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Lessons from Andiamo, Malawi, on grassroots development and globalisation from below

Margie G Booyens & Elsa J Crause

There is growing awareness that globalisation and an increase in life opportunities are not directly and exponentially related for the majority of youth. This article highlights lessons on the bridging of this 'great divide' gleaned from Andiamo, a 'campus' in Malawi, southern Africa. It describes a case study of this cooperative, detailing its conception, its early and current position and its sustainability. Andiamo is presented as a significant example of human-scale development and globalisation from below.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the resolutions adopted by the International Labour Conference in Geneva on 15 June 2005 is that:

If young people are to be given opportunities, then multiple pathways to decent employment are needed. Achieving decent work for young people is a critical element in poverty eradication and sustainable development, growth and welfare for all. (International Labour Organisation, 2005:1)

This article offers a case study of one such pathway – a youth-oriented cooperative in Malawi, named Andiamo (an Italian word, loosely meaning 'Let's go!').

The article is organised as follows. Sections 2 and 3 sketch a theoretical framework; Section 4 explains the study's methodology; Sections 5, 6 and 7 contextualise the cooperative and describe its history, development, current situation and place in the community and society; Section 8 discusses its achievements; and Section 9 concludes.

2. POVERTY AND EXCLUSION FROM THE FORMAL ECONOMY

The perceived size of the world is relative: for those who can afford the newest technology to travel, communicate and produce, it appears to have shrunk. Progressively more 'real-time' actions and transactions cross immense distances and use systems of great technological complexity that its users do not need to understand in order to use.

The principles of 'small' and 'human' scale were left behind from the very start of the industrial processes that eclipsed the methods of the first craftsmen and farmers. Ferrante observes that 'Before mechanization, goods were produced and distributed at a human pace' (2003:7). From the time of the industrial revolution, those with money, be it by birth or accomplishment, have been able to eclipse the human scale all the

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faster – and mostly as end users of technology that enables speedier manufacturing, travel and communication (see Max Neef, 1991). In societies that have been excluded from participating in the technological revolution, the strains of not only relative but real poverty are clearly visible. The youth in Africa are especially hard hit, as the following extract shows:

In 2015, 660 million young people will either be working or looking for work – an increase of 7.5 percent over the number of youth in the labour force in 2003 – and decent employment opportunities for young people will need to grow substantially to meet this challenge. Between 2003 and 2015, the growth in the number of young people looking for a job will be greatest in sub-Saharan Africa (28 percent) and South Asia (15 percent). (International Labour Organisation, 2004)

Another aspect of the exclusion of the poor, including poor young people, from the formal economy relates to capital resources. Approximately 80 per cent of the world's population (from the developing world and areas of former communism) cannot formally identify who owns what, or describe assets in standardised ways that make them comparable. Yet this is a prerequisite for turning resources into money. Many of the world's poor have in fact accumulated all the assets needed for successful use as a capital resource, but these assets are not 'paperised' in a way necessary to produce capital in the strict sense of the word (De Soto, 2001; CATO Institute, 2004; Bruwer, 2005).

For De Soto it is the non-availability of these formal legal representations that explains why laws are in a sense made only for the rich. He suggests that practical measures must be implemented by those who have a vested interest in capitalism to empower and include the poor by administratively creating the necessary innovative procedures that will provide acceptable proof of ownership so as to allow such owners access to formal capital (De Soto, 2001; CATO Institute, 2004). In essence, De Soto suggests that the 'net' of globalisation must be expanded by allowing more people to access the possibilities regulated by law, including the poor.

3. GLOBALISATION: FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

Although the need to include the poor in the formal economy is widely recognised, unchecked economic growth is nevertheless not a sustainable option. We live in a world where voices of warning are sounding about the deterioration of earth's ability to regenerate and maintain itself as an intact ecosystem (Korten, 1990). However, large and institutionalised interests are at play, with inherent self-perpetuation needs, such as consumerism and the globalisation of the labour force. As an additional factor feeding into what seems to be a lack of political will to stem damage to the environment, some people hope that science will prove this Malthusian view of 'earth as a biosphere' wrong and save us from Armageddon. Be that as it may, there can be no question that the current prospects for further globalisation – the 'reconfiguration of geography' (Scolte, 2005:16) – are severely challenged in the sense that those who are excluded from its ambit are in need of sustainable livelihoods. The phrase 'globalisation from above' means connecting some people around the world, through the Internet and by other means, to educational, economic and social advantages, while excluding significant numbers of others.

The above trends increasingly indicate the need for a conscious shift from unchecked macro-economic growth; the need for a return to many practices on a human scale to

address both the deterioration of the earth and the continued division of earth's population into 'haves and have-nots'. Human-scale development is:

focused and based on the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, on the generation of growing levels of self reliance, and on the construction of organic articulations of people with nature and technology, of global processes with local activity, of the personal with the social, of planning with autonomy, and of civil society with the state. (Max Neef et al., 1987:12)

Max Neef (1991) makes the important and insightful distinction between needs and satisfiers. Fundamental human needs are subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, recreation (in the sense of leisure, time to reflect, or idleness), creation, identity and freedom. Needs are defined according to the existential categories of being, having, doing and interacting – creating a matrix that can be filled with examples of satisfiers for those needs.

A countermeasure to 'globalisation from above' is the emergence of movements that network across national borders. Brecher et al. (2000:26) observe that these movements are beginning to develop 'a sense of solidarity, a common belief system, and a common program' and that the movements are 'utilizing these networks to impose new norms on corporations, governments, and international institutions'. They argue that '[t]he movement for globalization from below is, in fact, becoming an independent power' (Brecher et al. 2000:26) and they set out a 'draft global programme'. Don Wells, in a review of Brecher et al. (2000), argues that these authors 'articulate a radical, yet pragmatic vision intended to bring together major parts of the global justice movement from their "nooks and crannies" while at the same time attracting the uncommitted and neutralizing the opposition' (Wells, 2002:586). The programme revolves around seven principles:

- levelling upward labour, environmental and social conditions and strengthening human rights;
- democratising every level of institution in society, from local to global;
- keeping decision-making as close as possible to those the decisions affect;
- creating greater equality in global distribution of wealth and power;
- ensuring environmental sustainability;
- providing full employment and prosperity through policies to meet unmet human and environmental needs; and
- stabilising the global economy against the 'boom or bust' tendencies of capitalism.

Many of these principles are already being pursued in the context of 'globalisation from below'. In Africa and elsewhere, people have begun to address their own needs 'innovatively and quietly', not on a global scale, but in ways appropriate to 'globalization from below' (Brecher et al., 2000; Ferrante, 2003:25, 26, 524; Perera, 2003).

Within the context of an awakening sub-Saharan Africa, eager to progress on the road toward an 'African Renaissance', localised initiatives that intentionally or unintentionally relate to the seven principles as set out above should be noted and incorporated into the knowledge base of current contextual development actions and debate. To foster and support the need for case studies proactively, this article describes Andiamo Campus, a youth-oriented cooperative in Malawi.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research described in this article was commissioned by the Youth Development Network, a Johannesburg-based non-governmental organisation, to contribute to the

knowledge development component of the Southern African Regional Support Plan developed subsequent to the first global Youth Employment Summit held in Egypt in September 2002. The study of this and three other youth employment initiatives, all of which were selected by the Youth Development Network, was commissioned in 2003 and described in a report by Booyens and Crause (2004).

Data were collected by the first author from written material, observation, interviews and questionnaires. A questionnaire was electronically distributed to the Director of the cooperative and two visits were paid to the cooperative. During these visits, a workshop was held with cooperative members, two meetings were held with cooperative members and staff members (jointly), and one meeting was held with members of the Executive Committee. Two individual in-depth interviews were conducted with Father Mario Pacifici and two with the Director of the cooperative. Interviews were also conducted with the following key informants, all based in Malawi: the Youth Employment Summit country coordinator, the Chairperson of the National Youth Council, the Deputy Director of the National Youth Council, the Director of Youth of Malawi, and the Director of the Malawi Human Rights Youth Network.

5. THE MALAWIAN CONTEXT

The Republic of Malawi, one of 14 members of the Southern African Development Community, has an estimated population of 12 884 000 (Norris, 2006). The Malawian rural environment (where about 85 per cent of the population lives) is challenged with low levels of infrastructure and institutional support, and high levels of poverty. Among those hardest hit are the enterprising but disempowered youth, unable to make a living for themselves. Andiamo, located in a rural area of southern Malawi, is one response to this challenge.

6. A CAMEO OF ANDIAMO CAMPUS

Andiamo is an African example that demonstrates dignified livelihoods can be pursued in a group context and at a human pace and scale; that people have been actively living the possibility of accessible and attainable development.

Cooperatives have a mixed history. In many African countries, such as Kenya, cooperatives were established as part of top-down government initiatives that 'left them burdened with a range of duties unrelated to members' own needs' (Bibby, 2005:2). The Andiamo case study underlines the relevance of a people-centred, bottom-up approach to development. It illustrates a number of values and principles; in particular, those that are ecologically friendly, socially just and process-oriented, and that value 'the local' (Ife, 2002). It also shows how an agent of change – a priest – has successfully avoided holding onto power and authority, through an approach characterised by listening more than talking, learning more than teaching, and facilitating more than leading (Bhasin, 1976, cited in Burkey, 1993:81).

The story of the Andiamo Youth Cooperative started in 1978. Impressed with the quality of the musical performance of young parishioners at his birthday celebration, Father Pacifici of the St Louis Montfort Parish (a Roman Catholic Church) in Balaka, suggested they form a band. From this humble beginning, growth and development have been 'organic' and steady. A variety of activities and services have been introduced over the years, based partly on the needs of the cooperative members and partly on the

resources that have been made available by family and friends of Father Pacifici and by the Roman Catholic Church, both locally, in Italy and elsewhere (Father Mario Pacifici, Founder, Andiamo Campus, Malawi, personal communication, 22 June 2004).¹

Andiamo – registered only with the National Youth Council of Malawi – is now a well-established, well-known cooperative situated on a ‘campus’ 2 km southwest of Balaka Township. At the time of writing it had 31 members, who employ between 400 and 500 young people from the surrounding community as staff members. The mission of Andiamo is to alleviate poverty and unemployment among the youth of Malawi by providing them with employment and teaching them various skills. About 50 young people are trained in mechanical engineering and carpentry each year, and about 100 in various computer skills, while approximately 450 are employed in a variety of divisions, all located on the Andiamo Campus:

- Administration (general office work).
- Agriculture (animal husbandry, crops, maize mill).
- Building (cement products, construction, painting).
- Communications (Internet service).
- Education (computer school, technical college offering training in various trades).
- Health (the Comfort dental and eye clinics, malnutrition project).
- Ice-cream making.
- Personal care (barber shop, beauty salon).
- Photo studio.
- Piece work.
- Security (watchmen).
- Trades (trades exercised include carpentry, cobbler shop, electrical, general fitting and turning, mechanical engineering, metal work, panel beating, plumbing, tailoring, welding).
- Transport.
- Women, children and development (Tikondwere children’s project, Tiyende women in development project, St Monica Kindergarten).

The Andiamo complex, set up as a ‘campus’ in 1984, is like a small town, containing homes, gardens, workshops, sheds, buildings, vehicles, animals and gardens. Besides offering skills training, it has also created resources that are being used by people living in the area of Andiamo, such as the ice-cream making section, the beauty salon for women, the cobblers’ shop, the dental and eye clinics, and the vehicle repair centre.

7. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF ANDIAMO CAMPUS

The activities at Andiamo are human centred and illustrate Korten’s description of development as ‘a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capabilities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations’ (1990:67). The authors would add: ‘and also consistent with their own efforts’.

In the following subsections the main characteristics of Andiamo are presented and analysed within the framework of a people-centred and process-centred, participative, bottom-up approach to development that strives for ecological sustainability and social justice.

¹All of the quotations in this article from Father Pacifici are taken from the interview conducted on 22 June 2004.

7.1 Conception and establishment

As mentioned, Andiamo was born through the vision of the local Roman Catholic priest, Father Pacifici, who saw the establishment of a musical band as a small but viable way of starting to address the problem of youth unemployment in his parish. In summary, the basis from which the story of Andiamo unfolds is:

- The presence of the Roman Catholic Church as an institution and as a well-established organisational structure, from the earliest beginnings of the collective.
- A priest *in situ* with more education, training and international experience and exposure than one would normally find in such a remote area.
- This priest actually living in the community, sharing in the life experiences of his congregation and having both a vision and a commitment to facilitate a bottom-up development process. The observations of Wignajara, made over 20 years ago, apply:

A truly participatory development process cannot be generated spontaneously, given the existing power relations at all levels and the deep-rooted dependency relationships. It requires a catalyst. A catalyst or change agent who can break this vicious circle is a new type of activist who will work with the poor, who identifies with the interests of the poor and who has faith in the people. (Wignajara, 1984b, in Burkey, 1993:75)

- Farming land made available by the local chief.
- The possibility and subsequent reality of sponsors and support for development efforts from the church and the international community.

Human, financial, natural and social capital was available for these first, and subsequent, stages of development.

7.2 Early development

From the initial single focus – the Alleluya Band – Andiamo has diversified its activities over the years. This kind of progression is identified by Hulme and Turner (1990) as a possible contributor to the success of this particular development initiative. On the basis of a qualitative examination of the histories of a number of case studies, these authors propose that many successful local organisations start with a single function and only diversify over time as their management capacity improves. This pattern, they argue, is a feature that organisation designers should consider (Ferrell, 2002:27–37; Hulme & Turner, 1990:196).

Linked to this is the notion of community development as a process. Ife (2002:119) writes that there are two sorts of journey: one where the aim is to arrive at the destination as quickly and comfortably as possible; and the other where it is the journey of discovery that is important, rather than the arrival at some predetermined end. Under the guidance of the change agent, Andiamo has adopted the latter approach, expecting the unexpected and, when it happens, welcoming it as a new opportunity. In an interview in 2004, Pacifici described the journey as ‘an adventure’. Yet he had to deal with strong criticism initially. To those who claimed that his project would have no future or continuity, he replied:

I always challenged this. If we can walk together, for a quite long time, I can say that I’m sure . . . I’m convinced . . . these young people are able to come to take the same heart that is beating in my life, in our lives . . . we are plenty of people who have been there from the beginning of the project – over 200, even more.

Another challenge concerned the nature of this initial collective. The whole community, according to Pacifici, was originally against the establishment of a band, the sentiment being that a band should not be a part of a church community. Now, Pacifici intimated, Gospel bands could be found all over Malawi.

The pace of development receives much attention in the literature. The Andiamo case confirms that '[F]or the process to be a good one, it is necessary to allow it to proceed at its "natural" pace'; that to rush the process is to compromise it (Ife, 2002:135). Pacifici seems to have embraced the truth that 'a community development worker can help to create the right conditions for development, and help to secure resources, but beyond that the pace of growth and development is really beyond her/his control' (Ife, 2002:135–6; see also Smith, 2004:55).

The early diversification of Andiamo's activities was not without problems. While the Alleluya Band and then crop farming went from strength to strength, the attempt at cattle farming in those early days was unsuccessful and was terminated. Pacifici said it had been 'too hard'.

On the matter of resources, broached above, Ife (2002:212) poses the question: 'If it can't be done with local resources, is it worth doing at all?' It would seem true that communities that are more self-reliant are in a better position to cope with a future of uncertainty and crisis. However, we question an 'all or nothing' stance. Andiamo illustrates the viability of a development process in which the principles of 'valuing the local' and 'empowerment' are fundamental, while nevertheless drawing on and appropriately using governmental, international and local private (voluntary) resources. Andiamo offers an example of the kind of donor involvement that succeeds in furthering the empowerment of local people. For example, volunteers from Europe go to Malawi to live on Andiamo Campus, sharing their knowledge (usually related to a particular trade) and teaching skills over a period of months, even years, by using and demonstrating them on the Campus (Lucious Kanyumba, Director, Andiamo Campus, Malawi, personal communication, 25 February 2004).

Andiamo is thus an example of local people coming to own their initiative and developing increasing levels of control over its organic growth (as opposed to being subject to top-down, governmental, non-governmental organisation or donor dictates) – while still accessing and using resources from further afield.

7.3. The current situation

The information in this section is organised into micro, mezzo and macro levels, and attention is given to a number of considerations of each.

7.3.1 Micro level: the cooperative as a system

Andiamo's structure reflects the core membership as the most important body, with a Board of Directors (external people plus the Director), a steering committee (the chairperson of the Board plus cooperative members), an Executive Team (the Director, Deputy Director and financial controller), an Executive Committee of 11, nicknamed 'the think tank' (the Executive Team plus eight cooperative members), and four coordinators (also cooperative members) who are responsible for training, projects, health services and finances.

These structures have evolved and changed over time, in line with the expansion of the cooperative. The members appear to accept and actively support the structures – one of the reasons for this, according to the chairperson of the Andiamo Board, being that they have not been imposed but have evolved in an organic fashion (Professor A Ambali, Chairperson, Andiamo Board, Andiamo Campus, personal communication, 22 June 2004).

Studies of the practices of organisations indicate the need for issues of membership and ownership to be clarified, sooner rather than later, to avoid energy-sapping conflicts (Daft & Noe, 2001:290). Andiamo has clear criteria and processes through which people can become members, and offers specific benefits of membership, both tangible and intangible. The full body of current cooperative members decides together on applications for membership. All ownership, except for that of individual houses, is collective (Kanyumba, personal communication, 25 February 2004).

Andiamo has an ‘exclusive’ approach to membership, operating with a small, relatively stable number of members – in the 30s. People wishing to become members may apply for membership. Others are approached and encouraged to apply. At a members’ meeting, applications are considered and either accepted or rejected. While the number of members is small, Andiamo employs over 400 outside people on the Campus. This has implications for its sphere of influence, which extends far beyond its geographical location, influencing the surrounding community in terms of value systems, training in economic activity and empowerment through employment. The Campus also links the surrounding community to quality-of-life services such as the kindergarten, the hair salon and the Internet connection.

Andiamo has a fully equipped computer school that trains young people in various programs, and offers access to the Internet and a website – all through the assistance of ‘friends’ in Italy, via the Roman Catholic Church. In the case of Andiamo, the use of the Internet has not, as yet, ventured beyond an apolitical level. However, Portes points out the need to recognise the potential and actual impact of the Internet connection for the enablement of ‘transnational communities’ as part of ‘globalisation from below’, and identifies three features of transnational activities:

First, the near instantaneous character of communication across national borders and long distances; second, the numbers involved in these activities; and third, the fact that, after a critical mass is reached, they tend to become ‘normative’. [Portes argues that] By combining their new technological prowess with mobilization of their social capital, [it renders] individuals and groups capable of reacting creatively to the new situation in which they find themselves. (Portes, 1997:18–19)

In terms of human resources, the Andiamo leadership is conscious of the power and value of continuous learning and development through formal and informal education and training. Members are encouraged to use opportunities outside the cooperative to develop their knowledge and competencies. An additional key issue is that, in an effort to link the training offered by Andiamo into Malawi’s formal education and training system, plans are being formulated to give heads of selected sections of Andiamo access to a university education. For example, at the time of writing there was a plan to open a music school after the head of the music section had studied, possibly in the UK, and graduated with a formal qualification in music (Charles Sinetre, head of the music section, Andiamo Campus, Malawi, personal communication, 22 June 2004).

Team leadership and management are evident at Andiamo. There is concern both for production and for people in this multidimensional approach. The cooperative owners are those with the ultimate decision-making power. Accountability is, in the end, to the body of members (Daft & Noe, 2001:336–70).

A characteristic of problem-solving and conflict resolution processes at Andiamo is that individuals are empowered to take full responsibility for dealing with issues or solving problems at their level of responsibility. If the issue or problem is deemed to be above their level, or is not resolved satisfactorily at this level, it gets referred to the next level of decision-making. The research indicated that members regarded this practice, undergirded by the principle of decentralisation of power, as one of the contributors to their success (Daft & Noe, 2001:355–60). Of significance is the change in Pacifici's role in the problem-solving and decision-making processes. He explained that his opinion is sometimes asked on a decision or a choice that the members have already made:

What is happening is that there is a problem. The problem comes to me already solved, somehow. At this stage they come to me as an advisor if you want or the last word said.

The above discussion of team management, problem-solving and conflict resolution indicates that Andiamo is guided by the community development process principles of cooperation, peace and non-violence, and consensus (Brecher et al., 2000; Ife, 2002).

It is evident that the members strive to maintain open communication systems within the cooperative. While different decisions are taken at different levels, efforts are made to keep all of the members regularly updated and informed. This promotes ownership, unity, a sense of accountability to one another, transparency, and a level of trust between members (Daft & Noe, 2001:288–97). Pacifici indicated that from the early days he had encouraged 'formation for themselves. Meetings – weekly, monthly, after three months, at different levels'.

Poor financial management can be the downfall of an organisation, a danger Andiamo once faced. Two key members 'played a kind of double life', according to Pacifici; for example, selling what did not belong to them and destroying the unity among the members of the cooperative. These two members subsequently left Andiamo. This kind of problem has not repeated itself. On the matter of finance, Pacifici reported that 'now we are able to see some money coming back'. Andiamo members currently pride themselves on carefully managed finances. There is a full-time bookkeeper (both a staff and a cooperative member) and the books are audited annually.

The key characteristics of Andiamo as a system indicate that it runs as a participatory democracy: there is evidence of decentralisation, accountability, education and obligation (Ife, 2002:127–30). At the general level of participation, the rules of thumb set out by Ife (2002:132–3) for encouraging participation seem to be confirmed through the Andiamo case study. These guidelines are that people will participate if they feel the issue or activity is important, if they feel their action will make a difference, if different forms of participation are acknowledged, if they are enabled to participate and are supported, and if the structures and processes are not alienating.

7.3.2 Mezzo and macro levels: Andiamo in relationship to the community and society

For Andiamo, the immediate environment is a source of workers or employees, a market for products, a source of trainees, and a place where the members can be visible role models of self-sufficiency. The signs are that Andiamo has succeeded in developing an amicable, mutually beneficial relationship with its surrounding community. The members regard the cooperative as a means to empower those who were previously unable to make a living, and they have succeeded in creating sustainable livelihoods for the Andiamo members and employees.

The cooperative benefits from the goodwill – and non-interference – of government at different levels. Practical support offered includes infrastructural development at the local community level and subsidies for various posts at the dental, eye and general clinics on Andiamo Campus.

Andiamo plays an additional more ideological role (Ife, 2002), as it seems to be making a conscious and deliberate attempt to promote a more just society. This is indicated through its skills training functions and the availability of medical and other services to the general public. Its focus has not broadened to the level of questioning the socio-economic policy context, which does not appear to adequately address the development challenges of youth unemployment and poverty in Malawi. One can speculate that it may be the origins and continuing relationship of Andiamo with the Roman Catholic Church that plays a role in this regard. Studies suggest that the majority of non-governmental organisations and churches tend to be confined to first-generation and second-generation understandings of development (Korten, 1990; Roodt, 2001). These fall short of targeting the constraining local, national and global policies and institutions and mobilising national or global people's movements. Andiamo is a member of the Youth Employment Summit country network and the National Youth Council of Malawi. These networks could potentially play a very useful, empowering and supportive role for their member organisations – both as individual organisations and as collective structures at national and international levels.

8. 'GOOD PRACTICE', SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANNING

There is a strong correlation between the organic development of Andiamo and the emphasis placed by Ife (2002) on theoretical 'ideal type' bottom-up practices. Ife cites ecological and social justice principles to underpin his model of 'community-based alternatives in an age of globalisation' and describes the social justice and ecological perspectives as follows:

The social justice perspective provides a vision of what is socially *desirable*: a society based on equity, empowerment, the overcoming of structural disadvantage, freedom to define needs and have them met, the definition and guaranteeing of rights and so on. The ecological perspective provides a vision of what is *feasible*, and outlines the kind of society that will be viable in the long term, namely a society based on the principles of holism, sustainability, diversity and balance. (Ife, 2002:79)

One major difference between what Ife (2002) regards as good practice and what was observed in this case study is the way functional communities (communities based on some common element other than locality, which provides a sense of identity) are mobilised. Whereas Ife states that using functional communities as a basis for community

development is less desirable than using geographical communities, Andiamo transcends the concerns by merging the two conceptions of community. It achieves this firstly by being firmly grounded in a farming community and secondly by being clearly focused on nurturing the physical environment in which it is located. The mere existence of the cooperative seems to have made the members more inclined to initiate and participate in locally based initiatives and activities. This is also clear in Andiamo's goals and confirmed in its members' value system and actions. A third way it does this is by using and 'growing' a functional community, which is appropriate as this plays an important role in the process of empowerment. Andiamo neither represents the powerful nor functions in an area populated by the powerful but is in the process of generating an alternative power base.

For Andiamo members, community is thus both a geographical area and a subjective experience of ongoing dialogue, exchange, consciousness-raising, education and indeed helping themselves and others to construct their own version of community, which includes an element of transnationalism (see Okorie, 2004). Significantly this includes vertical connections through which they are linking a previously isolated rural community to the 'virtual' community of cyberspace, thus making a contribution to networking in both the 'globalisation from above' and 'globalisation from below' senses – linking the micro and the macro. But as mentioned, this network is not at present being used for political purposes.

Many developments for expansion were Pacifici's own ideas, in response to a need he identified with which Andiamo members concurred, usually linked to donations of equipment from overseas friends of the cooperative. A possible reason why these externally originated ideas were embraced and cultivated is the high level of trust and understanding between Pacifici and the Andiamo leadership and members. In interviews, Pacifici demonstrated the basic ingredients for being an effective change agent (Burkey, 1993:82): a deep commitment to Andiamo, a belief in the cooperative members' capabilities, and the ability to work with them as equals.

Another reason why Andiamo has remained open to externally originated ideas may be that it is a forward-looking, vibrant grouping of people who are not afraid to embrace challenges and change – who take on opportunities that arise during the journey of community development. An example is the idea of a music school, mooted by Pacifici. In the words of Charles Sinetre: 'So when this idea came to us, it was like just adding fuel to fire because it was our burning desire as well . . . When he came with this idea, it was warmly welcomed' (Sinetre, personal communication, 22 June 2004). In tandem with this, Andiamo seems to apply a learning process approach without necessarily labelling it as such (Taylor et al., 1997; Ife, 2002). This is a characteristic of good practice and augers well for informed planning processes and the sustainability of the cooperative.

Andiamo has reached a stage of development at which it is possible for several sections to become viable, sustainable and profit-generating. This would decrease dependence on donors and increase cross-subsidisation between the profit-making and service-oriented sections. In response to a question about what he regarded as the ideal balance between income generation and service delivery (especially for the poor), Pacifici said that Andiamo cooperative members were not meant to become rich people, but to live with dignity and to help other people to achieve a decent quality of life. The 'law' or 'commandment' the cooperative members attempted to live by was: 'Let us remember people with basic needs . . . and never chase away someone in need'.

A key issue is that Andiamo is making a shift from an initial high level of dependency on the Roman Catholic Church (locally and internationally) for financial and in-kind support towards increasing its income slowly but surely, via, for example, government subsidies for posts at the dental and eye clinics, charging student training fees, and ensuring that those activities that have the potential to generate an income, such as building construction, do so (Booyens & Crause, 2004). This is an important step towards enabling the cooperative to enter into 'a genuine partnership with the state' (Ester Gicheru in Bibby, 2005:1). The General Assembly/Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has published a number of guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives, also referring to this relationship.

The promotion of the ongoing education and training of key members is aimed at facilitating a link between the educational programmes offered by Andiamo and the formal education system of Malawi.

From a sustainable livelihoods perspective, according to which development seeks an accurate understanding of people's assets and capital endowment and the processes and institutions that enable the conversion of these into desirable livelihood outcomes (Mubangizi, 2003), it is also making its mark. Sustainability is clearly not only a 'latent' goal – it is part and parcel of the planning and adaptations of Andiamo.

The five forms of capital that Andiamo recognises and builds, all of which are viewed as essential to sustainability, are: (1) human skills, knowledge and the ability to work; (2) natural assets such as land and water; (3) financial aspects such as inflows, savings and in-kind value (or accumulated wealth, the proof of ownership documented in formats acceptable to financial institutions – compare De Soto, 2001, 2002); (4) physical capital such as infrastructure and services; and (5) social capital.

It seems clear that Andiamo is, in a number of respects, at the forefront of current 'good practice' – especially if this is portrayed as a synergy of support and enabling from 'above' with the application of (latent) resourcefulness from 'below' (Beukes, 2003).

9. CONCLUSION

The focus of this article is on Andiamo, a cooperative located in Malawi, regarded as an example of southern African 'best practice' in the field of youth employment initiatives that are driven by young people themselves.

Andiamo illustrates a number of good practices and has a demonstrable impact on human-scale development and the principles of 'globalisation from below'. A case can be made for the opportunities presented by this kind of globalisation. While globalisation from above 'connects people from around the world with education, economic and political advantages', it also 'excludes and pushes aside those who are not part of the cycle' (Ferrante, 2003:23). Because cooperative, people-centred organisations empower people and, in Andiamo's case, directly influence the entire community outside their immediate ambit, they are ideally placed to have an impact on and connect with the powerful while also changing attitudes towards power.

In the words of Stiglitz:

The greatest challenge is ... in mindsets: caring about the environment, making sure the poor have a say in decisions that affect them, promoting

democracy and fair trade are necessary if the potential benefits of globalization are to be achieved. (2002:216)

In a world faced with continual change and the seemingly impossible quest by macro developments to achieve the inclusion of values and caring for both the earth and people in communities in a sustainable and just fashion, the challenge is for small initiatives to achieve upscaling while maintaining their more caring and balanced character. This is a vital frontier in combating poverty. This particular case, based on ecological and social justice principles, has shown sufficient growth to be on the brink of the possibility of venturing further.

In addition, while acknowledging that Andiamo has emerged in a peaceful community and in partnership with a priest who has helped to access critically important human, financial and other resources, the authors suggest there is nevertheless much about Andiamo that could well be replicated. Research would need to be built into any such attempt.

In the words of Timothy O’Riordan (2005): ‘Long live the local and small. And may they coalesce to become the “big” that the “big” right now is not championing’.

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