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The Impact of Cultural Perceptions of Well-Being and Resulting Sustainable Local Development Initiatives

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THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF WELL-BEING AND RESULTING SUSTAINABLE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

By

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Abstract

Views on and approaches to sustainable economic development can differ vastly depending on country and location. Historically, in the United States, sustainable development is primarily based on the four pillars of sustainability: social, human, environmental, and economic. On the other hand, in communities in relatively collectivist societies, sustainable development policies and organizations are influenced by collective interest, cooperation, and the well-being of the community. Local development initiatives centered around promoting the well-being of the community are a way to have a more equitable approach to sustainable development and are necessary to address ecological, economic, and social challenges. I will discuss three well-being philosophies stemming from more collectivist cultures: Ubuntu in Southern Africa, Buen Vivir in Bolivia and Ecuador, and Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Bhutan. I will then contrast this with local development initiatives in the United States, specifically in South Carolina. This information will be garnered from interviews conducted with leaders of South Carolina organizations working on development projects. Finally, I will argue that incorporating community well-being into local development frameworks like those in South Carolina can make economic development processes more human-focused in the long term.

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Thesis Summary

This paper will look at the history and philosophies surrounding sustainable economic development in the United States and around the world. I will also explore the connection that happiness has with economic development and why it is important in the development process. I will examine local development initiatives in the United States, specifically in South Carolina to see what the role happiness and sustainability play in economic development in the state. This information will be garnered from interviews conducted with leaders of South Carolina organizations working on development projects. Finally, I will argue that incorporating community well-being into local development frameworks like those in South Carolina can make economic development processes more human-focused in the long term.

Introduction

Before the 1980s, most local development initiatives in the Western world focused on increasing economic growth and were quantified in terms of metrics like Gross National Income (GNI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The idea was that if there was growth, development projects were successful. Even though the two words are often used interchangeably, in the context of economics, 'growth' and 'development' mean very different things. While growth refers to an increase in quantitative metrics like GDP, development refers to an increase in progress. It often focuses on making intangible changes to provide qualitative results, which in turn lead to quantitative results, like an increase in life expectancy and literacy rates.

The issue of climate change became imminently relevant to US policymakers during the 1980s and with this came the idea of sustainable development as well as participatory development, which considers the voices and feedback of the communities in which development initiatives strive to improve. Sustainable development was criticized for not meaning much since the word has different meanings to different people and the term is often accused of being a buzzword, but it implies an approach to development that puts the desires of the people and the environment first. In fact, increasing well-being has been cited as a necessary component of sustainable development (Dolan et al., 2006).

This paper will examine some cultural well-being philosophies and the local and national policies that they influence. I will specifically look at ubuntu, a Southern African philosophy; Buen Vivir, an indigenous idea native to Ecuador; and Buddhist philosophies surrounding well-being that influenced Bhutan's Gross National Happiness index. All of these initiatives are local and domestic rather than put in place by international or foreign organizations. I then present perspectives on local sustainable development from leaders of nonprofits in South Carolina

based on one-on-one interviews. Through these interviews, I provide an overview of what

"sustainable development" means in South Carolina and whether community well-being is

actually incorporated into these development initiatives. I will then argue that incorporating

community well-being into development frameworks can create better results for communities.

Significance

This thesis is significant because, while there is a good amount of literature on the significance of well-being in local economic development, a lot of it describes local development in the context of the developing world, not the United States. There is also little literature on local development initiatives in South Carolina, in both the present and the past. Getting a better understanding of what 'sustainable development' means in South Carolina and whether local development includes a focus on well-being in the state can help future researchers, as well as people working in nonprofit and development spaces, have a more comprehensive understanding of what the state's attitudes towards development and sustainability are and whether existing frameworks that foster community well-being are in place. Having that understanding can improve economic development initiatives in South Carolina, ultimately making them more sustainable and community focused.

Literature Review

Sustainable Development Philosophy in the United States

Since the start of the industrial revolution, human progress has been primarily linked to economic growth and scientific advancement. The country experienced an unprecedented economic boom following World War II, and during this time, continuing the trend of upward growth was prioritized and the prevailing philosophy surrounding development was "the law of progress". Philosophers including Comte and Hegel predicted that humankind would advance stage-by-stage up to a golden age of Earth (Grondona, 2000). However, rapid economic growth widened the gap between the rich and the poor as well as the developed and developing world. The large-scale exploitation of raw materials also contributed to global environmental degradation, leading to policymakers and organizations putting a greater emphasis on sustainability (Goudie, 1986).

During the 20th century, two main development philosophies emerged in the Western world: modernization and dependency theory. Modernization theory, which is rooted in neoliberalist ideas, argues that developing countries should model their development off of Western nations by modernizing their societies and taking on Western values, such as the market economy and free enterprise. Poverty in the developing world, or the periphery, could be combatted by providing these countries with more access to the resources of the developed world, or the core, which will ultimately advance the periphery. The other major theory of development is Dependency Theory, which is based on Marxism. Adherents to his philosophy believe that links between the core and the periphery are exploitative and do not promote development. The capitalist Western world has made the periphery dependent on it through

economic domination and therefore, the periphery should sever its ties with Western capitalist countries and instead pursue an autonomous, independent path to development based on socialist philosophies (Peet & Hartwick, 1999).

During the early 1970s, economists reached the consensus that the idea of never-ending progress was an illusion. Philosophies surrounding sustainability, growth, development, and progress converged in a new direction: sustainable development. Various authors had different views on sustainable development. J. Coomer (1979) believed that a sustainable society recognized the limits of growth and sought alternative ways of growing. Robert Allen (1980) took a more human-focused approach to the subject, saying that sustainable development was likely to achieve long-term improvement in the quality of human life. Paxton (1993) believed that sustainable development focused on development rather than economic growth. He argued that if every country grew as rapidly as the West, it would be unsustainable and would destroy the environment. Therefore, developing nations should focus on the needs of the people instead of increasing economic metrics like GDP.

The official definition of sustainable development first appeared in the Brundtland report in 1987, a UN report that developed the guiding principles of sustainable development as it is understood today. It stated that most environmental problems were caused by poverty in the global South and unsustainable consumption in the global North and defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Brundtland Commission, 1987).

Even though sustainable development is hailed as a solution to environmental degradation, it has its criticisms. Developing nations feared that it was being used as a talking point to decrease aid from the developed world, keeping the gap between the core and periphery

intact. Others argued that it did not adequately challenge rampant consumerism and economic growth, since 'sustainability is a vague word with no criteria' (Mitcham, 1995). Views on sustainability in the US also tended to be anthropocentric. Anthropocentrism is the idea that the world should be preserved for the sake of humanity rather than because the natural world possesses intrinsic value. Environmentally concerned critics have argued that anthropocentrism is morally wrong and is the root of the present ecological crisis (Pisani, 2007).

Many actors are working with different audiences in various areas of sustainable development. The main one is the United Nations, which introduced the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals and 169 targets adopted by member states of the United Nations, and many global development initiatives and policies are based on them. The SDGs focus on ending poverty and hunger, expanding opportunities for education, creating an environment that is friendly for business, and fostering growth within the earth's natural boundaries (Hák et al., 2016). On the business side, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), an organization of over 200 international companies, helps member companies transition to net zero carbon emissions. Additionally, entities like the Ellen MacArthur Foundation are working to implement a more circular economy, which relies on recycling and refurbishing old products for new purposes, rather than disposing of them (Martinetti and Havas, 2021).

Today, sustainability can mean many things, but it is very broadly used to talk about the actions aimed at the preservation of a kind of resource. In economic development, it is often used when describing the triple bottom line, a concept coined by John Elkington (2004). The triple bottom line is the concept that businesses should focus on measuring their social and

environmental impact as well as their financial performance, rather than just focusing on making a large profit. The three aspects of the triple bottom line are people, referencing a company's stakeholders; planet, referencing the national environment; and profit.

The four pillars of sustainability, another concept often used in economic development, divides 'sustainability' into four areas: human, social, economic, and environmental. Human sustainability aims to protect and improve human capital and involves things like workforce development; social sustainability aims to preserve social capital and culture through promoting community well-being; economic sustainability aims to improve long-term economic growth without negatively impacting communities, and environmental sustainability aims to preserve natural capital. There is also financial or organizational sustainability, which allows an organization or business entity to remain financially viable in the future, which some consider an aspect of economic sustainability (Duic et al., 2015). However, when an organization says that it is 'sustainable', it is difficult to discern in which way. Is it referring to sustainability in terms of just one pillar? two pillars? All four? Critics have also pointed out that the term 'sustainability' is often thrown around as a buzzword and often precedes development, even if practices associated with it are still exploitative of the natural environment (Palmer et al., 2015).

Since the US belongs to a highly individualistic culture, its economic development pathway has been the product of individualistic ideals. Individualistic culture attaches rewards to personal achievements, which incentivizes people to work harder, not only for monetary reasons but also for social status rewards. Because of this, individualistic societies often have higher innovation and growth than collectivist ones (Gorodnichenko and Roland, 2017). In the US, 'growth' and 'development' are often used interchangeably because of this. Even though collectivist societies experience less economic growth, there is research showing that they have

higher social capital and trust, which are fundamental determinants of good economic performance. Cooperation has been shown to be a remedy for dilemmas impeding economic development, and cultures that value cooperation can be successful in terms of growth (Ball, 2001).

Sustainable Development and Well-Being

Although the two words are often used interchangeably, economic growth and development are also very different. While growth refers to increases in economic metrics like real national income and GDP, economic development refers to an improvement in less tangible metrics, like well-being, livability, and quality of life. Some have cited the purpose of development as "to improve the material standards of living by raising the absolute level of per capita incomes," but this again conflates growth with development. As economist Richard Easterlin showed in the Easterlin Paradox, after a certain point, raising the per capita income of a nation does not correlate with greater happiness (Frank, 2012). Sustainable development emerged as an approach to traditional economic development that put the well-being of the community and the environment first, and then increasing measures of growth were secondary.

Sustainable development is rooted in the idea that nature and resources should be preserved for the sake of human well-being. There is a consensus among scientists from various disciplinary backgrounds that the central concern of sustainable development should be the improvement in the state of human well-being of a society over time and that the natural environment, which is becoming a scarce resource, has a determining role in this process (Sengupta, 2002). In 2020, a study at Oxford University found that societal well-being stagnates after a certain period of economic growth unless further economic growth is made more

sustainable. Neve says, "We find a strong correlation between achieving sustainable development and self-reported measures of well-being" (De Neve & Sachs, 2020).

When describing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations says, "healthy lives and well-being at all ages is essential to sustainable development". The World Happiness Report examines links between well-being and the UN's SDGs. Countries with higher SDG scores tend to also have higher subjective well-being (SWB), with Nordic countries topping both rankings. This could be because many of the SDGs are related to determinants of well-being, such as health and trust in government (World Happiness Report, 2020).

Sustainable development also has positive impacts on the mental health of people living in the communities in which they are beneficiaries. Psychological maladjustment is unfortunately linked to destitution. Poverty also influences mental wellness, making the physical, mental, and social aspects of well-being interrelated, so that increasing physical well-being will also increase psychological well-being and vice versa. Therefore, economic development should be considered with the individual's mental health and psychological well-being in mind (Kapur, 2021).

There are instances when sustainable initiatives could decrease well-being in the short run. For example, the Yellow Vests protests in France occurred because of higher fuel prices, a policy that was meant to be sustainable but ended up negatively impacting the middle class (de Neve & Sachs, 2020). Even though short-run effects are difficult to predict, a commitment to promoting well-being during the development process is a way to have a more equitable approach to human development and is necessary to address ecological, economic, and social challenges.

Metrics for Measuring Economic Development

Historically, in the US, local development has been measured in terms of economic variables like the number of jobs created or retained and the amount of private investment following a public intervention. Public and private agencies now want variables that look at the bigger picture. This interest dates back to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 which pushed federal agencies to track local development outcomes. Moreover, tighter local government budgets increased the desire for accountability regarding where and how money going towards economic development initiatives was spent, as they wanted to see big-pictures changes, not just increases in economic variables (Plantz et al., 1997).

The emergence of sustainable development has also led to the birth of more integrative solutions to measure the success of economic development. The "dashboard" concept has now become more popular, which includes data on health, housing, environmental issues, and other factors that predict quality of life. It is becoming more common for local development goals to include increasing decision-making capacity, building social capital, and preserving natural resources (Community Indicators Consortium, 2013). The human development index (HDI) as well as the human development report (HDR) was also presented as a concept in 1990, which measures a country's social as well as economic development by focusing on 4 factors: mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, life expectancy at birth, and gross national income (Stanton, 2007).

The UN Development Program (UNDP) uses the HDI to monitor the development levels of countries. The UNDP has used the Human Development Index to focus on improving the prosperity and well-being of individuals collectively at the national level (UNDP, 2021), but this hides significant disparities within countries. Critics have said that this does not see how

initiatives are working to achieve well-being at the individual level. Ideally, the best measure of successful development would be one that "enables every human being to fulfill their life's potential, in cultivating individual capacities and in contributing to the advancement of society" (Dahl, 2012).

Well-Being and Development Around the World

The ways in which different cultures view well-being have been translated into local economic development initiatives. Collectivist cultures are more likely to have community-centric approaches to economic development and consider the needs of all community members. They are also more likely to think of well-being in terms of that of the community rather than the individual (Ball, 2001). This paper will define collectivism in terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, as most cross-cultural comparisons regarding collectivism and individualism use Hofstede's continuum. Hofstede defined individualism and collectivism as the degree to which societies are integrated into groups. Collectivism indicates greater importance placed on the goals and well-being of a group, while individualistic cultures place a greater emphasis on attaining personal goals (Hofstede, 2003). Bhutan has a score of 52 on the individualism index; South Africa has a score of 65, and Ecuador has a score of 8. To compare, the United States has a score of 91, making it a highly individualistic society (Hofstede Insights).

Ubuntu

Ubuntu (also called Batho) is a Bantu word describing a philosophy indigenous to Southern Africa, specifically to Zimbabwe and South Africa, that is defined as the continuous motion of the enfoldment of the universe. The word's closest English translation is "a vested

interest in human well-being". It describes the idea that 'a person is a person because of other people' and collectively emphasizes the value of group and community (van Norren, 2020). Ubuntu stresses the idea that 'life is mutual aid', emphasizing the intrinsic value of human life as opposed to the idea of human capital. It extends this same respect to the natural world. It also strives for collective agency, emphasizing what we can do so that we can live better. It relates to economic principles such as 'no one is useless' (inclusiveness), 'we work as one', living in time (rather than on time), and sharing instead of profit. (Mangena, n.d.).

This philosophy extends to how happiness is viewed. If the community is suffering, it is difficult for an individual to feel happy. In giving and sharing is true joy and happiness. For example, if an individual were eating a tasty dish alone and had no one to share it with, it would be difficult to use words to share how great the dish is. Sharing the food with someone else will make the experience of eating it better (Baloyi, 2008). While some ubuntu writers place the interests of the community over that of the individual, others believe that the two are inexorably linked, like ubuntu scholar Oyebuchi Eze, who believes that the individual and the community ultimately share the same priorities. Therefore, pursuing the interests of the community coincides with pursuing one's own interests and maximizing the happiness of the community maximizes one's own happiness (2010).

Ubuntu has several development implications. It stresses the intrinsic value of human life instead of 'human capital', implying the sovereignty of people over capital, and extends this same respect to nature. Unlike anthropocentric philosophers, it suggests that nature does not have to be preserved because of other people but because it is intrinsically valuable. It also supports the idea of employment for all based on the idea that no individual is useless. Finally, it suggests

that local development is a constant dialogue between organizations and governments with the communities that they serve (van Norren, 2020).

Apartheid contributed to the erosion of social capital in South Africa. The Land Acts forced many non-white South Africans into rural 'homelands', areas outside of cities. State provision of basic services such as water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare in these areas was often insufficient or nonexistent. These reserves had high levels of crime and poverty, factors which weaken social capital, rendering public institutions ineffective (Breier and Visser, 2006). However, ubuntu as a concept was used in the 1990s to support South Africa's transition from apartheid to majority rule, as Nelson Mandela was a believer in the ubuntu philosophy. The word even appears in the Epilogue of the 1993 Interim Constitution of South Africa: "there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, and a need for ubuntu but not for victimization" (Gade, 2011).

Today ubuntu still influences local development initiatives in South Africa. Vukani-Ubuntu is an organization that has been operating in South Africa since 1998, which has established 13 community-centered development projects, using the ideas of ubuntu. It supports "cooperative development", which essentially connects various grassroots development projects across the country into a single network (Van Wyk, 2006). Ubuntu has also been implemented in South Africa's "Working for Wetlands" program. Here the culture of the people living in the wetlands is taken into account while protecting the wetlands and the economic survival of the people. For example, women from the Ikhowe and Thubaleth'e'lihle craft groups are taught to harvest reeds to produce crafts that are then sold, while taking into account the wetlands environment and the people. Additionally, ubuntu places emphasis on collective harmony, which makes it useful in a heterogeneous society like South Africa (Church, 2012).

Gross National Happiness

In 1972 the fourth king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, declared that "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product". At the time, this statement was bold, because the Himalayan nation was one of the least developed countries in the world. During the 1970s, over 90% of Bhutan's population lived in rural areas and most of them were subsistence farmers living on the country's hillsides without running water or electricity. The country was also plagued with poor infrastructure and a lack of proper roads. King Wangchuk's statement showed that Bhutan's economic development process would grow out of its own cultural context and Vajrayana Buddhist traditions rather than be imposed by foreign institutions and governments.

For a long time, Bhutan's mountainous topography and dense forests made it inaccessible to the outside world, and this isolation was reinforced by the country banning foreigners until late in the 20th century (Allison, 2012). Bhutan had also banned television until 1999 because the government feared that it would destroy the nation's traditional Buddhist way of life (The Guardian, 2003). Bhutan's isolation from a lot of the Western world was a factor in why the country created its own development policies rooted in traditional values.

GNH draws from the country's 1,200-year history of Vajrayana Buddhism surrounding happiness. Buddhism encourages compassion for and nonviolence towards all sentient beings. One of the tenets of Buddhism is that all sentient beings desire happiness and that with guidance, an individual's suffering can end. When it does, enlightenment is reached (Tashi, 2004). Dependent co-arising is also fundamental to Buddhist ethics. It recognizes that reality is an interdependent process in which "change and choice, doer and deed, person and community are mutually causative". This interdependence provides an incentive to protect life (Macy, 1979).

Additionally, according to Tashi, the idea of karma teaches that, for an individual, carrying out good actions reaps benefits while carrying out harmful actions can reap punishments. This provides more impetus to treat others well. Within Vajrayana Buddhism, the bodhisattvas are revered, because even though they have overcome suffering and entered enlightenment, they choose to stay on earth to help others also achieve enlightenment. Again, this emphasizes Bhutan's value for compassion (2004). Bhutan's 1675 social contract stated that the happiness of all sentient beings and the Buddha's teachings are dependent upon one another. Later, in 1729, a Bhutanese legal code required that laws promote the happiness of all sentient beings, instead of just all humans (Allison, 2012).

In the 1980s, King Wangchuk expanded on the meaning of GNH, criticizing traditional socioeconomic development indicators for placing more value on means rather than ends. Unlike indicators like GDP and GNI, GNH measures development in terms of a population's happiness, recognizing people's spiritual, social, and emotional, as well as material needs. Wangchuk redefined development as "the enlightenment of the individual through the creation of a harmonious psychological, social, and economic environment that could lead to the blossoming of happiness". GNH is applied by measuring development in terms of 4 pillars: sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development, environmental conservation, preservation and promotion of culture, and good governance. This was central to the implementation of development efforts in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as these pillars were taken into account when putting laws and development initiatives in place (GNH Center Bhutan, 2020).

As of 2020, Bhutan was ranked 129 out of 189 countries according to the Human Development Index. The country's small size and geography are also an impediment to economic development. The domestic market is small, the country is lacking economies of scale,

and trading costs are high as a result of being landlocked (United Nations Development Programme, 2020).

Even though the nation has room for progress regarding economic and human development, it has come a long way since GNH was introduced. By 2023, Bhutan is expected to graduate from the 'least developed country (LDC) category. Since the 1980s, Bhutan has seen average annual GDP growth of 7.5% and since 2003, the average annual growth rate increased to 8.7%, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia. Additionally, the poverty levels have declined from 36% in 2007 to 10% in 2019 (Asian Development Bank, 2019). The country's export concentration and export market concentration are also high. Exports are focused on hydropower, tourism, and mining, and over 80% of these are exported to India. Its government also places sustainability at the forefront of decision-making, due to a belief in the preservation of the natural world rooted in Buddhist philosophies. Because of these factors, Bhutan is the only carbon negative country in the world (Sharma & Adhikari, 2022).

Buen Vivir

Ecuador and Bolivia are incorporating the indigenous philosophy of buen vivir into their approach to economic development. Buen vivir is the Spanish translation of the indigenous word sumak kawasay, which means "good living" or "living well". The philosophy originates from the worldview of the Quechua people of the Andes, which describes a way of life that is built upon happiness by doing things in a way that centers around community, ecology, and sensitivity to cultures. A defining characteristic of buen vivir is harmony, between human beings and also between humans and nature (Balch, 2013). "With buen vivir, the subject of wellbeing is

not about the individual, but the individual in the social context of their community and in a unique environmental situation," explains Gudynas, a buen vivir scholar.

Another characteristic of buen vivir is that of the collective. Capitalism often promotes individual rights, but buen vivir suppresses the rights of the individual in favor of those of communities, people, and nature. This philosophy extends to supporting small-scale agriculture because this kind of agriculture is more likely to enhance local culture, include local people, and protect the local environment. It also encourages a more participatory method for development, as it welcomes a variety of opinions, perspectives, and ways of life. If you respect the spirit of everyone and everything, you can acknowledge their inherent dignity and perspectives. At the same time, buen vivir does not require a return to the past but should be seen as a blueprint for development and growth (Gudynas, 2011).

Buen vivir is very different from other development frameworks. Most try to tackle large problems through government handouts, NGOs, or corporations. Buen vivir encourages people to find harmony with the people and the world around them. Most importantly, they must find internal well-being, because, without that, larger scale change and well-being are impossible. Buen vivir philosophers believe that after this happens, economic development is possible (Phelan, 2011).

This philosophy is being implemented in South American countries. Bolivia and Ecuador have incorporated the idea into their constitutions. Bolivia's constitution was amended in 2008, and it acknowledges buen vivir as an ethical principle in Article 8. Ecuador founded its new constitution in 2009, and in it, they stated that "buen vivir constitutes a complex set of rights that should be guaranteed and fulfilled in a manner that respects diversity and balance with the rights of nature". Ecuador has created a national plan and the multidimensional poverty index (MPI),

which includes 12 indicators across 4 dimensions and was designed to accompany the new

constitution with the goal of upholding buen vivir-based rights of people and nature (van Norren,

2020).

Economic Development and Well-Being in South Carolina

 Background

South Carolina's approach to local development is different from these collectivist societies in that it is not as participatory and that there is a strong focus on economic growth and increasing metrics like GDP and GNI as opposed to metrics that are better predictors of well-being. Like in most parts of the United States, sustainability is thought of in terms of the 4 pillars of sustainability, with a strong emphasis on the 'economic' pillar. When economic development approaches in South Carolina include environmental sustainability, the pillar is considered from an anthropocentric point of view rather than a belief that the natural world is intrinsically valuable in itself (Ford & Stone, 2007).

Historically, South Carolina's economy has been based heavily on agriculture, especially on exporting rice and cotton, which were cultivated using the labor of enslaved Africans. After the end of the American Civil War, the state's economy was devastated, and the enslaved population was freed. Additionally, a series of natural disasters in the 1920s and the arrival of the boll weevil in 1917 rendered cotton and rice unprofitable (Conclanis, 1982). In an effort to recover its economy, South Carolina began industrializing during World War II using defense contracts as well as New Deal construction policies. Beginning in the 1960s, South Carolina became one of the first states to solicit foreign direct investment (FDI) (Conclanis & Komlos, 1995).

Pulver said that there were five community economic development strategies. One of them was the attraction strategy, which involves attracting big capital investment from outside and bringing it into the community (Pulver, 1978). This has been South Carolina's leading

development strategy and has contributed to the state's success in attracting large manufacturing plants like Boeing, BMW, Volvo, and Michelin. However, this is a very expensive approach, and it takes a long time for it to pay off. The state is also lacking headquarters and technology-focused companies.

Since South Carolina's development strategy has been focused on recruiting big business, it has been difficult for local development projects to receive funding. South Carolina is not alone. Most US states approach economic development in terms of recruiting big businesses without focusing on micro businesses. A few states, including California, Arizona, and Massachusetts have a greater focus on providing funds to local development corporations and financial institutions, but almost all of the Southeast places a priority on funding big business. However, the idea of "economic development work" in South Carolina is changing to include smaller and more local development projects. For example, the SC Department of Agriculture recently began providing more funds to support small community farms, even though in the past they have strictly supported big agriculture.

One of the interviewees believes that the main reason why South Carolina's development strategy is expanding to include projects other than attracting large manufacturing is because of automation. As more parts of the manufacturing process become automated and technology plays a bigger role in plants, there will be fewer manufacturing jobs. For the number of South Carolina jobs to increase, the state will have to begin focusing on initiatives like engineering, research and development, and technology-related projects as well as building the tourism economy. Manufacturing is still very important to South Carolina's economy and will continue to be, but the state is branching to fund other industries as well.

South Carolina is also struggling with workforce development. A lot of issues with workforce development stem from South Carolina's under investment in the K-12 education system, which is unevenly funded across the state. This underinvestment goes back to a history of segregation with private academies in rural areas. These areas are currently trying to support two education systems with very little funding. However, South Carolina's strength is that they have the best technical college system in the country, targeted toward meeting the specific needs of industry and providing the tools to enable our workforce to have higher-paying jobs only after two years of education. Even so, workforce development will continue to be important when attracting and retaining companies in the state (personal communication, 2022).

With regards to quantitative metrics predicting sustainable development, South Carolina typically falls in the bottom 50% of the country. The state is ranked 37 in a 2021 US state sustainable development report, based on how much SC has done to implement the UN's SDGs (SDSN, 2021). South Carolina is also ranked 37 on the UN's subjective wellbeing index with a score of 61 out of 100. Additionally, it is in the bottom 10 states based on the human development index (HDI), having a development score similar to the Czech Republic (UNDP, 2020).

Methodology

In the following sections, I will present and discuss the qualitative data that I garnered through interviews with leaders of local economic development organizations in South Carolina. I chose development organizations that mention "sustainability" in their mission statements so that I could narrow it down to organizations where sustainability is a focus in their operations. I conducted nine interviews. One interviewee discussed two of the organizations that he was

working with, so 10 organizations were discussed in total. Six of the organizations were nonprofits, two of them were affiliated with in-state universities, one was a public/private regional development organization, and one was a state agency. Each interview lasted between 15 and 30 minutes and was conducted virtually through the Zoom platform. During the interviews, I asked all interviewees seven open ended questions (see figure). I also asked additional follow up and clarifying questions. The interviews were recorded through Zoom's recording feature and then later transcribed. All the organizations and the interviewees will not be named, as their names are not relevant for the purposes of this thesis. I will refer to the organizations as numbers ranging from one to ten, with Organization 1 being the first one I interviewed and Organization 10 being the last (see Table 1).

There were several goals that I aimed to accomplish during these interviews. I wanted to get a sense of how economic development is viewed and what factors influence economic development in South Carolina. I was wondering if increasing community well-being was central to these organizations' missions or whether it was something else, like increasing economic growth. Additionally, since 'sustainability' means many things, I wanted to know what 'sustainability' specifically meant to these organizations. The purpose of sustainable development initiatives is often cited as increasing community well-being, but just because an organization has the word 'sustainability' in its mission statement does not necessarily mean that sustainability is central to its mission. Finally, I wanted to know what metrics these organizations were using to measure the success of their projects. Specifically, I was wondering if they used 'well-being' as a metric, and if not, I wanted to know if the metrics they were using were predictors of well-being.

Findings

There were several main trends that I found through the interviews. In South Carolina, 'sustainability' means many things, but most of the organizations described sustainability in terms of the 'economic' pillar of sustainability, especially relating to financial and organizational sustainability. Even though all of these organizations were committed to economically developing South Carolina, their purposes were wildly different (see Table 2). However, none of them listed 'well-being' as a central part of their organization's purpose. Lastly, the overwhelming majority of metrics used to measure the success of projects were examined in the short-term and were predictors of economic growth rather than development.

Sustainability means very different things to different organizations (see Table 3). Most of them defined sustainability within the limits of the four pillars of sustainability: human, social, economic, and environmental (see Table 4), except for Organization 9, which included diversity of board members in their definition. All the definitions of sustainability that dealt with the environmental aspect of it were also very anthropocentric. For example, there was a strong emphasis on supporting projects and initiatives that improved the natural environment in order to increase livability in the region, which would in turn attract businesses and jobs. Although the main goal of local sustainable development is often cited as improving the well-being of the community, none of the interviewees mentioned community well-being as the final objective of their initiatives.

Within the four pillars, a lot of organizations defined sustainability in terms of economic sustainability, although they called it different things, including 'financial', 'organizational', and 'nonprofit' sustainability. According to the four pillars, these concepts are all facets of the economic pillar of sustainability, and they all describe initiatives that allow an organization and

its projects to continue into the future, either through creating an organizational structure that facilitates the organization's long-term viability or through putting endowments in place so that the organization will last forever. This is important in supporting communities because knowing that these projects will continue in the future means that these communities will continue to receive more long-term support.

Another common definition of sustainability relates to preserving the natural environment, but the ways that the organizations defined this differed. One organization related it to choosing to provide funding for more eco-friendly technology. Another related it to "improving natural beauty" and another to investing in locally sourced agriculture, which will reduce transportation costs and carbon emissions. Overall, considering environmental sustainability is becoming more important to local community development due to combatting climate change being a hot topic. Also, a lot of South Carolina manufacturing are from European countries, which has caused Europe's tighter standards regarding metrics like carbon emissions are making their way into the state. For example, the BMW plant in Greer, South Carolina has to adhere to the same environmental standards as plants located near the company's German headquarters.

The least organizations defined sustainability in terms of "human" and "social" sustainability. All of the four pillars of sustainability relate to promoting well-being in communities, but social sustainability most directly relates to increasing community wellbeing through preserving the social capital of societies. However, only four out of ten organizations defined sustainability in terms of promoting social capital and community welfare. Additionally, one of the organizations mentioned that they are currently not working on any 'sustainability-

related' projects, but they are working on incorporating sustainability into their overall strategic plan.

"Collaboration" has different meanings too. Several organizations mentioned having collaborative philosophies. These collaborations referred to cooperation between local, county, and state governments, NGOs, and other organizations and entities working to bring about change. Only two interviewees referred to collaboration in terms of collaborating with members of the community. For Organization 10, collaboration was central to their mission, as all of their initiatives are based on what the community wants, as the organization is in a 'constant feedback loop' with all stakeholders, especially community members. Organization 10's approach to development, which involves listening to the desires of the community, is the closest that any of the South Carolina organizations had to the very participatory development frameworks of the collectivist societies described.

Organizational metrics also varied widely, which was due to the different types of work and the nature of the projects and initiatives that each organization was working on (see Table 5). Of the metrics used, most of them measured short-term success, were related to the finances of the organization rather than its impact on the community, or looked at economic variables that predict growth like capital expenditures and jobs created. One of the exceptions to this was Organization 5, which looked at the impact that the innovative companies it gave funding to had on the community, as it wanted to support companies that improved the lives of South Carolina citizens. Organization 5 also partnered with researchers to conduct an annual economic impact analysis, which provided a more comprehensive view of the organization's projects on the South Carolina economy.

An organization leader mentioned that most of their metrics are short-term because long-term tracking is cumbersome. Quality is often measured from seeing immediate buy-in from the community but tracking the success of projects years down the line is difficult to do. For example, it is easy to say that an organization fed 5,000 people but it is difficult to see the long-term effects of that down the line. However, knowing long-term effects can be important to get a better idea of well-being. In South Carolina, there are 15-year term limits on affordable housing. After 15 years, when an 'affordable house' gets put on the market, family members living there will be evicted. The effects of affordable housing programs look good when examining short-term metrics, but from a more long-term perspective, it can be seen that families are getting evicted from their affordable housing in less than a generation. Looking at predictors of well-being and long-term metrics could give organizations a better idea of the effect it has on the community. Predictors of well-being may include quality of healthcare, quality of education, and the mental health of the members of the community, like the prevalence of depression and anxiety.

While well-being was never stated as a metric used to measure the success of projects, some of the metrics used by these organizations can either directly or indirectly be used as possible predictors of community well-being. For example, the number of grants from organizations like the USDA funding broadband in rural areas can be a predictor of well-being. Bringing broadband into these areas can improve school systems, job development, and entrepreneurship, which could bring people out of poverty, potentially increasing community well-being. Additionally, two of the organizations cited 'livability' as a goal that they were striving for in the communities they were operating in. However, while livability can be a predictor of well-being, the two are not analogous, as livability describes what a place is like to

live in and has less to do with social capital. The only mention of 'well-being' that I found as a metric to measure the success of development initiatives was used by the Midlands Regional Competitiveness Report published by the Midlands Business Leadership Group (MBLG) and EngenuitySC (2021), where the Gallup well-being index, which is one of the most common measures of well-being in the United States, is used to measure social well-being in the midlands region. The report mentioned that the Midlands region of South Carolina possesses an index higher than the national average.

Even though well-being was not a metric used by any of the organizations nor was cited as an end goal, every interviewee believed that community well-being should have a role in economic development in South Carolina. A lot of them also believed that community feedback and involvement are necessary to economic development, because it will increase community well-being. Overall well-being is beginning to become more of an end goal in South Carolina development initiatives. Increasing livability in the state, especially in the Upstate region, has also become a big focus area, and doing so usually involves dialogue with the community. Livability projects include increasing the number of green spaces, improving healthcare in the area, and increasing the amount of artistic and cultural events. The end goal of a lot of livability projects is bringing in talent but increasing community well-being plays a large part as well.

Discussion

The major difference between local development in South Carolina and in many parts of the developing world is the lack of community feedback. Positive community feedback is the predominant feature of participatory development that characterizes a lot of developing countries. In these societies, the well-being of the community is central to the developmental

goals, so community feedback is highly valued. Another major difference is views on "sustainable development". In a lot of collectivist countries, sustainable development is thought of in terms of the "social" pillar: increasing social capital. However, in South Carolina, "sustainable" development has a wide variety of definitions, most of which relate to organizational or financial sustainability.

Organizations and other entities working in South Carolina development spaces should incorporate well-being into development initiatives, and this can be done through a greater emphasis on collaboration with the communities being served. The main way that this should be done is through community feedback on development initiatives (Jackson et al., 2018). While community engagement has been a prevailing local development strategy in the developing world, it has also been effective in the United States, as it better enables understanding of community needs and aspirations and allows leaders to create programs that are very specific to community needs (Stone, 2012). At the same time, it builds support for projects, since community members will feel like they are being listened to. Organizations will also benefit from the feedback, since it will reduce the risk of misconceptions of lack of awareness surrounding the development initiatives.

There is a shift in South Carolina towards supporting more community-based development projects. The interviewee who worked with Organizations 6 and 7 mentioned that he aims to support community-based economic development programs throughout the state with capacity building, public policy, and funding. A lot of the programs he supports operate in rural South Carolina counties like Jasper and Allendale and since they work closely with these rural communities, they are very collaborative by nature. While governmental organizations like the USDA historically used to not provide as much support towards community development

organizations, they have seen a recent increase in funding. Additionally, the definition of economic development is expanding to include more local development initiatives, when previously, attracting foreign investment and manufacturing was the dominant development strategy in the state.

As South Carolina's economy expands, a lot of the traditional metrics for measuring the success of development projects will not be as applicable. While capital investment, number of jobs created, and economic growth can be useful for measuring the success of bringing in a foreign manufacturing plant, it will become less relevant as the definition of economic development expands to include other kinds of projects. This does not mean that economic growth should be ignored when implementing development projects. Economic growth plays an important role in local development and is a predictor of things like well-being and social capital, but it often does not illustrate the full dynamics of a community. Examining growth metrics like GNI per capita are important, but other, more comprehensive metrics, like HDI, should also be considered. Local communities in the US can learn from those in other countries, like Bhutan, who came up with GNH, which is comprised of 33 indicators and paints a more exhaustive picture of the state of a community (Pejore, 2017). It is especially important when designing indicators to know what each indicator means as well as its importance to the overall well-being of the community. Focusing on only one or two indicators may miss essential components of community well-being (Blanke and Waltzer, 2013).

South Carolina can also learn from the ideas of ubuntu and buen vivir, where economic development is highly participatory. The process of ubuntu-based economic development does not involve increasing numbers like capital investment and number of jobs but rather a constant dialogue between organizations and the communities that they serve. This constant dialogue

inspires collective agency, where members of society often act together to strive for sustainable development with organizations and institutions playing a more minor role. In South Carolina, enabling civil society and promoting social inclusion can lead to the same result. This can be seen as church groups, school boards, local farmers, and small businesses taking on a more active, community-centered role in economic development.

Buen vivir-inspired economic development is also highly participatory, where feedback and ideas from all members of the community and walks of life is actively sought out. In South Carolina, this would involve including the feedback and input of all relevant groups, including marginalized and rural populations, in the design and implementation of economic development projects. This includes creating spaces where community members can present their input as well as surveying community members on the efficacy of projects. Since the US and more collectivist, developing nations like Bhutan, South Africa, and Ecuador are very different, I am not arguing that South Carolina should copy their development frameworks as the needs of the communities in these countries and in South Carolina are very different but rather that they can learn from them and their approach to development policy.

This research is also subject to some possible limitations. Nine interviews were conducted with ten different organizations, as one interviewee discussed two organizations that he was working with. While six-twelve qualitative interviews are often considered ideal for sufficient information gathering, these seven organizations do not fully encompass the local economic development initiatives in South Carolina. There was also a lack of responses from rural development organizations, so only one of the leaders that I talked to was working exclusively in rural communities. This limitation was impacted by time constraints and response rate. I reached out to organizations through email, which entailed a low response rate, as I

reached out to 30 organizations and only received seven responses. If I had a longer timeline, I could have explored other avenues of reaching out to these development organizations.

Analysis

According to the interviewees, some of the organizations had attributes that made them more receptive to integrating the approaches outlined in buen vivir, GNH, and ubuntu. These attributes include a more community-centric organizational structure, an emphasis on collecting and incorporating community feedback, a focus on well-being, and more comprehensive metrics used to measure the success of development initiatives. I have identified that five out of the ten organizations would be good candidates for incorporating attributes of these three collectivist philosophies (see Table 6), namely Organizations 3, 5, 7 8, and 10.

Organization 5 would be the most receptive to incorporating the attributes of GNH, as out of the ten organizations, Organization 5 uses the most comprehensive indicators and benchmarks. While the GNH index is composed of 33 intuitive metrics for measuring the success of sustainable development in Bhutan, Organization 5 does a lot of collaborating with third-party researchers to get a wide variety of indicators that illustrate the organization's economic impact in South Carolina. Additionally, Organization 10's interviewee mentions that one of his goals is "improving the lives of South Carolina citizens", which ties into increasing community well-being.

I have identified that Organizations 3, 7, 8, and 10 would be most open to incorporating the participatory elements of ubuntu and buen vivir. The same interviewee was a part of and talked about organizations 7 and 8, and he mentioned that both organizations do a lot with capacity building in rural communities, which takes place in the form of providing training to

workers and funding to small businesses there. He also noted that his organization tries to strengthen rural communities, primarily by providing them with access to healthy food and broadband. Over time, capacity building and strengthening can lead to these rural communities having more collective agency, where they take a more active role in the development process, which is a big part of ubuntu. Additionally, the interviewee discusses his thoughts on rural, local economic development. He says, "Funding local economic development is more sustainable. Supporting local provides a sense of identity and there is more of a commitment to being successful." The way in which Organizations 7 and 8 are set up shares similarities to organizations inspired by the philosophies of ubuntu, as they are both very local, rural, and involve more direct work with communities.

The interviewees at Organizations 3 and 10 emphasize getting community feedback. Organization 10's interviewee says that he "works with all stakeholders: interest groups, decision-makers, individuals, academics, and policymakers – involving people in the beginning, middle, and end to come up with an optimal solution for everyone." He also mentions that his organization is always in a constant feedback loop with the coastal South Carolina community. Organization 3's interviewee mentions that it is not a one-size-fits-all when it comes to serving communities. She says, "Depending on whatever a particular communities' needs are, we change. Some want to focus on affordable housing, some on small business development and funding. Listening to the community is the first step in being sustainable." This structure aligns with the community-centric approach to sustainable development seen in buen vivir-inspired organizations, where the community has a major role in the outcomes of the economic development process.

A lot of the organizations do not have many similarities to the initiatives described in the collectivist countries, but Organizations 5, 7, 8, and 10 do. While some of the aforementioned statements may reflect the views of the interviewees rather than the views of the organizations, for the purposes of this thesis, I will assume that the interviewees and organizations hold the same views. Therefore, these organizations are more likely to learn from buen vivir, GNH, and Ubuntu. All of these organizations, especially 5 and 10, which state that they want to increase well-being in some capacity, are more likely to make the promotion of well-being in South Carolina a more integral part of their end goal as an organization. I recommend that South Carolina organizations should increase community participation, and with that, community well-being, and organizations like these five would be good places to start.

Conclusion

Development organizations in South Carolina, and elsewhere in the United States, can benefit from the tenets of buen vivir, GNH, and ubuntu. As opposed to more collectivist societies, in South Carolina, 'sustainability' has multiple meanings, many of which do not relate to the economic pillar of sustainability. Additionally, well-being is not the end goal of many economic development initiatives and the metrics used for measuring the success of projects tend to be predictors of economic growth rather than development. Incorporating community well-being into local development frameworks can allow local development organizations to get more human-focused results for projects. This can be done by getting more community feedback on initiatives and using more big-picture metrics to measure the success of projects, as these can give individuals working in development spaces a better idea of what community well-being looks like.

Future research should look at what 'sustainability' means and how central well-being is to development policy in other parts of the United States and then compare these results to South Carolina. I also recommend that future researchers lay out the frameworks to incorporate community participation, and by extent, well-being, into local South Carolina development initiatives. Making development frameworks more participatory will, in the long run, contribute to communities becoming less reliant on organizations and more self-sufficient. A lot of organizations defined sustainability as the ability of their projects to continue into the future, but the end goal of development efforts should be to create an environment that develops the long-lasting sovereignty and well-being of the community.

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Appendix

Table 1

Interview Questions Asked to Local South Carolina Development Organizations

1. What would you say is the main purpose of your organization's initiatives?
2. You mention sustainability in your mission statement/ on your website. How is your organization contributing to a sustainable mission in the area that you are operating in?
3. What does sustainability mean to your organization?
4. What indicators/metrics are you using to measure the success of your projects? Is community well-being a factor used to measure the success of your projects?
5. Are your initiatives influenced by county or state policies? Or something else?
6. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of development policy in South Carolina?
7. Does community well-being have a role in development in South Carolina?

Note: This table lists the 6 questions that were asked to all the organizations. Some of the organizations received additional following questions for clarification on certain concepts and topics.

Table 2

The Purpose of Each Organization

1	to establish new and sustainable approaches to the assembly of hierarchical materials that serve South Carolina's STEM research, education, and workforce needs, which will contribute to economic development
2	to contribute to the success of the Upstate by increasing collaboration across the region and by connecting struggling areas to resources and organizations that help
3	to provide innovative sustainable solutions to low wealth communities through capacity building, policy, and community economic development
4	to create a database with business and firm level information along agricultural supply chains so that businesses can find suppliers and customers more efficiently
5	to fuel the state's innovation economy through providing coaching and funding to early-stage technology companies
6	to increase the number of rural communities with access to broadband
7	to expand networks of community gardens so that schools and grocery stores can have access to sustainable, local healthy food
8	to be a center for philanthropy by being a collaborator in the community in the eleven diverse counties we serve
9	to recruit companies into our in-county area
10	to provide science to people who need it

Note: This table lists the purpose of each organization as reported by the interviewee during the virtual interviews.

Table 3

What Sustainability Means to Each Organization

1	• Sustainability is allowing projects to continue without being dependent on state dollars. • Sustainability is providing funding for more eco-friendly materials (i.e., batteries in cars).
2	• Sustainability relates to improving natural beauty, resources, and environmental sustainability. • There is also sustainability within an organization with structure and funding that leads to its long-term growth and viability. • Outward sustainability is working on creating lasting growth in the community.
3	• Sustainability involves building the capacity of our members (nonprofits, governments working in community development) so that they can expand their programs and serve the people in their communities. • Sustainability involves changing projects based on community needs and listening to the community. • Sustainability means that there is ownership in the community and that it is useful long-term.
4	• Sustainability involves three pillars: people, planet, and profits. On the profits side, the organization tries to reduce costs for everyone (farmers and organizations buying from them) by placing information about farmers markets in one place and reducing overlap
5	• An organization should be financially sustainable to function and serve communities. • Sustainability involves investing in tech companies and funding research at universities that contribute to long-term environmental sustainability
6	• Sustainability relates to making long lasting changes in rural communities.
7	• Sustainability can be about networks and communication (i.e., community gardens communicating so that they grow a variety of different produce). • Sustainability involves buying locally, which reduces carbon emissions. • Sustainability is creating long-term improvements in the health of rural communities.
8	• financial sustainability in that the organization has endowments put in place so that it will last forever

	• nonprofit sustainability in that nonprofits should be financially viable so that they can have more effective programs
9	• Sustainability is making the board more diverse. • Sustainability is preserving the environment and lowering carbon emissions. • Sustainability is implementing ESG (environmental, social, governance) program management.
10	• Sustainability is working with all the relevant stakeholders to come up with an optimal solution for everyone. • The research we conduct should have actional, applicable results that people can apply in their own settings. We study everything from the social to the ecological to have an understanding between climate and society to get closer to sustainability.

Note: This table lists the definition of sustainability as reported by the interviewee during the virtual interview.

Table 4

The Pillar of Sustainability that Corresponds to the Organization's Definition

Organization	Human	Social	Environmental	Economic (includes financial and organizational sustainability)
1	X		X	X
2			X	X
3		X		X
4	X			X
5			X	X
6		X		
7		X	X	
8				X
9			X	
10		X	X	
Total	2	4	6	6

Note: The majority of the organizations have definitions of sustainability that encompass multiple pillars. In these cases, the interviewee provided definition(s) of sustainability that relate to more than one of the 4 pillars.

Table 5

Metrics Used by Each Organization to Measure the Success of Projects

1	research success from peer reviewed publications, the number of patents, the number of new students going to work in STEM fields, the percentage of research proposals that are collaborative
2	direct involvement and participation, number of interactions on social media, the direct impact of our initiatives (i.e., air quality improvement in particles per billion), public investment
3	output indicators including jobs created, houses developed, weatherized houses, money in the organization, grant funding provided in dollars
4	the number of business entities within the supply chain database, the status of the collaborative relationships within the network
5	conducting an annual economic impact analysis, the number of SC based jobs supported and the average salary of those jobs, the amount of follow-on funding, the impacts the companies funded have on the community
6	number of grants funding broadband, number of homes with broadband
7	the profitability of farmers selling their produce, the number of gardens being sourced for healthy food in rural schools, the sourcing of produce in local grocery stores, the number of food hubs
8	the dollar amount of money being raised, the amount of money pledged/the number of legacy gifts received, the rate of return on investment, the percentage of funds with new money coming in and percentage of funds with money going out, the diversity of funds in terms of age and ethnicity, how much grantees raised outside of the organization's grants, number of volunteers and number of first-time volunteers
9	capital investment/capital expenditure, jobs,
10	the number of businesses and jobs supported, the number of businesses and jobs created, the number of communities that implement hazard resiliency practices, the number of natural resource managers that come to trainings and use the information provided by the organization, the number of people engaged in the organization's education programs

Note: This table lists the metrics as reported by the interviewee during the virtual interviews. As most of the organizations were working on multiple projects at the same time, most of the metrics listed are used to measure the success of differing projects.

Table 6

Attributes of Each Organization that Make Them Candidates for Incorporating Well-Being

Organization	Organization structure that encourages collective agency	Emphasis on collecting and incorporating community feedback	Focus on well-being	Comprehensive metrics used the measure the success of development initiatives
1				
2				
3		X		
4				
5			X	X
6				
7	X			
8	X			
9				
10		X	X	
Total	2	2	2	1

Note: "Comprehensive metrics" involves looking at a dashboard of indicators over time instead of the immediate impact of initiatives in the present. An organization structure that encourages collective agency allows community members to take on an active role in the development process and become more self-sufficient without the organization.