

Transforming Sustainable Development

Exploring religion-sensitive approaches in Light Development



Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 The context: Transforming development	3
1.2 Exploring Light Development	4
1.3 Outline of this report	4
2. The Light Development concept	5
2.1 What is Light Development?	5
2.2 How does Light Development express the 3Ps of sustainable living?	5
2.2.1 Planet: Lightly digestible processes and products.....	6
2.2.2 People: Light-like relationships.....	6
2.2.3 Profit: Light-weight living	8
3. The Light Principles in practice.....	9
3.1 The eco-village Lagoswatta (Sri Lanka)	9
3.1.1 Background of the Lagoswatta project.....	9
3.1.1 Background of the Lagoswatta project.....	10
3.1.2 Lagoswatta as a Light Community	10
3.1.3 The religious dimensions of the Lagoswatta project.....	12
3.1.4 Participatory action research in Lagoswatta.....	13
3.2 The Sekem project (Egypt).....	14
3.2.1 Background of the Sekem project	14
3.2.2 Sekem as a Light community	16
3.2.3 The Religious Dimensions of the Sekem project.....	19
3.2.4 Participatory action research in Sekem	19
3.3 The Basa Magogo project (South Africa).....	20
3.3.1 Background of the Basa Magogo project	21
3.3.2 Basa Magogo as a Light Practice	22
3.3.3 The Religious Dimensions of the Basa Magogo project.....	24
3.3.4 Participatory action research at Basa Magogo.....	24
4. The Consultation on Light Development	26
4.1 The content: An integral approach	26
4.1.1 Vision and motivation.....	26
4.1.2 Root causes of the current crises	27
4.1.3 Religion: keep it in or leave it out?.....	27
4.1.4 Who defines the Good Life?.....	28
4.1.5 Dimensions of power.....	28
4.1.6 Questions of scale: connecting the local and the global	29
4.2 The concept: ‘Light’ as a metaphor	30
4.2.1 Relation to other concepts	30
4.2.2 Is it illuminating?.....	30
4.2.3 The franchise model.....	31

5. Concluding remarks	32
5.1 Remaining questions	32
5.1.1 What is religion?.....	32
5.1.2 Who owns 'the Good Life'?	33
5.1.3 Is local development enough?	33
5.2 The benefit of the concept: Light Development as a mapping framework	34
 Appendix A. Expert contributions to the Consultation	 35
A.1 What is going on? How do we respond?.....	35
A.1.1 Contemporary development challenges (Wendy Tyndale)	35
A.1.2 3P Development response (Marnix Niemeijer)	37
A.2 The Light Development concept	39
A.2.1 People: Light-like relationships (Jan de Valk)	39
A.2.2 Planet: Lightly digestible processes and products (Cathrien de Pater).....	40
A.2.3 Profit: Light-weight living (Paul Hendriksen)	42
A.3 Religion in Light Development cultures	44
A.3.1 Religious diversity (Frans Wijssen)	44
 Appendix B. Participants to the Consultation	 45
 Factsheet	 46

1. Introduction

Every second of the day, human beings interact with each other and with the world around them. People live with others and with their environment, at local, regional and (inter)national level. In the present-day globalising world, human-human interactions and human-nature interactions become more intense and more frequent. International development can not deny these changing interactions.

At the same time, however, we should not forget the relationships between humans and nature at local level. This publication deals with these local relationships, by exploring the concept of *Light Development*. This concept focuses on individual households: on the way members of these households interact with each other and with the Earth around them, and the way individual households interact with other households. Within these relations, religion and spirituality can play both unifying and divisive roles. In exploring development through the visions behind the Light Development concept, we have examined these roles.

1.1 The context: Transforming development

In the past years, the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (KCRD) and its participants have organized four conferences concerning the exploration of the relations between 'religion' and 'development'. The *Consultation on Light Development*, held in April 2010, has been the fourth of these.

The first conference, entitled *Religion. A source for human rights and development cooperation*, was organized in 2005 by the predecessors of the KCRD. The main conclusion of this conference was that religion can have a positive contribution to human rights and development.

In 2007, the second conference was held, entitled *Transforming development. Exploring approaches of development from religious perspectives*. During this conference, the positive contribution of religion to human rights and 'Integral Development' was further discussed.

In July 2009, the KCRD organized a third conference, called *Responding to Climate Change. Religion and Southern Perspectives on Light Development*. During this conference, Louke van Wensveen (researcher for the KCRD) presented a policy proposal for Light Development as a trademark for development programs that combine a light ecological footprint with attention to the immaterial aspects of integral human development at household level. As religious traditions typically emphasize, there should be a balance between material and immaterial development, for example between building houses and building relationships within and between households. Light Development was presented as a design concept that gives hands and feet to this balance.¹

In 2010, the KCRD further developed this Light Development concept and reflected on it, both in a practical and a theoretical manner. The concept was practically tested by

¹ For more information, you can go to the website www.religion-and-development. Here, you can find the documents of both conferences mentioned in this chapter.

comparing existing development projects in the South with the ideas and visions behind the concept. Theoretically, the concept was examined during the *Consultation on Light Development*, during which different experts were invited to comment on the concept.

1.2 Exploring Light Development

Light Development is a combination of the Integral Development and Sustainable Development. Integral Development takes the indivisibility of the human being as a starting point for development. Central in this concept are people's visions on the Good Life. In these visions, religion and relationality play major roles, since these elements or a great part shape the idea of the Good Life.

Sustainable Development consists of three dimensions: the ecological, the economical and the social. Within the international business world, these dimensions are called the '3Ps of Sustainable Development', meaning Planet (ecological), Profit (economical) and People (social).

In Light Development, the ideas behind Integral Development and Sustainable Development are combined. In the Light Development concept, the 3Ps of Sustainable Development get another meaning than is accustomed within the world of international business, in order to emphasise the lightness of sustainability. A similarity between Integral Development and Light Development is the emphasis placed on religion and relationality. However, Light Development specifically focuses on the micro level of individual households in the South.

1.3 Outline of this report

This report gives an outline of the exploration of the Light Development concept. It covers the four stages of this exploration.

First, the Light Development concept was created and developed by Louke van Wensveen. An extensive explanation of this concept can be read in the second chapter of this report.

After the introduction of the Light Development concept by Louke van Wensveen, we have explored the concept in a practical manner. We did this by comparing the visions and ideas behind the concept to existing case studies. In the third chapter of this report you will find three of these case studies: the Lagoswatta project in Sri Lanka, the Sekem project in Egypt and the Basa Magogo project in South Africa. In these case studies, you can read what Light Development means in practice.

After this exploration, we further explored and reflected on the concept with other intellectuals, both theorists and practitioners, during a *Consultation on Light Development*. During this conference, international experts and guests shared their ideas and critiques on the concept. The report of this consultation can be found in chapter 4.

Finally, the critiques and strengths of the Light Development concept have been discussed within the KCRD. In the fifth chapter, you can read if and how the KCRD will continue to work with the Light Development concept and its underlying visions in the future.

2. The Light Development concept

In 2009, dr. Louke van Wensveen introduced the concept *Light Development* to the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (KCRD). This concept emphasizes the support for *Light Practices*: basic cultural building blocks of ecologically, socially and economically sustainable societies. In societies, most Light Practices are woven into the regular responsibilities and routines of the household, involving home maintenance, small-scale food production, cuisine, child care and education, health care, shop keeping, artisanship and cottage industry.

When households engage in Light Practices, their members consume and produce in a cradle-to-cradle manner, while personally and socially flourishing in integral and resilient ways. Their sustainable and constructive participation in the larger systems of the Earth can be expressed in terms of the 3Ps of sustainable living: Planet, People and Profit.

2.1 What is Light Development?

Currently, social, ecological, and economic values are seldom integrated from the very first stages of project design, let alone in religion-sensitive ways. At the same time, many professionals in the sector and people in local communities appreciate the urgency to do so, given the linked social, ecological, and economic crises and their underlying moral and spiritual perversions. Fundamentally, the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of intensifying global threats is at issue.

Therefore, a new way to structure 3P development cooperation – the main vision behind the Light Development concept – is very important. At the project level, Light Development is a sustainable design concept that combines social, ecological, and economic values in religion-sensitive ways. At the organizational and network level, it is a value anchor for 3P development cooperation cultures.

Light Development takes the form of Light Practices: practices that are designed to be sustainable from the inside out. In sustainable societies, most of these practices are woven into the regular responsibilities and routines of the household. As cultural activities that realize and reveal evolving visions of Light Development, Light Practices are the basic human building blocks of sustainable societies. They are the local roots of a just and viable global civilization in an age of resource depletion, ecosystem stress and climate change.

2.2 How does Light Development express the 3Ps of sustainable living?

Light Development refers to cultural processes (practices) and products (artifacts) that can be described as light-like, lightly digestible, and light-weight. These metaphors indicate the 3P qualities of practices and their products (People, Planet, Profit). The qualities of being light-like, lightly digestible, and light-weight refer to physical experiences that most people would recognize. This helps to communicate the principles of 3P Sustainable Development in local contexts. These 3Ps are:

- ... Planet: Lightly digestible processes and products
- ... People: Light-like relationships
- ... Profit: Light-weight living

Participating in Light Practices reliably generates goods and services that support a more light-weight quality of life in households and communities.

2.2.1 Planet: Lightly digestible processes and products

Currently, the 'Planet' criterion of Sustainable Development often means little more than controlling environmental damage at the margins of systemically harmful business-as-usual. By contrast, Light Practices are ecologically sustainable in a genuine way.

Practices meet the 'Planet' criterion of Light Development when their processes and products are lightly digestible by the Earth's cycles.

This is a cradle-to-cradle criterion.²

Light Practices transform materials and energy in such a way that processes and outputs can be easily assimilated by the biodynamic and technical metabolisms of the Earth.

An example is the practice of permaculture farming: sustainable land use design. This way of farming does not only produce crops, but also builds up humus, which nourishes and protects the soil communities of the 'underground economy'. It is a holistic perspective on the Earth. Central in the concept are the ideas of Earthcare (recognizing and caring for the Earth as the source of all life), Peoplecare (supporting and helping each other to change our way of living), and Fairshare (placing limits on consumption in order to ensure the Earth will be used in a wise way).³ A practical example of this kind of farming can be seen at the Lagoswatta project in Sri Lanka, a project that has been set up with the help of Australian permaculture experts Max Lindegger and Lloyd Williams.⁴

2.2.2 People: Light-like relationships

Currently, the 'People' criterion of Sustainable Development often means little more than reducing the personal, social, and cultural damage – the fall-out – of economic practices. By contrast, Light Practices are personally, socially, and culturally sustainable in a genuine way.

² Cradle-to-cradle is a system way of thinking: all materials used are 'food' for the next step of processing in the system. This is not the same as recycling, because it is taken at the system level, not at the product level, and is aimed at retaining the quality of all materials in the cycle (so there is no 'downcycling'). This way of designing has proven to be applicable in farming as well as in industry, in individual products as well as in city design. This is being shown by China, where currently whole cradle-to-cradle cities are being planned to accommodate several millions of people. Cf.: Braungart, M. & McDonough, W., *Cradle to cradle. Remaking the way we make things*, New York 2002 (North point press).

³ Cf.: Mollison, B. & Holmgren, D., *Permaculture one*, Australia 1978 (Transworld Publishers).

⁴ See chapter 3.1.

Practices meet the 'People' criterion of Light Development when people find that participating in these practices tends to realize and reveal light-like, relational qualities of the Good Life.

Light Practices enable participants to shine as they share these light-like qualities. They allow people to flourish in dignity as they contribute to the common good.

Light-like, relational qualities of the Good Life tend to be realized and revealed ...

... when household practices engage people

Light Practices engage participants by drawing them together, as though around a fire. In the process, people find opportunities for bonding, bridging, and linking. Such affiliation is one of the light-like, social qualities of the Good Life.

For example, cooking around a fire made the 'Basa Magogo' way draws family members and neighbors together.⁵

... when household practices enable people

Light Practices enable participants by empowering them to be integrally involved in contributing to the common good. Light Practices foster skills and virtues that allow people to participate with head, heart, and hands in society. Such cultivation of skills and virtues for the common good is one of the light-like, relational qualities of the Good Life.

For example, when home construction is a community practice, it not only yields shelter, but also opportunities to hone skills and virtues that realize the common good while revealing the Good Life. This can be seen in the Habitat for Humanity project with Roma people in Bulgaria.⁶

... when household practices encourage people

Light Practices encourage participants by allowing them to experience the warmth of social support. This helps them to face fatigue, doubt, and disappointment. Such awareness of benevolent presence is one of the light-like, relational qualities of the Good Life.

For example, traditional health care practices are particularly valued for providing caring social support, as mapped by the African Religious Health Assets Program (ARHAP).⁷

⁵ See chapter 3.3.

⁶ Habitat for Humanity, *Bulgaria: Keeping families together*. See: http://www.habitat.org/eurasia/learn_about_habitat/our_impact/bulgaria_abandoned_children_project.aspx.

⁷ See: <http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za/>.

... when household practices exemplify human excellence

Light Practices exemplify human excellence by allowing participants to feel enlightened. By participating in the practices, people can come to see how specific quality standards witness to true, good, and beautiful ways of living. Such wise, moral, and aesthetic perception is one of the light-like, relational qualities of the Good Life.

For example, the practice of joint music making reveals the possibility of dynamic social attunement. At the same time, it trains the general listening skills and team building skills that are necessary for social representation.

2.2.3 Profit: Light-weight living

Currently, the 'Profit' criterion of Sustainable Development often refers to little more than earning money. By contrast, Light Practices produce goods and services that ensure material sufficiency as well as economic resilience.

Practices meet the 'Profit' criterion of Light Development when people find that participating in these practices tends to generate goods and services that support a more light-weight quality of life in their households and communities.

Light Practices reliably relieve burdens of care: they ensure material sufficiency and economic resilience.

Participation in Light Practices supports a more light-weight quality of life ...

... both directly and indirectly

For example, making a fire the 'Basa Magogo' way produces heat for physical comfort (*direct benefit*); facilitates food production (*indirect benefit*); saves money that can be made productive in other ways (*opportunity benefit*); and protects health, allowing for participation in other practices (*opportunity benefit*).⁸

... both immediately and in the long term

For example, permaculture gardening produces food for immediate consumption; builds up a living system that will continue to produce; and builds up a production base for long term local economic resilience.

... both by design and serendipitously

For example, making a fire the 'Basa Magogo' way produces heat for cooking and physical comfort (*by design*); and facilitates social capital formation by drawing people together (*serendipitously*).⁹

⁸ See chapter 3.3.

⁹ See chapter 3.3.

3. The Light Principles in practice

From February to April 2010, the KCRD has searched for practical examples of development projects, which serve as illustrations to clarify the visions behind the Light Development concept. In this chapter, we give three of these practical examples of existing projects that successfully support Light Development at the household level. These projects stand out because they effectively foster the immaterial as well as the material aspects of human development, while respecting ecological integrity.

Find out from the following three case studies what Light Development can mean in practice.

3.1 The eco-village Lagoswatta (Sri Lanka)

After the tsunami of 2004, much of the coastal region of Sri Lanka was destroyed. The Sri Lankan Buddhist development organization Sarvodaya helped survivors from three villages to build up a new community at a safer distance from the ocean. It started to construct Lagoswatta, an eco-village that houses 55 households in the Kalutara area of Sri Lanka. Residents were able to move in a year after construction began, in 2006.

For the organization Sarvodaya, environmental management and ecology are priorities. The organization seeks ways and means to conserve biodiversity and ecological processes in order to support a healthy biosphere. A key element is to educate and train residents in environmental management and Sustainable Development. This includes teaching them the benefit of sustainable household management.

An eco-village is a community striving to create cooperative lifestyles in harmony with their local environments.

Important features of the eco-village are developing and refining social and ecological tools, such as consensus decision making, inter-generational care, alternative economic models, whole systems design, permaculture practices, renewable energy systems, and alternative modes of education that offer positive visions and real-life solutions for humanity and the planet.

[Source: Website Sarvodaya]



3.1.1 Background of the Lagoswatta project

In December 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami devastated thirteen coastal districts of Sri Lanka. Over 40,000 people were killed; more than a million residents lost their homes. To prevent a future disaster on this scale, the government of Sri Lanka declared a buffer zone along the coastal line, including the Kalutara district. People living in this zone had to relocate.

The organization Sarvodaya was assigned a piece of land by the Sri Lankan government to help build a new community for the displaced people of three villages in Kalutara. This Buddhist NGO – founded in 1958 and now Sri Lanka’s largest development organization – combines relief work in the battered North with ongoing development projects in the entire country. All in all, Sarvodaya is involved in 15,000 communities, Lagoswatta being one of these.

In March 2006, 220 displaced people, belonging to 55 households, settled in their new eco-village Lagoswatta. This village was developed and designed with the help of Australian permaculture experts Max Lindegger and Lloyd Williams. Nowadays, Sarvodaya still accompanies the residents of Lagoswatta as they cultivate a sustainable lifestyle. At the same time Sarvodaya has started up similar projects in Kalutara and in other areas of Sri Lanka that were affected by the tsunami.

The development of Lagoswatta was mainly financed by Sarvodaya. Additional funding came from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC), the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), the Asian Pacific Forum for Environment and Development (APFED), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Bush and Clinton Tsunami Relief Fund.

According to Sarvodaya, the village of Lagoswatta will be an example for future eco-village development at the local level. Lagoswatta can be especially inspiring for communities around the world which are recovering from disasters. The learning experience of working with members of the Lagoswatta community will also help Sarvodaya’s development workers to take on more sustainable projects in the future.

3.1.2 Lagoswatta as a Light Community

Sarvodaya describes its Lagoswatta project as “*the development of a self-sufficient ecological way of life according to which a group of people of similar intention can live together*”. Sustainable technologies as well as social tools facilitate this development process in the 55 households of Lagoswatta.

Practices in Lagoswatta meet the criteria of Light Development when it comes to ...

... Planet (lightly digestible processes and products). Many of Lagoswatta’s practices are ecologically sustainable in a cradle-to-cradle sense:

- Houses in the village have been constructed to use solar energy and capture rain water for the production of fruits and vegetables.

- Residents recycle material resources (e.g. non-biodegradable plastics) and water and compost organic waste. People have built the three R's of waste management – Reuse, Reduce, Recycle – into their daily routines.
- The eco-village's infrastructure includes two recycling centres, consisting of four colour-coded containers for glass, metal, paper, and plastic.

... People (light-like relationships). Sarvodaya has invited the residents of Lagoswatta to be a part of the development process. This has helped to support good relationships right from the start:

- Sarvodaya's development workers carefully listened to prospective residents of Lagoswatta who had lost everything in the tsunami, including loved ones. According to Dr. Ariyaratne, founder of the organization, Sarvodaya's aim was not just to reconstruct a village, but to bring harmony to the community and contribute to the healing process of the residents.
- Consensus decision-making is a key element of life in Lagoswatta. Sarvodaya empowers the communities of the Kalutara region of Sri Lanka to make their own decisions. This includes engaging residents in discussions about environmental problems and solutions.
- The people of Lagoswatta themselves helped to build the houses and infrastructure of Lagoswatta, which gave them a sense of empowerment. Both skilled and unskilled residents contributed. This increased social accountability as well as a feeling of ownership in the community.
- A multi-purpose community house was built at the heart of Lagoswatta. It has a doctor's office, a library, a computer room, a childcare centre/Montessori school, and a playground. In the community house, residents can also take classes in livelihood support and social mobilization.
- Lagoswatta has become a real community: its residents are inspired with a sense of positive purpose and collectively shared goals.

... Profit (light-weight living). Sarvodaya has built a community for people who were effected by the tsunami. The organization returned to them some of the things they had lost:

- Fifty-five households that had been affected by the 2004 tsunami were selected by Sri Lanka's government to receive new homes through the Sarvodaya development project.
- At the start of the project, there was no infrastructure for water at Lagoswatta. Sarvodaya helped to construct wells in the village, which function as water harvesting systems.
- Before the tsunami, the families who now reside in Lagoswatta used to live mostly from fishing. Sarvodaya increased their economic resilience by teaching them also how to grow their own fruits, nuts, and vegetables through permaculture farming.
- By growing their own crops, households can save on buying food supplies and generate extra income by selling surpluses on internal or external markets.
- Sarvodaya has increased environmental and health consciousness in Lagoswatta by educating women and children about hygiene and sustainable

ways of waste disposal. As a result of these new, knowledge-based household routines, living standards have improved and fewer children become sick.

- Residents from neighboring villages also benefit from Lagoswatta's light practices. They can make use of some of the facilities and activities, such as the recycling centers and the awareness events.

3.1.3 The religious dimensions of the Lagoswatta project

The Lagoswatta project was initiated by Sarvodaya to support families that were affected by the tsunami. From Sarvodaya's perspective, the project is not just a material response to a natural disaster, but a religious response to a religious crisis: dr. Ariyaratne sees the tsunami in light of the Buddhist idea of Karma, according to which everything is interrelated. He said: "*The tsunami was not just nature unleashing destruction on humankind, but a result of human beings violating cosmic laws. This is why it is imperative that humans learn to live in harmony with their environment and the spirit of nature.*"

In general, religion plays a key role in the Sarvodaya approach to development. The Sarvodaya Shramanada movement deliberately...

... engages local 'religious resources'

Rooted in Buddhism and other ancient Sri Lankan traditions, Sarvodaya celebrates the involvement of many of Sri Lanka's *bikkus* – local monks who play an active role in village life.

... encourages local interreligious cooperation

The movement is open to anyone. One can visit a participating village and see houses built by Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims next to one another. New homeowners eagerly tell of their close friendships despite different religious and cultural traditions - friendships that come from working together for common goals.... Sarvodaya has engaged people to live by the motto: 'We build the road and the road builds us'.

... enables local-global spiritual awareness and organizing

The Sarvodaya Shramanada movement has supported the Earth Charter since its drafting process. The Earth Charter represents a locally rooted, globally acting movement for the transition to sustainable ways of living. The Earth Charter's culture of change has a distinctly religious dimension. For example, its preamble states: "*The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.*"¹⁰

While Sarvodaya's Buddhist identity comes through clearly in its organizational vision and values, the organization approaches other traditions with a sense of hospitality. According to Dr. Ariyaratne: "*Sarvodaya is not only about the Buddhist philosophy, but*

¹⁰ Read the Earth Charter at <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/The-Earth-Charter.html>.

also about Ghandi's philosophy, which is very respected and accepted by the people in Sri Lanka. Also, Sarvodaya is not about making decisions, it is about guiding, helping the society to empower itself and to develop the country as a whole." This hospitable identity allows the Sarvodaya to work with people of different races, religions, castes, tribes, ethnicities, parties, and regions.

3.1.4 Participatory action research in Lagoswatta

The Sarvodaya development model acknowledges six levels of 'awakening': personal, family, village, urban, national, and global. According to Dr. Ariyaratne "this adheres to the Buddhist principle, that the health of the whole is inseparably linked to the health of the parts, and the health of the parts is inseparably linked to the health of the whole". Thus, even at urban, national, and global scales, development can only be sustainable when one understands and facilitates well-being at the personal, household and community levels.

In such a modular view of development, participatory action research is indispensable for any type of development cooperation.¹¹ While developing Lagoswatta, Sarvodaya paid much attention to the needs and hopes of the village's future residents. As a development movement, Sarvodaya is committed to 'Community Driven Development'. In Lagoswatta, the organization took on a facilitating role by supporting and improving decision-making processes where necessary.

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¹¹ This anthropological method of investigation bridges the (perceived or real) 'gap' between research 'subjects' and their 'objects' of inquiry. Researchers actively involve community members in finding solutions for their self-defined community issues. Participatory action research thus empowers members of local communities.

- *Priorities*, year unknown. See <http://www.sarvodaya.org/activities/tsunami/tsunami-to-deshodaya/priority-action>.
- *The Sarvodaya path to a new century*, 2008. See <http://www.sarvodaya.org/wp-content/The%20Sarvodaya%20Path%20to%20a%20New%20Century%20-%20English.pdf>.

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Wepener, C.

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3.2 The Sekem project (Egypt)

In the middle of the Egyptian desert, nearby Belbeis (60 km north east of Cairo), a big oasis of approximately 70 ha offers economic, ecological, and social support to at least two thousand people. The oasis was planted by dr. Ibrahim Abouleish, who founded the Islamic organization Sekem in 1977. In the oasis, everything is organic, hence in harmony with nature and with the cosmos – almost a Garden of Eden on Earth.

The name Sekem has been derived from one of the pharaonic hieroglyphs, meaning 'Vitality of the Sun'. This name signifies the main vision of the organization: contributing to the Sustainable Development of man, community, and the Earth. Eventually, this development will lead to advancements on economic, social, and cultural domains. Dr. Abouleish's ultimate goal with Sekem is to convert everybody in Egypt to organic farming and to enrich the Egyptian culture with art and education. Because of this, the Sekem initiative coincides with the principles of Light Development.

Sekem advocates a sustainable and biodynamic agro-business model that contributes to a comprehensive development of individuals, society and the environment.

All products are grown using a biodynamic way of farming, thereby reducing water usage and wastes.

For Sekem, every member is equal. All members involved are offered proper education and health care.

[Source: Website Sekem]

3.2.1 Background of the Sekem project

In 1975, after having lived in Austria and having managed a pharmaceutical-research facility there, dr. Ibrahim Abouleish returned to his motherland Egypt on a vacation. There, he realized what two decades of Arab socialism had done to the land and economy:

"Everything was destroyed in my country. I witnessed misery and I wanted to analyze, to diagnose, why people could suffer without trying to do anything to relieve it. I wanted to help... it took some years."

Two years later, dr. Abouleish started digging a well approximately 60 km north east of Cairo, at a desert place far away from governmental and urban influences. At this site he wanted to create his own self-defining and self-sustaining community. The well was deep enough to provide the land with water. Dr. Abouleish planted trees and brought electricity to the area. He started to irrigate and fertilize the land by letting cows graze on it. By 1983, he managed to grow vegetables, fruits and species for herbal medicines.

At the same time, Sekem opened facilities for the people who worked for Sekem and their household members. All this was done with help from European volunteers and Egyptian farmers. This was the beginning of the Sekem community. In this community

- ... people have the opportunity to work and go to school;
- ... the Earth is treated as is supposed to with the use of biodynamic agricultural methods and natural biodynamic fertilizers, customized to the Egyptian climate; and
- ... medical care is provided.

Because of this, Egyptian households are given an opportunity to enrich their land, their culture, and their personal knowledge.

Through the years, Sekem has been able to influence some of the regulations of the Egyptian government, especially with regard to environmental issues. For instance, when dr. Abouleish first started his initiative in 1977, many the Ministry of Agriculture used to spray pesticides on cotton fields with airplanes. Instead, dr. Abouleish developed organic ways to capture insects, for instance using pheromone traps. This led to a ban on airplane spraying and a reduction of pesticides by 95%.

Nowadays, Sekem encompasses more than 150 farms, producing food items, natural medicines, and textiles meant for national and international markets. Some eight hundred farmers from all over the country supply Sekem with vegetables, fruits, herbs, and cotton. These products are exported to the rest of the country (55%), Arabic countries, and Europe (45%). All the farmers live in villages and cities more or less close



to the farm in Belbeis. They are provided with a regular income, education, and health care. Recently, Sekem concluded a EU-funded development project for thirteen surrounding villages. The project included waste management, training for midwives, women's education, and micro finance facilities.

Because of the increasing number of Egyptian people that is involved in biodynamic farming, Sekem expects a simultaneous increase in the number of people that will get jobs in processing, packaging and distribution of the organic products. This is necessary, because the market for Fair Trade, organic products is opening up – both in Egypt and in other countries.

Helmy Abouleish – the son of dr. Abouleish, who now is CEO (Chief Executive Officer) – also has major plans for the organization. According to him, Sekem is now working on setting up the first private wind park in Egypt in order to use wind as a alternative to fossil fuel, and on the development of photovoltaic cells to capture solar energy. Other measurements that are being taken, are the reduction of the amount of water used in agriculture by reducing sub surface irrigation, and the transformation to carbon neutral transportation. These are all plans that will benefit the health of the Earth.

Hopefully, all the good intensions and inventions of Sekem will help develop Egypt into a greener and more sustainable country. Eventually - when adapted to other climate conditions - the project might even spread to other countries, thus becoming an experiment in which household members all over the world develop and execute ideas to create more sustainable communities.

3.2.2 Sekem as a Light community

The organization Sekem was established to create *'a sustainable and biodynamic agro-business model that [contributes] to a comprehensive development of individuals, society and the environment'*. This three-fold vision allows a development of community building, humanity, and the Earth, and is worked out in the different organizations Sekem entails. From the start of Sekem in 1977, Sekem has been developed along three different poles: a cultural, a social and a economic pillar. Each pole has its own organization(s), which contribute to economical, physical and mental development:

- ... In the economic pillar, different Sekem companies are gathered under the Sekem Holding. These companies produce and sell all kinds of fair trade products, for instance food, textiles, and herbal medicines.
- ... The cultural pole includes the NGO EBDA (Egyptian Biodynamic Association), that provides training and expertise to farmers in Egypt; the SDF (Sekem Development Foundation), that promotes the social and cultural unique path of Egyptians; and the Heliopolis University, which is still under construction. At this university, people will be trained in holistic perspectives, integrated research, sustainable knowledge, cooperation amongst cultures, and orientation towards practicality. Initially, the Heliopolis University opens the faculties of sustainable engineering, management, and agriculture. Arts will be an essential subject for all students.
- ... The social component entails the CSE (Cooperative of Sekem employees).

The three different poles together create a possibility for individuals to develop in a positive, sustainable way. Therefore, the Sekem community meets the criteria of Light Development when it comes to ...

... Planet (lightly digestible processes and products). The processes and outputs of light practices at the Sekem community are lightly digestible by the Earth's cycles:

- All the products of Sekem are grown in a biodynamic way of farming. Organic, biodynamic farming restores and maintains the vitality of the soil and food, and helps the biodiversity of nature.
- Biodynamic farming reduces wastes. This type of farming is closed and self-sustaining, because it uses own compost for fertilization. Because of this, no waste material remains at the end of the process, hence no waste goes into the ground to effect the Earth.
- The use of compost leads to a reduction in CO₂ emissions. Because of the increase of organic material in the soil, the need for irrigation water decreases and the fertility of the land rises. Compost also leads to the storage of carbon in the soil, which leads to lesser CO₂ in the air – and hence to a smaller influence on climate change.
- CO₂ emissions are reduced in other ways as well. In the coming years, Sekem will try to realize the initiatives to develop hybrid solar dryers for herbs and medical plants, establish wind parks at three different Sekem farms, and replace all electricity-based water heaters with solar water heaters. All these initiatives will lead to a reduction in emissions.

... People (light-like relationships). People find that participating in light practices tends to realize and reveal light-like, relational qualities of the Good Life. This is also the case in the Sekem community:

- Sekem tries to build a sense of pride, beauty and hygiene within communities and individual households. Helmy Abouleish: *"We're now collecting solid waste from all these villages. We are recycling it and using the organic part for the composting site and selling on the plastics and metals. We are collecting their liquid wastewater and purifying their biological waste products. We are cleaning up the villages and we are really trying to build their sense of pride in their villages, their sense of beauty and hygiene."*
- The dignity of Egyptian people has long been under pressure. Sekem tries to rebuild this important human value in all their projects.
- The organization works with a 'social management approach'. Every member of Sekem is seen as an equal part of the employee community of Sekem, and as a individual with specific abilities and character. Development of both the individual as well as the group is very important for Sekem. Therefore, the organization offers prosperity, family education, health services, religion, community membership, and individual artistic development. Through this, every household can develop in the way it wants.
- Sekem stands for Fair Trade. All the economic activities of Sekem are aimed at fairness for everybody that is involved in the production chain, from members

of the cooperation to employees and farmers. Everybody has his/her own rights, stated in the CSE (Cooperative of Sekem Employees).

- Profit of the organization is being spend on people. The profit Sekem gathers, is spend on social and cultural development programs. These will lead to efficient working, better production, and creativity for the development of the organization. Hence, the development of individuals leads to the development of the company and thus of a part of Egypt.
- Children of poor households receive extra help. The programme 'Chamomile Children' is set up for children who were forced to leave their school because of their families' need for money. Two hours a day, the children collect chamomile flowers and receive money, that can be spend in the household they belong to. The rest of the day, they learn in school.

... Profit : Light-weight living. Sekem participates in Light Practices that reliably generates goods and services that support a more light-weight quality of life:

- Biodynamic farming leads to economic independence. In biodynamic farming, farmers and household members use their own compost in a closed, self-sustaining environment. In doing so, less water is being used, and farmers do not have to spend money on other fertilizers, such as herbicides and pesticides.
- Fair trade leads to good working conditions and a possibility for a Good Life. In the fair trade production of Sekem's products, *"the whole supply chain from the poor farmer to the consumer in London is transparent. Every participant in the chain should know what the next in line is doing and the end result of this transparent chain is the farmer who gets the fair price for his product"*.
- All members of the Sekem community are offered education. Small children (4-6 yrs) can go to the kindergarten, where special pedagogic emphasis is put on creative development. Children and young adults with physical, mental and learning disabilities can go to special education schools, where they learn practical, everyday life activities and basic skills, or get the opportunity to work in a special place. In the Sekem Vocational Training Centre, young people can learn skills that are needed in the local market, giving them a change to find a job on the highly unstable Egyptian labor market. Illiterate people can attend the Sekem's Literacy Program, which enables them to make more informed choices, take care of their own lives, and participate in social and cultural life. Adults can go to the Adult Training Institute to be trained and contribute to the community and country. In this way, everybody can get empowered through the right type of education.
- All members of the community are offered good medical services. Health care and therapy are available at all Sekem centres. In these centres, holistic medicinal approaches are being used.
- Parents of children that work in the Sekem community are offered extra income to make up for the lost work activity of their children. The SDF (Sekem Development Foundation) offers parents of working children micro-loans to establish their own businesses.

3.2.3 The Religious Dimensions of the Sekem project

Being Egyptian of origin, dr. Abouleish has always been a Muslim. While living, studying and working in Austria as a pharmaceutical researcher, he deepened his knowledge with anthroposophic methods of thinking. In Sekem, he found a way to combine these different aspects in a dialogical way. According to him, *"all the different aspects of the company, whether cultural or economic, have been developed out of Islam. We believe that it is possible to derive guiding principles for everything from pedagogies, to the arts, to economics from Islam."*

In meditating the Qur'anic texts for decades, dr. Abouleish noticed that the Holy book contains many truths. All the work Sekem does in Egypt therefore has its foundation in Islam. According to dr. Abouleish, the Islam asks of Muslims to take care of the Earth and the people living on it. The Qur'an shows that Allah has appointed human beings with the agency to preserve His Creation: an universe in which every atom is in perfect balance.¹² Biodynamic farming is a good way of living up to this task, since – according to dr. Abouleish – this leads to the preserving of the Earth as a fertile piece of land, for present and future generations.

However, Islam is not the only religion present within the Sekem community. Answering the question of why he chose to develop Sekem the way he did, dr. Abouleish has answered:

"It was my wish for this initiative to embody itself as a community in which people from all walks of life, from all nations and cultures, from all vocations and age groups, could work together, learning from one another and helping each other, sounding as one in a symphony of harmony and peace."

For example, in the different schools Sekem has built, pupils from different social and cultural backgrounds learn together. Both Muslim and Christian children are taught to respect differences in gender, religion, class and ethnicity. For people that feel the need to attend Muslim services, Sekem has built a mosque. However, attendance is not mandatory. Every person that is involved with Sekem can develop in his or her own cultural and religious way. Human rights, health, safety, and good working conditions are the most important goals of Sekem-development.

3.2.4 Participatory action research in Sekem

People engaged in the organization gather every day in large circles to discuss what they did the previous day and what they will do the coming day. These circles symbolize unity, wholeness, and equality amongst all members – both managers and farmers. In these circles, there is a place for everyone. Religion does not play a role in these gatherings.

Sekem is an Egyptian-based initiative, trying to involve as many Egyptian people and companies as possible. Sekem is always trying to involve more and more farmers and other Egyptian inhabitants into the processes of producing and distributing the Sekem products. From the very beginning, Sekem has worked together with members from surrounding villages and other Egyptian companies. According to Sekem, *"this holistic approach to development emphasizes participation, integration and the need to foster long-term independence and self-determination of community members."*

¹² See for instance Sura 55:3-12.

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3.3 The Basa Magogo project (South Africa)

Basa Magogo is a South African development project in which low income residents learn how to build a cooking fire in a way that protects their health and the environment, and saves them time and money. Through the Basa Magogo fuel stacking method, participating households are able to live in a more integral and sustainable manner.

Basa Magogo is an initiative of the organization NOVA, which focuses on Sustainable Development at the household level. NOVA is a good example of an organization which is religion-sensitive, even though it is not a faith-based organization.

Savings in purchasing coal are on average R380 per household per year. The reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is about 1 ton of CO₂ eq per household per year. All residents, including those who do not use coal, experience cleaner air and much better health, but the users of this method benefit the most. Residents can continue to connect around the heat and light of a household fire.

In sum, the Basa Magogo way of making fire reduces both poverty and greenhouse gas emissions.

[Source: Website NOVA]

3.3.1 Background of the Basa Magogo project

In eMbalenhle, a town in of South African province Mpumalanga, people traditionally use open fires for cooking and – especially during cold winter days – for heating. The use of coal for these purposes is common in low to medium income communities in South Africa. Approximately 3% of the national coal production is used by individual households. However, coal leads to multiple negative consequence, such as CO₂ emissions and bad health.

The South African development organization NOVA has – since the last years of the previous decades – started to introduce to low income households another way of making fire: the Basa Magogo way. This method of low-budget fire making involves an innovative technique of reverse fuel stacking. In South Africa, low income residents traditionally start a cooking fire by putting paper and wood in an empty paint can and then adding coal on top. Basa Magogo involves placing the paper and wood on top of the coal. Smoke emitted from the coal is then further combusted by the fire on top. This simple but surprisingly effective adaptation of a daily household routine reduces smoke, carbon dioxide emissions, and fuel usage all at once.

The method is named after granny Mashinini, resident of eMbalenhle. When the new method of making fire was first introduced in eMbalenhle, it did not always work well. In 1999, granny Mashinini adapted the stacking technique a little, adding more coal on top. Since then, the fire lights easily. In honor of her, the new technique was named Basa Magogo, meaning 'Light up, grandmother!'.

In 2007, the DEAT (*Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism*) launched a media campaign involving radio stations, news papers, and billboards advertisements to inform people about Basa Magogo. Follow-up surveys showed, however, that the campaign did not even convince 1% of local coal users to change their fire-making routine. By contrast, NOVA's demonstrations teach people in person how to make a fire the Basa Magogo way. The participation of local residents in the demonstrations is crucial for their



effectiveness. The demonstrations also palpably demonstrate the difference in the amount of smoke produced.

Besides demonstrations, local churches play a significant role in engaging households in NOVA's Basa Magogo demonstrations. The churches also provide social networks to support a lasting transition from old to new household routines. The Basa Magogo way of building a cooking fire still relies on coal as primary fuel. Although Basa Magogo uses significantly less coal than the traditional low-income way of making a fire, coal continues to be a problematic fuel from the perspective of bringing Earth's carbon cycle back into balance. NOVA therefore continues to research and develop even more sustainable ways of making fire in low income households. NOVA is currently working on a biogas digester for low income residents.

3.3.2 Basa Magogo as a Light Practice

The effective adaptation of this daily household routine reduces smoke, carbon dioxide emissions, and fuel usage all at once. With this, the Basa Magogo method of making fire coincides with the elements of a Light Development practice, when it comes to ...

... Planet (Lightly digestible processes and products). The processes and outputs of light practices are lightly digestible by the Earth's cycles. Basa Magogo significantly reduces pollution from cooking fires:

- Reduced CO₂ emission relieves pressure on the over-burdened carbon cycle of the Earth. Through the Basa Magogo method, less coal is being used to build a fire that is warm enough for cooking. Consequently, greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by one ton of CO₂ per household annually.
- Reduced smoke emission relieves local ecosystem stress, especially through the improved health of human and animal ecosystem community members. Burning coal the Basa Magogo way reduces emitted smoke by up to 50%.

- Reduced coal use relieves mining pressure on local ecosystems as well as air pollution pressure due to coal transportation. When using the Basa Magogo method, households reduce their coal consumption by more than 50% annually.
- ... People (Light-like relationships). People find that participating in light practices tends to realize and reveal light-like, relational qualities of the Good Life. Basa Magogo facilitates low-budget cooking and heating while preserving the presence of a fire in a household:
- The presence of a fire draws families together. In low income South African households, people tend to gather and bond around the household fire. Such bonding is especially facilitated by fires that emit little smoke.
 - Through the household fire, family members feel connected with their ancestors. Cooking on a coal fire allows residents in low income households to use and hand on traditional forms of cuisine. This supports a sense of cultural identity.
 - Basa Magogo especially gives low income women a sense of empowerment. Female residents have played a key role in developing the Basa Magogo way of cooking (e.g., Granny Mashinini). Many of the method's demonstrators are previously unemployed black women.
- ... Profit (Light-weight living). People that make fire the Basa Magogo way find that participating in Light Practices reliably generates goods and services that support a more light-weight quality of life in their households and communities:
- A household fire provides heat for cooking, which helps to produce tasty and digestible food and to kill food-borne pathogens. It also heats the home in Winter.
 - The Basa Magogo method reduces food preparation time. The traditional method requires up to an hour of waiting before the fire is warm enough and smoke has sufficiently subsided to allow for cooking. This unproductive hour requires approximately two kilograms of fuel. With Basa Magogo, the fire is ready for cooking within ten minutes and requires only one kilogram of fuel to get to this point. This is especially helpful for women who also work outside the home.
 - The primary fuel in the Basa Magogo method of making fire is coal. This is cheap and easy to obtain for low income South African households through a well-established network of distributors.
 - Making a household fire the Basa Magogo way reduces the amount of coal needed for cooking and heating. Households can save up to 300kg of coal annually (roughly R380). This translates into more household budget for other goods and services.
 - In South Africa, two thousand children die annually due to respiratory infections caused by air pollution and smoke emissions. Health improvements thanks to smoke reduction in households translate into more time and energy for school and play. Significant savings in health care costs also relieve household budgets.

- When all households in a certain area use coal the Basa Magogo method, air quality in the area can improve by as much as 38%.

3.3.3 The Religious Dimensions of the Basa Magogo project

Many residents of low-income South-African townships value cooking on fire for reasons rooted in their religion and cultural traditions. The light and warmth of a fire draw the residents of the household together. It also allows people to engage in the religious practice of connecting with their ancestors.

The traditional method of bottom-up coal ignition, however, causes significant air pollution. Therefore, in 1991 the South African government launched an effort to reduce air pollution from open coal fires. The Free Basic Electricity (FBE) programme encouraged low income households to switch to electric cooking. In the Vaal Triangle, this initiative had little effect. For many households, purchasing and maintaining the necessary electrical appliances was not a financially sustainable option. Nor was switching to electricity culturally acceptable. Also, electricity caused the increase in people sitting in front of a television, thereby not sharing with each other anymore.

In the village of eMbalenhle, people feared that they would lose in social connections what they would gain in comfort and convenience from using electrical appliances. When NOVA came to eMbalenhle, it engaged residents in dialogue about the meaning and challenges of various cooking methods. As a result of this participatory action research process, the use of an open coal fire for cooking was taken as a culturally and religiously embedded starting point for technological innovation. Engineers of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, were set to work to design improvements within the parameter of open fire cooking and heating. Together with the residents of eMbalenhle and NOVA staff members, they developed a technique that causes coal fires to emit significantly less smoke.

Hence, attentiveness to the religious dimension of coal fire cooking in low-income South African households was a key factor in the design and success of the Basa Magogo project. This attentiveness can be attributed to the general attitude of 'religious empathy' that characterizes NOVA's organizational culture.

3.3.4 Participatory action research at Basa Magogo

The success of NOVA's Basa Magogo project can in large part be traced to the religious empathy of NOVA's development professionals. This empathetic attitude is neither purely personal, nor accidental to their work. It is anchored in their operational method of participatory action research.

In the Basa Magogo project, participatory action research meant three years of dialogue between community members, university researchers, and the NOVA staff. This led to the decision to look for technological innovation that respects the importance of open fire in the daily routines of the community's households.

Between 1998 and 2003, the Basa Magogo method was developed and implemented in the village of eMbalenhle. NOVA developed a phased approach in cooperation with

members of the community, using community consultation, needs analysis, survey research, and pilot projects.

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4. The Consultation on Light Development

On April 15th 2010, the *Consultation on Light Development* took place in the Paleis Church in The Hague. The purpose of the consultation was to explore the concept of Light Development and critically reflect upon it. For this, six experts were invited to share their view on the challenges of religion-sensitive Sustainable Development and the potential role of Light Development therein (the expert contributions can be found in Appendix A). The aim of this chapter is to give a thematic overview of the most important findings and conclusions of the consultation, and of the questions that are still open.

The first part of this consultation report will focus on questions and observations concerning the broad underpinning vision of Light Development: the search for a more integral approach to Sustainable Development. Such an approach includes reinterpreting the 3Ps of Sustainable Development (People, Planet, Profit) and attuning to the religious and relational dimensions of life. The topics discussed here are relevant for all that are interested in further exploring such an integral approach.

The second part will deal with the specific challenges of Light Development as a franchise and umbrella concept that aims to connect future and existing integrally sustainable projects. Does it help to structure Sustainable Development in an integral and religion-sensitive way? And how does it relate to similar concepts?

4.1 The content: An integral approach

4.1.1 Vision and motivation

At the beginning of the consultation, Louke van Wensveen shared her motivation for inventing the concept. Because corporate interpretation has hollowed out the concept of 3P development, the need has risen for development practitioners to reinterpret People, Planet and Profit in their own way. Light Development wants to provide a shared language that honors the interlocking qualities in each P that truly and meaningfully increase sustainability and local resilience, calling them 'Light qualities'. In doing so, it



also places a renewed focus on the religious and relational dimensions of life, taking into account immaterial goals and means of development.

During the consultation, there was a widely shared recognition of the analysis underlying the idea of Light Development, and sympathy for the broader and more integral scope that the concept means to take in. Participants acknowledged the lack of integration of social, ecological and economic values in many development projects. There is a need to better connect things; in order to do this we need new images and new metaphors in our discourse.

The need for development practitioners to be more sensitive to religion and spirituality was recognized as well. Pneuma (ancient Greek for 'spirit', 'breath', 'the energy of life') was often mentioned as a 'fourth P', to signify the importance of the religious aspects of development and human wellbeing.

4.1.2 Root causes of the current crises

As there was a shared recognition of the need for a more integral approach, there was also general agreement on the root causes of the various interlinked crises (climate, energy, biodiversity, financial, economic) that such an approach would have to address. Participants used different terms to connote these root causes: the mindset of modernization, the logic of economic growth and competition, the logic of industrialism, divisive modes of analysis, a mechanistic worldview, a dualistic worldview, linear thinking, the gospel of modernity. Although different, these terms seem to point to a common set of assumptions, patterns and values, a powerful narrative which is widespread in most Northern societies, as well as in Southern societies that have (partly) adopted it. Having identified some aspects of the worldview that is at the root of the crises, the need remains to broaden the perspective and to continue to critically reflect upon worldviews and paradigms, many of which find their source in religion. An integral approach to development has to take on the challenge of changing the foundational discourse. Introducing better practices and technology alone is not enough to overcome the crises ahead. Most of all we need to change the story, which is the heart of the matter. These observations support the KCRD conviction that being more aware of and attuned to religious inspirations should be a key aspect of an integral approach to development.

4.1.3 Religion: keep it in or leave it out?

Although participants agreed on the importance of further researching religiously sourced development paradigms, there was disagreement on the concrete role religion should have in development cooperation. In addition to acting as a source of meaning and social cohesion, several factors were identified that can make religion into a counterproductive force in development. For example, religion can be used as a means of manipulation and exploitation by development practitioners and religious leaders alike, to further goals that would not otherwise find local support so easily. Also, religious traditions and institutions do not necessarily support the emancipatory goals that many development organizations have. And lastly, religion can be a fiercely divisive force, especially where two or more traditions are equally strong and competing for political, economic and discursive power. Furthermore, it was suggested the characterization of religion-sensitive development is too much an outsiders' perspective. Of course development can be religiously based or

meaning-oriented. However, it is the developing agent who can and should be religion-sensitive, not 'development' itself.

Several solutions were suggested to handle the counterproductive side of religion. Some participants thought it better to leave religion out entirely. According to Swami Aksharananda, the way religion is defined is divisive, separative, exclusionary, and as such it is unable to integrate. Melba Maggay pointed out that religions do share a common spiritual basis, but that basis is not shared at the institutional level, where specific cultural expressions just incite conflict.

Another option suggested is to keep religion in and focus on shared commonalities. Bring religion to the table and look at it, but don't discuss it. Acknowledge differences and respect the existing diversity, but also look for common values and orientations to be able to decide on a common course.

A similar option, mentioned by the representatives of Stoutenburg, is to stress spirituality instead of religion. Focus on the shared 'feeling for the holy' without debating the specifics, and take the language used in the Earth Charter as an example.

4.1.4 Who defines the Good Life?

During his presentation, Jan de Valk stated Stoutenburg's vision on the Good Life.¹³ He characterized it as life in simplicity, modesty, dedication, devotion, joy and gratefulness. An Integral Development approach should be promoting the Good Life as its primary purpose and acknowledge that this has both material and immaterial aspects.

However, the Good Life as a development goal is also ambiguous and therefore controversial. An important question is whether the aforementioned characterization of the Good Life could be applied universally. In the North, people have the luxury of characterizing the Good Life in terms of modesty, for example. But in the developing world, people may have a very different view. What if people see the Good Life as something we may consider wrong? For example, is striving for material wealth fundamentally wrong, or part of the Good Life? We should be cautious not to fall into the trap of having a dualistic worldview by separating material and spiritual wealth. And more fundamentally, we should be aware of power relations involved in defining the Good Life. An Integral Development approach therefore should entail constantly asking: Who decides on what ground what the Good Life is? And how does this correspond to the needs, wishes and ambitions of local people and partners as they themselves see it?

4.1.5 Dimensions of power

During the consultation, more issues that had to do with power came up. As Swami Aksharananda rightfully asked: Do the development models discussed apply to Northern countries as well as Southern countries? And if so, are people in the North prepared to have one car less, or eat less meat? Because ultimately that is what it will come to. The answer, at least in the case of Light Development as an example of an integral approach, is that the model does apply to both. This was the reason for inviting representatives of Dutch organizations that already embody the principles of Light and Integral Development. They were meant to help us understand that development has to start at home, in the North as well as in the South. As Louke van Wensveen explained, the whole idea of the Light Development model is that we are pilgrims along. The idea is that we

¹³ See Appendix A for De Valk's and other experts' contributions to the consultation.

start walking together and build a counter-economy from the bottom up with a force that will be able to withstand the other forces and challenges mentioned.

To be able to do so, however, would require a more thorough political strategy, Gerrie ter Haar pointed out. The vision of Integral Development may be wonderful, but the question is how to shape this in the context of the political power structures in which we operate. We cannot move things in a certain direction, unless we also take on this challenge of down-to-earth politics.

4.1.6 Questions of scale: connecting the local and the global

During Cathrien de Pater's lecture on the Planet criterion of Light Development (the Lightly digestible quality), she introduced another strategic challenge, in addition to the aforementioned climate, energy, biodiversity, financial and economic crises: How to feed nine billion people in 2050 without deepening the other crises? This touches upon another set of questions raised, which focus on how to create a large-scale effect with small-scale initiatives. How to connect the local with the global? And again, here also, we have to ask ourselves how local initiatives can be linked with national, regional and global political power structures. There is no lack of knowledge and experience at the local level concerning integral and sustainable living. Upscaling is the challenge: creating ways of involving these local initiatives in higher level decision-making and empowering them by appropriate governance structures and economic stimulation.

In the case of Light Development, these challenges are met by involving two existing concepts that have proven to be quite scalable: the cradle-to-cradle design concept and the franchise model.



- ... In Light Development, the Planet criterion is called lightly digestible because it is tied to cradle-to-cradle (C2C). Louke van Wensveen approaches C2C as a religious concept, because when you are done with something, it becomes a gift to the next generation. In other words: in gratitude we receive and in generosity we hand on.
- ... The franchise model also has a record of being scalable. A franchise is a way of organizing an idea, possibly globally, in such a way that power is local. There are many religious communities that are organized in this way. Locally people can say how things go, and yet they consider themselves as part of a larger movement that has a certain identity, and that identity has certain values. This works in business, but it can also work in the development sector.

4.2 The concept: 'Light' as a metaphor

4.2.1 Relation to other concepts

While during the consultation, there was a widely shared sympathy for the underlying visions of Light Development, the concept itself was received with mixed feelings. Since Light Development explicitly states several other concepts as sources of inspiration – such as the cradle-to-cradle design, the Earth Charter and Integral Development – questions arose about its exact relation to these other concepts. What is the added value of Light Development, knowing that there are similar approaches that are already fully integrated in the practice and discourse of many actors in society? What is new in Light Development? And, most importantly, does Light Development help structure 3P development in a religion-sensitive way, as it means to?

A lot of critical observations made during the consultation focused on exactly these points. Paul Hendriksen stated that Light Development is too much about intellectualizing what is already put into practice. By trying to capture local practice in general terms, it takes away the focus on what needs to be nurtured, which is diversity. Melba Maggay agreed with him and added that the spirit of Light Development has always been part of cultures in the South. However, the invention of such a countercultural concept as Light Development might be a good sign that the North is 'catching up' with indigenous peoples. Other participants thought what may be new to Light Development is its effort to make the underlying religious dimension in development programmes more explicit. However, this was refuted by the fact that the 'P of Pneuma' is already being added as a fourth P of Sustainable Development, by for example TEAR.

4.2.2 Is it illuminating?

One thing that Light Development does add and that clearly sets it apart from similar concepts, is its use of the metaphor of 'light'. By using this metaphor, the concept is meant to accomplish a stronger integration of the 3Ps of Sustainable Development, as well as an interpretation that takes local resilience and meaningful relationships as starting points, instead of making (or saving) money. For this purpose, the symbol of light is introduced to be used across (potential) partner communities as a shared language. 'Light' is a multi-faceted physical experience that we can all recognize in its various forms:

- ... light as radiance and warmth (People);

- ... lightly digestible sustenance (Planet); and
- ... being light-weight, not leaving deep footprints (Profit).

This might make it very effective as a translated image.

The use of the metaphor of light evoked different reactions among participants. Firstly, the importance of light was recognized as a common ground between religions. In many religious traditions, visual light is at the beginning of creation. It was also pointed out that the individual 'light qualities' in themselves make practical sense for sustainable living. They make tangible and visible what sustainability should look like in practice, which makes it more easily adopted, taught, practiced and copied.

An important backdrop of the concept, however, seems to be that the metaphor has too many aspects and variations. The individual qualities may refer to concrete physical experiences, but tied together they form a rather abstract concept. This makes it difficult to grasp and may above all be confusing, rather than being illuminating. A related and possibly even graver critique is that the word 'light' is not a homonymous word in many languages; other languages simply do not use the same word for different meanings of the English word 'light'. For example: *luz* in Spanish is light like a candle and *ligero* is light for a burden. For a concept that is meant to be used for cross-cultural translation, this of course is a very problematic observation.

4.2.3 The franchise model

Many participants found the choice of using the franchise model an unlucky one. Many of the objections were based on connotations of the word 'franchise'. The word was associated with commercial parent companies letting out to make profit among the grassroots. Also, a franchise suggests an idea that needs (legal) protection, creating a dichotomy between that which it is and that which it is not, instead of a concept that assumes an inherent strength and is allowed to grow while gaining local support, leaving room for diverse interpretation. Finally, a franchise seems to presuppose ownership of certain structures, systems and tools, and that also presupposes unity based on uniformity.

Although these remarks were mainly based on association of the franchise model with its use in the corporate world, they do point to one central critique: the franchise model seems supportive of (or based on) the worldview that is seen as the root cause of the crises the world faces. By using such a model, are we not going to deepen these crises – by strengthening the discourse at their root – instead of finding solutions?

5. Concluding remarks

During the *Consultation on Light Development*, many critical questions were raised by the participants. Should religion or spirituality play a role in development, and how? Who defines the ambiguous and controversial interpretation of the Good Life? What is the connection between local and global development? How useful is the term 'Light'? And what is the overall value of adding yet another concept to the debate around development?

In general, the participants to the consultation characterized Light Development as too romantic and as a concept that does not cover bigger global processes. However, the general thoughts and visions behind the concept were for a big part accepted and valued. For example, all participants recognized the importance of adding 'religion' or 'religious sensitivity' to development. Also, the emphasis placed on the micro level of households and the reducing of the ecological footprint in international development projects has been approved as key elements towards Sustainable Development worldwide.

In this final chapter, we will comment on the way the KCRD perceives Light Development and the way the outcomes of the two explorations of the concept (practical through examining case studies, and theoretical through the consultation) add value to the work of the knowledge centre.

5.1 Remaining questions

The *Consultation on Light Development* and the practical exploration of different development projects lead to a few questions concerning the concept, that remain unanswered to this day.

5.1.1 What is religion?

One of the main questions that came up during the consultation and in the evaluation of the KCRD, was with regard to the definition of religion. This questions has two elements in it: the issue of the *nature* of religion and the question of the *span* of religion.

The issue of the nature of religion coincides with the question whether the Light Development concept depicts religion as too romantic. As Frans Wijsen indicated during the consultation, religion not only has positive elements.¹⁴ It can also be a negative force, that arouses conflict or hinders development.

Besides this, one can also wonder how far the term 'religion' can be stretched. Where does one draw the line between 'culture' and 'religion'? It seems as if the term 'religion' in the Light Development concept is seen as a very wide, all-encompassing term. For example, in the Basa Magogo project, the light and warmth of the fire draw residents of a household together.¹⁵ The KCRD wonders if this coming together around a fire is part of a religious activity and whether it has a transcendental element in it.

¹⁴ See chapter A.3.1.

¹⁵ See chapter 3.3.

5.1.2 Who owns 'the Good Life'?

At the conference held in 2007 on the transformation of development towards Integral Development, the participants stated that 'there is no one-view-fit-all Good Life and hence no one-process-fit-all development towards the Good Life'.¹⁶ This raises the next question concerning the concept of Light Development. Any NGO – both faith-based and secular – has certain convictions and values that underlie the mission of the organization. These coincide with the organization's visions on the Good Life. However, as Wendy Tyndale noted, these might be different from the ideas of the Good Life people in the South are having.¹⁷

So how far can you go as NGO? Who has the ownership to impose values upon others? In other words: in development projects and design, who can be seen as subject or object – and who should be subject or object?

Two different approaches to these questions can be found in the examined case studies. In the Sekem project, the organisation Sekem has a specific vision of the Good Life and how to achieve this. He places emphasis on biodynamic farming and a cultural and creative enrichment of human capital, and tries to accomplish this in the project.¹⁸ In the Basa Magogo project, on the other hand, the organization NOVA has allowed residents of the Mbalenhle area to state their own needs and desires, resulting in the adjustment of fire making.¹⁹

Comparing these two organizations with each other, one can wonder what the most effective way is to achieve Sustainable Development: implementing the organization's visions of the Good Life on residents of households, or letting residents of households implement their vision of the Good Life in development projects. Perhaps a good compromise has been reached in the Lagoswatta project. The organization Sarvodaya has itself a vision behind the cause of the destructive tsunami and about a better way to take care of the Earth. However, at the same time, the residents of destroyed villages were given voice in the creation of 'their' new village through *shramadana work camps*: training camps in which residents went into discussion with each other and with the organization concerning the question what will be best for their community.²⁰ Hence, in this development project, a bringing together of ideas about the Good Life has led to the creation of the Light, sustainable eco-village.

5.1.3 Is local development enough?

The Light Development concept places emphasis on the development of individual households in the South. The assumption is that local development will eventually result in global sustainability. Development of households herein is relatively 'easy': members of households interact and influence each other in a very direct way, resulting in a de- and reconstruction of household routines in a more sustainable manner.²¹

¹⁶ Wensveen, L. van, *Transforming development. Exploring approaches to development from religious perspectives*, Utrecht 2007 (Knowledge Centre Religion and Development).

¹⁷ See chapter A.1.1.

¹⁸ See chapter 3.2.

¹⁹ See chapter 3.3.

²⁰ See chapter 3.1.

²¹ According to Gert Spaargaren, households are structured around certain fixed routines. These routines are executed, without consideration of possible environmental damage. To change this, it is important for

However, are these small changes towards sustainability on micro level indeed sufficient enough for global change? For example, Cathrien de Pater has expressed her doubts as to whether this emphasis on local level will contribute to the global food crisis that we are facing.²²

5.2 The benefit of the concept: Light Development as a mapping framework

Because of the unanswered questions stated above, the KCRD has decided to not proceed in using the concept Light Development in future work. The main objection is adding another concept in development, that is a combination of Integral Development and Sustainable Development. Besides this, the KCRD does not know what the added value of the concept might be in other, especially Southern, countries. This has to do with the fact that 'Light' cannot be translated into other languages, as claimed by Wendy Tyndale during the consultation.²³

However, the exploration of the concept has led to some interesting insights for the KCRD, especially when perceiving the concept as a mapping framework for development projects. The Light Development framework consists of 3P Sustainable Development at household level, adding religious sensitivity. When placing this framework over different development projects, we can be aware of the 'sustainability gaps' in certain projects. Besides this, it makes insightful the essential role of religion in international development. When looking at Light Development this way, the framework can be used to test different development projects and organizations on their level of sustainability.

development organization to break down these non-sustainable routines (*de-routinization*) and replace them by more sustainable routines (*re-routinization*). Cf.: Spaargaren, G., *The ecological modernization of production and consumption. Essays in environmental sociology*. Wageningen 1997 (Agricultural University).

²² See chapter A.2.2.

²³ See chapter A.1.1.

Appendix A. Expert contributions to the Consultation

During the *Consultation on Light Development*, six national and international experts commented on the Light Development concept. In round 1, Wendy Tyndale and Marnix Niemeijer discussed how Sustainable Development is currently dealt with. In the second round, Jan de Valk, Cathrien de Pater and Paul Hendriksen represented in their speech examples of projects that connect to the ideas of Light Development with regard to People, Planet and Profit. Finally, in the third round, Frans Wijzen discussed the role of religion within the Light Development concept.

In this appendix, you can read the contributions of each expert to the *Consultation on Light Development*.

A.1 What is going on? How do we respond?

A.1.1 Contemporary development challenges (Wendy Tyndale)

That currently social, ecological and economic values are seldom integrated from the very first stages of project design, let alone in religious sensitive ways, is due, I think, to two main factors that will continue to pose a challenge to development practice over the foreseeable future:

- ... The very word 'development' is still basically understood as meaning 'modernization' or catching up with what I shall refer to for convenience as the Global North – the countries that went through the earliest process of industrialization; and
- ... the way to achieve this has been widely accepted to be above all through promoting economic growth.

I would suggest that this understanding of development has resulted in projects of whatever type, whether industrial or rural production, education or even health having this sort of 'modernization' as their primary aim.

Because development projects are almost invariably linked to a supply of technical and financial resources from the North they are designed from a Northern perspective. The mind set behind them arises from modes of analysis that divide up reality into more easily rationally graspable or controllable compartments, each separate from the others. Thus economic activities are unlikely to be seen to have any meaningful relation to religious or spiritual ones. With its increasingly technological orientation, too, this mind set militates against integrated project design.

It is also the case that the increased use of the private sector as an agent of development, even though its main objective must be to continue to make profits for itself, has made the single minded focus on economic development and the inability to link it to other areas of life even more extreme.

[One example of this, among very many, is to be found in the western highlands of Guatemala where, with the help of a loan from the financial arm of the World Bank, a Canadian mining company has developed an open cast gold mine. By using thousands of gallons of water in the extraction process it is depriving the local indigenous Mayan farmers of their source of irrigation; by the use of cyanide to separate the gold from the

rock it is poisoning the water and the air; and by its underground workings it is causing the walls of the local people's houses to crack apart. There was no initial consultation with the Mayan inhabitants of the area and certainly no consideration has been given to their spiritual concerns about the violation of Mother Earth or the ruination of the homeland of their ancestors.

But these challenges to development practices are not only presented by inter-governmental or governmental organizations and private enterprise. We all know, too, of countless small-scale development projects that have gone badly wrong through the use of inappropriate technology or because of socially insensitive designs drawn up in the offices of North American or European NGOs by people who have also failed to see the essential links between cultural, social, ecological, spiritual and economic values. Even if NGO workers themselves become aware of these links they are under pressure from their organizations and the donors who keep them going. They thus have to produce visible results to short term deadlines by pressing for a kind of haste that is usually alien to the rhythm of life of the people they are purporting to help. We in the Northern NGOs have been guilty, too, of reducing the concept of success to measurable results without paying sufficient attention to the long-term social or ecological costs or benefits of the work – How many women have been involved in the project? How many workshops have been held? It is indeed very difficult to take into account that other world, those other dimensions that are nevertheless an essential part of human existence.]²⁴

That this inability to see life's different dimensions as an integrated whole, each as necessary as the other for human well being, is intimately connected to the social, ecological and economic crises we see all around us needs little comment. We only have to look at our trivialization of the purposes of life, our celebrity culture with all its stupidity and cruelty, our mindless consumerism, our dependence on drugs and alcohol for 'happiness' as well as the dangerous ecological catastrophes we are creating and the ever increasing and equally destructive gap between the rich and the poor in our own societies and throughout the world to realize that we have morally and spiritually lost our way.

The problem is that, even though it has become very clear to many people, from employees of the World Bank to workers of the smallest NGOs that we have somehow got onto the wrong track, we seem to be so deeply entangled in the myth that economic growth is the solution to our problems that we find it hard to look elsewhere.

Thus, although I feel very supportive of the way the concept of Light Development has been thought through as a way of naming and addressing possible solutions to the crises in our so called development processes, both in the North and in the South, I think the proposals themselves pose huge challenges. The expectations of our Southern partners and the communities they work with have now been so thoroughly shaped by Northern catch-up concepts that more emphasis on process and community building and ecological care might well seem a retrograde step to them unless some very concrete material results are also in view. It is not only the fact that the problems of poverty, homelessness, hunger, illiteracy and ill health are concrete problems in themselves but

²⁴ This part was not mentioned during the consultation. However, since important points are being made in this part, it is inserted in this report.

also the fact that drinking Coca Cola has now become almost a necessity and a visit to MacDonald's a desirable status symbol as well as a huge treat. The experience of disillusionment after people have been inveigled into investing huge amounts of time and work in projects that have done little to change their living conditions for the better has been pretty wide spread but the reasons for the failures are not clear to most people.

Moreover the inclusion of religion in development work is a very highly complex issue. I'll name just four challenges that occur to me:

- ... People's religion or spiritual beliefs can all too easily be exploited by development workers, who usually do not share them, to promote a pre-set agenda. It is well known how easy it is to find a text in the Bible or the Qur'an to back up almost anything we want to do, for instance.
- ... The power of pastors, priests and other religious leaders is also a factor that can help or hinder development, as it makes the people who follow them very vulnerable to manipulation.
- ... Religion can be a fiercely divisive as well as cohesive force.
- ... The practice of many religious communities and institutions that we might want to involve in Light Development programmes is not necessarily conducive to truly participative processes. One only has to look at the attitudes of most of them towards women.

I am entirely in agreement that the exclusion from development theory and practice of a truly integrated vision of the different spheres of human and natural life on our planet has been a fundamental cause for our failure to bring greater well being for all. However, our practices, attitudes, understanding and visions have become so deeply entrenched and left such indelible marks on our societies that we shall need a great deal of clarity of thought as well as common sense to break through them. We shall also need to return to the deepest silence and inner fire of our religious traditions if we are to be able to remove ourselves from the forefront of the picture and find the inspiration and the wisdom, the joy and peace and the true compassion that will enable us to forge a new way ahead.

A.1.2 3P Development response (Marnix Niemeijer)

According to the FAQ's list I received, Light Development is a new way to structure 3P (People, Planet, Profit) development cooperation. At the project level, it is a sustainable design concept that combines social, ecological and economic values in religion-sensitive ways. At the organizational and network level it is a value anchor for 3P development cooperation cultures.

In my short contribution, I will point out how this type of connectedness is lived out within Tear. My contribution can be considered as an practical exposure how an organization – which perspective of working is 'integral' – is operating. So, I will not use the term 'triple P' but the concept of 'integral approach'. This concept is related to our worldview and the worldview of our partner organizations and networks we are part of.

Tear

But first a short introduction about Tear. Tear is a so-called Faith Based Organization (FBO), based in the Netherlands. Tear is part of the Integral Alliance, comprising 14 Northern FBO's and part of the global Micah Network. Over 300 FBO's are part of this network, the majority coming from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

As Tear we view ourselves as an organization which operates in a world where for many people, daily life and future possibilities are determined by poverty, natural and man-made disasters and the consequences of these. In this reality, Tear works within a worldwide network of Christian FBO's and churches which are committed to:

- ... combating the causes and consequences of poverty and the injustice associated with this; and
- ... and working on the restoration of relationships and just relations.

So fighting injustice by empowerment of and campaigning for marginalized groups, and working on restoration of relationships is our passion, as we believe that this is the passion of God.

Integral approach

We feel that an integral approach is the best approach to reach sustainable and so effective outcomes, in – quote – 'a religion sensitive way'.

An integral approach recognizes the importance of all the relationships man has: with fellow men and society, with nature, with him/herself, and in our view also with God. An integral approach also recognizes that people are more than their hunger or despair; to give meaning to life is an important part of life. An integral approach in our view is more in line with the Judeo-Christian world view and for sure with the world view of many of the cultures our partners are working in.

A clarification about the meaning of the concept of 'integral': Integral does not mean that something is *built up from* different parts, but that something *cannot be divided in* different parts. We use sometimes the metaphor of wholemeal bread. If you delete some of the grains, it isn't wholemeal bread anymore.

In a dualistic worldview we inherited from the Greek and Romans, an integral worldview is challenging. It is even more challenging in a world which values specialism more and more.

So an integral approach pays attention to stewardship and fairness/justice.

- ... Stewardship means no ownership.
- ... Fairness/justice is based on the conviction that men has been made in the image of God.

To use another biblical concept: it is all about 'shalom': a peaceful and joyful life, a life in abundance as Jesus describes it. 'Good Life.'

Within Tear we recently had a period of reflection an evaluation about the meaning of integral approach for us. Do our strategies and policies reflect it clearly? We concluded:

- ... that the 'P' of 'planet' should be integrated better in our work – so one of our two corporate themes is now called 'Environmental sustainability'; and
- ... that we had to focus more on the local churches in the Netherlands and overseas to support them to develop an integral approach.

Examples

I conclude my contribution with some examples of the Integral approach:

- ... On program level: the CEDRA approach is an approach in which environmental degradation and climate change will be an integral part in all the development initiatives. Adaptation measures have to be applied, with the objective of building resilience and adaptive capacity in vulnerable local communities.
- ... On organizational level: as we like to practice what we preach, we are not only ISO 9001 certified, but we also received as the first international NGO in the Netherlands the ISO 14001 certificate (regarding sustainable management).
- ... On network level: Tear is active in the Micah Network. Tear initiated the Dutch Micah campaign which is part of a worldwide movement, which main goal is to support and strengthen the local church in its advocacy for just relationships between men and with nature. With a Dutch coalition of churches, social movements and a publisher, we developed a Micah Course, which distinguish 4P's: People, Profit, Planet and Pneuma (Spirit). And we are thinking together with other organizations how can we develop an effective strategy, 'educate the educators'. More specific: how can we enrich theological education, as an integral approach is usually not the approach theologians/pastors was taught.

Finally

What is the value of the concept of Light Development in the light of this practical exposure about Tear and its working environment? Shortly: I value Light Development positive as an example of an integral approach.

But my main question is: what is the added value, knowing that there are already existing integral approaches, which are deeply linked with actors in (civil) society? For whom is this an answer to their specific needs? And who are the driving forces behind this concept?

A.2 The Light Development concept

A.2.1 People: Light-like relationships (Jan de Valk)

I will start this short lecture with a personal conviction:

Development cooperation on a large scale will only have an enduring effect when it is exercised and practiced on a small scale.

The idea and practice of the Franciscan ecological project Stoutenburg correspond to the Light Development concept considered in the double sense of 'bringing light' and 'not too

heavy' – in stressing the Good Life. It means life in simplicity, modesty, dedication, devotion and – last but not least – in joy and gratefulness. These characteristics are typically for this relatively small community (*communititeit*), which is at the moment inhabited by six adults and supported by about thirty volunteers. Especially the mainly self-supporting and environmentally friendly life-style should be mentioned – e.g., growing vegetables, fruits and herbs in their ecological kitchen garden. Not only are an intense connection and solidarity with the Earth and soil and the surrounding environment promoted and shown as a model for good practice, but they are also exercised in a practical way for the benefit of people who wish to be reconnected by the feeding and potentially graceful Earth. Each year hundreds of visitors participate in a mixture of work, meditation, celebration, study and mutual encounter, while experiencing repose, tranquility and ... blessed silence.

Finding back one's authentic self, one's genuine strength and positive energy, breathing more freely physically and mentally, and above all gaining openness to transitional processes are a great good. In the long run it is also a great common good. The Stoutenburg community does not have the wish to develop into a massive large-scale environmental and spiritual centre. It hopes to be a breeding place and source of inspiration for small scale initiatives, a collection of 'Little Stoutenburgs' spread over the country (and, of course, over the world!).

Officially, the project maintains – and now I cite the website www.stoutenburg.nl – that the relationship between humans and the environment can be truly changed and radically renewed, provided the effort is based on a spirituality/religious perspective which is nourished by the essential relationship of all creatures with one another and with the Creator. The spirituality of Saint Francis and Saint Clara of Assisi is a powerful source of inspiration. In recent days it is enriched by growing impulses of Buddhist wisdom and spirituality.

In connection with the Stoutenburg community, a Stoutenburg Academy has been established consisting of seven members who study and disseminate recent literature and who exchange information, initiatives, and actions concerning spiritual-ecological development and sustainability. The group's activities include, among other things, organizing small scale conferences and lectures. Stoutenburg is really a place to be experienced and exercised and where connectedness, solidarity and the Good Life can be enjoyed!

A.2.2 Planet: Lightly digestible processes and products (Cathrien de Pater)

I used to work for twenty years as a tropical forester in forestry and biodiversity projects in Southern countries, particularly in Asia (in the Philippines and Nepal) and Nicaragua. Many of these projects were at the grassroots level developing participatory models and supporting farmers in developing better and ecologically healthy farming systems, including woody perennials and forests: agro forestry, home gardens, integrated agriculture etc. I even came across 'permaculture' at that time already. In fact, these were already the 'lightly digestible goods and services' we are discussing today.

So what's new in Light Development? The P of Pneuma? Making the underlying religious dimension more explicit in development programmes? Then, how to operationalize this, what are the pitfalls and perspectives?

My point of departure to discuss goods and services is biodiversity, understood as the green web of life of this world. Not only the species but the relations between genes, species and ecosystems; and not only conservation but also sustainable use and equitable distribution of benefits: the Planet 'P'.

We have a biodiversity crisis that is at least as serious as the climate crisis or energy and other crises. One example: in one area in China, wild pollinators have been extinguished by indiscriminate pesticide use. They now hire farmers to pollinate fruit trees by hand – a tremendous job yielding only a fraction of the insects' achievements. So Light Development should have the least possible impact on biodiversity, or even better, restore and enrich biodiversity. Does it?

Let me take this discussion at two levels: local and global.

- ... Local level: As I understand it, in Light Development, the large body of participatory integrated action-oriented local-level development approaches is enriched with the concept of religious empathy. I do not see at this point of my understanding that this is an entirely new concept. There is no lack of adapted, integrated technologies and approaches at the local level, generated and continuously adapted by ages of traditional indigenous practices, experience and knowledge, and in some cases successfully enriched by local-level development efforts during the last decades. The challenge is upscaling and creating an enabling environment, i.e. governance, rights, and economic stimulation. That needs higher level involvement.
- ... Global level: The main strategic question is: how to feed nine billion people in 2050 with a minimum of biodiversity loss (and minimum climate / resources / energy etc. impact)? The limits of land and natural resources are in sight, e.g. the world's phosphate stocks and fishmeal which are so widely used in agriculture – how to intensify agricultural production without increasing pressure on land, resources and the environment? Innovative solutions for eco-efficient agriculture are needed.

The international negotiation arenas – Copenhagen, CITES – are disappointing; it seems the UN democratic system is 'wearing out' at the cost of tuna, whales, and the climate. The next challenge is the Convention on Biodiversity's COP 10 in Japan where new targets have to be negotiated after this International Year of Biodiversity 2010. That will be hard work.

Support is given by a number of interesting global studies:

- ... The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB): Ecosystems make economic sense, provide essential services for human survival; we have to invest in them in order to conserve them, also for poverty alleviation. Plus: Payment for Environmental Services (PES), reform harmful subsidies, steer regulation and

- pricing towards, add value to Protected Areas (PAs). 1/6 world population depends on PAs for livelihood!
- ... Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL): published 'Growing within limits' in which they state that biodiversity in fact offers opportunities for (moderate) economic growth (!). People's cooperation is required as well as lifestyle changes.
 - ... Social-Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER): recently came up with an advice in which they also emphasize biodiversity as a priority area.
 - ... PBL is now calculating the consequences of TEEB for Dutch policies; they are also presently writing an advice on the interaction between climate, poverty alleviation and biodiversity crisis.

My conclusion: all this is possible but only if

- ... the right leaders with the right 'heart' are in place at all levels, of whatever religion;
- ... the local, national and global level link in meaningfully with each other; and
- ... since a lot of knowledge and effort is required for eco-efficient agriculture, we need empathy, dedication and passion from all concerned, locally as well as globally.

A.2.3 Profit: Light-weight living (Paul Hendriksen)

The unbearable Lightness of Living Sustainability ('The unbearable Lightness of Being'- Milan Kundera).

Why does it seem to us as unbearable?

The core business of Transition Towns: to bring back resilience to vulnerable communities.

It is common sense to implement 3P as soon as possible., given the facts of:

- ... over all resource depletion;
- ... climate change;
- ... energy crisis;
- ... water crisis;
- ... massive loss of biodiversity and fertile soils;
- ... exponential growth of world population;
- ... and together with that the exponential growth of all our habits and needs that rapidly devour the world we depend upon for our very survival.

However, it is not easy as yet to have people act according to what's common sense. There is a contrast between our analysis for the need of change – real change on a fundamental level – and what's been put to action in reality. Only green tech solutions won't get us off the hook.

Our host is focussing on religion related to human development. Good way to find out about why 3P seems so unbearable.

Religion, spirituality, ethics, morality, world view. "What beliefs/stories about our world underpin our industrial growth society?"

On a deeper, psychological level they all come down to fear:

- ... scarcity → excess
- ... isolation → (empty) connections
- ... powerlessness → power over
- ... weakness → weapons, walls and locks
- ... worthlessness → ambition

Note that the question "What beliefs/stories about our world underpin our industrial growth system (IGS)?" contains no charged words. It is our gut-feeling about the destructiveness of the IGS which makes it loaded or seem prejudiced.

We are still stuck in the old paradigm characterised by the economic dogma of unending growth, a mechanistic world view, linear thinking, competition and so on.

What is needed?

- ... Make it feasible, puts the job ahead on a human scale, self-reliance;
- ... appeal to common sense; and
- ... get debate in the open about our paradigm, the underlying beliefs and stories about the world

This also requires a fundamental review of current practice of development cooperation where the 'development' part of it is aimed at further promoting majority countries to further adopt the old paradigm.

'Easy' as a key word: Light Development depicts for me a development which makes a sustainable future easily tangible/visible, by making it

- ... easily understandable;
- ... easily practiced;
- ... easily copied and built upon;
- ... on every-day level, human scale.

These are the corner stones of the Transition Towns model and explain why it is so rapidly spreading.

A.3 Religion in Light Development cultures

A.3.1 Religious diversity (Frans Wijzen)

I was asked to reflect on the statement attached to the Lagoswatta project of the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka. The statement reads:

... "Light Development cultures would tend to emphasize similarities-within-differences when it comes to religious cooperation on the road of fair and green living."

'Would tend to' is a very careful formulation indeed and in my reaction, I will try to be as careful as the statement itself.

I am extremely sympathetic to the concept of Light Development, but in my own work I have become a bit suspicious with respect to religion in the development debate. This is because too many participants in this debate are a bit naïve and have a romantic vision of religion. They speak about what religion should do, not what it does in fact. And on the whole, religion remains very marginal in development studies.

My suspicion was immediately confirmed when I read in the project description that "most villagers in Lagoswatta are Buddhist". This is exactly the point, especially when we think in terms of religious diversity, as I was asked to do. As long as there is one majority religion things can work out well. But if two or more religions are equally strong this can become problematic.

When I read under the 'people criterion' that Light Development aims at "Good Life for All" and – in the statement above – "fair" living, the question is: Who decides on what grounds what is "good" and "fair"?

When we want to make those broad principles that everybody agrees on more concrete, we would recognize how different we are. Thus, in relation to the statement above I would go to the opposite and tend to emphasize differences in similarities. Even then there is enough common ground for fruitful collaboration. But sometimes it is better to leave religion out. As many informants in Indonesia and Tanzania said: Muslims and Christians can collaborate well on social issues, but don't talk about religion!

My Muslim friends pointed at Sura 5:48, and I have come to appreciate it:

"For each We have appointed a Shir'ah and a patterned path. And had God willed, He would have made you one nation; but that He may test you by what He has conferred upon you, (He willed it that way). Therefore, strive in competition for good deeds. To God shall be your return altogether, then He shall apprise you of that on which you were at variance".

Appendix B. Participants to the Consultation

In total, 23 participants were present at the consultation in The Hague on the 15th of April:

Day Chair:

... Ineke Bakker (Oikos)

Experts:

... Wendy Tyndale (*also advisory member*)
... Marnix Niemeijer (TEAR)
... Jan de Valk (Stoutenberg)
... Cathrien de Pater (Radboud University Nijmegen)
... Paul Hendriksen (Transition Towns Deventer)
... Frans Wijzen (Radboud University Nijmegen)

Advisory members:

... Swami Aksharananda
... Gerrie ter Haar (ISS)
... Melba Maggay

Members of the KCRD:

... Welmoet Boender
... Esther Dwarswaard
... Tural Koc (Islamitische Universiteit Rotterdam)
... Jasper de Lange
... David Renkema
... John Veldman
... Lisette van der Wel (ICCO)
... Louke van Wensveen
... Mariske Westendorp

Guests:

... Anne van den Berg (Stoutenberg)
... Corien Hoek (Vriendenkring Sekem; Groene Moslims)
... Henk Jochemsen (Prisma)
... Coen Reijntjes (Compas)

Factsheet

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