TRANSCENDENCE AND SPIRITUALITY: HUMAN NEEDS OF AN URBAN SPECIES?

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ABSTRACT:
Vantage point of the paper is Max-Neef’s intention to include the ‘search for transcendence’ in his alternative model of basic needs and the fact that at that time the unacceptability of talking about spirituality was so strong that he eventually refrained from doing so. I will exemplify the significance of spirituality in human development using the ‘Svadhyaya movement’ as a case study in urban India. This movement has been present in deprived urban areas for some decades now, inducing “real transformation of concrete urban life” in terms of people’s mindset and approach to life. Because the principles of the movement are grounded in a modern revision of classical Hindu philosophy emphasizing personal development and self-realization, it demonstrates a reversal of the Western paradigm of materialism as an inevitable first stage of development. In accordance with Max-Neef, there is virtually no hierarchy of needs. In a next step I contextualize the findings of this case by drawing attention to the fact that spirituality seems to be (re-)discovered in the ‘West’ especially by scholars working with meta-theoretical or integral frameworks. This seems to be reflected in various discourses such as (international) development or sustainable living and climate change. The last section discusses the implications this may have on urban planning practice and theory.

KEY WORDS:
Spirituality; urban development; international development; planning profession; integral theory.
INTRODUCTION

In this paper I intend to elaborate two arguments to bring in the human scale: first, the hierarchy of Maslow’s pyramid could either be reversed or even any hierarchy dissolved; second, we have not reached a comprehensive, or integral notion of the human condition, but if we want to work on and be better enabled to respond to the human scale we have to fully acknowledge all dimensions of human nature including spirituality and transcendental dimensions of life.

However, this area of human nature is commonly neglected in the international development discourse and practice. It has thus far not gained much support or drawn much attention. Vantage point of my paper is Max-Neef’s original intention to include the ‘search for transcendence’ in his alternative model of basic needs more than 20 years ago (Max-Neef 1991). Tellingly, he felt that the time was not ripe then. The unacceptability of talking about spirituality was so strong that he eventually refrained from integrating it into his model because it seemed too daring (Drekonja-Kornat 2001). This attitude has virtually not changed much. Yet there is no reason whatsoever to neglect empirical realities simply because our worldviews and ideologies are not ready to accommodate them.

Significantly, it is the experience ‘in the field’ either as a researcher or development practitioner which shows us how real spirituality is for many, if not most, people. We simply cannot afford to continue treating spirituality as a ‘development taboo’ (Ver Beek 2000). In order to be sincere and serious in our profession as planners and development practitioners, we need to listen and be attentive to whatever the realities ‘out there’ are telling us. It was this attentiveness and curiousness which increasingly led me to study spirituality. Thus, when I did fieldwork in Ahmedabad in western India some years ago about urban risk perception in low-income communities, I was continuously confronted with people’s references to their beliefs and a spiritual organization which, they said, had significantly helped many to change their attitudes and behaviors in life. It became clear that there was no way to exclude this aspect from my study (Woiwode 2008). The more information I collected and trying to relate it to the planning and development literature, the more I noticed that in fact there was not much space for spirituality in it. I wanted to know why it is like that and how it could be changed. Hence it is the purpose here to demonstrate the significance of spirituality in human development by using Svadhyaya as a case study in urban India. Even though it initially began with a focus on rural areas, it has become an urban phenomenon as well, touching already about one-fourth of all the low-income settlements in Ahmedabad more than ten years ago (Jayapal 1998).

SVADHYAYA: BHAKTI AS A SOCIAL FORCE FOR TRANSFORMATION

Svadhyaya as a movement emerged in the early 1950s. It was founded by Pandurang Shastri Athavale, known as Dadaji, who was born into a Marathi Brahmin family. In spite of being in existence for some time, information is scarcely scattered only in articles on the internet and very few publications1. All these treatises stress the uniqueness and outstanding character of the movement that seems to move between a religious organisation to facilitate one’s spiritual freedom and a social organisation to improve one’s lot in this life. Svadhyaya is deeply obliged to humanitarian values. Dadaji is a social reformist insofar as he emphasises an egalitarian society, the upliftment and inclusion of the

1 The volume edited by Srivastava (1998) seems to be the only systematic compilation about Svadhyaya.
marginalised in society, which becomes visible in his actions. For instance, a noteworthy feature in Dadaji’s talks is the simplicity of his language, he hardly ever uses Sanskrit quotations and his examples are taken from everyday life of ordinary people. Since the Brahmanic tradition in Hinduism is highly exclusive, it is revolutionary that simple fishermen and untouchable slum dwellers recite from the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita. He has also given the sacred thread - originally only a sign of the upper castes - to lower caste Svadhyayees and began to rename them. These measures express a strong sense for social justice and equality, demonstrating his rejection of the caste system through a radical novel interpretation in saying that someone who is deserted by God is an untouchable, and everyone who does God’s work is a Brahmin since God resides in everybody (Rukmani 1999).

SVADHYAYA IN PERSPECTIVE: A BRIEF EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT

“She was aware of Pandurang Shastri as well. Every Monday someone is coming to hold a talk which is about how to live, or the art of living. I asked how this does change their live. She said that she is attending these sessions for the last ten years already. Before that there was permanent quarrelling between her and her husband and they were ‘lazy’ with work. But over time she has changed to the better. Approximately 50 people of Nitinagar attend these lectures. She gets peace there, and she notices a change in behavior, she admits. For instance, now she would be conscious about welcoming guests and being polite, and she is also able to get proper food because there is no laziness any more. Among the people would be a decrease of quarrelling, and there is less drinking by those people who attend the lectures. Her husband does not go to the lectures though, and she doesn’t see much of a change in him.”

(Nitinagar voices on Svadhyaya from the field diary, Woiwode 2003)

Nitinagar residents identified as community resources good relationships between and co-operation among each other, arguing if there was any kind of co-operation, problems would be solved easier. Some ascribed this to the presence of Svadhyaya in their area. Apparently, Svadhyaya had stimulated discussions about the desired future direction of the development of the community, resulting in a lower level of acceptance regarding risks evolving especially from their employment, social and environmental situation. Many residents viewed Svadhyaya as a positive vehicle that might assist them in breaking out of their deprivation and poverty. They appreciated it as a chance to improve their spiritual life and change their general attitudes towards each other and, very important, their highly stigmatised image towards the outside society.

The residents of Nitinagar are very poor vegetable vendors who originally came from North and Central Gujarat. They belong to the Vaghri community, which is classified by the government as a Scheduled Caste (SC)². Werth (1996) mentions that the term Vaghri is found in Gujarati and Rajasthani, denoting a group of castes rather than one social unit, who have a north Indian origin and their own language, related to Gujarati. Werth identifies them as a separate social entity within Indian society, since they are considered the gypsies of the Indian subcontinent, and for this reason they traditionally live on the margins of society.

² Other Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes and Tribes are classifications chiefly for administrative purpose, in particular in terms of quota regulations for depressed classes. Practically, they comprise a heterogeneous stratum of primarily tribal and untouchable communities that vary from region to region (see Ahuja 1999).
The stereotypes associated with this community appear to be strongly negative. They were frequently associated with criminal activities (Government of Gujarat 1984: 604) and even perceived with the connotation of uncleanliness. Pocock (1973: 43) reports an incident in a Gujarati village during the 1950s where Vaghris came as seasonal visitors: “The Vaghari are local people whose name is almost a synonym for personal dirtiness and extreme lowness of caste.” Despite such social stigmatisation it is usually acknowledged that Vaghris are not regarded as untouchables, rather the key to their extremely low social status is their marginality (Werth 1996: 81). They do not have a fixed position in the local caste hierarchy, but are outsiders. The reason why they are often ostracised is their marginality combined with an appearance that totally contradicts Hindu notions of purity, since they do not have duties according to the caste ideology which are associated with impurity and define untouchability. Besides caste, various other elements are commonly regarded as indicating a low social status in Indian society. For example, the consumption of alcohol seems to be part of the culturally accepted customs of the Vaghri much to the contrary of the values of the majority population in Gujarat. This attitude towards alcohol in Vaghri communities and the contrast with the rest of the Gujarati society must be kept in mind when they speak of their alcohol addiction.

Thus the residents of Nitinagar are anxious to change their image by turning towards vegetarianism, abstaining from alcohol or changing marriage practices. I have never witnessed anyone gambling or drunk in public, nor consuming meat. It appears in focusing on these values, Svadhyaya brings the Vaghri unavoidably closer to the cultural mainstream of Gujarat, which is dominated by ideals such as non-violence (ahimsa) and vegetarianism. The Vaghris are one of the most deprived communities in Gujarat amongst whom Svadhyaya has been particularly active right from the beginning.

THE CONCEPT OF SVADHYAYA

The term *svadhyaya* goes back to at least the times of the Upanishads. It is understood as ‘the study of the sacred texts’. In conventional usage it denotes self-learning, and in this context one’s own realisation of the self, thus being extended to include self development and enlightenment (Gupta 1999; Rukmani 1999; Sheth 2002). *Svadhyaya* seems to have two levels which are connected to Dadaji’s teachings. One encompasses a linkage with ‘theistic thinking’, another ‘an attitude of the mind’.

By reflection on the nature of one’s self the whole mental attitude changes, and finally society as well. The ego-centric behaviour will gradually change into a god-centred behaviour, called *bhava bhakti* (total devotion) by Dadaji. Thus, “’svadhyaya’ realizes its goal of ‘moksa’ [liberation] in the attitudinal mental transformation of the individual” (Rukmani 1999: 2). *Bhava bhakti* (in the extended sense of ‘attitudinal changes’) generates self esteem, self confidence, acceptance of others as equals. Hence, “it is a character building exercise that is rooted in a spiritual outlook. […] Svadhyaya stands for an attitudinal change and is a programme of self development” (Rukmani 1999: 2) based on Upanishadic philosophy.

Establishing relationships among fellow Svadhyayees can be viewed as the essence of the movement. In building these relationships between people the movement is significant for communicative action based on equality and driven by non-attachment of one’s own interests. One of the movement’s
significant achievements is to generate a sense of solidarity within families and the community of Svadhyayees, therefore ultimately offering the potential of even impacting on the wider society (Rukmani 1999). Specific activities support a notion of divine brotherhood through visits of Svadhyayees in villages and slums, called bhaktipheri (trip of devotion); thirayatra (longer pilgrimages), or one-day visits at the house of a previously unknown fellow Svadhyayee of any caste where one’s family is treated as the Divine (represented in Lord Krishna) for this time. Once established these relationships are maintained over long periods of time in order to develop a relationship of trust and to bring people to the realisation that each individual, each living thing is divine (Jayapal 1998: 103-04).

In this way (especially through self-confidence) Svadhyaya greatly impacts on individuals. They are better able and confident to speak out and articulate themselves. These impacts have been vitally described by Gupta (1999) in various examples, and I myself observed this in Ahmedabad during the participatory workshops and weekly Svadhyaya sessions held in Nitinagar. These meetings, in fact, can be regarded as exercises in speech and in speaking in front of a group, since at each meeting some people are asked to express their thoughts and feelings, or their experience with Svadhyaya and daily life. It thus fosters qualities of individuals to communicate. The communicative element is so strongly felt that Judge (2003) named Svadhyaya an example of a ‘community of discourse’ where members communicate ideas with each other that emphasise not on the imposition of a belief system but how the people may better help themselves with their own resources in response to the challenges and problems in their daily life. When undertaking bhaktipheris “[t]he challenge for the visitors is to find ways of evoking a reframing of the ways in which the villagers see themselves and their constraints and opportunities. This cannot simply be a cognitive game. It must build on the culture and belief system – in this case of Hindu rural [and urban] India. Patterns of meaning have to be evoked, and have to be reinforced, in order to acquire legitimacy. Clearly story-telling can be a major vehicle of exchange and has always been viewed as such. In that context, many such stories are derived from myths, legends and spiritual tales” (Judge 2003: 3). It is here where the communicative competence may be found and can be made fruitful through action embedded in local culture and understanding, self-confidence and equality.

RE-INTERPRETATION OF BHAKTI

The basic principle in Svadhyaya is theistic thinking. Dadaji believes that dehumanisation of large sections of population lies in forgetting the ‘God within’. In virtue of that notion his approach is entirely based on a re-interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita. By this interpretation of bhakti Dadaji developed the belief in an indwelling God and universal brotherhood from which emerges a demand to build and strengthen relations among human beings based on asmita, the recognition of dignified existence, and atmiyata, oneness and solidarity among all (Sheth 2002).

Especially two concepts are critical in Svadhyaya which call for an active agent, namely bhava bhakti and kriti bhakti. Bhava bhakti signifies the changed mental attitude as a result of knowing oneself, thus a Svadhyayee fits in with the jnana bhakta, ‘a devotee who enjoys intellectual love towards God’. Kriti bhakti (action-oriented devotion) is Dadaji’s unique contribution connected to bhava bhakti. It circumscribes the offering of one’s skills to God as an expression of gratitude. In redefining bhakti as kriti bhakti emphasis is on one’s agency rather than blind faith or ritualism. Thereby the ancient idea of bhakti is transformed into a social force which has effects on current social problems, as Dadaji points out: “It is of no use to go on complaining against difficulties and odds, sorrows and sufferings,
We have to face them and utilise them to develop our latent potentialities. Nothing great can be achieved without incessant self-effort. God within helps those who honestly try to help themselves” (Athavale 1998: 17).

The concept of *kriti bhakti* refers as far back as to the five debts or duties (*rina*) a person owes to the society as outlined by the *Dharmashastras*. Gratitude is held to be one of the main character building tools in Svadhyaya by the re-interpretation of the *rina* ideal. This conceptualisation has a high potential for value-guided communicative action. Although action emerging from an idea of welfare for all (*lokasangraha*) according to the *Bhagavad Gita* is not totally new, the emphasis in this ancient idea was on the doer. In contrast, in *kriti bhakti* one has to be conscious of what benefits the receiver as well, thus evoking an emphasis on disinterested action (*niskama karma*). While the *lokasangraha* is centred more around the giver, “‘Krti-bhakti’ can be engaged in by those in whom ‘bhava-bhakti’ has wrought a complete attitudinal change in which case they are liberated according to SM [Svadhyaya Movement]. ‘Kriti-bhakti’ has the world and those who inhabit it as its reference point” (Rukmani 1999: 3). Benefit in such a way is primarily character building with economic well being and material benefits occurring as its by-products.

It is clear from the teachings that Svadhyaya is a spiritual attitude firmly grounded in the ‘here and now’. This notion brings an interesting aspect to light, notably a sort of ‘work ethic’ that provides for material development and satisfaction. In accordance with the concept of *kriti bhakti*, a person using one’s own skills and knowledge in service of fellow people is interpreted as someone who offers efficiency in gratitude to the Lord. From this notion emerges a remarkable concept called *shram bhakti*. It is defined as ‘devotion through labour’ referring to a person’s contribution of manual labour in any kind of community-oriented activity (Sheth 2002: 40). A similar comparison has been made with regard to the *Pushtimargi* sect in Gujarat, which is characterised by a similar mundane worldview (Lütt 1987). Such a philosophy necessarily comes along with a certain type of rational thinking and attitude4 which encourages among other things the development of material well-being. This dimension is remarkable as it offers a very practical way of living, far from inactivity, fatalism and renouncement.

For this reason, the way of thinking underlying Svadhyaya may be viewed as a rational system of belief. According to *jnana bhakti* of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Dadaji extorts people to use intellect along with *bhakti* maintaining that “Adhyatma or spirituality is highly rational. It is the highest form of knowledge. Man is endowed with the power of reasoning and reflection” (Athavale 1998:1). In his lectures he draws from the heritage of century old philosophy remarking, “Medhaa is the faculty of reasoning[…]. It is Medhaa or the power of thinking which is the distinguishing feature of man[…] That is why, in India, we put Tilakam on the forehead as a mark of adoration to Buddhi (intellect).5 Even our Bhakti i.e. devotion must be based on solid foundations of reason” (Athavale 1998: 10). It is on this basis that Gupta points out: “The average swadhyayi uses the language of reason rather than faith. Reasoning, based on sound principles, just like the reasoning of any branch of knowledge, be it

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4 I have discussed this type of rational thinking, which should not be confused with the ordinarily used concept of Western rationality, in my treatise on the moral economy of the Banias of Gujarat (Woiwode 2001).

5 The *tilak* or *tilakam* is the spot applied by the Brahmin during a temple visit. It represents intellect in a spiritual sense, i.e. the experiential and ineffable knowledge of the transcendent (metaphysical) world. As such it is a symbol of the third eye which can be found on Shiva’s forehead, the one that is able to perceive beyond the physical facts.
modern science or traditional knowledge. After all, every knowledge system is based on certain assumptions and principles, which are unique and built into the heart of the system, on the foundations of which the rest follows” (Gupta 1999: 5-6).

Svadhyaya as a movement combines characteristics of spirituality with an emphasis on individual agency. Individuality, however, is perceived as embedded in social interaction and relationship (see Mines 1994). Essential for the worldview of its members is the acceptance of a this-worldly liberation (moksha) with a rational approach to life. Following this feature, unattached action combined with a kind of ‘work ethics’ is a remarkable characteristic as its consequences induce ‘side effects’ of economic and material wealth besides the primary goal of attaining personal spiritual development. It is at this point where one encounters again a clear hierarchical link of transcendent and mundane dimensions with a primary focus on non-material dimensions of affluence – an inherently ancient Indian notion -, which poses a sharp contrast to Western notions of prosperity. I shall comment on this decisive factor below. Due to the notion of an indwelling God, equality and social justice of all human beings are recognised. These are clearly considered to offer opportunities for democratic and participatory interaction with a firm foundation in moral and ethical behaviour.

DISCUSSION: A REVERSAL OF THE “WESTERN” DEVELOPMENT RATIONALE?

Svadhyaya bridges the gap of ancient and medieval times to contemporary India exemplifying the still prevailing influence of philosophical ideas on social, religious and political movements. Reformulations of ancient values are viewed as a vehicle for rethinking social interaction and life in today’s world. These activities demonstrate that neither philosophical thinking nor social practice have ever been static in India. As Srivastava notes, “Swadhyaya is [...] a spiritual and social quest which uses the past as the creative element in the living present” (1998: 9). Especially relevant for this paper, he further summarises “Swadhyaya recognizes what human beings need, besides food, shelter and security [...]:

- self-dignity and esteem for one’s cultural heritage,
- a sense of becoming,
- a sense of pursuing worthy ideals,
- a sense of belonging to a worthy group,
- a sense of participation,
- a sense of being in command of one’s destiny,
- a sense of wholeness, and
- a sense of justice in the larger order” (Srivastava 1998: 16).

Some scholars (e.g. Raju et al. 2004) see in this movement a continuation of Gandhi’s spirit from satyagraha to svadhyaya commenting: “A noteworthy feature of contemporary Hinduism has been the emergence of several original thinkers who have been devising strategies for dialogue, with the aim of promoting mutual tolerance and understanding among religions and of establishing a network of harmonious relations among the people of the world. […] particularly […] the strategies of satyagraha (soul force) proposed by Gandhi, and svadhyaya (reflective self-study) proposed by Pandurang Athavale, may facilitate meaningful interreligious dialogue and the realization of the ideals of social progress, human rights, and equality” (Rukmani 1999: 8).
The argument of the prevalence of transcendental knowledge in Indian thought and practice can be taken further for a conceptual re-interpretation of ‘development’. As a consequence of this-worldly ( basically instrumental) rationality in Western societies, ‘development’ is generally conceived as a linear movement in time, emphasising technical innovative progress and economic growth. In significant contrast to this notion yet in an equally clear agreement to its values, in India spiritual development of the self is emphasised while simultaneously recognising worldly life and its material necessities. This is, at least, the primary tenet despite all social and economic changes in this country. Without neglect of material needs, the striving for spiritual development – which is in fact not linear but circular according to the theory of samskara - is the major goal, and not material satisfaction.

This is not to say that Indian society does not desire to live a comfortable life without hardship. It is rather perceived as just a means towards a higher spiritual improvement. In fact, all Indian philosophical theories and therein various distinct sects demonstrate an attempt to reconcile this, to many Western observers seemingly paradoxical (and therefore often misunderstood), tension between the material and metaphysical world. Some Indian scholars maintain “[r]eligion can evoke awareness of that dimension of the human personality which is not affected by scientific and technological reasoning. In creating appropriate awareness, religion helps in realizing that there are limits to our control over the animate and inanimate world, and our arrogance and manipulative power over nature can backfire. Religion says that a man’s life cannot be measured by material possessions, and that the ends of life go beyond consumption” (Dwivedi and Tiwari 1987: 102). Following this Indian tradition, they propose religion provides restraint, humility and liberation from self-centredness compared to (potentially dangerous) technologies. Hence religion can be a source of individual as well as social transformation with non-quantifiable results of development as Svadhyaya illustrates: an increase in inner peace, harmonious relations, a broader understanding of responsibility and duty, and a new awareness of and respect for self, i.e. true self-empowerment (Jayapal 1998: 113).

Such a perspective, admittedly, has far reaching consequences for any kind of development work, yet should not be seen as an obstacle but rather an opportunity to utilise these perceptions for social change. For what is the meaning to insist on a pure focus of material satisfaction if most people believe they are only complementary to mental well-being? Svadhyaya precisely demonstrates the fact that it is possible to generate material development as a by-product from a spiritual basis. The movement accumulates capital for its members from its members through the concept of immaterial wealth ( impersonal, as Dadaji calls it) and a work ethic that is collectively employed. Thus, by refusing any donations, it takes a totally different position and role than NGOs do and is indeed self-sustaining and free from dependencies. To use economic language, it is a stunning example of how immaterial social investment generates material capital – economic in a narrow sense - by turning seemingly un-worldly metaphysics into social capital, and thereby revealing that rationality is a social and cultural construction which creates and utilises symbolic capital besides an economic one.

The approach of Svadhyaya to human development is not singular in South Asia. In Sri Lanka, the well known Sarvodaya movement is rooted in Buddhist values ( Macy 1983, Wismeijer 1981). But Bhutan has become an outstanding example in the world to radically question Western development rationality by incorporating its Buddhist philosophical tradition in development policies arguing that mere economic growth without happiness of the people would not lead to development (Royal

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6 Experiments in Giving. What NGOs can learn from Svadhyaya, humanscapeindia.net/humanscape/hs0399/hs039911t.htm, accessed 23/06/03.
Government of Bhutan 1999). It is in this example that we find a merger of material and spiritual development combined, which clearly demonstrates an inclination towards ‘emotional’, more human dimensions of development. Most significantly, but not surprising, such approaches come from ‘the East’. They have been taken up only recently as valuable by international development think tanks and even western governments. This clearly shows how ‘the West’ can and perhaps even ought to learn more from these ‘developing’ countries.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

Often it is the people who trigger a wake-up call in development projects in order to make the development approach more human, such in the case of workshops conducted by the International Federation of Agriculture and Development (IFAD). During these workshops, which utilized the sustainable livelihoods approach developed by DFID, ‘many participants felt that the SL framework was rather ‘impersonal’ – it tended to imply that people’s livelihoods were made up of a sum of different assets, people’s access to those assets and influencing factors that affect that access.[…] participants wanted to include ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual’ assets in the livelihood framework. In a workshop in India, the framework was developed by participants in the form of a nine-tiered mandala that linked individuals to the universe, emphasizing the importance of this spiritual aspect of people’s lives” (IFAD, no date). A result of this was the inclusion of ‘personal’ assets in the SL framework to make spirituality more explicit, but also to emphasize people’s internal motivations, their will to act and promote change.

In a similar vein, Högger (2004) attempts to formulate a holistic approach to understanding livelihood systems in Gujarat (India) from the living experience of the people rather than theoretical constructions. Högger and his colleagues make use of the indigenous concept of a mandala to conceptualize and link inner and outer reality of people’s livelihoods (Fig. 1). They point out the importance and significance of the far left end of the mandala, which in fact circumscribes many features ascribed to a spiritual life: “The forces that are represented here play a role in all livelihood systems. However, conventional research does not usually pay much attention to them. Individual or inner-human forces are often taken for granted by rational-minded scientists. This is different in the case of the villagers themselves, who seem to value individual characteristics quite highly. Learning from them, we have come across many cases where the inner-human forces indeed appear to have made the decisive difference between development and stagnation” (Högger 2004: 51).

Clearly, spirituality is intrinsic to any kind of development, both at the personal and social level. And yet it is by and large obscure in contemporary development practice and discourse precisely because of the hegemony of Western thought in international development and associated organizations, which is deeply rooted in the Cartesian split of matter and mind, as summarized by Goswami (1993: 11): “The negative influence of material realism on the quality of modern human life has been staggering. Material realism poses a universe without any spiritual meaning: mechanical, empty, and lonely. For us – the inhabitants of the cosmos – this is perhaps the more unsettling because, to a frightening degree, conventional wisdom holds that material realism has prevailed over theologies that propose a

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Note the stark contrast to the ‘technical’ approach to and notion of human development by UNDP explicited in the human development index (HDI), which has nothing to say about the emotional side of well-being of people.
spiritual component of reality in addition to the material one.” This means that development of a country or society is largely reduced to mere material achievements; an almost stubborn neglect of the empirical reality of religiosity and spirituality in people’s lives. Goulet (1995: 205) sarcastically comments: “This reductionist approach to knowledge leads most development specialists to function as ‘one-eyed giants’, purveyors of science who are bereft of wisdom. They analyze, prescribe, and act as if humans could live by bread alone, as if human destiny could be stripped down to its material dimensions alone. […] In order to survive one must want to survive, but how can one want to survive unless one’s life has a meaning? Indeed, having a meaningful existence may well be the most basic of all human needs” (last emphasis added).

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6. Inner Human Space

5. Family Space

4. Socio-economic Space

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INNER REALITY ➔ OUTER REALITY

[Fig. 1] The Livelihoods System Mandala, source: Högger 2004: 47

The imbalance (or probably better: misconception) of material versus immaterial dimensions of development is apparent in the very concepts such as the ‘basic needs approach’. In his critique of the basic needs approach Rist (2002: 167-68) comments on the dominant thinking of the material primacy over the immaterial/idealistic dimensions of life: “The spontaneous idea that one must start with ‘basic needs’ and only later move on to ‘higher’ aspirations is contradicted by the evidence of anthropology. […] Before one can eat, a share must be set aside for the gods; before one can have somewhere to live, the temple must be built. Greek and Roman ruins, as well as cathedrals and mosques, testify to the care that must be devoted to things holy before one can think of oneself.” This demonstrates the relative weight of the spiritual and the material, which is demonstrated by the significance of funeral rites, donations to spiritual/religious organizations, in the context of social life. Ryan (1995: 1) contends that “beyond a basic level of survival and security, for most people in most parts of the world, innermost attitudes and behavior towards change – individual or societal – are not motivated by economic or political interests. Many people in most cultures start at the other end of Maslow’s scale: at the most personal level, they are moved by deep underlying moral and spiritual assumptions that
reflect and explain reality and that support the values that guide their decisions about whether to change or not to change.”

Ver Beek (2000) has attempted to understand the reasons why spirituality is not merely neglected but also even avoided by development theorists and practitioners. In contrast, I shall focus on how spirituality is being taken up as a relevant dimension for development. At the most general level, this is the case with all those authors, researchers or practitioners who have an interest in the emergence of the ‘new sciences’ such as complexity and chaos theory, and a wholistic or holonic worldview, and who seek to bridge the fragmented knowledge of disciplinary thought for a more integral perspective that acknowledges multiple perspectives and the interconnectedness of being. For example, Nederveen Pieterse (2006) explores some of the ‘futures of development’ or what he calls ‘the Tao of development’ in terms of ‘wholism’ or ‘holism’. His starting point is the underpinning contradiction between the ‘two cultures’, the scientific-technological and humanistic cultures, the worlds of science and art: “It is clearly a superficial representation from the outset. Viewing this relationship as a continuum of views that meet and diverge on multiple levels is much more adequate. In addition this involves a one-sided representation of the Enlightenment, which is a much more complex historical field than is granted in conventional views. This is worth keeping in mind when considering the long-standing attempts to bridge these worlds and reintegrate the sciences and humanities (Nederveen Pieterse 2006: 135-36).”

Even though Nederveen Pieterse mentions mysticism in several instances in relation to science, he does not explore the general significance of spirituality (or faith, religion) and its role for development. There is a cursory note on “spiritual sources sidelined and bulldozed by the incursions of colonialism and modernization”, and a far too short-sighted, narrow, reduced suggestion to incorporate the ‘shaman’, obviously this is an incredibly insufficient proposal that does not pay justice to the complexity of the spiritual dimension (Nederveen Pieterse 2006: 141). Apparently, this gap is not considered and dealt with properly. Nonetheless, with his assessment, Nederveen Pieterse is certainly at the forefront of re-conceptualizing development by propagating a new sense of balance, between science and art, fact and value, analysis and meaning:

This reintegration of the ‘two cultures’ is one of the main objectives of what came to be known as Integral Theory or the integral project in the widest sense. Yet integral thinkers add another dimension to it, the one of the spirit so that the challenge is to integrate a threefold, three-dimensional perspective at this level (Wilber 2000 and 2007, Hargens 2002; McIntosh 2007; Laszlo 2004). The specific contribution of integral theory to (international/community) development is the notion of developmental stages and of development as an evolutionary process. Human development is viewed in a different way than the mostly materialistic and behavioral definition of the UN Human Development Index, for integral theory includes individual and personal development of consciousness and the Self. Hochachka can be seen as pioneering the application of Integral Theory to international and community development. It is an emerging field that recognizes how human needs span not only the economic, social and ecological, but also the cultural, psychological and spiritual in bringing together current development methodologies with other disciplines like transformative learning, action research, and developmental psychology. In this way interiority is taken seriously as it refers to psychology and epistemologies, ethics and morals, values and worldviews, religion and spirituality (Hochachka 2005: 8). Integral theory’s contribution and expansion of prevalent development paradigms is provided in Fig. 2.
Each era of development has both positive and negative impacts, in what has been called the “dialectic of progress”. The positive contributions of conventional and alternative approaches are brought together in an integral approach to developing sustainability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic qualities</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Integral</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The conventional modern approach brings scientific rigor, quantitative methodologies, and concrete problem solving for addressing tangible material needs.</td>
<td>The alternative postmodern approach brings participatory and emancipatory methodologies that engage local beneficiaries as active contributors to, and co-creators of, social change.</td>
<td>The integral approach includes the interiority of communities, namely personal wellbeing and cultural integrity, with the objectives of economic security and environmental sustainability, and also works with the transformative processes of personal empowerment.</td>
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| Characteristics | Characterised by centralized power and extractive, linear flows of non-local resources from territories. | Promotes and emulates circular economies and heterarchical decision-making; is embedded in, and reinforces, “local”. | The framework provides enough breadth and depth to include a vast number of development objectives, indicators and methodologies. It seeks to integrate the positive aspects of the conventional and alternative systems. |

| Advances | Notable advances include technology, medicine, education and communications, as well as contributing to the foundations for democracy, economic prosperity, gender equality and civil rights. | Notable advances include community-based approaches to natural resource management and local economic sufficiency, decentralized governance, addressing unjust power dynamics, as well as fostering human rights, gender equality and ecological sustainability, among many others. | Notable advances include working in self-development along with socio-economic, political and ecological objectives; working toward shifts in worldviews; offers tools for identifying local worldviews and appropriately translating communications in ways that resonate with local worldviews. |

Clearly, the novelty of an integral approach is the integration of interiority as an essential dimension of personal and societal development. In order to do so successfully, Hochachka (2005: 30) suggests four key aspects: a) fostering empowerment and psychological development, b) honouring local spiritual frameworks and local beliefs, c) giving space for subjectivity and the self-development of the practitioner, and d) situating development in an evolutionary context. Bhaskar (2002: 10) strongly asserts in his new philosophy of Meta-Reality the intrinsic nature of spirituality and transcendence to human beings: “A primary feature […] is to stress the ubiquity, and especially the everyday character, of transcendence and spiritual matters traditionally regarded as esoteric, exceptional and/or bizarre or as the products or results of an arduous, privileged, heteronomously acquired practice […]. Transcendence, transcendental identification in consciousness and transcendental agency are indispensable features of all human beings, social life and indeed a necessary condition for any human act at all” (emphasis added).
THE URBAN PLANNING COMMUNITY AND SPIRITUALITY

It is disputed whether and to what extent urbanization also contributed to the progressing disenchantment of people’s imaginaries. Many scholars maintain that the climax of this view of “The Secular City” (Cox 1965) was reached in the 20th century. Only twenty years later Cox felt to observe a return of religion to the Secular City (Cox 1983). In any case, by the twentieth century, industrial societies in particular were strongly oriented to the cognitive, the rational, and the logical, with devastating consequences: science largely unrestrained by ethics (whether from religion or anywhere else) helped to deliver the most violent and most environmentally damaging century in human history (Gardner 2002: 9). At the same time, urbanization played a role in the modernist development path that was exported to the developing world with the same aim to ‘rationalize’ those societies, as Escobar (2005) comments: “The organizing premise was the belief in the role of modernization as the only force capable of destroying archaic superstitions and relations, at whatever social, cultural, and political cost. Industrialization and urbanization were seen as the inevitable and necessarily progressive routes to modernization” (86).

No doubt, this can be attributed to the enlightenm ent in the Western hemisphere, whereas in other parts of the world, notably India, spirituality has always been part of individual as well public life. A modern day fine example in practice is Auroville, located in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu. This settlement was planned based on the teachings of the philosopher-sage Sri Aurobindo, a modern integral thinker who combined Western scientific knowledge with the Indian philosophical tradition. In contrast, the de facto absence of spirituality in Western cities is visible in the nearly total neglect of any link between urbanization or urban development and spirituality in the literature. Likewise, the revival of religion or spirituality in the West has not entered the field of urban planning theory or planning practice.

The divide established by the Enlightenment movement between science and religion/spirituality is so deep that it leads, according to Anhorn, to the paradox of not responding adequately to some challenges of our times: “We are experiencing a time of growing plurality of culture, ethnicity and religious and spiritual belief in our cities. Despite these things and despite the demonstrated power spirituality has on many people’s actions and their understanding of their place in the world, planning theorists have done little to explore how this increasing diversity of spiritual beliefs affects how we manage our collective future, and none have looked at how (and if) spirituality can be incorporated into planning processes in the multicultural and multifaith communities of today’s cities” (Anhorn 2006: 69). Planning literature is virtually silent about a relationship with spirituality. Only one recent issue of Planning Theory and Practice (2006) does exist which is explicitly devoted to spirituality in which several authors share their insights, experience and opinion about the links between spirituality and planning.

In a study rare among the planning profession Anhorn (2005) explored spirituality and its link to planning in the American context. His conclusions underline the fact that spirituality in particular shapes relationships and creates connectivity, features ascribed by many people as central to spirituality in general. In this sense spirituality encourages a wholistic outlook towards the world and planning, notably of being conscious of the relationships between and among all that is around us. By doing so, spirituality recognizes that there are other ways of knowing and seeing the world than the dualistic manner inherited by the Western tradition. It also brings one’s whole self into planning...
practice, making self-awareness, self-reflexivity, and self-realization inevitable dimensions of one’s own spirituality. According to his findings, Anhorn identified two dimensions of spirituality - the interior/inward self nourishment and the exterior/outward of building connections - in relation to planning whose details are outlined in Fig. 3.

As much as spirituality is about connections, it also involves a process of self-assessment, self-awareness, and self-actualization which can turn into personal change and even transformation; the latter being viewed by scholars and practitioners as an integral part of following a spiritual path. As a consequence, if spirituality as a human dimension is to be integrated and acknowledged as relevant for planning, it needs to be part of planning education and, beyond this, each planner’s personal development. Another approach to spirituality in planning might be through ethical considerations, as Thomas points out: “[Spirituality] involves much more: how do we carry ourselves as professionals in a society where such simple qualities as honesty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, and selfless service to society at large, and to its most vulnerable populations, require constant reinforcement? How can we inculcate an internally driven desire in planning students to be ethical in this way, and not to simply follow the rules? For this we need to discuss the role of spirituality, which has to do with virtues and values as well as self-actualization and communication” (Thomas 2006: 94).

Other than in planning there has been a recognition of spirituality within the management literature (see Edwards 2010), which might be useful for planning organizations and management skills of planners as well. Planning professionals and the planning profession needs to generate an ethics that is congruent with the challenges of our times, such as environmental degradation, poverty, rapid urbanization, climate change, global connectedness and interdependencies – culturally, economically, and environmentally. One approach of changing planning practice and practitioners could be, for instance, through organizational transformation and exploring spirituality in leadership development. Edwards (2010) has reviewed several organizational theories relating to spirituality and identifies a spiritual lens of organizational transformation. These approaches to individual and organizational transformation “see change as guided by a search for deep purpose and meaning” (Edwards 2010: 122). Wight (2011) has worked in this regard with concrete application to the training of planning students and has also made an effort to explore the nexus of the planning profession with spirituality within an integral framework (Wight 2009). These are just a few examples how spirituality might be better incorporated in the planning profession. In spite of these endeavors, the conscious integration of spirituality as a dimension of planning and a point of reference for planners is still awaiting more attention.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-nourishment</th>
<th>Some salient aspects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-awareness</td>
<td>- Identified by practitioners as very important in planning practice</td>
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<td>- Important for working in conflict and to help increase understanding of other people</td>
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<td>- The better we understand ourselves the better we are able to understand others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Planners encourage others to increase their self-awareness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- May be a way to engage people in dialogues about how their understanding of the cosmos (worldviews) relates to the issues and potential interventions at hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Bring ‘whole-self’ to process</td>
<td>- Practitioners very clear about importance of bringing their whole beings into the process</td>
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<td>- Helps to build trust and safety among participants and allows for diversity of epistemologies to inform the process</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Intuition</td>
<td>- Many people view their intuition as being part of their spirituality and draw on it heavily to aid their work and relationship with others</td>
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<td>- Intuition can be developed and honed</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Building connections</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Atmosphere of mutuality</td>
<td>- Planners who incorporate spirituality strive for mutuality in learning, risk-taking, giving and receiving, and mutual levels of comfort and discomfort</td>
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<td>2. Safe space</td>
<td>- The development of group guidelines, self-disclosure and admitting one’s own mistakes are used to help create a sense of safety for everyone</td>
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<td>- While physical safety is necessary during spirit-conscious planning, this refers more to the psycho-social space of the group</td>
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<td>3. Work with potential</td>
<td>- Several practitioners identified this as the core of what they strive to do through their planning practice</td>
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<td>- Working in a space that is unhindered by preconceived agendas, limitations or judgements</td>
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<td>- &quot;you are going to work with what isn’t”, “so you need to get enough space for the –nothing- to be there”</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Build relationships and bridge differences</td>
<td>- The relationships we have to one another, to the environment around us, to the land and to past and future generations figure prominently in planning that incorporates spirituality</td>
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<td>- Planners encourage others to explore and expand their relationships and seek out new connections</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Spiritual understandings influence the relationships we think about, often expanding them to include non-human beings such as the animals, plants, spirit-beings and divine beings</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Mythology and storytelling</td>
<td>- Helps to build a more complete understanding of the history of the land and the community</td>
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<td>- Stories are also used to assist with group formation and to help individuals and communities to heal from trauma and oppression</td>
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<td>6. Rituals</td>
<td>- Used mainly to mark transitions</td>
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<td>- Sometimes rituals most memorable part of the process for participants</td>
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<td>- Can be used to celebrate, remember and explore meaning</td>
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<td>7. Listening</td>
<td>- Honours the other person and their experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Can facilitate healing</td>
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<td>- Gift of listening one of the most valuable and powerful gifts a person can give</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- A huge part of the problem is that we don’t listen anymore: so listen to your child, listen to the land, listen to the ancestors…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- There is such a focus on self-gratification in the city, and in pop-culture and everything, it’s all about our own pleasure and satisfaction</td>
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[Figure 3]: Spirituality in Planning Practice, summary based on Anhorn 2006
CONCLUSIONS

I have set out to demonstrate that spirituality and transcendence are significant ‘players’ in people’s lives and hence cannot be ignored. As a consequence, transcendence and spirituality need to be acknowledged as an integral part of the human condition. Only if this is recognized will we arrive at a truly human scale development.

The complexity of interconnected and multi-faceted global issues such as rapid urbanization, poverty, the food, environmental and financial crisis call upon a more comprehensive response - one that appreciates the full spectrum of human beings, the interior as well as the exterior realities of the world. This is not going to happen within the existing socio-economic frameworks and systems. As I have explored elsewhere especially issues of environmental degradation, climate change and global warming stimulate the study of the spiritual dimensions of human existence (Woiwode 2011).

Hitherto both the planning profession as well international development practice are shying away from a serious discussion of spirituality and its respective role, even though we find many empirical examples that prove otherwise. While there has been a ‘resurgence’ of spirituality in western societies as well, this is (not yet) reflected in most professions (the health sector with its cautious attempts to recognize complementary medical systems is a forerunner). Taking on spirituality explicitly in urban development projects and community development is marginal as long as there are no conscious professionals and no training in this regard in the planning education.

On a final note, it is interesting that most of the little effort in planning practice and research into spirituality has thus far been conducted in North America and Australia. My assumption is that the awareness of the Sacred is more present there because the First Nations and Aborigines represent somewhat the spiritual consciousness and hence sensitize planners and pose challenges to planning institutions unheard of in Europe.

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