

# The Roots of the **NGO Crisis** in South Africa

*A Look Beyond the Surface*



**BY FRANK JULIE**

(Author of *The Art of Leadership and  
Management on the Ground*)

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*In this historical analysis Frank Julie postulates that the roots of the current NGO crisis in South Africa can be located in the shifts in leadership and modes of learning that have occurred within three historical periods. These shifts were accompanied by broader shifts in the power relations in South Africa post 1994 and the witting or unwitting collusion of sections of the NGO leadership to a discourse that was detrimental to the interest of the poor and marginalized. Julie argues that the entry of new leadership generations into the NGO sector and how knowledge, skills and experiences were produced and transferred in the second and third historical periods facilitated this collusion.*

“I really like what you are saying, what you do with the issue. I think it’s a great study and well worth the reading by anyone in leadership positions in South Africa. Great work!”

(Allan Kaplan: Co-director - Proteus Initiative)

“It is so important for us to start understanding ourselves better through our own narratives, and for others to start getting a clearer understanding of our view of their role. I think that telling it as you have helps us to shift stuck relationships to ourselves and to those whose relationships contribute to defining us.”

(James Taylor: Director - Community Development Resource Association)

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# THE *ROOTS* OF THE NGO CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA

*A Look Beyond the Surface*

“Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not want this naming - between those who deny other men the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression.”  
 (Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, p.61)

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To the community of Bishop Lavis and members and supporters of People First Foundation

## Acknowledgements:

What started as a 'hunch' and later an informal theory about the roots of the NGO crisis, and based on my continuous reflection, has evolved over time into a thesis.

I wish to thank Dr Janice McMillan at the University of Cape Town (UCT) who played a key role encouraging me to crystallize the core arguments contained in this study and who motivated me to make this offering available to a broader audience.

My gratitude is also extended to those NGO leaders who availed some of their precious time to be interviewed to share their views on the subject.

I am also grateful to those who have read the initial draft of this study and who sent comments that further illuminated the general thrust of this thesis and its subsequent findings. I am indebted to all of you. Thank you.

Frank Julie

Cape Town, October 2009

## My rationale for this study

I have been active in the NGO sector in South Africa for about 27 years starting out as volunteer, field worker, organizer, programs manager and later as director. I have also served on various NGO boards, act as advisor to many and now practice as a development practitioner within the sector. During these years of involvement I have tried to develop a sensitive understanding about the challenges that NGO type organizations (or organizations with a social purpose) face. A few years ago I authored a book – The Art of Leadership and Management on the Ground (2006) that captured those experiences to make it available to a broader audience. The central focus of this book is the role of leadership in building sustainable organizations for permanent social change. The response to this book was overwhelmingly positive and this prompted me to develop questions around leadership and learning within the sector, especially in relation to the current crisis facing NGOs in South Africa.

Although this crisis is manifesting itself as a funding crisis, lack of resources and lack of capacity, my view is that this is simply the external and outward manifestation of a deeper crisis – a crisis of leadership. Empirical evidence suggests that this crisis of leadership does not of course only relate to the NGO sector but to all sectors of society. But my focus with this study is the NGO

sector in South Africa. I would argue that this leadership crisis is a result of a leadership discontinuity that took place within the sector over a period of about 35 years.

My view is that we have experienced a leadership discontinuity further exacerbated by a disruption of learning processes with serious implications for transfer of knowledge, skills, experience and a subtle, sometimes deliberate undermining of a body of knowledge produced in the process of struggle for a true developmental practice in the interest of the poor and marginalized.

I am fully aware of an objective limitation to this study in that the focus has been on the evolution of those NGOs that can be termed “struggle NGOs” or NGOs with a conscious intent to radically alter the power relations in South Africa. These are NGOs that are advocating for transformation of society and not its reform within the existing system. My interviews were therefore targeted at those leaders whose leadership development and capacity has been shaped by this conscious intent. The findings of this study should therefore be viewed in this context and not be generalized to the sector as a whole, especially those previously state subsidized (and largely white dominated) welfare NGOs.

This study consists of four parts. Part one examines the evolution of the NGO sector in its European and broad African context. Within the African context I try to highlight three phases within which the NGO

sector evolved. Part two then examines the evolution of the South African NGO sector and here I also conceptualized three phases through which the NGO sector evolved.

Part three is an analysis of the evolution of the sector and the dominant discourses that impacted on this evolution through the lens of leadership and learning.

Part four is a postulation of my findings and the lessons to be learnt from this analysis. My hope is that these lessons will be taken to heart by both the older generation leaders as well as the new ones as we grapple collectively with the crisis in the NGO sector and become more awake to our collective responsibility towards the poor and marginalized for whom we exist in the first place.

## PART 1

### Background to the NGO sector globally

Within the European context the anti-slavery movement in England in the late 18th century provided the initial impetus for the rise of what we today know as the NGO movement (or non-profit sector). This movement gave rise to various political associations that eventually led to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840. Subsequently the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA's) was founded in 1855, followed by the establishment of International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863.

Trade unions emerged later in England in the 19th century as a leading force in the NGO movement. Rapid industrialization, with its consequent social and economic challenges, created specific areas of need within societal structures. It is these needs that the NGO sector tries to address. The growth of the sector has been substantial over the last decade, fuelled by increasing concerns over issues such as environmental abuse, globalization, unemployment and poverty, gender inequality, human rights violations and more recently the HIV and AIDS pandemic (Paul cited in Rokey: 2001: 129).

### NGOs in Africa and social control<sup>1</sup>

The emergence of the NGO sector in Africa can be traced back to the period of colonization and the role of the missionaries in conquest. In a paper, Manji and O'Coill (2002:1) state that the role of NGOs

“...in ‘development’ represents a continuity of the work of their predecessors, missionaries and voluntary organizations that cooperated in Europe’s colonization and control of Africa.”

According to them NGOs can either subscribe to an “emancipatory agenda” or a “paternalistic role” in development.

Although not stated explicitly, the authors identify at least three major periods within which this colonization and control evolved.

#### Period of colonialism

The first period was characterized by the colonial period of war and conquest with the missionaries playing a significant role in controlling the expectations and behaviour of black people. Where

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<sup>1</sup> The picture being sketched here is to provide a general view of developments on the continent. I accept that there may have been unevenness in certain countries.

services were provided by the colonial state it was mainly for a minority. A clutch of charities and missionary groups provided support to the majority rural population such as material support in education, health or other social services. In exchange they evangelized amongst the black population, promoting their own vision of civilization (Manji and O’Coill: 2002: 1, 2).

Struggles by Africans against colonialism were either met by brute force or the waging of an ideological war. Within the latter the missionaries and voluntary organizations played a key role.

“They provided the (colonial) administration not only with a cheap form of private welfare, but with a subtle means of controlling the behaviour of blacks” (Manji and O’Coill: 2002: 3).

The programs of care which they delivered did not seek to address the root causes of the poverty but focused on the failings of Africans themselves.

“The problem was not injustice, but being ‘uncivilized’ and suffering from the ‘native’ condition,” Manji and O’Coill (2002: 3).

### Period of neo-colonialism

The post independence or second period landed these missionary and charitable groups in a crisis since the popular political movements derived their legitimacy and credibility from a desire to end social

injustice. Manji and O’Coill raise an important point about how these missionary and charitable groups managed to survive after independence and found the answer in the changing discourse around ‘development’.

While the idea and practice of ‘community development’ existed within the colonial period, voluntary bodies did not represent themselves or their work in terms of ‘development’ until much later when the US Government and the international agencies began to distinguish half the world as ‘underdeveloped’ and to describe ‘development’ as a universal goal. (Manji and O’Coill: 2002: 3).

Since the missionary and charitable groups were tainted by their association with a racist past, the new discourse around ‘development’ created a way out for their dilemma of illegitimacy. By adopting this mantra of ‘development’ they could create a connection with emancipation. They also started to express concern about poverty and vociferously condemned the racial prejudice that created this poverty. They reinvented themselves as indigenous ‘development NGOs’ due to the pressure of black resistance and international politics (Manji and O’Coill: 2002: 4).

It is important to note that the discourse around ‘development’ was quite different to how progressive NGOs with an emancipatory agenda would interpret and understand it. If true development is

understood as a process that cannot be delivered to people, is innate to any individual or society, must lead to more control over one's destiny and a fundamental shift in the power relationships, then the dominant discourse was a total distortion and abortion of this process. (Taylor: 2000: 5) The dominant discourse was framed

“...with a vocabulary of charity, technical expertise, neutrality, and a deep paternalism.” It “...continued to define non-Western people in terms of their perceived divergence from the cultural standards of the West, and it reproduced the social hierarchies that had prevailed between both groups under colonialism” (Manji and O’Coill:2002: 4).

According to Kaplan (1996) even in the so called ‘developed’ Western countries there were “damning and articulate indictments” of this notion of ‘development’. Quoting well renowned economist Wolfgang Sachs and colleagues, Kaplan (1996:10) writes:

“The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape...the development epoch is crumbling under the weight of delusion, disappointment, failure and crime, and ...the time is right to write its obituary.”

After political independence the new African rulers were not so eager to extend the benefits of political office to everyone. The popular movements, associations and trade unions that brought these

rulers to power were now seen as an obstacle to progress. Under the guise of ‘national planning’ they were marginalized and replaced by experts supported by bureaucratic and centralized decision-making. The language of emancipation and denial of rights was now replaced with the language of ‘poverty’ and ‘basic needs’. The difference may seem trite, but the implications are huge for developmental practice. As Manji and O’Coill (2002:7) state, the first approach,

“...demanded popular mobilization, the other inspired pity and preoccupations about the technically ‘correct’ approaches to ‘poverty alleviation’.” (my emphasis)

During this time we also saw the emergence of development economists, advisors, technicians and ‘experts’. As a rule they were all imported from the West.

Another development took place, namely the role of the local development practitioner or activist. The political orientation changed from being concerned about power relations that generate poverty to poverty being the problem of the poor. According to this outlook poverty can be eradicated by the ‘development’ practitioner teaching the poor how to help themselves, hence the notion of ‘self-reliance’. The Freirian understanding of a lack of power being central in maintaining the position of the poor was undermined and with it the role of the activist as one of conscientizing the poor to their own inherent

power to change their own circumstances (Kaplan, 1996:38-39).

### Period of globalization and neo-liberalism

The third period in the 1970s saw major political and economic upheaval. The world economy experienced a recession. An oil crisis created a financial glut with Europe and America awash with capital and little prospect of high rates of return. Developing countries were offered loans to finance 'development'. But this glut of international credit was short lived and the cost of borrowing increased significantly in the 1980s fuelled by an American monetary policy that drove up interest around the world. Those countries that took loans were suddenly faced with huge debts and the challenge to service the interest on the loans. It was during this period that we saw the advent of globalization and its twin brother, neo-liberalism. Technological innovations also provided further impetus for this new form of economic and political control (Manji and O'Coill, 2003: 9).

As a political ideology neo-liberalism believes in the supremacy of the market and the safeguarding of the right of a minority to the unfettered accumulation of profits at the highest rate possible. This is euphemistically referred to as 'growth'. They argue that when this freedom to accumulate is unrestricted others will reap the benefits through a 'trickle down effect'. According to this mantra, the purpose of 'development' is therefore to guarantee

this 'growth' so that other freedoms can be enjoyed at a later stage in the future. State expenditure should be directed to create an enabling environment for this 'growth' to take place and not be 'wasted' on providing public services that can be best provided for by private enterprise (Manji and O'Coill, 2003: 9).

The imposition of structural adjustment programmes as part of the debt provisions by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank led to a growth in poverty and inequality. The result was popular dissatisfaction and demonstrations. These demonstrations were violently suppressed, and the most popular organizations became the target of repressive laws. Universities were closed and strikes were declared illegal. This widespread opposition forced the multilateral and bilateral aid agencies to reconsider their approach to promoting 'development'. Neo-liberalism at this stage had to be dressed up with a more "human face". According to Manji and O'Coill (2003:9) the outcome of this process was,

“...the 'good governance' agenda of the 1990's and the decision to co-opt the NGOs and other civil society organizations to a repackaged program of welfare provision, a social initiative that could be more accurately described as a program of social control.”

It is important to note that many NGOs unwittingly allowed themselves to be co-opted to this agenda by

being hoodwinked by the language of 'good governance'. Manji and O'Coill stressed that the pre-condition for NGOs' cooption to this neo-liberal cause was merely a "coincidence in ideologies rather than a deliberate plan." (my emphasis) Instead of coercive means to uphold an unjust social order, the proponents of neo-liberalism saw an opportunity to perpetuate this order through "consensual means". Unlike the colonial missionaries who were not as discreet in justifying an unjust social order, the modern day NGOs may have unwittingly allowed themselves to be co-opted to perform this same role, albeit in total ignorance with more devastating effect (Manji and O'Coill, 2003:12).

To summarize the 3 periods of social and economic control:

1. The colonial period (war, conquest, missionaries and charitable organizations spreading the language of 'civilisation')
2. The neo-colonial period (the development of indigenous 'development' NGOs as they adapted to the new political forces)
3. Period of globalisation and neo-liberalism (adopting the language of 'good governance' with NGOs co-opted mostly unwittingly to assist in social control)

Interestingly, a similar process was (and is still) pursued in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall and the penetration of Western capital to capture the potential emergent markets with the

'development NGOs' in the forefront of this economic conquest. This is how Kaplan (2005:14) summed this situation up in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"In the past, BiH (Bosnia-Herzegovina) was dictated to by various (foreign) empires and regimes. These have disappeared; but 'globalization' and the dictates of unaccountable global institutions might signal greater danger. With the latter, power is wielded in more hidden and insidious ways, through temptation, through assumption, through a compelling discourse which lulls to sleep rather than awakens" (my emphasis).

## PART 2

The evolution of the South African NGO sector

It is within the context of the global developments and discourses in the 'development' industry, especially the broader African context, that one must view the South African NGO sector as a community of practice to understand the current impasse. The same patterns can be discerned.

Although one can trace the origin of the South African NGO back to the slave period, for the purpose of this study I will start with the period of the 1970s when the more modern NGO emerged as we know it today (Camay and Gordon: 2007).<sup>2</sup> The pre-1970 period was characterized mostly by predominantly white controlled welfare organizations subsidized by the apartheid government promoting separate development.

The period preceding the 1970s was marked by political repression with the major political actors banned, imprisoned or forced into exile. The trade union movement, South African Congress of Trade

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<sup>2</sup> Although the sector is very diverse encapsulating sport, cultural, faith based and welfare organizations, my focus in this study is on those NGOs with an expressed aim of challenging the unequal power relations in society, i.e. your 'struggle NGOs'. See Camay and Gordon (2007) for a detailed overview of the evolution of NGO sector from pre-colonial times to 1994.

Unions (SACTU), as one of the biggest NGOs in the 1950s was dealt a similar fate.

The modern NGO sector, also termed the "struggle sector" (as opposed to the state supported and white dominated welfare sector) in its evolution can be contextualized by dividing it into three historical periods.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Historical Period: 1973 - 1991

South Africa experienced enormous economic growth in the 1960s. However, in 1978 the country experienced a deepening recession that resulted in its worst economic crisis. The fall of colonial regimes in Mozambique and Angola developed a renewed confidence amongst local activists to confront the apartheid state. This confidence was fuelled by one of the biggest strike waves since the second world-war in 1973 in Durban that spread to major centres in South Africa until 1978. Out of this strike wave was born a new trade union movement, later baptized as the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) later renamed the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985.

In 1976 the country was rocked by the biggest rebellion of high school students against the forced imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. This period also saw the emergence of the Black People's Convention (BPC) with its ideology of black consciousness (BC) and focus on fostering self-

reliance through its programmes in black townships. Many adherents of the BC tradition were inspired by the works of Paulo Freire, Frantz Fanon and Afro-Americans like Carmichael. The emergence of the BPC was a forerunner of the more modern struggle NGO post 1970 (Matiwana and Walters: 1986:3).

It was during this period that NGOs mobilized against the apartheid state with some NGOs acting as front organizations for banned political parties. Various struggles were waged during this time such as consumer boycotts, school boycotts, worker strikes such as Fattis and Monis the boycott of the Tri-cameral parliament. Out of these struggles emerged alliances of organizations such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum (with the Cape Action League as an affiliate based in Cape Town) (Matiwana and Walters: 1986:33).

During this period South Africa experienced deepening crises manifested in various political uprisings in 1980, 1985 and 1989. The military strangulation and subsequent retreat of the South African Defense Force in Angola with the help of the Cuban forces led to the independence of Namibia and later a negotiated settlement in South Africa.

On the NGO front

Many NGO leaders had an activist background with affiliation to a certain political tendency. It was

during this time that NGOs were flooded with external funding with very little or no concern for accountability from donors. Funding during this period came mainly from church based sources or international donors who entered the NGO scene during this time.

On the leadership and learning front

Most of the knowledge, experiences and skills were acquired through incidental learning, action learning, observation, modeling, self-directed learning through study groups, reading, etc. Many of those who were part of the leadership had to hit the ground running. Learning happened in the process and practice of struggle. There was very little time for formal learning or training courses. What existed were non-formal leadership courses organized mainly by church groups. Examples of this were the Christian Education Leadership Training (CELT), Methodist Christian Leadership Centre and the Churches Urban Planning Commission (CUPC) (Matiwana and Walters, 1986:43). During this time the sector was also male dominated.

A NGO leader working in the social housing sector described her experiences in this way:

“I got a lot of political education... I got an understanding about the broader international context... it was very valuable... in the student congress...I was representing the region/province.

We learnt how to organize... you were exposed to organizational process... you mimicked what you were experiencing... e.g. mandates... there was no training session... you were disciplined when out of turn.” (Interview: 23 June 2008)

Another NGO leader focusing on building capacity in the sector put it this way:

“I don’t think we realize how remarkable the leadership was... there is no way of validating it... a lot of what was happening...if you go back to the days of struggle. And how leaders were thinking on their feet and there was this mad craziness and everybody is being consulted... if you capture this and take it to the world more confidently...” (Interview: 23 July 2008)

The same leader commenting on the impact of popular education methods employed at the time within the sector in particular commented:

“That is what most progressive development is meant to be about. People take control over their own destiny. They find their own voice, shape their society. This is what development should be about. Others have no idea that it can happen. People stood up to the most brutal authority...street committees, school children...it is beyond the experience of 99% of the world population.” (Ibid)

2<sup>nd</sup> Historical Period: 1992-2000

During this period political parties were unbanned and a new political climate prevailed. NGOs started to reevaluate their role vis-à-vis the state and many leaders left the sector in droves to join the new democratic government that was elected by popular vote in 1994. The UDF was dissolved and a deliberate process of demobilization of organizations was embarked upon. This had the effect of reducing the oppressed to spectators to the political negotiations that unfolded, negating all the developmental principles that underpinned the practice of struggle. The political compromise that followed (culminating in an elite transition) happened with almost no input and participation from popular organizations. This was in stark contrast to their previous role in the struggle years where consultation and participatory democracy was cherished and embedded in the process of struggle.

Referring to the above one observer noted:

“It was a grave mistake, for which we continue to suffer today. The political culture imposed on the internal structures stifled the democratic culture that has been so key to weakening the apartheid state. This was a culture of secrecy, authoritarianism and intolerance. It was the culture that allowed the motley clique that ran our

country for the past decade to get away with murder.”<sup>3</sup>

On the economic front a new economic regime - the Growth Economic and Redistribution Policy (GEAR) was put in place that replaced the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). This was to be South Africa’s version of the structural adjustment program imposed on other African countries in the second period as outlined above. This was neo-liberalism in disguise. The protagonists of this self-imposed structural adjustment program often frowned upon and stifled debate around its ideological underpinnings and implications. NGOs were not very vociferous in their opposition to this policy, too scared that they may be targeted and denied funding.

On the NGO front

A more hostile donor environment started to prevail with more emphasis now on accountability, transparency, management, good governance, legal compliance, measuring impact and project planning. Available funding could only be accessed with strict conditions especially around planning and reporting. The logical framework planning method imported from the USA (from the Pentagon) via Germany (the ZOPP method) became prominent with many leaders sent for training to master this

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<sup>3</sup> Mondli Makhanya, Editor, Sunday Times, 8 November 2009, p. 12

tool (Reeler: 2008: 5). The social theory that underpinned this method was hardly questioned and challenged openly.

Describing the situation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> historical period, the leader focusing on social housing referred to above commented:

“There are a lot of people who want to do good...they have a lot of degrees but no complimentary experience... there are people who opted out of the private sector... but with no struggle experience...” (Interview: 23 June 2009)

Referring to the sector she commented:

“We now have less sophisticated agendas operating...the sector is very disorganized...it is now becoming very individualistic...” (Ibid)

Kaplan (1994: 2) commented about this process:

“...some people formerly working in the corporate and commercial sector are bringing ideas about management and organization which would previously have been rejected by the “democratic” development organizations.”

An NGO leader in the early childhood development sector described this period in this way:

“The language of leadership is changing... now it is about impact ... return on investment... not

only a feel good basis... but the economic basis... about measuring impact... it is outcome and impact driven..." (Interview: 9 June 2008)

Many NGOs collapsed unable to adapt to the new conditions. Those NGOs who acted as fronts for banned political parties died a natural death. Others died due to their inability to adapt to the new demands. International funding dried up as more donors decided to exit. Local funding sources opened up to mitigate the effects of the limited international donor funds and more international governments preferred to enter into bilateral funding agreements (government to government) such as USAID and the European Union. Local funding sources were (and are still) marred by bureaucratic red tape and inefficiency. NGOs were now encouraged to develop 'income generating' strategies to mitigate the effects of a developing funding crisis. Already the very identity of the NGO sector as 'non-profit' started to shift, albeit under the guise of 'income generation'. The discourse around NGO 'sustainability' (with a focus on financial sustainability only) as innocuous as it may sound can be viewed in this context.

To meet the challenges many NGOs started to network and established forums. The South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) was a product of this networking amongst NGOs. Donors also promoted such networks to save on administrative expenses in the management of funding contracts. One example was the Urban Sector Network (USN),

consisting of a group of NGOs promoting social housing and the Youth Development Network (YDN) focusing on preparing youth for sustainable livelihoods.

A new policy framework for NGOs was developed with the most important being the Non-profit Organization (NPO) Act. This NPO Act required all NGOs to register themselves. This was to be a prerequisite for external funding and to compel NGOs to legally comply with certain provisions such as submission of annual narrative and financial reports to promote accountability.

On the leadership learning front

On the education and training front new policies were introduced by the democratic government with a new emphasis on formal training, accreditation of courses, the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAS), Recognition of Prior Learning, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Many formal educational institutions e.g. universities, started to position themselves to offer leadership training programs to address the new demand for 'capacity building'. (By the way, no mention was made about the "indicators" when this capacity will be fully built!!). A new terrain and language opened up and new leadership training programs were required and offered. Many NGO

leaders enrolled on these programs to improve their own social mobility and at times as a stepping stone into government or the corporate sector. Unlike the first period where the focus was on the collective, a crass individualism and materialism started to emerge at a leadership level.

Kaplan (1994: 10) commented on this process:

“Outside the communities, in the airy realms of corporate development agencies, consultants and trainers thrive. In the name of ...capacity building the development sector has become the place to be, for some, more lucrative than the commercial sector.” He added: “...the corporate culture which accompanies many development projects does not go beyond the motions of development.”

A NGO leader, who used to be active in the early childhood development sector but now practice as development consultant, commented:

“...when I came in there were all these strategies... all the top people were leaving...staff attritions... competition was tough....all this stuff about accreditation and SAQA....There was the slow decline of the organization.... people were just leaving...” (Interview: 25 April 2008)

A NGO leader focusing on building capacity within the sector and who joined during the 1<sup>st</sup> historical period and referring to the current leadership commented thus:

“In our sector it (the leadership) may have gone backwards I think... our experience was not valued and validated... a lot of leaders went to get their PhD’s and now they can say I am validated... nobody wrote it up... the development sector has been emasculated ... and bullied into ... starting to adopt leadership and management practices that suit others more than us really... so I would say... in one way leadership has changed... in the same breath... things are more professional... more corporate.” (Interview: 23 July 2008)

Interestingly at this time the role of the development practitioner or activist started to assume a new meaning, from activist in the Freirian understanding (in the 1<sup>st</sup> historical period) to one of development worker teaching the poor to help themselves, i.e. the discourse of ‘self-reliance’. Popular mobilization to address strategic issues of power was replaced with the discourse of ‘capacity building’ and ‘advocacy’ all imported from the ‘developed’ world (read: overdeveloped world). The discourse of the second period in the African context started to play out.

At the same time new NGOs and CBOs focusing on the new challenges such as HIV and AIDS, women and child abuse, gender mainstreaming, etc. emerged. A new cohort of leaders entered the sector, mostly unaware of the lessons of the previous period. Social movements with a more overt political agenda started to gain more prominence as the social and economic crisis

deepened with 'service delivery' protests becoming more sustained and spreading. The rise of the social movements can be viewed in the context of the failure of the (professionalized) NGO sector to address strategic issues of power at this stage, many still trapped in a state of complacency, inertia and confusion following the elite transition of power.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Historical Period: 2001 – 2007

#### On the NGO front

During this period another cohort of leaders emerged who entered the NGO sector having either left the corporate sector or state institutions. Others were unemployed and started NGOs as a survival strategy. Some of the leaders in the second period migrated to government or having achieved formal qualifications, started their own businesses or became consultants to the sector.

A NGO leader focusing on fighting sexual abuse described the sector at this stage like this:

“In 2005 things started to change... Sangoco seemed not to exist anymore... we asked who is representing the sector... there was no one... people did not want to help you with advice...or how to register an NGO... and where to source funding... people did not want to share or refer... it looked like complete madness... cat fighting...” (Interview: 11 June 2008)

During this time more international 'development NGOs' started to enter the country competing for space with local NGOs. The policy frameworks of the state were now largely in place with a seeming change in attitude towards the sector. The state suddenly baptized itself as a developmental state with NGOs now suddenly viewed as 'service delivery agents', i.e. an extension and appendix to state designed (welfare) programmes. Problems on the ground were now framed as a 'lack of implementation' and not problems with the fundamental design and the neo-liberal anti-developmental discourse that underpinned that design. As if the thinking behind GEAR (and neo-liberalism) could be artificially separated from these state designed (welfare) programmes!

Meanwhile the funding crisis deepened with a myriad of NGOs collapsing, many of them staffed by highly experienced and professional people. Frustrations with state subsidized donor agencies also spilled over into anger and despondency amongst many NGOs. SANGOCO lost credibility and as a network organization all but collapsed.

This period also saw the consolidation of social movements with a more overt political agenda such as the Anti-Eviction Campaign, Landless People's Movement, Anti-Privatization Front, etc. This coincided with sustained 'service delivery' protests around the country and a general disillusionment with deepening poverty. Joblessness increased with an almost total collapse of public health and

education and a deepening housing crisis (i.e. privatization by default by leaving many people no choice but to subscribe to private health care and education in particular). This is further reinforced by an unofficial state policy of “self-disconnection” i.e. allowing the poor to disconnect themselves from basic services such as water provision, electricity and telecommunications. This unofficial policy of ‘self disconnection’ is complemented by another unofficial state policy of ‘short-term containment’ in the form of social grants which is a tacit admission that the socio-economic challenges cannot be solved within the current political and economic framework that gave rise and exacerbated them in the first place. Commenting on the predatory elites active within the ruling party, like moths attracted to a light bulb, Richard Pithouse commented:

“The current strategies by elites to manage the poor with grants, service delivery and forced removal to transit camps are very modest – in fact they amount to a strategy for short-term containment at the level of basic survival rather than a strategy for a viable society.”<sup>4</sup> (my emphasis)

At the same time the well ‘connected’ predatory elites are involved in widespread corruption (through formal and informal collusion) and looting in the public and corporate sector, both “legal” (according to their own pre-designed rules, some

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<sup>4</sup> Cape Times, 29 October 2009, p. 11

inherited from the old apartheid days) and others blatantly illegal (in violation of the “liberal” constitution).<sup>5</sup>

The SETAS, launched with much fanfare to address the skills shortages in the country also started to show signs of incapacity and an inability to deliver on their mandate. Calls for their closure increased but later a scaling down was agreed upon.

On the political front divisions within the ruling ANC party deepened, culminating in a change of leadership at its Polokwane conference in December 2007. The policy of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) was challenged on the assumption that it was benefiting only a few black elite with ties to the ruling party. Calls to rescind this policy increased with other voices calling for a more broad based approach.

Meanwhile statistical reports confirmed the widening gap between rich and poor with South Africa being the most unequal country in the world after Brazil.<sup>6</sup> This deepening social and economic crisis and its effects on the poor finally spilt over into the xenophobic attacks in early 2008.

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<sup>5</sup> This ‘grab and run’ mentality of looting and plundering of resources is not only limited to politicians and corporates but also found its way into the NGO sector as the politics of elitism were reproduced at all levels of society.

<sup>6</sup> Sunday Times, Business Section, 20 November 2005, p. 1

The crisis in the NGO sector deepened with some big NGOs closing down<sup>7</sup>. According to research by the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) at the University of Kwazulu-Natal only two percent of NGOs would remain sustainable in the long term.<sup>8</sup> In a recent gathering of about 20 NGO leaders who can be regarded as veterans within the sector, all having entered the sector in the first period, the precarious situation that the sector finds itself in today was summed up in this way (Kaplan et al, 2008:5):

“We are losing our humanity. As NGOs we are losing the practice of being human – and this was (their emphasis) our practice. Why and how may we rekindle it? What are we enabling, what are we allowing? We don’t talk truth anymore; and truth exposes, truth names the void – says what is really there. But we cannot speak because we no longer listen; we no longer listen to the silenced voice, the silenced person, the silenced position, the silenced idea.”

Towards the end of 2007 calls were made for the revival of SANGOCO nationally, with various

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<sup>7</sup> One is reminded by the closure of the Non-Profit Consortium (NPC), Olive ODT, Themba Lesizwe, Development Resource Centre (DRC), South African Grantmakers Association (SAGA), Interfund, Careers Research and Information Centre (CRIC), Centre for Education and Enterprise Development (CEED), Resource Action Group (RAG), Northern Cape Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and National Land Committee (NLC) and Arts Media and Education Centre (AMEC) to name but a few.

<sup>8</sup> Cited by University of Stellenbosch, Mail & Guardian, 5 May 2007

chapters re-launched in the middle of 2008. All over the country some NGOs started to do some serious introspection with leadership networks emerging in Johannesburg (NGO CEO Circle), Durban (Leadership Conversations) and Cape Town (The Leadership Circle and Director’s Forum). Deep disillusionment has been expressed during these gatherings with the current impasse that NGOs have reached and blamed mainly on the political leadership. In the gathering of NGO leaders quoted above this disillusionment was expressed thus:

“Our political leadership, and the movement that overcame apartheid, appear bitterly tainted with the ravages of pride: corruption, disrespect, arrogance, and overwhelming culture of denial. Our financiers and merchants – peppered now with erstwhile struggle leadership – have joined a mass movement of global capital and argue the fate of our (their) money as the arbiter of the fate of our land...and the gap between wealth and poverty has become obscene” (Kaplan et al, 2008:5).

This then, is the context within which the NGO sector finds itself today and the realities that the leadership are confronted with.

## A typology of the three historical periods:

## PART 3

1 <sup>st</sup> Period	2 <sup>nd</sup> Period	3 <sup>rd</sup> Period
<p>Political and economic crisis in SA; focus on activism; trade unions rebuilding; building of democratic organizations; UDF and National Forum launched to coordinate local struggles; fighting apartheid state; SA isolation deepens; war in Angola a turning point; learning in action; informal learning, experiential learning; learning as participation in struggle; ample funding available; little accountability for NGOs; struggle sector vs state subsidised welfare sector; male dominated; the 'development discourse' enters SA; leadership training offered by churches; a strong indigenous NGO movement become entrenched.</p>	<p>Political compromise; new democratic government; new policy frameworks; GEAR strategy adopted; popular democratic organizations demobilized; 'poverty alleviation' and 'basic needs' discourse emerged; NGO networks emerged, foreign funding dries up; local funding sources open up; focus on 'income generation', leadership exodus to government; new leadership enters sector; crisis in the NGO sector emerging; new language of 'good governance' and accountability; new tools to measure development work; NGOs collapsing; new NGOs emerged focusing on HIV/Aids, women &amp; child abuse; new educational regime i.e. accreditation; RPL, etc.</p>	<p>Deepening social and economic crisis exacerbated by global crisis; service delivery protests increased and becomes sustained; social movements gain more prominence; xenophobic attacks become more widespread; deepening divisions in ruling party; crisis for NGO sector deepens, more NGOs closing down; revival of SANGOCO; NGOs regrouping; a new generation of leaders enter the sector; female leadership dominance; more international 'development' NGOs enter SA competing for space with local NGOs; split in the ruling party formalized a year later; revival of popular education movement</p>

### What are the lessons?

The above typology can lead to the misconception that the movement of leaders in and out of the sector happened in a mechanistic manner. This is wrong. It is quite common to find leaders (although rare) who joined the sector in the mid 1980's and leaders who joined the sector in the mid 1990's and who are still active. The purpose of this typology is to show that there are three distinct periods that can be identified with the movement of leaders in and out of the sector in each period and facing different qualitative challenges that impacted on the continuity of leadership with implications for transfer of knowledge, skills and experiences.

### On the political front

On the political front what emerges from the above typology is the unfolding of a process of subtle social and economic control that happened in the rest of the continent during the second and third period as outlined above. South African NGOs did not remain impervious to the discourse around 'development', 'good governance', 'poverty alleviation' and 'basic needs' that NGOs beyond our borders were exposed to, with some unwittingly (and at times understandably) adopting this mantra and its unspoken agenda. The 'development'

discourse was uncritically embraced especially since its protagonists were vociferous in their opposition to apartheid. Following this, the discourse around 'poverty alleviation', 'basic needs' and 'good governance' were also embraced since that was what NGOs thought they were struggling for in the first period (in SA) and also because it coincided with our democratic practices and ethos forged at that time. Many leaders were not aware that these discourses were already common currency globally nor were they aware of the real (and hidden) agenda of social control behind them due to South Africa's relative isolation from the rest of the world. However, its effects were as devastating in South Africa as can be seen in the second and third periods in SA, as in the rest of Africa as Manji and O'Coill (2002) have pointed out above.

At the same gathering of veteran NGO leaders quoted above, this confusion about how the NGO sector as a community of practice has evolved was captured in the following observation:

"The development industry has usurped our very language. All the old words, concepts, no longer work. Yet language influences and defines who we are. At this point of transition we can no longer say what we mean. We ourselves no longer know what we mean...None of this is unique to SA, we're all part of a global framing..." (Kaplan et al, 2008:7).

After analyzing the situation they found themselves in the veteran leaders admitted:

"Looking at ourselves truthfully we were able to admit that we were both flattered and used by international donors who regarded South African NGOs as special, with superior expertise to bring to the dark continent. Glorifying in this role we allowed ourselves to become separated from others on the continent." (Kaplan et al, 2008:24).

On the leadership learning front

On the leadership learning front a qualitative change in the mode of learning about leadership impacted upon the nature of the NGO sector as a community of practice. In the 1<sup>st</sup> historical period informal learning was highly valued with experiential learning being more collective than individual. As the NGO leader focusing on building capacity in the sector commented about his leadership development:

"I was just incredibly lucky...working in remarkable groups and teams of people. I never came into a group as a leader. My leadership was part of the groups I was a part of. I have taken the lead from them really. We tried to understand what they need and what the organization needs. My learning about leadership has been through these groups." (my emphasis) (Interview: 23 July 2008)

However, a fundamental shift in learning about leadership occurred in the 2<sup>nd</sup> historical period. With the changing political and socio-economic context post 1994 informal learning and learning via the community of practice (with its focus on the collective) became eroded, less dominant and less supported by this changing context. The dominant role of formal learning and its perceived value was accompanied by more and more opportunities for those previously denied access to it. Many leaders enrolled on numerous leadership courses to validate their experiences through formal learning. This process happened at the same time when the older leaders within the sector migrated to government and the corporate sector.

This is how the NGO leader focusing on building capacity within the sector described it:

“... behind that (the move towards formal learning) for me society has a certain way of attributing value to certain things... it attributes value to formal learning but it does not attribute value to effective action (informal learning). If I led a street committee I should be the equivalent of a Masters degree plus... but society has a clever way of attributing value.” (Interview: 23 July 2008)

Another NGO leader focusing on community development put it like this:

“In the 1980’s and early 1990’s there was no accredited learning but we learnt ...there was experiential learning... the real questions that you were struggling with as a leader... yes, there was credibility; a strong foundation was laid... I’m not into the certificates; learning is what you take out of and bring to the experience... that is what I value in learning.” (Interview: 12 June 2008)

Another NGO leader who joined the sector in the 1<sup>st</sup> historical period and now working in the early childhood development sector put it this way:

“I never did a course in leadership... you experienced things and you copy... you see people doing the wrong things and you don’t do it... I also worked with people who were useless as leaders; who promoted nepotism and were autocratic...” (Interview: 9 June 2008)

The new generation of leaders who entered at this stage lacked the tradition and collective experience of struggle coupled with access to the body of knowledge developed during this phase. The identity of the new generation of leaders in the 2<sup>nd</sup> historical period therefore differed fundamentally with the older generation. Their knowledge was mainly text-based with an emphasis on managerialism, profitability and sustainability (with a focus more on financial sustainability).

As a group focusing on advocating for a return to popular education admitted:

“At present neo-liberal forms of education dominate learning and development creating a focus on the individual while negating the power of the collective.”<sup>9</sup>

The shift towards this kind of leadership and knowledge did not support the holistic sustainability and an adherence to a true developmental practice within the sector. I wish to contend that the developing funding crisis post 1994 therefore only exacerbated and deepened this trend but did not cause it.

The beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> historical period was largely characterized by elements of the 2<sup>nd</sup> period. However, the continued crisis within the NGO sector, the emergence of new social movements with an activist approach to leadership and sustained community protests due to a lack of service delivery caused a shift to take place within the NGO leadership towards once again valuing informal modes of learning and the valorizing of ‘local knowledge’ as in the 1<sup>st</sup> historical period<sup>10</sup>. The impasse we have reached within the sector has also compelled us now to ask serious questions about our developmental practice as opposed to a practice of welfarism (as an end in itself) that at

best is only ameliorating and at worst perpetuating the very social problems we try to eradicate.

#### PART 4

The way we look at the problem is part of the problem!

In this study I have tried to show that the roots of the current NGO crisis can be located in the shifts in leadership and learning that have occurred within the three historical periods as outlined above. These shifts were accompanied by broader shifts in the power relations in South Africa post 1994 and the witting or unwitting collusion of sections of the leadership to a discourse that was detrimental to the interest of the poor and marginalized. It was an agenda of social control masked by a language of ‘development’ and ‘good governance’ that coincided with the language of struggle.

The entry of new leadership generations in the second and third historical period into the sector facilitated this collusion. It was further reinforced by the disruption of informal learning processes

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<sup>9</sup> Popular Education Group Report: 24-25 November 2008, p. 1

<sup>10</sup> In November 2008 a country-wide popular education network based on the ideas of Paulo Freire was initiated.

and by depoliticizing the sector<sup>11</sup> through the undermining of a body of knowledge, experience and skills acquired in the process of struggle to promote a developmental practice in the interest of the poor and marginalized. The shift in emphasis to more formal learning processes and with their emphasis on accreditation, standardization and commodification of education at the expense of the value of informal learning, should be viewed in this context. The foregrounding of leadership training programs with their clearly defined, verifiable, predictable and predetermined outcomes acting as a substitute (and not supplementary) to more comprehensive leadership learning programs, should also be viewed in this context. The focus in these training programs tended to emphasize “teaching” and not “learning”.

As Kaplan (1999: 16) states:

“The “teaching” aspect of a training program should be considered a small part of the program. It incorporates only the possibility of exposure. The real “learning” aspect of a training program takes place in the practice back home.” (his emphasis)

The NGO leader focusing on community development referring to the importance of inner work for NGO leaders and the role of training instead of learning programs commented thus:

“Training is not always the answer; to create that space for people to be vulnerable; you cannot learn unless you have made yourself vulnerable. They come back (referring to staff members) and they are not able to utilize that training (my emphasis); it is clinical training; There are many other things you have to put in place; training is being used to conform... it is about conforming...” (Interview: 12 June 2008)

Problematic areas of the training approach (as an end in itself) are the disconnect between theory and practice, lack of context and not being embedded in real situations, lack of respect of participant’s experiences, follow up in the workplace and the importance of practicing what participants learned. (Kaplan: 1999: 15-16)

Commenting on this shift towards packaged training instead of holistic capacity building which is inherently a more slow process, Kaplan (1994: 10) stated:

“Committees are convened and they ...are serviced by packaged training courses delivered as the final answer to the capacity-building problem.”

In contrast the NGO leader focusing on building capacity in the sector commented on his leadership development.

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<sup>11</sup> The discourse around ‘civil society’ should also be viewed in this context

“I would say experience has played a dominant role compared to training or being taught to lead. Nobody sat me down to say here is a course...you have to take this before you can lead. So that’s very clear...” (Interview: 23 July 2008)

I would argue therefore that what was transferred (content) as part of leadership development in the SA NGO sector cannot be divorced from how (methodologies/form) it was transferred. A clear shift took place from the informal learning approaches in the first period dominated by activism to more formal approaches to learning in the second and third periods dominated by a discourse of ‘development’ and ‘good governance’ with a new dominant trend amongst the leadership towards materialism and individualism.

The largely technician and strictly academic approach (advanced mainly by academics with more experience of welfarism and little experience of a true developmental practice) embedded in the formal learning approaches, either deliberately or by default (or both) bought into the dominant global paradigm of ‘development’, ‘capacity building’, ‘good governance’, ‘poverty alleviation’ and ‘basic needs’.

A NGO leader working with abused women put it this way:

“When the lecturers explain something I can hear they lack experience. Experience comes from the heart and theory comes from the head. I can

assess if they have personal experience or clinical experience, paper knowledge.” (Interview: 18 May 2008)

The NGO leader focusing on community development described it like this:

“We hear of development studies... especially if we look at the South African context...training programs are based on imported views that have no bearing on the context in which we live.” (my emphasis) (Interview: 12 June 2008)

Echoing this view Sue Soal (2003: 8) commented:

“The development sector is teeming with people who can provide respectable, even reputable, services: trainers who have their workshop “packages” that get sold all over the world; consultants who ply their methods and ready solutions; NGOs that make their reputation developing something original – then peddle it endlessly, with little regards for need and context”. (my emphasis)

Linda Cooper (1998) identified a similar trend in the labour movement where she contrasts a focus on ‘workplace training’ from previously ‘workplace education’ with its emphasis on formal certification, recognition of prior learning and accreditation within a national qualifications framework. According to Cooper (1998:10), worker

experience previously regarded as shared resource and

“...guide to action’ amongst workers has been turned into a commodity which is ‘individually ‘owned’ “and can be exchanged for a qualification in order to compete with other workers on the capitalist labour market, and in a struggle for individual upward mobility and ‘career paths’.” (my emphasis)

Walters and Daniels (2007: 70) commenting on the discourse around ‘short courses’ (re: short term training programs) in relation to assessor training, made the following observation:

“In many instances, organizers of ‘short courses’ and assessors of education and training do not see themselves primarily as educators, but rather as marketers of learning products to consumers – and this we believe is a problem.”

They continue:

“Providers of ‘short courses’ are often on short term contracts to deliver cost-effective products to organizations to which they have no long term affiliation. The short course is a type of commodity that is sold in the market place, with little relationship to the social practices where it is delivered.” (my emphasis) (Ibid: 70)

Walters (who is also the chairperson of the South African Qualifications Authority – SAQA) and

Daniels conclude that this shift towards ‘short courses’ is “driven primarily by business interest.” They feel strongly that the discourse around ‘short course provision’ “reflects tendencies towards the marketisation and commodification of learning within the contemporary neo-liberal economy.” (Ibid: 61) (my emphasis)

According to Walters and Daniels (2007: 61) the increasing dominance of this discourse around ‘short courses’ ultimately leads to the preservation of the status quo, intentionally or not, instead of allowing the majority of people to challenge the “hierarchies of power and privilege.”

Confirming the globalized nature of this process of commodification of education, Griff Foley (2001), a renowned radical adult educator based in Australia, sums it up when he states that we are faced with a

“Globalized capitalism (is) invading more and more areas of human life, including learning and education. Adult education provision (is) increasingly commodified and dispersed. The very notion of ‘adult education’ disappearing.” (Foley: 2001: 84) (my emphasis)

This logic of profit accumulation, maximization and commodification is not only limited to the realm of education. Its penetration is all pervasive. As Richard Pithouse (2009: 11) pointed out in relation to political participation:

“The problem that is not faced up to is that while liberal democracy offers everyone the same rights to engage and shape the future in principle, in practice, access to media, the courts and electoral politics are all commodified to the point where there’s a systemic exclusion of the poor.” (my emphasis)

The logic of profit accumulation, maximization and commodification had penetrated the South Africa NGO sector in insidious ways and its discourse became dominant albeit in sometimes disguised and deceptive forms. The very identity of the sector as “non-profit” became contested terrain.

As Paul Goodman (1964:61) stated in relation to formal education,

“Profit societies, like garrison states, invade every detail of life.”

Interestingly enough, as many of our leaders blindly (and at times openly) rushed to embrace the new discourse of managerialism, profitability and sustainability (note: sustainability more as an end in itself and not as an instrument towards social change), strong evidence emerged that this model of intervention within the sector is highly flawed. As Jim Collins (2006: 1) confirmed after researching about 100 corporates over a 10 year period in the USA,

“We must reject the idea – well intentioned, but dead wrong – that the primary path to greatness in the social sectors (re: NGO sector) is to become “more like a business.” He continues: “Most businesses – like most of anything else in life – fall somewhere between mediocre and good. Few are great. When you compare great companies with good ones, many widely practiced business norms turn out to correlate with mediocrity, not greatness. So then, why would we want to import the practices of mediocrity into the social sectors?”

But this is not all. Collins (2006: 13) comes to another interesting conclusion namely,

“...tomorrow’s great business leaders will come from the social sectors, not the other way round.”

Sadly, despite clear evidence of a failed hegemonic business paradigm, more and more donors are encouraging NGOs to adopt these mediocre practices. The leader working with abused women commented:

“They (referring to donors) want us to be like corporates. But the everyday is removed from being a corporate. There is nothing wrong to subscribe to relevant laws but you cannot lose focus on your mandate.” (Interview: 3 July 2008) (my emphasis)

This conclusion by Collins (2006) resonates strongly with my own conclusion In The Art of

Leadership and Management on the Ground (Julie: 2006: 182) on the emergence of a new form of leadership that is painfully emerging within the sector.

“...it is my firm belief that as the historical forces of human progress move relentlessly and inexorably towards a more interdependent phase in the organization of human life, a new woman and man (re: new leader) is emerging. The painful birth of that new man and woman is largely taking place in the developmental sector where (unlike in other spheres of societal life) men and women are subjected to all the pain, vulnerabilities, uncertainties, challenges and complexities of a world in transition. It is here where the new leaders and elders of tomorrow are now being born, baptised in the laboratory of daily struggles for human survival; where the human values to sustain this form of interdependent life are now being forged. The fundamental task of today’s leader and elder is to be the pioneer and nurturer of this new form of life, this new consciousness, this new awakening of the human spirit. There can be no nobler task than this one, no bigger investment in the future of the next generation!”

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As this study has demonstrated, the NGO sector in South Africa, as is the case in the rest of the world, has not been impervious to the invasion of the logic

of profit maximization. Enough evidence exists that many of us actually colluded in our own downfall and may have helped (consciously or unconsciously) to precipitate the current endemic crisis in the sector.

Now, the big question is: For how long will we only blame external funding or lack of capacity for the cause of the crisis in which we find ourselves in? When are we going to realize that the way in which we frame/name the cause of our problems is part of the problem? Or are we prepared to look beyond the surface, beyond the obvious? Only time will tell...

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Julie is the co-founder and fellow trustee of People First Foundation and its Leadership Circle, focusing on building the capacity and guiding the new generation of NGO/CBO leadership to fulfill their organizational mandates. Julie is also the author of *The Art of Leadership and Management on the Ground* (A practical guide for leaders and managers on how to build sustainable organizations for permanent social change).

Julie is the author of numerous articles such as '18 Ideas to Avoid a Funding Crisis', '23 Sins of Management', 'Effective People Development in a Non-Profit Organization' and '13 Habits of Highly Effective Leaders'. He acts as strategic adviser to many NGOs.

Julie studied social science at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and adult education at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He regularly contributes articles to websites and journals all over the world. To freely download articles and read more about his book, please visit [www.frankjulie.blogspot.com](http://www.frankjulie.blogspot.com).

#### Comments from other NGO leaders

Dear Frank

"I really like what you are saying, what you do with the issue, I think it's a great study and well worth the reading by anyone in leadership positions in South Africa. Great work!

It does beg questions, or perhaps begs for further explorations, as to what happens now, where does this all go, and so on. How do leaders actually learn to get beneath the surface, where do we all go from here, how do we really understand the subtleties and insidiousness of the 'invasion', and how do we shift even here, from seeing it not so much as an invasion - which remains external - but as a collusion, both conscious and unconscious, with forces that we ourselves are releasing. It begs, I think, a look at the global context in terms of consciousness, where we find ourselves, why, and how do we move now. All these are lengthy explorations and I do not mean to imply that I would have liked to find them in this paper, not at all, this paper stimulated my own thinking about

some aspects of my own agenda, I guess. And I indicate only how much work there is ahead. I also liked the quotes I read from your book..." Allan Kaplan (Co-Director: The Proteus Initiative)

Hi Frank,  
"Thanks for sharing this insightful discourse. I do however feel that while you examine our local context well, and encapsulate the present ills that beset much of our NGO sector, that you overlook an important aspect behind this whole subtle (and not so subtle) shift that has happened, especially since around 2000 or so in the local NGO world. This shift has affected not only our NGOs but has equally hit NGOs elsewhere around the world. What has happened is not just the capture of local activist NGOs by the predominant capitalist (greed driven!!) paradigm but also a similar shift elsewhere in both the developed and developing world."  
Best  
Glenn Ashton (Journalist and Social Analyst)

Dear Frank

"I have just been forwarded your article on the roots of the crisis by one of my colleagues. I immediately started reading it... I am already thinking of people in the development sector in other parts of the world that I want to send it to. It is so important for us to start understanding ourselves better through

our own narratives, and for others to start getting a clearer understanding of our view of their role. I think that telling it as you have helps us to shift stuck relationships to ourselves and to those whose relationships contribute to defining us."

James Taylor (Executive Director: CDRA)

Dear Frank

I could not help myself and dropped all those end of year reports et al on my desk and started reading! Thank you so much for sharing this excellent document with us. I will be forwarding this to many here and abroad. Thought provoking, so true and much needed analysis.

Gardie Judge (Rural Development Support Services)

"To meet the demands of a successful transformation in any organization, community or society, every leader must be prepared to undergo an internal transformation, a painful process cleansing a leader from the contamination of an unconscious, unthinking, gender-, race-, class- and

rank blind society. Like steel forged in the white heat burning the impurities, so a leader is moulded on the anvil of those invisible social forces that must lead to change - human change." (Frank Julie)