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# Sustainable communities, economic development, and social change: two case studies of 'garrison communities' in Jamaica

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ABSTRACT *Although the concept of sustainable communities is often referred to as being closely allied to environmental sustainability, it also embodies notions of sustainable development, empowerment and increase in community autonomy. The concept of sustainability assumes a process of social and/or economic development that has as a high priority the needs of the future generation. However, models of social and economic development employed in developing countries must rely heavily on political, social and psychological empowerment techniques being employed at the community level, in order to warrant any type of sustainability becoming apparent. Two case studies taken from Kingston, Jamaica, demonstrate the process of community economic development (CED) employed and provide a source for analysis of one writer's criteria for sustainable development. Conclusions are subsequently drawn as to the usefulness of this particular CED model in contributing to sustainable community-driven action. The analysis also points to improvement in the quality of life, acceptance of a 'third-party' support mechanism, the creation of an atmosphere for continued community decision making and continued visible government support as important factors in the struggle to maintain a responsible, viable community which will be acceptable to present and future generations.*

RESUMEN *A pesar de que con frecuencia se refiere al concepto de las comunidades autosuficientes como muy vinculadas con mantenimiento del medio ambiente, tambien contiene nociones de desarollo sustentable, transferencia de poder y aumento de la autonomıa de la comunidad. El concepto de la sustentabilidad asume un proceso de desarollo social y/o económico que tiene como su maxima prioridad las necesidades de la generación futura. Sin embargo, los modelos del desarollo social y económico empleados en los paises en desarollo, deben depender en gran medida de que las técnicas del autorizamiento polıtieo, social y sicológico esten implementadas al nivel de comunidad para garantizar que cualquier tipo de sustentabilidad sea aparente. Dos estudios, hechos en Kingston, Jamaica demuestran que el proceso del desarollo económico de la comunidad (CED) emplearon y facilitaron un fuente para el análisis de los criterios de un escritor sobre el desarollo sustentable. En consecuencia, se han extráıdo concluciones referentes a la utilidad de este modelo espećifico (CED) para contribuir a la acción originada por la comunidad sustentable. El análisis tambien apunta a una mejora de la calidad de vida,*

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*la a ceptación de un mecanismo de apoyo a terceros, la creación de un ambiente para la toma de decisiones comunitanas y el continuo apoyo gubernamental visible como factores importantes en la lucha para mantener una comunidad viable y responsable que sea aceptable para las generaciones presentes y futuras.*

## Introduction

Munslow, Fitzgerald and McLennan (1997, p. 4), writing from South Africa, suggest that sustainable development can be seen as being 'concerned with improving the overall quality of life as well as satisfying human needs'. Furthermore, Lampart points out that sustainable development 'appears to have great potential for reviving the idea of development as a multi-faceted, long-term and intergenerational problem' (Lampart, 1993, p. 371). Clearly, the ability to develop an agenda that secures a future in which people can transform economic opportunities into internationally acceptable and environmentally consonant lifestyles is central to the concept.

This paper aims to understand the strategy used by working-class people to achieve sustainability of socio-economic development, and the utility of the measures they have taken to assist in fulfilment of their vision. For the purpose of this paper, 'a final and pivotal part of sustainability is that development must also make sense in human terms and be assessed against its impacts upon households' (Lusk & Mason, 1992, p. 10).

Two case studies will be discussed of communities of low-income 'ghetto' dwellers in the Kingston Metropolitan area of Kingston, Jamaica, in the West Indies. Both case studies are presented within a particular socio-political dialectic which examines the communities' everyday realities from a locally derived theory of 'garrison communities', and the effect that this has on the decision-making process. Both case studies incorporate the work of students from the Social Work Unit at the University of the West Indies, and are framed by Nozick's (1993) model of community economic development. Nozick's criteria are used to assess how the highly participatory process of community economic development (CED), adopted by each community, is able to achieve some measure of sustainable development over time. Conclusions will be drawn from the analysis with regard to determining the mix of critical factors in supporting sustainable development in a developing country, as well as the role of agents/actors who are seen as being external to the community.

## Community development and empowerment

Community work, in previously colonial territories, has moved a long way from being a tool designed by our colonial masters to facilitate docile community acceptance of the conventional economic growth model. This model depended mainly on asset building and agency networking on behalf of, and in concert

with, already existing and empowered local interests. In other words, the intent was not to create new ways of empowering communities, but rather to support the existing status quo. Gross, macro-economic indicators were used as acceptable indicators of production and progress, thus rendering the model weak in acknowledging the output of small-scale producers, particularly small farmers and informal-sector participants. Since the late 1980s, the human element has been included in the plethora of international development indicators. This has led to a redefinition of the methods we use to achieve economic growth, as well as the goals for which we strive, as economists, residents and workers now admit that owner-driven activities have a particular value. Over the past 15 years we have also witnessed a new emphasis, reflected in the literature, which realizes that the process of community empowerment includes community goals being self-identified and self-addressed. This type of empowerment has been accompanied by both community and state accepting the need for re-interpretation of what are viable alternative economies (Abbott, 1995; Freire, 1972; Friedman, 1992; Jones, 1992; Mendell & Evoy, 1993).

Community development in Jamaica has followed this trend. The recent initiatives of the government to move towards a policy of revitalization of blighted areas has seen communities taking over wide-ranging responsibilities from developing work and income-generation initiatives, land repossession and infrastructure preparation, to community-based housing and localized decision making (ASCEND [2] data 1996). Such programmes have given new impetus to community development across the island as they support the view that low-income communities will attain sustainable change and empowerment only when conditions exist for real community involvement in participatory goal setting within a supportive governmental environment.

## Empowerment within garrison communities

The concept of the 'whole-economy', as expressed by Friedman (1992), holds untold promise for the newly empowered (Barr, 1995; Craig & Mayo, 1995; Ife, 1997; Rubin & Rubin, 1992) who, as individuals, might then begin to realize the potential for a development which would allow them simple liberties such as the running of a food cart close to home, the selling of sweets outside the gate of the school which their children attend, having a choice in the quality of education available for their children, and many others. However, real empowerment of the community tends to lead to confrontation with the state and its machinery (Delgado, 1997; Kolawole, 1982; Shragge, 1997). Handing over authority to local bodies, the forming of partnerships between state and community economic ventures, the creation of new civil structures with their own autonomous and independent decision-making machinery, are all changes which lead not only to enculturation and revitalization of dying communities, but also have the potential to lead to confrontational politics from all the stakeholders.

Whilst it might be this confrontation which brings results in the low-income

community, there is a peculiar tension which exists in its relationship with the government. Although striving to create some sort of community integrity, with civil structures which are run and managed by the local residents, there is still hesitance to become too independent and therefore lose the patronage derived from partisan support. Confrontation with government representatives is, therefore, rarely more than easy rhetoric, as local people remain unsure of the faithfulness of any new source or offers of assistance. The most successful types of alliances springing from any possible confrontation are those which bring clearly defined rewards, which should be visible in material terms, and should be accessible to the majority of the residents.

In the ghetto, wealth and status have been easily ascribed to party (government) membership and position In relation to the two case studies to be presented below, Stone's concept of the 'garrison community' helps us to understand the extreme dependence ('clientelism') which can develop between the ghetto resident and the political party in power. In Stone's (1986) garrison communities, the guarding of the 'garrison', that is, the urban ghetto community, became uppermost in the life of the residents. Stone sees this dependence leading to a partisan 'preponderant support' (Stone, 1986, p. 63). In the community, the need for, and access to, scarce resources often leads to extreme measures being taken to ensure community coherence and safety, albeit all in the name of partisan fidelity. 'Garrison communities' have shown a typical die-hard political-party allegiance, a faithfulness which has tended to redirect confrontational politics inward. This in turn leaves little space for the forging of alliances and collaborative activities with external non-party groups which historically have been hesitant to identify with the area for fear of reprisals, personal or political.

## The model

Nozick's (1993) 'ideal-type' approach reminds us of five components of sustainable community development. Economic self-reliance, ecological sustainability, community control, meeting the needs of the individual and community culture, must all be present if the community is to survive. Although somewhat altruistic in her design, Nozick realistically proposes that economic self-reliance emphasizes both individual and collective enterprises which are aimed at regaining community ownership, all of which should try to maintain a clean and safe environment. This holistic strategy for sustainable development further suggests that meeting the needs of the individual and the community is best achieved where there is knowledge and acceptance of cultural diversity and community history.

Nozick's model is strong in four characteristics:

(1) It suggests that community attempts at sustainable socio-economic development must necessarily be bound by the 'natural limits of the biosphere' and

realize the conviction to maintain the natural balance between humanity and nature.

(2) It contributes to new social movement theory by emphasizing the need for non-hierarchical organizational structures which encourage the development of 'community will, unity of purpose and a collective consciousness, that is especially sensitive to the individual'. Thus, for the community, the 'power within' (the individual) and the 'power-with-others' (the community) should emerge rather than being ascribed due to partisan fidelity and adherence to fixed national agendas.

(3) It places the onus of development on the community and the individual within that community, pointing out that material and non-material needs will be satisfied only when human indicators of development are foremost. As she puts it, 'people matter most—not things, not money' (Nozick, 1993, p. 38).

(4) It highlights cultural diversity as a concept to be applied across communities in order to understand the multiplicity of ways that people find to solve their problems.

As she rightly reiterates, residents know their history, their shared visions, their allies and their foes. Sustainable CED must build on this local knowledge.

## Case one: the Jones Town experience

In 1992, the government of Jamaica began the process of developing a strategy for revitalization, deemed the 'only way forward' for urban low-income communities 'blighted' by continuous outbreaks of gun warfare, extreme poverty and a piteous lack of infrastructure A specially selected committee was then constituted under the Office of the Prime Minister, and brought together a range of community-based organizations, representatives of the Church and the political parties, the Kingston Restoration Company (KRC) [3], the government of Jamaica, and the University of the West Indies (the Social Work Unit, Mona Campus, represented by the author). After a series of meetings, a sub-committee was given the task of selecting an area to begin the process of revitalization, in which the Social Work Unit was to play a central part. The area (Jones Town) [4], was selected and accepted by the committee KRC and the Social Work Unit were then named as joint implementers (together with the backing of the government of Jamaica) of a strategy for revitalization.

### *Description of Jones Town*

Jones Town, during the 1950s, evolved as a settled residential area, with stable housing of employed, middle-income persons The area was then supplied with all the necessary infrastructure such as roads, electricity, telephones (later), and a piped yard-based, water supply. Residents found ready employment both in and outside the immediate environs, as many were skilled trade persons and professionals. Residences and surroundings were well kept. Technology of the

time was present, namely cars, buses, modern building materials, etc This pace of development, however, failed to keep abreast with the rest of Kingston as the area became stigmatized as a political-party stronghold, and suffered frequent attacks by the political opposition. During the 1970s and 1980s this resulted in a restriction in movement for the residents, both in and out of the area, with a consequent reduction in earning opportunities. The problem of political violence, together with the oppressive reality of extreme poverty over the years, created a tightly knit, closed community which has been ravaged by frequent outbreaks of gun warfare and attendant emergency curfews.

Today, internally, Jones Town is well serviced with churches (of all denominations) bars, small shops and groceries, basic schools, a post office, a primary school and a police station. Within close proximity, Jones Town has potentially easy access to a range of health facilities, schools, cemeteries, public transportation, limited telephone facilities and fire stations. Economic opportunities are, however, limited, as the stigmatization of both the residents and the area by the larger community still exists.

In identifying Jones Town for a case study, community boundaries were defined by using a geographical area delineated by the Electoral Enumeration Office and ratified by the historico-geographic recollections of the residents [5]. As the area has remained a party stronghold, local political interpretations of 'tribal' boundaries (a term used to reflect party allegiances) was also employed. Thus the definition of this community reflected that of Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (1985, p. 313):

> A community is a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision-making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it Such a community is not quickly formed. It almost always has a history and so is also a community of memory, defined in part by its past and its memory of its past.

Jones Town is a community of history, a community of memory, of residence, of partisan politics and, as such, a community that needs to be seen in both a physical and spiritual sense. It is an inner-city neighbourhood which has been ravaged from within by the devastating impact of poverty, hopelessness, alienation and abuse, and from without, having endured severe political polarization and consequent stigmatization by the larger society. It is a community that has been used as a buffer zone between rival factions, a war zone between opposing 'tribalists' and one that has seen its share of local personal breakouts due to domestic disputes.

The young (51% under 20 years of age) socially depressed community of approximately 8000 residents has experienced over the last 30 years a continued deterioration in the level of community services available internally. In an attempt to lessen the effects of this deterioration, the residents have determinedly moved away from continued dependence on party representatives and

have tried to build alliances inside and outside the community for the provision of a broad range of services. The high level of social unrest and violence experienced by the residents, however, has undermined this attempt.

*The strategy*

Early in the process of revitalization, the implementers agreed that community revitalization is best effected if one realizes that any sustainable community development strategy must encompass a process of 'reclaiming and revitalization'. In this instance, reclaiming and revitalizing should occur from within, as residents would then be given the opportunity to begin once more to recognize that they do have the power to chart new alternatives and new alliances. It was important for the implementers to bear in mind, however, that the long-term goal of sustainable development assumes a desire for longevity, a concept that may well have been unusual to residents of this target area.

Having selected the area, the special committee gave the implementation team the mandate to begin the process of revitalization. The first step was a process of fostering community acceptance whilst building knowledge of the community and its dynamics. In initiating the process, the faculty representative of the Social Work Unit spent some 3 months in the area becoming a familiar face to political and social activists. During that time, political representatives and residents were aware from discussions and public media that the government-supported committee had selected the implementation team

Once the community was ready to accept the team and to participate in the process of revitalization, students of the Social Work Unit were formally and informally introduced, together with their faculty supervisor. The use of students from the University of the West Indies Social Work Unit brought home to the community of Jones Town the seriousness of the project. Suddenly, it appeared that perhaps someone was really interested in helping them in their almost forgotten dream of regeneration. To the residents of Jones Town, the constant threat of gun violence had now become a way of life which it was clear had driven away any sort of systematic interest in the area To see young female university students standing on the corner late in the evening talking about community dreams and desires seemed almost unreal. Soon, however, it became obvious that KRC was indeed intent on pursuing a process which must begin with a high level of community involvement.

The first set of community meetings was able to communicate the development process to the residents, as well as to identify the kinds of concerns which were most frequently expressed. They also served to identify to the researchers possible community 'resource persons' who might be willing to identify with the project. This was not as simple as it might seem as it meant that people would have to be seen to be assisting with a project which at first blush appeared to have strong political support from the party in power.

Careful attention was paid to the issues of acceptance, credibility and safety as part of the process of gaining entry to the community. There were ground

rules agreed by the community representatives and the students, such as how late one could stay in the community at night; that students should always be accompanied by the chosen community representative; and if fighting broke out in the community, students should be escorted out quickly. The process began with employment of the Social Compass technique (Connor, 1969), as a participatory method of identifying community strengths, weaknesses and resources. After encouragement from the Church and social activists of the community, members of the community volunteered to be trained by the Unit to assist with the exercise. There then followed an intense 3 months of data generation. Participatory analysis of the data led to members of the implementation team becoming very active, discussing the findings from the study with the different sections of the community, with the special committee and with the Prime Minister's Office.

The process of gaining acceptance by both the communities was premised on the principles of partnership and the necessary fusion of researcher and researched. Unexamined assumptions of leadership, expertise and authority, often held by the outsider, were open to confrontation and scrutiny by the community experts. This methodology has been acknowledged as a way of sharing the responsibility for collective decisions made (Bawden, 1989; Finn, 1994; Freire, 1972) while reinforcing community self-confidence and endurance.

In 1993, the working group entered a second phase in which the task was now one of representation and advocacy. The team had no other agenda than to press for help for the community within the areas that were identified by the participatory data gathering. It therefore initiated consultation with the community, private investment companies and government representatives to attempt clarification and support for possible implementation of goals which could be derived as a result of the process. During this phase, the community was represented by mass meetings, area political representatives, informal community leaders and Church representatives, while the committee appointed by the Prime Minister provided an external source of assistance. It was a period of continuous dialogue and negotiation, forcing opposing groups within the community to identity themselves as joint members in the process. All levels of leadership were engaged, with the committee taking full charge of ensuring active continuation of the process. In this manner, residents were able to negotiate how 'tribal' warfare was handled and to initiate the inclusion of new expertise. By 1996, we saw the evolution of a Jones Town Re-development Committee, which called for an alliance between Jones Town community representatives and the committee.

In understanding the process of community development employed, this new alliance was important as it heralded the resurgence of a well-defined representative body within a community in which residents felt empowered enough to identify themselves as change agents. The alliance between KRC, UWI and the Jones Town community structures included the local government representatives as well as elected 'Block' representatives. The intent was to bring

together, under the Re-development Committee, all concerned bodies who in fact became responsible and reported to the community body itself The alliance[6] therefore signalled a new independence, with acknowledgement by the political representatives that community empowerment would be accomplished only with active governmental support. Consequently, local residents were motivated to 'make things happen' and this saw the emergence of a basic school coalition, community-managed garbage collection and a teens project, all funded by private-sector agencies and run by residents. In addition, we witnessed local government's agreement with the request to open the east–west corridor which had been closed due to political warfare; ministerial backing for huge inputs of international financial aid; and visible evidence of state intention to back private-sector financial and resource support for basic schools, parenting and teen projects, and economic ventures in the area.

The strategy employed the revised community intervention approach (Rothman, 1996), and was particularly strong on the use of non-hierarchical organizational strategies. For the community, the committee became a resource which should be used. Partisan representatives could be confronted both by the committee and the residents without fear of reprisals. The committee, on the other hand, encouraged community self-help by publication of a booklet which listed residents' skills by names and addresses. These skills had been identified as part of the Social Compass strategy. Further, the committee found that it was able to redirect external funding from the private sector and private donors to individuals and long-standing community groups In this way, a number of projects were rejuvenated and the community welcomed a new day-care centre, a backyard nursery and a bakery. During this time, the Anglican church was also able to secure funding for its renovation.

The Social Work Unit is no longer in Jones Town. It is not needed. Looking back at 1998, it would appear that the community is now fully mobilized towards social, psychological and economic empowerment (Report 1998), having moved through the stages of participation in consciousness-raising and critical analysis of historical political alliances, learning how to exert control through developing competence and technical ability, and re-establishing a positive self-esteem (Ninacs, 1997). If we look at the areas of success, the need for security, clean neighbourhood and improved access to the outside world ranked high on the list. During the process it became clear that it was important to the community that those who wished to be identified as part of the process should be clearly identified and publicly praised. For them community approval was now more influential than wealth or status conferred from outside. The community is well on its way to prioritization of its needs and the possible sources for assistance, having finalized arrangements with government-linked international aid agencies. It has also called for a redefinition of autonomy and decision-making power as it strives to entertain possible alliances. This is what revitalization really means. A new power from within which is defined in cognitive, economic and social terms. Economically, the historical reliance on the local representatives of the state and/or party continues

to give way to self-help and innovative use of the relevant credit institutions that now exist.

## Case two: the Mona commons experience

Mona Commons, like Jones Town, has maintained a peculiar sense of closeness, a sense of sharing and a sense of involvement in other's well-being. Although a coherent and cohesive community, Mona Commons has from time to time identified separate political leaders and alliances. However, unlike Jones Town, Mona Commons has managed to control the emergence of political factions within the community, identifying this as a potential threat to community cohesion and strength of representation. It has nevertheless suffered the same peculiar stigmatization by the larger society, with residents being stereotypically classified as low income and benefiting from 'preponderant support'.

The Mona Commons community started settling as a small squatter community some time in the 1960s. Today it houses approximately 1200 low-income persons, mainly in semi-permanent structures. The immediate neighbouring communities are predominantly middle class. Over 50% of the residents have regular employment For the past 30 years these people have lived with the threat of imminent removal but have chosen to remain in their houses owing to the proximity of employment and their unwillingness to destroy structures, some of which have been built at a great price Physically, the community is historically divided into Upper, Lower and Middle Commons, with unemployment being highest in Upper Commons.

The Mona Commons project undertaken by the Social Work Unit at the University of the West Indies, in conjunction with PRIDE, a National programme for Resettlement and Integrated Development enterprise, started in February 1996 and is still ongoing. PRIDE is a statutory agency which is driven by the government's need to reallocate or redistribute large areas of land as a means of giving the earning poor the opportunity to own both their own land and housing. In Mona Commons, the intention is to relocate the residents to another site close by, as the present land has been earmarked, for some time now, for development by the neighbouring hospital. PRIDE is therefore responsible for the divestment and allotment of land, the development of infrastructure, and requires the setting up of a Provident Society This latter action is the most crucial element in the process of community development, as registration as a Provident Society secures for the community PRIDE support (financial and technical) for infrastructure development, as well as giving the community a new sense of autonomy and independence (through a community-owned and managed bank account). The University of the West Indies (Social Work Unit) became responsible for the provision of a community educator and development officer to assist in creating and supporting those community structures necessary for building a responsible community and community organization.

*The strategy*

In 1996, the Social Work Unit at the University of the West Indies (represented by a Master's student and the author), voluntarily became involved in the facilitation and interpretation of the process of relocating this community. Initially we mediated between the various stakeholders, and then went on to determine the best way to implement a development process which would give the residents both the power and the authority to determine their relocation. The issue at the heart of the exercise was the wish of the residents to live a better life more in harmony with their surroundings. The process of community entry was governed by the same assumptions as in the Jones Town case. Here, however, attempts at partnership building were hampered by the fact that PRIDE, in its initial discussions around relocation, had challenged the community's self-confidence, undermining feelings of authority, capability and cohesion. This became an important issue, as these residents had continually reiterated their determination to develop their own ability to negotiate with the government and any other support sources, as they had in the past tended to rely on the tried and trusted system of 'clientelism'.

As part of the beginning phase of community development initiated on the Commons, residents were enrolled in a special training programme in leadership skills, a training programme which was designed by the Unit and encouraged the inclusion of new, potential leaders. The training also created the opportunity to solidify and document shared visions of the community, thus reviving lagging hopes for skills training and income generation which should accompany the relocation activity. The training was not without its problems, as from the outset residents were wary of the classical 'ivory tower' atmosphere of a university and refused to hold training sessions there They were then held in the church hall adjacent to the community. Furthermore, the attempt to include potential leaders was undermined by the older more established leaders who felt that this move was unwarranted After heated discussions and poor attendance at the start, training moved on to successfully develop new leadership with the appropriate skills, a move supported in the community. It was noticeable that the elected community association subsequently established banking procedures necessary for registration as a Provident Society and efficiently maintained its own statement of accounts. It also felt empowered to use the services of invited consultants to re-evaluate the site selected and examined with them possible housing alternatives which could be afforded by the majority of the residents

'Community organization practice is not simplistically an issue of gaining power for those population groups which are disenfranchised. Practice should be based on realistic assumptions that social organizations, community and political systems are complex, fragmented' (Spergel & Grossman, 1997, p. 469), and can only move at the pace of the community resources and capacities This feature of community development is one which does not get the attention it deserves, as residents cannot be pulled and pushed at will either by internal or external agents. Mona Commons is a case in point where members of the

executive were unwilling to initiate critical change without the support of the entire community. Eventually, however, a Development Committee was re-established together with a number of satellite committees that addressed issues of housing, income generation, safety and security. Looking at it from the point of view of the Social Work Unit, the process was almost circular at times, with apparent leaps forward being negated by criticisms from members who might have been absent from meetings. These criticisms usually served to renew previous doubts held Participation at the community level teaches the community development worker that patience, together with constant reassurance to the residents as to their capabilities and correctness of their position, is the key to any move forward. Meetings and rescheduled meetings became the order of the day It is interesting to note also that the Social Work Unit became a constant presence at meetings held between government representatives and the community, between residents and the elected satellite committees, actively pursuing the role of supporter and resource person. The consequent facilitation of the development process encouraged the community to include other community-based organizations in their search for assistance. This strengthened the process of internal capacity building as the community was able to identify new projects and activities for additional support.

## Towards the development of sustainable intervention strategies

In reflecting on the process involved in facilitating development in these two communities, the issue of scarce benefits has been a real one. Too often, low-income residents find that their alternatives are constrained, directly, by income-generating possibilities. An example of this was seen recently in Mona Commons where, together with the allotment of land and the preparation of land for installation of infrastructure, PRIDE introduced the concept of sweat equity. This concept gave a money value to the number of hours spent in labour on the new site This amount was in turn related to the eventual payments on the allotted land when complete. Soon it became evident that those selected for inclusion in the work project were being selected by some unspoken criteria, as was the process of time allocation. The community, realizing the undemocratic nature of the decision making challenged the process and has now taken over the selection of persons as well as the process of supervision.

The case of Mona Commons typifies the issue of community control and community decision making Early in the process, it became evident that issues would become problematic, as there was poor communication between the leadership groups, namely PRIDE, the political representative and the Community Development Committee. All these groups were legitimate and important to the process of relocation. It soon became clear that the following factors were critical to finding a solution to the problem.

- emphasis on individual needs as expressed by the community;

- a knowledge of, and identification with, the history of oppression of the community;
- the need for non-hierarchical relationships and the ability to function across partisan boundaries.

These factors are consonant with Nozick's (1993) approach As we saw at the start of the paper, prevailing clientelism undermines the 'power within' and the 'power-with-others'. Creating a community in which informed decision making is possible assumes that residents, as a collective, share the vision of development and that credibility of all members in the representative committees is assured

Being a social worker committed to revitalization of blighted areas, there is a critical question with which one is continuously confronted: how best to understand poverty and its alleviation, and the role of empowerment and anti-poverty programmes in the process of sustainable development. For both Jones Town and Mona Commons, poverty alleviation was interpreted as improved housing conditions and removal of certain stigmas associated with location, thus allowing for easier access to the outside community (particularly Jones Town). As the majority of residents in both communities were self-employed, ease of access and proximity to the marketplace was critical. Economic empowerment then became both determinant and corollary as acceptance of their legitimate struggle for autonomy led to improved financial inflows into the community and improved economic strength. Simultaneously, as residents realized the possibility of their savings going towards the erection and renovation of their own dwelling units, the incentive for earning a steady income improved proportionally. For both communities, empowerment also involved an increase in community decision making and acceptance of it by the politicians.

In addressing poverty, social processes go hand in hand with new economic initiatives as economic independence brings with it new roles, responsibilities and personal relationships [7]. For both communities, the services of community-based agencies in the development of skills and starting up of small businesses remained high on the agenda as a residents identified the need for improved incomes. As Ninacs' SWOT analysis of the Bois-France *mouvement communautaire* in Quebec (Ninacs, 1993, p. 154) led him to conclude, any economic activity within the community will become sustainable chiefly because of the solidarity and recognition of the broader socio-political framework which exists.

In both of these cases, the external agents found it expedient to 'market' the community to the private interests and, internally, to ensure that programmes aimed at restoring self-esteem and weakened family relationships became high priority The community was quick to realize that sustainable community development and poverty alleviation require creative and democratic alliance building between public- and private-sector agencies as well as

within already existing agencies. Over time, participatory involvement in the larger society can be encouraged and promoted.

## Conclusion

Having lived through the horrors of debt rescheduling, privatization and other such features of national economic restructuring, it is well understood by the populace that the political process must serve to eradicate poverty In this island of paradoxes, where self-reliance and clientelism live side by side, micro-enterprise and self-employment continue to offer the most viable sources of income and livelihood to the people (Wint, 1993) As self-employment remains the most viable sector of the informal labour force, the growth of urban centres is directly linked to this search for employment and creation of alternative economies.

It would seem, therefore, that the government in power cannot afford to rest on its laurels, looking back at the project approach of the 1940s–1970s, which successfully built skills, creativity, leadership and self-confidence. Rather, it now needs to build on the past and encourage institutionalized acceptance of communities' attempts at capacity building and self-actualization. In a society where economic power continues to be highly concentrated within a small minority of rich and privileged families who, along with foreign capital, dominate the economy, communities are now demanding an integrated approach to development which builds on tradition and history but confronts a sense of marginality and powerlessness by improving the conditions of life and livelihood nationally. What is also interesting to note is that as both communities have begun to realize their own ability to negotiate for project funding on their own behalf, new demands are being made of politicians to go beyond the traditional clientelism and give integrated social development an opportunity to take root.

As Barr (1995) points out, however, there is a need to form mutually empowering alliances, as confrontation has shown itself to be limited. In fact, it is now recognized that capacity building or asset building, i.e. the developing of community skills and resources, cannot be achieved by relying totally on internal capabilities. In discussing the complexities of empowerment, Barr makes the point that often the state, while attempting to hand over the reigns of local government and other such structures of local empowerment, finds its efforts misunderstood. 'There are sometimes contradictions, therefore, between the apparent desire to empower but an actual unwillingness to recognize and "own" the logical consequences in terms of power redistribution and dis-empowerment Professionals and politicians need honestly to appraise their attitudes and consider whether in their strategies for empowerment they only accede to notions of partnership because this approach secures their own power' (Barr, 1995, p. 128). The major players in both case studies discussed above were young men and women in their mid-20s and educated to secondary level. These young people saw themselves as the new leaders, and the elders (eventually)

accepted them. It will be important to record for how long this shift in the power differential is able to maintain its legitimacy.

Analysis of these case studies has demonstrated that there are five lessons to be learnt:

(1) Although accustomed to the 'garrison' tenets of dependency and guardianship, these low-income communities are able to move to democratic, cross-sectional representation that harnesses the community strengths, placing emphasis on committed community involvement in development.
(2) As organizational strength grows with the confidence gained from accomplishments, sustainable development in low-income ghetto settlements can only move in pace with the community's ability to interpret and challenge political control from a position of organizational and cognitive strength.
(3) Community involvement may be sporadic, temperamental or sustained. Low-income communities that have suffered the stigmatization of the larger society over time have articulated the need to actively and consciously attempt to move away from political clientelism and develop new ways of encouraging income generation and local decision making. Inclusion of a process of participatory learning action, as part of the intervention model employed, will lead to the community embracing new opportunities for revisioning and re-statement of purpose, and consequently becoming committed to their own social and economic development.
(4) The strategy of guiding communities such as these towards active understanding of the principle of sustainability, despite the daily reminders of unemployment, environmental degradation and shortened lifespans, is one which benefits greatly from the retention by the community of an unattached external body that sees its role as facilitator and enabler, using the community development process to bring together internal and external agencies to tackle poverty eradication. In order to be effective, this body needs to be reputable, community sanctioned and to show evidence of support for the principles expressed in Nozick's (1993) model. It must also be non-partisan and have the competencies required for action development.
(5) Access to a low-income community for a university-based Social Work Unit is fraught with dangers that have to be confronted head-on Concerns as to physical safety are best dealt with on the ground through alliance building and negotiation, not through paper contracts. These two case studies reminded the Unit of the importance of the initial groundwork to be done in community-based social work, before students are brought in. Similarly, closure and exit must be fully accomplished so as to be able to return to the community should the need arise, without what we would call 'any hard feelings' on the community side. To leave means assurance that capacity building has been effective, and yet the link is still there should it be needed. As the Unit has learnt, communities trust a 'university-based' unit as long as it respects and encourages local knowledge

The intervention approach used for sustainable intervention in these cases assumes that people preoccupied with daily questions of safety and political violence are hard pressed to dream of a long life or a fruitful future. These residents of inner-city low-income neighbourhoods see political stability and the freedom to encourage economic investment at the local level as a desirable goal For them, sustainable development and empowerment mean having the capacity to negotiate alliances with both government and the private sector from a position strengthened by representation and participation as they strive to live that 'better' life.

## Notes

[1] The author acknowledges the role of Mrs Aldene Shillingford, the then Master's students assigned to the Mona Commons and her detailed recording and reflection on the process employed.

[2] ASCEND, Association for Settlements and Commercial Enterprises for National Development, a Committee established in the Prime Minister's Office.

[3] KRC, a private company located in downtown Kingston with a special mandate for urban redevelopment.

[4] For the selection of the area (Jones Town), communities were rated in terms of evidence of a high level of political 'warfare', proximity to the designated KRC redevelopment area, socio-economic characteristics, and potential for development.

[5] The concerns impacting on final boundary definitions included: historico-geographic definitions as recalled by the residents and local leadership, political interpretations of 'tribal' boundaries, and the need to work within a manageable and demonstrable area with a focus on high residential density.

[6] There is an interesting addendum. As formation of the alliance became imminent, a number of educated residents living outside the immediate area assumed active leadership roles by becoming a part of a team of consultants with students from the Physical Infrastructure Class of the University of Technology, Jamaica, with some even returning to live in the area.

[7] See Mendell and Evoy (1993) for cogent discussion on the tensions inherent in community economic development.

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