

# EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR : A Conceptual Analysis

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## Summary

This paper discusses the effects of development on human behaviour with reference to empirical studies carried out in developing countries. Migration is discussed as a development process and its effects on immigrants behavioural display are analysed. Questions are raised about how environments stimulate or restrict human behaviour, activities and lifestyles as well as foster social or even cultural change.

## Résumé

L'article examine les effets du développement (modernisation) sur le comportement humain par référence à des travaux de recherche menés dans les pays en voie de développement. Les effets sur ce que les immigrants veulent montrer d'eux-même sont analysés. Des questions sont soulevées sur les environnements qui stimulent ou limitent le comportement, les activités et les styles de vie et qui engendrent des changements sociaux et même culturels.

## Introduction

In this paper 'development' is defined as a process of modernization. Development can be induced or planned. It supposedly aims at improving life conditions of people in a particular situation so that they achieve a set of defined goals (Omar, 1976, 31). Through development, people may acquire new values, aspiration and desires. They may retain or drop old ones. For example, one reason why people migrate is for personal and/or family improvement.<sup>1</sup> Through migration people come in contact

<sup>1</sup> Although the term 'migration' is used in a limited sense, it does also refer to forced migration arising from warfare and natural calamities such as drought, floods and earthquakes. A movement from a distressed area, or situation, to a less distressed one should be seen as a move to ensure individual and or family qualitative improvement.

with several components of development. These include urban built environment, legal and political institutions, urbanization and industrialization, social and cultural contact (Canter, 1983). These situational aspects are also responsible for shaping and affecting the way people behave.

In this article 'culture' is defined as consisting in a group of people sharing common customs, beliefs and values, which may be factual or symbolic. Cultural groups confer common meanings and significance to things and objects. Once established, these meanings become statements of particular associations that support specific understandings of the society's social world. Culture, however, is not static. It can be learnt, diffused, altered or incorporated into another social system, albeit with differing functions (Hockings, 1989, 3-8). It provides, in addition, means by which each society adapts to its environment for survival and continuity and hence plays a significant role in the overall development process.

However some human activities are common to almost all cultures allowing for cross-cultural generalizations to be made. One such activity is house building. In the physical sense, a house acts as a direct link between people and their environments. In the social sense, it acts as a link between people and their society. Furthermore building a house is both a creative activity as well as a goal oriented one (Kaitilla, 1993b). As Habraken (1976) suggests, it is not "an arbitrary" activity. This means that houses are built to serve specific tangible and intangible functions. These may include to offer safe and secure shelter as well as protection of both the ancestral spirits and the living. It is therefore a place of repose and continuity. To adequately meet these requirements creativity and ingenuity, including ritual traditions, are called upon in the building process.

The terms 'attitudes' and 'values' are also used extensively in this paper. Simply stated, attitudes are defined as 'way of feeling, thinking or behaving'. Values are defined as special kinds of attitudes that are highly abstract ideas about what is good or bad, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable. Human values are fundamental in defining both individuals and the society into which they fit. Hence, values serve as basic standards that guide attitudes and behaviour. Values are therefore useful as a measure of people's qualitative lifestyle preferences and goals.

In this paper the term 'environment' is not used to merely mean 'surrounding' or 'place' *per se*. It implies a circumstance, or a situation, humans may find themselves in at a given time. Finally, the term 'behaviour' is defined as the manner individuals 'conduct' themselves in given situations or circumstances and at a given time (Habraken, 1976, 52). Individuals do not simply respond to the built (physical) environment stimuli *per se* but to its many situational aspects as well (Canter, 1983).

### ***Empirical Studies***

Studies were conducted in both Tanzania and Papua New Guinea to reveal among other things factors influencing individual choices of building materials in housing

improvement processes (Kaitilla, 1991a; 1991b; 1994). Although both Tanzania and Papua New Guinea are developing countries, they have a different building tradition. Major materials for walling in Tanzania consist of concrete blocks and/or sun-dried mud bricks whereas in Papua New Guinea they are timber and timber based products. The Tanzanian data of 112 respondents were collected in 1987 in two upgraded squatter settlements 1,300 km apart (Kaitilla, 1990; 1991a). The data of 158 respondents from Papua New Guinea were collected in 1990 in the Bumbu squatter settlement (Kaitilla 1991b; 1994). The Bumbu settlement is located on a customary land on the outskirts of Lae city. At the time of the study, the settlement was undergoing an upgrading process with financial assistance from the World Bank.

**Table 1: Building Material Choices**

| Empirical Results of the Tanzanian Studies |                   |       | Empirical Results of the Papua New Guinea Study |       |                |
|--|-------------------|-------|---|-------|----------------|
| Quality                                    | Material          | Score | Material  | Score | Quality        |
| <b>Good</b>                                | Corrugated Sheets | 86.6  | Timber  | 99.4  | <b>Good</b>    |
|  | Timber            | 75.9  | Corrug. Sheets                                  | 96.2  |                |
|  | Nails/Steel Bar   | 67.0  | Plywood   | 61.4  |                |
|  | Cement            | 63.4  | Cement  | 37.4  |                |
|  | Concr Blocks      | 54.5  | Concr Blocks                                    | 5.7   |                |
| <b>Average</b>                             | Burnt Clay Bricks | 9.8   | Asbestos Sheets                                 | 3.8   | <b>Average</b> |
|  | Clay Tiles        | 8.0   | Sago Leaves                                     | 0.6   |                |
| <b>Poor</b>                                | Mud Bricks        | 5.4   | Clay Tiles                                      | 0.0   | <b>Poor</b>    |
|  | Bush Poles/Bamboo | 2.7   | Burnt Clay Bricks                               | 0.0   |                |
|  | Asbestos Shts     | 2.7   | Mud Bricks                                      | 0.0   |                |
|  | Earth             | 0.9   | Bush Pole/Bamboo                                | 0.0   |                |
|  | Thatch/Grass      | 0.0   | Other Grass                                     | 0.0   |                |

**Table 2: Reasons for not Choosing Indigenous Materials**

| Tanzania (1987)       | Score | Papua New Guinea (1990) | Score |
|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| Modernization         | 63.0  | Poor Quality            | 51.3  |
| Urban Building Codes  | 12.3  | Unavailable in towns    | 20.8  |
| Financial Constraints | 12.3  | Urban Building Codes    | 10.1  |
| Temporary 1           | 2.4   | Fire Hazard             | 3.8   |

In both studies, respondents were asked to participate in a "building material choice" game. They were asked to consider that all building materials possible, both indigenous and modern were made available in a big warehouse. They were then requested to select in order of priority four basic building materials they would require in the improvement process of their houses. Table 1 gives the building materials selected and their scores for both countries. Table 2 gives the reasons for not choosing indigenous building materials in both countries.

## **Effect of Development on Human Behaviour**

Let us now consider the following question: what influences a rural migrant to build his/her house in conformity, material wise at least, to those built there according to existing values? Is it a mere desire for conformity, that is, *'fit'* or *congruency*?

The answer lies in the attributes of the situation in which an individual finds him/herself in at a particular time.

### ***Socialization and Cultural Contact***

Although socialization and cultural contact are intricately linked, they are both aspects of the development process. Firstly, socializing with others is a prerequisite for acceptance by peer groups. Social interaction may affect the individual as he/she changes some of his/her previous behaviour in order to be accepted by the significant others. In becoming accepted the individual also receives satisfaction. A person who is not accepted will be dissatisfied and be compelled to change his/her behaviour or move elsewhere where satisfaction will be attained.

Secondly, cultural contact and cultural change have taken place almost everywhere. Cultural contact can be traced both historically and spatially. In Papua New Guinea this contact is more recent (Oram, 1989) than in other countries in a similar stage of development. Many societies have been exposed to external agents of cultural change through, for example, mutual exchange of ideas with members of another society, but often from one that considers itself more *'superior'* to the one that considers itself less *'superior'*. The less *'superior'* culture undergoes imposed change through teaching and/or learning, indoctrination, propaganda or even through the use of mass media. The chief agents of cultural contact and change on indigenous communities have been the activities of explorers, missionaries, colonists and immigrants (Pitt Rivers, 1969). For example, the acquisition of two world religions, Islam and Christianity, have constituted the most significant sources of cultural change conferring on the converted an identity distinct from an ethnic or tribal one. For instance, missionaries imposed their own cultural values while they suppressed traditional ones. Imposition of heavy penalties on the practice of, and belief in, magic and sorcery despite their significance to indigenous people, has steadily led to erosion of powers among traditional clan leaders (see Pitt Rivers, 1969, 200-206).

Colonization, on the other hand, has led to large numbers of colonized people seeking to identify themselves with the colonialists (Morgenthauer, 1977). Not only did colonists become highly idealized as model figures but also brought with them eurocentric and superficial beliefs about their superiority. In the colonies, the colonized paid much attention to those in higher status, whose behaviour and values they aspired to copy and internalize. This lends strong credence to the argument that a person with status sets standards and norms which others must follow.

### ***The Urban Built Environment***

The effects of the built environment on people are clearly discernible in developing countries. Although migrants often have little knowledge of the extant urban by-laws, they consciously or unconsciously, succeed to build their squatter houses<sup>1</sup> in conformity with those already there. In Tanzania and Papua New Guinea, Kaitilla (1991a, 1994) observed a general disregard toward indigenous building materials. In Tanzania, for instance, despite the fact that over 60 percent of the respondents were familiar with durable indigenous materials, almost 80 percent did not approve using them in urban areas. In Papua New Guinea, on the other hand, the building materials most preferred by respondents were invariably those legally allowed for use in urban areas.

### ***Urbanisation and Industrialisation***

Sociological studies often cite urbanization and industrialization processes as major contributors of social change, hence posing considerable effects on human behaviour. As technologies get modified, ideologies amended and institutions changed so do the values of those who invent them, on the one hand, and those who respond to them, on the other hand.

Morgenthaler (1977) and Jequier (1976) show how the submission of developing countries to western industrial technology continues to produce profound loss of autonomy on people. One clear observable effect is a rapid cultural disintegration and rejection of traditional values and attitudes, especially resulting from the introduction of a modern cash economy in developing countries. In the Tanzanian study, respondents were asked why houses built of indigenous materials should not be used in urban areas. Over 60 percent stated that requirements of modern progress do not allow the use of such materials in urban areas (Kaitilla, 1991a). In Papua New Guinea, despite the fact that 96 percent of the respondents had lived much of their life in traditional houses, more than 86 percent would not approve them in urban areas (Kaitilla, 1991b).

Urbanization and industrialization processes, as aspects of development have, in turn, caused considerable damage to the natural environment. Instances of noxious industrial locations in proximity to residential areas, putting at risk the health of the people and the environment are just too common (Kaitilla, 1993a). Most 'modern' building materials are also energy intensive both in the production and application processes.

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<sup>1</sup> The transition from a rural to an urban lifestyle is not that smooth, but full of conflicts. It is however argued that the proliferation of squatter settlements in developing countries is largely the result of the desire for both social and economic development. In many of these countries the squatter phenomenon was almost unknown before colonisation, industrialisation and urbanisation. It is for these reasons that the squatter phenomenon is generally regarded as a negative consequence of development.

### ***Political and Legal Institutions***

Political and legal institutions often encourage and impose specific values and restrictions on behavioural displays of the people. Wherever a substantial conglomeration of people exists legal and political institutions are established to check upon disapproved behaviours.

The political environment is one of the oldest factors affecting human values and attitudes. Political power influences social status and identity and tends to identify with those who have power or high social status. Historically, social status has played a powerful role in societies. As every child identifies very closely with its parents, so one's house in a community was related to the person with power.

Recently the imposition of legal codes through urban planning and housing for different sectors of the population certainly have significantly altered human values and aspirations. In many countries regulations encourage the use of certain building materials while imposing a total ban on others. The reasons given by respondents in Papua New Guinea for refusing to choose indigenous building materials included low quality (51.3 percent), disapproved for urban use (10.1 per cent), unavailable in towns (20.8 percent) and fire hazard (3.8 percent). Through political pressure some housing authorities have offered loans and grants to low-income urban households to either build or improve their houses to stipulated standards (Macolo, 1988; Ofori, 1985). Similar evolutions were noted in Tanzania as the results of *Operesheni Nyumba Bora* (Kaitilla, 1991a, 208-211). Despite the good intentions behind these codes to ensure healthy, safety and orderly urban development, their overall effects on social change, values and attitudes have, almost everywhere, been devastating. In many developing countries, where the change is most alarming, the use of indigenous building materials is closely associated with being backward, poor, unable to change and so on. On the other hand, the use of modern materials, usually of western origin, is always associated with progress, modernity, economic affluence and power.

At the same time, some legal restrictions are meant to maintain *status quo* between different groups of people. A good example is the segregation of residential areas, initially, on the basis of race and color and, lately, on the basis of income as a clear cut distinction in the provision of basic services and infrastructure.

### **Synthesis**

This section contains a brief synthesis of the effects of development on human behaviour. The synthesis is limited to the preceding analysis.

Any analysis of human behaviour requires a thorough understanding of how people interact spatially in different situations. Human behaviour is directly influenced by the development process. Advances in the development process must be accompanied by a corresponding change in human behaviour in order to produce satisfaction. Where dissatisfaction prevails the development process will also likely produce severe social, cultural, physical, economic or even psychological stresses. Evidence

from the cases studies from Tanzania and Papua New Guinea lends strong credence to this view. In addition, the exploitation of natural resources in Papua New Guinea, although intended to induce economic development has generally brought hardships and despair to many villagers. The supposedly economic developments have led to environmental degradation as traditional sources of livelihood for the villagers are steadily damaged.

In comparison to developed countries, the relative level of development in developing countries is still at an early stage. Many of the countries in the latter category believe in the need of fast development, when a stage for social and economic change has not yet been established. As one leader from a developing country used to say "We must run while the developed countries are walking".<sup>1</sup> Alonxo (1993) lends support to this view by stating that:

"The dream of obtaining a degree of development that would allow us to compete in the world market has been one of the causes leading the so-called "Third World" countries to promote and execute development projects that greatly impact on our social and economic organization. Indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources without taking into account their limitation is, ironically, the basis for this "development".

In this process the majority of the population is either left behind or severely affected as they cannot adequately cope with the rapid change. This often results in social disorder, juvenile delinquency, and other forms of disorder, as those exhibited among the South African black youths due to their inability to acquire the "goods" of development.

Irrespective of the level of the development process, it should be stressed that human behaviour attempts to achieve positive or negative "fit" or "congruence" in a given situational aspect. It is only by relating situational aspects with the development process that human behaviour can be accurately observed.

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Nyerere, the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

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