Community networks and Social Development: A case Study

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Introduction

- Objectives and Rationale

- Approach

- Relevant Findings

- Main Recommendations

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Rationale

- Social Macro Report:
  - "social networks extend beyond … socio-economic issues, and are impacted on by factors that can define a trajectory of their own (PCAS, 2006:70)…"
  - "social networks, even among the poor, do have some influence on individual's access to resources, opportunities for employment and so on (PCAS, 2006:74)."
  - Capacity of CSOs needs to be built

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Objective

- Assess degree of fit between dynamics of these groups and networks and government service delivery

- What can government do <u>for</u> CBOs and <u>with </u>community based groups to improve efficiency of service delivery?

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Approach

- <u>Case study</u> – started in Khayelitsha then to Vrygrond, with issues tested wider
- Snowball approach to meeting groups
- Qualitative and exploratory interviews with organisations
- Used Complexity Theory to perform final analysis and impact measurement technique

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Key Findings

- *Quality* of engagement with government not adequate – Is not unique to this community
  - 'Government does not listen' or try understand
  - Policy Implementation: Cut and dry, efficiency preferred to effectiveness
    - Once off support, rather than mentoring, developing and learning
- Little <u>real empowerment</u> actually happening
  - Empowerment = transfer of skills and building of ability to do, not bricks and mortar
  - Events, but should be processes of shared learning

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Key Findings (2)

- Giving in the <u>presence of need</u> is complex

  - Myths develop rapidly, if support is not managed properly it is more likely to destroy trust and create tensions than help the community

- Groups and networks

  - Transient, constrained by space, can spring out of nowhere, membership ↔ trust

- Success follows initiative

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Recommendations

- CBO/NPO offer good entry points
  - Registration is a way to enforce accountability and transparency – this is critical
  - Capacity needs to be built inside government to register more NPOs
  - Provide training: financial mgt, strategic mgt, org mgt etc
    - Self belief & sausage machines?

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Recommendations

- Prioritize quality skills – so NPOs can get unstuck and grow

- Governance framework:
  - Build capacity to *comply* and *enforce* it
  - Mentor them to *perform* and *measure* it
  - Apply governance framework built on <u>relationships</u> and two-way partnerships to achieve impact

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Recommendations (3)

- <u>Communities are complex</u>, complexities are context specific

  - Manage the complexity, don't try impose solutions

  - Starting conditions – and from fail-safe to safe-fail

  - Resilience and stability over efficiency

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Recommendations for Qualitative Research on Poverty

- Complement with naturalistic approaches (and complexity theory):
  - De-privileging experts and enable **meaning** at the ground level
  - **Sufficiency** of information to act to stimulate evolution
  - Diagnosis and interventions <u>intertwined</u>…or at least participation in research must be beneficial
- Research as a process of 'un-listening'
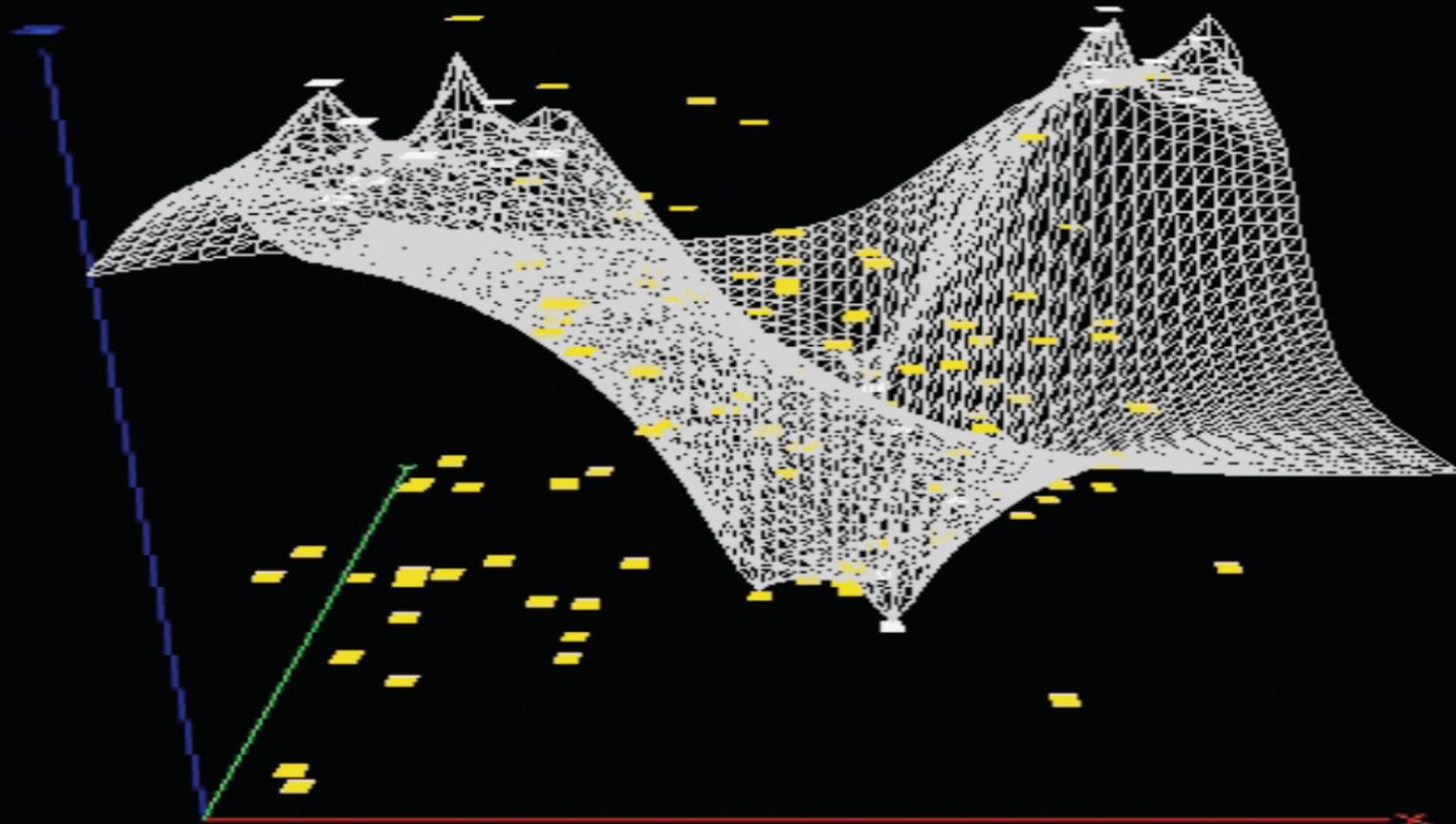 - Displace responsibility, no presumptions, let the meaning be expressed by the teller

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Example – Anecdote Circles

- Collect anecdotes through anecdote circles
- Transcribe, 'clean', filter
- Use three scales:
  - Morality – evil to good
  - Sophistication – barbaric to civilized
  - Stability – from causing instability to stability
- Objective: enable decision makers to see the world through the eyes of the community members

Anecdotes (2)

- Remember collecting sufficiency of information in a complex setting
- Visual graphs
  - E.g. can see 'level of morality'
    - If high, can see outliers and try destabilize
    - If low, can see outliers and try leverage opportunities
    - Also get examples of low morality etc

X axis: Morality (evil to good)
Y axis: Sophistication (barbaric to civilised)
Z axis: Stability

Update

Drag to rotate; Ctrl-drag to zoom (Command-drag on Mac)
Shift-drag to shift up/down and left/right

Center

Arguments for sufficiency

- To be used as a *complement* to existing measures – make sense and give more meaning

- Adato, Lund and Mhlongo paper – not sure quantitative data is *accurate* as made out to be? As basis for regressions?

- Complexity – dynamism in poor areas –

- System allows you to drill down to actual data to test 'validity'.

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- What scope is there for … forms of knowledge that allow for an understanding of some of these complex dynamics and which are by their very nature more *provisional, more embodied and localised*, more connected with specific histories and relationships, more value laden and political? What scope is there for the state to learn other ways of seeing and imagining poverty and vulnerability? (Du Toit, 2005)

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