



UNIVERSITY  
OF NATAL  
**CASS**  
DURBAN

A REPORT ON MAJOR SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS WHICH BEAR UPON  
PROBLEMS OF AND PROSPECTS FOR ACCELERATED  
DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

L.S. SCHLEMMER

**DOCUMENT AND MEMORANDUM SERIES**

**Centre for Applied Social Sciences**

**Sentrum vir Toegepaste Maatskaplike Wetenskappe**

**UNIVERSITY OF NATAL**

**DURBAN**

CASS/19.SCH

A REPORT ON MAJOR SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS WHICH BEAR UPON  
PROBLEMS OF AND PROSPECTS FOR ACCELERATED  
DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

L.S. SCHLEMMER

Centre for Applied Social Sciences  
University of Natal  
King George V Avenue  
Durban 4001  
South Africa

*CASS/19.SCH*

Conference S.A. Institute of International Affairs  
22-25th March 1972 : Jan Smuts House Johannesburg

Centre for Applied Social Sciences  
University of Natal  
Durban

Library Copy

Conference S.A. Institute of  
International Affairs.  
22-25th March 1972  
Jan Smuts House, JHBG

A REPORT ON MAJOR SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL  
FACTORS WHICH BEAR UPON PROBLEMS OF AND PROSPECTS FOR  
ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA:

Rapporteur: *Lawrence Schlemmer*

In this report on part of the proceedings of the conference, I have not attempted to summarise much of the important theoretical arguments advanced since these have been mainly political and economic in content. My focus, rather, has been on what is practically and empirically of direct relevance to Southern Africa.

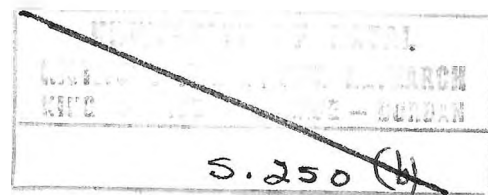
The material summarised here does not necessarily always represent a broad concensus of opinion among delegates. In some cases there was a clear polarisation of views, and this has been indicated. In other cases important points were made without any dissent being voiced within the time available for discussion, and here I have had to assume that no significant disagreement existed.

Obviously, considerable overlap in the social, political, and economic subject matter existed, and it has not been possible to avoid reflecting this in the points presented below.

As far as possible I have used terminology which, although much less impressive than some of the academic terminology used during the conference, hopefully is readily comprehensible to a lay audience.

Unfortunately I have had to omit a great deal of valuable material from this necessarily brief report.

It has been necessary, very often, to draw together scattered points made at different sessions in the conference in order to present a systematic and coherent statement of the social and cultural subject matter of the conference. Points which were not necessarily linked during the discussion have been combined in this presentation in order to draw out the significance of the material.



I. THE HUMAN FACTOR AND THE GOALS AND MEANS OF DEVELOPMENT:

The needs of people, in addition to the necessity for favourable growth statistics, were emphasised by many speakers, discussants and participants. Development was variously seen as an increase in the options and alternatives open to people: an improvement in the quality of the lives of human beings in the fullest sense (as opposed to people viewed as labour or consumption units); and as the manner in which mankind seeks its identity and attains the fullest human stature.

In line with these goals, it was emphasised that overall development plans and specific schemes should carry the approval of the majority of people to be affected, and, ideally, that people should participate in the formulation and implementation of development plans, or at the very least, enjoy full consultation. Pleas were made for planners to pay heed to the social costs of some forms of economic development; costs such as, for example, the destruction of the environment, the breakdown of existing family patterns, the growth of landless proletariats in rural areas, the growth of competitiveness and exploitative behaviour, etc.

Although by no means everyone was optimistic, it was generally agreed that development in Southern Africa must involve a trend towards the equalisation of the incomes and status of people. Not only poverty, but the relative gap in the material standards of different groups and regions was considered likely to cause unrest which would further undermine stability and development in the whole sub-continent. 'If some don't eat, others don't sleep' was a warning accepted by most delegates.

Then again, a prominent Homeland politician, in relating one of South Africa's sick race jokes, very eloquently made the point that what Africans feel they need most is to have their dignity and humanity recognised in full.

II. FACTORS IN THE TRADITIONAL AND IN THE CHANGING CULTURES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA WHICH BEAR UPON THE PROCESS OF MODERNISATION:

African traditional culture and social structure does not generally allow scope for innovation, and does not encourage behaviour orientated towards personal achievement or dissent. Social prestige and status, attitudes to work and livestock, individual life-goals, the system of communal land-tenure, the family system, and the integrating and unifying factors in traditional societies are all tightly interwoven in a kinship-based social system which rigidly prescribes roles and ascribes status.

Occupations are largely undifferentiated, as are the pre-literary forms of education and social-training. A quality of fatalism and an absence of rational planning and rational anticipation of problems is encouraged by the traditional religious beliefs.

Such societies are virtually the complete antithesis of the model of a modern or modernising society which, above all, is characterised by the in-built facility to adapt to changing conditions and to ensure its own survival in changing circumstances.

However, vast and sweeping changes have occurred as a result of the growth of a modern industrial economy in South Africa and as a result of missionary influences, colonial rule, and the modern administration of territories.

The money economy has penetrated everywhere, most tribal people have become convinced of the value of modern education, and increasingly the African (and other) populations are becoming urbanised and gaining experience of industrialised labour. Christian beliefs or certain values which are broadly associated with modern Christianity and/or with rational/scientific thinking are sweeping away traditional supernatural beliefs, although some aspects of these beliefs, like the fear of witch-craft for example, are proving to be fairly resilient.

These changes have given rise to a number of specific factors which have both positive and negative implications for accelerated development. The positive influences are:

- i) Urbanisation, in itself, is generally positively associated with changes in attitudes, values, and patterns of response to social situations; changes which are generally favourable to development. This relationship, however, depends on the urbanising society acquiring the formal and informal organisations for dealing with complex administrative tasks and for resolving internal conflicts.
- ii) Urban African workers, and, in some cases and areas, seasonal migrant workers as well, are generally committed to industrial employment and usually form a stable work force, even though relatively few as yet appear to have acquired career orientations or an acceptance of the value of self-expression through achievement for its own sake.
- iii) It was suggested that growing occupational, material and prestige differentiation among urbanising and modernising groups could spur the initially less-successful members or groups to greater efforts. A contradictory view was also expressed which will be noted presently.
- iv) Numbers of voluntary associations have come into existence spontaneously to provide mutual assistance and to provide immigrants to cities and towns with support and security in a new environment. Such associations teach new and appropriate ways of behaving and take the place of those traditional institutions which do not function adequately in the new milieu.
- v) When rapid change occurs, as with urbanisation, individuals, acting in a changing cultural context, become aware of dissatisfying features, inconsistencies and discrepancies in their social environment, often as a result of some changes occurring faster than others. Once aware of these inconsistencies, provided conditions of leadership are favourable, individuals and groups take action to correct the inconsistencies, and such change-orientated behaviour becomes established as a positive, often dynamic feature in the modernising society.

The process of rapid urbanisation, however, has also resulted in some very serious social problems:

- i) The breakdown of the traditional family, and of the norms and sanctions associated with it, has resulted in certain transitional features, like, for example, a relatively unstable single or nuclear family system, high illegitimacy rates and juvenile delinquency.
- ii) Poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, have led to rising crime rates.
- iii) In some territories in particular and in Southern Africa as a whole the large numbers of unskilled workseekers - the surplus labour - tend to work with other factors in keeping wage rates exceptionally low, exacerbating the problems mentioned above. On the other hand, shortages of skilled workers have, in part, contributed to wide income disparities between skilled and unskilled workers, which seriously impede the struggle for prosperity among Black people and Black states in Southern Africa.

- iv) Many better-educated Africans reveal a tendency to distance themselves from less-educated people and from rural people, contributing towards a weakening of social cohesion and leadership in urban areas. This is, in part, a reflection on one function of the conventional educational system which (in one of the education groups at least) was considered to be a negative feature in that the values and form of education encourage the stratification of African communities.
- v) Migrant labour has meant that rural subsistence agriculture is deprived of a considerable proportion of able-bodied male workers, contributing to the exceptionally poor efficiency in subsistence farming.

Despite the seriousness and urgency of these problems, the view was expressed that in certain cases the very seriousness of the problems acts as a powerful political incentive to efforts to overcome such problems, which in turn act as a spur to development. Even the breakdown of moral values and resulting social disorganisation, for example, can speed up the process of detribalisation.

III. SOME SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT:

- i) In many parts of Africa, ethnic group identity has proved to be a serious dividing factor, emerging after the unity achieved in independence struggles has become attenuated in the post independence period.
- ii) Certain territories in Southern Africa are characterised by potentially disruptive tribal divisions which are countered by attempts to regenerate unifying mass political movements, which can have other effects beneficial to the process of modernisation as well.
- iii) There did not appear to be unanimity among delegates in regard to the salience of tribal divisions in South Africa. One point of view broadly, was that feelings of solidarity among Africans across tribal divisions was a temporary response to the broader pattern of colour-based discrimination in South African society, and that powerful historical and contemporary analogies suggested that tribal conflict would reappear if other conflicts were to pass. Another view, briefly, was that subjective patterns of group identity were, to an important degree, a response to objective factors affecting the interests of people in society, and that no hard and fast predictions could be made as to whether or not tribal hostility would reappear in a hypothetical future. Yet another view was that strong subjective feelings of group identity existed to unite most Africans in South Africa, and that tribal identities were in large measure a result of political policies of the present government and could not be regarded as autonomous social movements. The view was expressed that it was extremely difficult for Whites to understand fully the authentic responses of Africans, in situations like the present.
- iv) On another issue, it was considered that the traditional role and status of the African Chief has been distorted by present policies which entail the nomination of Chiefs as political leaders of the African people in South Africa. These policies result in a weakening of the Chief's prestige and an exposure of Chiefs to the indignities of the hurly-burly of politics.
- v) Evidence from Malawi and Germany suggested that the morale and initiative of peasants was greatly improved by political 'liberation' and by the feeling among people that they were able to participate in deciding their own affairs. Black consciousness programmes in South Africa were seen by some as potentially able to improve morale among Africans, whereas others considered that they would be disruptive of harmonious relations between Black and White.
- vi) Two speakers and a few delegates expressed the view that race attitudes and self-interest among members of the White electorate (or among political party support groups) placed a definite limit on the extent to which material assistance for the development of African people could be provided by the White government. Such attitudes also stood in the way of Africans in South Africa enjoying improvements in occupational status.
- vii) The point was made that an important segment of poorer Black people in South Africa resided permanently in the common area of South Africa, and that their development could not be considered in isolation from political and economic issues in the developed sector of South African society.



IV. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES:

i) Two divergent views emerged on whether or not subsistence peasants should be encouraged to undertake communal farming activity, on the one hand, or should be given the opportunity to own or lease individual plots and become small-scale entrepreneurial farmers on the other. One view was that private African smallholders had proved themselves in Kenya and elsewhere, and that no successful communal ventures existed outside of the very special circumstances in Israel. Difficulties facing communal ventures, in particular, were the generally inefficient management which seemed inevitable unless there was very strong authority, as well as the difficulty of a general inability to discipline labour without personal income incentives for the food producers.

ii) An alternative view was that the social costs of private enterprise farming were high, since this tended to result in growing inequality and in a landless proleteriariat coming into existence. In view of the extreme pressure on land in some parts of Southern Africa it was suggested that successful communal farming was a challenge which had to be faced. However, in defence of individual tenure, the point was made that many landless peasants were usually given employment on the private small farms of relatives and that a general average improvement in material standards for all could result, relative to what the standard of living would be on inefficient communal farms.

It was emphasised that in most types of settlement schemes, however, three conditions appeared to be necessary for success:- a) that strong guidance and authority should be present in the early stages, and b) that initial rewards should be high in order to overcome the understandable reluctance of peasants to take risks and sacrifice leisure, and c) that well organised co-operative marketing and credit schemes (either public or private) should exist. The benefits of individual tenure on leasehold with public 'landlords', with the authority to ensure sustained effort, were mentioned<sup>1)</sup>. However, specific mention was made of two successful co-operative farming schemes in Lesotho, although both schemes were admittedly fairly new.

---

1) C.F. Document of Dr. Ruthenberg.

V. SOCIAL FACTORS RELATING TO DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS:

Ideally, the need for family planning schemes was fully endorsed, since mounting pressure of population numbers cancelled economic growth, led to a high number of dependents per family, and was a factor contributing to political and social instability.

Severe impediments to family planning exist in Southern Africa however, and some of these are:-

- i) The low cost of bringing up children in subsistence agriculture.
- ii) Children are the only form of social security for parents where no state welfare benefits or social security exist.
- iii) A political factor is also present in South Africa, and this manifests itself in the belief that family planning schemes are suggested by Whites to reduce the numbers of Africans, who, on the other hand, see their numbers as a potential source of political strength. It was suggested that family planning schemes should be made applicable to all, irrespective of race.

VI. SOCIAL FACTORS RELATING TO EDUCATION:

NOTE: This is not a summary of the report on the education workshop which appears elsewhere. It merely is a selection of aspects emerging from the discussions which are relevant to this summary of social and cultural factors in Accelerated Development.

- i) Doubts were expressed as to the benefits of primary school attainments in conventional education. Functional literacy and numeracy were felt to be possibly more effective as a stimulant to development.
- ii) The function of conventional education in contributing to sharp status-distinctions in the community has already been noted. The desire on the part of school-goers to achieve white collar status and the tendency for them to disparage agriculture, and manual and technical work is a related feature. It was considered that these features might result in part from values imbedded in conventional education and that developing countries should make attempts to discourage these values, where they exist.
- iii) Education should be rooted in the familiar culture of children, but should aim at preparing every child for adjustment to the demands of a changing, developing society.
- iv) The importance of school-feeding was emphasised, in combatting the poor performance of hungry children.
- v) In a developing society, lifelong education (adult education) had a particularly important place, and its major concern should be literacy training of a type which would encourage an intelligent, thoughtful awareness of community issues and the individuals own life-goals.
- vi) 'Teriminal' primary school courses should have the effect of encouraging further progress of pupil on his or her own, making use of adult educational or correspondence school facilities. Primary school courses should provide children with useful skills instead of being a preparation for further academic studies.
- vii) Dedicated volunteers from more well-educated sections of the South African community should devote themselves to providing part-time instruction to adults in less fortunate educational circumstances, and such efforts should be encouraged, not discouraged, by the South African government.

VII. MAJOR BROAD SUGGESTIONS EMERGING AS  
REGARDS STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:

- i) Urbanisation should be carefully studied, the problems assessed and development planning should include urban planning and social and community development programmes to deal with urban problems. The mobilisation of community members to assist in solving their own problems is particularly important.
- ii) Socially active people in underdeveloped communities should be encouraged to assume leading roles, implying some form of leadership training.
- iii) Many planning attempts have failed because of communication problems. Experts experience difficulty in operating at the grass roots, and agricultural Extension Officers, for example, have difficulty in understanding farmers. Generally difficulties exist in overcoming the natural suspicion and caution of peasants, and this difficulty is probably aggravated in the political climate of South Africa. Sustained efforts should be made to improve the quality of technical assistance, particularly in regard to the aspect of Communication. The role of the social scientist here is paramount.

S. 250 (b)

VIII. SOME RESEARCH PROPOSALS ARISING OUT OF THE NEEDS AND PROBLEMS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE:

The following are some areas in which research appears to be urgently required. For the most part they represent my own assessment of research needs, since very few concrete suggestions for research were made at the conference.

I have been parsimonious in suggesting research topics, limiting myself to what I see as very high priority needs, because of the fact that research is expensive, and generally has to be replicated in different situations before the validity of findings can be fully established. The following are regarded as essential projects:

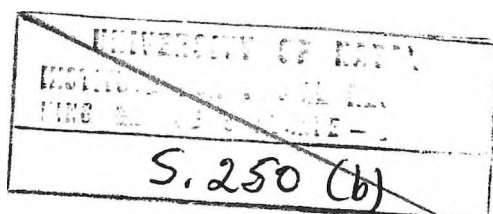
- i) A study of peasant communities, with a view to exploring those factors which lead to urban migrancy and to a failure on the part of migrants to return to the land or to maintain ties with or responsibility for dependants in rural areas.
- ii) Studies of traditional and modern elites in rural areas, and of the conflicts between such elites, specifically incorporating experimental studies of group dynamics approaches to conflict resolution and of institutional arrangements to resolve or minimise such conflicts. A study of conflicts between generations as they relate to development should also be included in such projects.
- iii) In light of realities of population pressure, the high density in certain areas like, say, Zululand or Lesotho for example, we need careful and exhaustive studies of the prospects for group farming and for communal village farming, with particular emphasis on the sort of social institutions that might be encouraged to develop which could help lessen some of the difficulties associated with group farming programmes.
- iv) Collation of all possible data, and of the records of success or failure and the reasons for success or failure (where possible), on all ongoing development schemes in Southern Africa. There is a great need for some sort of handbook - a guide to what is happening in the field of development. This would have to be kept up-to-date.
- v) Study of school-dropouts with particular emphasis on personal motivation and on the social and other factors predisposing children to failure.
- vi) Experimental studies of methods of improving teaching without the necessity for the recruitment of more teachers (who are likely to be in short supply for many years to come). For example, resource books are needed which will overcome second-language learning difficulties; and teaching aids using simple technology are required. All these possible methods require considerable researching before their effectiveness can be established.
- vii) Experimental studies of Community Development schemes and of self-help techniques and organisations which could assist unemployed or under-employed migrants avoid dangers of social dislocation, and enable them to help themselves and the community by working on community projects which could provide money or subsistence for the unemployed while being useful, nonetheless, for the community as a whole.

viii) (Suggested by Professor Kurt Glaser):

Since discussion on population policy showed marked disagreement, it is evident that data are needed as a basis for rational choice.

Therefore research should be undertaken projecting expected rates of development (per capita GNP) on the basis of various assumed rates of population growth, for different groups within the Southern African population separately.

The study would have to assume a range of alternate policies on allocation of resources - since that is a political question. For each policy, it should assess the effects of various birth rates and immigration balances on the ability of White South Africa to divert resources to non-White communities and the ability of the latter to attain optimum economic growth and social development.





This work is licensed under a  
Creative Commons  
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 3.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs  
<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/>