

Infrastructure, equity and the elderly

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Abstract

Equitable infrastructure provision in the less-developed world requires recognition of the needs of marginalized groups, such as the elderly. This paper explores issues relating to the use of household energy sources by the elderly in a rural village in the Western Cape province of South Africa, and focusses on perceptions of and barriers to electricity uptake. Whilst poor elderly persons are frequently involved in child care, and together with the young suffer most the negative health effects of indoor air pollution, their access to electricity is limited by constraints including affordability, status and custom. Electrification is considered by the South African Government of National Unity to be a vital development intervention and employment creator; yet the elderly tend to be excluded from the concrete benefits of development, and their construction and commentaries on energy issues often contain a critique of infrastructural development and the accompanying processes of social change. Rather than dismiss the elderly's attitudes towards electrification, it is important to look deeper into what their commentary tells us about missed opportunities, to ensure that development brings with it equitable access and outcomes to categories of people in need.

The elderly are frequently overlooked in policy planning, yet they represent a special interest group worthy of attention in view of the important role that they play in poverty-stricken households. Seventy per cent of all households with an elderly member live below the poverty datum line (Møller & Devey, 1995: 10); yet the elderly, the majority of whom receive a social old-age pension, constitute an important social resource in poor households. This paper uses responses of a group of elderly people who live in a rural area to the electrification of their village, to explore some of the implications of development policies and interventions. It is argued that the elderly have significant influence in determining energy use, even where they are dependents rather than heads of household. Where there is resistance to particular energy sources by elderly people, the effect may be to increase energy expenditure in poor households, as a range of fuels and appliances have to be introduced and sustained. The paper suggests that targeting the elderly as a specific category for education regarding electricity may have great benefit in development policies which rely on electrification. However, development is not always equitable, and we caution that the elderly may reject development if they perceive that developmental interventions exclude them.

Several important reasons exist for considering the elderly as significant in energy studies, not least of which is the fact that South Africa's population is ageing,¹ albeit at different rates across population groups² (Hofmeyr & Mostert, 1989). Households with pensioners are considered to be better-off than those in which there is no pension beneficiary, (Cross, Bekker & Broomburger, 1992; Spiegel, 1990; Lund, 1993; Ardington & Lund, 1994), as a reliable income enables people to establish and maintain a range of social relationships and mutual assistance activities which might not otherwise be possible (Ross, 1995). However, the benefit of a pension should not be taken to indicate wealth. Møller and Devey point out that elderly households in South Africa are "typically poorer than young households" (1995:10), particularly where households are rural-based and female-headed. Pensioners are frequently regarded as resources for child care, and children are left in the care of grandparents or other elderly persons when young adults migrate to urban areas in search of work. In these contexts, the elderly become important decision makers within domestic units on a day-to-day basis.

Of course, the elderly remain a minority group in the overall population, and this may result in their roles and needs being undervalued. The historical circumstances in South Africa have meant that the poorer sections of the population are those which were classified "non-white" in the apartheid era. In addition, given that women live longer than men, the effect of gender in the process of impoverishment further complicates a relationship between age, population group classification, and impoverishment in South Africa. It is this relationship which impacts directly upon electrification in households in which elderly persons reside, and which involves the elderly as sometime decision makers in domestic units.

Multigenerational households seem to typify the living arrangements of the coloured, black and Indian populations in South Africa (Ferreira, Møller, Prinsloo & Gillis, 1992; Schoombee & Mantzaris, 1989; Barnes & Yach, 1991). Ferreira's 1992 study, which explored attitudes and attributes of 4 400 people aged 60 years and above, found that more than 80% of respondents from the coloured, Indian and black population groups resided in two or three-generational households. Co-residence may be out of necessity rather than choice. Indeed, the South African Race Relations Survey (1994) notes that in November 1992, 45% of whites and 80% of Africans over the age of 65 were living below the poverty datum line. However, despite economic constraints, the elderly wield power, be it generated as a result of cultural and social

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norms governing the status of the elderly (see e.g. Brindley, 1982; Chinkanda, 1989; Dubazana, 1989), or because they contribute income and labour to households, including the task of "growing children up" (to use a respondent's words). We contend that their response to electrification is thus important for energy-related education of today's children.

This paper is prompted also by the fact that the elderly in South Africa suffer from high rates of respiratory infections, which are documented in most studies of the health of the elderly (Gillis, 1989; Ferreira *et al.*, 1992), but which rates infrequently receive attention in literature relating to energy (see a review of the biomedical literature pertaining to energy provision and health, CHRGE, 1995). For the main part, research exploring a link between impaired respiratory function and indoor air pollution in South Africa has focussed on children rather than on adults (although see Bradshaw, Dorrington & Sitas, 1992). Lerer (in CHRGE, 1995: 12), for example, points out that there is growing international evidence supporting a causal relationship between air pollution and adult respiratory morbidity and mortality, arguing that childhood respiratory infections are part of a link between air pollution and adult ill-health. Ferreira *et al.* (1992: 257-58) show that among the elderly, respiratory infections ranked as the fifth, sixth and eleventh most common ailments of rural blacks, and the eighth and ninth most common ailments among coloureds in South Africa. Lerer (in CHRGE, 1995:15) points out that the long-term effects of respiratory infection "include the possibility of permanently impaired lung function and high risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in adulthood."

Decisions relating to utilization of energy sources at a household level thus have a direct impact not only on the adults who make the decisions but also on other household members, many of whom are likely to be children. Since the installation and use of electricity are expected to lower indoor air pollution levels as a result of reduced reliance on coal-stoves, the health effects of complete conversion to electricity for the elderly and children could be considerable. As Eckert, Greyling and Seventer (1993:19) point out:

It is obvious that there will be substantial differences in how electricity affects household members differentiated by age and sex ... The young and the aged are likely to be most affected by pollution and thus the principal beneficiaries if electricity reduces this problem. A careful disaggregation of benefit streams by age and sex would seem crucial for designing and prioritising public spending programmes in this field ... (emphasis added).

Thus far, we have identified three reasons why the responses of the elderly to electrification should be earnestly examined. First, the elderly play important roles in daily household activities (particularly in cooking and other domestic chores). Second, as child carers they have influence on future generations. Finally, the adverse health effects of the present fuel-use patterns of the elderly warrant intervention, particularly if the assumption that household decisions made by the elderly impact directly upon the health and education of poor young South Africans holds true.

We elaborate on these reasons by examining responses to electrification in Elim, the rural village which provides the case study for this paper. Elim is of particular interest in that it is home to a large number of elderly people, previously classified as coloured, many of whom support grandchildren (mainly as a result of urban migration among young adults), and who have limited family support. Their experiences of and attitudes towards the process of electrification invite consideration of the impact of electrification as one aspect of

development policies presently being implemented in South Africa.

The study

An intensive interview study was conducted in 1994, in 13 households in Elim, a small inland Moravian village in the Western Cape province of South Africa. A structured questionnaire was used to gather the data from the respondents who were interviewed in their homes. Initially, the study focussed on a household's energy-use patterns and expenses. In a follow-up phase, group and individual interviews were conducted to explore the meanings which the elderly respondents gave to electricity. Community leaders, representatives of the Moravian church, shop-owners and other residents of the village were also consulted regarding the electrification process in the village and their opinions as to its effects on the elderly.

Sample characteristics

Forty-two people resided in the 13 households which formed the basis of the research. Fourteen of the residents were of pensionable age, i.e. aged 60 years and above; of these 14, twelve received a state pension. Of the two elderly people who did not receive a pension, one was reliant on income remitted from elsewhere and the other owned a small shop which was managed by his wife. Fifteen of the 28 remaining residents were under 18 years of age. Ten of the 13 households contained elderly people, and in nine cases these people were fully responsible for the maintenance of the household. The population profile of the sample thus indicates a large proportion of young children cared for by elderly people. Only three households, all three consisting of elderly people, contained a single generation; two households were composed of single widowed women, and the third household, a married couple.

The most common household composition was three-generational (n=6), and in five instances a pensioner was responsible for the maintenance of the household. Four households contained two generations; only one of the latter households had a resident pensioner. In all cases, save one, child care was the responsibility of elderly residents. The children were either their own grandchildren or else children of an extended family network. The patterns of household composition are indicative of urban migration among young adults, who send their children back to Elim to attend school and to retain rights as "citizens" of the village. In our sample, child maintenance (of approximately R100 per week per child) was received in three instances where grandchildren were resident with respondents, but these incomes were not always reliable. According to the South African Council for the Aged, it is not uncommon for the majority of social pensioners to share their meagre incomes with unemployed and impoverished family members" (SAIRR, 1994).³

Ten of the 13 households had electricity; the figure considerably over-represents the electrified households in Elim. However, in other respects the sample is a fairly accurate reflection of the population of the 380-house village, where according to the church's statistics, elderly people account for 60 % of the population, 171 people collect state pensions, and others have alternative sources of income or private pensions.

Exploring the responses of the elderly in Elim to electrification

"All roads lead to the Church": church, land and control in Elim

The land on which Elim is located belongs to the Moravian Church and cannot be alienated from the church. Thus, while the residents of Elim own their homes and have rights, generated through church membership, to remain in their houses as long as they are not ex-communicated from the church, they do not own the land on which they live. Land and who controls it are central themes which underlie social interactions in Elim. The church, as sole landowner, controls all resources, including housing rights, citizenship, burial rights, baptism, commonage and grazing. Part of this control also extends to electrification, a factor which has profoundly shaped the provision of electricity to the village.

Less than three-quarters of the villagers have electricity,³ this despite the fact that an overhead reticulation system was installed in 1985 and electricity was offered to householders in 1986. Thus, although electricity had been available in the village for approximately eight years prior to the study on which this paper is based, a large proportion of the population remains without electricity in their homes. Householders without electricity were not planning to install it in the future, mainly because of the costs of internal reticulation and appliance purchases, and also because of the monthly flat fee charged to consumers by the church which owns the land on which the houses are built.

The situation in which villagers find themselves then, corresponds with findings in rural areas elsewhere. Viljoen and Cross (1993:8) have commented that people in rural areas are slower to make use of electricity, partly because of the availability of other fuels, but also because of limited disposable income and attitudes towards electrification. There are interesting parallels here with a situation in which many farmworkers find themselves. For the latter, occupation of housing is linked to employment on the farm on which the housing was situated, and farmworkers were therefore assured of accommodation only if they continued to work on the farm (SAIRR, 1994; Hofmeyr, 1994). For the residents of Elim, housing rights are held only for as long as the head of a household remains a member of the church. In both instances, this causes complications where electrification is concerned, as neither category of consumer can contract with the electricity utility in their individual capacities, and instead are constrained by decisions made and obligations incurred by the church or landowners on their behalf.

Services in the village are limited, and business which cannot be conducted in Elim (including the purchase of appliances and electrical services) must be undertaken in Bredasdorp, 36 km away, or further afield. Street lights have been installed at each street corner in Elim, but residents complain that the lights are often not operational. Indeed, one woman interviewed commented that her electricity bill increased in a direct relationship to the non-operation of the street lights; when the latter did not work, she kept her house lights on to illuminate the road so that *old people* could see their way when walking (her emphasis).

"Elim has now got a future": electrification in the village

Electricity was installed in the village between 1985 and 1986. Installation was commissioned by the church to ensure a reliable energy source for the Elim Home for the Mentally and Physically Handicapped and to assist the elderly by providing lighting within the church building – the centre of activities and social life of the village – at night and in winter.

To obtain capital for the installation of reticulation, a loan of R120 000, repayable over 20 years, was taken by mortgaging part of the land on which Elim is located. The loan and its interest are repaid from a basic monthly fee of R20,54 which is charged to all household electricity consumers in Elim. This basic fee alone, i.e. excluding actual consumption charges, represented 5,5 % of a 1993 social pension of R370 per month. A number of respondents felt that this charge, in addition to the high costs of internal reticulation, curtailed new electrical connections, particularly among the elderly. Others expressed anger at repayment of the loan by households, in view of the fact that electricity consumers do not own the land on which their houses are built (the land remains the property of the church). This latter point constitutes an important component of the response of the elderly to electrification. Unable to negotiate with the energy utility in their individual capacities, the residents of Elim are thus held to the conditions set by the church.

We identified three main barriers to electrification among the people whom we interviewed: affordability, contractual issues resulting from non-ownership of land, and custom.

- **"They are stripping us naked!": the affordability of old age.** Pensioners are regarded by the villagers as the poorest members of the Elim community – unlike other settlements, where the reliability of pension payments puts recipients in stronger positions than those whose incomes are less regular.⁴ In Elim, a number of monthly fixed expenses ensure that pensions are rapidly consumed. The elderly people whom we interviewed in Elim feel that they are entrapped in a cycle of household poverty which impacts directly on attitudes towards electricity.

- **"I go mad thinking about how much it costs": the expense of electricity.** The perception that electricity is expensive was universal among the respondents. In part, the reason for this construction of electricity consumption lies in the church levy, which represents a sizeable amount incurred prior to paying the unit charge of R0,21 per unit of electricity consumed.

Several respondents had devised strategies to limit their use of electricity for domestic activities. One old woman drew hot water from the gas geyser rather than use her kettle to boil water. Indeed, she commented that her electricity costs "soared over the festive period" when her family came to stay, because they used the electric kettle to make tea. Another explained that her membership of the Old Age Club meant that she received three hot meals a week.⁵ In addition, she used her microwave oven to limit both electricity and gas consumption. Despite these measures, her electricity expenditure alone amounted to approximately a tenth of her income in February 1994.

- **Household budgetary constraints.** The price per unit and overall cost of electricity are major deterrents to those who might consider the switch to electricity. Price *per se* is not the only deterrent, however. This is particularly so for pensioners, who, as Mrs H, herself a pensioner living alone, pointed out, cannot afford the reticulation costs of electrification, nor the levy charged by the church. In addition, the limited affordability of electricity is directly related to household budgetary constraints – particularly to intra-monthly budgetary fluctuations. As Cross *et al.* (1992: 39) comment, "... households of the poor are attempting to meet economic demands that impinge on them with unequal periodicity," a finding which is borne out by Van Horen and Eberhard (1993: 46) who argue that the poor are

confronted by "extremely short cash flow cycles, involving small income amounts."

Individual understanding of budgeting requires more investigation in the light of a respondent's ironic comment that with the installation of electricity "... we don't save any more. Now I save at the post office [where telephone bills are paid] and at the electricity office." This respondent felt that she had been in a better position to save prior to electrification because then she did not have recurrent monthly expenses such as electricity bills. In short, these are ironic comments on development – money which was perceived as being saved is now spent on electricity. Whether in fact this is so, is incidental to the respondent's argument; she experienced paying for electricity as constituting a drain on her limited household resources.

Appliance switching and supply reliability

The expense involved in switching to electricity is not purely subjective. There are a number of costs involved, especially given the need to repay the loan taken by the church, to obtain internal reticulation, and also to purchase appliances. The latter expense has been identified as an important barrier to the uptake of electricity, since electrical appliances are generally more expensive than appliances which residents already have for other fuels (Van Gass, 1993). In addition, internal reticulation costs are high, with respondents claiming to have spent between R450 and R2 000 on connections and reticulation. However, even if a total switch to electrical appliances were possible for the elderly who form the core of this research, such a switch would not be practical. This is because the electricity supply to Elim is unreliable and is frequently interrupted, especially over holiday periods when large numbers of people congregate in the village. The unreliability of the electricity supply impacts directly upon the division of labour and time allocation in a household. One woman whom we interviewed on a cold windy day had just finished cooking the evening meal on her electric stove, several hours in advance of the meal, in case there was a power failure later in the day.

Several other people commented on the "sensitivity" and unreliability of the reticulation system; they explained that all who used electricity also retained alternative energy sources and appliances to use when the electrical supply was cut. Thus, having electrical outlets and appliances in the house does not mean that electricity is necessarily the most reliable energy source. Back-up means of lighting and cooking are regarded as essential.

Thus far, we have considered the perceptions of affordability of electricity of the elderly, and have seen that in their eyes, electricity is not always the most appropriate energy source in terms of its costs. However, in discussion with residents, it became clear that there are a number of other reasons why electricity is not installed and utilized by the elderly of Elim.

Land-ownership, citizenship and contractual relationships

Three components of the land-ownership/citizenship issue which affect electrification in Elim are considered. First, we examine the limitations on contractual rights which the peculiarities of citizenship in Elim impose on residents. These limitations are in direct relation to the type and costs of electricity available to residents. Second, the ways in which citizenship and mobility are linked to the attitudes of the elderly towards electrification of their homes are examined. Finally, Eskom's planned nuclear power reactor as a case study of community participation is briefly considered and

juxtaposed with the notion of development put forward by the church. (Eskom is the national electricity utility.)

- **Contractual capacities.** The position of residents of Elim in the structure and organization of power within the village is such that they are unable to contract as individuals in any relationship which involves alteration to the land on which they live. Thus, the contractual parties in the electrification of the village are Eskom and the Moravian Church, although individual heads of households may enter into contractual relationships with contractors undertaking the work of internal reticulation of houses. As individual householders cannot contract directly with the energy utility, they have not been able to benefit from recent initiatives to provide subsidized rural electrification, including the installation of pre-paid meters. Electricity consumers in Elim are thus not able to fit their electricity consumption to fluctuations in their disposable income. In addition, the church's levy discourages further electrification, so the levy itself does not decrease over time.

The conversion to electricity is not solely determined by economic factors; demographic features of the village as a whole and of particular households impinge directly upon the electrification process and on uptake rates.

- **Citizenship and mobility.** Electrification of domestic units is inextricably linked not only to individual decisions made by the residents of Elim, but also to patterns of migration and urbanization. In some instances, elderly people justified their refusal to install electricity on grounds that their absent offspring were not going to return to Elim, and since they (the elderly) had no desire to use electricity, installation would be wasted. Aunty S case is of interest here, for her commentary encapsulates much of the ambiguity which is expressed towards electricity by the elderly (see Box 1).

Box 1

Case of Aunty S

Aunty S, who lives alone, told us that she has no use for electricity. Her children are not planning to return to the village, and she sees no need to convert to electricity from gas, coal and candles – energy sources to which she is already accustomed. "My time on this earth is short, and my children and grandchildren will not come and live in Elim. In any case, I've been accustomed to candlelight from birth." When asked about cooking she stated that she only eats once a day – in the evenings, and her food is provided by the Old Age Club. She uses candlelight to see at night. When she wants to read in the evenings she sits in a room where a streetlight shines through the window and provides sufficient light. Electricity is necessary in Cape Town, she says, so that one can see the "rogues." She argues that as there are no rogues in Elim, electric lights are unnecessary. She explains that if her children were to return to live in Elim, she would then consider installing electricity, particularly if it were made available at a substantially reduced price.

While the absence of family members from Elim was given by some as justification for non-electrification, several respondents told us that the presence of young people, particularly children, in a house was a good predictor of whether electricity is or will be installed. The local *dominee* (church minister) told us that the elderly parishioners tended to prefer alternative fuels to electricity unless their children or their grandchildren lived with them, or contributed to the upkeep of the household, in which case

electricity would be likely to be installed as a result of pressure from the younger family members. However, in our sample it was mainly elderly people who were supporting youths, and not *vice versa*.

• **Notions of community development and participation.**

There is a degree of opposition to electrification by the elderly in the village, which is expressed in terms of affordability, citizenship and residential status, as well as habit and cost. At least part of the opposition can be attributed to the interviewees' perceptions of development, particularly over the role that the elderly are unable to play in development, and over the ways in which development affects them. It is therefore interesting to note that the elderly were among a group entertained by Eskom when the establishment of a nuclear plant on the south coast close to Elim was being considered. This points to two radically different notions of community development as posited by Eskom and the church.

The World Bank notes that electrification is a "major potential employment creator" (Doppegieter, Du Toit & Van Vuuren, 1992: 87). Two aspects of this statement require examination in the context of electrification in Elim. The first has to do with projects initiated as a result of electrification. Elim's bakery, clay-manufacturing plant and clothing factory do not employ elderly persons, many of whom have thus not profited directly from the benefits of electrification outside of the domestic sphere. The second is related to small business opportunities which emerge in the production of electricity. In this light it is interesting to examine Eskom's interaction with the elderly of Elim during community consultation processes aimed at exploring the viability of constructing a nuclear power plant on the south coast. The utility's pointed inclusion of elderly people during consultation, compared with the church's exclusion of them, points to a conflicting set of ideas relating to community development and consultation. These complex interactions are compounded by the fact that in terms of electricity supply, the Moravian Church is Eskom's sole client in Elim, while in terms of seeking approval for development projects, the community is envisaged by the energy utility as consisting of all the residents of Elim, including the elderly. Given that the elderly in Elim are excluded from the positive effects of domestic and infrastructure-based electricity use, there is a certain irony in the fact that they were consulted regarding nuclear power.

Structurally, the elderly do not stand to gain directly from development opportunities offered by electrification. Their hostility towards electricity as a domestic energy source may therefore reflect deep social (as opposed to psychological) insecurities resulting from the changes which are actually occurring and are anticipated to occur. In this regard, the constraints on individual contracting capacities are likely to exacerbate social tensions and experiences of alienation from development processes. Ironically, then, the installation of electrical power may lead to disempowerment, as elderly people are disallowed the products of development such as employment in new business enterprises.

One way in which the experience of limited access to development is expressed is through recourse to notions of custom and habitude. Thus, some respondents utilized the term "gewoond" (custom) to justify non-electrification. Mrs H, herself a pensioner, commented that the reason why so many pensioners would not use electricity is because "they are still living in the olden days," and do not trust

"young ideas." As Aunty L said: "I wouldn't install electricity, even if I could. I'm too used to candlelight"

Custom and "gewoond"

You sit just so, then the candle goes out. Then you sit quietly and safely. So we are born and so we grow old.
(Mrs T)

Notions of "gewoond" (habitude) were frequently given by the elderly respondents as reasons for their rejection of, or non-conversion to electricity. Here we explore the idea of custom as it was expressed by elderly respondents in relation to energy and health.

The respondents used ideas of custom to justify their continued preference for particular fuels. For some, this was indeed the reason why they had installed electricity in their homes (Mrs H commented that the house in which she had lived in in Cape Town had electricity and she was therefore "used" to it and had installed electricity in her home in Elim). Others used custom to justify the non-installation of electricity:

In the old days, there were no streetlights. One had to walk around with a torch. But a person felt safer then. Nowadays, things happen under streetlights. On top of it all, television teaches the children to be undisciplined.

Young people wander around more nowadays. They stay away from home until late. There are 'discos' and 'games'. It's no wonder that children get pregnant.

Implicit in these commentaries is a critique of change, especially where change is experienced as a threat to old, accepted ways of understanding the world. These meanings in the world are also expressed in stories told by elderly people about the effects of electrification on village life and morality. One such story is the myth-like "blessing of Elim," told by several respondents and retold in Box 2.

Box 2

Story of the "blessing of Elim"

The story of the "blessing of Elim" recounts that prior to widespread electrification, coal-burning stoves and a temperature inversion in the valley had the effect of generating a smog which hung over the village in the evenings. This smog was known as the "blessing of Elim," and was popularly believed to represent divine protection of the village and its residents. The smog was regarded as the manifestation of angels watching over the residents. Since electricity was introduced, the elderly believe that the near disappearance of the smog represents a diminution of the blessing which once accrued to Elim. This belief is analogous to the disappearance of the column of smoke which guided the Israelites in the desert and disappeared as a sign of heavenly disapproval.

Clearly there is more to this story than a simple comment on air pollution. The story contains social and cultural meanings generated around notions of how things ought to be, and a critique of the changes which development has brought about, particularly in so far as such development has excluded the tellers – in this case the elderly – from its positive attributes. Electricity was envisaged by the elderly as destroying the peace of Elim, represented by the veil of mist and smog, by bringing with it development which excludes them, and the "blessing" (mist and smog). It should not be surprising, then, that some elderly persons are hostile towards electricity, when

it presents a direct challenge to their constructions of the world and their power within it.

Conclusions

This paper has shown "reasons" why elderly persons in a rural village do not use electricity. The reasons form part of wider discourse on energy equity, in which the needs and responses of elderly rural dwellers to electrification are not fully articulated, recognized or met. We have argued that the elderly constitute an important segment of the population, wielding social power in the day-to-day running of households and the care of children. The elderly in Elim expressed a range of responses to electrification and gave numerous justifications for their (partial) rejection of this energy source. These ranged from problems of affordability to difficulties in contractual relationships, and finally to a refutation of "young ideas" in favour of doing things in the ways to which people have become accustomed. The latter reason contains within it a critique of change, particularly in so far as change is manifested in altered power relationships within households and in people's lives. Attitudes expressed by the elderly towards electrification are sanctified and legitimated through appeals to the past, to custom and to myth. However, stories such as that of the "blessing of Elim" should not be read as a sign that people are rejecting electrification solely for romantic reasons related to the past. Beneath the myth lies a real and concrete concern with the practicalities of development and change as these forces impact upon individual lives.

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Notes

1. An increase in the proportion of elderly persons in the total population is an almost universal phenomenon. The implications of an expanded aged segment in a population in terms of the social structure of society, personpower, housing, and health and welfare services are enormous.
2. Use of the terms of the now defunct Population Registration Act of 1953 does not imply acceptance of these terms, but reflects the way in which population statistics were, until recently, collected and presented. Given that the effects of apartheid will continue to be felt for some time, it was felt that the terminology retains descriptive power.
3. Estimates of the numbers of electrified households vary, although reasons for the discrepancy were not clear.
4. At the same time, the reliability of these incomes means that pensioners are often targeted as resources and their incomes must be made to stretch between large numbers of dependents (Cross *et al.*, 1992).
5. Membership of Elim's Old Age Club, operated by the church, has a number of benefits for the members, one of which is meals. Several elderly interviewees indicated that they had little need of improved fuel sources (i.e. electricity) because they seldom cooked for themselves. Three meals a week prepared by the Old Age Club are made available to them for a fee of R12 a month. The meals are hot, and if need be, are brought to a member's house.

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