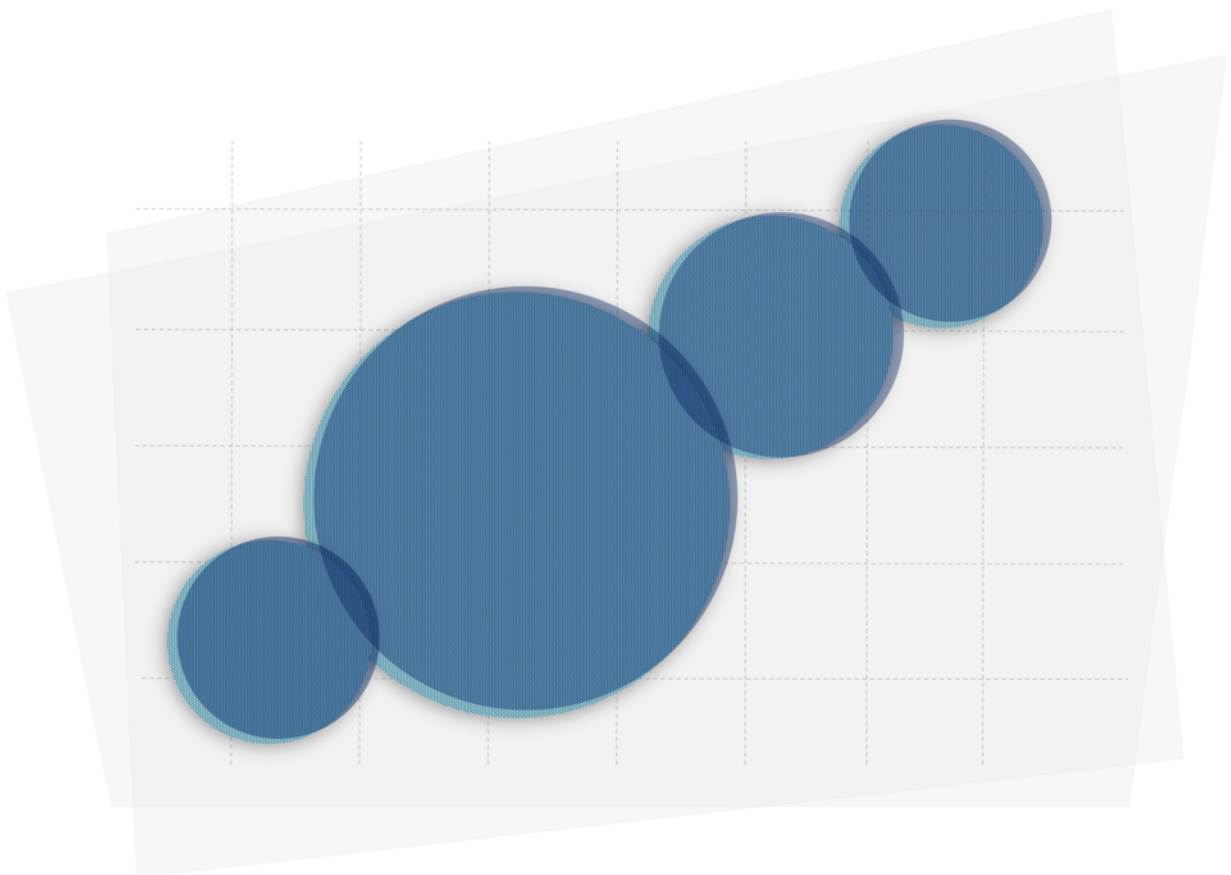


A Morphogenetic Approach to Social Development



Deon Pretorius

A Morphogenetic Approach to Social Development

Authors: Deon Pretorius

Corresponding author: Deon Pretorius, deon@dpact.co.za

Reviewed by: Prof Janet Cherry, Dept of Development Studies, Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa; and Grant Hancock, Managing Director, Ramp Economics, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Mistra Urban Futures, 2020

www.mistraurbanfutures.org

Mistra Urban Futures is an international Centre for sustainable urban development. We believe that the coproduction of knowledge is a winning concept for achieving sustainable urban futures and creating accessible, green and fair cities. The Centre is hosted by Chalmers University of Technology and has five platforms in Cape Town, Kisumu, Gothenburg, Skåne and Sheffield-Manchester as well as a node in Stockholm.

Mistra Urban Futures is financed by the research foundation Mistra and Sida, together with a consortium comprising: Chalmers University of Technology, the University of Gothenburg, the City of Gothenburg, the Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR), IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, the County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland, and the Region of Västra Götaland, along with funders on the various platforms.

Cover illustration: Emile Pretorius

Contents

1: Introduction	4
2: The Morphogenetic Approach	8
3: Adapting and Applying the Morphogenetic Approach	10
4. Morphogenetic Development in Graphs	13
4.1 Development as a process in time	13
4.2 The Interplay Between Context and Action	14
4.3: Development as a Cumulative and Staged Process	17
4.4. The Phases of Development	20
5: Explaining the Phases of Development	24
5.1 Enabling Reconstruction	24
5.2: Institutional and Systemic Transformation	26
5.3 Differentiated Growth	31
5.4: Inclusive Well-Being	32
6: To Summarise: How to Recognise Morphogenetic Developmental Progress?	34
Phase 1: Enabling Reconstruction	34
Phase 2: Institutional and Systemic Transformation	35
Phase 3: Differentiated Growth	36
Phase 4: Inclusive Well-Being	36
7. Conclusion	38
8. Bibliography	39
9. Funding	Error!
Bookmark not defined.	

1: Introduction

This paper presents a *morphogenetic approach* to societal development. The motivation for proposing this approach is, firstly, that despite economic advances and fewer people living in poverty the problems of poverty, exclusion and systemic inequality remains a challenge for more than half of the world's population who still struggle to meet their basic needs. Secondly, and implied in the first reason, there is a need for approaches to societal development that are more systemic in the sense of transforming the systems and institutions of society so that the impact of development could be more pervasive and sustainable. Thirdly, there is a need to approach social development in ways that rise above and go beyond the prevailing adversarial political and ideological discourse which merely serves to produce and reproduce conflicts and instead of enabling the necessary collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination required for sustainable societal development.

Thus, this paper is aimed at those who see themselves as agents of progressive change, and it is premised on the view that progressive people of the world cannot afford to relax in their quest for development models and approaches that are truly inclusive, transformative and sustainable.

The term *development* is used here to refer to change from an undesirable (or less desirable) present to a more desirable future. The exact nature of the desirable future cannot be known but the intent of development is to make progress towards a better *quality of life* for all people, i.e. inclusive well-being. Societal development is inevitably a process that takes time and it proceeds through stages that accumulate and build on one another; not in a neatly sequential fashion but nevertheless in a cumulative way. The most vital changes for pervasive and sustainable societal development are the increased effectiveness of institutional systems to serve human and societal actualization.

The *morphogenetic approach* to societal development proposes to provide a way of overcoming the problems of exclusion, superficial, selective and unsustainable societal development. It is a pragmatic, planned, managed but urgent approach to development as an alternative to destructive revolutionary and unbearably slow evolutionary approaches. It

provides an explanation and strategy for development based on the complex interplay between contexts and people acting in contexts. Contexts both enable and constrain action, but it is always possible to take progressive action even if it is a small step forward. Effective agents of morphogenetic development seek to facilitate change by strategically reducing constraints and enhancing opportunities for progressive action.

The word *morphogenesis* derives from the Greek and literally means change in form or shape. Although it was originally used in biology, it was over the years also found to be useful as a term to describe social change by some social theorists who viewed biological models as appropriate metaphors for understanding society. It should be noted that the approach adopted here does not suggest that society *is a system* in the same sense as a biological or natural system; the terminology of morphogenesis, however, is useful in gaining insight into the processes of societal development. To explain the word morphogenesis for the purposes of societal development:

For current purposes, morphogenesis explains the formation or development of a social system:

- A society or community is a social system that consists of subsystems such as communities and institutions including the family, education, economy and the polity and, at a more micro level, individual human beings.
- Development is the progressive unfolding, evolving or actualization of the potential of the system and its sub-systems.

As articulated in this paper and as used in the practice of projects referred to herein, the morphogenetic approach to societal development is an adaptation of **the social morphogenetic approach of British sociologist Margaret Archer (1984, 1988, 1995)** and is informed by **work with communities in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (Port Elizabeth) and elsewhere in the Eastern Cape of South Africa.**

The adaptation of this approach was, in particular, informed by research and development facilitation work on two ongoing developmental initiatives: firstly, a twin-city partnership between the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (South Africa) and City of Gothenburg (Sweden) and, secondly, work that is underway in the Sundays River Valley, a citrus-growing agricultural area approximately one hour's drive from the Port Elizabeth city centre in Nelson Mandela Bay.

The Nelson Mandela Bay and Gothenburg partnership project is entitled '**Access for the Creation of Just Cities**'. The ultimate objective of this project is to enhance spatial, social, economic and notional *access* for marginalized sections of society in pursuit of greater justice. In Nelson Mandela Bay, the project focus is on township communities and in

Gothenburg the focus is on inequality between communities in the city centre and out-lying suburbs. Like townships throughout South Africa, the townships of Nelson Mandela Bay, despite twenty years of democracy, are still characterized by socio-economic and economic challenges and limited access to important amenities and life options. Where enhancing access to services and amenities is an important developmental objective in the context of townships in NMB to overcome the legacy of the Apartheid past, the challenge in the communities of Gothenburg is to reduce the inequalities in income, health and other living conditions that have accumulated over recent decades. The planning and development goal is to undo or reduce the social distance and isolation of these communities within Gothenburg society. In both instances there is a case to be made for a developmental approach that involves societal and institutional transformation. Teams from both Gothenburg and Nelson Mandela Bay have collaborated over a period of three years to identify practical interventions that can be implemented within the Cities to increase the levels of physical, social, economic and notional access and thereby increase the levels of fairness and justice. I have been co-opted onto the City project teams as a research co-ordinator. The teams have worked on exploring the providers of access, the limitations of current processes and the identification of practical solutions to enhance access in all its dimensions.

The citrus-producing **Sundays River Valley** experienced a spurt of growth and economic success over the last five years. While the farmers have benefitted from this expansion, very little benefit was passed on to workers and local communities in the Valley. Compounded by a failure of local government, an very uneven social system emerged. Despite commendable efforts by the organised farming community to compensate for the lack of service delivery by the Local Government a climate of hostility arose. By the middle of 2018 the Sundays River Valley had fallen into a state of intense conflict between the main stakeholders, with communities and workers on one side and citrus farmers and pack-house owners on the other. This led to violent and destructive protests and threats of “revolutionary destruction” of the local citrus economy.

Since the end of 2018, I have been involved in an effort to defuse the conflict and to implement a development process based on morphogenetic logic. The Sundays River Valley development process involves the **Sundays River Valley Collaborative** that can be described as a developmental movement rather than a developmental project. It is a complex process of overcoming severe conflict and promoting collaboration among local parties through a multi-stakeholder / multi-perspective model that is based on the morphogenetic development process which is elaborated on in this paper. A remarkable degree of progress has been made in a relatively short period of time, with arch-enemies from a year earlier now collaborating in a systemic transformation and development process defined by the common

pursuit of inclusive well-being. These initiatives are referred to for illustrative purposes with an emphasis on clarifying the morphogenetic approach.

The point of departure for the approach presented here is that development challenges in countries like South Africa must be seen and understood in *systemic* terms instead of excessively focussing on individual or social self-interests and contending ideologies. A systems approach will show that *the problem* of ongoing socio-economic and economic inequality, persistent exclusion of substantial proportions of people from the mainstream of society and the ongoing failure to secure inclusive well-being is *a flawed social system* in which the major institutions are conditioned to produce and reproduce inequality and exclusion. People and communities are hamstrung from pursuing improved quality of life by contextual constraints; current political solutions increase the problem instead of offering an answer. The most significant harm done by current antagonistic politics is to portray the situation in zero-sum terms; that is, that there are always winners and losers. A systemic approach can be used to reveal how self-interest and the common good are entangled with one another, and why awareness and increased inter-dependence are preferable to adversarial self-interested contestation.

The **systems approach** presented here suggests that a social system will achieve optimally when its human and other resources are actualized. It is therefore useful to see that the inherent potential of the social system is equivalent to the sum of individual and collective human potential, resources and assets that are accessible in and for the system. The implication is that exclusion or restrictions on access are not only obstructions to individual or group self-actualization but are also obstacles to the unfolding of the system - as a result, the 'losers' are not only those who are marginalized but all those who form part of the social system.

2: The Morphogenetic Approach

Margaret Archer (1984, 1988, 1995) uses the term *morphogenesis* in social theory to explain a *social realist approach* to solving a problem that sociologists grappled with in the 1980s and 1990s: the relationship between so-called *macro and micro* aspects of society or, as it eventually became known, the *structure-agency problem*. Strictly-speaking it is a *structure-culture-agency problem*.

Structure refers to the relationships among people whereby wealth and power are distributed. Domination, subordination, exploitation, collaboration and partnership are all examples. These relationships enable or constrain people (agents) in their actions. **Culture** here refers to ideas, beliefs, ideologies and values that prevail in the context. Do they complement or contradict one another? These ideational or cultural relationships also enable or constrain people (agents) in their actions. **Agency** is the capacity of individuals and groups to act independently and to make their own choices in pursuit of their own interests. Thus, agency refers to action by people as individuals and groups.

For the purposes of the work done in the NMB and SRV cases the two terms that are used are: **context** and **action** and sometimes **agency**. Structure and culture are referred to as the **context** or setting in which people act (or not) and **action or agency** refers to what people, groups or stakeholders do (or not) in response to the conditions of the context in pursuit of their own or the common interest.

Archer presented her approach as distinct from the then-more-prominent *structuration theory* that is associated with Anthony Giddens (1979, 1981, 1984). As used by Archer, morphogenesis depicts a dialectical relationship between *structure* and *agency*, whereas *structuration theory*, in Archer's terms, *conflates* the two.

Without delving into the complex nuances of Archer's work, it is not difficult to agree with Archer that much of traditional social theory suffers from *conflation*, where—due to a reluctance or inability to theorize about the emergent relationships between social phenomena—one side of the relationship is denied causal autonomy. To be denied causal autonomy means that the characteristics of either structure or agency are seen to not have an independent influence on each other. Archer explains that this can take the form of autonomy being denied to *agency*, with causal capacity only granted to *structure* (downwards conflation). Alternatively, it can take the form of autonomy being denied to *structure*, with

causal capacity only granted to agency (upwards conflation). Finally, it may take the form of central conflation, where structure and agency are seen as being *co-constitutive* (i.e. structure is reproduced through agency, which is simultaneously constrained and enabled by structure). The latter is the view held by Anthony Giddens (1979, 1981, 1984).

Archer then offers a solution in the form of *analytical dualism*:

- While recognizing the interdependence of structure and agency (i.e. without people there would be no structures), she argues that they operate on different timescales.
- At any particular moment, prior existing structures constrain and enable agents, whose interactions produce intended and unintended consequences. This leads to structural elaboration (change or transformation) and the reproduction or transformation of the initial structure.
- The resulting structure then provides a similar context of action for future agents.
- Likewise, the initial existing structure was itself the outcome of structural elaboration resulting from the action of prior agents.
- Thus, while structure and agency are ontologically interdependent, Archer argues that it is possible to unpick them analytically.
- By isolating structural and/or cultural factors that provide a context of action for agents, it is possible to investigate how those factors shape the subsequent interactions of agents. Further, how those interactions, in turn, reproduce or transform the initial context. Archer calls this a *morphogenetic sequence*.
- Social processes are constituted through an endless array of such sequences, but, as a consequence of their temporal ordering, it is possible to disengage any such sequence to investigate its internal causal dynamics.
- Through doing so, argues Archer, it is possible to give empirical accounts of how structural and agential phenomena interlink over time rather than merely stating their theoretical interdependence.

3: Adapting and Applying the Morphogenetic Approach

The remainder of this paper is an adaptation and application of Archer's approach for the purpose described above. This means that not only will the theory of morphogenesis be used to explain and analyse developmental processes at a community level, but it will also be used as a strategic tool to guide and facilitate community socio-economic development.

For purposes of illustration, I will refer to the above-stated **Nelson Mandela Bay / Gothenburg 'Access for Just Cities' Project and the Sundays River Valley Collaborative**. Thus, the adaptation of the morphogenetic approach that is presented in this paper was required for pragmatic purposes to be used in certain types of social contexts.

While the morphogenetic paradigm is a systems approach to societal change, it is unlike the 'systems theory' that is associated with *organismic evolutionary* theorists like Herbert Spencer (1896) and *structural functionalists* like Talcott Parsons (1971). Distinctively, the morphogenetic approach does not propose a unidirectional, linear, inevitably-progressive path of change towards a specifically-definable desirable future. Instead, a morphogenetic view of social reality suggests that the future cannot be fully foreknown, because it is an ongoing emergent outcome that derives from the dialectical interaction between people within contexts that constantly change. It is possible to postulate an idea of a desired future, but only in general terms. For instance, it is possible to describe a desired future in terms of a set of quality of life indicators (life expectancy, educational attainment, employment rate, income and poverty rate etc.), but predicting exactly how the future will play out is impossible. The trajectory of societal change can go in many directions, and progress is unfortunately not a guaranteed outcome of human action; 'progressive' change is dependent on agencies that have the freedom to choose to act or not, and when they act there is no guarantee that they will act in a moral, ethical or progressive way.

Excellent theoretical work has enabled us to appreciate that the world that we inhabit is a complex system that adapt in unpredictable ways (Crawford et al., 2005, Miller and Page, 2007:9). Byrne (1998: 5-6), for instance, propose that complexity theory should be used for sociological investigation as linearity and order seem forced on a world which isn't really like that. As human beings we continuously engage in interaction and interpretation not only

with fellow humans, but also with biological and physiological environments at any given point in time Byrne (2005:96). Humans can interpret interactions differently based on individual subjective norms and values, providing a disorderly and unpredictable conscious complex system. Geyer and Rihani (2010).

The best that we can do as development strategists, planners, social activists, social entrepreneurs and others who pursue progressive change is to formulate general ideas of what is meant with human and societal well-being and to hypothesize about the inherent potential of a society or community (social systems) based on human and other assets with which it is endowed. Based on these assumptions, we can argue that certain actions are progressive (and others not) to the extent that they serve what may be presumed to be the common good.

It is argued here that for progress to be made in the development of a social system towards its assumed optimum or desired state, it is imperative – if not obvious - that the resources available in and to the system are used optimally and that as many of the people that inhabit that system as possible are optimally integrated in the society or community in all relevant senses of the word. Optimal integration here would mean a reciprocal or mutually-beneficial relationship in which the person and groups of people add value to the system and also benefit from being part of the system. The theoretical optimum of a *social system* will be achieved when its human and other resources are actualized, which means that it reaches its fullest potential, whatever that may be. Therefore, as stated earlier, for our purposes it is helpful to understand that the inherent potential of the social system is equivalent to the sum of individual and collective human potential, resources and assets that are available in and to the system. This means that exclusion or restrictions on access are not only impediments in the way of individual self-actualization but are also obstacles to the unfolding of the system.

Whereas specific political ideologies are typically opposed by their ideological opposites or alternatives, there is no feasible alternative to authentic individual, community or systemic development. There simply can't be, because human and social development is about the unfolding, actualization and realisation of something (human nature and society) on its own inherent terms. One cannot oppose human and social development except if it is misguided or wrong-headed, and if a person opposes authentic human and social development, he or she is either ignorant of his or her own interests or self-destructively self-centred or corrupt. There are doubtlessly many misguided notions of human and social development, but that should not be confused with development *per se*. The only known theoretical opposition to development derives from post-development theory (also referred to as post-development or anti-development or development criticism), which holds that the concept and practice of development reflects Western-Northern hegemony over the rest of the world. Post-

development thought arose in the 1980s out of criticisms voiced against development projects, and development theory, which was used to justify these development projects. It is thus a reaction to a particular manifestation and interpretation of development *per se*.

Thus, one of the most important actions that we can take as progressive-minded people is to enable people to adopt a developmental, rather than a political mindset. Political mindset is meant as a way of looking at the world that holds that ideational opposition is inevitable and unavoidable.

The implications of such an approach for the **Nelson Mandela Bay / Gothenburg ‘Access for the Creation of Just Cities’ project** are that if spatial, social, economic and notional access is necessary for individual, community and social self-actualization, it is not only a matter of individual interest, or a matter of morality, but also a ‘systemic imperative’. Township communities that are excluded from the means and opportunities to improve their lives experience a low quality of life because of limited access but also cannot make a meaningful contribution to the city. Exclusion from the mainstream of society and productive participation in the city economy means that township communities become increasingly dependent on the state. This trend leads nowhere but downwards and backwards for all.

The implications of adopting a system development mindset for the **Sundays River Valley** are that the farmers and farm workers and their communities will understand and appreciate that they are inter-dependent. If farmworkers and their families suffer from a low quality of life, it will impact their relationship with the farmers; similarly, if the farmers are prevented from being successful, the economy of the Valley will collapse, and the farm workers and their families will suffer. They need one another, but the system must be more just and fair to all. The question is how to make the system more fair, just and inclusive and the answer is a collaborative development process that is designed to pursue inclusive well-being.

The essential message in both instances is that inclusion is in the interest of everyone who is a part of the social system, not only those who are currently excluded or marginalized, and in the interest of the progressive development of the society or community.

4. Morphogenetic Development in Graphs

This paper explains the morphogenetic argument with the assistance of four cumulatively-related graphs. These graphs were drafted to assist the explanation of the morphogenetic approach; they are simplifications of social reality intended to make human and social development understandable as a basic societal process.

4.1 DEVELOPMENT AS A PROCESS IN TIME

Like so many terms, the word ‘development’ is used by many people who participate in the daily discourse about society, but it is rarely explained what is meant by ‘development’ in a societal context. **Graph I** below defines ‘development’ and also serves as a simple picture or paradigm of what is meant by societal development.

The basic morphogenetic development graph has a vertical axis that measures development as a process of change from low to high **quality of life** and a horizontal axis that measures development as a process in **time**.

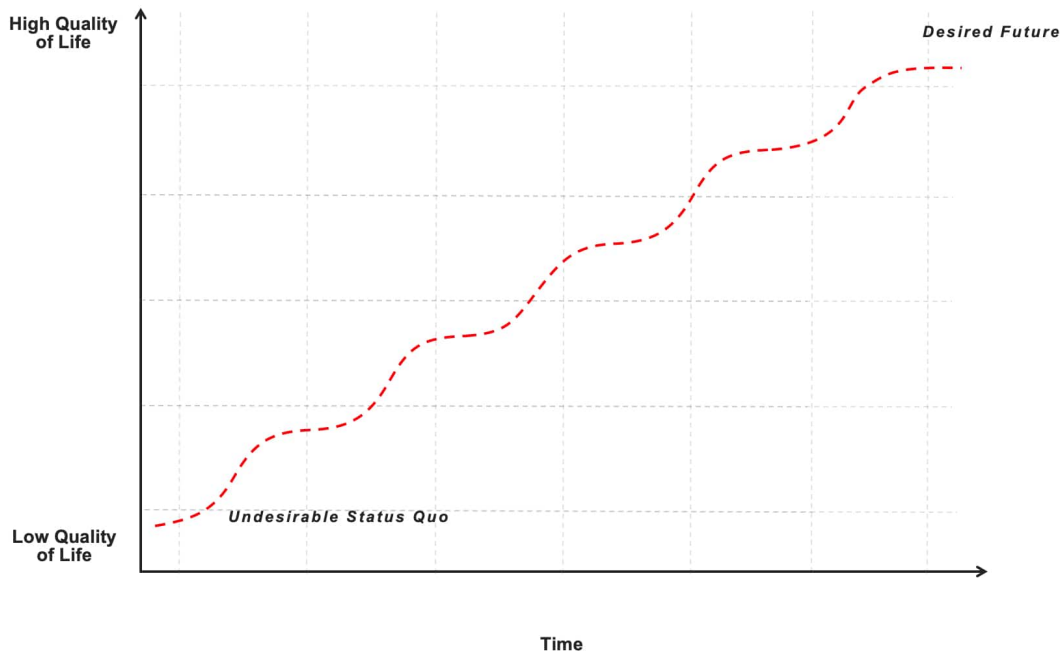
Development involves a longer period of time; it does not occur in a brief moment. If this were the case, it would be a revolution and not development.

Besides change occurring over a period of time, if change does not involve progress from low levels to higher levels of quality of life, it is not development. Development is *progress over time*. Development as a process cannot be reconciled with ‘cynical post-modern’ views that reject the very possibility of development. Doing development work means that one is optimistic or at least hopeful about the possibilities of making the world a better place although we do not know exactly how to do it. The morphogenetic approach is therefore not only a **theory of change**, but it is also a **strategic tool** for progressive people and agencies to bring about progressive societal change.

As suggested in **Graph I** the logic of development involves an idea of a **desirable future** in relation to the **present**, which is perceived as less than desirable. Unlike old-fashioned theories of change and unlike ideologues (from the left and right) who claim to know the nature of this desirable future, however, the morphogenetic approach does not make any such claims since, as previously noted, the future emerges from ongoing interaction between context and agency. We can only say that a better future should entail better quality of life for all

The development process is also an uneven path over time that is characterized by stops and starts, ups and downs, deviations, failures and successes. That is the reality of human existence.

Graph 1: Development as a Process of Change Over Time

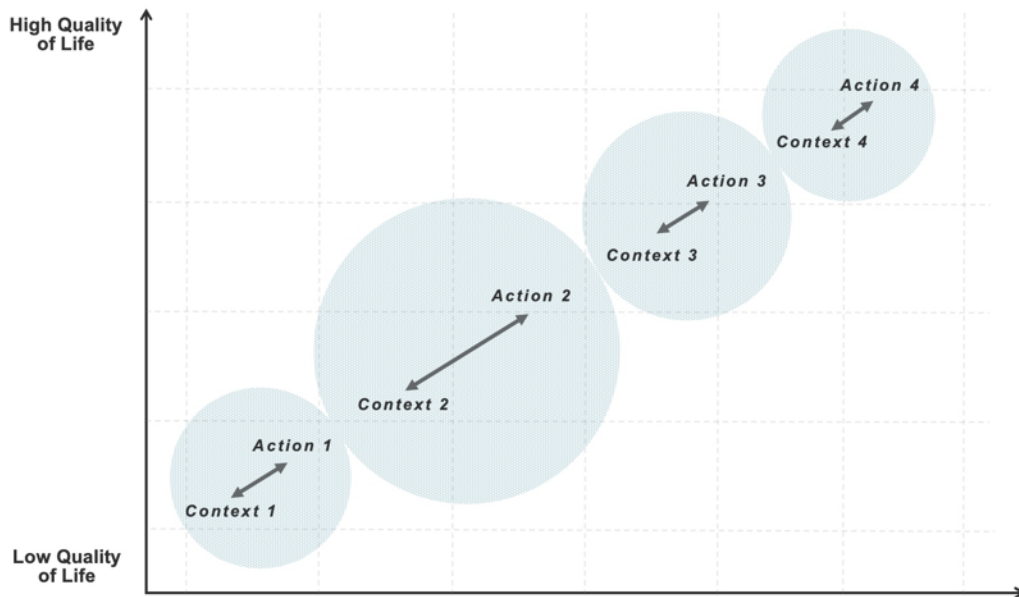


4.2 THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CONTEXT AND ACTION

A key question for anyone that wants to make developmental change happen is: What makes development happen? The short answer is, in theory, that societal change (and thus societal development) occurs through the dialectical interplay between structure and agency. In practice, social change and societal development occur through the **actions** of people in response to the challenges and opportunities contained **in the context** (in a particular moment in time)—not any action, but action that takes the system forward; some actions are progressive, and others are not.

As suggested earlier, at any particular moment, prior existing structures (referred to as **context**) constrain and enable agents in their **actions**, whose interactions produce intended and unintended consequences. This leads to structural elaboration (change or transformation) and the reproduction or transformation of the initial structure or **context**. The resulting structure then provides a similar **context of action for future agents**.

Graph 2: Structure/Culture and Agency



Any given **context** is structured in a particular way. Wealth and power, for example, are distributed in such a way that some people or groups are constrained, and others are enabled (disadvantaged and benefitted). Equally, in terms of cultural patterning, **in the same context**, certain ideas favour some people or groups and not others in their pursuits. **Agency** involves how groups respond (**act in their own interest**) in this context, and development occurs when groups respond to the conditions in a context **in such a way that it contributes to the progressive unfolding** of the inherent potential of the social system. Social processes are constituted through an endless array of such sequences. A consequence of the ongoing morphogenesis of both context and agency is that it requires a strategic and pragmatic approach to development that starts with a thorough contextual analysis and will then need to be repeated on a regular basis because both context and agency is transformed all the time. The *critical moment of morphogenetic development* is when those whose actions are constrained manage to overcome the challenges facing them and those who are enabled act in such a way that assists the inclusion of previously excluded groups. Of course, the *test* for all these actions is if they contribute to change towards the next (developmental) stage of the system. Thus, not all actions to overcome constraints and to assist with such actions are developmental. Constraints to criminal and unethical action are beneficial for the system, but there are some impediments that serve as stepping stones or hurdles *en route* to an improved quality of life and inclusive well-being. There are moments of *creative disruption* (Jean-Marie Dru, 1992) and *creative destruction* (Schumpeter, 1942), in which an older order is

overcome in a step forwards towards the next phase of the morphogenetic development process. Failure is sometimes essential for success.

In South Africa, there are many people who are excluded or do not have access to the mainstream socio-economy and economy. Although the odds are against them, these people have the potential to contribute to society, to the economy and to the morphogenetic development of the system. But there are constraints (obstacles and challenges) that must be overcome to undo exclusion and to utilize the opportunities for inclusion. Additionally, the prevailing values, ideas and ideologies may appear to favour the small number of wealthy and the powerful, but the opportunity exists (as a systemically-conditioned possibility) to promote a discourse that would favour change to the benefit of the groups of currently excluded sectors of the society.

Thus, development is a process that is defined by the overcoming of constraints. It is inevitably not easy, and it is not equally easy or difficult for all parties. In every stage of development, particular groups are more constrained and challenged than others. The odds are therefore stacked against some groups and individuals, but, ironically, they also have the most to gain. Even more ironically, it is a **systemic imperative** that historically-disadvantaged groups overcome these challenges: in other words, it is in the interest of all in the system that the more challenged groups respond adequately and appropriately in overcoming the challenges that they face. The very participation of marginalised people improves the robustness of the system that emerges, and the more people are involved the greater the reality of change.

It is even in the interest of everyone (including wealthy and powerful groups and individuals) that those who are constrained be appropriately assisted and enabled by others to respond appropriately. If not, even those who currently benefit from the *status quo*'s future could be in jeopardy/threatened when excluded groups eventually decide that they have had enough. This means that all sectors of a society have a role and responsibility in bringing about and promoting the development of the system. In this context, *appropriateness* refers to the type of action that takes the system forward and enables the previously constrained and excluded groups to progress to an enhanced role and significance in the system.

Another way of looking at the above concept is to realize that we should never expect that there will be no resistance or opposition to development. Development as a change process *requires* obstacles and challenges to progress from one level of development to the next. Resistance and opposition can come in different forms—ignorance, conservatism, self-centredness, corruption, etc. Ignorance of one's actual interests and how they are entangled with the interests of others, leading to misguided self-interest, is an important impediment to progress. There will also be people that *just don't get it* and who are incapable of coping with

the challenge of change. There are also cases where development may be against the interests of the truly self-centred. Indeed, some people are morally corrupt and indifferent to the looting and plundering of a system as long as they get what they want. The irony is that development of the system is in the interest of all. Even when someone is truly self-centred and takes actions that are evidently against the common interest, either they will cause the eventual breakdown of the system, or those who are damaged by the self-centred action will eventually find a way of exposing and over-throwing the despot.

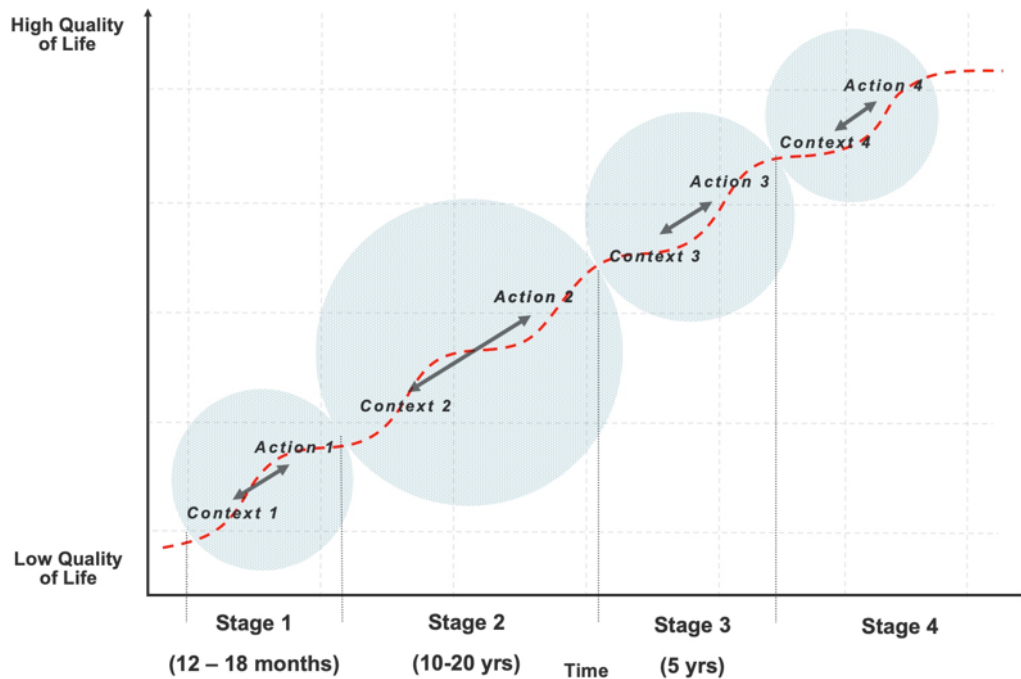
Unlike typical political ideologies, however, there are no alternatives to development; there is only development that is inadequate, too slow or too fast, misguided or wrong-headed. Even the post-modernist post-development theory that holds that the entire concept and practice of development reflects Western-Northern hegemony over the rest of the world, is a description of development that is not truly systemic.

The typical examples of constraints that must be overcome are exclusion from or limitations on access to the economy. Appropriate action by the excluded groups would be to acquire skills to enhance their employability so that they can enter the economy; inappropriate action would be to pursue the same objective by means of crime or corruption. Appropriate actions by advantaged / insider groups could include investment by corporate entities in a school system even though they do not appear to benefit directly from the system. Inappropriate assistance may include an over-generous social welfare system that does not incentivize young people to get an education or job. This would effectively remove the challenge but disable the person from becoming a productive participant in the economy and thus placing a burden on the system by making the person dependent on a social grant.

4.3: DEVELOPMENT AS A CUMULATIVE AND STAGED PROCESS

Human and social development is, in theory, an incremental, phased, cumulative progression - *in theory*, because reality is more inclined to be messy and inconsistent. If development is understood and implemented as explained in this paper, however, the possibilities for relatively orderly change are increased. Actualization depends on agency, that is, the actions of people. Success is not guaranteed, and failure to make progress is an ever-present possibility. History is filled with examples of failure where people failed to overcome constraints and did not use the opportunities presented to them to make progress. As indicated earlier, even the best-facilitated development process will be prone to ups and downs and even stops and starts. As said earlier, that is life!

Graph 3: Development as Incremental, Staged and Cumulative Progression



Due to the interplay between context and action, the social system is in ongoing morphogenetic transformation, even if it occurs very slowly. The social system of yesterday is not the same as today, and we cannot simply use assumptions about yesterday and today to plan and strategize for tomorrow.

If developmental agency/action is at all effective, it changes the context in which it functions and, in the process, it undergoes change. There is no sense in remaining focussed on a developmental goal if it has already been achieved. In the case of the Sundays River Valley, the first contextual analysis pointed out the need for basic leadership skills, but it would not make any sense to repeat the same level of training if leaders are ready to move on to the next level of agency. Contextual analysis must occur on a regular basis, which means that it is in fact possible to talk about stages or phases of development. Each phase requires its own contextual analysis.

It is therefore an important strategic consideration for any serious agent of social or socio-economic change to foresee and plan his or her actions with the aim of ensuring that actions and results 'stack up' in a cumulative way. There is a starting point that involves initial obstacles; if these are conquered, the process must move on to the next level, and if the initial challenges have not been conquered, the necessary gains have not been made then the next stage of change will be difficult if not impossible.

For a community that is seeking to overcome developmental challenges it is vital to understand that the saying - *first things come first*- is not a mere cliché. The basics are important before you can attend to next level issues. For instance, in the Sundays River Valley:

- Firstly, it was essential to put a hold on the ongoing confrontations and conflicts between the main protagonists. *A cessation of hostilities* was required. Conditions of relative peace were essential to test the possibilities for a dialogical solution between the opposing parties. It took some time to convince leaders that there was merit in giving facilitated dialogue a chance. A small committee (six people), with three from each side, representing the farmer and workers/community divide, was formed. I acted and was accepted as neutral facilitator.
- The next step was to *identify authentic leadership*. This was accomplished by asking many questions about leaders to everyone and anyone across the spectrum of the communities and stakeholders. It was also to start a discourse about the distinction between false and real leaders. Quite remarkably, those who proved to be the authentic leaders responded positively and a few (probably fake) leaders quietly disappeared from the scene. The initial committee soon started growing in numbers and four months later consisted of more than 30 people.
- The next step was to introduce the notion of *a developmental mindset* as distinct from an adversarial political mindset. The model presented in this paper was presented, and the Team Members embraced it and started realizing that the interest of all sections of the Sundays River Valley community are inter-mingled within the same system and that development should focus on reducing the imbalances and severe inequalities. The notion of collaborative development emerged from the first phase of facilitated engagements.
- Then the Team started applying the logic of collaborative development to a list of ‘sticky’ issues that could best be resolved by collaborating (called low-hanging fruit) *to learn how to solve problems in a dialogical and collaborative instead of an adversarial way*. The item of a minimum wage referred to elsewhere was first on the list, but 10 other items were dealt with in the same way over a period of six months.
- The next step was a training programme in *leadership for development*.
- By the second half of 2019, these actions culminated in the formation of an entity entitled the *Sundays River Valley Collaborative*, which is being structured into a formal development enabling organisation.

All of the above actions followed in sequence—not one that was neat and compartmentalized, but everyone nevertheless came to understand that certain things come first so that others can follow. This is part of the developmental mindset.

A community that is trapped in a negative (restricted) collective mindset due to generations of deprivation and exploitation may find it difficult to understand why they must take small steps and make short-term sacrifices in order to achieve longer-term gains. They may find it difficult to envision the possibility of a desired (better) future and even less the step-by-step path that must be walked to get there from where they are. Thus, the notion of pragmatically-planned, managed cumulative change is essential for development to be sustainable.

This approach to change and development, however, is consistently challenged on ideological grounds. The rhetoric of revolution is often used in the South African day-to-day political discourse. One of the most significant challenges in a country like South Africa is to overcome the *excessive politicization of the public discourse*: public discourse that is so dominated by power and politics that it is difficult to put *development* on the agenda. To be more accurate about the exact nature of the problem, it is not power and politics *per se* but a particularly self-centred, factional and parochial form of politics that leaves little room for discussion about larger-picture social, systemic and institutional development. So, the prevailing mindset or paradigm is excessive self-interest. Demands across the socio-economic and socio-political spectra have to be ‘reconditioned’ in order to understand and appreciate the logic and need for ‘development’.

4.4. THE PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

The next section will reflect on phases of development in terms that make sense in the current South African context. Four stages have been identified:

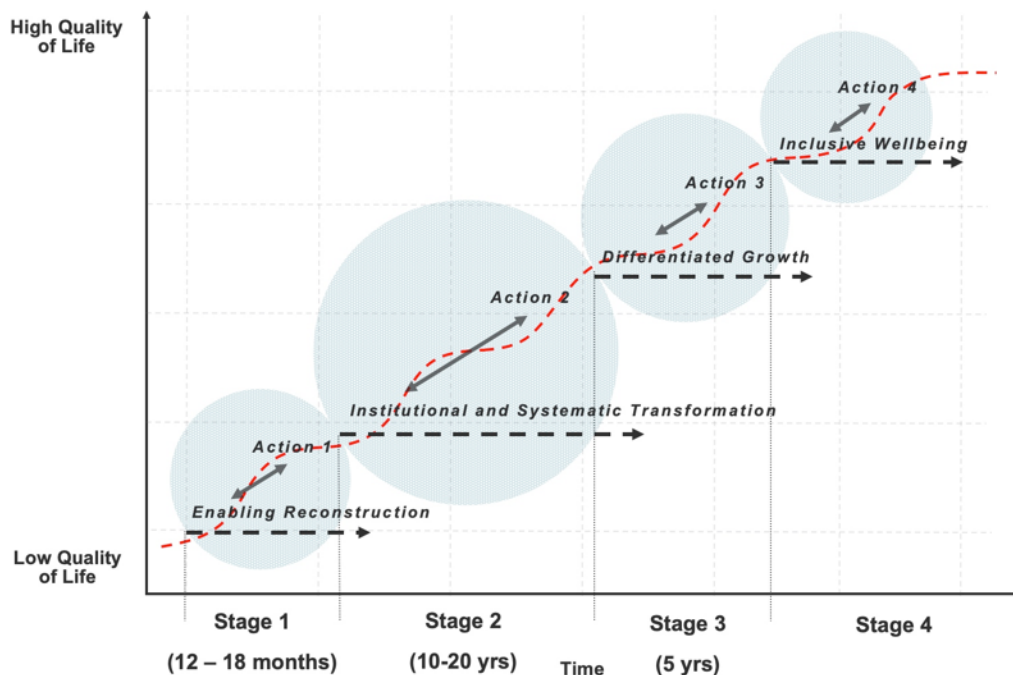
- Enabling Reconstruction
- Institutional and Systemic Transformation
- Differentiated Growth
- Inclusive Well-Being

These stages of development are different in terms of the scope of people that are included. They range from low to high development where low development means that many people are excluded and high development, that most are included. The stages are about equality of

inclusion/access and productive/appropriate contribution to the unfolding system or, in other words, the actualization of the potential of most people in a social system.

The first stage of development involves the greatest volume of constraints, as the challenges of the entire long-term development trajectory all still lie ahead. This may not mean, however, that these challenges are the most difficult. Every situation constrains but also enables action.

Graph 4: The Stages of Development in a Developing Society



In general, I use the word ‘transformation’ and avoid the term ‘revolution’ because the latter is so consistently used and abused in South Africa and elsewhere. It is necessary to understand that revolutionary change (‘a turnaround’) is fundamental change in political power or organizational structures that takes place over a relatively brief period when a population rises in revolt against the current authorities and overthrows the current dispensation. This is usually a destructive process (breaking down in order to build the new system). Although Marxist revolutionary rhetoric is often used, the change processes that have taken place in South Africa since 1994 are not revolutionary and should instead be described as a transformation process.

To illustrate the point about the potential futility and self-defeating effect of revolutionary rhetoric and action it is incisive to consider recent conflict regarding wages for workers in Sundays River Valley. In 2018 the state announced a minimum wage of R18 per hour for

agricultural workers. In the relative absence of organised labour (a unique situation due to the seasonality of the citrus industry), the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) a national community-based organisation adopted the role of a union and demanded R20. This resulted in a prolonged conflict between farmers and unions/community-based organisations; for 18 months, an ideologically-loaded conflict raged in the Valley. Since all parties were ready to accept R20 per hour, however, the solution was within reach, although they were locked into ongoing confrontations that seemingly had little to do with wages. These were essentially ideological battles inspired by ideologues and politicians that gained power from conflict but had no means of resolving it.

Nevertheless, the relatively small union adopted a revolutionary approach, demanding R30 per hour. When asked how they would get the farmers to pay this level of wages, they referred to regular revolutionary tactics of destructive and violent protest and damage to ‘the farmers’ economy’. The problem with this approach is that it is possible to destroy the economy and to chase farmers from their farms but then what? How was the R30 going to become a reality if the economy was destroyed? And if there was no stand-by team of experienced farmers among the workers and communities, who would take care of running these sophisticated citrus farms and pack-houses? It was not difficult to reach a sufficient level of consensus across the ideological spectrum and to present a developmental approach as the alternative. This developmental approach was explained as:

- Leaving the adversarial ideologies aside when engaged in problem-solving dialogue
- Adopting a learning approach
- Switching from a blaming mindset to a co-ownership / co-responsibility mindset
- Accepting R20 per hour
- Collaborating to transform the socio-economy and economy for greater inclusion

The conflict of 18 months was resolved in 20 minutes. It was agreed that a developmental path would be adopted to expand ownership and increase share-holding and diversification of the economy. The parties agreed that the process will take time and that its success will depend on appreciating the overlapping nature of interests and the reality of inter-dependence.

Thus, it is a development process: the *transformation* of systems and institutions instead of a revolution. The new approach was accepted, and all parties proceeded to work together in a co-responsible mode towards an expanding co-owned economy.

Transformation Instead of Revolution

The term ‘transformation’ refers to a marked change in form, nature or appearance; synonyms include alteration, modification, conversion, revision, amendment, reshaping, etc. It is these terms, rather than ‘revolution’, that describe what is occurring in South Africa, and agents of change should be careful to avoid using revolutionary rhetoric because it creates the expectations of revolutionary outcomes that cannot be delivered by most of the people who use this language.

Reconstruction

Together with transformation, *reconstruction* is more useful to describe developmental change. It refers to a deliberate but gradual building-up process. Thus, in tandem with the terms ‘development’ and ‘transformation’, ‘reconstruction’ describes a process of change that transforms without demolishing important systems and institutions like the economy or educational and judicial systems. The term *enabling reconstruction* makes particular sense, because it refers to those initial actions that must be taken in a context to modify or remove obstacles in the way of sustainable systemic development.

5: Explaining the Phases of Development

The following section will explain the phases of development:

- Enabling Reconstruction
- Institutional and Systemic Transformation
- Differentiated Growth
- Inclusive Well-Being

5.1 ENABLING RECONSTRUCTION

In terms of a morphogenetically-unfolding development process, the first stage of development involves removing or overcoming constraints in the way of excluded communities and putting in place the basic enabling conditions for people and communities to start taking up the challenge of development.

The term **enabling reconstruction** is used here to describe the actions that are appropriate in this stage of development—actions and impacts that must be achieved as preconditions for sustainable development and change. More specifically, there are obstacles, impediments, stumbling blocks or **constraints** in the way of taking developmental and transformative action, and there are **enabling conditions** that make it easier for people to take developmental action. These obstacles must be removed and enabling conditions must come into place before more systemic institutional and developmental processes can *take off* and become sustainable.

There are a number of ‘scene-setting’ enabling actions that must be taken before development processes can start taking place and become sustainable:

- Firstly, if the context is characterized by manifest conflict among different societal groups, it is essential to have a cessation of hostilities (an agreement to stop fighting or a period of not fighting), even if only temporarily, to give a chance to alternative ways of engaging.
- Opening up the space for dialogue. Next, given relative calm, there is the problem of how people relate to one another—the problem of discursive blockages and/or the lack of a culture of dialogue. Development action depends on people collaborating with one another even if they do not have similar interests. Moreover, for development to take place, there is a need for a culture that is based on an appreciation of the precariousness of social reality, the ongoing construction and

reconstruction of the human life world, the importance of hearing all voices and perspectives, awareness of possibilities and the willingness to be self-critical (Habermas, 1984 and 1987) ideal speech situation comes to mind).

- Changing individual mindsets. Most important among these are in the realm of individual and collective psychology: awareness, mindsets, views, perspectives and attitudes about the self or ‘us’ and the very possibility of change, progress and development. If people do not see the possibility of change, progress and development, they will not step into the process.
- In the current South African context, making space for non-state sections of society to rediscover their agency. Thus, the process of building ‘agency’ starts with the individual in a community context. It may also require that parties be given time and ‘space’ to rediscover their ‘agency’—in the current South African context, for instance, non-state agents must be given time to re-discover their own sense of autonomous agency. The state and political parties have dominated the social system to the extent that it has disempowered ordinary citizens and communities and denied them co-responsibility for development. The idea of the ‘development state’ failed in South Africa because of an over-ambitious and under-capable state. In this context, non-state sectors of society must arguably be enabled with an awareness of their legitimate role in the development of communities and the social system as a whole.
- Deconstructing political ideologies and finding spaces for meaningful dialogue and engagement.
- Identifying and enabling real leaders and pushing back false leaders and self-interested individuals masquerading as leaders. There are also other impediments, like incapable leaders, obstructive policies and laws, and physical or spatial obstructions that may stand in the way of progress.
- Minimal enabling structures, projects and programmes. ‘Agency’ in this sense refers to organizational entities.
- Finally, there are ‘low-hanging fruit’: opportunities to achieve success and give people hope in the short-term so that people do not lose confidence in the process.

A morphogenetic strategy for development would require rigorous contextual/situational analysis to identify the obstacles and constraints in the early stages of a development process.

5.2: INSTITUTIONAL AND SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION

Successive phases of development involve actions that are aimed at capturing and protecting the development gains of the previous phase(s) and actions. The first phase, Enabling Reconstruction, is about setting the scene for the actual process of development and could (and should) be relatively short, but the next phase is the long-haul. The second phase of the development process is termed Institutional and Systemic Transformation. The following section will explain this phase and refer to examples of what is required for this phase to succeed.

As used in this paper, institutional and systemic transformation is about modifying, recalibrating and adjusting the way in which institutions like the family, education, economy, health system and political systems work so that they produce outcomes that enable progress to advance towards the desired state.

To see this development phase in the South African context it should be noted that during Apartheid the institutions of the South African society were conditioned to produce racially prejudiced outcomes. This means that family conditions, health, education, economic institutions functioned in a particular way to produce an unjust and highly unequal society in favour of white people and to the disadvantage of black, coloured and Indian people. To overcome this legacy, institutional dynamics must be transformed to be, not only, 'post-apartheid' in the sense of undoing discrimination based on race but institutions and systems must also be re-orientated to become developmental in the sense that they produce outcomes in pursuit of reducing social inequality in pursuit of inclusive well-being.

To make things more complicated, it is not only the legacy of Apartheid that must be overcome but also the undesirable institutional and systemic conditions that have accumulated in addition to the conditions of Apartheid. Without going into the detail here it is generally assumed that the societal institutions and systems of post-Apartheid South Africa are still deeply flawed and inadequate for the purposes of generating outcomes in pursuit of the goal of inclusive well-being. In many ways South Africa is still not a transformed society and the challenge of institutional and systemic transformation is and should remain high on the priority list.

An example of institutional and systemic transformation work that must be prioritized in South Africa is to enable families to break out of the vicious cycle that reproduces deprivation. This will require that families in deprived communities in South Africa are provided with the appropriate support to enable them to become more resilient and equipped to function in the interest of its members. Primary institutions like health, social welfare, education and the economy form part of a chain or mutually-reinforcing processes that keep

people in a state of vulnerability and dependency. Despite many ambitious policy innovations, early childhood development programmes are not effectively implemented and many children in South Africa start their lives handicapped by the damage of inadequate nutrition and stimulation in the first years of their lives. The South African education system remains dismally dysfunctional in relation to the education and skills needs of children from historically disadvantaged communities. Transforming the education system so that it encourages young people from historically disadvantaged communities - who were in the past inclined to drop-out of school prematurely - to complete their school careers and to acquire the skills to become productive participants in the mainstream of society is a vital part of the necessary institutional and systemic transformation work. To achieve this goal will require better skilled and committed teachers, better management and leadership and improved learning material and infrastructure. Against the background of fragile families, vulnerable communities, dysfunctional education it is not surprising that it is of the utmost importance but also extremely difficult to realign an economy so that more people from historically disadvantaged and poor communities find it easier to become successful participants in the economic mainstream.

The development phase that involves the transformation of established societal institutions and systems is inevitably hardest and challenging and takes the longest because it is about undoing the conditioned and entrenched patterns of the past and replacing it with institutional processes and practices that are necessary to make progress towards inclusive well-being.

Institutional and systems transformation may seem relatively easy, but it is not. On the other hand, although it may not appear to be the case on the surface, a context of severe inequality actually favours systemic and institutional transformation towards the inclusion of the subordinate, marginalized or excluded groups. While a highly unequal system enables the dominant groups to hold on to their advantaged position, it also provides opportunities for making effective rational, moral and political arguments in favour of inclusion that would be difficult to argue against or ignore. Moreover, from a *system development point of view*, it is essential that the excluded be included in the system for the reasons stated earlier—exclusion weakens the system as a whole, which is not in anyone's interest. But while inclusion, equalisation and progress towards a more just system pose challenges - because the *status quo* and prevailing system and subsystems (institutions) are conditioned to function in favour of the dominant groups - exclusion is against everyone's interest because it holds back the system. Exclusion prevents the system from *morphing* into the next stage of development. Moreover, if one accepts the principle that the potential of the system is equivalent (at least) to the sum-total of the potential of its parts, exclusion of people who can

add value undermines the actualization of the system. Thus, although both the structural and cultural conditions may appear to be against the historically excluded, this is misleading, since the constraints are systemic obstacles that must be overcome for the system to progress. Difficult as it may be for some, all agents should appreciate that real transformation is possible and necessary even though it is not easy.

To illustrate the point of how there is a systemic inclination towards transformation and development with reference to aspects of the institutional dynamics of the economy, work and employment in the Sundays River Valley. The undesirable historical situation was one where workers on citrus farms were paid very low wages and the recently introduced minimum wage of R18 per hour for agricultural workers will not contribute much to undoing the severe socio-economic inequality in the Valley. The argument is that there is a systemic incentive to pay workers more than a minimum wage. As long as employers pay their workers wages that are so low that it excludes the workers and their families from a decent living, the workers will have a common-sense reason to adopt an antagonistic attitude towards the farmers whom they perceive as owning, controlling and benefiting from an economy to which they make a vital contribution. This inclines the workers and their communities to resist that which is in the interests of the farmers, and it would take little to convince them that it is in their own interest to resort to actions aimed at destroying the agricultural economy. If, however, workers *are seen by the farmers* as vital to the success of the economy *and are being remunerated according to the value that they create* (which can be presumed to be more than a minimum wage), they will be able to see that their ongoing quality of life is dependent on the stability and success of the economy. This means that they have a stake in the economy. The more substantial this stake is, the more the workers, their families and communities will feel inclined to value, add value to and protect the economy. A person that is excluded from a benefit does not have a reason to protect that which generates that benefit, and once that person becomes included, he or she becomes co-responsible for its success. The point is that there is a systemic incentive for a more inclusive institutional arrangement.

The logic may be simple but transforming institutions and a social system is not easy. The **Institutional and Systemic Transformation** stage of societal development is about ‘recalibrating’ or ‘reconditioning’ institutions and the social system so that they are redirected towards modes of functioning according to principles that are not only accessible, inclusive and sustainable but also healthy, moral and just.

Of course, this elicits the debate about ‘whose morality and whose justice?’ While there is little chance of arriving at a final conclusion on this politico-philosophical issue, it is important to have such a debate in a brave, honest, responsible and constructive way. Unfortunately, the political and philosophical debates serves to obscure the obvious. As

suggested above, in South Africa, the problem of persistent inequality and exclusion manifests as a vicious cycle of deprivation that starts with a parent or parents who suffered deprivation or exclusion. These parents are conditioned by an experience of deprivation to be disinclined to encourage their children to complete their high school education. It is obviously wrong if children are encouraged to leave school prematurely, and it is equally wrong that if they do remain and the schools are not in a state to provide them with a decent education. There is no need for a moral, political or philosophical debate on such matters but where does the appropriate action start? Families must be enabled to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation. The micro-level starting point is parents who must be supported and enabled to see a better future for themselves and, more importantly, for their children. This is a very delicate but extremely important issue; due to a range of historical and contemporary factors, the primary institutions of society in the poor communities of South Africa are in dire straits. If families and relationships between adults and children at the primary level are weak and not mutually reinforcing, the rest of society will be fragile. The state is evidently incapable of adequately attending to these matters and there appears to be a need for private sector and civil society institutions to take co-responsibility for social and institutional transformation.

To further illustrate the nature of institutional and systemic transformation that is required and also the difference between just and unjust or moral and immoral institutional dynamics one could refer to the nature and impact of corruption on the South African economy. It is not so difficult to understand what the difference between just and unjust or moral and immoral institutional dynamics are even if it is difficult to bring about the right kind of change. Current South African society is trapped in a vicious cycle of undeniably unjust, corrupt and immoral actions and practices. The progressive response is to identify and undo these ills, and there is a systemic imperative to counter-institutionalize prevailing bad habits and practices with ways of doing what is, at least, *intended* to be honest, legitimate, fair and just. Corruption has become institutionalized in the current undesirable state of the South African economy. Besides the moral and legal question, the institutionalisation of corruption has had the effect of disconnecting performance from reward and remuneration. The South African economy as a societal institution is severely distorted. Billions of Rands have been allocated to people for reasons that have very little to do with performance. For instance, the term *tenderpreneur* has become an institutionalised feature of the system. These are individuals who enrich themselves through corrupting the awarding of government tender contracts, mostly based on personal connections and corrupt relationships (although outright bribery may also take place) and sometimes involving an elected or politically appointed official (or his or her family members) holding simultaneous business interests. This is often

accompanied by overcharging and shoddy workmanship. *Petty corruption* is so widespread that it has become inherent in the South African public service sphere. It is commonly known that bribes are regularly paid to traffic officials, police officers and officials in employment offices. A state-appointed commission of inquiry found that *state-controlled companies* have deposited vast amounts of money into personal and company accounts without evidence of productive value being created. These cases illustrate abnormal institutional dynamics that have become ‘normalized’. The obvious response should be to ‘clean up’ the system which suggests that South Africa cannot afford and does not have to get trapped in *post-modern moral relativism, meek political correctness or free-wheeling self-enriching corruption*. It is obvious that such forms of corruption are systemically damaging and that actions to reverse the impact are unquestionably justified (e.g. the Zondo Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture).

The institutional and systemic transformation development phase in South Africa requires a common-sense awareness about doing things differently and doing them ‘right’, or at least seeking to do ‘the right thing’. This refers to actions that contribute to making the system ‘healthy’, actions and institutional practices that enhance access and opportunities for those that were historically excluded.

A final example of the difficult but do-able institutional and systemic transformation that should be considered concerns the developmental (and other) roles and responsibilities of all sectors of society: the state, civil society, the corporate/business sector, universities, communities and individuals. There is a growing sense that the state’s role must be more specific and limited to what it is capable of ‘delivering’. This debate is less about ‘minimizing’ the state than it is about co-responsibility, collaboration and partnership and about appreciating that there is a tendency to over-estimate the role of the state and politics. If we approach this issue of co-responsibility from a macro perspective, it is daunting and seems implausible but if we approach it from the level of a cluster of communities like in the Sundays River Valley, it becomes much easier to conceptualize. The roles of different sectors of society become more evident; particularly if approached in an issue-by-issue way (as with our ‘low-hanging-fruit’).

The institutional and systemic transformation of society may be the hardest stage of development and is characterized by lapses and ups-and-downs. Good leadership and skilled development agency are required for it to succeed. The key social group that will encounter challenges are ‘development agents’ or ‘champions of change’. It is in the interest of all that these agents of change are skilled and enabled to perform their role effectively. Transformation of institutions and systems cannot be imposed but must largely be acquired through ‘agency’—assertive action or effort by people and communities themselves.

5.3 DIFFERENTIATED GROWTH

To follow through with the unfolding morphogenetic logic, if during the first phase of development a society or community have made sufficient progress in terms of enabling reconstruction and have invested enough time and effort to transform and develop their institutional systems, they would be positioned for the next stage of development. The next stage is a form of growth but a qualified form of growth. This growth occurs where it is required to enhance the equalization of the system, not where it is already in excess but differentiated and focussed on areas in the system that were neglected in the past due to the way in which the system and institutions were conditioned and structured for exclusion.

This is where the morphogenetic development process becomes interesting and potentially ‘radical’: when years of commitment to change, reconditioning and transformation of the system and institutions pay off and the development process and healthy institutional functioning become the norm. Moreover, the process becomes self-perpetuating in the sense that results accrue—or emerge—from the way in which the social system and institutions function. In other words, the transformative impact of development has now become institutionalized. The institutions and systems function so as to correct the acute structural inequalities of the past without the need for ongoing interventions. Institutions like the education system, the health system and the economy produce fair and just results.

Once the phase of institutional and systemic transformation has been concluded to a sufficient level or extent, inclusion is not dependent on artificial intervention. There will be no need for affirmative action, BEE, quotas or targets because the system treats everyone fairly. This sounds utopian (and is, in a sense, because no society is perfect), but there are certainly societies in which the systems and institutions can be trusted to the extent that interventions like the ones referred to above are not required.

Differentiated growth places the emphasis on increasing the numbers of those who can “keep food on the table”. The problem in a system like South Africa’s is that these people are too few in number; the goal must be that the ranks of those who cannot only look after their own well-being but also contribute to the well-being of others must be increased to the extent that there are enough to generate appropriate and sufficient growth for the whole of the society to benefit. Growth is therefore imperative, but as a means rather than an end—and not any growth, but appropriate economic and socio-economic growth rather than more wealth that leads to further inequalities. It should instead be growth that is so differentiated that it leads to increased inclusion and heightened quality of life across an increasingly broader base, leading to inclusive well-being. Thus, if sufficiently nurtured and promoted,

differentiated growth in the context of a developing society eventually leads to **inclusive well-being**.

5.4: INCLUSIVE WELL-BEING

The desired future is not ongoing growth, but inclusive well-being. As explained by economist Lorenzo Fioramonti (2017), Western societies have used a narrow definition of economic growth as the route to development. Growth has become an end in itself; as a result, the true meaning of development has been lost. Rather than an end goal, development should be viewed as a process towards an improved state of existence for humanity and the ecosystem.

The concept of well-being, with its multidimensional character, is far better suited to describe this improved state. Positive, enjoyable and fulfilling lives cannot be achieved through industrial output alone. Indeed, such output can easily endanger human well-being, leading to the deterioration of the social relationships and environmental balance upon which well-being depends.

For our current purposes, the argument will be concluded by clarifying what is meant by inclusive well-being. Well-being refers to a state of reasonable or optimal quality of life—not only in material or monetary terms but in terms of a spectrum of indicators that is informed by a holistic understanding of human existence and the reality of finite resources. Thus, the goal of development is inclusive and broad-based well-being rather than endless growth.

Well-being is the experience of health, happiness and prosperity. It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction and a sense of meaning or purpose. Major types of well-being, such as:

- Emotional well-being - the ability to practice stress-management techniques, be resilient, and generate the emotions that lead to good feelings.
- Physical well-being - the ability to improve the functioning of your body through healthy eating and good exercise habits.
- Social well-being - the ability to communicate, develop meaningful relationships with others, and maintain a support network that helps you overcome loneliness.
- Workplace well-being - the ability to pursue your interests, values, and purpose in order to gain meaning, happiness, and enrichment professionally.
- Societal Well-Being - the ability to actively and constructively participate in a thriving community, culture, and environment.

This is not the place to debate the meaning of the term ‘well-being’ but rather to appreciate that the long-term goal and objective is *inclusive well-being*, or a society in which everyone has a chance to have a good quality of life.

6: To Summarise: How to recognise morphogenetic developmental progress?

What does progress look like in terms of the phases stated above in terms of the NMB/GB “Access for Creating just Cities” and Sundays River Collaborative?

Based on the dimensions of access that have been identified for the purposes of the NMB/GB “Access for Creating just Cities”, each of the four phases of the morphogenetic development process can be split into quantitative / objective and qualitative/notional dimensions. Future work may lead to some form of developmental *rubric* - a matrix of dimensions and modes of practice where each mode of practice competes with a few others within the same dimension in terms of parameters like performance rate, commitment strength, and acceptance. As long as this work has not been done the approach to the four phases of development and the dimensions of access will apply in other cases like the Sundays River Collaborative.

Thus, the following is a provisional framework for the purposes of recognizing what progress will look like in terms of a morphogenetic development process in terms of the two cases being reflected on.

PHASE 1: ENABLING RECONSTRUCTION

Enabling Reconstruction is focussed on removing obstacles and setting in place the basic means for systemic and institutional transformation.

Following the “NMB/GB “Access for Creating just Cities” enabling reconstruction, in quantitative /objective terms, has at least social, spatial and economic dimensions:

- **Social** dimensions, that refer to peace being achieved (a cessation of hostilities to give time for the development process to take off) among stakeholders if the context is characterized by significant conflict among stakeholders. If this can be achieved, it will be followed by the identification of authentic leadership and then the creation conditions for engagement among stakeholders. Of course, none of this is easy and it may take months to achieve but that is not the point. The intention is to indicate that there are certain stages of development and actions that need to follow on one another for the process to proceed. Another important action in this phase of development is to collect baseline data on key **social indicators** such as age profiles, birth rates, mortality rates,

education through-put rates, employability rates, etc. to be used for monitoring and evaluating change and future development impact.

- **Spatial data** for profiling and collecting baseline data, maps and accessing facilities and resources for stakeholder engagement
- **Economic data** for economic profiling. Economic baseline data, skills, un/employment, productivity, income, sectors, GDP etc.

The **qualitative** / subjective dimension of enabling reconstruction entails identifying counter-developmental cultural / ideational / **notional** / subjective dimensions and paradigms and seeks to shift these to progressive development. These include:

- Collecting qualitative data by way of peoples' expressed views. needs, priorities, perceptions, attitudes etc
- Identifying and analysing the developmental implications of prevailing political ideologies, ideas and paradigms
- One other, the most important facilitating and enabling actions in this phase, it to understand the nature and limitations of prevailing mindsets of leaders and to actively facilitate the changing of mindsets to overcome excessive adversarial and politicized cultures towards a more developmental mindset

PHASE 2: INSTITUTIONAL AND SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION

In both NMB/GB and SRV institutional and systemic transformation can be understood in quantitative /objective terms. This includes:

- Transforming social institutions such as the family, health, education and political to become more developmental, accessible and inclusive
- Transforming spatial patterns of the location and distribution of amenities, facilities and other physical features of society to become more developmental, accessible and inclusive
- Transforming the economy and socio-economy to become more developmental, accessible and inclusive

And in qualitative / notional terms:

- Institutional and systemic transformation involves the shifts in peoples' mindsets, ideas, views and perspectives of institutions and how they should function, from excessively

self-centred and political to become more aware of possibilities for collaboration and mutually-inclusive development.

PHASE 3: DIFFERENTIATED GROWTH

In both the NMB/GB and SRV differentiated growth refers to counter-institutional outcomes that progressively undo the undesirable *status quo* through institutions and systems that produce results and outcomes that are counter to the undesirable original *status quo*.

In qualitative / objective terms

- Socially differentiated growth refers to emergent outcomes of transformed institutions in terms of less inequality, less steep social stratification, decreased power differentials, more cohesion which are all measurable by standard social indicators
- Spatial – emergent outcome of transformed institutions in terms of spatial indicators.
- Economic - emergent outcome of transformed institutions in terms of economic indicators

In qualitative / notional terms

- The emergent outcome of transformed ideas, views and attitudes with regards to transformed / developmental outcomes. These can be assessed by way of qualitative indicators.

PHASE 4: INCLUSIVE WELL-BEING

Following Lorenzo Fioramonti (2017), the case can be made for multiple forms of well-being: emotional, physical, social, workplace and societal well-being. Consistent with the pattern of this narrative, in both the NMB/GB and SRV Inclusive Well-Being manifests in quantitative / objective and qualitative / subjective terms.

The objective / qualitative forms of well-being include:

- Social well-being that refers to ability to communicate, develop meaningful relationships with others, collaborate, form partnerships and maintain support networks.
- Spatial well-being refers to institutional spaces, places, facilities, infrastructure that is appropriate, adequate, accessible, clean, healthy, environmentally sustainable, etc.

- Economic well-being refers to effective markets, fair trade and productive and satisfactory participation in an economy

And finally, in subjective / notional terms well-being refers to a persons and community sense of self-reliance, contentment, well-being and happiness.

7. Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of a morphogenetic approach to societal development. It is based on the theoretical assumptions of the work of social systems theorist Margaret Archer (1984, 1988, 1995), but it is not an academic exercise. It is more concerned with changing the way in which development practitioners and agents of change approach their efforts in changing communities and societies.

The paper suggests that there is a pragmatic, managed and planned alternative to often-destructive revolutionary change and painfully slow evolutionary change.

The main obstacles in the way of widespread implementation of this approach are mindsets that are conditioned into dichotomous and oppositional options that correspond with the prevailing political ideologies.

Countries like South Africa that suffer from development failure need more people who are willing to think in terms of the logic of systems development.

Systemic and institutional transformation will require a new mindset, one that is post-conflict in the sense that it acknowledges that conflict is inevitable due to the realities of inequality and injustice but not inevitable in all contexts.

There is a need to entertain solutions to development challenges that are based on collaboration among people and groups even when there are reasons for confrontation.

Appreciating the value and potential of ‘post-conflict’ collaborative solutions will require an understanding that people—whether they like it or not—inhabit the same social systems, and the failure to enable the actualization of one individual is also a failure for all of those who inhabit the system.

Even if inequality and exclusion benefit some people and groups at a particular point in time, the impact of systemic inequality and exclusion will eventually impact all of those who inhabit the system.

It is in no one’s interest to destroy institutional systems, and it is in everyone’s interest to transform dysfunctional institutional systems to make the social system stronger and healthier.

8. Bibliography

- M. S. Archer (1984) "Social Origins of Educational Systems", London: Sage
- M.S. Archer (1988) Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- M.S. Archer (1995) Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Byrne, D. (1998) Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences: And Introduction. Routledge, London.
- Byrne, (2005: 96) Complexity, Configurations and Cases. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276405057194>
- Crawford et al., 2005,
- Dru, J (1992)
- Fioramonti, L (2017), Wellbeing Economy - Success in a World without Growth. Pan MacMillan. South Africa
- Geyer, R. and Rihani, A. (2010) Complexity and Public Policy: A New Approach to 21st Century Politics, Policy and Society. Routledge: London.
- Giddens, Anthony (1979) Central problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis. Macmillan: London.
- Giddens, Anthony (1981) A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism. Vol. 1. Power, Property and the State. Macmillan: London.
- Giddens, Anthony (1984) The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration. Polity. Cambridge.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1984). Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Translated by Thomas A. McCarthy. Beacon Press. Boston, Mass.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1987). Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason. Translated by Thomas A. McCarthy. Beacon Press. Boston, Mass.
- Miller, J.H. and Page, S.E. (2007). Complex Adaptive Systems. Princeton University Press.
- Pretorius, D. (2019) A Morphogenetic Approach and Multi-Stakeholderism as a Solution to the Development Agency Problem. Working Paper. Development Partners. Port Elizabeth
- Parsons, T (1971). The System of Modern Societies (Foundations of Modern Sociology). Prentice Hall. New York
- Schumpeter, J.A. (1942), Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy.: Harper & Brothers. New York.
- Spencer, H (1896) The Study of Sociology. D. Appleton and Company. New York

Mistra Urban Futures strives towards Realising Just Cities which are Accessible, Green and Fair.
This is achieved through transdisciplinary co-production and comparative urban research at
Local Interaction Platforms in Cape Town, Gothenburg, Kisumu, Sheffield-Manchester and Skåne.
It is funded by the Mistra Foundation for Strategic Development, the Swedish International Development
Co-operation Agency (Sida), and the Gothenburg Consortium with seven members.

MISTRA URBAN FUTURES

Postal address: Chalmers University of Technology, SE-412 96 Göteborg, Sweden

Visiting address: Läraregatan 3, Göteborg, Sweden

www.mistraurbanfutures.org



CONSORTIUM: CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY | CITY OF GÖTHEBURG | IVL SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE | REGION VÄSTRA GÖTALAND
THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD OF VÄSTRA GÖTALAND | THE GÖTEBORG REGION ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES (GR) | UNIVERSITY OF GÖTHEBURG