Case Studies on an Integral Approach to International Development

Integral Community Development in Post-war El Salvador.

Centro Bartolomé de las Casas
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Background

The downtown centre of San Salvador is a nexus of movement and exchange: people convene here from every corner of the country, products from all over can be bought in the downtown markets, and most buses route through the downtown core. As such, the downtown centre also witnesses a blending of perspectives from all over the country, including both the victims and perpetrators of violence during the country’s 12 year civil war.

The resolution process that occurred after the peace accords were signed in 1992 hardly dealt with the underlying pain and trauma of those violent years. Today, people from both sides of the conflict now work, travel, and associate side by side. In a small, overpopulated country, people simply must go forth with life, despite past trauma and pain, and despite what their neighbours still stand for today. On the one hand, this resolution-by-necessity is commendable. Yet, on the other hand, is this true resolution? To ignore differences and conflict doesn’t mean that they go away: just as ignoring trauma does not mean it will miraculously disappear.

In the very midst of this conundrum, is situated a small civil society organization called Centro Bartolomé de las Casas (CBC). While small in human resources, the centre itself is actually quite large, with a spacious inner courtyard for workshops and activities. Coming in from the chaos and heat of the street into this centre, one suddenly feels safe and at home, somehow slightly removed from the gaze of society itself.

This Centre was created by a group of Dominican Fathers, and associated partners, with the intention to begin to work with this unaddressed pain and trauma residual in the Salvadoran people. It was created to be a meeting place for people to simply gather and dialogue amongst one another, even though they came from “the other side” of a given issue.

The Salvadoran culture does not commonly permit these types of gatherings, explains Larry José Madrigal, the coordinator of the Centre: “You are there, I am here; gringa and salvadoreño; right and left; youth and adults; the good and the bad.” The vision of the Centre was to take this moment in Salvadoran history as an opportunity to come into dialogue with people from the “other side” in search of creating new meanings for the society. To turn toward those differences, despite the past or present conflict, is also to turn toward those ways in which the human community is united.

It began as a small gathering, around a single table, Madrigal explains, a gathering that was not only physical and political but also social and spiritual. The Centre itself provided the safe space for this meeting to occur—a space in which each person would be heard, and even if others were not in agreement, no one would point a finger or discriminate against you. Six years later, so many have
sat around that same table: guerrilla fighters and soliders, women and men, youth and adults, Evangelists and Catholics. And from these gatherings emerged the recognition of difference as well as a felt-sense of union.

From that time, CBC has evolved into a tapestry of community programming. Its work focuses on popular education and community development, and includes an array of methodologies for interior self-development of participants and practitioners—from addressing psychological trauma of individuals and groups, to empowering people to participate in community, to accessing leadership potentials. The team of practitioners use integrated energy healing, bible-theology, cooperative games, art and embodied practices, among others, to help participants release trauma, self-reflect, and engage their self-development process as community leaders. They have designed their own methodologies to work with each dimension—methodologies that they did not learn in their university programs yet that are highly successful in practice with communities. Through these experiences, they know that it is not enough to change policy, build up new institutions, tinker with new systems without also, concurrently, working with the human, interior dimension of development.

This approach has come through a mix of creativity, networking with other organizations, on-the-ground experience and intuition for what is actually needed in the Salvadoran population. Along the way, the team of practitioners have learned from many other thought-leaders and partner organizations as they consciously sought out new perspectives and skills to help them improve their work. Some of these influences include energetic healing work trained by European practitioner José Höhne-Sparborth in the style of *Hands on Healing* (Brennen) and popular healing practices of Capacitar, an NGO based in the USA that does trainings for grassroots healing techniques worldwide.

Another influence is the Integral Approach. Two years ago, two members of the team found a Ken Wilber book tucked away in a bookstore in the centre of town. They were deeply moved by this elegant synthesis. Coordinators and staff of CBC quickly found that it not only validated their approach to date, but also suggested detailed pathways forward to refine and build on what they were already doing. They are still studying Integral theory and incorporating elements into their work.

I carried out a site-visit to San Salvador for 5 weeks in 2005 to learn more about their work, specifically the methodologies they use to address interiority as a key part of individual, community, and planetary wellbeing.

This research is part of a project entitled *Case Studies on an Integral Approach to International Development* carried out by Drishti-Centre for Integral Action and funded by the International Development Research Centre in Canada.1 A complete description of the research project, including
objectives and methodology can be found in the Introduction to this series of case studies. Here, I provide only a brief overview of the research.

I used an Integral Approach for my own research meta-methodology, to frame and select specific methodologies that would help me learn about CBC’s approach, organizational culture, and project outcomes. One of my specific research objectives was to learn more about how CBC works with the interior dimensions of development, and the Integral framework helped me to select methodologies that could effectively gather this more qualitative and subjective information. My specific research methodologies included 1) quantitative data collection and review of documentation, 2) participant-observer methodology and interviews with key informants (see Appendix 1), and 3) self-reflection, presencing, and journaling.

Context

The Salvadoran Reality

El Salvador has an intense history of inequality; for decades a small percentage of the population (infamously known as the “fourteen families”) owned more than 90% of the land. In the early 1980s, the situation resulted in civil war, which lasted for twelve years until 1992. During the time of peace accords, agrarian land reform occurred along with the formation of cooperatives and strengthening of local economies. However, the country’s development has since become aligned with the global economy: attracting foreign investment by assuming the American dollar as the country’s currency, establishing free trade zones across the country, and with a decreasing minimum wage to keep labour cheap.

This economic agenda has provided jobs for some of the country’s 7 million people, yet it has also furthered the gaps between rich and poor. Today, social needs are pervasive—from access to health care to job security—and the environment upon which the society depends is degraded and further deteriorating each year. Much of the population struggles with the increasing prices from dollarization, the impacts of the global economy on local livelihoods, dwindling natural resources and scarcity of jobs.

The lingering trauma from the civil war and lack of post-conflict reconciliation can exacerbate other social issues. The daily stresses of poverty also make it difficult to press the “pause” button on life for long enough to engage in healing processes. Few development programs in El Salvador directly address this trauma evident in the country’s population. While there are some specific mental health programs, rarely are these carried out as an integrated part of a larger development process that includes the other important aspects of community wellbeing (i.e. poverty alleviation, sustainable resource use, access to education and health care, etc.)
Moreover, mental health work is not often aligned with the further stages of human development, such as participatory action and community leadership.

**Identifying Needs**

Centro Bartolomé de las Casas (CBC) is a centre for popular education inspired by Christian liberation theology, made up of people of various social and religious backgrounds. The purpose of CBC is to research, disseminate and create new alternatives for development and community wellbeing. It has worked in cooperation with diverse groups and communities throughout El Salvador since 2000.

CBC’s work is oriented toward the search for the truth(s) among people of various origins and conditions, but especially among those who survive in the margins and cracks of Salvadoran society under the current political economic paradigm. When it was founded in 2000, it began this task by providing a place to call forth and facilitate dialogue in a post-war context (Madrigal, 2005, pers comm.). With both survivors and perpetrators of war crimes living side by side in such a densely populated country, spaces for dialogue that address and transcend these past traumas are excruciatingly important, yet ironically few. CBC was founded to provide that space—a space to envision and enact alternative pathways forward.

With its roots in liberation theology and with the vision to create a safe space for both “sides” of the conflict to foster true and deep connections, CBC team had an inherent view of human interiority from the start. Over the years, the team of practitioners have found more and more ways to work with interiority via faith, subjectivity, mental and emotional health, self-identity and leadership. Now, they have a unique array of methodologies to work toward individual and community wellbeing.

In this work, the CBC team deeply inquires into what development truly is. Their approach does not separate the economic, social and political dimensions of life from the spiritual. As such, their methodology connects to people’s sense of faith and facilitates processes of re-visiting and exploring the ultimate questions of life as they relate to community development.

This case study explores the unique response that CBC offers the Salvadoran people. It is unique for a number of reasons, which I discuss further below; some of which include:

1) The approach is open to integrate disciplines, and to bring together opposing groups into dialogue, so to explore differences and find unity.

2) The approach uses innovative methodologies to integrate interiority into all programming, working with faith, subjectivity, self-identity,
trauma, and personal power.

3) This focus on interiority is integrated with the concurrent work with exterior systems, such as local economic needs, gender equality, and community development.

4) The work facilitates self-development, and healthy at several levels of the spectrum of human psychology, as a key part of community wellbeing and as part of their own personal work as development practitioners.

**The Approach:**

**Centro Bartolomé de las Casas**

**Key Aspects of the Vision**

Centro Bartolomé de las Casas was founded to become a gathering place—for people, ideas, values, backgrounds—not only to name the differences, but to also find the places of unity. It is not surprising that, taking this philosophy to its further reaches, the CBC team found the Integral approach appealing to carry out this extraordinary mission. How can we gather together for truthful dialogue in such a way that honours what each person brings? The CBC team developed a holistic and integrative approach that is able to honour these different worldviews and ways of being. Through their dedication and devotion to what was clearly needed in Salvadoran post-war society, they developed the skills and methodologies that would assist them in this work. When they later found a book by Wilber on Integral theory, they saw its applicability immediately, and began to apply it in their practice of integrating disciplines, ideas and ways of being.

The original foundation for this organization emerged in response to a society that was struggling to make sense of reconciliation. Were people supposed to just go on with life, even after having lived more than a decade of war, suffering either as perpetrators or victims? The founding individuals of CBC sought to create another avenue for reconciliation through dialogue.

Larry José Madrigal, Coordinator of CBC, explains how their approach does not shirk away from differences and conflict, rather it explores them closely, so to also discover unity:

There are many pathways [to deal with difference], one is to only talk about what unites us, which is fine but not sufficient; we also have to talk about what separates us, our differences. And a way to know these differences is to talk about the conflictive themes. To recognize the differences between us is also the opportunity to recognize what unites us. This exploration of what separates and unites people is woven through every program and project. It can be
Another central aspect of CBC, that makes its work unique and important today, is how the organization integrates interiority into every part of their programming. The team holds an understanding that the spiritual and subjective dimension of development is crucially important. Madrigal explains: “It is the glue that holds together the other aspects of life; we call this transversal [or cross-sectional].” This transversal “glue” which be invisible, but is nevertheless there. Madrigal explains:

This “glue” comes from very deep inside, what we call “mismidad.” [self-ness or I am-ness.] What do these surroundings mean to me? What does this mean between you and I? What does this mean between my community and me? And what does this mean in the country, in the public policies? There exists a connection between all these spheres. They are connected.

This yearning to find connections, to find the tapestry that weaves all this together, is one reason why the Integral work of Ken Wilber has helped the CBC team to understand more clearly what they had formerly only intuited. Based on their experience with communities, Madrigal explains how the team of practitioners explain how you can distinguish between different issues and dimensions of development, but you can’t separate them. People’s beliefs and spirituality cannot be disconnected from the conception and practice of development. CBC has found that many development projects fail due to this separation of life’s various dimensions. Explains Madrigal, “One cannot say, ‘I am going to do interior work for ten years, after which I will begin to work for the community and environment.’” These processes, both exterior and interior, occur at the same time. The CBC team allows this inextricable connection to inform their approach.

Key Aspects of Programming

The CBC approach draws upon a series of methodologies that are now key aspects of programming; they include energy work, embodied practices, and subjectivity. Here, I explain the rationale behind why these are important, and describe some of their features as crosscutting themes through all other programs. Afterward, the program areas are described in more detail.

The focus on energy work was passed on from an earlier organization (called Milpa Libre) and brought into CBC’s work by José Höhne-Sparborth who trained approximately eight people in integrated energy work. The energy work is an important for the CBC team to work at deeper levels of therapy and healing. Now, energy work is integrated with Embodied Practices, and woven into much of the other programs.
The Embodied Practices of CBC include various different techniques that are quite unique for a popular education and community development organization. One of the key origins for integrating these practices came from their female participants.

The CBC team began to notice that many of the people who came to the centre were women. These women did not know how to read or write, and so CBC had to find methodologies that could engage an inquiry and process that did not rely on the written word. In response to this, CBC incorporated a focus on the body and developed entirely new techniques for subjective engagement in community development themes (which are described further below). Also, the women spoke of their life, faith and spirituality in terms of very concrete things, such as the body, sickness, health, food, children, and rain—and it was in those things that they found spirit (Madrigal, 2005, pers comm.) In response to this, the CBC team incorporated the methodology of rituals with the women. These rituals were about cycles of life—cycles of seasons, of menstruation, of childbearing and childrearing—which were more relevant and resonant to female participants. These rituals helped to create a sacred space in which individuals can make new meanings about aspects in their daily lives, such as the economy, traumatic events, inequality, and more.

Developing these techniques of Embodied Practice as part of community development work was new terrain for the CBC team, far from what they were taught at university. Yet, it was very practical and effective. It enabled them to better relate to and connect with the local people. People’s understanding of the

Walberto Tejeda facilitates a session involving embodied practices, ritual and subjectivity in the downtown centre in San Salvador. This is part of a two-day long “internal retreat” held by the organization to encourage others to participate in, and help co-create, their programming.
world around them, including their faith in sacred texts, can be known not only through the mind, but also through the body. Using embodied readings, drama, and art, the CBC process explores sacred metaphors and help people understand how these findings can illumine daily life in the community.

Engaging people in subjective practices allows them to access new forms of knowledge. Using rituals, symbology and art invites people to also access the emotional and creative aspects of themselves. These methodologies generate new forms of knowledge and self-knowledge, and also help to validate wisdom that may not necessarily come through the objectivity of science, the intellect, or the status quo.

Validating subjective ways of knowing is an incredible empowerment tool, particularly for those from oral cultures or those whom are illiterate. By using these tools of subjectivity and embodied practice, “valid knowledge” is not only contained in the written word, but is available to anyone. Accessing that subjective knowledge can serve to empower people, and in that way influence political or social behaviours in a society. As such, it is an essential aspect of community development.

The Programs Areas

With these influences and intention, CBC has developed an integrative process to fostering community wellbeing. The programs of CBC include Bible-theology, Mental Health and Survivor Memorials, Masculinity, Local Economy, Cooperative Games, and Embodied Practices. All these programs are woven with crosscutting themes of subjectivity, ecology, cooperation, organization, participation, and gender perspective. The base of the organizations’ mission rests upon certain principles such as inclusivity, gender equity, cooperation, care for the environment, support for traditional cultures, and the reflection of liberation theology on these realities. Taken as one whole, the various initiatives weave a deep tapestry of social change.

It began with a holistic orientation, and thus remained open to learning from other wisdom, realities and approaches to this work for social change. This attitude of openness enabled the CBC team to learn about, apply, promote and live new approaches to their work. Walberto Tejeda, the Project Coordinator of Local Economy, explained how this work has not been easy. Many people in other organizations find it hard to think and act in radically new ways. Tejeda (2005, pers comm.) explains this is due, to a certain degree, to the tendency of reducing or separating reality into its parts, which is a key part of the predominant conventional worldview.
The CBC team are committed to perceiving and working with the reality of community development as a seamless whole, and are constantly seeking tools and methodologies to do so. Each program area is a complex weaving of interior and exterior processes. While on the surface the activities may appear similar to many others, the intention and rationale behind each activity are profound. As a result, the feeling of the approach is qualitatively different than other development interventions. Often people cannot pinpoint exactly why, and simply say wistfully, “There is something about the style of Centro Bartolomé…”

**Bible-Theology—Making New Meaning of Faith and Development**

CBC’s work with faith and development is one of the cornerstones of its approach. They refer to faith not necessarily as a religious faith but an ultimate feeling of life that asks the deeper questions, such as: Why do we live? Who are we? Where are we headed?

Most rural Salvadoran communities are made up of people of faith, and so the CBC team quickly realized that their approach had to relate to that worldview for any further work to occur. Madrigal explains:

We need religious leaders that can help with development. There are so many great development projects; so well intended, with great ideas. But, too often, they just don’t work! These projects fail! When we ask the local people why they didn’t continue with the project, they say, “I didn’t like it.” “Was it bad, did it help you?” “It was good, it did help me.” So what happened? “God did not want this.” From conversations like this, we began to notice that there is something important in the deepest subjectivity of the person that influences the mystique or the flavour of the project. Such a project moves forward if the local people believe it in. To create, one
must believe—this is what our team has learned. As we say: *para crear necesitas creer*, to create you need to believe. And so we began working with the religious leaders searching for religious metaphors that would help enable community development.

One way that CBC works with these metaphors of faith and development is in their Bible Theology Program. In this program, the CBC team and particularly Madrigal who coordinates this program, dialogues with people about faith, religion, and those unseen aspects of life that relate to their daily activities and community development.

The methodologies used in this program help people to re-interpret Christian theology. One such methodology is called “texto sagrado” (sacred text) or “lectura subjetiva” (subjective scripture) in which community people make meaning of the scriptures through the body and through their own personal wisdom. They draw upon their own subjective wisdom, as well as inter-subjective understanding from group dialogue, rather than passively receiving the interpretations handed down from the minister or bishop. Explains Tejeda Guardado (2005, pers comm.):

> The subjective scripture is the scripture inside the person. To talk about the male Good Samaritan is not the same as talking about the female Good Samaritans; there is a difference... These are different connotations, which can only been understood by the “I”, the self; we have to ask ourselves, how do I read the text, with what eyes?

This process does not fight against, negate or ignore local peoples religions, but rather builds off their faith. This helps community people to access and trust in their own understanding of these teachings. Unlike a traditional format of passively receiving someone else’s meaning of the scripture, it fosters a more modern, empowered and critical process of meaning-making. In CBC work, this has also led to more post-modern forms of engaging in faith and development, as socially aware and politically active citizens.

In other words, this *lectura subjetiva* provides a developmental pathway from traditional to modern and to post-modern. This does not deny the traditional worldview, but rather builds off it into a wider horizon of what faith means. As such, this methodology blends faith with recognizing the power or presence within oneself, and brings spirituality into the lived realities of politics and economics.

Deisy Ana Garcia of the Mental Health program echoes her appreciation of the Bible Theology methodology:
[Our work] is connected to the faith of the local people, the methodologies are unique, we have distinct forms of working with faith, but these are entry points to the persons’ subjectivity that allows us to understand a little bit about how we can move forward. For local people it is important that they have a link to biblical texts. We try to reinterpret the conservative approach of the bible, and instead offer something very practical and useful for one’s self-development.

As a testament to this process, Francisca Lemus, from the rural community of Apulo, explained to me her personal change processes through her work with CBC. When she first got involved, she always attended church and had a very strong faith. Her faith has not failed since working with CBC, but it has changed. She explained how she understands her faith differently now, and feels called “to walk in the footsteps of Monseñor Romero”. (Romero was El Salvador’s most loved religious leaders, who stood up for the poor and oppressed during his time as Archbishop, and was consequently assassinated during the war.) Now, with him as a role model for faith-in-action, Francisca Lemus works with the Local Economy Program of CBC. Through this work, she seeks to support the poorer families in the community and also care for the environment in the surrounding watershed (which is further explained below). This work has built off her faith, and also expanded her faith into a wider, more inclusive circle of care.

**Mental Health and Memorials**

In El Salvador in 2005, there was two months of intense rains and flooding all across the country. This natural disaster destroyed houses and community infrastructure, and in some areas, it also uncovered decade-old massacre sites. One such site exists in the Ilopango Lake Watershed, a mere few kilometres from the Apulo community where CBC works. The rain unearthed not only bodies from the hillside, but also traumatic memories and pain in the survivors from the nearby towns.

Deisy Ana Garcia, the Mental Health Program Coordinator explains that local people know about old massacre sites, but they remain silent about such things. Another massacre site was discovered in the coastal Bajo Lempa region in 2002, a full decade after the war ended, about which Garcia explains:

The local people only began to speak about this 3 years ago. It is difficult to talk about these things, because they do not know whom they are in fact speaking to, so the risk and the fear encourage silence. After the armed conflict, very little, if any, reparation and psychosocial work addressed...
In the very same community, the families of victims and the perpetrators of crimes live side by side, and so people are fearful to speak of such things. This has been very difficult.

The Mental Health Program was first designed to begin to work with the issues of trauma after the earthquakes in 2001, but this work quickly brought forth other deeper layers of trauma from the war. Since then, the CBC team have worked in several other communities, including Arcatao, one of the most heavily impacted communities by the civil conflict, and have woven elements of the healing work into all other CBC programs. I discuss here stages of the mental health work, survivor memorials, and the relationship between self-healing and leadership.

Stages of Mental Health Work

Garcia explains how their process of mental health work occurs in three stages of self-healing, which have their own specific methodologies.

The first stage is about recognizing trauma, and inviting people to identify what happened to them. From that base, the CBC team facilitates a process to release it. Some of the methodologies at this stage include active listening, creating a space for group therapy, and fostering trust amongst the group. This also includes personal exercises, such as guided visualization or self-reflections, with dialogue afterwards for people to share their emotions and feelings with the others. Other techniques include embodied practices (corporalidad), art therapy, colour therapy, games and music therapy.

All these activities and techniques are oriented to get people to identify and talk about their trauma. She explains, “The first stage is so important for people to access their own knowledge, their self-knowledge, and to identify what things are bothering them.” Sometimes this trauma is released during an activity, such as a game, that was not solely or particularly designed to release trauma, but provokes or inspires participants to access and speak about their traumatic experiences.

This healing process can only be facilitated to a certain point by the CBC team; a lot depends on the individual. Explains Garcia:

I say self-healing because we may have tools, but the individuals themselves must work with these tools. We can create a process, but the individual has to want to address his/her trauma, pain, and feelings. Without this commitment it is practically impossible to help.

The CBC team includes other methodologies as well, such as breathing techniques,
acupressure, energy work, and polarity work. Many of these tools not only serve during the CBC sessions, but people can also use these when they are at home and are going about their daily lives, if needed. In a sense, the first stage is about providing techniques for personal work.

In the second stage, participants learn about other techniques not only for self-care but also for the family, such as, how to make plant medicines, how to do acupressure with others, how to make natural products like shampoo for use and for sale in the community. This stage is more practical, and yet all this is rooted in and includes the first stage.

The third stage is to deepen the skills with these tools, and to build capacity on how these skills can be used in their community to facilitate with others the processes of self-healing and wellbeing. This stage is more like community activism, explains Garcia. It also includes visioning processes in which members of the group identify their visions and dreams for their community. CBC then works with the community group to create and implement that project.

For example, through such a visioning process, the community of Acratao identified that they wanted to compile names of victims, create a memorial museum and collate stories from survivors into a memorial book. In response, the CBC team helped the community to register the names of the victims, created a museum about the war years, and helped to produce a book with survivors’ memories. The latter included holding training workshops for how to use the voice recorder, how to interview and take notes, as well as finding donated materials for producing the book. The community’s dream of the book has now materialized, with testimonies and interviews, as well as with documentation of the community experiences at that time. All these initiatives support individual healing.

**Survivor Memorials**

From the mental health work, the CBC team realised that enabling expression of the collective memory held within survivors was an essential part of self-healing. CBC began to hold Survivor Memorials to give voice and expression to the lived memories of the war—memories that are often hidden, clandestine, and often in conflict with the “official truth” put forth by the various political parties or interest groups.

CBC team calls these “survivor” memorials, not historic memorials, because they are working with survivors not only of the war, but also of oppression, poverty, the economic system and injustice. There is still so much daily violence in El Salvador, that has become embedded in the social norms and functioning, and people who survive this (or who are seeking to survive this) are those whom CBC works.

Each of the memorial activities carried out by CBC has an interior dimension to why
and how it is being done. For example, when the team facilitates a memorial art project with a group of people, the intention is not only to design and paint a mural, but it is a process that allows local people, many of whom are still very timid and shy, to begin to relieve themselves of trauma. Many of the memories and expressions of local people are not written in any book, not reported or mentioned in any way. During the process of this art project, they began to talk about things that they had never spoken about, that no one has ever spoken about, and it is both healing and empowering to do so.

The work of Survivor Memorials gradually became integrated into each of the programs, in a series of small initiatives. These included art, murals, rituals in past massacre sites, collecting memorial items and symbols (i.e. seeds of the *izote* flower in memorial sites), and naming spaces in the Centre after victims’ and martyrs’ names. Soon, it was an integral part of all CBC programming.

**Self-Healing and Leadership**

In the mental health program, the CBC team has noted important links between self-healing, leadership, and community wellbeing. The stages of this work move from releasing interior trauma toward caring for others, toward engaging in community leadership. Garcia says:

> I cannot say that all the leadership has come from this
[self-healing] process because there are some people that were very strong leaders before this process. But this process has helped to strengthen this leadership, helping them to identify and move towards what they want to do, honouring their memories and their lives.

For example, with the parish in the community of Arcatao, this self-healing has been instrumental in community’s development. It was apparent that CBC could not have carried-out actions with community people without also focusing on survivor memorials. Without the latter, the individuals involved were not necessarily “complete selves” able to participate, engage and lead the actions (Garcia, 2005, pers comm.). Through this process, the community people have developed a clearer vision of where and how they want to guide the community development process.

They are not waiting passively for change, but acting on their analysis and realizing their dreams. They are more aware of where they want to go, what they want to carry out in their community... I believe there is a big connection between economic development and personal development, which allows people to resist [the status quo] and create new alternatives within. (Garcia, 2005, pers comm.)

**Masculinity Program**

Even though that the war itself has ended, El Salvador still suffers from civil violence. It is of great concern to most citizens, and most political leaders are continually searching to find ways to curb or eliminate such violence. Much of this violence is gang-related; it is erratic and almost senseless. Other forms of violence are implicit to the culture itself, and thus root causes are hard to identify. A lot of the violence is directed towards women.

According to the analysis of the CBC team, a large degree of this violence corresponds with the social norms of the *machismo* culture. Recognizing this, CBC works with men in the Masculinity Program to address some of the deeper reasons for violence and gender inequality. To date, the Masculinity program is the only one of its kind in El Salvador. The results are good, and other organizations have realised they are on to something important—the phone is ringing for CBC to work with more male groups all the time.

John Bayron Ochoa, a Colombian development worker who is with CBC for two years, explains what is involved in this program:
We ask the men to assume responsibility for certain aspects of this issue, but we do not blame them. This blaming has been one of the failures of radical feminism. So, we invite the men to come to this process to take responsibility, not to blame them, and to point out that all of us have the capacity to change… We don’t make an atmosphere of accusation.

The underlying philosophy of this program is that men—just like all other individuals—are conditioned by society to act in certain ways. These are largely learned behaviours, but the learning has occurred just under the radar of the conscious mind. In other words, people may not be aware of how they are behaving, or that they may be acting in ways that are not essentially true to themselves.

The CBC process helps men to first identify how social conditioning influences their perspectives of the “ideal man”, and then to self-reflect on whether that ideal is anywhere near to what they actually are. The central theory behind this program is that, “If we have learned how to be men by a certain culture, we can unlearn it as well. And we can look for other ways to be who we are.” (Ochoa, 2005, pers comm.)

Many methodologies feed into this program area, of which I will discuss three examples: cooperative games, reflective exercises and bible theology.

Like many community processes, their process begins by forming trust. They do this by playing games—games that are both competitive and cooperative, in which scenarios of violence and cooperation can

The Cooperative Games methodology used by CBC use physical activity for participants to get a felt sense of competition and cooperation. This methodology includes dialogue on the subjective feelings evoked by these activities, as well as the implications such games have on the larger social paradigm at play in society. In these sessions with young men, Larry José Madrigal is facilitating a game which encourages participants to better understand what violence is, to explore social conditioning that provoke violent behaviours, and to facilitate self-reflection processes for the youth to envision new ways of being.
be acted on and felt. (It is interesting to note that this is unlike the CBC initial work with women, which usually begins with embodied practices and rituals.) Then, explains Ochoa, “we reflect on the games to see how they are competitive, and to explore what ideology informs our actions.” This methodology of analysing and reflecting on the behaviours and feelings evoked while playing games is an excellent tool of studying social norms. (In fact, Cooperative Games is one of the program areas of CBC, and it is useful with different groups to explore various issues.)

Through playing games, the men begin to perceive how violence does not solely come from outside; it is also, to a large extent, generated and re-created internally. The methodology with games is to consciously note where one behaves violently, to inquire into why that is so, to reflect on how it feels, and to explore other potential behaviours that may be more true to oneself.

Another methodology used in the Masculinity Program is to use art and self-reflection, to identify what we are told to be and compare that with who we actually are. Explains Ochoa:

We take a big piece of paper and construct a model of the “ideal man”, according to the conditioning of the society. This includes, generally, hair on the chest, tall, strong, drinks a lot and has a lot of women. When the participants look at this, they realise, “this is the man I am trying to be, but this is not who I am.” Suddenly we realise that we have created an image of the ideal man, whom we are not.

When the men recognize that they do not fit into that model, there is a crack or a fissure in the whole model itself. “This fissure is the opening to undo the whole mask, the whole shell, until the whole model falls.” And then they explore what other potential they may have—potential that they have never allowed themselves to explore due to the predominant social norms. At this point of the process, often the men express feelings that they never felt permitted to show.

Another methodology that CBC uses in Masculinity Program is subjective scripture (of the Bible Theology Program). Some men believe that the bible validates gender violence and they use scripture to rationalize abuse. These beliefs directly influence violent attitudes and actions, yet, other gender equality programs that do not work with faith, may not actually address these underlying beliefs that feed violence.

Madrigal explains that the CBC team use subjective or embodied readings of the bible to revisit this question. When these texts are read subjectively and “via the body”, the men understand differently what the bible says about violence. Many participants realise that the bible does not say that it is okay to abuse women. Madrigal asks them,
“And if this is what the bible says after so many centuries, what do you say now? In your embodied knowledge and in your most profound spirituality, what do you say?”

Of course, some scoff at such a question; others are deeply moved by this. Some recall their own infancy (a technique used in the Mental Health Program) in which they remember how their fathers treated them. This often brings memories of violence inflicted upon them, which help them become aware of how their own behaviours impact others around them.

This process of reflection directly addresses some of the faith-based beliefs that influence gender violence. The process first bridges to the morals and worldview of the men, via embodied bible readings. Then, the process creates an opportunity to “take the perspective” of those at the receiving end of the violence. At this point the men often become more critical of violent behaviour, and begin to recognize that the violence in the culture is, to an extent, ones’ own personal responsibility.

The final stage of the Masculinity Program includes identifying which of the men have been most participatory and active in past workshops. CBC works to develop leadership with that select group, so that these individuals can replicate and continue the masculinity work after the CBC program ends.

Local Economy

The Local Economy program is a process of searching for and reflecting upon alternatives to the local economy in three communities, as well as promoting self-development of local people. The program works with both the exterior and interior dimensions of economy.

Exterior Economic Structures and Behaviours

Walberto Tejeda, the Coordinator of the program, explains how the economy is a very important aspect of daily life for local people, and the program aims to address these livelihood needs. The CBC team does so by creating a type of “school” for reflecting on and re-creating local economies. The work includes a frank deconstruction of the current economic paradigm, which frees up space for new ways of looking at the economy and ways to engage in it. He explains, “One has to unlearn something in order to be open to learn something new.”

The process involves an exploration of competition and cooperation as modes of engaging in the economy. The CBC team uses games and other playful activities to explore these two paradigms (of competition and cooperation), as well as other unique methodologies of the CBC approach (such as rituals, embodied practices, and subjective scripture). Games can be safe activities that are often familiar to everyone, yet they can
also be used as examples to learn about the social system, group dynamics, and individual feelings.

Tejeda explains how by playing competitive and cooperative games, the people can feel and reflect on how the predominate paradigm of economic competition is embedded and reinforced in the game itself. The cooperative games that are used in the Local Economy program question this paradigm and its consequent economic structures and behaviours. “We question, what is in each of these games, and why have these games been created in this way? And we ask how can we play with other people, not against them?” For local people who simply do not have the base of resources to enter into competition at the global level, it is empowering to become aware of the subtle impacts of competition, and the potential that cooperation holds.

This process facilitates an inquiry into what “economy” actually is. This involves really looking at what one has in terms of skills, goods, products, and insights, which can be shared or exchanged with others. Rather than beginning from a place of inadequacy (“I can never compete with this large market of fluctuating prices”) it begins with appreciative inquiry into what one has to offer.

This process also involves re-creating the local economic systems. In the free market ideology, one has to leave the community to the urban markets to sell ones’ goods, which means that what is produced in the community does not directly benefit the local context. The money and produce is flowing out, versus recirculating within the community. The Local Economy program is looking for ways that local produce can be sold in the very same community, to benefit that community. To do this, the CBC team promoted barter system within, and between, three communities, in which people can exchange goods and services without necessarily having to use money. The idea is that the very produce from the local area can benefit the very people in that region; and the barter systems can be responsive to people’s needs regardless of cash flow.

In this different version of local economy, people work with each other and not against each other. Tejeda’s explains, “When one women in the community sells her produce in her basket at the urban market, she has to compete with other women with their own little baskets of produce. The question is: How can we create an economy which weaves cooperatively together these individual baskets into one market?”

It is interesting to see how this project has impacted the community people. The local people comment on how recirculating money and goods within the community makes sense. They also comment on how it is helpful to have an economy that does not necessarily rely on money. Tejeda (2005, pers comm.) summarizes the comments he has received:

Before, I would go to the town to sell my produce, and return
with money to spend in the community. But now, if for example I produce fruit, I can go directly to the woman who produces beans, we exchange and we can both benefit. It doesn’t need to go through the monetary economy.

During the flooding in September 2005, the country was thrown into a national emergency, and many local people lost their homes, crops and access to clean water. The barter system functioned extremely well to provide for those in need during the crisis. At that time, it more than proved its worth to the community people.

Other people describe how the personal aspect to this approach was ultimately most beneficial to them:

What I gained most from the barter store and local economy process was an improved sense of self-worth. (Francisca Lemus, 2005, pers comm.)

**Interior Dimensions of Economy**

While the program does indeed focus on the economy, Tejeda explains how it also serves as a doorway into the community to continue with the deeper work on awareness-raising, fostering self-esteem, and community leadership. This dimension of personal development gives rise to radically new ways of living.

Lemus explained that the work with CBC in Local Economy has helped her to realise the important and beauty of “walking in the footsteps of Monsenor Romero.” This is an extraordinary interior shift in how one sees oneself and one’s role in the community. Many other women involved in this work echoed the same sentiment.

To house their newfound commitment to the community and each other, the women involved in the initial stages of the Local Economy program formed their own association. It is called ADECOI, which stands for Community Development Association for the Poor of the Watershed of Lake Ilopango. This association began small with five women, and has since grown to include 11 adults and 15 youth. It has established and runs a local store and barter system, has formed a Solidarity Bank, manages a rotating fund for members, and aims to provide for the most in need in the community. Its view extends beyond the specific boundaries of the community to include the whole watershed, and also has helped other communities to re-envision and create sustainable local economies.

The women faced initial challenges when they first began to form the association. Some individuals left thinking that the group work was “witch-craft;” others left when they realised there was actually work to be done! However, for those that have stayed,
many remarked on how this initiative was transformative for them. They explain how formerly their lives had mainly revolved around their home and the church, and this was a lonely life. Through this association, now they are part of a community process that recognizes how the poverty experienced by one person, is shared by all. In this there is a solidarity and group trust, which forms a key foundation for the association.

The personal changes that took place through the process of this work are profound. One woman, who had lost her house in the September floods (2005), explained to me, “Although we have needs, there are others with much less.” She went on to explain how this association helps them realise this connection with others, and how it has led to new feelings about oneself in the community. “I am not ‘nobody.’ I need these others, and they need me as well. We are all important; even without 5 cents to our name, our value is equal to a rich person.”

The women explain how through the association they are “putting religion into practice” by being open to everyone (not only other Catholics), caring for others, knowing oneself, and recognizing that unless one loves oneself, one cannot truly love others. Their practical ideology goes beyond race, colour, political party, and religion, and aims to be non-divisive in their efforts to respond to community needs (Francisca Lemus, 2005, pers comm.). Says Dian Rodríguez, the Coordinator and President of the association, says, “I have transformed, I feel I am a different person.”

All this is integrated with the barter system that CBC began in the community. When CBC first worked in the community, many did not know what barter was. The CBC team explained to the group how barter is not only about production and exchange. It also includes much more as well. Francisca explains how now they realise this: “barter is education; it involves consciousness raising, love, and peace.” By engaging in barter, people realise how to value what they have and who they are. She explained, through the barter project, “We have discovered ourselves…. The small store is like a light that has illuminated us.”

This is the form of local economy that CBC is promoting and visioning, namely one that enriches people both in material needs as well as in their own sense of wellbeing. Rodríguez summarizes this perfectly saying, “The seed planted by CBC called ‘barter’, has flourished into a handsome tree.”
Other objectives of the ADECOI association include, many of which they are already implementing (with the quadrants of Integral theory to which they more closely correspond):

To engage in local economy through barter, and also using money when and where necessary (LR).

To manage the store in the community (LR).

To manage a rotating fund between members via creating a Solidarity Bank in which members deposit one dollar a month to a shared account (LR/LL).

To offer and engage in trainings on handicrafts (UR).

To provide scholarships for youth to study (UR).

To work for the most poor of the poor (UR/LL).

To be committed to this group (UL/LL).

To raise self-esteem of women (UL).

To learn more about liberation theology (courses at the University of Central America, UCA) (UL).

The CBC team facilitated a half-day workshop with coordinators and staff of CESTA, El Salvador’s top environmental organization. Their experiential learning methodology included relating subjectively and personally with nature, so to create conditions for shifts in awareness. This workshop was designed to share this methodology with CESTA staff, so that they can replicate it with other communities.
Analysis

Open to Integrate

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor’s cup full, and then kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. “It is overfull. No more will go in!”

“Like this cup,” Nan-in said, “you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I teach you Zen unless you first empty your cup?”

This short Zen parable illustrates how remaining open to inquire and learn is to remain open to new possibilities. The field of development, on the one hand, continues to develop itself in response to new analysis of needs. On the other hand, the field remains stuck in old patterns, struggling to elicit effective outcomes using the same set of tools.

From the start, CBC team of practitioners cultivated their own style of working, authentically and deeply seeking what really works for development. It was not enough to fall into the same modes of action as the current development discourse; rather they have chosen to continually seek out what resonates most deeply and most effectively for community people. This is not only done through acquiring new knowledge and information, but also through intuition, experience, and heart-felt action. Much of their methodologies were not learned in any university, although the director and at least two project coordinators have graduate degrees. Their approach is underpinned by the understanding that while we can distinguish between the various factors of a development challenge, these factors simply cannot be separated; they co-arise, co-generate and co-evolve.

The CBC approach has been oriented towards being open to learn and integrate other ways of knowing and being. One of the ways the team does that is by bringing together people of opposing sides to discuss issues that are perceived to be in opposition. Through offering workshops on different themes, to explore difference and conflictive themes, so to also discover unity.

Another way that the CBC team explores new perspectives is by inviting and receiving openly people with different backgrounds and expertise, and finding ways to retain and integrate elements of their sharing. It also includes creating participatory and
critical processes for evaluation and co-creation of CBC programming. The two-day “internal workshops” held at the CBC office downtown, include activities and dialogues in which CBC donors, partner organizations, and beneficiaries contribute to creating or revising certain methodologies and activities that CBC will later carry out in communities.

In 2003, when the Director, Larry José Madrigal and Project Coordinator, Walberto Tejeda read Ken Wilber’s Integral Approach, it helped them in their inquiry into the various perspectives of reality. It echoed their search for integration, as a way of honouring all of reality as it is. Reading about Integral theory validated their experiences and methodologies, and inspired them further.

This inquiry and openness to new ideas, and new ways of weaving together ideas, has produced a style of working that is unique. It’s uniqueness lies in how it integrates interiority (i.e. spirituality, subjectivity, energy and embodied practices), alongside exterior work to support the local economy, to address gender inequality, and to promote more cooperative modes of living in the society (see review of quadrants, figure 1).

Other practitioners and partner organizations (who are perhaps less open to new ways of working) particularly critique CBC work with spirituality and faith. Many secular organizations balk at this aspect, even though the very beneficiaries are definitely people of faith. Secular organizations have analysed the influence of religion on local people, seeing the more negative aspects domination and submission that is, to a certain degree, correct. Yet, the fact remains that most community people are religious and faithful, or at least holding the ultimate questions of why are we here and where are we going? CBC’s approach suggests that for development projects to work, they must, in some way, bridge to this interiority of local people. This is what CBC has done, in many different ways, with many different interwoven methodologies. Their process creates space for people to explore these ultimate questions, and helps people to reframe faith in more empowered, equitable terms, bringing forth active community leadership.

Some of CBCs partner organizations, who at first were critical of this connection between faith and development, eventually began to perceive and resonate with this aspect of its programming. For example, the feminist organizations that initially critiqued CBC’s integration of faith and development are now beginning to realise that their work with men on gender violence has produced outcomes that are really worth looking more closely at. One of the key reasons for these outcomes was that CBC facilitated a deeper inquiry with participants into their own perceptions that the bible validates gender violence, as well as their own conditioned beliefs about how men should act in society. The men were able to reframe their beliefs and attitudes around violence in a way that was not disconnected from, but rather through, their faith and subjectivity.
Folk-Integral and Integrally-Informed

CBC had pioneered a folk-integral approach for a few years before it learned of Integral theory. In other words, the team found their own ways of working with the interiority of individuals and groups, integrated with the other dimensions of development, with an approach that was not explicitly informed by integral theory. Their work and methodologies is deeply grounded in lived realities and practice. Yet, when they began to study Integral theory, it brought a body of research and writing that helps to support their existing methodologies, and perhaps also to suggest where the further reaches of this work may be. These two currents—of a folk-integral approach that embeds in lived realities and an integrally-informed approach that is linked to theory and philosophy—have

Figure 1: Review of quadrants (see a detailed description in Introduction to Case Studies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPPER LEFT:</th>
<th>UPPER RIGHT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual's interior experience (values, feelings, motivation)</td>
<td>Individual behaviours and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOWER LEFT:</td>
<td>LOWER RIGHT:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective realities (social norms, traditions, culture)</td>
<td>Collective systems (social institutions, laws, economy, politics)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Walberto Tejeda explains their unpinning philosophy and approach to workshop participants, describing how their methodologies and programs relate with the quadrants of Integral theory. This was a 5-minute appendix at the end of a 3-hour experiential workshop, reflecting the way that CBC has integrated both folk-integral and integrally-informed currents in their approach.
different gifts and truths to the practice of community development.

Tejeda explains it perfectly:

The Integral Approach helps us in our work in three ways. First, it confirms what we have been doing; second, it provides an inquiry into where we still have gaps [in our approach] and how we can fill them; and third, it is a foundational and theoretical base that helps us to dialogue with other fields of wisdom and with other development organizations.

Working with the CBC team, and in later analysing and reflecting on their approach, I found that each methodology, to a certain extent, draws from all quadrants of Integral theory. I will offer four examples here.

Figure 2: Quadrants of Embodied Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrated energy work</th>
<th>Subtle energy work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-taking</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Embodied practices, or what they call corporalidad, refers the actual physical body, and deals with issues of self-care, personal ecology, and physical health. Yet, the CBC understands the “body” not as limited to the gross body but also including the subtle body and causal body. In other words, the energy contained in the body is not limited to the layer of skin around it, and that there are dynamics and phenomenon that relate with the other more subtle realms that extend out from the physical form. Trauma, on the one hand, is bound and stored in the physical body itself, and to some extent needs to be dealt with there; yet other forms of trauma relate with other energetic fields extending from the physical form itself, and those require other energy work methodologies. Their training in integrated energy work, and their use of that with other mental health methodologies, assists the team with accessing these multiple layers of trauma.

Through the embodied practices, people access a felt-sense about a given issue, then reflect on that and dialogue about it.
This process enables people to make new meanings of the social norms that surround them (see figure 2). It also provokes changed behaviours that relate with the overall social, political and environmental system. All these dimensions of Embodied Practices engage the multiple ways that social change emerges, from the individual very own being out into the society at large.

**Bible Theology**

Another example is the Bible-Theology methodology, which upon first look appears it may be solely an Upper-Left methodology. When we look more closely, however, it involves all quadrants (figure 3). It works with beliefs and faith in a process that helps people take new perspectives, and make new meanings, of their faith. This is done with the subjective scripture methodology, which encourages participants to read the texts in an embodied way, getting a felt-sense of the readings. This process brings the group into dialogue to share feelings and perspectives of these readings, so to also encourage the cultural perceptions of “faith” to expand and include other meanings. The results of the Bible-Theology program are often very practical, and include shifts in the local economy, forms of decision-making, and even shifts in gender dynamics.

**Mental Health and Healing**

As described earlier in the text, the Mental Health program begins with interior process of identifying and talking about trauma, as a way to engage and release it. This is first and foremost a process of self-healing (UL), and yet it is held and nurtured in groups and via trust (LL). However, the subsequent activities of this program extend to the Right-hand quadrants: such as learning personal practice skills that can be used at home (such as breathing techniques and massage), as well as community actions that individuals begin to participate in, as their self becomes healthy and whole (figure 4).

**Figure 3: Quadrants of Bible-Theology Methodology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible-Theology Methodology</th>
<th>Using subjective scripture readings to get an embodied, felt-sense of the texts. Precipitating changes in individuals' behaviours (e.g. reductions in violence against women.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection to, and reflection on, faith and spirituality. Taking new perspectives of faith and scripture (e.g. not a passive acceptance, but an active way of making sense of what faith means to an individual.)</td>
<td>Changes in the social systems (e.g. increased participation in local economy.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group dialogue and shifts in cultural perceptions of faith and development (e.g. from traditional to modern to post-modern expressions of faith).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Figure 4: Quadrants of Mental Health and Healing Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaging in interior processes of self-healing. Identifying and releasing trauma (e.g. Integrated energy work; reflection exercises and guided visualizations)</th>
<th>Using games and activities to work with trauma and self-esteem. Learning techniques for personal practice (e.g. breathing, massage, listening skills)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Health and Healing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active listening Forming trust and group bonds (e.g. group dialogues in which people share and talk with others about trauma; group rituals to name massacre sites and those that died during the war.)</td>
<td>Identifying visions and carrying-out community actions and projects (e.g. survivor memorials, exhumations, museum and memorial documentation project, local economic projects.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Figure 5: Quadrants of Masculinity Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using subjective scripture methodologies to explore myths that religion validates gender violence. Taking perspectives of one’s self; accessing new emotions, new potentials, and new sense of self. (e.g. drawing one’s outline on a big sheet of paper, making it into the “ideal man” and then reflecting on whether that is, actually, who one is or even wants to be.)</th>
<th>Using competitive and cooperative games to understand one’s behaviours and facilitate changes in behaviours. (e.g. using physical activity as a beginning point to feel competition and cooperation.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculinity Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group dialogue on social conditioning that influences the dynamics between men and women. (e.g. comparing ideal man with real person, and dialogue around how these are socially-constructed perspectives, that can also be un-learned.)</td>
<td>Facilitating changes in social system via fostering interior shifts in sense of self and behaviours. (e.g. participants analyse how violent behaviours influence the social system, and become aware how each person is, to a certain degree, able to influence the system by their own ways of being.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Masculinity Program

The Masculinity Program begins its process using competitive and cooperative games (UR). The process then engages people in self-inquiry, social conditioning, and its implications on behaviours and the larger social system itself. The process is definitely an all-quadrant, and creates conditions for transformation regarding sense of self and human potential.

In Wilber’s latest book (Integral Spirituality, 2006, forthcoming) he describes the UL quadrant as zone 1 and zone 2 methodologies (phenomenology versus structuralism). In figure 5, two examples illustrate such methodologies. Drawing and reflecting on the ideal man, or “taking a perspective of your self from outside your self” is a form of structuralism (zone 2); and subjective scripture is a way of access interior knowing via phenomenology (zone 1).

Having begun as a folk-integral approach, the natural inclination was to develop methodologies that would work with all quadrants. CBC is now refining this approach with Integral theory as a guide. Analysing this with an Integral framework helps to explain the various dimensions of individuals and communities that are being addressed by each methodology. This analysis may also help to see if there are gaps in the approach, and to understand why these methodologies are effective for promoting individual and community wellbeing.

All the Way Up, All the Way Down

CBC stands unique in its ability to work with interiority, and also to integrate that work with corresponding exterior needs. I will explain this further below, but first, it is important to ask why this organization was able to do this, in the midst of many other development organizations that do not?

One suggestion that I offer to explain this is that CBC was faith-based in its conception and inter-faith in its implementation. Therefore, not only is this focus appropriate, since most Salvadoran rural communities are made up of people of faith, but it also enables a view of interiors that many other secular NGOs are unwilling or unable to take. This orientation to interiors enabled the CBC team to look for methodologies that lay beyond where most development organizations conventionally look. In other words: the CBC team had access to a wider set of methodologies because they had a deeper understanding of the development issues. Perhaps for this reason, CBC’s approach, from the start and up until today, draws upon many different disciplines and wisdom traditions to work toward community wellbeing.

Of particular mention, CBC works with individuals at different stages of psychological development. According to studies by developmental researchers (such as Erikson, Maslow, Kegan, Gilligan, Cook-Greuter) and as synthesized by Wilber in Integral Psychology, these stages can be summarized as deeper layers of the psyche,
ego-centric, socio-centric, world-centric and beyond to kosmos-centric (see left-hand column of figure 6). Each stage has a different focus, ranging from addressing psychosocial trauma, to fostering self-esteem and confidence, to fostering collaboration and accessing human potentials, to developing leaders, and even to creating conditions for self-actualization and self-realization (middle column of figure 6). The needs at each stage are very different and thus each stage requires different sets of methodologies (right-hand column of figure 6).

To put it more simply: CBC’s work goes all the way down to deal with the psychological trauma in the deeper layers of the psyche that show up in various energetic layers of the body. And, it goes all the way up: creating conditions in which individuals can form a healthy ego, build capacity, confidence and collaboration for community work, and transcend their egos in service of a wider identity, embrace and care. CBC has designed specific sets of methodologies to respond to the unique needs at these stages of the trajectory of self-development. Let us look at how this works.

CBC’s work with self-development begins by helping participants to identify and voice trauma, in order to release it. This work is dealing with issues residing in the deeper layers of the psyche, and helps in the development of a healthy ego or healthy sense of self. For example, in the Mental Health program, the first stage is to use reflection exercises, integrated energy work, embodied practices, and other techniques, to help participants engage in a self-healing practice. Much of this work helps people to first identify trauma, and then to releasing it via activities, rituals, dialogue and art.

CBC work also addresses needs at the ego-centric stage, by orienting activities and methodologies towards fostering self-worth, self-esteem and confidence. In CBC work, this occurs in many of their programs. In the Local Economy program, for example, this includes creating barter systems for goods and services in which local people learn to

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**Figure 6: Working with Stages of Human Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of development</th>
<th>Focus of developmental stage</th>
<th>Sets of methodologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kosmos-centric (universe as divine)</td>
<td>Self-realization, self-actualization</td>
<td>Spiritual traditions, transpersonal practices toward unity consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World-centric</td>
<td>Developing leadership and human potential</td>
<td>Developing empowered leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-centric</td>
<td>Fostering participation and collaboration</td>
<td>Integrating transformative practices for consciousness raising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego-centric</td>
<td>Building self-esteem and self-confidence</td>
<td>Building capacity and competencies for change agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeper layers of the psyche (persona/shadow)</td>
<td>Addressing psychosocial trauma</td>
<td>Mental health counselling, psychology, and healing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
value what they have and who they are. This evokes a shift in self-worth and self-esteem, which is, in a sense, foundational for any subsequent work. Says Garcia:

"If one does not have adequate self-esteem what can one do? If we don’t work with that [with self-esteem], it is hard to work toward and arrive at new ideas, create new opportunities."

CBC approach includes a strong focus on socio-centric stage. In many program areas, the team uses the cooperative games methodology. These games give participants a felt-sense of competition and cooperation not only as modes of behaviours but paradigms of society. This technique often helps people to see the potential and value of cooperation and solidarity, helping to stabilize the socio-centric stage.

CBC work also engages the world-centric stage by developing or fostering community leadership. At this stage, people feel comfortable and secure in their own sense of self, and are thus able to care for and help others. The methodologies focus more on building confidence, skills and capacities to engage in community processes and leadership activities. For example, in the Masculinity Program, men reflect on where they learned their behaviours, and help them to see how their own behaviours impact others around them. Often this gives rise to new sense of responsibility for reducing gender violence, which demonstrates a shift into world-centric awareness. Another example is the Mental Health program in which individuals have moved from self-healing practices into modes of engagement to benefit the whole community.

For certain individuals who demonstrate leadership, commitment, and awareness, the work with CBC takes on a whole new dimension. To work towards some of the larger development objectives—such as, care for and collaboration with the larger community, the environment, and even the whole planet—we need to go beyond our individual selves. It is an expanded sense of self that is able to identify with and care about the larger community and environment. Developmental psychology research (and the wisdom traditions) explain how as a person dis-identifies exclusively with a small ego, he/she can more fully love and care for others (Wilber, 2000). In these later developmental stages, CBC engages “transformative” activities and processes by which individuals can explore the deeper questions of being in relation with community service and care. Examples of CBC work with higher stages of self-development can be seen in the Bible Theology program and Local Economy program, in which individuals experienced shifts in their spirituality toward transcended perspectives of self.

We need to clarify here, that these sets of methodologies can be important at any stage of human development. That is, we need mental health, self-esteem, participation and cooperation, leadership and self-actualization
in all the stages of human development (from ego-centric all the way towards kosmos-centric). Figure 7 explains the relationship between transformation between the stages (vertical development), and the personal growth and healthy development in each and every stage (horizontal development).

This work with the spectrum of human development (both vertical and horizontal) runs throughout most, if not all, of CBC programming. While it may look different in different programs, in my analysis, the work is seeking to accompany the self-development process of community people whether they may be in that process. In responding to the needs of the people in this way, CBC creates a developmental pathway toward healthy, whole selves, who are then able to become full leaders.

This is not a linear process. The stages of development unfold holarchically as nested stages of development that transcend and include what came before. Further study of this developmental pathway and the developmental lines involved in this process would be very interesting. This brief analysis suggests that the CBC approach works with whole spectrum of human development, helping to facilitate a self-development process rooted in the existing stage and reaching toward tomorrow’s horizon of being.

This orientation in CBC’s approach is an extraordinary insight and practice in the field of international development. The two main paradigms of development—conventional and alternative—do not necessarily nor sufficiently deal with trauma (i.e. post-war, natural disasters, and on-going grinding trauma).

Figure 7: Sets of methodologies used by CBC. Each set of methodologies often, but not always, corresponds with the needs, self-identity, and consciousness at particular stages of human development (for example, ego-, socio-, world, and kosmo-centric). However, in each stage, these methodologies can be very important or helpful for the healthy development in that particular stage. The spiral of human development (represented by the grey arrow) is this dance between horizontal development (within one stage) and vertical development (between stages), always deepening towards more inclusive, compassionate ways of being.
poverty), let alone engage the higher stages of human development.) While other development organizations tend to engage some of these needs (at a particular stage), often the understanding of the whole process of self-development is missing. Therefore the whole pathway is not necessarily enabled, or even implicitly acknowledged. In fact, in many cases, the pathway is capped at a certain stage (usually the stage of the development practitioners themselves). In this regard, CBC approach is exceptional in the field of international development.

**Practicing Practitioners**

One thing I believe, and which emerged as a teaching through this work, is that the process is not only of the group or the community in which you are working. It is my own process as well. I am sharing some tools. But the people too are sharing things with me; their strength, resistance… This is a mutual process, a shared process of learning and personal growth. (Deisy Garcia, 2005)

Practitioners are also growing through this process of self-development. Deisy Garcia’s explanation above beautifully and humbly illustrates this shared growth process. The importance of practitioners to also engage in their own self-development process cannot be understated. Those who think they are out there to “change the world” at some point realise that that deeply and profoundly includes themselves as well.

This is another key part of the CBC approach: the team is committed to engaging their own personal development processes, both as individuals and as a group. Each one has his/her own individual practice, such as reading scripture, cooking and sharing food, Zen meditation, and prayer. Some commented that they would like to emphasize this individual practice more. As an organization, they engage this process by holding a weekly reflection, evaluation, and planning (REPLA) session. Each week, on Tuesday, the team meets in the morning to engage in one of the three activities in rotating order: reflection, evaluation or planning, with some “creative REPLA” sessions (involving art and creativity) and other “free REPLAs” (in which the team watches a movie or spends time together).

This past year, they began holding a REPLASIS (reflection, evaluation, planning and systematisation) 2-3 day per month, which is helping them to document their work to date, and to create a culture of documenting what they do, how they do it, and with what results.

This systemisation process is “like an adventure, of gathering up all that is hidden in the functioning of the organization,” explains Ochoa. This process included a reflection on how they arrived to where they are now. Another chapter included careful inquiry on the programs of the Centre, looking deeply
into the methodologies and their theoretical roots. Another part of this process was an self-critical and reflexive evaluation of themselves and the organization, asking, “What are our errors and our mistakes, and what have we learned in these five years?” Another chapter was to vision where the organization is going over the next five years. Ochoa explains: “Each chapter of this systematisation focuses on what we have learned, both outside and within ourselves.”

CBC team also hold more intimate group processes for self-care and to engage personal development. Garcia explains:

> We realised there are few spaces to work on our selves, and so we decided to meet monthly to discuss things that happen at work, and to engage in self-care. We call this *vitalización* ['enlivening'] in the office one morning per month to engage in self-care practices as a group. Next year, we hope to also find a therapist to work with us as well. But, it can’t be just any old therapist, someone who is more integral and holistic, not just clinical.

Another way the CBC engages the development of practitioners is in the Internal Workshops that are participatory processes with beneficiaries, other partners, and funders. At these workshops, the CBC team evaluates existing methodologies and tries out new methodologies, in service of responding most effectively to needs, evolving their approach, and integrating new elements. These processes have become spaces for growth for CBC staff and participants.

The CBC team uniquely emphasizes this personal dimension of the work, as Garcia summarizes here:

> Similarly as someone who writes poetry, the same with development work. We must deeply feel it.

**Results**

This approach is having profound effects in communities where other methods have failed. The reasons why the CBC approach seems to be more effective is not proven empirically, but the CBC team suggest that it has to do with interiority. Explains Garcia:

> Many projects don’t work because there is not the awareness that subjectivity is important; the spirituality of the people is not permitted to have a space in the process. And yet so much of this relates with our being! These are elements that are so often left out, and yet they are necessary parts to include for a complete understanding of the person.
When asked if this approach could be shared across the nation, or even promoted internationally, Garcia, said while she would love that, she is, “not sure that there is the consciousness for this yet; there are many involved in activism who forget this other part of ourselves, this personal part.” Ironically, she asks, “But how can we forget this part; organizations are made up of people, so it is important to work with the personal dimension of this.”

Some organizations have critiqued CBC work precisely because of its inclusion of interiority. Madrigal reports (authors italics):

Other critics have said that this [work we do] is not development; that development is building a hospital, making a bridge, planting trees, that these things are development. But we say, that these things are not only development. It is also education, dialogue, and empowerment. If empowerment is not spiritual, then it is outside, it is external, it something that others do, it is not something that is yours.

He goes on to explain that they do not see development as a linear process involving the acquisition of material items; rather they understand development as a spiral-like process, that must include the individuals’ interior growth as well.

People say, we are going to give the community a school, a clinic, electricity, water, and then they will have everything. But, we ask: what about the person? He/she may have everything, but have we resolved all the problems, the psychological traumas from the war, from oppression? They may still beat their children or may be consuming in an unsustainable way. This consumerism is development? This waste and polluting of the earth is development? There is a relationship between all this, and your interior.

This illumines their approach and may contribute very significantly to the outcomes and impacts of their work.

Conclusion

The Center is named “Bartolomé de las Casas” after a innovative leader in the past, one who not only defended the indigenous peoples from oppressive regimes, but also who was a profound catalyst for social change.

After its namesake, CBC has a profound approach for addressing today’s complex global issues. These issues we face today, such as pollution, over-consumption, and
environmental degradation, are to some degree due to overly separating and reducing reality into pieces. These reductions and separations no longer serve the process of finding and realizing solutions; all the dimensions are somehow interwoven and dynamically related to one another. While we can distinguish and discern the contours of difference, we also must acknowledge their inseparability, explains Madrigal. How do we make sense of this complexity without succumbing to a piecemeal approach?

“We have been on a threshold”, explains Tejeda, “and this threshold has brought us to dialogue, including dialogue with epistemologies that go against our thinking, and we have taken the philosophy that one must know, even if one does not like it, one must come to know other ways, to be able to dialogue better.”

This space of dialogue became oriented toward the very nature of development, which itself is multi-faceted and complex. Tejeda:

In CBC, we asked ourselves, how many development projects there have been in 50 years? Where are we, what has changed? What are the changes you can see? Why? What do these projects fail? We analysed that these failures are because there is a very reduced approach or focus. So, we have been going toward a more integrated approach, and how great to find a philosophical synthesis [referring to Integral theory] that confirms this.

Every activity or methodology used by CBC can be unpacked in its interior dimensions, and each part contributes to the whole of social change. For example, games played with beneficiaries, contain important teachings about the self and about development, and about the new structures and systems that are possible. In their bible readings with local people, they encourage participants to take new perspectives of the text, so to better understand themselves, others, and the issues of concern in society.

Tejeda explains the question behind a lot of their work is: “From where do we view Reality?” This question highlights the profound nature of this organization. Their work searches for meaning in an otherwise chaotic society. What is the pattern behind all this? Where are the cracks in the system from which community wellbeing and leadership can emerge?

CBC has sought to find a way to address difficult development challenges with an approach that does not separate faith, subjectivity and self-knowledge from the more exterior aspects of development. Beginning with a folk-integral approach, the CBC team is now integrally-informed and seeking to ever deepen their approach. They are integrating new ideas and perspectives, engaging their own self-development
processes, and daring to stand on the constant threshold of change. This has enabled the CBC team to operate with a whole new panorama of the possible.

As my site visit comes to an end, if occurs to me that this team of practitioners are demonstrating and embodying the emergence of a World Soul, right in the very centre of San Salvador. As the congested crowds hustle by and the black smoke of air contamination stains the concrete buildings, the team of Centro Bartolomé de las Casas is shining forth a light on the blurry horizon of development. We can only hope that others in the development field will follow.

References


Appendix 1: Key Informants for Interviews

Centro Bartolomé de las Casas team:

Ana Deysi Granados (Mental Health and Survivor Memorials)
Larry José Madrigal Rajo (General Coordinator y Bible Theology)
Rutilio Delgado (Cooperative Games)
Rosa Gutiérrez Linares (Administrator)
Walberto Tejeda (Masculinity Program and Local Economy)
John Byron Ochoa (Masculinity Program)
Adriana Ospina (Masculinity Program)

ADECOI, Apulo Community:

Diana Rodríguez (Coordinator and President of ADECOI; now with Local Economy program)
Francisca Lemus
Mirtala Sanchéz, Margarita Escobar
Silvia
Naida Romero
Jaime de Jesús
Endnotes

1 A complete description of the research project, including objectives and methodology can be found in the Introduction to this series of case studies.

2 It is supported with sufficient core funds for operation by the Dominican Fathers (Sacerdotes Dominicos, Orden de Predicadores), and by other foundations for specific programming (e.g. OXFAM for gender equality and masculinities work). CBC began with a team of only three people, and remains small with 8 employees mostly Salvadoran with some support from other Latin American countries. Currently, the team has employees from Honduras, Costa Rica and Colombia.

3 Explained by both Walberto Tejeda and Larry José Madrigal.

4 At the time, the program was called PROPEN, which stands for Program for New Possibilities in Energy.

5 I will discuss here the first three programs. Since the latter two (Cooperative Games and Embodied Practice) are part of most other programs, I did not include separate sections for them. I encourage the reader to directly correspond with CBC for more specific information on any of these programs: Walberto Tejeda tejedor12@yahoo.com Larry José Madrigal coordinacion@centrolascasas.org or Larry José <larryjose@gmail.com>

6 Two in the east of the country (Jiboa and El Espinal) and one on the banks of Lake Ilopango near San Salvador (Apulo).

7 Monsenor Romero was a bishop who was profoundly committed to justice and stood up for the oppressed during the war. He was consequently assassinated, and is considered a leader and saint by many.

8 This differs from both the convention paradigm, that is based on the objectivity of science, and seeks to separate and reduce elements of the problem into piecemeal parts, as well as the alternative paradigm, that is primarily secular and reduces most problems to an inter-subjective analysis of power.

9 Conventional development seems to carry the assumption that interior change will occur if there is enough money, cell phones, cars, roads, and other such modern accoutrements. Evidence across the world suggests otherwise. Regardless of much modern “stuff” conventional development brings, it cannot rectify post-war trauma, lack of self-worth, or a narrow sense of self. These aspects dwell within human beings, and the conventional interventions are primarily dealing with external world. Addressing external needs is absolutely important, and in some cases it may provide the security required for interior growth. However, it is incorrect to assume that such an exterior approach will get at interior realities of people. Moreover, most of that modern stuff ends up with those who can afford it, while the majority etch out their livelihood in spite, not in support, of this development paradigm.
Alternative development approaches are mostly secular and are largely framed in opposition to the conventional shortcomings. As such, they tend to avoid addressing issues like spirituality and faith, and they are largely focused on promoting participation. It is true that through local ownership and participation that change is sustained. However, if people are (implicitly) not invited to bring their faith and beliefs with them to a group process, or if they are suffering from trauma or low self-worth, it is difficult to engage meaningfully in participatory processes (Hochachka, 2005). In this sense, alternative approaches would do well to better understand and work with interiority to assist their participatory agenda.

I shall point out here that this emphasis on participation, perhaps to the exclusion of interiors, is the case for a reason. Namely, the crucial role of the alternative paradigm in the history of development has been to point out and underline that inter-subjective constructions of reality are extremely important. This articulation was crucially needed, in the face of modernity’s a perverse reliance on “objective truth”. Moreover, certain bodies of thought (i.e. the Western “new-age” movement) that proclaim the importance of interior subjectivity have, for their own reasons, not sufficiently included emphasis on the inter-subjective influence in any human system. These tend to disregard issues of power and oppression, which obviously factor importantly in the social contexts of the developing world. The reasons for the alternative paradigm making participation paramount are understandable, yet in (over)stressing the inter-subjective there is little if any recognition or emphasis on the subjective realities of people that play a role in any given social change intervention, let alone the value of certain elements of the modern approach to development. As such, their assumptions have their own truths and their own limitations, as much does the conventional paradigm.
About the Author

Gail Hochachka, BSc, MA has worked in the area of sustainability and community development in several countries in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa since 1998. Her first book was released in 2005 entitled Developing Sustainability, Developing the Self. An Integral Approach to International and Community Development. She is currently researching, writing, and building capacity on integral praxis for global wellbeing as Program Director of the Canadian non-profit organization Drishti - Centre for Integral Action. She is also Co-Director of Integral International Development Center of Integral University, and recently joined the core faculty of John F. Kennedy University’s School for Holistic Studies.

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