – not active/nothing going on

decades – many years

integrated – joined/combined/together

Lebitso laka ke Nnono Makenethe

Ke dula motseng wa Naledi, Rustlers Valley, ke sebetsa ntlo ya baeti hona motseng. Ke na le selemo jwale ke sebetsa mona Earthrise Mountain Lodge. Lodge ena e sebetsa se ka kgwebo ea sechaba, mme e tsamaiswa ke sechaba hobane le lekeno kapa keketso e etswang kgwebong e sebediswa ho etsa dintlafatso ka hare ho sechaba. Ntho ya pele e kgolo e etsahetseng, ho hailwe kirishi ya bana ka hare ho motse.

Esale maloko a Earth Trust a reka Rustlers Valley, hona le dintho tse ngata tse etsahetseng motseng mona.

Hona le polasi e leng Naledi Co-op e tsamaiswang ke baahi ba mashome a mabedi ba motse wa Naledi. Baahi bana baqadile ho sebetsa polasing selemong sefitileng, ka nako ya komello, yaba ba phomella ho kotula di tamati, moroho le khabiche tse ntlatfetseng tsa boleng bo phahameng. Hona le bacha ba etsang dithlodisano tsa mountain biking, mme ke bona bo mmapodi ba Ficksburg ba ho sebetsa ka mopolanka, ho bolela tse mmalwa.

Toro e kgolo ya maloko a Earthrise Trust le bahai ba motse wa Naledi ka karetso, ke hoba le motse wa dipolasi wa bokamoso, moo ho naleng dintlafatso tsohle jwalo ka motse tropong, marangrang a thekenologi, matlo le motlakase.

Hoya kanna ena toro retlo efihlella haholo ho bane Trust e entse ntho e kgolo ya hofa setjhaba mobu, dihekethara tse mashome a mane le metso e mmedi. Haofinyana motse wa Naledi e tlaba mohlala ho Afrika borwa ka bophara.

My name is Nnono Makenethe

I live in Naledi Village in the Rustlers Valley. I work in the community lodge called Earthrise Mountain Lodge - the lodge operates as a social enterprise and the aim is to put any surplus towards supporting the development projects of the community. Now the big thing that has been done in the village is to build a pre-school, which is one of its kind – it is cool in summer and hot in winter - it is insulated.

The Rustlers Valley Farm is owed by the Earthrise Trust. Since the Trust has been here, three years ago, a lot has happened. We have Naledi Co-op which consists of 20 members - they work and run the farm and last year, in the middle of the drought, they managed to produce high quality tomatoes, spinach and cabbages.

That's not all we have - we also have a mountain biking team, which consists of boys and girls from the village. Last year some of our team members took part in the 22km Cherry Festival Race in Ficksburg - they took 1st, 2nd and 4th positions.

There are so many enterprises we have here - we have a sewing group, woodwork, a plant nursery and an environmental learning centre. We also have new enterprises starting like the village bakery and brick-making enterprise - all of these are community run with the help of Earthrise Trust.

When the Earthrise Trust bought the farm, they had a vision of the village of the future where people are self-sustaining and where you don't have to travel far to access things like healthcare, the internet, and so on. And my view is that that can and will be achieved. Together the people of Naledi Village and the Earthrise Trust are going to be an example to the rest of South Africa. Watch this space.

Lastly we hear about bulk buying and savings clubs in the Eastern Cape:

BULK BUYING AND SAVINGS CLUBS

The Community Education Programme (CEP) based at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University supports, as part of its work around the theme 'Food and hunger', the development of bulk buying and savings clubs.

WHAT IS A BULK BUYING CLUB?

For monthly bulk buying, members pay money for their food hampers at the beginning of each month. They draw up a list of what groceries they will buy in bulk that month. They research prices and buy food in bulk from wholesalers and divide it into family hampers. Bulk buying can save money because food is bought in large quantities at cheaper prices per food item than at a supermarket or a spaza shop. For yearly bulk buying, members meet monthly and keep an agreed amount to save towards bulk buying food at the end of the year.

WHAT IS A SAVINGS CLUB?

Savings club members agree to contribute a certain amount of money to the club in order to save. In some savings clubs, the money **accumulates** in a bank account. Other groups act like the bank and make small loans to group members at an agreed **interest**. Savings groups pay out the accumulated savings yearly or at the end of an agreed period. Savings clubs can help to achieve self-sufficiency and financial independence. Like buying clubs, saving clubs are managed and run by their member owners, who decide together on a constitution and rules.

(From: CEP, Handbook for bulk-buying and savings groups, 2017)



We made a play to introduce how savings clubs work. In the picture the secretary is stamping a savings booklet to reflect the monthly contribution of a member.

The following is an **extract** from an interview with Mam' Nondlela who belongs to one of a group of community gardeners who save together from the vegetables they sell. This is the story she told one of the CEP community educators:

"Yoh, mntanam! Asibole ngamatyala!" (Yoh, my child! We are rotten from debt!). I feel confused and ask: "Hayibo yintoni?" (Oh no! What is the matter?). Mam' Nondlela explains that she has to return money that she loaned from the gardening savings group. She says: "Yazi, (you know) when we started with the garden we did not know what we were doing and where all of this is going, but today we are reaping the rewards of our hard work". Now she has captured my full attention. I ask: "Why do you say that?" She replies and says: "Today I can loan money from the group and not even have stress about it because it is also for my own benefit rather than going to 'oMashonisa' (loan sharks). When I return this R100 I loaned for electricity, I will give it back with its 10% increase. This makes our money grow in the savings club".

She says that she is not the only one who is seeing the rewards of this savings group. All of them are now using money from the groups' savings to meet their household expenses. The group enables them to save the money they make from selling the vegetables they've grown together. They motivate each other to keep on using this money for small loans. This makes their money grow.

I could feel her excitement for herself and the rest of the group. Not only are they producing food, but they are working together to be in control of their household finances. These activities are building strong relationships of trust and solidarity amongst them. At the end of our conversation Mam' Nondlela laughs softly and says: "There is more to come".

accumulates – grows/the amount gets bigger and bigger

interest – the additional/extral amount of money above the amount that is borrowed

extract – part of/not the whole

And we met many more people but, because we are limited by the number of pages in this booklet, we cannot share everyone's stories.

Part 2

*WHY is our
world this way?*



Children play while their Mother sells vegetables in Zwide, Port Elizabeth.
She re-packs vegetables for her customers in quantities which they can afford.

What we have learnt is that millions of people the world over are doing similar productive activities to those described in Part One. In order to understand why this is so, we need to ask some questions about the world we find ourselves living in.

What is Capitalism and what has it done?

Please read the articles at the end of this booklet – one on food and hunger and the relationship to capitalism titled ‘Hunger and advancing sustainable food systems’ by Andrew Bennie (Associate: Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC)). Then there is an extract from an article about ‘economic solidarity’ with a focus on food stokvels titled ‘Building economic solidarity from grassroots survival mechanisms. Popular education and solidarity economics in Freedom Park, Johannesburg’ by Mudney Halim (Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT), UJ). Then there is a third on the concept of ‘work’ titled ‘Why do we wait so restlessly for the workday to end and for the weekend to come? Could work be redefined to include enjoyment and pleasure?’ by Ashish Kothari (Kalpvriksh). The first two articles are written about South Africa and the third about India. What is very important to note is that these issues are global and the struggles are very similar across the world.

ACCORDING TO OXFAM:

The world's eight richest billionaires control the same wealth between them as the poorest half of the globe's population (Harroon, 2017, p. 1).

South Africa remains the most unequal country in the world – it has the widest gap between the rich and poor. The following is a list of the 10 richest South Africans and the amount of money they each have:

1. Christo Wiese	R81.26 billion	6. Bruno Steinhoff	R12.56 billion
2. Ivan Glasenberg	R59.98 billion	7. Atul Gupta	R10.69 billion
3. Stephen Saad	R16.04 billion	8. Rupert Family	R10.61 billion
4. John Whittaker	R15.87 billion	9. Jannie Mouton	R9.7 billion
5. Laurie Dippenaar	R12.86 billion	10. Koos Bekker	R9.63 billion

<https://mybroadband.co.za/news/business/191358-the-10-richest-people-in-south-africa.html> 2016

Why is this so?

The answer is simple - because of capitalism (now in its neoliberal phase). Capitalism is a brutal system which favours only a few, forcing the ‘social majorities’ (Prakash and Esteva, 1998) (i.e. ‘ordinary’ people, particularly the poor and working class) into increasing poverty - landless, homeless, hungry or malnourished, jobless or in **precarious** labour (see more on this further below), without proper healthcare or education. Capitalists plunder, extract and ultimately destroy our Earth, often in the name of ‘development’.

precarious – the opposite of secure or stable; the ‘job’ may be temporary or contract and/or have no benefits. Workers like this do not have any or many rights

Development??

The term 'development' may be understood by some to mean something positive, but for the majority of the world's people, 'development' is a negative term. Development is something that has labelled them 'backward'*¹, and has oppressed and marginalised them, and made their lives worse.

'...for two-thirds of the people on earth, this positive meaning of the word 'development'* - profoundly rooted after two centuries of its social construction – is a reminder of what they are not. It is a reminder of an undesirable, undignified condition. To escape from it, they need to be enslaved to others' experiences and dreams'. (Esteva, 1992: p.10)

These 'experiences and dreams of others' include money and the accumulation of it and all it can buy. But for many people, this is not something they desire, nor aspire to:

'Many people living off the world's lands or forests without the benefit of modern amenities or cash in their pockets do not perceive themselves as 'poor'. Their aspiration is not necessarily a **simulacrum** of modern Western consumer society'. (Black, 2007: pp. 29-30)

In South Africa, 'development' is often understood to be about building shopping mall after shopping mall or office block after office block or casino after casino, while millions live in shacks or on the streets.

*On 20 January 1949, in his inauguration speech before Congress, US President Harry Truman defined the largest part of the world as 'underdeveloped areas'. And, just like that, the South became 'underdeveloped' and it has remained that way (according to the **dominant discourse**) since Truman uttered his words.

simulacrum – to be similar to, or to be like someone or something else

dominant discourse – particular way of talking about issues and subjects by those who hold positions of political and economic power. These 'particular ways' are repeated and passed on and become 'normalised'. Many, including those in the social majority, believe them to be true. Often they are false



Illustration by Nkosinathi Mhlongo

Alienation under capitalism

While capitalism has almost completely redefined how we understand ‘work’ and how we look at ourselves in relation to our work, work has always been essential to the ability of human beings to survive, create social systems and reproduce itself over thousands of years. Karl Marx (the German philosopher, economist, sociologist, historian, journalist and revolutionary socialist) is famous for stating that work under capitalism leads to what he defined as ‘alienation’. Marx believed that alienation is the systemic result of the process of removing the fruits of workers’ labour from them. Capitalism has deepened the division of society into social classes based on who *owns and controls* the wealth of society and who *labours to produce* this wealth. Strong class divisions are, in societies like South Africa, further entrenched by racism, sexism and other forms of differentiation that have continued long after 1994.

Within the capitalist mode of production the worker invariably loses the ability to determine her or his life and destiny because, even though it is the worker doing the labour, everything is determined by the owner of the business/organisation and it is the owner (often supported by laws and long-established practices) who decides, controls and dictates what, when and how things should be done. The division of labour has made sure that workers perform single or limited tasks and, by doing this, they do not need to know what others along the ‘factory line’ are doing (indeed other workers may be working in different countries). Apart from the replacement of craftspeople by ‘unskilled’ workers who can be paid less, the division of labour further alienates workers from their work. This alienation is further deepened by violating the languages, histories and traditions of the people.

(From: Baatjes, 2014, p. 9)



Capitalism always requires a certain amount of unemployment of workers (and by extension, their families and communities). These workers can be employed (albeit temporarily) by the capitalists if and when there is a demand for their ‘use’. Because there are many of them, the cost of their labour can be pushed down by capitalists who can ‘take their pick’. Unemployment is achieved by capitalists by (amongst other means): reducing the amount of jobs; increasing mechanisation; ‘sending’ jobs to other countries where the same job will be done for less pay; and encouraging ‘competition’ amongst prospective employees by constantly demanding a higher level of qualification and/or experience for jobs that really do not require either. Prospective and retrenched workers are blamed for their unemployment or underemployment. They constantly strive to acquire (get) more certification and/or experience and/or whatever is demanded of them, when, in fact, the system (owned and controlled by capital), ensures that workers remain unemployed or underemployed.

As we wrap up Part Two and move into Part Three, consider this question:

Who, under capitalism, is valued and why?

The financial ‘wizards’ at Wall Street’s top banks received pay deals worth more than \$70-billion, a substantial proportion of which was paid in **discretionary** bonuses, for their work in 2008 despite plunging the global financial system into its worst crisis since the 1929 stock market crash. And other individuals, particularly celebrities (including many sports ‘stars’), earn outrageous amounts of money. David Beckham (retired before he turned 40) took home £13.3million from sponsorship deals in 2011.

On the 27 March 2017:

£1 (British Pound) equals R15.94
(South African Rand)

\$1 (US Dollar) equals R12.64
(South African Rand)

For R1, you get very very few cents in British or American money.

The exchange rate (how much different currencies - e.g. the Rand - are worth) changes every day.

discretionary – this kind of bonus is not automatic/to give it or not is decided after the fact and it is usually given for something like exceptional (really good) performance

Are they really more hard-working, knowledgeable and/or skilled than a farm worker, miner, nurse or police officer that they should earn so much more? It would take a farm worker, etc thousands of years to earn the same.

An alternative way of thinking about skills, livelihoods and work is through the concept of ‘socially useful work’:

Many people have skills that are very useful and that can add value to the lives of the people around them: skills in childcare, in building or repairing things, in cooking or cleaning, in making music or telling stories, and countless other things besides. Many people already provide these services to each other on the basis of neighbourly exchange – in other words, they help each other when something is needed, and simply maintain an ‘informal’ sense about who has done what for whom, and who owes someone else a return favour. These are not necessarily skills that businesses can easily profit from, so these skills are not normally recognised or taken seriously within discussions of skills, employment and livelihood (CERT, 2013, p.18).

In this booklet we argue for forms of ‘work’ such as those described above to be acknowledged and valued, so that a Mother who stays home to cook, clean, raise children, offer advice and comfort, sew, look after animals, plant vegetables (and possibly look after other extended family members and/or neighbours) is not told she ‘does not work’ but rather that she is contributing to a vital part of society – the love, care and concern that happens within the home and community - and that she is recognised and supported accordingly.

Another look at the term ‘economy’:

If we return to the root of the word ‘economy’, we will see that it comes from two Greek words: ‘oikos’ meaning ‘house’ or ‘household’ and ‘nomos’ meaning ‘rule’, ‘law’ or ‘custom’. When put together, the word points to the ‘management’ or ‘stewardship’ of a household. An oikonomos was a steward or manager and economics was originally the management of the resources of a household. It was about how goods were produced, distributed, shared and consumed for the well-being of the household’s members.

Part 3

Co-creating another world



Abalimi Bezekhaya farmer, Cape Flats

There are many ways of making a contribution and difference to society - we should be aware of not falling into the trap of thinking that being part of making a profit for a business (either as a worker or owner) is the only way, or even a 'good' way to contribute to society. There are many people globally who are proving just the opposite. As the above examples in this booklet demonstrate, 'ordinary' people (the social majority) are creatively crafting and developing 'solutions' to their everyday issues, concerns and problems.

Activists and scholars use certain terms and concepts to describe what is happening 'on the ground'. Below we look at some of these terms/concepts and what they mean:

The Commons

The Commons was (and still is in many indigenous communities) a large part of what was vital to ensure and sustain life. The Commons is made up of resources held in common or shared, *not* owned privately. It consists of natural and cultural resources freely accessible to all members of a society. These include air, water, food, land worked co-operatively, genes, plant biodiversity, wildlife, seeds, public spaces, languages, human knowledge and wisdom, technologies, amongst other. Importantly, the Commons respects an Earth that is **finite** and therefore not pillaged or destroyed.

Under capitalism, most of the things that make up the Commons have been **commodified** as part of capitalism's (il)logic and the Earth is ravaged in the process. As community after community has been destroyed, so has the concept of the Commons and the actual things that make it up, for example, most of the world's freshwater is used by corporate industrial agriculture and in manufacturing, such as in the computer industry for manufacture of computer chips. Relatively little is left for drinking or small-scale farming (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004: p. 84).

The term 'eco-cide' (coined by the American biologist Arthur Galston at the Conference on War and National Responsibility in 1970) comes from the Greek 'oikos' which means 'house' or 'home' and the Latin 'caedere' which means 'strike down', 'demolish' or 'kill'. It translates to killing our home, which is the Earth.

finite – fixed, it has limits, it does not go on and on

commodified – to turn something that everyone has a right to (like water) into a product that can be bought and sold (this is part of what neoliberalism does)

ecological – to do with the environment

DEMOCRATIC ECO-SOCIALISM

Supporters of this form of socialism believe that the **ecological** crises created by capitalism place all life in jeopardy. They believe we have to restore balance to sustain life which means that the way we produce, consume and organise our living has to be non-destructive in its relationship to eco-systems. Society needs to be organised around human needs rather than profits. Democratic public ownership, public goods, protection of the Commons and socialised forms of property relations become crucial.

(From: Baatjes, 2014, p. 13)

(See *ecopedagogy* in Part Four)

Buen vivir*: the simple life / living well / good living

Simple living or living well is a tradition that dates back many thousand years and has emerged as a philosophy of life in almost every civilisation. Our history is filled with people living in harmony with the cycles of nature. They saw the Earth as a great mother and treated her with a **sacred reverence**. Their lives and work were influenced by the seasons, the moon, stars, sun and sky. They lived in **alignment** with the natural order of things and thus maintained balance. Simple living came naturally in hunter-gatherer societies. Each group had a large 'territory' over which it roamed. The area was large because only a small amount of plants in any given environment were suitable for people to eat and these came into fruit at different times of the year. The group's territory had regular places, like caves, where the group would stop for a while. Hunter-gatherers lived in harmony with their environment, for example the moon played a major role in the hunting of food. Hunting at night would have been more rewarding than during the day and the hunters were able to use the moon's phases for the stalking and killing of prey. People ate what their own small group gathered or killed, no one was richer or poorer than their neighbours. It is highly unlikely that any one person led or exercised any significant authority over any group larger than the family group. The Mbendjèle Yaka Pygmies in the Congo lived in an **egalitarian** system of social relationships – they had a 'pendulum of power' system of women ruling and then men ruling. Scholars refer to this as 'primitive communism' (a term first used by Marx and Engels). In one famous study, Marshall Sahlins pointed out that aboriginal people in Northern Australia and the !Kung people of Botswana typically worked only three to five hours a day. Sahlins (1972) wrote that 'rather than a continuous travail, the food quest is **intermittent**, leisure abundant, and there is a greater amount of sleep in the daytime per capita per year than in any other condition of society'.

(From: Baatjes, 2014, p. 6)



From: <http://www.viome.org/>

*Buen vivir comes from the Quechua term 'Sumak Kawsay'. Quechua is the language spoken by approximately 10 million people of the South American Andean countries. 'Sumak' is 'good'. Kawsay is 'life' or 'living'. Therefore 'good life' or 'good living'. In Spanish it is translated as 'Buen vivir' or 'Vivir bien', the latter meaning 'living well'.

sacred reverence – religious/spiritual respect

alignment – worked in harmony with/at the same time as

egalitarian – equal

intermittent – happening at irregular intervals – now and then/not continuous or steady

This idea and practice of 'living well' is still found in the ways of life of many indigenous peoples throughout the world, such as the Adivasi in South Asia. In South America this way of life is called *buen vivir*. There are many other indigenous peoples in all parts of the world who practise similarly, but in some instances there are no specific terms or words to describe their practices. 'Living well' is when one has enough to enjoy life as opposed to having too much 'stuff' i.e. *too many* unnecessary material things. It is not about returning to some romanticised past, but rather it is about facing the systemic crises of present-day societies - crises caused by the capitalist system - and trying to learn *from our roots*. The late Neville Alexander spoke and wrote about 'Enough is as good as a feast' (2013) (words attributed to Mary Poppins, 1964). Alexander reminded us that we just need 'enough' to lead happy and fulfilled lives – people do not need an abundance of material things in order to be content.

Simple or good living is not about expecting people to live with very little (and we should remember that many people already do live with ‘very little’ in this capitalist world). ‘Living well’ is about meeting basic human needs such as food, decent living conditions, education, healthcare, etc. - all in an environment of peace with no discrimination, violence or conflict. It is about quality rather than quantity as measured in ways that have nothing to do with money. It is anti-**consumerist**. Degrowth thinkers and activists and scholars **advocate** for the reduction of production and consumption, arguing that over-consumption is a cause of long-term environmental problems and social inequalities. Degrowthists aim to maximise happiness and well-being through non-consumptive means such as sharing work, consuming less, spending more time doing what we term ‘leisure’ activities like art, music, spending time with family and community members, and embracing and practising spirituality (spirituality, for many indigenous peoples, is not de-linked from earthly or material things).

‘Living well’ does not deny the individual, but recognises that we are individuals because of our communities and others. This is aptly captured in the philosophy of ‘Ubuntu’ – ‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ (*I am what I am because of who we all are*). ‘Living well’ is about gaining much positivity, joy and strength from human relationships.

consumerist – when a society encourages people to buy goods and services ('stuff') in ever-increasing amounts (even if things are not really needed)

advocate – believe in/promote

Solidarity Economy

There is the dominant discourse way of looking at the ‘economy’ which is about a clearly defined space that consists of formal labour markets in which buying and selling and competition happens. An Ethiopian farmer struggles to eke out an existence because ‘the markets’ have set a price for her or his coffee, while Americans drink this same coffee miles away for a **premium** price. What do we think about this? We (largely) accept that this scenario is because ‘the markets’ have decided, and we (us ‘ordinary’ people), accept it as a **‘fait accompli’**.

Yet, simultaneously, ‘other’, ‘new’ or ‘alternative’ economies are all around us and growing **everyday**. Here, we are not necessarily referring to the informal or township or green (et al) economies which operate along capitalistic ways of doing things, but to an economy or economies in which things are purposely done ‘differently’. Here, we refer to an economy or economies based on ‘democratic participation, worker and community ownership, social and economic justice, and ecological sustainability’ (Miller, n.d., ‘About GEO’). The important difference between the dominant discourse ‘economy’ and the ‘solidarity economy’ is that the **latter** is about the many different ways in which humans *collectively* organise themselves and ‘do’ or act - putting people and the environment before profits. These groupings embrace practices of solidarity, care and co-operation rather than individualism and competition. The Solidarity Economy is anti-capitalist (yet some argue that it is almost impossible to operate ‘outside’ of a capitalist frame because it is so **pervasive**).



The Women’s Circle

premium – top/highest

fait accompli – a thing that has already happened or been decided before those affected hear about it, leaving them with no option but to accept it

latter – last/second one

pervasive – all around/everywhere

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

'Work' done within the home sometimes referred to as 'women's work' (as described in Parts One and Two)	Subsistence economy	Bartering (collective economy)	Sharing (collective economy)	Scavenging	Gift economy	Worker-controlled initiatives
	a non-monetary economy which relies on natural resources to provide for basic needs through such things as subsistence agriculture. The idea is that one provides for oneself and, if there is any surplus, it can be sold or traded. It is the opposite of an 'industrial' economy (see food sovereignty in Bennie's article further below under 'Articles')	(these could be non-material things, like child-minding or fixing something that is broken)	Circle wrote about 'bringing and sharing' in Part One. A collective economy is based on common ownership and/or control of resources, such as the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative's <i>community land trust</i> . The trust ensures that people living in this working class neighbourhood in Boston, USA, will always be able to afford their houses as all houses have been bought by the trust – they are not subject to 'the markets' and fluctuating market prices which can easily become unaffordable for the residents	this includes hunting, fishing and foraging and also living off waste ('one person's trash is another person's treasure'). Earlier on we spoke about the Itsoseng Women's Project who collect and recycle glass, paper and plastic. Community members bring their waste to the site, as do local shebeens, bottle stores and street traders. Shops are also encouraged to bring their waste to Itsoseng in exchange for cash	this is about giving to others without an explicit agreement for immediate or future rewards (it is therefore different to bartering)	this includes workers own and control their own workplaces - these could be factories such as Vio. Me in Thessaloniki, Greece (which produces and sells ecological cleaning products at the occupied premises) or co-operatives (as discussed in Part One). In 2010 in South Africa, workers from the Mineline-Tap Engineering factory, in Johannesburg near Soweto, attempted a takeover after the owner filed for bankruptcy which left the workers unemployed and without any pay or benefits. After a long struggle the attempted takeover (into a worker co-operative) failed, but Mineline is an important example of how South African workers organised in an attempt to keep their jobs and the factory going

fluctuating – keeps changing
explicit – clear/definite

Below, Miller (2005) explains how the Solidarity Economy is a grassroots, organic process that starts and grows from the bottom-up and, therefore, it can never be a 'one size fits all blueprint' handed down by an 'expert':

Solidarity economics is fundamentally different than both capitalist and state socialist economics. Instead of starting with a grand theory, it starts with our practices. Instead of demanding a single plan or vision for the economy, it seeks to connect many diverse initiatives together in ways that respect their differences and independence. Instead of putting forward a single vision of economic organization (how the economy should be structured); solidarity economics provides us with a model for economic organizing - a process by which we can democratically strengthen and create new kinds of economic relations in our communities.

When someone asks the big question, 'so what's the alternative?', solidarity economics answers not with a Big Scheme (a 'third way' beyond the Market or the State), but with another question: By what means, on whose terms, and with what guiding ethical principles will we collectively work towards new economic structures and relationships? This is an economic process, not a plan; it is a strategy for economic organizing that starts with our already-present practices and, from there, 'builds the road by walking'.



Vio.Me.

Occupy, Resist, Produce!

From: <http://www.viome.org/>

Part 4

Education and its purpose



'Singabafazi Singumzabalazo' (We are the women. We are the struggle).

A workshop attended by farmers from the Makukhanye Rural People's Movement facilitated by DELTA (Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action) and Khanyisa Education and Development Trust, Port Elizabeth.

What kind of a role does ‘education’ play in all of this?

Let’s start by looking at what the White Paper for Post-school Education and Training (2013, pp. 9-10) says:

Given the demographics of the South African labour force, it is not enough to focus education and training on preparing people for formal-sector employment. Unemployment levels in South Africa are extremely high, particularly among youth.

...
This situation means that we are providing training for individuals who will not, in the foreseeable future, be able to find formal employment in existing enterprises. To make a living, they will have to create employment opportunities in other ways – by starting small businesses in the informal or formal sector, or by establishing cooperatives, community organisations or non-profit initiatives of various types. The education and training system must cater for people in such circumstances by providing suitable skills. Education must also cater for the needs of communities by assisting them to develop skills and knowledge which are not necessarily aimed at income generation – for example: community organisation; knowledge of how to deal with government departments or commercial enterprises such as banks; citizenship education; community health education; literacy. The proposed community colleges are expected to play a particularly important role in this regard, and must therefore be designed to be flexible in meeting the needs of their own particular communities. The colleges must build on the experiences and traditions of community and people’s education developed by non-formal, community-based and non-governmental organisations over many decades.



A play being done for community educators to generate discussion about what community education is and how it can be brought to life from experiences and interests of community members (CEP).

From the above, it is clear that government acknowledges and recognises the types of examples we have described in this booklet, and that education should play a role in *supporting* these kinds of capabilities/initiatives/enterprises.

How should or could this happen?

originate – begin/start

generated – made/created

Much of the education or learning that supports the kinds of examples described above is of a non-formal or informal nature, although some of it is formal or intersects with the formal. This kind of education or learning is different to mainstream institution-based education in its *purpose*, *what* it is that is learnt, and *how* it is learnt.

It is about the interests, issues and concerns of the community members involved in it - it is about what is ‘happening on the ground’ and in people’s lives, rather than about knowledge which many refer to as abstract or alienating, i.e. not real or concrete. Abstract knowledge is often taught/learnt in a formal institution and many critique it for being ‘out of touch’ with what people would really like or need to learn. The type of education/learning that is directly connected to people’s lives acknowledges that knowledge is not something made up by ‘outside experts’, but rather that it is something that can and does **originate**, grow and develop within ‘ordinary’ communities and is **generated** by community members. What is learnt starts *from* the ground, rather than the more usual way which is from the ‘top’.

Below, a member of the Unemployed People's Movement (Grahamstown), explains her learning or 'education':

Since joining the UPM I have learnt a lot of things ... because first of all politically I was not ... I didn't have that much experience, but joining the UPM I have managed to be more informed of what is happening around me.

The kinds of education or learning that people say they find meaningful and valuable is when:

- it is to do with their *lived experiences* – it is about their issues or struggles - and it *starts from* that basis;
- when it helps with people's *doing or making of their lives* and therefore is directly *relevant* to them; and
- when it combines the *head and the hands and the heart* (this takes us back to the original meaning of the word 'vocation' – when people carry out meaningful and productive activities with a sense of dedication and commitment, as opposed to simply doing a 'job' for someone else in order to earn money. See Kothari's article under 'Articles' for more on this).

Most examples of this type of education/learning are found not in formal institutions, but in non-formal spaces, such as is evident with the Itsoseng Women's Project where the women used their garden space not only to plant and grow vegetables, but also to discuss social problems and to try to find solutions together.

Meaningful and valuable learning does not have to happen in a 'brick and mortar' structure (a building), but can and does happen in a variety of spaces and this had led some to refer to this type of education as being that of a 'college without walls'. The educators who teach or facilitate within this type of environment do not necessarily have the 'required' level of qualification to do so, yet many have the experience and know-how which enables them to do the job as well as 'qualified' educators.

ECOPEDAGOGY

Ecopedagogy is a different way of looking at education to the mainstream - it comes from leftist educators in Central and South America such as Paulo Freire, Moacir Gadotti and Leonardo Boff. It is about *re-educating* ourselves as we try to create a new world that is about care and respect for each other and our *Earth*. It asks many questions such as: What kinds of education do we need and what *actions* do we need to take to bring about a new, better, safer, healthier world for *all* who live in it?

What is very important is that the State should let the grassroots groupings decide what and how they would like the State to intervene. The State should pay attention to the following words:

**Para dialogar escuchar primero. Despues escuchar
(For a dialogue let's listen first. And then, listen).**

(Machado in Prakash & Esteva, 1998, PART II)

Resources you may find useful

Following is a list of resources you may find useful.

There are many others too. Many resources are freely available online.

Books:

- Beck, D., & Purcell, R. (2010). *Popular education practice for youth and community development work*. (Empowering youth and community work practice). Exeter: Learning Matters Ltd.
- Brown, M.J. (2006). *Building powerful community organizations. A personal guide to creating groups that can solve problems and change the world*. Arlington, MA: Long Haul Press.
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Articles and documents:

Kallis, G. (2015). *The degrowth alternative*.

<http://www.greattransition.org/publication/the-degrowth-alternative>

Merino, R. (2016). An alternative to 'alternative development'? Buen vivir and human development in Andean countries. *Oxford Development Studies*, 44(3), 271-286.

SAFSC: *People's food sovereignty act*.

<http://www.safsc.org.za/peoples-food-sovereignty-act/>

<http://safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SEM-guide.pdf>

Documentaries:

Food, Inc.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Oq24hITFTY>

SAFSC: *The hidden story behind hunger*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYHybn0QdYA>

The story of stuff

<http://storyofstuff.org/movies/>

(There are others in this series)

Websites:

www.copac.org.za

The Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) is a grassroots NGO and a facilitator of the Solidarity Economy Movement in South Africa. It is 'not the movement but an organiser working on the ground with all potential and actual solidarity economy actors'.

<http://www.educationpolicyconsortium.org.za/>

The Education Policy Consortium (EPC) was established in 2001 and is currently undertaking a large-scale research programme on *Building a progressive network of critical research and public engagement: Towards a democratic post-school sector*. It is funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

www.safsc.org.za

South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC)

The SAFSC emerged out of a need to unite organisations, social movements, small-scale farmers, farmworkers and NGOs championing food sovereignty into a national platform in advancing food sovereignty strategically in South Africa.

<https://nyelenieuurope.net/>

Nyeleni Europe/European Food Sovereignty Movement

In 2007 an alliance of social movements organised an international meeting on food sovereignty in Mali. This forum was the inspiration for the European food sovereignty movement to get together in 2011 and agree on the Nyéléni Europe Declaration.

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Articles



Hunger and advancing sustainable food systems

by Andrew Bennie (Associate: COPAC)

When looking at the problems we experience in the food system today, most starkly illustrated by our levels of hunger and malnutrition, the causes speak to questions of power, justice and politics. Hence seeking solutions to the problems of hunger cannot be reduced to questions of 'best practice' – while of course it is critical to implement practical solutions to the problems we face and to do so in the best possible ways, to really tackle the issues we must also confront questions of power, justice and politics in the food system and in South African society. The question of hunger (and solutions) therefore requires a concerted effort from the standpoint of justice.

I will outline some suggested principles in the interests of 'best practices' that may assist stakeholders in their projects and engagements with community members and organisations, but I will situate this within a broader picture of the forces driving the shocking levels of hunger and malnutrition and resultant suffering we currently experience in South Africa, and the world. But, people's solutions exist. It is a matter of building the ideas, capacities and cooperation through linking and working together to advance a just, fair and sustainable food system – a campaigning and movement building approach.

1. The Broken Food System

The question of hunger in South Africa is a reflection of our high levels of poverty and inequality. However, a key dimension of hunger is the nature of the food system itself: how food is produced, who controls its production, what it is produced for, what kinds of foods are produced and consumed, who profits and benefits from food, who gets food, and who doesn't.

Rather than hunger being only a reflection of poverty, inequality and unemployment, the making of the South African food system historically was a key dynamic in creating such poverty and inequality, and it continues to drive hunger through how it operates today in the interests of corporate power. We can focus on three major contradictions of the food system to understand how it puts our ability to feed everyone sustainably in the present and into the future in jeopardy: hunger and malnutrition, corporate power, and climate change.

1.1. Hunger and Malnutrition

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reports that today 795 million people in the world suffer from hunger, but the likelihood is that it is still over a billion people. 2.1 billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiency because they do not have access to the variety of food that would constitute a healthy and nutritious diet. At the same time, of the world's 5 billion adults, 2 billion are obese or overweight. This represents a doubling of the rate of obesity between 1980 and 2014. However, obesity is often a sign, not of prosperity, but of malnutrition: eating starchy, high energy foods because they are the cheapest. Thus although obesity was once considered a malady specific to the wealthy world, it is on a sharp rise in developing and poor countries.

The crisis and injustice of the global food system is jeopardising the futures of a vast swathe of the world's population – its children. Globally, 45% of child deaths are due to malnutrition, and almost 25% of children experience stunting. The world is also getting sicker and dying earlier than they should: the greatest cause of mortality today is non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The largest cause of NCDs is malnutrition and poor dietary intake. South Africa reflects these global trends. We are classified as food secure at the national level as we produce more than we consume and we export much of our (best) produce, yet 14 million people (26%) suffer from hunger, and a further 28% are at risk of experiencing hunger. That is, only 46% per cent (less than half) of the South African population is food secure!

The situation described above exists despite the fact that the world produces enough food to feed everyone 1.5 times the amount of food that they need every day, an amount that is enough to feed 10 billion people. We can repeat a statistic above: in a world that produces more food than it needs, almost half of the children that die each year, die because they or their parents were not rich enough or lucky enough to access this food.

How is this so? A key issue is for us to look at who controls our food. That is, who decides who gets to eat, and who doesn't get to eat?

1.2. Corporate Control of our Food Systems

For the last financial year (2016) the CEO of Shoprite Checkers (a shop from which much of South Africa's workers and poor buy their food), Whitey Basson, was paid about R100-million – a R49.7 million salary and a R50 million bonus for the rising performance (i.e. increased profit rate) of Shoprite Checkers over the previous few years. According to Shoprite, much of this increasing profit over the years has resulted from its expansion into sub-Saharan Africa, a region with the highest levels of hunger in the world, and in which it is estimated a further 25 million people were added to the ranks of the hungry as a result of the recent drought. To further put Basson's earning of R100-million into perspective: a casual worker in a Checkers deli who earns a basic wage of R550 per week would have to work 290 years to earn what Basson earned in one month; or, to earn what Basson earned in a year, she would have to work for 3 500 years.

What this real-life scenario illustrates is the power that corporations in our food systems have to make super-profits from a basic human right. In practice, the imagined corporate right to profit is taking precedence over the constitutionally enshrined right to food. As discussed, a vast portion of the South African population does not access all the food they need on a daily basis, but most of the food that is purchased by South Africans has travelled through a corporate-run value chain: only 6 companies, such as Pick n Pay, Shoprite, Spar and so on, control 90% of the formal retail market; 4 companies control 80% of the formal processing market; 3 companies control 90% of the commercial seed market, and so on. At each step in the value chain these few powerful actors have the ability to shape the market and extract a profit. It means that when South Africa's close to 55.5 million citizens purchase food at a retailer, they are paying not just for the food, but for the profit that has been taken at each step in the value chain, each time increasing the price that the consumer will pay for the item of food at the retailer.

This reflects a global picture of concentration and corporate control in global food circuits, where just four companies control almost the entire global grain trade. Just ten companies, the likes of Nestle, control a majority of the world's food brands and products. This corporate concentration and control is extending to one of the most basic elements of life: seed. For all of human agricultural history, seed has been part of the commons, saved, shared and improved for the benefit of humans and the earth. But commercial seed companies have been building their power over seed through mechanisms of exclusion that aim to sever collective control over seed, through intellectual property rights and patenting of genetically modified varieties, forcing farmers to buy their seed every season. If final regulatory approval is given to recent mergers between the world's largest seed companies, only three companies will occupy over 75% of the world's commercial seed market.

1.3. Climate Change

The world has already passed the one degree Celsius warming mark since pre-industrial times and is likely to continue further unless drastic action is taken to curb rising carbon emissions. Climate change is already impacting food systems, and this will intensify, through droughts and increasing temperatures, where sub-Saharan Africa will be hardest hit. In addition, the industrial food system is itself a major contributor to climate change and environmental degradation. It uses fossil fuels in agricultural machinery, in the manufacture of pesticides and fertilisers, and in the transport and packaging of food. Some sources say that agriculture contributes between 33-50% of global greenhouse gases.

If we are to halt climate change and survive the severe climate changes that are on their way, we cannot be handing control over a key requirement for human survival, food, to corporations who know how to do little else but maximise profit, and destroy communities, farming systems and the environment in the process. But all over the world, people, farmers and movements have risen up to demand and fight for an alternative, embodied in the notion of food sovereignty.

2. The Food Sovereignty Alternative

Food sovereignty has garnered much attention and action by movements, as well as researchers and

academics, and has evolved in its dimensions and descriptions. It was first development by La Via Campesina, a global movement of small farmers and peasants and the world's largest social movement with over 200 million members and chapters in over 80 countries. In basic, practical terms, it can be outlined as:

- We build people's control over the food system – corporate power is rolled back
- Farmers control their own seed systems
- There is a more equal distribution of, access to, and control over land
- We produce food for the sake of humanity
- No one is hungry – the human right to food
- Farmers are supported through appropriate government policy – technical, financial, markets
- Markets serve people
- We care for the earth
- We care for each other

3. Challenges for Key Stakeholders

In this context described above, two key broad questions for key stakeholders might be:

1. How do we become part of challenging the injustices of the existing food system?
2. How do we advance people's alternatives that place control in people's hands to end hunger?

There are countless examples in South Africa and all over the world of communities and groups that are defending and advancing alternatives to the broken, corporate-controlled and globalised food system. It is imperative to advance alternatives from below now in order to construct an alternative food system and to build the capacity of communities to cope with climate change.

Some of these practical activities that need to be supported include:

- Building agroecology capacities and practice: given the environmental and social impacts of industrial agriculture, we simply cannot rely on this system to feed us into the future. In fact, the industrial food system currently only produces about 30% of the world's food. 50% of world food production is still undertaken by small scale farmers, and one-third of the world's population still relies on its own production for meeting food needs. Agroecology is essentially a model of agriculture that works with nature instead of against it, and draws on traditional knowledge as well as scientific research and knowledge. However, for this alternative to be put into practice on a wide scale surfaces the question of land, especially in our South African context: who has access to it and who controls it.
- Land: An important component of transforming our food system is land reform, so that land is more equally distributed and therefore the production base can be widened.

However, there are also questions relating to existing land that communities have access to and what is hampering the use of this land, such as lack of government support. Urban land is also another important question. Urban agriculture is growing all over the world and is a growing feature of urban spaces in South Africa as well, especially townships. But access to land and associated needs like water and infrastructure remains a challenge and local government planning usually does not take into account land use planning for building urban food economies.

- Seed banks: To cope with climate change we need more diversity in our food systems, not less. Traditional varieties of seeds and those saved over generations and bred for varying conditions often have greater resilience. Building on-farm and community seed banks are crucial therefore to deal with climate change as well as to advance a front of resistance to corporate control and incursion into seed systems, preserving biodiversity and the control of communities over a key basis of life.
- Building and sharing knowledge and capacities: To advance alternatives to the food crisis also requires the building of capacities to do so, at the level of understanding the economic and political context as well as the practical knowledge and skills in building alternatives. For example, in many parts of the world

farmer-to-farmer learning has emerged as one of the most powerful forms of knowledge-sharing and education. This takes the form of a horizontal and democratic approach to learning in which the skills existing in farmers, activists and community members are appreciated and a platform provided for sharing this knowledge with each other. This form of learning does not need to be limited to farming and agroecology. The principle of peer-to-peer learning extends across all the capacities and knowledge we need to advance alternatives.

- Consumption alternatives: Some of the alternatives discussed above relate to production, but solutions to the current food crisis need to extend beyond only the realm of production. Much of South Africa's population is urbanised and not directly involved in food production. So there are examples as well of alternatives for consumers to access affordable but nutritious food. These include worker cooperative supermarkets, consumer cooperatives, and solidarity buying groups. These forms allow for collective buying of food as well as democratic involvement and benefit of consumers involved.
- Linkages: The above alternatives should not be viewed in isolation and so a key challenge is to link them all into a comprehensive alternative extending from production to consumption. These alternatives cannot be constructed individually and require collective action and cooperation, especially amongst the poor and hungry, for emancipation through practical building and action. Although forms of solidarity and cooperation always exist in various ways amongst communities and groups, building and strengthening it in a consistent way towards a clear building of alternatives poses certain challenges and dynamics. For example, cooperatives in South Africa have suffered from a high failure rate due to a multitude of factors. This situation led the COPAC to reflect on why this is the case and part of this reflection involved a learning journey of cooperative experiences in Africa and South Africa in order to learn from successful cooperatives about some of the key factors that seem to underpin their success. The identified factors include:

Vision: Refers to the place the cooperative wants to be at in the future as it realises the needs of worker members. It is important to have a clear vision and to actively work towards the realisation of this vision. Worker cooperatives thrive best when they see themselves as a means to meet the needs of worker owners and as part of contributing to wider social transformation. It is important to see the future of the cooperative integrally linked to a wider movement, a solidarity economy movement.

Practice Principles: Principles are crucial to maintain the identity of the worker cooperative. This has to happen in a conscious way and has to be built into the operations of the cooperative, the institutional decision-making structures of the cooperative, the planning tools and relationships the cooperative has with the community and wider solidarity economy movement.

Leadership: Many successful worker cooperatives have a leader or two that use their leadership skills not for personal gain, but are committed to achieving the vision and success of the cooperative. They therefore use their capacities to build the cooperative and its cooperative practices. They also bring together the cooperative members to act as a collective and in pursuit of the cooperative's objectives and vision.

Strategic Planning: Is necessary to keep the cooperative on track to realise its objectives. Strategic planning is about having a road map that connects the present with the vision of the cooperative. A cooperative should have an annual strategic plan, and even a five or ten year strategy. These need to be developed as the cooperative starts up.

Finance: Is crucial to provide the capital for the development of the cooperative. Worker cooperatives are normally constrained by a lack of start-up finance, working capital and a lack of finance for growth. Organising sources of finance that do not undermine the autonomy of the cooperative are important. Most successful cooperatives sacrifice in the short term and build up internal reserves of finance for growth and expansion.

Education and Training: Is ongoing in a worker cooperative. Without developing a culture of education and training most worker cooperatives fail. Many successful worker cooperatives rotate jobs and encourage

worker owners to learn everything about the enterprise. This empowers worker owners to have a global view of the cooperative and to understand its operations better. Education and training is also important to ensure cooperative skills are developed. There are many methods of education. For example, as discussed above, a peer-to-peer approach can be one of the most powerful forms of learning.

4. Moving Forward

The above suggested principles relate to strengthening collective action at the local level or within a specific project or cooperative. However, if we go back to the beginning of this article, it was proposed that the reasons we experience hunger relates to questions of power and justice. If we want to challenge the power that is at the root of hunger and injustice, and advance solutions on a societal level, these local level activities need to be networked into a collective platform that can build the power of the people and groups advancing such alternatives.

One such example is the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC). The SAFSC was launched in February 2015 and brought together over 50 organisations from communities, small farmers and cooperatives, the agrarian space and NGOs to develop a national platform to give voice to the injustices in our food system and to the solutions that we need to build. Since then the campaign has embarked on a process of building action through forums locally and by building a national voice on the food crisis. This was done through a tribunal on hunger and food prices where food corporations and government were put on 'trial' for their role in the hunger crisis; a national bread march in May of 2016; a tribunal on the drought, rising food prices and the impacts on small farmers; and other events together with these that worked with a host of other civil society organisations to draw the links between the climate crisis, the food system and extractivism. Such a campaign is aimed at further networking civil society allies, from trade unions to churches, to confront the realities of hunger and inequality in South Africa, and to show that there is another way. It provides a space in which key stakeholders could add their voices to a growing momentum for justice and wellbeing in our society.

Below is an extract from *Building economic solidarity from grassroots survival mechanisms. Popular Education and Solidarity Economics in Freedom Park, Johannesburg*

by Mudney Halim (CERT, UJ)

Freedom Park is located along the Golden Highway, ribbon development joins Johannesburg to Sebokeng on the fringes of Vereeniging. Historically the region is known for small-scale agriculture, stock and dairy farming. By organising existing initiatives, and encouraging new stokvels and co-operatives to develop into a strong movement, activists will provide a different lens to economic relationships, to rethink and reorganise local economies.

Making Sense of the Economic Landscape

The Freedom Park Research Group (FPRG) is a solidarity research collective that takes stock of economic activity in the specific geographic area comprising all residential extensions of Freedom Park incrementally. The FPRG initially concentrated on the way in which money goes into and out of the community.

Co-operatives and Stokvels

The FPRG identified stokvels as local endogenous practices that have the potential to develop into networks of solidarity for the greater benefit of all. In spite of the high levels of unemployment, the poor have always found innovative ways to cope with the demands of daily existence through stokvels. Stokvels are basic mechanisms used by working class people to show solidarity with each other's struggles by making collective savings work for them. There are different types of stokvels that serve diverse purposes, but a common factor is regular monetary contributions and collective saving towards fixed objectives. The traditional informal financial sector exemplified by stokvels is also very important in providing credit to poor households (a means for the poor to develop their resources to provide credit to themselves). Traditional institutions and instruments have a history of success and have for some time made access to credit possible for even the poorest of the poor.

There are different types of stokvels that operate very successfully for their members. They range from small groups to larger ones with hundreds as members, and collectively have substantial savings in formal financial institutions. Stokvels (buying clubs) are already operating on a small scale in Freedom Park. The research will give an indication of how their success can be generalised and structured in order to accommodate a larger membership to benefit. Presently smaller stokvels are buying from wholesalers located in close proximity. A larger pool of money will enable the collective to have more bargaining power and to broaden the scope for procurement.

Midway through the FPRG project, a parallel process was initiated in Freedom Park to set up a consumer co-operative. The indications at that stage were that the acquisition of basic goods, especially food, was a major challenge for most households, and a food co-operative, or a community co-operative store would offer some relief. VUSTA Food Distribution Primary Co-operative was established. Activists working on the project felt that the initial findings of the FPRG formed a substantial foundation and worked to action the ideas to form a consumer co-operative in Freedom Park. Contact was made with Morning Star Secondary Co-operative (MOSSECO), a registered entity that was established with the co-operation of primary co-operatives. It aims to organise other stokvels and seek alliances nationally to strengthen the sector. It seeks to consolidate the solidarity that is already expressed by 'ordinary' people who find innovative ways to survive, through collective strategies, to build the solidarity economy movement.

Growing Networks

What does a solidarity economy strategy look like in concrete terms? We can think about it in five parts: seeing with new eyes, naming our practices, connecting our practices, strengthening these practices and creating new possibilities (Mance, 2007). The FPRG initiative is a starting point for growing solidarity around how food is obtained by households in a community. The process thus far has generated the establishment of a primary consumer co-operative. Contact was made with a secondary co-operative where the idea of

community co-operative stores is taking root. MOSSECO already have committed members who make monetary contributions to achieve common objectives. The partnership will serve to compliment this commitment with research and scholarship into local economies, towards formulating solid sustainable strategies to grow the stokvel/co-operative sector to contribute to building the solidarity economy. The partnership hosted two hundred and thirty seven representatives of stokvels and co-operatives at a summit in September 2016, themed around;

- Food and other basic needs: from profit driven motives to a service model, and
- Consumer co-operatives, buying clubs and grocery stokvels: towards establishing community co-operative stores.

Why do we wait so restlessly for the workday to end and for the weekend to come? Could work be redefined to include enjoyment and pleasure?

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Originally published on Scroll.in, 17 June 2016

Economic development and modernity have transformed livelihoods into deadlihoods. They are wiping out millennia-old livelihoods that were ways of life, with no sharp division between work and leisure; and replacing them with dreary assembly line jobs where we wait desperately for weekends and holidays. Economic progress, we are told, is about moving from primary sector jobs to manufacturing and services. And so the livelihoods that virtually keep all of us alive – farming, forestry, pastoralism, fisheries, and related crafts – are considered backward. In India, this marginalises 700 million-800 million people, two-thirds of its population.

The results? Horrendous ones like thousands of farmers' suicides in the last decade; or the displacement by so-called development projects of 60 million people from their farms, forests, and coasts. Less visible is the pauperisation of many others deprived of the natural resources they depend on, as their lands and waters get taken away for industry, infrastructure and cities. Entire new forms of poverty are being created by development.

Assembly Line Drudgery

Let's assume that this is inevitable and desirable. As the narrative goes, who wants to continue the drudgery of farming and fishing? What are we replacing these with? For the poor, either no employment at all, or insecure, exploitative and unsafe jobs at construction sites, mines, industries, **dhabas**, and other places that can hardly be called less drudgery. A staggering 93% of Indian jobs are in the informal sector, an increasing number of these in exploitative conditions.

And are the middle classes and rich better off?

In terms of remuneration, they are much better off – a recent study shows 1% of Indians owning over 50% of its private wealth (built on the backs of severely underpaid labour).

But what about the quality of work?

The vast majority of those in modern sectors of work such as the IT industry, are mechanical cogs in a vast assembly line stretching across the globe. Early morning to late night, slouched on a computer terminal, or providing rote responses at call centres, or desperately seeking news to feed the incessantly hungry 24x7 news channels, or staring at stock market numbers – who can honestly say that these are not deadlihoods, suppressing our independence and innate creativity? If this is not the case, why do we wait so restlessly for the workday to end, or for the weekend to come? Why do we need retail therapy, superficially trying to get happiness by going shopping?

Meaningful Work

Over the last few years I've been taking sessions on development issues at alternative learning centres like Bhoomi College in Bengaluru and Sambhavana in Palampur. A large percentage of participants in these are IT professionals who want to drop out, to "do something more meaningful". Long ago I lost count of the number of people who've expressed envy about my enjoying my work. These folks have realised that they are not practicing livelihoods, even if they are making a pot of money. I do not mean to say that all modern jobs are deadening, nor that all traditional livelihoods were wonderful. I am well aware of the inequality, exploitation, and even drudgery in the latter. But this bathwater needs to be changed without throwing out the baby of meaningful livelihoods. Live examples of this include the Deccan Development Society and Timbaktu Collective, helping sustain and improve the social and economic status of once-poor peasants (including Dalit women farmers who are now also filmmakers and radio station managers); or **Dastkar Andhra** and **Jharcraft**, bringing back viability and providing new dignity to craftspersons. And so too that rare meaningful job in a modern sector: the field biologist who loves being in nature, the music teacher enthusiastically bringing out the talents of students, a chef in love with cooking in charge of an organic food kitchen.

Respect Physical Labour

For these counter-trends to gain ground, fundamental change is needed in education. In school and college, we are inculcated with the attitude that intellectual work is superior to physical labour. Our minds are trained, to the exclusion of building the capacity of hands, feet, and hearts. We are given role models of people whose success is based on conquest of nature and climbing ladders while kicking other people down. And so we grow up undervaluing producers. The horrendously low prices that farmers get for their produce is a symptom of a society with warped priorities; we do not want to pay adequately to someone who keeps us alive, but we are willing to pay through our noses for branded shoes and gadgets. And in relation to the latter, we don't even care what the actual factory worker gets. So another crucial change is in economic structures: community tenurial security over land and natural resources, worker control over means of production, social control over markets. In Greece recently I went to a detergents factory taken over by its workers. They now run it democratically, have converted the machinery to produce ecologically safe cleaning agents, and have won support from nearby townspeople including consumers. They spoke of how fulfilling their lives are now, compared to earlier when under the yoke of a capitalist owner. The next time we come across nomadic pastoralists steering their sheep through the traffic-laden streets of our cities, think of this. Yes, perhaps they are anachronisms, soon to disappear. But who is to say the same will not happen to our IT or digital media or call centre jobs? Perhaps a generation from now robots with artificial intelligence, seeing some of us staring at a computer screen, will smirk about how inefficient and outmoded we are. Not only farmers and fishers will have become anachronisms, but humans as a whole, except perhaps the few controlling the buttons. Science fiction? Perhaps, but a lot of what was science fiction has become fact.

Revisit our Role Models

Before we end up in a future where humans are redundant, we could do some serious reconsideration. Perhaps we can transition from being only an IT professional or writer of articles, to being more of the human that we have the potential to be. Perhaps we can facilitate farmers to also be researchers and filmmakers (as Deccan Development Society's women have become) – variants of Marx's vision of being hunter-fisher-pastoralist-critic all rolled into one. Many people I know (who'd be embarrassed to be named here) are accomplished researchers, farmers, musicians, parents, explorers, all in a seamless whole, breaking the false divisions between work and leisure, physical and mental, old and new. Imagine if these were the role models given to our kids, imagine if as youngsters we were encouraged to be self-reliant, inquisitive, respectful of diversity, and a responsible part of the community of life. Imagine if we redefined work to include enjoyment and pleasure? I believe this will happen, sooner or later. Till then, let us at least appreciate ways of life that have engaged respectfully with the earth for millennia, unlike the alienated modern jobs many of us have. And let's question whether we want to continue being deadened cogs in a mass production system that enriches only a few. Let's see how we can combine the best of old and new, to make both more meaningful and fulfilling. This could be the start of bringing back livelihoods and leaving behind deadlihoods.

dhabas – roadside restaurants in India usually open 24 hours

Dastkar Andhra – is an NGO whose vision and mission is to sustain handloom weaving as a viable rural livelihood and to strengthen the handloom industry

Jharcraft – is a government of Jharkhand undertaking. Jharcraft was formed to create sustainable livelihood opportunities in rural areas based on handloom, handicraft and other related activities

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