**Culture and Social Animation**

**A Taste of Social Science for the Community & Community Development worker**

1. **Animation Promotes Social Change: -**

A Human settlement is not merely a collection of houses. It is a human (social and cultural entity. (The houses which are cultural products of humanity, belong to one of the six dimensions of society or culture, the technological dimension, as will be explained below)- Social Animation (promoting community participation and self-help) mobilizes and organizes a community participation organization o the community is changed, however slightly. The animator, there for a social change agent or catalyst.

1. **An Animator Must Know About Society: -**

It may be dangerous to dabble in changing something you know nothing about. It is therefore the responsibility of the animators to learn something from the sciences of anthropology and sociology. An animator is an applied sociologist, so must know come important features of the subject.

1. **Keep Essential Elements of Society in Mind: -**

The important thing for the animator to note here is the inter-connections between the cultural dimensions which comprise a community. While Social Scientists may disagree about the precise nature of those inter-connections, all of them will agree that the basic characteristic of society (and thus of the communities within a society) is the interconnection of those cultural dimensions. A community, like other social institutions, is not merely a collection of individual persons; it is a changing set of relationships, attitudes and behavior of its members.

1. **Culture is Learned: -**

Culture consists of all those things, including actions and beliefs which human beings (as physical animals) team, which make them human. Culture includes learned behavior, but not things which are determined genetically. Culture is stored and transmitted by symbols; never by chromosomes. – While some culture is learned in childhood (like how to talk, for example), other is learned by adults. When the animator is engaging in promoting social change, she or he is promoting the learning of new ideas and behavior. Adult educating skills are there for needed.

This sociological definition culture, which is society itself, is not the common everyday definition of culture, where people usually think only of drumming and dancing, or only the arts (they belong to only one of the six dimensions of culture, the aesthetic).

1. **Culture Transcends its Humans: -**

Culture is super-organic. Understanding this special concept, “Super organic” is important in understanding what is a community. Just as the organic level is based on inorganic (living cells are made up of non-living atoms, etc.), so the super organicis based on the organic (society is not a human being but it is made up of human beings).

This means that, during animation (mobilization and organization) of a community, the animator must always be able to separate what is happening to the overall community itself, in contrast to what is happening to particular individuals. –

1. **A Community is A Super organic System: -**

A community can be seen as being something like an organism. It lives and functions even though its human members come and go, are born or die. Just as a living cell, plant or animal, transcends its atoms, so an institution, a behavior pattern, or a community, transcends its individual humans. – A belief, for example, is believed by person, but that belief may live on through other persons long after the first ones die. The same with an institution such as marriage, an organization such as an air force, a town such as Maputo, a custom such as shaking hands; a tool such as a hoe, or a system such as marketing. All of these transcend the individual human beings which carry them.

A society, then is a system- not an inorganic system like an engine, not an organic system like a tree, but a super organic system built up of learned ideas and behavior of human being. – Although a community is a cultural system (in that it transcends its individual persons) do not assume that a community is a harmonious unity. It isn’t. It is full of factions, struggles and conflicts, based upon differences in gender, religion, access to wealth, ethnicity, class, educational level, income, ownership of capital, language and many other factors.

In order to promote community participation and development, it is the task of the animator to bring these functions together, encourage tolerance and team spirit, and obtain consensus decisions. That is not easy. While techniques of doing this are found in other documents in this series, knowing about social and cultural system (described in this document) lays a theoretical background upon which the animator can built up professional competence. – For the animator to promote social change in a community, it is necessary to know how that system operates, and therefore how it will respond to changes. Just as an engineer (an applied physical scientist) must know how an engine operates, the community facilitator (applied social scientist) must know how a community operates.

1. **Dimension of Culture: -**

All culture (or social organization) has several dimensions. Like the physical dimensions of length, width, height, and time, cultural dimensions may vary in size but, by definition, permeate the whole. It is suggested here that the most logical set is of six cultural or social dimensions. These account for all systems of learned values and behavior.

All of these are systems within every social system. They are based on learned behavior, which transcend the individuals who each learned parts of them. Like the physical dimensions of length and time, if any one dimension of culture is missing, by definition, all are missing. These dimensions of culture include;

1.Technology

2.Economic

3.Political

4.Institutional (social)

5.Aesthetic-value, and

6.Belief-Conceptual.

You cannot “see” a dimension of culture or society, as you can see an individual person. Every individual manifest each of the six dimensions of culture. – To become socially aware, the animator must be able to analyse all six of the dimensions, and their interrelationships, even though s/he can only see individuals, not those dimensions.

1. **The technological Dimension of Culture: -**

The technological dimension of culture is its capital, its tools and

Skills, and ways of dealing with the physical environment. It is the interface between humanity and nature.

Remember, it is not the physical tools themselves which make up the technological dimension of culture, but it is the learned ideas and behavior which allows humans to invent them, use them, and teach others about tools. – When a facilitator encourages a community built a latrine or well, new technology is introduced. A well (or latrine) is as much a tool as is a hummer or computer. The facilitator must be prepared to understand the effects on otherdimension of culture by the introduction of a change in the technological dimension.

1. **The Economic Dimension of Culture: -**

The economic dimension of culture is its various ways and means of production and allocation of scare and useful goods and services (wealth), whether that is through gift giving, obligations, barter, market trade, or state allocations.

It is not the physical items like cash which make up the economic dimension of culture, but it is the various ideas, values and behavior which give value to cash (and other items) by humans who have created the economic systems they use. Wealth is not merely money, just as poverty is not merely the absence of money. – When a community decides to allocate water on the basis of a flat rate for all residences, or to allocate it on the basis of a payment for each container of water when it is collected, then a choice is being made between two very different systems of economic distribution. The animator should encourage the community to chose what it wants so as to be more consistent with prevailing values and attitudes. (A good animator will not try to impose her or his notion of what would be the best system of distribution; the community members, all of them, must come to a consensus decision).

1. **The Political Dimension of Culture: -**

The political dimension of culture is its various ways and means of allocating power and decision making. It is not the same as ideology, which belongs to the values dimension. It includes, but is not limited to types of governments and management system. It also included how people in small bands make decision when they do not have a recognized leader.

An animator must be able to identify the different types of leaders in a community. Some have traditional authority, other have charismatic personal qualities: - When working with a community, the animator must be able to develop the existing power and decision-making system to promote community unity and group decision making that benefits the who community, not just vested interests.

1. **The Institutional Dimension of Culture: -**

The social or institutional dimension of culture is composed of the ways people act, interact between each, react, and expect each other to act and interact. It includes such institutions as marriage or friendship, roles such as mother or police officer, status or class, and other patterns of human behavior.