

Participatory Research
Revisiting the Roots

Edited by
Rajesh Tandon



Mosaic Books
New Delhi

Mosaic Books
B-17, 2nd Floor
Lajpat Nagar Part 2
New Delhi 110024 • India
E-mail: israel4@vsnl.com
Tel.: 91-11-6846071, 6918517

© Rajesh Tandon 2002
PRIA
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area
New Delhi 110062
Tel.: 91-11-6081908, 6060931/32/33
Fax: 6080183
E-mail: info@pria.org
Web: www.pria.org

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be translated, reproduced or copied in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of Mosaic Books.

ISBN 81-901297-3-2

Printed in India

Published by Mosaic Books. Typeset by Print Services, B-17, Lajpat Nagar Part 2, New Delhi 110024 and printed at Print Perfect, New Delhi 110064.

Contents

Introduction: Revisiting the Roots	<i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	vii
Section I		
Monopoly over Knowledge: Critique of Monopolistic Research		
1. A Critique of Monopolistic Research	<i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	3
2. Breaking the Monopoly of Knowledge: Research Methods, Participation and Development	<i>Budd Hall</i>	9
3. Participatory Research: Main Concepts and Issues	<i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	22
4. Knowledge as Power: Participatory Research as the Alternative	<i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	40
5. Ideology and Political Economy in Inquiry: Participatory Research	<i>L. David Brown and Rajesh Tandon</i>	54
6. Occupational Health and Participatory Research	<i>Harsh Jaitli and Vijay Kanhere</i>	67
7. Reflections of a Feminist Political Scientist on Attempting Participatory Research in Aotearoa	<i>Delle Small</i>	74
Section II		
Participatory Research & Social Transformation		
8. People-Centred Development and Participatory Research	<i>L. David Brown</i>	90
9. Participatory Research and Participatory Social Action	<i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	100
10. Issues and Experiences in Participatory Research in Asia	<i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	115
11. Participatory Research in North America and India	<i>John Gaventa and Juliet Merrifield</i>	122
12. Participatory Research as a Contribution to Cultural Reconstruction	<i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	138

vi *Contents*

13. Tribals and Land Alienation <i>Anthya Madiath</i>	143
14. Participatory Research among Farmer Settlers in Southern Philippines <i>Eileen Belamide</i>	154
15. The Struggle in Dhulia: A Women's Movement in India <i>Vijay Kanhere</i>	163
16. Knowledge, Participation and Empowerment <i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	172

Section III

Methodology of Participatory Research

17. The Methodology of the Participatory Research Approach <i>Deborah Bryceson, Linzi Manicom and Yusuf Kassam</i>	179
<i>Editor's Note: From Clarity to Anarchy: Participatory Research Approach (A critique of 'The Methodology of the Participatory Research Approach')</i>	193
18. Ambiguities in Participatory Research <i>L. David Brown</i>	197
19. Social Transformation and Participatory Research <i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	203
20. Participatory Research and Empowerment of Adults <i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	216
21. The Socio-Political Implications of Participatory Research <i>Francisco Vio Grossi</i>	222
22. People and Forests—A Participatory Study <i>Mohan Hirabqi Hiralal and Savita Tare</i>	233
23. Knowledge and Social Change: An enquiry into Participatory Research in Asia <i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	253

Section IV

Innovations in Methodology

24. Dialogue <i>Rajesh Tandon</i>	275
25. Enumeration <i>Srilatha Batliwala and Sheela Patel</i>	295
26. Popular Theatre <i>Seemantinee Khot</i>	313
Bibliography of Selected Readings	321
Contributors	325

Introduction: Revisiting the Roots

RAJESH TANDON

It has been nearly a quarter of a century since the early formulations of participatory research began to be presented hesitatingly and tentatively. Those early proposals were essentially a reaction to the classical methodology of research and inquiry which had alienated the social science research enterprise from the very people about whom research was being carried out. In a simple way, stated then, participatory research challenged the 'monopoly of knowledge' which has been vested in the elites of our society. The production of knowledge, its certification and dissemination have been controlled by intellectual elites in all human societies, since a long period of time. The Brahmanical order justified its hierarchy by making the distinction between intellectual work and physical work. Brahmins were the repositories of knowledge and wisdom, could use the language of God's 'Sanskrit', and interpret the religious scriptures to prescribe the social norms and behaviour for the rest of society. Similar Brahmanical orders have existed in other cultures and other histories. Therefore, the *first* significant contribution of participatory research has been to challenge the *mythical and artificial divide between mental labour and manual labour*, intellectual pursuits and physical pursuits. It has questioned the belief that capacity for intellectual work resides in only a few. It argued that popular knowledge, ability to produce and use knowledge, is a universal human phenomenon, and such capacity exists in all human beings, so argued participatory research then.

Argument was built over these twenty-five years, the process of production and control over knowledge has become increasingly more sophisticated. The new information technology has created new opportunities for those who could not only record but also disseminate knowledge at rapid speed. However, the digital divide that the world is witnessing is reinforcing the pattern of elite control over production and dissemination of knowledge. While there are millions of internet users from Europe, East Asia and North America, millions of

citizens in Africa and South Asia have not even made a telephone call. Such disparity and structural inequality reinforces the hegemony of intellectual elite in contemporary societies. In that sense participatory research and its early tentative proposals which critique the dominant social science research methodology are still relevant and perhaps more so. Papers in Section I of this collection are drawn from this historical perspective.

The struggle to break the 'monopoly of knowledge' has acquired new dimensions and requires new tools. The mindset which creates the hierarchy between intellectual and physical work is not only limited to academic institutions but is very pervasive in many societies. In political party structures, government institutions, on production organizations (like factories and mines), those at the top of the hierarchy are supposed to be endowed with intellectual capacities and those at the bottom are seen as mere physical labourers. Therefore, one important contribution of participatory research in the 21st century could be to reassert that critique and challenge the myth of elite control over production and use of knowledge.

The *second* theme that was developed in the practice and discourse of participatory research early on was the relationship between participatory research and social transformation. Students and practitioners of social change always knew that the core of the issue is redistribution of power. Power is the central dynamic which can mobilize energies, capacities, people and institutions to bring about desirable social change. Therefore, many strategies historically have used power equalization interventions, more popularly known as empowerment approaches, to redress inequality of power in social contexts. But participatory strategies of social transformation have emphasized participation of the people themselves in bringing about the desired power redistribution.

Participatory research argued that knowledge is the integral part of the equation that establishes the link between power and participation. Knowledge is not only a source of power and control in contemporary society, but it is through knowledge that participation and empowerment is facilitated. This tentative hypothesis presented in the late 1970s through the early writings on participatory research have acquired a new reference in today's context. Inequalities of power are rooted not only in local situations of domination but also in the national and global contexts as well.

There are powerful nations, powerful corporations, powerful financial interests in the world today. In the context of globalization, the power elites have connectivity in all the countries of the world. Yet those who struggle to redistribute power, those who aspire to bring about power equalization, those who attempt to empower people, to bring about social change, realize how access to knowledge supports the global network of power elites. The powerless in different countries of the world remain disconnected from those knowledge networks and information flows. Therefore, such proposals of participatory research, so eloquently made in several writings, are included in the Section II of this book. These articles point towards the need for fresh conceptualization and deepening practice on re-connecting knowledge, power and participation.

In its early proposals, participatory research described itself as a method of inquiry, learning and change. The pedagogy was linked to epistemology. Learning about reality was an act of changing the reality. Therefore, participatory research challenged the myth of distancing knowledge producers from knowledge users, of separating the two worlds of 'knowledge as pursuit of truth' and 'knowledge as pursuit of well-being'. In methodological terms, early formulations of participatory research challenged the 'scientific' connotations associated with social science research methodology.

It questioned the myth of objectivity and neutrality which is the hallmark of scientific rationality. The early discourse of participatory research posited 'popular knowledge' in antagonism to 'scientific knowledge'. Most conventional academics, progressive in their political pursuit, describe the role of research to support struggle. Thus knowledge in this perspective is seen as being provided by the few for the benefit of the many. The popular knowledge argument describes *research as struggle* itself. It argues for knowledge as a part of the process of reform and reconstruction. Thus, in its early formulations, the dialectic between popular and scientific knowledge was presented as a duality. As the practice of participatory research evolved over these years and as the global context began to change, it became clear that a higher order synthesis can result from this dialectic of popular knowledge and scientific knowledge. Knowledge produced through conventional methodology in the institutions of higher learning needs to be accessed by change agents and integrated with their popular knowledge in order to develop a fresh understanding of the world. There have been many examples where tools of scientific

research enterprise (like surveys and statistical analysis) have been appropriated by social organizers and animators to enhance capacities and understandings of the ordinary people.

As the debates on participatory research began to be disseminated worldwide largely due to development discourse by the mid 1980s, new formulations began to be presented. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an enhanced articulation of the early proposals of participatory research by bringing the component of action in the very concept itself. PAR thus legitimized action oriented strategies in enquiry. Orlando Fals Borda (1985), and Anisur Rehman (1984) contributed greatly to the elaboration of this perspective. Another stream grew out of the desire of development practitioners to create relevant and data-based development projects and plans. Started as Rapid Rural Appraisal, it soon became transformed into Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA (and PLA in its more recent formulations) was very effective in developing a wide range of tools of data collection and analysis which could enable illiterate women and men to develop their own enquiry into social and economic phenomena in their immediate context. By the late 1980s PRA had spread remarkably as the methodology for developing locally appropriate development projects, enabling planning, monitoring and evaluation of those development projects and thereby facilitating greater participation of the targets of change themselves. However, the perspective of actors as agents of change themselves needed to be reinforced in order 'to root' the tools and techniques developed by PRA. Not only *Whose Reality Counts, But Who Counts Reality* (Robert Chambers, 1997) became the key issue in the politics of development action. Thus, change orientation based on the aspirations and priorities of people themselves and using their own capacities and knowledge could be the building block in which tools and techniques of PRA could be utilized.

Interestingly enough there have been many new ways in which the perspective and philosophy of participatory research has begun to be translated in reality. Relationship between practitioners and researchers, in what has been called Practice Research Engagements (PRE), are happening increasingly in different contexts.

Many social science research funding agencies worldwide are now requiring close collaboration with the community of practitioners in determining the research agenda, research methodology and outcomes. Participatory research has also spread to various courses and pro-

grammes of social science and development studies. Teaching of participatory research has energized a new generation of practitioners and innovators. The discourse on ecology and sustainability reemphasized the value of popular knowledge and indigenous wisdom. It challenged the myth of scientific rationality around use and regeneration of natural resources. Many ecological movements articulated the significance of valuing and respecting popular knowledge, a perspective that participatory research has always maintained. Likewise, struggles for gender equality and empowerment of women brought about new consciousness which challenged the patriarchal underpinnings of scientific rationality. 'Personal is political' created the opportunity to remove the artificial dichotomy between thinking and feeling. Women's movement articulated its own epistemology of learning about women's condition, in particular about their oppression. There has been greater concern about the issues of governance in all our societies in recent years. At the core of governance is the question of accountability—public accountability for public agents, agencies and institutions. Knowledge production itself cannot escape this demand for accountability. *Knowledge is a public good* and cannot be exclusively reserved for private consumption. This was the struggle of 'intellectual property rights' which needs to be viewed from the perspective of participatory research. Knowledge as public good must remain accessible for use and regeneration by ordinary people as well.

In the early days, the challenge for articulating a new methodology of participatory research also entailed demonstrating new methods of enquiry which combine investigation, education and action. In that sense, cognitive and rational approaches to enquiry were questioned as too restricted and limited. Feelings and emotions as a source of knowing were reinforced and obtained philosophical and intellectual support from the phenomenology theory.

Likewise, action research, learning by doing and other similar streams provided validity to 'doing as a mode of inquiry' as well. In this collection, three early innovations in methods of participatory research are presented in Section IV to highlight this expansion of approaches to knowing. *Dialogue* as a process of enquiry has been situated in the context of *action orientation*. *Popular theatre* as a method of knowing is presented as a way of *articulating feelings as data for enquiry*. *Enumeration* reappropriates survey methods in the hands of the ordinary folks determined to redefine their future. Thus

dialogue, popular theatre and enumeration are early illustrations of the range of methodological innovations that an expanded epistemological perspective of participatory research enables.

In this journey of twenty-five years, participatory research has new followers and critiques. This collection is a way of revisiting the roots for the global participatory research movement as well as for its practical elaboration in the Indian context. Many institutions, programmes and interventions evolved through these early formulations of participatory research. PRIA itself was born from similar perspectives and aspirations. In pulling this volume together to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of PRIA, we revisit our roots in order to rededicate ourselves to its pursuit in future.

Today, we live in a somewhat different world than twenty-five years ago. Production of knowledge is no longer limited to academic institutions. Media and new information technology has vastly transformed the production and dissemination knowledge. Many countries are beginning to call themselves knowledge economies. The World Bank, which for decades maintained itself as a development finance institution, is trying to rechristen itself as a *knowledge bank*. Knowledge seems to be the 'in thing'. Yet we know that there are attempts to regulate and control knowledge, to patent and privatize knowledge, to monopolize methods of production and access to use of knowledge. The political economy of knowledge production in knowledge economy is far more complex than was the case twenty-five years ago. Who finances knowledge production and its dissemination? Whose interests does knowledge serve? These remain sharp and important questions in today's global context.

As we look around societies throughout the world, there is a growing search for redefining identities. Gender, caste, language, ethnicity and religion have become important dimensions of such a struggle for redefinition of human identity. In this, knowledge drawn from traditional scriptures is being reformulated to create opportunities for pegging and inaugurating new identities. Yet the purpose of linking local and global identities continues to remain defeated as knowledge and its access remain strangled in the hands of the religious, political or financial elite.

In an important sense, therefore, the 21st century represents the questioning of the basic paradigm of development, not only in a few countries or societies, but for humanity as a whole. *Growth* as the paradigm of development effectively utilized scientific rationality and

created an aura of sustainability. As limits to growth are being experienced, a new paradigm for *well-being* is being represented. 'Well-being' is rooted in the subjective reality of people and an understanding of 'well-being' requires the perspective of participatory research. 'Well-being' is not only cognitive but also phenomenological and action-oriented.

This collection draws on the writings of many who have been associated with the birth and evolution of PRIA. It focuses on the themes of participatory research from different vantage points. It is hard to classify these people as researchers or academics or educators or practitioners because, in a significant way, these authors themselves are attempting to practice participatory research in their own pursuits. Thereby, they combine inquiry with education and action. In helping to put together this book, my colleagues Namrata Jaitli and Mohita Sachdev in PRIA played a significant role. This book is dedicated to the cause of reaffirming our acknowledgement of our roots. It is also presented as a statement of commitment to extend the practice of participatory research in newer and changing contexts.

References

1. Borda, Orlando, Fals (1985) *Knowledge and People's Power: Lessons with Peasants in Nicaragua, Mexico and Colombia*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.
2. Chambers, Robert (1977) *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London, U.K.
3. Rahman, Md. Anisur (1984) *Grassroots Participation and Self Reliance*, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. and PRIA, New Delhi.

SECTION I

Monopoly over Knowledge: Critique of Monopolistic Research

Section Outline

Since the last few decades, knowledge has increasingly become a major source of power and control. The exercise of power through control over knowledge has been consolidated, among others, through social science research methodology, which became the dominant research paradigm after World War II.

The popular knowledge of the poor and oppressed has been devalued with the rise of the modern professional knowledge producing enterprise, which includes the dominant research paradigm. The poor have been systematically denied access to either the knowledge produced by experts or the means of production of knowledge. Thus for empowerment of the poor and oppressed, they need to be involved in valuing their existing knowledge and producing and using new knowledge.

Building on this premise of empowerment, Participatory Research (PR) in its earlier formulations was seen as an alternative to dominant social science research method. It represented an alternative system of knowledge production. PR challenged the premise on which traditional social science research methodology was based: the premise of neutrality, objectivity and value-free character. PR attempts to present people as researchers themselves, in pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily struggle and survival.

The first section of the book traces the roots of PR as a critique to the dominant social science research model. The critique and the emergence of PR as alternative research strategy is highlighted with the help of seven papers of researchers and practitioners, who have been pioneers in the emergence of PR.

2 *Section 1: Outline*

Rajesh Tandon's paper 'A Critique of Monopolistic Research' introduces the section by critiquing the dominant research paradigm across four dimensions: absolutist critique; purist critique; rationalist critique and elitist critique. Budd Hall builds on this critique, in his paper 'Breaking the Monopoly of Knowledge', highlighting the weakness of the survey method (a social science research method), and arguing for PR, as an alternative to the dominant research paradigm.

Having argued the case of PR, as an approach to break the monopoly over knowledge and involve the poor in production and use of knowledge, Rajesh Tandon provides a comparative analysis of classical research and PR, in the paper 'PR: Main Concepts and Issues'. This paper, along with his paper on 'Knowledge as Power', highlight some key characteristics of PR as an educational experience. Issues of steps, methods, participants, and implications of PR are touched upon in this paper.

David Brown and Rajesh Tandon address the issue of ideology and political economy in inquiry in PR, in their paper 'Ideology and Political Economy in Inquiry: Participatory Research'. They argue that PR 'is an integrated activity that combines social investigation, educational work and actions, and values useful knowledge'. Political economy of PR allies researchers with oppressed clients in opposition to the existing authority and resource holders.

PR as an alternative system of knowledge production, as opposed to the conventional social science research is highlighted by Harsh Jaitli and Vijay Kanhare's paper 'Occupational Health and Participatory Research'. Their paper provides a realistic critique to the conventional social science research methodology in addressing issues of Occupational Health. It supports the claim of PR as an alternative and empowering research methodology and illustrates how workers in India were active participants in creation of new knowledge, which had implication of concrete actions to improve their lives. Delle Small, in her paper 'Reflections of a Feminist Political Scientist on Attempting PR in Aotearia', also provides insights on challenges faced to promote PR in a university set-up in New Zealand. It provides an interesting interface between the dominant research paradigm and participatory research. Implications of PR to feminist research in a university setting are highlighted in her paper.

A Critique of Monopolistic Research*

RAJESH TANDON

Social science research has developed into a large-scale enterprise in the twentieth century. A variety of research approaches is currently being used to investigate a wide range of social systems and phenomena. Professional researchers are being trained in academic settings; and they are utilizing their expertise in research to generate knowledge on a wide variety of subjects. Over the years, different disciplines have emerged in social sciences, and these disciplines generally focus on different themes and issues as foci of research. Psychology and sociology have dominated the field of social science research in the twentieth century. However, new disciplines like social-psychology have also made their mark during the past two-to-three decades. Social science research has, despite the range of disciplines and subject matter, followed a major tradition which is still the dominant research paradigm. This paper is an attempt to critique this dominant social science research paradigm.

Characteristics of Dominant Research Paradigm

There are several ways in which one can describe the salient characteristics of the dominant research paradigm. To make the readers familiar with the background of my critique, I am presenting here, rather briefly, my understanding of the classical research paradigm that has dominated social science research.

The purpose of research is to generate knowledge. This knowledge then adds to the existing body of knowledge. It is then possible to develop general laws about various phenomena. Over a period of time, the truth about the nature of phenomena is established.

*This article was earlier published in: Hall, Budd, Gillette, Arthur and Tandon, Rajesh (1982) *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly*, PRIA, New Delhi. pp 79-84.

In order to develop such generalizable knowledge that establishes the truth, methods of research have to be totally objective. The research situation should be controlled in such a manner that no spurious influence vitiates the inference. The researcher should be objective in his data collection and analysis. The degree of objectivity achieved has to be of highest order.

The research should use the thinking process and conceptualizations must be done to enhance knowledge. Manipulation of symbols and concepts is the main ingredient of the knowledge-generation process. Observation and conceptualization are central methods of research.

The research entails communication of findings to other professional colleagues. Written form is most aptly suited for this. The knowledge generated through research has to be communicated so as to add to the existing body of knowledge.

In the classical research paradigm, rules for maintaining objectivity, observation and conceptualization and communication are well-developed and strictly adhered to. Deviations from these rules are severely penalized through professional ostracization and criticism. Over the years, these rules have assumed the status of dictums and have become sacrosanct.

Critique of the Dominant Research Paradigm

The above description of the salient characteristics of the dominant research paradigm is intended to provide the basis for the critique that is presented here. This critique will focus upon each of these characteristics separately.

(a) Absolute Critique

This critique is aimed at two aspects of the first characteristic of the dominant research paradigm. Firstly, the limited purpose of knowledge-generation can not be accepted in the present context. While in natural sciences, pure research and applied research fields have developed considerably, it is not so in the social sciences. Unlike physical and natural science and technology, the social sciences do not have a trained set of professionals to utilize their research. Therefore, knowledge-utilization is left to the administrators, policy-makers and programme-designers. This explains the wide gap that presently exists between the available knowledge and its utilization.

Moreover, the complete lack of concern with utilization of generated knowledge leads to research that is irrelevant: research that can

not be used to improve our social, economic and political systems; research that can not assist men and women to guide their own destiny. It is, therefore, questionable whether poor, third world countries can afford social science research that borders on irrelevance.

The second aspect of the absolutist critique is aimed at the fanatical position of social science—research for the discovery of the truth. Influenced by the research paradigm of natural sciences, social science research has also assumed that there is one truth about social phenomena.¹ The reality of social systems and phenomena is not physically determined alone; it is also socially constructed. As such, it is difficult to present a realistic representation of any social phenomenon by believing in one truth. This absolutist stance of social science research is further reinforcing the limited purpose of knowledge-generation because the criteria for evaluating such research are assumed to be totally internal as determined by the truth. The value of research, therefore, can only be judged by the researcher and his peers and not by the larger social system.

(b) Purist Critique

As mentioned earlier, the crusade for objectivity is practiced in classical social science research paradigm by several means. Control of various extraneous interferences is attempted through experimental approaches and field studies are neglected for the fear of being 'unscientific'.² Under the guise of achieving objectivity, rigour is maintained by the researcher's control over the focus and methods of inquiry.³ The researcher knows all and he controls the entire process of research.

The attempt to achieve objectivity by maintaining strict separation between the researcher and the subjects has severe problems. Firstly, the researcher shares the essential humanity with his subjects in social sciences. He is, therefore, subject to the same laws that he is attempting to understand. Secondly, the sheer presence of another person has impact over the 'subject'.⁴ The presence of the researcher influences the natural processes. Moreover, the process of research does have impact on field setting in ways that can alter what is being researched.⁵ It is now amply demonstrated that the behaviour of the researcher in experimental settings has substantial impact on the quality of data collected.⁶ In fact, the quality of data-collection can be significantly improved if the researcher develops rapport with the setting and people in that setting.⁷ To that extent, the very act of strictly

separating the researcher from the setting leads to poor quality of data. What was once assumed to be achieved through objectivity is really being distorted by it.

(c) Rationalist Critique

The overemphasis on thinking and conceptualization is based on a very limited view of man and his abilities to learn and know. The classical research paradigm has, in the interest of reducing subjectivity, emphasized the thinking process as a way of knowing. The feeling and acting processes have been largely neglected; to the extent that human beings as researchers are thinking, feeling and taking sides. It is generally claimed that natural science researchers can prevent their feelings from influencing their inquiry. In a study of scientists working on the Apollo-Moon project, it has been shown that their sensory experiences made significant impact on their research.⁸ Feeling as a mode of knowing has also been clearly emphasized in social science philosophy. Polanyi describes the research process as moving from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge.⁹ Tacit knowledge is sensory and, therefore, in the realm of feelings.

Similarly, acting as a mode of knowing has been emphasized in action-research.¹⁰ In order to understand a system or phenomenon, one can attempt to change it. Certain aspects of a social system can only be understood by acting on them. 'Knowing from action' is an important and useful direction in which some research is beginning to be carried out.¹¹ It is, therefore, possible to engage in entire faculties of thinking, feeling and acting in research process.

The critique is relevant from another perspective. Research implies knowing; and knowing is based on learning. Therefore, theories of adult learning can illuminate approaches to research. The dominant research paradigm is based on a truncated version of adult learning. There are four types of adult learning processes:¹² concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. The dominant research paradigm only supports two of these: reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. The other two modes of learning, concrete experience and active experimentation, are de-emphasized. This limitation, therefore, constrains the classical research paradigm in two ways. Firstly, those persons who are not comfortable in observation and conceptualization modes of learning, do not easily enter the research profession. Secondly, even those who are strong in these two modes and engaged in re-

search, lose some of their insights by denying or neglecting the other two modes. To that extent, the rationalist critique questions excessive reliance on thinking, observing and conceptualizing as main modes of knowing and research.

(d) Elitist Critique

The final critique of the dominant research paradigm is aimed at its elite control over the techniques of research and the outcome of research. As argued earlier, the techniques of research are presently available only to a body of professionals who are enjoying elite status. Similarly, the outcome of research is essentially controlled by the researchers, journals and publishers as the dominant form of communication is written. Personal status, copyrights and other advantages are gained by this research. However, those who assist the research process as respondents or "subjects", those who are researched, have no control over the research and its outcome. The people, systems and settings being researched are mere objects who help provide the basic data for knowledge, but they have no control over that knowledge. This is an ethical issue in that the providers of information are denied any control over it.

It is also a political issue in that knowledge is power and it is further enhancing the power of the elites. Those who are presently powerful, have the expertise to generate knowledge themselves or the resources to acquire/hire researchers to generate knowledge for them. The dominant research paradigm tends to ignore these ethical and political issues. It is also possible that this research paradigm is dominant because it supports and strengthens the elites.

In sum, this paper has been an attempt to provide some basic critique of the dominant research paradigm. It is hoped that this has added to the theory papers in this volume. New directions and different approaches to research in the social sciences have to take these critiques into account.

References

1. Jack D. Douglas: *Investigative Social Research*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976.
2. David, Bakan: *On Method*, London: Jossey-Bass, 1974.
3. *Ibid.*
4. R. Zajonc: 'Social Facilitation', *Science*, 149, 1965.

5. L.D. Brown and R. Tandon: 'Interviews as Catalysts in a Community Setting', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63(2), 1978.
6. R. Rosenthal: *Experimental Effects in Behavioural Research*, New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1966.
7. Frank Friedlander, 'Behavioural Research as a Transactional Process', *Human Organisation*, 27, 1968; Hyman, J., 'Problems in collection of Opinion-Research Data', *American Journal of Sociology*, 55, 1950; C.P. Alderfer, 'Comparison of Questionnaire Responses With and Without Preceding Interviews', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 52, 1968; C.P. Alderfer and L.D. Brown, 'Designing an Empathic Questionnaire for Organisational Research', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 58, 1972.
8. Ian L. Mitoff, *The Subjective Side of Science*, New York: Elsevier, 1976.
9. M. Polanyi, *The Study of Man*, Chicago University Press, 1959.
10. N. Sanford, 'Whatever Happened to Action Research?', *Journal of Social Issues*, 26, 1970.
11. C.P. Alderfer and L.D. Brown, *Learning from Changing*, London: Sage, 1975.
12. David A. Kolb, et al., *Organisational Psychology*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975.

Breaking the Monopoly of Knowledge: Research Methods, Participation and Development*

BUDD HALL

People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create in himself by his own actions. He develops himself by what he does; he develops himself by making his own decisions, by increasing his understanding of what he is doing, and why; by increasing his own knowledge and ability, and by his own full participation—as an equal, in the life of the community he lives in.¹

—*Julius Nyerere*

Research is always and by logical necessity based on moral and political valuations, and the researcher should be obliged to account for them explicitly.²

—*Gunnar Myrdal*

Background

Thinking about development—and about the role of social research in development—has evolved dramatically of late. The still-prevalent idea that development occurs by being injected from the “top” down toward the “bottom” of a society is now widely questioned. Development is increasingly seen as an awakening at the “bottom”, i.e., a

*This article was earlier published in: Hall, Budd, Gillette, Arthur and Tandon, Rajesh (1982) *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly? Participatory Research in Development*, PRIA, New Delhi, pp 13–25.

catalytic process of freeing the creative forces of the impoverished and exploited of any given society and enabling those forces to come to grips with the problems of underdevelopment. According to the earlier view, it was expected that development could be designed by planners and scholars from afar, then delivered by technicians and cadres; often, indeed, the mass of peasants and others most affected by underdevelopment tended to be seen as a kind of problem that the experts had to solve. Under the new view, the people are not the problem, they are the solution; at least, the solution is seen to be latent within them.

With the shift in thinking about development has come a general questioning in all fields of development-related social science about the way in which research is conducted and, in turn, about the overall values from which research proceeds. In the field of adult education, this discussion has been particularly rich. A growing number of researchers are exploring new methods. It has been suggested that their experimentation derives from three main concerns:

1. The concern that quantitative research methods are not providing an adequate understanding of complex reality;
2. The desire for practical research that can be used as a base for setting policy and developing programmes which will promote social justice and greater self-reliance;
3. A view of human behaviour which sees individuals as active agents in their environments rather than as passive objects to be researched.³

Purposes and Forms of Research

Most social science research carried out in the Third World (and elsewhere) is related to either of two purposes. First, the need and desire of administrators and policy makers to gather information from those who do not make decisions in order to make decisions for them. This happens at both the national level, as government ministries attempt to 'solve' various problems of underdevelopment, and at international levels as inter-governmental agencies attempt to offer solutions as well.

The second purpose relates to the researcher's own economic needs. For a man working in a university or research institution, knowledge is the only commodity available to sell. He gathers or 'mines' ideas and information in order to survive. His priorities go to collecting

data at a central point, summarizing it and then packaging it in such a way that journals, books, seminars, international conferences can consume it. Policy makers represent an obvious and major market for the ideas and information. The need to serve the people from and about whom the information has been gathered (the unemployed, the villagers, the students, the teachers), is of low priority. These groups will not buy the results—and perhaps did not want the research in the first place.

The forms of research which have developed have been shaped by these two purposes. Quantitative research has been an attempt to summarize social information in a form that is convenient and that, most importantly, readily lends itself to transfer and dissemination. This has been seen as a necessity as society has become more complex and as decision-making has been pulled ever farther from most people's grasp. But this chapter is not an attack on numbers. Numbers in and by themselves are not the problem. There is now and will be a need for all kinds of census information (although the absence of national statistics in so many fields in China gives rise to speculations about even this.) The fundamental question is: who has the right to create knowledge?

The vast majority of all social science research done anywhere in the world represents one aspect or another of either experimental designs, comparison of case studies, anthropological (participant observation) or survey methods of various kinds. Most of this work has been characterized by a desire for objectivity and scientific accuracy. All of these methods have been characterized by the fact that problem formulation, analysis and knowledge creation converge in—and are therefore controlled by—the persons initiating the process.

Of these approaches, by far the most common is the survey approach based on a process of problem formulation, hypothesis construction, 'instrument' construction (usually some form of interview or questionnaire), collection of data, analysis of data and interpretation of data. The last few years' experience and frustrations of national and international researchers working in the Third World—and the resultant evolution of their thinking—have brought to light several shortcomings of the survey research approach.

What are the weaknesses of the most commonly used research methods?

A number of drawbacks can be identified. They are the more serious since some 90 per cent of studies done in the fields of edu-

cation and development in recent years have followed the survey research approach, although a variety of other research approaches exists and could have been used.

The Survey Research Approach Oversimplifies Social Reality and is Therefore Inaccurate

Instrument construction is often arbitrary; such specific tools as semantic differential tests and various other tests devised by those who work from a primarily psychological point of view often express class bias. Moreover, a research process that extracts information from individuals in isolation from one another and aggregates the information into a single set of figures may do so at the expense of oversimplifying the complexity and richness of human experience. Responses to problems offered by groups of people are not necessarily the same as the sum of individual responses of people speaking alone. It is, of course, correct to say that the use and interpretation of the figures 'depends on the institutional and social context within which the research is embedded'.⁴ Still, even in an institutional framework that encourages popular participation or control of decision making, the representation of interviewees' perceptions by a set of figures such as '22 per cent of those interviewed said that their home environment has had the most influence on their career choice,' or '42.16 per cent of teachers report problems' is blatantly inadequate. The illusion of accuracy through numbers has been perpetuated by many of us researchers. Unfortunately, this illusion obscures—or mystifies—reality.

A second way in which survey research oversimplifies reality is by forcing choices, i.e., by asking the wrong questions. Information is sought through interviews or questionnaires which provide a preset framework for the responses. For example, people may be asked what is 'most influential', 'least satisfactory', 'first choice' or 'most responsible'. But attitudes, decisions and behaviour do not reflect a single rank-ordered cause or group of causes. The curious fact is that all of us have experienced this false choice. We have often filled in forms or questionnaires and have felt the desire to say, 'that really isn't the right question'. The forced choice approach becomes a fetish in some educational research. This was seen in one case where a 'diagnostic tool' was being employed to help in the analysis of new adult students. Potential students of English were asked to choose the

form of literature in which they were most interested from a list that included novels, short-stories, poetry, drama and non-fiction. What of the respondent who did not know the difference between the forms (this is likely enough in modern literature), and wanted some of all, or was curious about a particular historical period?

A third reason why one-time surveys oversimplify is their presentation of a static picture of reality: a photograph of a group of people with neither a past nor a future. The very fact that the survey is historical is a severe limitation; social change is a continuous process—a dialectic or linear movement (depending on one's point of view) in time. The way people respond on one day under one set of conditions by no means guarantees they will have a similar reaction at another time.

Survey Research is Often Alienating, Dominating or Oppressive in Character

Many social scientists assume that their research is neutral. Does it, however, seem probable or even possible that the design of a research project or questionnaire can not reflect, consciously or otherwise, the designer's own values and ideology? Interviews worked out in a university department or an adult education institution are, by nature, one-sided. The survey research approach regards people as sources of information, possessing bits of isolated knowledge needed by the researcher. But interviewees are neither expected nor apparently assumed to be able to analyze a given social reality. In extreme instances, researchers take up people's time with badly formulated questions and make interpretations based on little experience in the area or social class of the interviewees. The results of their research provide the basis for policies or programmes which are then expected to be useful and relevant to the interviewees!

Research approaches of this kind often create the illusion among those from whom information is obtained that research is rigorous, highly technical, scientifically 'pure' and that the work can only be done by those who are university-trained. The abilities of people to investigate their own realities are not stimulated or developed. Those whose daily existence is most affected by ill-health, poor nutrition, low levels of production or failures of educational provision are effectively excluded from formulating the changes which might lead to improvements. Control is left to those who by virtue of training and

responsibility levels, are unfamiliar with the experiences within which change is sought.

One large-scale example of this was noted in the UNESCO/UNDP evaluation of the Experimental World Literacy Programme. The emphasis on large-scale, internationally comparable survey design resulted in a situation where few national researchers were viewed as competent to carry out the type of evaluation needed. The resultant instruments not only grossly oversimplified the relationship of literacy to economic development (an admittedly narrow linkage in any case) but were designed in a very biased fashion. For example: under the general heading of 'transformation of the milieu', indicators were devised for testing changes in literates' behaviours in the following categories: means of production, volume of production, monetary income, income of kind, consumption of durable goods. These indicators say virtually nothing about vital behaviours concerning social, political or cultural transformation even though pertinent data were available in certain project evaluations. In one country, where per capita GNP is less than \$ 200, the criterion of increased consumption was broken down into indicators that included safety razors and wrist watches.⁵

Survey Research is Not Conducive to Subsequent Action

Much research in adult education is intended to result in action. It may attempt to determine a community's educational needs or to modify an existing adult education programme. In either case, it is often expected that, when subsequent changes are made, the people of the community or the students in the adult education programme will participate more actively or more efficiently than before, or will gain increased benefits of some kind. It is a basic principle of planning that the likelihood of full and effective participation in any venture—educational, political or social—is improved by involving would-be participants in the decision-making process. Research which has alienated respondents, or at best treated them as sources of raw information, has little likelihood of creating a human environment conducive to change.

Survey Research Methods are Not Consistent with the Principles of Adult Education

The arguments put forward so far would contribute to a general critique of social science research. In the field of adult education, there

are additional specific criteria to be met in selecting an appropriate research approach. To begin with, adult education is rooted in an especially strong concern for social justice and equality. Concern for the adult learner is often synonymous with concern for the proportion of the population that has not had, for various reasons, a fair share of either national wealth or social services. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, adult education is directly linked to attempts to increase participation of citizens in national development and to provide a minimum level of basic education to all people.

A reading of any or all of the basic adult education texts, such as Kidd, Knowles or Miller, would produce a set of basic principles such as:

- (a) Programmes should be based on adult needs;
- (b) Adults are more able to articulate their learning needs than children;
- (c) Although adults' ways of learning change with age, the phrase 'too old to learn' is a fallacy;
- (d) Adults often work out quite complex learning strategies to achieve desired goals on their own.⁶

These principles, and many others, imply a faith in adults as mature persons participating actively in the world. It is no secret that the implementation of actual programmes very often falls short of these principles; but the principles do exist and should serve as a basic guide for adult education research. John Holmes has suggested that if educational research had been working with adults instead of children, current doubts about research methods would have arisen much earlier as adults tend not to be so passive as children.⁷

Instead, we find that the dominant research methods in use today, and the ones being generated as adult educators begin to do more and more research, are alienating, inaccurate as a means of identifying needs, and stem from the assumption that certain adults are marginal or incapable of articulating their own needs. Research in adult education is at an early stage of development. We still have time to select research approaches that suit adult education uniquely and thereby keep us one step ahead of other social sciences, which are now in the throes of questioning and attempting to replace unsatisfactory approaches.

Alternative Strategies

Here and there around the world, work has been done to define ways of changing and improving social science methodology. The follow-

ing brief overview of recent significant literature on this subject shows, like an unfinished mosaic, that the search for alternatives is in a preliminary phase and has, in any event, not yet become a comprehensive and coherent movement.

A general dissatisfaction with orthodox approaches has been expressed in the work of Blumer.⁸ Qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, strategies have made their strongest entry with Glaser and Strauss.⁹ Filstead's introduction in *Qualitative Methodology* provides a useful discussion substantiating the need for alternatives.¹⁰ Pilsworth and Ruddock have described an alternative approach based on the phenomenological position.¹¹ Still other approaches have borrowed from anthropology and stress the value of participant observation.¹² Beltran has outlined convincingly the Western bias in social science research methods.¹³ Callaway has similarly singled out the cultural trap which researchers are prey to when attempting allegedly objective research in non-Western cultures.¹⁴

From Africa come the work of Swantz and, in some sense, Malya with his approach to providing follow-up literacy material and investigation of a literacy environment.¹⁵ In Latin America, Freire provides useful ideas in Chapter Three of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and a bit more in a talk given to the Institution of Adult Education, in the United Republic of Tanzania.

Vio describes some attempts at peasant participation in Chile under the Allende government. Beltran and Gerace have developed important concepts of communication among peasants rather than to them.¹⁶ These concepts of 'horizontal communication' are important links. In addition to Freire, Pinto has elaborated on forms of thematic investigation.¹⁷ Within the field of sociology, the de Oliveiras have put forward a compelling set of similar ideas in *The Militant Observer: A Sociological Alternative*.

Participatory Research

Although very diverse, the above-mentioned authors do show a tendency to combine community participation in decision-making with methods of social investigation. This combination could be called participatory research. The term refers to the efforts in several spheres to develop research approaches which involve those persons who are the expected 'beneficiaries' of the research. The term deliberately focuses on involvement of those who are traditionally the objects of

research in the entire research process itself: formulation of research design, collection of data, interpretation of information. With the support of the International Council of Adult Education, so many researchers in several countries are defining and experimenting with formal and informal ways of developing different aspects of participatory research. Some of the guidelines that have emerged from these efforts to date are:

1. A research project—both process and results—can be of immediate and direct benefit to a community (as opposed to serving merely as the basis of an academic paper or obscure policy analysis).

Research cannot be justified solely as an intellectual exercise or as a justification of academic career-building. It is important that the community or population gain not only from the results of the research, but from the process itself. This means, for example, that the community members should, by participating in the research process, be better able to articulate problems themselves and to initiate the search for solutions. In concrete terms, the reports of youth research in the United Republic of Tanzania by Swantz¹⁸ and the agrarian reform work in Chile stress that the entire research team should contribute to the productive work in the area. Such an approach has the added advantage of creating a better atmosphere and providing the outside members of a research team with the possibility for closer involvement with the community.

2. A research process should involve the community in the entire research project, from the formulation of the problem and the interpretation of the findings to planning corrective action based upon them.

This is perhaps the fundamental principle of participatory research and its point of most radical departure from both orthodox research approaches and such improvements as grounded theory. The research should be based on a system of discussion, investigation and analysis in which the 'researched' are as much a part of the process as the researcher. Theories are neither developed beforehand to be tested, or drawn by the researcher from his or her involvement with the reality. Reality is described by a community as it develops its own theories about itself. Research teams would need to include villagers, farmers and unemployed persons, as well as educators or titular local leadership.

3. The research process should be seen as part of a total educational experience which serves to determine community needs, and to

increase awareness of problems and commitment to solutions within the community.

From this point of view, research becomes an integral part of educational planning and indeed, broader development planning. It could thus become an accepted method of raising interest and increasing motivation. Various techniques of stimulating initial involvement in research and thus self-education have been used including photographs in Peru (and elsewhere), and theatre in Jamaica (Drama for Progress) and Botswana.

4. Research should be viewed as a dialectic process, a dialogue over time, and not as a static picture of reality at one point of time.

Carr-Hill makes a compelling case for using questionnaires—typically static instruments—for consciousness raising.¹⁹ His point is that, precisely because questionnaires are biased, they can be used positively to create an awareness and to awaken in individuals powers of analysis which can then be brought to bear on the problem. I would agree with this point, but would want to make certain that, in a participatory research project, several additional conditions are met.

The first is that the questionnaire represents only the first stage of analysis, the basis of several discussions and interactions with the respondents, so as to achieve the above-mentioned 'dialogue over time'. Secondly, that the interpretation of the questionnaire data not be performed solely by a single social scientist, but it be a joint activity involving respondents. Thirdly, one would want any action resulting from the research process to be determined by a group larger than a social scientist and his or her bureaucratic counterparts.

I have spoken of using questionnaires so as to 'prove the rule' of the above-enunciated guideline by describing the exception. The point is that, whatever the information-gathering instrument or technique, the gathering and interpretation of information should be viewed as a continuing activity characterized by two mutually re-inforcing kinds of dialectic: (a) interaction between community and researchers, and (b) interaction between gathering and interpretation, with the information gathered fuelling interpretation while, in addition, interpretation yields new needs for information that must be gathered. In this way, the chances of producing a stilted, static and unidimensional image of reality are reduced.

5. The object of research, like the object of education, should be the liberation of human creative potential and the mobilization of human resources for the solution of social problems.

This is a value statement, an underlying assumption for participatory research which may well not suit everyone. But then this type of research will perhaps not be acceptable to all in any case. The point of intersection of research, learning and socio-economic development should be the same—man. The more intellectual power and creativity that can be brought to bear on society, the more likely will be solutions to its problems. What is needed? More highly-trained and sophisticated researchers operating with ever-more esoteric techniques? Or whole neighbourhoods, communities and nations of 'researchers'?

An analogy to medicine may be appropriate here, although only partly so. Social science research often appears to replicate a situation in which a doctor tries, in silence, to diagnose a patient's symptoms from behind an aseptic and opaque screen. The doctor measures the patient's responses through a long stethoscope (the social researcher's orthodox survey approach) and his main concern is to develop a longer and better stethoscope for going over or under the screen. But the real need is for the doctor to set aside the stethoscope, walk around the aseptic opaque screen and begin talking with the patient. It is, after all, the patient who knows best what hurts and where.

I said this analogy was only partly appropriate. That is because, precisely in the light of the man-centred guideline for research, the researcher should not consider him or herself to be a doctor ministering to a sick person. Rather, both researcher and 'researched' should be viewed as partners in a joint venture of human liberation and mobilization.

6. Research has ideological implications. There are two points involved here. First is the re-affirmation of the political nature of all we do, especially in adult education. Knowledge is power. Research that allows for popular involvement and increased capacities of analysis will also make conflictual action possible, or necessary. It may, for example, be necessary at a certain time for the researcher to choose to side with one group or another within the community. The use of the term 'participatory research' will not prevent someone from using similar methods to help a group of slum landlords work out a set of 'tenant-proof' rules. It may be necessary to make the choice to work only for the tenants at an early stage. What is reality for landlords, and perhaps even some government officials, is not necessarily reality for tenants.

Conclusions

We have created, and are still creating, a situation in social science research which effectively denies recognition of the knowledge-generating abilities innate to every human being in the world. In our search for techniques for adding to the 'body of knowledge', we have lost sight of objectives of our work: people. Science is not a bag of tricks that one learns by being trained to remove oneself ever farther from reality. We have created an illusion and we have come to believe in it—namely, that only those with sophisticated techniques can create knowledge. This should remind all social scientists of the crucial need not to forget that, whatever they do, they must keep a steady eye on their own values. This is especially so of participatory research workers.

Participatory research is not a set of ideas that can be applied at random with predictable results. It is not neat, it cannot be rounded off to two decimal points, and it is even difficult to translate into charts. It does not eliminate the need constantly to evaluate the political implications of one's work. It provides no guarantee for ideological or scientific purity (does anything?). What it does is to offer an alternative way of conceiving and executing research which may suit both the needs of our work and our own values more closely, while serving more faithfully the interests of those with and for whom we work.

References

1. J.K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Development*, Dar-es-Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 60.
2. G. Myrdal, *Objectivity in Social Research*, London: Duckworth, 1979, p. 74.
3. K. Rockhill, *The Uses of Qualitative Research in Adult Education to "Enlighten, Enoble and Enable"*, Los Angeles: Department of Education, University of California, 1976, p. 1.
4. R. Car-Hill, *Development of Educational Services for the Needs of Population Groups: Testing Some Concepts*, Mimeo, Paris: UNESCO (EPP), June, 1974, p. 30.
5. UNESCO, *The Experimental World Literacy Programme: A Critical Assessment*, Paris, UNESCO, 1976, p. 153.
6. J.R. Kidd, *Teaching and Learning in Adult Education*, New York: Macmillan, 1964; M. Knowles, *How Adults Learn*, 2nd Edition, New York: Association Press, 1974; H. Miller, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*,

New York: Seabury Press, 1971.

7. J. Holmes, 'Thoughts on Research Methodology', *Studies in Adult Education*, Vol. 8, No. 2, October, 1976, p. 150.
8. H. Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
9. B.G. Glaser, and A.L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago: Aldine, 1967.
10. W.J. Filstead, *Qualitative Methodology*, Chicago: Markham, 1970.
11. Michael Pilsworth and Ralph Roddock, 'Persons, Not Respondents—Alternative approaches in the study of social processes, in B. Hall, G. Arthur and T. Rajesh (eds) (1982) *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly? Participation in Development*, International Council for Adult Education, Toronto.
12. G. McCall, and J.K. Simmons, *Issues in Participant Observation*, Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1969.
13. L.R. Beltran, 'Alien Premises, Objects, and Methods in Latin American Communication Research', *Communication Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, April 1976.
14. H. Callaway, 'Research for Development: Adult Learners Within Their Cultural Setting', paper presented at Conference on Adult Education for Development, Dar-es-Salaam, June 1976.
15. S. Malya, 'Tanzania's Literacy Experience', *Literacy Discussion*, Spring, 1975; Swatz, M.L., 'Participant Role of Research in Development', mimeo, Dar-es-Salaam; BRALUP, 1974; and, *Youth and Development in the Coast Region of Tanzania*, Dar-es-Salaam; BRALUP Research Report No. 6, 1974.
16. Beltran, op. cit.; Gerace, F., 'Communication Horizontal', Lima: Liberia, 1973.
17. J.B. Pinto, 'Metodologia de la investigation tematica', Bogota: IICA-CIDA, No. 101, 1969.
18. Swantz, op. cit.
19. Carr-Hill, op. cit.

Participatory Research: Main Concepts and Issues*

RAJESH TANDON

From the days in the 1930s when the University of Bombay first introduced a postgraduate course in sociology, to our days, there has been a gradual change to professionalization of the social sciences. With professionalization came specialization and its acceptance as a science that can be considered objective by creating a distance between the researcher and the 'object' of study, i.e., the people studied—actors in the social setting.

What is forgotten in this classical mode of research is that this cry for objectivity is a result of the post-renaissance developments in the West, the evolutionary thinking of the late nineteenth century and the rationalist schools of the early twentieth century, when 'modernist' thought considered the world as chaos. The work of the social scientist was to create order out of this 'chaos' by remaining outside the system and taking an observer stance. His work was to analyze the behaviour of man and understand the system in a 'scientific' way.

Looking at the world as chaos. The work of the social scientist was to create order out of chaos led further to the model of man where subsistence and survival were hypothesized as the prime driving forces. In order to further gain some control over the chaos it was necessary to generate a construct of social order demanding compliance.¹

The classical research approach in social settings has, therefore, implicitly borrowed the method of inquiry used in the natural sciences. This has

*This article has drawn extensively from the following paper: Tandon, Rajesh (1981), 'Participatory Evaluation and Research: Main Concepts and Issues', in Fernandes, Walter and Tandon, Rajesh (eds.), *Participatory Research and Evaluation: Experiments in Research as a Process of Liberation*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

led to a distorted emphasis on 'objectivity' and researcher-object differentiation. This approach in social settings has placed primacy on developing research designs (both in the laboratory and in the field) that attempt to maintain the separation between the researcher and individuals in the social system under study. Such an emphasis will seem misdirected if we examine the three distinctive characteristics of inquiry in social settings:

- i. Social research means a study of individuals, groups and organizations in a social setting;
- ii. The researcher shares his essential humanity with the individuals in the social setting under study;
- iii. The very act of inquiry tends to have some impact on the social system under study.

One can clearly notice the differences that emanate from these distinctive characteristics of social research. In the natural sciences it is solely aimed at increased understanding of, and knowledge about, natural phenomena. The utilization of this new knowledge has been the task of the technologist. Social science researchers have assigned similar roles to themselves. Social change based on the enhanced understanding of the social system and phenomena is not seen as an integral part of their role. In the absence of social technologies, the utilization of new knowledge has been neglected.

The Historical Context

One may ask why technologists have not 'arrived' in spite of the effort at 'objectivity'. The reasons should probably be found in the historical context in which the social sciences grew. The search for objectivity that finds its best example in Durkheim is the result of the interaction of the early twentieth century social thinkers with the natural scientists. Their preoccupation was to show that sociology and anthropology were sciences, i.e., objective like the natural sciences.² They had thus to be shown as studying an object that was outside man. Durkheim declared that the object of study was a social fact which is external to man, 'every way of acting which is general through a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations.'³

If Durkheim's pre-occupation was to show that sociology was different from psychology and philosophy, Weber had to show its psychological linkages which were essentially individualistic.

The main intellectual influences in which Weber's work is steeped are as predominantly German as those which shaped Durkheim's writings are French. Moreover, Durkheim's early studies are rather abstract and philosophical in character ... Weber's first works on the other hand, are detailed historical studies, and it was from within the context of specific problems brought to light primarily by the German historical school that Weber went on to expand the range of his writings to embrace questions of a general theoretical nature.⁴

Moreover, in all the classics, including Marx, an evolutionistic trend is clear. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this was also a colonial context since it made a distinction between 'primitive' and 'advanced' societies—the former belonging to the colonies and the latter to the colonizing countries. Though Indian sociologists gave it a 'national' interpretation by making the anthropologists study the 'primitive' tribes of India and the sociologists studying India's 'advanced' societies,⁵ the original intention of the colonialist trying to understand his own society by going back to the origin of 'primitive civilizations', or trying to know more about the colonies in order to better control them, has to be borne in mind.

It is in this context of evolutionism and its colonial past that the present should be examined. This is especially important if one bears in mind that in spite of thirty years of independence, our intellectuals are, by and large, dependent for their status and acceptance on their links with the West.

From among the members of the second generation and of the third generation (of sociologists) some went to the United States and some to Britain after independence ... All these persons formed a category and did influence sociological tradition in India, by introducing the new trends. For academic position a foreign degree or even a stay abroad without any degree, was considered more acceptable by the universities and they filled up many positions in the university departments. This new trend was reinforced by the visit of the foreigners to India, again a very large number from the United States and a smaller number from Britain.⁶

Classical Methodology

This methodology was more and more quantitative in character and assumed the universality of social principles. In other words, meth-

odologies developed in the West under a totally different social, cultural, economic and political situation were absolutized and transferred to India and other Third World countries. These methodologies that took the principles of natural sciences for granted, did not make allowance for the distinctive nature of social science inquiry. If we assume that it is impossible to control all the spurious interferences in social research (and this is an increasingly doubtful assumption), then it might be difficult to talk about 'reproducibility' and consequent generalization. We only develop a partial understanding of a social phenomenon and this seriously limits our ability to generalize. Therefore, a major argument against the utilization of knowledge generated by social research is its lack of applicability in particular settings. As the director of the Amul cooperative said recently,

Technocratic approaches to improve productivity in our village cannot put the tools of improved productivity into the hands of our poor, rural majority. Thus, increasingly, in our search for a key to rural development, we leave aside the conventional economists and technocrats and we turn to the sociologists. Then we encounter a paradox: the professional sociologist is very good at describing a social structure, at measuring attitudes to change, at diagnosing male/female roles and so on But all these sociological exercises do not seem to be of much help when it comes to putting some equality to change, or freeing women from the bondage of traditional ideas about men's and women's roles.⁷

To that extent, those interested in social change in a particular setting need to move away from this type of professionalism and initiate their own research process in that setting. It is because classical social research has neglected the issue of change of social system except as one more subject of study. It has not only been indifferent to this issue but has also actively punished those who attempted to combine the two purposes of understanding and change by labelling their efforts 'unscientific'.

Another argument against researchers' involvement in social change is premised on the misconception that research is value-free. Since all change, especially social change, is based on a normative vision of the 'desired' and since the researcher's task is to be objective and value-free in pursuit of his inquiry, how can one expect him to combine the process of inquiry with the process of change?

The underlying fallacy in this argument is the naïve assumption that inquiry is value-free. Neither social research, not even inquiry in the natural sciences is value-free. The researcher not only believes that the natural phenomena are orderly and therefore can be researched, but he also adopts a framework in order to collect observations. These frameworks are as much normative as those held by social researchers.

Moreover, the myths of value-free inquiry and the non-normative role of the researcher have led to the dehumanizing and catastrophic utilization of knowledge. The overwhelming obsession of researchers with 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' has resulted in the development of nuclear missiles, biological poisons and psychological brainwashing. Other studies have shown how the standards of professionalism in the social sciences set by foreigners, have in fact led to a colonial control of institutions and knowledge.⁸

Finally, there is an ethical issue that has been largely neglected in classical social research. The practice of classical social research resulted in complete and exclusive control of the process and outcome of research by professional researchers. The researcher develops knowledge based on data collected from individuals, groups and organizations in a social setting. Those individuals, groups and organizations do not have any control over the knowledge generated from the data obtained from them. They are only the 'objects' of research. And the researcher is neither accountable to them nor responsible for the use of knowledge thus generated. A researcher can do that in the natural sciences without any ethical considerations because the subject matter is natural phenomena. Can we follow the same argument for inquiry in social phenomena?

Participatory Research

In the light of the above frustrations with classical research, it may be valuable to analyze the issue of control in a little more depth. In various types of research approaches, what is chosen and who chooses? Figure 1 can give us some idea.

As Figure 1 shows, classical research emphasizes professional control over the generation, utilization and elaboration of knowledge—hence the need for new approaches. Participatory research and evaluation maintain that the actors in the situation are not merely objects of someone else's study but are actively influencing the proc-

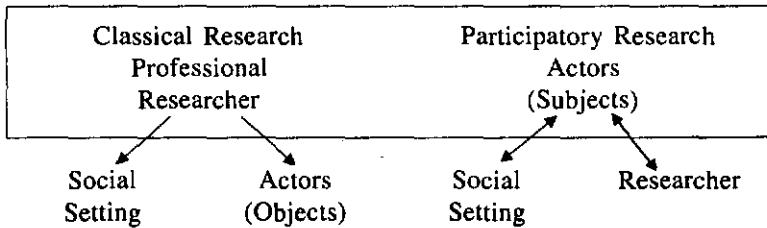


Fig. 1: Control over Knowledge-Generation and Elaboration Process

ess of knowledge-generation and elaboration. To that extent, the participatory approach is an effort to check the present trends of: (a) professionalization and centralization of knowledge in its generation and utilization since it can be used to manipulate the actors of a social setting without their having any control over it; (b) the neglect of the actors in the situation not only as sources of knowledge but also as its legitimate owners.

Is this an ethical issue or ideological confusion? Probably it is a combination of both. Whatever be the case, it is obvious that if the actors in the social setting become the owners of knowledge they generate, the process of this elaboration can itself become an important step in awareness-building and social change among the oppressed.

If we broadly classify research type into the three categories shown in Figure 2, then it is easy to understand how the participatory research approach differs in some very fundamental ways. Academic research is what most professional researchers are engaged in and what most research institutes reward and encourage. Policy/evaluation research has become increasingly popular over the last two decades. An administration, policy-maker or government agency commissions a research study in order to satisfy some of the administrative needs. This client is, by and large, outside the problem or area he wants researched by a professional researcher.

Participatory research has been set against these two types on the three key steps in a research act: choice of the problem, choice of the methodology and choice of the outcome. Figure 2 highlights, somewhat dramatically, this issue of control in research. Academic research has emphasized unilateral control by the professional researcher on all steps of a research act.

<i>Steps in Participatory</i>	<i>Academic Research Policy/Evaluation Research</i>		
		<i>Research (Commissioned)</i>	<i>Research</i>
1. CHOICE OF PROBLEM			
What?	Choice based on the interest and discipline of the professional researcher	Choice based on client's administrative needs	Choice based on immediate problem situation
Who?	Professional researcher	Client (who is outside the problem area)	Jointly by the actors in the problem situation and professional researcher
2. CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY			
What?	Experimental research designs, use of reliable instruments, statistical analysis	Quasi-experimental field research designs, use of reliable instruments, statistical analysis	Consensual-validity-based research design, use of Oemphathic Instruments, multiple analysis methods
Who?	Professional researcher	Professional researcher	Jointly by the actors and the professional researcher
3. CHOICE OF OUTCOME			
What?	Publications (Presentations in 'learned' seminars)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report (to the Client) - Publication (if the researcher negotiates) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes in the situation - Increased knowledge base - Increased capacity among actors to inquire into and change their situation
Who?	Professional researcher	Client (primarily)	Jointly by the actors and the professional researcher

Fig. 2: Distinction Between Three Types of Research Process

Participatory research is an approach where this control is jointly shared by the researcher and the actors in the problem situation. While the former gives an absolute value to the minority of theorizers in a society, the latter begins with trust in the knowledge which the common man possesses. What has been said by some authors about the sociology of knowledge can equally well be applied to participatory research:

Theoretical thought, 'ideas' *Weltanschauungen* are not *that* important in society. Although every society contains these phenomena, they are only part of the sum of what passes for 'knowledge'. Only a very limited group of people in any society engages in theorizing, in the business of 'ideas' and the construction of *Weltanschauungen*. But everyone in society participates in its 'knowledge' in one way or another. Put differently, only a few are concerned with the theoretical thought in society and history is a natural failing of theorizers. It is then all the more necessary to correct this intellectualistic misapprehension. The theoretical formulations of reality, whether they be scientific or philosophical or even mythological, do not exhaust what is 'real' for the members of a society. In other words, commonsense 'knowledge' rather than 'ideas' must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge. It is precisely this 'knowledge' that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist.⁹

The Main Issues

Before going into the details of some of the implications of this fundamental emphasis in participatory research and evaluation, it might be worthwhile to enumerate what a participatory approach might entail concretely. First of all, in its broad and loose meaning, it has been an ongoing process in India. As mentioned in the above quotation, the label may be given by theoreticians, but its practice is quite common in groups engaged in the process of re-awakening the weakest sections of our society. As examples of such efforts one may mention the organization of landless labourers in Dhulia district of Maharashtra that has used a similar methodology in identifying the records of people whose land was illegally alienated from them.¹⁰ Another well-known case is the Chipko movement in Uttar Pradesh where, as a result of the people's reflection on the causes of the 1970 floods,

deforestation caused by some industrialists, the forest department's refusal to let the local poor use the Ash trees for their needs and the permission they granted to commercial contractors and industrialists, the people organized themselves into a resistance group. A community forestry scheme based on the right of the local people to the forest produce and the maintenance of its environment was born out of it.¹¹

The relevance of this characteristic of a participatory approach is not merely to recognize that, while the label is new, the approach has existed over the years, but also to accept the fact that while labelling of concepts is an activity of professional researchers, ordinary people somehow do not see their approaches in similar conceptual frameworks. Participatory research is, therefore, a new approach for professionals and a pragmatic one for those in the field.

This poses significant questions for the development of a participatory method. For example, do we have a single, well-defined and well-articulated approach? Are we clear that the range represented by those engaged in participatory research and evaluation (from professional researchers located in universities to semi-literate field work-

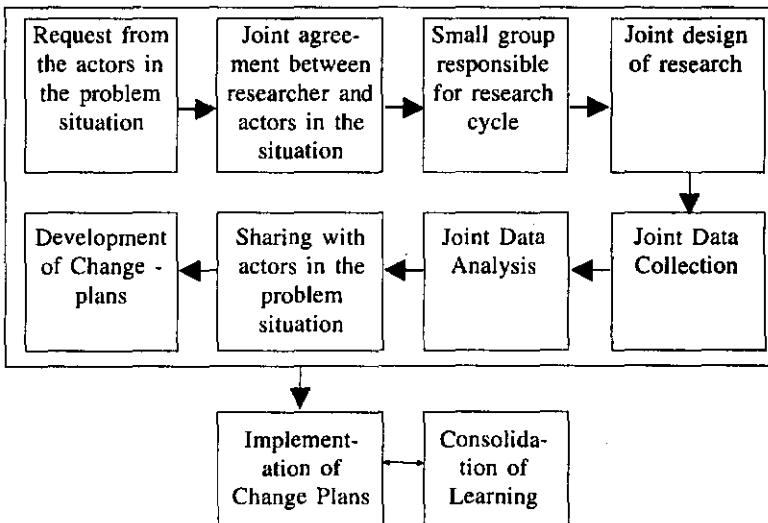


Fig. 3: Steps in an 'Ideal' Participatory Research Approach

ers in the village) necessarily implies tensions which need to be addressed in an inclusive manner?

We do not as yet have clear-cut answers to all these questions but can only think of tentative steps. Figure 3 is an attempt to chart the steps of an 'ideal' participatory approach.

One major element missing in this 'ideal' model is the ideological/normative stance. To the extent that participatory approach is an attempt to break away from unidirectional control of the professional researcher, it has to be consistent in its definition of 'actors in the problem situation'. Therefore, the participatory approach is solely in response to and for the fulfilment of the needs of the less powerful, weaker segments of social settings and is part of a process of their growth into consciousness.

At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. Reflection and action become imperative when one does not erroneously attempt to create a dichotomy between the content of humanity and its historical forms. The insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection—true reflection—leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection.¹²

Some comments related to Fig. 3 are needed here:

- i. The initial request in an ideal participatory process may come from the powerful actors in the situation. But in reality, this may not be so. The request may come from someone powerful within the situation, or outside it. Yet, the researcher can transform it into a participatory process by following some later steps, provided his ideological stance is explicit.
- ii. Various steps outlined in Fig. 3 appear to be one-shot, fixed ones. In reality, a participatory process has to be cyclical and iterative. For example, joint agreement may need to be worked and re-worked many times, over the entire cycle.
- iii. As presented here, various steps in the participatory process assume the involvement of an outside researcher. In reality, groups of actors in a particular setting may go through the entire process without any assistance from the outsider. In fact, effective participatory process must have the increased capacity of the actors in the situation to inquire into and change their situation as a

valued outcome. To that extent, an outside researcher will become redundant soon.¹³

- iv. As presented in Fig. 3, the participatory process may appear identical to Action Research. However, there are two significant ways in which participatory research is different. First, the ideological stance and emphasis on making the researcher's value-premises explicit are generally not mentioned in the action research approach. Second, action research can be, and is being, undertaken without the participation and control of the actors in the situation. In essence, then, action research becomes another method in the exclusive control of the professional researcher.

The Participants

A related characteristic that deserves mention here is the range of people and their diverse motivations to enter into the participatory process. We can see the participants at two levels, i.e., professionals and the common man, especially the oppressed.

At the professional level, in the Indian context, there are at least three sets of people and motivations. One set comprises those who have been trained professionally in the empiricist paradigm of traditional social science research. They have moved into participatory research due to frustration with the existing forms of research. For this set, the reality has remained untouched and unchanged despite tremendous development in research technology. They notice that despite the increased volume of printed material, the life of ordinary people has remained unchanged. Moreover, the institutionalization of research in the universities and other such institutes has led to a monopolistic control over research, on the one hand, and a distance of research from ordinary people on the other. For this set of researchers, such irrelevance of social science research is intolerable in the context of a poor society like ours.

For the second set, motivation is related to the need to redirect the process of development in the country. The failure of existing programmes and models of development is being well established. These are the activists and field workers who have experienced frustration and anger over the misdirection of our developmental strategies. For them, participatory research is a possible alternative to provide momentum to decentralized alternative models of development—development of the people with their active participation. They are en-

gaged in localized experiments in a participatory process to try out these alternative models of development.

Education as a means of social transformation is the underlying motivation of the third set. For this set of people, research is a learning and educational experience and, therefore, should be attempted in a manner that facilitates societal level change. Unless research contributes to learning and unless that learning is widespread enough to include those who are part of that setting, it is a meaningless activity. To that extent, participatory research has been found to be a relevant approach to education and learning.

At the level of the oppressed sections, the participants are predominantly rural. The size of the rural population in India and in other Asian countries, as well as the complexities of development dynamics, have contributed to the overwhelming rural context of participatory research in this country, or for that matter, in the Third World as a whole. The best examples of this process are, in fact, from rural areas. As examples we may mention the Joint Irrigation System among tribals in Southern Rajasthan, *Gram Vikas* in the Ganjam district of Orissa or *Bhumi Sena* in the Thane district of Maharashtra.

This rural context has contributed to a much better understanding of the processes involved than would have been possible in an urban professional atmosphere. Moreover, Indian activists and researchers have been able to learn from similar experiments in other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America and have been able to contribute to learning in these continents. In that sense, it is considerably different from similar experiments in Europe and North America and can at best complement them since they are, by and large, urban in character.

Some Implications

It should be clear from what has been said above that the participatory approach is not value-neutral but is ideologically committed to the weakest sections. It has a necessary relationship with social transformation and action while classical social science research has conspicuously avoided any active involvement. It is this close linkage between social action and its political implications that has scared many professional researchers from adopting a participatory approach. These professionals work on the assumption that research should be value-neutral.

However, one can question the validity of such an assumption. Though scholars may consider themselves objective, the system within which they work cannot be politically neutral. Research in social settings has always been political and either maintains, explains or justifies the *status quo* or provides data to those who want to question, examine or transform it. Moreover, studies have shown that many apparently charitable foundations such as Ford, Carnegie and Rockefeller have in fact been used as tools of American foreign policy though the scholars concerned may not have been aware of it. The decision-making process, the nature of funding and the type of institutions they helped to build up all indicate a definite policy.¹⁴ What has been said about the above foundations can be said also about many national institutions and the funding policies of many other countries.

On the other hand, participatory research cannot be considered merely one more mode of community development. In the Indian context and in the Third World as a whole, the participatory approach is increasingly becoming synonymous with the processes of liberation of people. The involvement of poor, marginal farmers and landless agricultural labourers in the twin processes of participatory evaluation and social action have resulted in enhancing their self-confidence and ability to take collective initiatives in their common interest.

While it is different from the classical community development approach, participatory research can contribute towards the liberation of people only if it is associated with some form of participatory social action. The challenge to researchers as well as activists is, 'are we prepared to accept this as an operational definition of the participatory approach?' The researcher who accepts this definition has to commit himself to an approach that is closely linked with action. One cannot demarcate separate identities of participatory research and community development without asserting the elements of participatory social action.

To the extent that participatory research is invariably associated with some form of social action, it has very clear political implications. To use the participatory approach in identifying land alienation with the organization of landless tribal labourers is to link inquiry with the political dynamics of the setting. To join with the farmers to engage in the social analysis of their existing structure. To develop an alternative health-care system which favours the rural poor is to enter

into direct conflict with those whose interests are challenged. It is so because the process of social control is a political process.

Differences in the ability to make rules and apply them to other people are essentially power differentials (either legal or extra-legal). Those groups whose social position gives them weapons and power are best able to enforce their rules. Distinctions of age, sex, ethnicity and class are all related to differences in power, which accounts for differences in the degree to which groups so distinguished can make rules for others.¹⁵

The participatory approach, therefore, by its commitment to the underprivileged as well as to social action, enters into a political arena where questions of method and validity become simplistic. It is because the rural Indian, for that matter the Asian and Third World context, is primarily unorganized. The underprivileged, whether landless labourers or urban slum dwellers or women, are primarily unorganized. In a large measure, their state of poverty, exploitation and helplessness are related to this non-organization.

To initiate a participatory process with such underprivileged groups means to initiate the process of organization building. Unless this process leads to genuine organization, one cannot think of a genuine participatory approach. In fact, in the absence of an organization, the participatory research efforts can become means of unilateral manipulation by an outsider. To that extent, initiating participatory research efforts with unorganized groups requires an initial effort in developing a rudimentary form of their organization.

If there is this initial effort, many instances have shown that the participatory research effort itself contributes to the building of an organization of the people with whom this process is started. By the sheer process of attempting to bring a group of small marginal farmers to analyze their own situations, temporary organizations of farmers developed in the tribal areas of Southern Rajasthan. In other words, this poses some questions about the methodology of the participatory approach. Indian and Third World societies are unorganized in comparison with more developed countries of the West, and participatory research effort in the poor nations has to be, simultaneously, an effort at building organizations. This is not necessarily the situation in the rich countries.

Development of Knowledge

Another question that arises from the above discussion is: how to develop authentic, valid knowledge? The participatory process tends to lay emphasis on authenticity as opposed to validity. The concept of validity as defined by the classical research paradigm is inappropriate for several reasons. First of all, knowledge about a social setting is not equivalent to information obtained from it. The meaning attached to that information is more important. Any representation of social reality is contingent upon such meanings that actors attach to their reality.

Secondly, the impact of historical contingency on knowledge derived from social settings is too critical to apply to universal constructs of validity. Existing criteria of validity are concerned with the generalizability of the outcome of research.

Participatory research, on the contrary, is potentially an attempt to generalize a *process* of research, instead of its outcome. To that extent, the criteria of validity need to focus on the external generalizability and internal consistency of the research process itself. What can be some initial elements of such a concept of validity? One can enumerate the following among many other possibilities.

- i. *Relevance*: Historical, temporal and spatial.
- ii. *Researcher calibration*: Sensitivity of the researcher; emphasis on the calibration and reliability of the researcher as opposed to an instrument or a method.
- iii. *Convergence*: Emphasis on consensus of issues, multiplicity of methods and congruence between processes and outcome.
- iv. *Inclusion*: Context, actors and researcher. Emphasis on looking at the research approach as a social process and managing the confluence between the aspects of the setting, actors in the setting and the researcher.

How can we build an alternative concept of validity based on the stance that participatory research emphasizes generalizability of the research process itself? This is one question that still needs to be studied, because though many groups in the field are involved in the participatory process, not sufficient work has been done at the macro-level.

Moreover, if the generalizability of the research process is emphasized in the participatory approach, what is the outcome of research itself? It can be at different levels:

- i. Immediate social action and change is one such outcome. The actors in the research process engage in a common effort to transform their situation since they become aware of the causes of the present state and their own potential to be agents of change.
- ii. Increased knowledge about the particular social setting is another outcome. Unlike in the classical system where the outside researcher has the monopoly of knowledge, in the participatory approach it is available both with the researcher and the actors of the social setting. This enables the actors to begin a new decision-making process based on this knowledge.
- iii. Increased capacity among the actors in the situation to inquire into and change their situation is another important outcome. This is the result of the new self-confidence they gain as a result of the initial common search for knowledge and combined effort at action. Persons who were till then considered incapable of being anything more than servants and implementers of the orders of the powerful (and at the research level objects of an outsider's study), are now considered capable of analyzing and understanding their own reality. This leads to a new self-image and increased potential to learn and act.¹⁷ This is the educational aspect of the participatory approach where the actors in the situation learn how to learn; deuterio-learning occurs in the process.

If these are the potential outcomes of a participatory approach, what happens to enhancement of knowledge? Viewed from a classical researcher's point of view, there may not be increased knowledge since in this system the end product is a professional report. But the participatory approach leads to a different kind of end product, though a marco-research type of report need not be excluded. The main outcome of the participatory approach is increased knowledge about the social setting that is available both with the researcher and actors in the situation. Is this not enhancement of knowledge, or, is such enhancement exclusively the task of the professional researcher?

Conclusion

This paper has tried to study the frustrations experienced by professional researchers from various points of view. There are the ideological issues of the use made of the knowledge generated, the ethical issues of using the actors as objects of study and leaving the control of knowledge in the hands of the professionals, and the po-

litical issues of the use that is made of this knowledge by those who fund the research programme. It is the realization that the present professional approach to research is in fact a reproduction of our unjust society in which a few decision-makers control the rest of the population that has led many to move away from the classical methods and experiment with alternative approaches.

Many others have shied away from participatory research since they consider it a political process. If the researcher really wants to find an alternative to the present system which has not led to any social change in spite of increase in printed material, he makes his ideological stand explicit. If we get involved in research efforts that assist the less powerful and the weak, the so-called research process becomes a political one.

However, those who shy away from the participatory approach because of its political implications do not seem to realize that research in social settings has always been political. It either maintains, explains or justifies the *status quo* or questions it, though the researcher may not take an active part in changing it. We may not be aware of the political aspects of our research efforts because we never believed that our inquiry was normative or we never made our ideological stance explicit.

A transition to the participatory approach requires some basic attitudes on the part of the researcher or the activist, as the case may be. If he practices participation in his own work, it is much more likely that he will be able to facilitate participation of the people in various research efforts. On the other hand, it is doubtful how an authoritarian personality of the researcher can encourage a participatory approach with the underprivileged.

In other words, the values of the researchers have to be in congruence with the values of the participatory approach. He has to believe in the basic strengths of the people and has to cherish democratic values in the proper sense of the term. The behavioural skills required to encourage and sustain participation of people must be possessed by the researchers. These behavioural skills become critical in the context of the focus on the underprivileged sections of our population. Since a dominant characteristic of the underprivileged is their inability to and fear of participation, greater effort is required to facilitate the participation of such sections.

These are some of the challenges facing participatory research in our country. By their very nature they are macro-challenges. But we

need to deal with them both at the macro- and micro-levels through a combination of research and action aimed at empowering the marginalized sections of our society.

References

1. Sushanta Banerjee, 'Participatory Research: Ethic or Logic', in Rajesh Tandon (ed.), *Participatory Research in Asia* (Canberra: Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, 1980), p. 26.
2. David Walsh, 'Sociology and the Social World', in Paul Filmer, *New Directions in Sociological Theory* (London: Collier-Macmillan Publishers, 1972), pp. 16-18.
3. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 13.
4. Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory—An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (London: Cambridge University Press, Reprint 1974), pp. 119-20.
5. I.P. Desai, 'Craft of Sociology in India—An Autobiographical Perspective', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 16 (n. 8, February 14, 1981), pp. 247-8.
6. Ibid. p. 246.
7. V. Kurien, Productivity and Rural Development—Some Economic, Technical and Social Considerations (New Delhi: National Productivity Council, 22nd Foundation Day Lecture, February 1980).
8. Zafarulla Chowdhury, 'Research—A Method of Colonisation', in Rajesh Tandon, op cit., pp. 16-25.
9. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality—A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, Reprint 1973), pp. 26-7.
10. 'The Story of Shramik Sanghathan', *How* (n.1, June 1978), pp. 24-8.
11. Gopa Joshi, 'Afforestation of Deforested Himalayas', *How* (n. 4, April 1981), pp. 11-14.
12. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, Reprint 1980), p. 41.
13. For more on it see, 'The Activist's Credo' (Excerpts from the Report of the Workshop on 'The Training and Methodology of Training for Activists' prepared by Kamla Bhasin and Vasant Palashikar Lakshmi Rao), *Voluntary Action*, 23 (n. 5, December 1980), pp. 249-51.
14. Robert F. Arnove, 'Foundations and the Transfer of Knowledge—Implications for India', *Social Action*, 31 (n. 2, April-June 1981), pp. 144-73.
15. Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders—Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), pp. 17-18.
16. J.M. Heredero, *Rural Development and Social Change: An Experiment in Non-Formal Education* (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1977), pp. 32-5.

Knowledge as Power*

RAJESH TANDON

In the situation of inequalities of which the majority of our country's citizens are victims, the search for the bases of power leads us to one factor that is not easily acknowledged, viz. knowledge as power. Physical force and economic strength are tools of keeping others under control. Political power reinforces such a situation of power and powerlessness. In recent years, particularly since the growth of organized sciences, the monopoly on knowledge has functioned as a major factor reinforcing the division of society into 'haves' and 'have-nots', or the powerful and the powerless.

This paper will therefore try to attempt an understanding of knowledge as a source of power, its monopoly as a mode of keeping people divided and under control and of strengthening the already powerful. It will then try to find a solution in the form of participatory research which values people's knowledge as against externally imposed scientific knowledge which can be monopolized by only a few.

Knowledge as Power

In the early period of this century, the 'haves' or the powerful exercised direct control over the land and other resources of the 'have-nots' or the landless. This was true both at the international and national levels. Internationally, the colonial countries directly exercised political power in the colonies in order to exploit their resources as raw materials and their people as markets.

*This article has been extracted from the following: (1) Tandon, Rajesh: 'Knowledge as Power: Participatory Research as the Alternative', in Fernandes, W. (ed.) (1985), *Inequality, its bases and search for solutions*, Dr. Alfred De Souza Memorial Essays, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, pp. 333-44. (2) Tandon, Rajesh (1981) 'Participatory Research in the Empowerment of People', in *Convergence*, Vol. XIV, No. 3.

They were able to manipulate the 'have-nots' largely because they exercised this direct power which many a time was reinforced with physical force. While this form of control still continues in a country like India, a more subtle form of control has also emerged since World War II. This is the form of control that is exercised through knowledge.

Knowledge has increasingly become a major source of power and control. The very process of thinking and valuing of the ordinary people is being indirectly influenced through the control and use of knowledge (Gaventa, 1980). This also allows for an indirect and remote control such that New Delhi and Washington D.C. can control the destiny of those living in far-flung villages. This control is made possible through professionalism and the monopoly of the means of communications and of social control. Economy is being controlled by a few persons in a country and by a few decision-makers in the rich countries. These persons are able to use all knowledge to their own advantage in order to maintain their economic and political control over the rest of the world or over the remaining groups in their own country.

This exercise of power through control over knowledge has been further consolidated with the help of more organized research enterprises. The ordinary persons and the 'have-nots' have been facing two forms of assaults in this regard. Firstly, their own knowledge, the popular knowledge, has been completely devalued with the rise of modern professional knowledge-producing enterprises.

To establish such control, the dominant section needs to discard centuries-old popular knowledge as superstitions. This is most evident in the case of health-care, for example, where traditional health care practices have been made to appear meaningless with the rise of modern medicine. This devaluation starts from the experts, who in the process of establishing the reign of the modern knowledge-producing enterprises, have done so at the cost of popular knowledge. The 'cult of expertise' has acquired much more significance in recent years and this has been supported by the institutions of research. Over a period of time, the 'have-nots' themselves begin to devalue their own knowledge and mechanisms of producing that knowledge, which have been relevant for their survival and development for several centuries (Joseph, Desrochers and Kalathil, 1983: 67-73).

Secondly, ordinary people have been systematically denied access to either the knowledge produced by experts or the means of produc-

tion of that knowledge. In fact, the research enterprises have created such an impression that the ordinary persons are not considered capable of creating their own knowledge. This is further fortified with degrees, scholarships, institutions, etc. Unless one has been 'properly' trained through long schooling, one is not considered capable of producing any knowledge (Tandon, 1981).

Briefly, professionalism and monopoly of knowledge do not merely exclude the weaker sections but make them weaker than they were. They not only deny them access to professional knowledge but deprive them of what they already had. Thus, herbal medicines are considered unscientific and only allopathy is declared civilized medicine. In reality, however, the allopathic health-care pattern ensures that it is limited to a small elite and the majority is deprived of any of its facilities. But deprivation even of their traditional medicines leads to the deterioration of their health. Another case of professionalization depriving the poor of what they had, is housing. To quote L.M. Menezes (1985: 85),

Barring real estate development and government housing for its employees as well as the general public (which is of recent origin), the vast majority of housing in India has always been self-constructed in some form or the other. For thousands of years, people in India have been building for themselves, without engineers and architects, the most elegant, aesthetically pleasing, economically durable and functionally efficient houses using indigenous material, techniques and resources.

Today, however, the poor are denied access to housing because housing laws ensure that only those who can afford to buy land at the exorbitant price fixed by real estate speculators. They are the only ones who can draw up a plan according to the housing legislation, get it approved and invest a big amount in a short time to build it. In other words, only the rich can afford to own good houses. The traditional knowledge of building houses has been rejected as illegal and unscientific. The poor who cannot afford the modern houses are forced to live in slums amidst squalor and be evicted as illegal encroachers and criminals (de Souza, 1978: xxiii-xxiv).

Participatory Research as an Educational Process

If social change implies people's collective participation in determining their own destiny as mentioned above, then knowledge is a nec-

essary ingredient in that process. If people can learn to value their own knowledge, and produce as well as use new knowledge, then it will be a contribution to the process of their empowerment. Participatory research is based on this basic philosophy of empowering the 'have-nots' through their involvement in both valuing their existing knowledge and producing and using new knowledge.

Participatory research has been demonstrated to act as a powerful educational experience for those involved in it. This educational experience takes place in several ways as described below. These experiments in alternatives have been attempted by several activists. While describing the process, we shall discuss some of these experiences.

Existing Popular Knowledge is Recognized and Valued

Participatory research starts from the assumption that ordinary people already possess some knowledge. Some elements of this knowledge may be distorted, and some may be authentic. This, in fact, is also the starting point of adult education. Adults already have some understanding and information. They do not start with a clean slate. This recognition is reinforced in participatory research and its significance to their ongoing survival and development is underscored. It is this existing knowledge which is used daily by the people in their on-going struggles for survival. And this existing knowledge is examined to identify the elements that are disparate and those that are authentic. In participatory research, the synthesis of popular knowledge with existing scientific knowledge strengthens the educational experience of the people (Vio Grossi et al., 1983).

An example of such revalorization of popular knowledge is the case of the women's unit of *Seva Mandir*, Udaipur. Their training programmes are issue-related. Beginning with issues concerning women and children, they go on to try and understand the basic causes which deprive them of their rightful place in society. Thus, their non-formal education is based on the assumption that women are capable of running their own affairs and of understanding the factors that govern their lives. As an example, one may mention the case of social forestry which they initiated and implemented. The implementers of the country's law had taken for granted that only men were producers and they alone could own land. Hence, when the women's group approached the sub-divisional officer, he refused to allot land to them

because, "we do not allot land to women, only to men, only to those who plough the field and are heads of households."

The women, however, knew that they were the ones who worked the most and that they were capable of selecting trees which their families needed. Hence, they could be owners, and they challenged the sub-divisional officer to prove that the law did not allow them to own land. They threatened to go to the Supreme Court and charge him with discrimination based on sex. Their knowledge of their situation enabled them to acquire land from the sub-divisional officer who had accepted the male domination of society which has been legalized by the professional law-makers. The women who knew the household needs and the local situation were able to decide what type of trees could grow there, how their irrigation could be organized as a group, and how 90% of the seedlings could survive as against the 'scientific' plantation measures that result in hardly 40% survival. They needed land for this and their knowledge of law which forbade discrimination based on sex supplemented and supported their popular knowledge and enabled them to acquire land in the name of women. They were thus able to work out a community forestry project that catered to their needs and helped them to grow as a group. The women consulted the forest department about the availability of plants and their nutrition needs. But it is they who drew up the plan of trees, bushes, herbs and arranged for the saplings and seeds. They are the ones who were able to find ways of keeping goats off the land without starving them because they knew the local situation and knew how to keep a balance between various needs. The normal solution of the forest department is to protect trees from people and from goats. In other words, the people and animals are deprived of their food and no alternative is provided by the so-called scientific forestry. But the women who knew how to plant trees according to the local needs were able to cater to the needs of both and ensure the survival of their goats as well as 90% of the plants (Srivastava, 1985: 150-52).

New Knowledge is Built on the Existing Knowledge

The starting point for creating new knowledge is the existing knowledge of the people, particularly the authentic elements of it. As people begin to appreciate what they already know, they are more open to seek new information. This desire to seek new knowledge is en-

hanced if it is done in the context of concrete problems which the people are facing. The people will be motivated to create and use new knowledge if they see its relevance in solving some concrete problems that they face.

A case in point is the Women Workers' Forum of Madras which was facilitated by the Swallows of Sweden and Denmark. In 1967, after beginning a Batik centre and forming a co-operative of women, the outside facilitators wanted to take either legal action against money lenders or open a literacy and health education centre. But the local women viewed the money-lender not as a wholly exploitative element but also as a part of their community and as a social institution serving the function of providing credit in an emergency. Official financial institutions are inaccessible to the poor and the victims of exploitation know that the money-lender is the only source in case of need. Hence they could not accept a purely legal solution of banning money-lenders till an alternative was found. They even viewed him as a benefactor, but they wanted to be free from loans. Hence, a debt releasing fund was formed and other insurance schemes had to be initiated. Slowly, a workers' co-operative and savings bank emerged and the people began to take control over what they had saved. It is at this stage, i.e., in 1979, that the women felt the need of literacy. Initially, it was a middle-class need of outside facilitators. It is when the women had grown sufficiently as a group and needed to keep the accounts of their savings bank and of their production centre that they thought of the literacy class, not when outsiders wanted it (Srinivasan, 1981: 78-9).

People Learn to Exercise Control

The process of participatory research puts emphasis of the active participation of the ordinary people in generating their own knowledge. This encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning. It is this active posture which constitutes a powerful impetus for learning to exercise control over their own lives. This is particularly so since participatory research explicitly calls for and promotes the exercise of control by the people themselves (Brown and Tandon, 1983).

An example of such a situation can be found in many aspects, particularly is social forestry. For centuries, the people have kept a balance between environmental and their own nutritional and other

needs. They have viewed nature as a renewable resource and have survived on it without destroying the environment. However, what is called scientific forestry has deprived them of their basic needs in favour of a small minority from outside to whom natural resources are only a raw material and a source of profit. Today, several groups have risen all over India that have revived some of the traditional practices in order to protect the existing forest or fishery resources and in the process safeguard both their surroundings and themselves. These are the groups which have centuries-old 'popular' knowledge of their surroundings and know that trees are not only a raw material but are essential for the people. In other words, the environment is not only trees and animals but, above all, the survival of the people. Its deterioration leads to the impoverishment of the weaker sections and it is these sections that have come together in several places (the best known among them being *Chipko* in Uttar Pradesh and *Appiko* in Karnataka), to protect their surroundings and the people who survived on them. This has at times forced the government to change its approach to forestry (Agarwal and Narain, 1985: 338-40).

It Becomes a Collective Process

One of the elements of participatory research is promotion of collective responsibility for seeking new knowledge. Unlike classical research, it does not encourage individual production of knowledge. As a result, people learn to get together, collectively seeking and analyzing information. Many-a-time this forms the seed of a rudimentary organization of the people. This has been the particular experience in those situations where 'have-nots' are not yet organized (Fernandes and Tandon, 1981).

A case in point is that of *Gram Vikas* in Orissa. For years, the people have suffered under the money-lenders to whom they had mortgaged their fruit trees on which they had to survive. Slowly, through the influence of *Gram Vikas* they realized that the law did not bind them to the money-lenders. It is not merely this knowledge that freed them, but the fact that they acquired it together in a group. The process of learning was one of reflection on their situation and the realization of their strength in unity. This slow reflection and realization of their strength helped them to stand up to the money-lenders, free themselves from their clutches and eventually gain ownership of their trees (Madiath, 1985: 125-9).

It Creates Informed Options

The very process of collectively analyzing a given situation throws up various alternatives. As part of the process of analysis, options are debated on the basis of concrete information. As a result, people are able to accept and reject options on an informed basis. This creates a sense of empowerment which is based on the confidence that information has been understood and interpreted.

An example would be the case of ASAG in Ahmedabad. They began with the government housing programme which was more budget- and bureaucracy-oriented than client satisfaction or people's participation oriented. Though the people gave most of the money either in the form of loans or free labour, the government considered them mere beneficiaries of the rural housing project. They were not considered capable of taking a decision for themselves. ASAG, however, was convinced that people who had to live in the house knew well what they wanted. Hence, they involved many of them from the very first stage of designing the house, though that is considered the prerogative of an architect. The result was that the people not only accepted the idea of housing but even viewed the project as their own. Unlike in many other places, where nearly 60% of the houses are sold within a year after occupation, in this particular case very few houses have been alienated. In most places, the new owners have added new rooms to the house thus showing their ownership not just legally and physically but also psychologically. The housing design is based on the needs of the community and is meant to encourage them to grow together (Shah, 1977: 148-52).

Actions Emerge Out of This Analysis

In other words, the very act of involvement in the process of analyzing a given reality creates a sense of ownership of that knowledge and willingness to transform that situation. The people are able to take concrete action as part of their involvement in participatory research. In fact, participatory research is normatively linked to the transformation of the situation of the 'have-nots'. As a result, acting as a legitimate form of knowing and learning is emphasized.

The educational aspects of participatory research are elaborated above. Participatory research is essentially a self-initiated and collective process of inquiry. It builds expertise and awareness among the 'have-nots', it encourages action and experimentation by them to

transform their reality and it creates a sense of empowerment and organization among them.

Steps in Conducting Participatory Research

A series of simple steps are taken in conducting participatory research. They consist of a group of people first agreeing on a common statement of a problem. Some common problems, for example, are landlessness, low income, indebtedness, sickness of children, etc. The problem should be stated clearly and concretely.

Simply stating a problem does not lead to action. The group should express interest in solving it. Sometimes, problems are identified merely because someone asks them about their situation. This step should ensure that there is willingness to understand the problem in its entirety and its underlying causes, as well as make an attempt to solve it. Questions like: "Why do we want to solve the problem?", "How will we benefit if the problem is solved?" may help in clarifying this.

Such, for example, were the questions asked by the Working Women's Forum, Madras which we have described above. When outsiders first suggested a literacy class, their main question was "How will we benefit from it?". They did not see any use for it at that stage because their main problem was loans from the money-lender. They could not see how literacy could solve the problem.

It is when they see the benefits of an alternative that they begin to take decisions. One can notice it in the literacy programme of the Working Women's Forum and of many other centres. The middle-class workers who organize these classes concluded that the poor are not interested in making progress and refuse to cooperate with the development workers. Their solution is to try and motivate them to change, on the assumption that the real problem is the KAP-gap, i.e., lack of knowledge, of the right attitudes to development and of scientific practices. Their solution is to give the poor new knowledge which, it is assumed, will change their attitudes and will lead to new practices. In this context, the refusal of the women to cooperate is an understandable decision because they know that it is not beneficial to them at that stage. One can find other examples, as for example, in family planning. While the upper-class decision-makers are convinced that the poor are irrational in their fertility behaviour, studies (Mamdani, 1972) have shown that villagers have their own rationality which may not be that of the urban elite that thinks of the poor, not poverty,

as the real problem. But the villagers to whom children are an economic asset, have a rationality based on their need. Filling the KAP-gap according to the urban understanding of the problem cannot lead to any results.

What is important is to remember that knowledge is power. Hence revalorizing popular knowledge is an important step in empowering the powerless. It can be a part of a process enabling the marginalized sections to acquire some rights which they have been deprived of till now. They can be instrumental in building a community of the poor. For example, knowledge that anti-social elements are employed by the landlords to suppress the landless agricultural labourers has helped some bonded labourers to resist repression. Knowledge of the law on the abolition of rural debt and of bonded labour has been an important factor in helping the poor to liberate themselves (Baxi, 1985: 116). When this knowledge of the dominant systems has gone hand-in-hand with a greater value given to popular knowledge, the community has been able to grow as a result. Such, for example, has been the case of many community health projects that made use of the traditional medical systems as a tool for non-formal education and leadership building (Narayan, 1985: 76–8).

Characteristics of Participatory Research

The concept, approach and methodology of PR as it has evolved over the past few years, has several characteristics. We enumerate them briefly below.

Participatory research is a process of knowing and acting. People engaged in PR simultaneously enhance their understanding and knowledge of a particular situation as well as take action to change it to their benefit. To that extent, PR attempts to remove the established dichotomy of knowing and using that knowledge. Knowledge for the sake of knowing is de-emphasized; knowing is linked to a concrete action. This enhances the quality of knowledge as well as informs the basis for action.

The process of PR is initiated in the context of the actual reality which the have-nots intend to change. Therefore, an existing problem provides the initial motivation for engaging in PR. In situations where people are already aware of a problem and articulate enough about it, they may initiate PR themselves. They may or may not use the resources of experts from outside. In other situations, some outsiders—

be they activists or educators or researchers—may provide the initial problem focus. However, the involvement of people from that situation in the process, even if it begins with an external push, is a necessary element of participatory research.

While participation of people in processes of knowing and acting is a necessary part of PR, the extent and nature of this participation varies considerably. Where initiative to engage in a process of PR comes from people of the situation, their participation is quite widespread. In most such cases, they take part in the methodology of data collection, analysis of data, planning and taking action. In other cases, where initiative comes externally, the participation of people from the situation is initially limited, but tends to increase in scope and depth as the process moves on. They may not be so involved in methods of data collection and analysis as they may be in the planning and taking action stages.

We come now to the issue of control in participatory research. The people of the situation must have control over the process of knowing and acting. It is easier to obtain control when initiative comes from the people themselves. In case of external initiative, it is a slow process by which people of and in the situation begin to control the PR. The external party may not relinquish control so easily. This gets further complicated if this external party is an expert. Experts have a tendency to control others; ordinary people tend to voluntarily submit to an expert's control. In either event, it is imperative that the processes of PR shift control over the process of knowing and knowledge to the people in that situation.

The methodology of PR attempts to reduce or eliminate the limitations of classical research. It employs methods of data collection which are prevalent in classical research. However, it also emphasizes qualitative and phenomenological methods which are generally considered 'unscientific' in the classical model. The methodology of PR, however, stresses interpersonal communication among different parties and demands clarification of the motives of the external party, if any.

An important characteristic of PR is its collective nature. As evolved over the years, the process of PR requires groups of people to engage together. The most important step in this context is collective analysis of a given situation. It is this significant distinction from the classical paradigm in which research is an individual effort. Participatory research is a collective enterprise and this is reflected in its different steps.

An outcome of this characteristic of PR has been the creation of organizations among the have-nots. As described earlier, many of the have-nots, in the Asian context, are unorganized and isolated. The process of PR brings such persons together; collective sharing, analysis and action generate strong connections between them. Over a period of time, these connections grow into organizations of the have-nots. This has been demonstrated many times in the rural Asian context.

Finally, the process of PR is an educative experience for those engaged in it. The people in the situation become aware and more knowledgeable through their engagement. They become more knowledgeable about methods of knowing any analysis; they become aware of their situation and possible way to change that situation. It is this component of learning-for-all that makes PR a distinct approach.

Examined in the light of the above characteristics, PR has made valuable contributions in Asia and throughout the world. It has been used to bring about improvements in villages, urban slums, tribal habitats, etc. It has been effectively engaged in adult literacy, primary health care, agricultural practice, economic enterprise. It has been brought in from outside as a tool for local confrontation. It has contributed to people's organization, conscientization and liberation. It has highlighted possible approaches to development.

In all these efforts, particularly in Asia, participatory research has confined itself to micro situations (a hamlet, a slum, a colony) and concerned itself with the have-nots (landless labourers, migrant workers, tribal people, women). It is now time for PR to address itself to the other side as well.

Conclusion

We have seen in this paper how knowledge is power. Through the monopoly over knowledge, the dominant sections have been able to keep economic as well as political power in their own hands. Thus, the knowledge-producing educational and other systems as well as service systems such as health, housing etc. have been monopolized by the same dominant groups which kept economic and political power in their hands. They have treated the resources of the poor only as a raw material and have further impoverished the already powerless sections of society.

It is in this context that participatory research is viewed as an alternative in the community building and empowerment process of

the powerless. The struggle is between the 'haves' who have kept all power in their own hand and the 'have-nots' who have been deprived even of what they had without in any way getting access to political knowledge and the power and riches that go with it. In other words, their situation has deteriorated. Hence we view revalorization of popular knowledge and research that functions as a tool for reflection and mobilization as a possible alternative. We have mentioned several experiences of voluntary organizations that have attempted such a process. Many of them are localized and small experiments which need to be studied, analyzed and made known. Many such experiments are needed if an impact has to be made on the structures that ensure the powerlessness of the majority in favour of a small powerful minority.

References

- Agarwal, Anil and Sunita Narain (eds), *The State of India's Environment 1984-85: A Second Citizens' Report*, New Delhi: Centre for Science and Environment, 1985.
- Baxi, Upendra, 'Law, Struggle and Change: An Agendum for Activists', in Walter Fernandes (ed.), *Social Activists and People's Movements*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1985, pp. 110-25.
- Brown, L. David and Rajesh Tandon, 'Ideology and Political Economy in Inquiry: Action Research and Participatory Research', *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 19, 1983, pp. 277-94.
- de Souza, Alfred, 'The Challenge of Urban Poverty: An Introduction', in Alfred de Souza (ed.), *The Indian City: Poverty, Ecology and Urban Development*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1978.
- Fernandes, Walter and Rajesh Tandon (eds), *Participatory Research and Evaluation*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1981.
- Gaventa, John, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1980.
- Joseph, George, John Desrochers and Mariamma Kalathil, *Health Care in India*, Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1983.
- Madiath, Anthya, 'When Tribals Awake: The Kerandimals Movements', in Walter Fernandes (ed.), *Development with People: Experiments with Participation and Non-Formal Education*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1985, pp. 109-39.
- Mamdani, Mahmood, *The Myth of Population Control—Family, Caste and Class in an Indian Village*, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- Menezes, L.M., 'Social Housing as a Tool for People's Development', in Walter Fernandes (ed.), *Development with People: Experiments with*

- Participation and Non-Formal Education*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1985, pp. 83–91.
- Narayan, Ravi, 'Community Health as a Quest for an Alternative', *Social Action*, 35, n. 3, July–September 1985, pp. 254–66.
- Shah, Kirtee, 'Housing for the Urban Poor in Ahmedabad: An Integrated Urban Development Approach', *Social Action*, 27, Jan.–Dec. 1977.
- Srinivasan, Viji, 'The Methodology of Participatory Evaluation', in Walter Fernandes and Rajesh Tandon (eds.), *Participatory Research and Evaluation: Experiments in Research as a Process of Liberation*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1981.
- Srivastava, Ginny, 'Social Activists, People's Movements and Indian Women', in Walter Fernandes (ed.), *Social Activists and People's Movements*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1985, pp. 145–54.
- Tandon, Rajesh, 'Participatory Research in Empowerment of People', *Convergence*, 14, n. 3, 1981.
- Vio Grossi, Francisco, Martinic, Gonzalo Tapia and Ives, Pascal, *Participatory Research: Theoretical Frame, Methods and Techniques*, Paris: UNESCO, 1983.

Ideology and Political Economy in Inquiry: Participatory Research*

L. DAVID BROWN AND RAJESH TANDON

The spread of applied behavioural science requires adaptation to new circumstances and audiences, and applications can generate new insights. This paper examines the tradition of applied behavioural science inquiry—"participatory research".

The authors have worked together as applied behavioural scientists in each other's countries (The United States and India), applying common conceptual equipment to diverse cultural, political, and economic settings. We have used both action research and participatory research approaches to inquiry (e.g. Brown and Tandon, 1978; Tandon and Brown, 1981) and this paper focuses on the ideological, political, and economic aspects of this approach.

This article is organised into several sections. The first section defines and describes examples of the participatory research traditions. The second section considers the impacts of values and ideologies and inquiry and compares the ideological and value commitments of the tradition. The third section considers the political economy of inquiry and suggests political and economic factors that shape participatory research activities. The fourth section describes phases of inquiry and differences between traditions related to differences in ideology and political economy. The last section covers the diffusion of participatory research.

Participatory Research

The participatory research tradition emerged from work with oppressed peoples in the Third World. Variants have been developed in many

*This article has been extracted from the following paper: Brown, L. David and Tandon, Rajesh (1983), 'Ideology and Political Economy in Inquiry: Action Research and Participatory Research', *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, Vol. 19, November 3, pp. 277-94, (JAI Press, Inc. London, U.K.)

settings, often independently. Paolo Freire and his colleagues in Latin America, for example, developed widely influential concepts for adult education among the urban and rural poor. Freire's dialogue approach to adult education engages individuals in critical analysis and organized action to improve their situations (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1978). In these dialogues, educators and "students" move toward a critical consciousness of the forces of oppression and the possibilities for liberation.

Similar principles of inquiry have been developed in Africa and Asia (Hall, 1981), but the lack of communication channels or contact among researchers has delayed recognition of their common themes. An international network of participatory researchers was formed in 1978 under the sponsorship of the International Council for Adult Education, and the Secretary General of the organization has summarized the characteristics of participatory research as follows:

Participatory research is an integrated activity that combines social investigation, educational work, and action ... Some of the characteristics of the process include:

- The problem originates in the community or workplace itself.
- The ultimate goal ... is fundamental structural transformation and the improvement of the lives of those involved.
- The workplace or community (is involved) in the control of the entire process
- The awareness in the people of their own abilities and resources (is strengthened) and mobilizing or organizing (is supported).
- The term "researcher" can refer to both the community or workplace persons involved as well as those with specialized training.
- (Outside researchers) as committed participants and learners in a process that leads to militancy rather than detachment. (Hall, 1981, 7-8)

Participatory research has increased dramatically in the last decade. The editor of a recent special issue on participatory research concluded,

No single issue of a journal nor any collection of papers can do justice to the richness and diversity of the debate nor give an adequate overview of what is going on. (Gayfer, 1981)

Much participatory research has been undertaken in developing countries, where problems of adult education and social oppression are particularly acute. But occasional projects have been undertaken in developed nations. The participatory research project described below is an American example, so comparisons to the "sorearm" project will not be confused by national difference.

Gaventa and Horton (1981) describe participatory research on land ownership patterns by citizen groups in six states in the Appalachian region. A Regional Land Ownership Task Force of local citizen groups and Highlander Research and Education Centre staff proposed a study of land ownership patterns to the Federal Regional Commission. The Task Force hoped to gather previously unavailable information about land ownership that would enable local groups to influence regional policies and the activities of absentee landlords. They hoped that the study would provide a model for research adapted to local needs, train local people in research skills, develop a network of groups committed to using the information generated, and mobilize a larger constituency to influence local, state, and regional decision makers.

The political implications of the project made fund raising difficult. The Regional Commission created special requirements for the proposed project and postponed funding until the Task Force threatened to drop the project and "go public with our criticism of the Commission" (Gaventa and Horton, 1981, p 32).

Once funded, the Task Force held workshops in which researchers and citizen group representatives designed the research, prepared to collect data, and considered land reform strategies. Survey data on land ownership were collected in 80 counties, and case studies based on interviews were developed in 19 counties in six states. State and regional reports and case studies were written during the next year. At the same time, Task Force members worked with local groups to plan action to influence local and regional decision making.

The study documented in "overwhelming" detail local citizen expectations about land ownership: ownership is highly concentrated in few owners; absentees (particularly corporations) hold land and mineral resources; mineral rights are greatly underassessed for property tax purposes. The funding agency delayed dissemination of the reports and refused to issue the case studies (labelled "unscientific") and the state overview reports (labelled "too subjective"). The Task Force independently disseminated its findings to the news media and

local citizens' groups. Subsequently, a number of projects evolved to use or expand the study's findings.

The authors concluded that the project succeeded in its information-gathering goals and provided a model of a participatory research project. The workshops offered useful training for participants, and citizen groups had begun to pass on their research skills to groups in neighbouring countries as yet unstudied. The project created networks for further action and educated participants about taxation inequities.

The mobilization impacts were most obvious in areas that were already concerned about land ownership and land-use decisions.

Values and Ideologies in Inquiry

Values have been defined as preferences for courses of action and outcomes; relevant values shape choices among perceived alternative actions (Beyer, 1981). Ideologies are sets of beliefs that explain the world, bind together their adherents, and suggest desirable activities and outcomes (Beyer, 1, 1981; Brown and Brown, 1983). Values and ideologies of particular relevance to research are drawn from political training and experience as well as from the large cultures in which researchers have lived. Values and ideologies are not always recognized as such by their adherents: If individuals know nothing of alternative perspectives, they will likely assume that "all reasonable people" have similar commitments.

Although value- and ideology-free observation and analysis may be possible in social sciences, they are virtually impossible—particularly if those sciences purport to provide guidance to solving social problems (Diesing, 1982). The values researchers hold and the ideological perspectives that guide them exert powerful influences on choices they make in the course of inquiry.

Participatory researchers emphasize the value of useful knowledge and dismiss the abstractions and irrelevancies of more traditional social science (e.g., Hall, Gillette and Tandon, 1982). Gaventa and Horton (1981) and their colleagues focused on the implications of knowledge about land-ownership patterns for influencing policy-making rather than on their theoretical implications. Participatory researchers also place high value on developmental changes. They particularly emphasize research implications that enable oppressed groups to improve their lives. Recurring value themes in participa-

tory research include equitable distribution of resources, empowering oppressed groups, increasing self-reliance, and transforming social structures into more equitable societies (Freire, 1970; Hall, 1981; Fernandes and Tandon, 1981). Gaventa and Horton (1981) sought land ownership data to counteract the corporate dominant of Appalachia.

Participatory researchers are often adult educators and community organizers and they tend to analyze problems in terms of community and social structures. They draw on the intellectual traditions of sociology, political science, and economics as well as on individual and group theory. Gaventa and Horton (1981) focused on regional patterns of ownership and control, choosing as critical variables political and economic forces rather than individuals and groups. Participatory researchers have also been influenced by the cultural contexts of work with poor people in the Third World, and so conceive of problems in terms of resource inequities, dependence, and oppression. In Appalachia, for example, absentee landowners held many resources and yet paid little in taxes for local use. Participatory researchers conceive of the world in terms of conflict theories of society that emphasize fundamental differences of interest among social groups and the dynamics of oppression and change (Dahrandorf, 1959). Gaventa and Horton (1981) sought to expand awareness and to mobilize citizens to challenge the concentration of power and land in the Appalachian region. The ideology of participatory researchers emphasized large-scale structural forces, conflicts of interest, inequalities, and changes that reduce oppression.

Participatory research shares many values. Participatory research values useful knowledge, and rejects the irrelevance of more traditional conceptions of social science research. Participatory researchers emphasize the conservative social implications of overemphasis on social science rigour (e.g., Freire, 1970; Fals Borda, Note 1). Participatory research traditions seek knowledge that will have an immediate impact on social systems.

Participatory research also emphasizes the importance of developmental change as a consequence of inquiry. Participatory researchers accord great importance to social change and see most traditional research as actively supporting the status quo (e.g., Mblinyi, Vuorela, Kassam and Masisi, 1982; Hall, Gillette and Tandon, 1982). It promotes developmental change as an important outcome of inquiry.

Table 1 summarizes the values and ideologies in participatory research.

Table 1: Values and Ideologies in Participatory Research

Participatory Research	
Values	Useful Knowledge (e.g. land ownership) Development Change (e.g., more absentee taxes)
Ideology	Social Analysis (e.g. economic dominance) Conflict Social Theory (e.g., absentee owners profit at citizens' expense) Equity/self-reliance/oppression problems are central

The Political Economy of Inquiry

Political economists study the interaction of political factors (e.g., distribution of authority and power) and economic factors (e.g., allocations and uses of resources) that affect decision making (Uphoff and Ilchman, 1972; Benson, 1975). Political economists ask questions like the following:

1. What actors have interests in the decision?
2. What authority and resources are relevant to the decision?
3. How will decisions affect actor interests and distributions of authority and resources?

Answers to these questions reveal patterns of influence and interaction that shape decisions. The political economy of inquiry influences decisions made in at least three critical sets of choices in the process of social science inquiry: (a) the definition of problems, (b) the collection and analysis of data, and (c) the utilization of results.

The Definition of Problems

Definitions of research problems fundamentally shape and constrain results of inquiry. Problem definitions influence the data collected, the results apprehended, the solutions proposed, and the responsibilities assigned for the problem itself. Ryan (1976) argues that social science often "blames the victim" in initial problem definitions, and Lukes (1974) has pointed out that the agenda control by dominant groups can turn problems into "non-issues" that never become part of the public choice process. Researchers define problems in traditional social science research on conceptual and methodological grounds, or they are defined by government and corporate interests with investment in problem solutions. Problem definition in the participa-

tory research traditions is influenced by traditions' commitment to "real" problems, for a variety of interest groups may be affected by research results.

Participatory researchers are explicit about client contributions to problem definitions: "the problem originates in the community or work place itself" (Hall, 1981, p. 7). Their immediate clients are defined as "a wide range of exploited or oppressed groups" (Hall, 1981, p. 7). They also start with the assumption that oppression is a central problem. This perspective has at least three implications: (1) participatory research clients will define problems differently from dominant groups, (2) authority and resources will be controlled largely by other interest groups, and (3) dominant interest groups can be expected to resist or attack problem definitions that threaten their positions.

Oppressed groups often recognize problems, even when system authorities do not see any difficulties. The Appalachian land ownership research project (Gaventa and Horton, 1981), for example, attacked a problem perceived by the researchers and the alliance of citizen groups, but not by the Regional Commission. The Commission controlled the resources and the authority to support the study, but preferred to define land settlement rather than land ownership as the research problem. The alliance and the researchers had to threaten public exposure to get the Commission to accept their definition. Problem definition in this project initiated adversarial interactions between actors with potentially conflicting interests.

The way researchers define problems differentiates them from other groups interested in research outcomes and creates the political and economic contexts of inquiry. Participatory researchers generally ally themselves with oppressed groups and opponents of established authorities and so find resources and authoritative support set up against them.

Data Collection and Analysis

The choices of methods, the types of data, and data collection and analysis procedures are also influenced by interested actors and the distribution of authority and resources. Dominant social science research traditions emphasize data-collection and analysis methodologies, such as experiments and surveys, that require specially trained researchers and complex experimental or data-processing installa-

tions (Diesing, 1971). These methodologies allow researchers to control data even when other actors finance the research. But researchers' control may prove counterproductive for research intended to influence non-researchers. One study of social policy research found conceptual and methodological rigour to be negatively related to impact on social policy making (van de Vall and Bolas, 1977), perhaps because policy makers did not consider the findings relevant.

Participatory research explicitly requires client participation "in the control of the entire process" and defines all participants as "researchers" (Hall, 1981, pp. 7-8). But not all interested actors can be participants: solidarity with oppressed groups often makes participatory researchers adversaries of dominant groups. Participatory researchers use collaborative data collection and analysis strategies with participants, much like action researchers. They develop "education for critical consciousness" (Freire, 1974) and methods of "collective analysis" (Barndt, 1981). But, in addition of this, they seek information from unwilling sources, who use control over vital information to oppress their clients. The participatory research tradition uses "militant observers" (Darcy de Oliverira and Darcy de Oliverira, 1975), investigative and advocacy research (Laue, 1978), and "conflict methodologies" of various kind (Lehmann and Young, 1975) to extract information from un-cooperative adversaries.

Gaventa and Horton's (1981) study mobilized community groups in a data collection process that both educated and empowered participants, but posed a potential threat to absentee and corporate landholders. Since the Regional Commission resisted the initial proposal, questioned the "unscientific" methods used to construct the case studies, and delayed and eventually suppressed publication of some results, Gaventa and Horton saw that it protected established interests more than it supported the research. Participatory research data collection and analysis necessarily uses client resources, since funds to support research staff are seldom available.

Data collection and analysis decisions reflect political economies of the tradition. Participatory researchers emphasize collaboration and consciousness raising to mobilize and educate oppressed groups and to build close links to those clients. But they also seek information from and about groups with oppressed interests, and so employ adversarial data collection and analysis as well.

Use of Results

Access to or control over findings, decisions about dissemination, and choices of how to link results to implementation are important issues for researchers. The political economy perspective directs attention to actors interested in result utilization, distributions of authority and resources among them, and costs and benefits of utilization decisions.

When pragmatic consequences of research are not obvious, interested actors may be limited to other researchers or funding agencies concerned with basic problems. Participatory research, however, explicitly seeks pragmatic results and so may involve many interests in utilization decisions. For example, contract research supported by government agencies or corporations may involve many interested actors.

Participatory research explicitly calls for improving the lot of oppressed groups, and participatory researchers seek research outcomes that will change the status quo. So at least three sets of actors have interests in research outcomes: the researchers, their clients, and their opponents. Opponents often monopolize formal authority and resources; researchers have training and expertise; client groups have information, energy, and time. Participatory researchers join their fates with oppressed clients. The Appalachian land ownership study reflects researcher-citizen integration even in its authorship: Gaventa works for Highlander Research and Education Centre, and Horton works for the Appalachian Alliance.

Participatory research explicitly calls for improving the lot of oppressed groups, and participatory researchers seek research outcomes that is often inimical to the interests of other groups. Gaventa and Horton's (1981) project demonstrated that land ownership is concentrated in a few absentee landholders—a fact already recognized by poor residents but not by government policy makers. The project also sought to create mobilized regional constituencies. The researchers expected new data and new actors to strengthen the representation of poor people in negotiations with such established interests as major landowners and the Regional Commission.

Participatory researchers explicitly joins one set of actors in a social system fragmented by conflicting interests. That choice is expensive, for their opponents often have more access to authority and resources. Participatory research seeks "fundamental transforma-

tion" of societies, and the price may well be conflict with existing authorities and resource holders.

Table 2 summarizes some characteristics of the political economies within which participatory research tradition is embedded. Those political economies encourage choices that produce very different research analysis and problem solutions.

The political economy of participatory research, allies researchers with oppressed clients in opposition to existing authorities and resource holders.

Table 2: Political Economics of Participatory Research

Participatory Research	
Actors	Researchers Client Groups Established Authorities Third Party Funders
Resources and Authority	Researchers Provide: - Research Expertise - Political Awareness Client Group Provides: - Information - Energy - Insights Established Authorities Provide: - Sanctioned power - Funds and rewards Third-party Funders Provide: - Funds - Protection
Impact on Phases	
1. Problem Definition	- Controlled by client groups - Benefits provided to client group - Resources received from clients or extracted from system.
2. Data Collection and Analysis	- Collaborative with clients - Adversarial with authorities - Interaction to educate and mobilize client groups.
3. Uses of Results	- Client consensus on goals of intervention - Negotiation to improve client situation

The Diffusion of Participatory Research Traditions

Some investigators argue that political economies largely determine values and ideologies and so should bear the brunt of analysis (e.g. Benson, 1975). Others suggest that ideologies and values shape recognition of political and economic factors and that understanding the latter is impossible without analysis of the former (e.g., Starbuck, 1982; Weick, 1979). We will not resolve that controversy here; instead, we argue that ideology and political economy interact, so that either—or both—potentially influences research. Ideology and political economy frequently reinforce one another in inquiry.

The political economy and the ideology of participatory research are also mutually consistent. Concern with societal-level analysis encourages attention to political and economic analysis and an awareness of many interested actors. Conflict assumptions prepare researchers to extract information from reluctant opponents as well as to cooperate with oppressed groups. Educating and mobilizing oppressed groups to solve their own problems is consistent with beliefs in self-reliance and in the redistribution of resources. Participatory researchers run into trouble when their ideological assumptions and political economic expectations are not met.

Participatory research has developed from social-change efforts in Third World Countries, in which poverty, conflict, and oppression are commonplace. Power and resources are often highly concentrated in Third World countries, and as poor people come into more contact with the outside world, they are more likely to challenge the legitimacy of those concentrations. When the legitimacy of present arrangements is questioned, the state may be set for participatory research. Gaventa and Horton (1981) found that prior arousal and organization made county groups more ready to undertake the land ownership research and more able to use their findings effectively.

Oppressed groups are not always ready to join such projects, for they risk much and often know more than their would-be helpers do about the costs of failure (e.g., Huizer, 1978). Client-group commitment is crucial in participatory research, for resources for research and action must come largely from these groups. Gaventa and Horton (1981) managed to get funds from the Regional Commission, but the actual data collection relied heavily on volunteer willingness to record and analyze data.

Participatory research projects need more than client tolerance; they require active commitment of time and energy.

Participatory researchers themselves often run substantial risks, for challenged authorities may attack their institutional bases, their professional standing, or even their physical safety. Participatory researchers are more motivated by commitments to social change and social justice than by the hope of professional and institutional rewards, for the resources and authority of established institutions are often set up against the interests of their clients. Gaventa and Horton (1981), based in a small research and education centre and in the citizens' group alliance, respectively, were much less politically and economically secure than the large landowners they challenged.

Reference Notes

1. Fals Borda, O.: 'Science and the common people'; paper presented at the International Forum on Participatory Research, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, 1980.

Readings and References

- Barndt, D.: *Just Getting There: Creating visual tools for collective analysis in Freirian education programmes for immigrant women in Peru and Canada*, Toronto: Participatory Research Group, 1981.
- Benson, J.K.: 'The inter-organisational network as a political economy', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1975, 20, 229-49.
- Beyer, J.: 'Ideologies, Values and Decision-making in Organisations', in P. Nystrom and W. Starbuck (eds), *Handbook of Organisational Design* (Vol. 2), New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Brown, L.D. and Brown, J.C.: 'Organisational microcosms and ideological negotiation', in M. Bazerman and R. Lweicki (eds), *Bargaining Inside Organisations*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983.
- Brown, L.D. and Tandon, R.: 'Interviews as catalysts in a community setting', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1978, 63, 197-205.
- Dahrandorf, R.: *Class and Class Conflict in Industry Society*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1959.
- Darcy de Oliveira, R. and Darcy de Oliveira, M.: *The Militant Observer: A Sociological Alternative*, Geneva: Institute d'Action Culturelle, 1975 (IDAC Document 9).
- Diesing, P.: *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences*, Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1971.
- Fernandes, W. and Tandon, R.: *Participatory Research and Evaluation: Experiments in Research as a Process of Liberation*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1981.
- Freire, P.: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

- Freire, P.: *Education for Critical Consciousness*, New York: Seabury, 1974.
- Freire, P.: *Pedagogy in Process: Letters to Guinea-Bissau*, New York: Seabury, 1978.
- Gaventa, J. and Horton, B.D.A.: 'Citizen's research project in Appalachia, USA', *Convergence*, 1981, 14 (3), 30-42.
- Gayfer, M.: 'Participatory research: Developments and issues', *Convergence*, 1981, 14 (3), 5.
- Hall, B.L.: 'Participatory research, popular knowledge and power: A personal reflection', *Convergence*, 1981, 14 (3), 6-47.
- Hall, B.L., Gillette, A. and Tandon, R.: *Creating knowledge: A monopoly? Participatory Research in Development*, New Delhi: PRIA, 1982.
- Huizer, G.: *Peasant Rebellion in Latin America*, New Delhi: Marwah Publications, 1978.
- Laue, J.: 'Advocacy and Sociology', in G.H. Weber and G.J. McCall (eds), *Social Scientists as Advocates: Views from the applied disciplines*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978.
- Lehmann, T. and Young, T.R.: 'From conflict theory to conflict methodology: An emerging paradigm for Sociology', *Sociological Inquiry*, 1975, 14, 15-28.
- Lukes, S.: *Power: A radical view*, London: Macmillan, 1974.
- Mblinyi, M., Vuorela, U., Kassam, Y.O. and Masisi, Y.: The politics of research methodology in the social sciences, in Y. Kassam and K. Mustafa (eds.), *Participatory research: An emerging alternative methodology in social science research*, New Delhi: Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1982.
- Ryan, W.: *Blaming the victim*, New York: Vintage, 1976.
- Starbuck, W.: Congealing oil: Inventing ideologies to justify acting ideologies out, *Journal of Management Studies*, 1982, 19(1), 3-27.
- Tandon, R.: Participatory research in the empowerment of people, *Convergence*, 1981, 14(3), 20-29.
- Tandon, R. and Brown, L.D.: 'Organization building for rural development: An experiment in India', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 1981, 17, 172-89.
- Uphoff, N.T. and Ilchman, W.F.: *The Political Economy of Development*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.
- van de Vall, M., and Bolas, C.: 'Policy research as an agency of planned social intervention: An evaluation of methods, standards, data and analytic techniques', *Sociological Practice*, 1977, 2(2), 77-94.
- Weick, K.: *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (2nd ed.), Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

Occupational Health and Participatory Research

HARSH JAITLE AND VIJAY P. KANHERE

The word 'health' brings to mind an image of doctors, nurses and also the complex world of medicine, anatomy, diagnostic machines and so on. 'Occupational' Health (OH) encompasses disciplines such as engineering, chemistry, ergonomics and other areas requiring technical expertise.

Participatory Research (PR) on the other hand, is a tool most commonly used in social science research. It is generally associated with investigation into more qualitative than quantitative aspects of human reality. The applicability of PR to a seemingly technical field such as OH therefore, is not immediately obvious and requires, in the first instance, some reflection on the focus of research in OH.

Research in Occupational Health

Almost all OH research studies are focused on human beings: the workers. Their health and their well-being is the subject under investigation. The primary tool for investigation is the recording of occupational history and the symptoms of the worker. Once this is done, the adverse symptoms are verified with diagnostic machines, sampling at the workplace and the theoretical information of the researcher or expert. The first component of research in other words, serves to diagnose the ailment while the second component serves to establish the link between suffering and exposure to occupational hazards. In both instances, the worker is the "object" of investigation. Control over the research process is entirely in the hands of the researchers or doctors, technicians, scientists etc. These experts are respected, sometimes even feared. The more complex the problem, the greater the fear of experts.

This dichotomy between experts and workers is also evident in the outcomes of research in OH. Research is often undertaken for

purposes of academic curiosity rather than for improving the lives of those affected by occupational health hazards. The results of research studies are generally used for the benefit of researchers or the resource providers. Moreover, the results of the research rarely reach the affected workers. They are generally kept in the dark about the findings.

In recent years, research in OH, as in other technical disciplines, has met with considerable criticism. Researchers are finding it exceedingly difficult to confine research to laboratories, as results demonstrated in a laboratory are frequently disproved in real-life situations. Some argue for an 'openness' of experts not only in the process of investigation, but also in sharing the findings with the affected workers. Others encourage the use of social science research techniques in order to make the subject more relevant to humans beings. It is argued that an understanding of OH also involves understanding the relationships between workers and employers, which objective, scientific methods do not always capture.

The following article is based on over a decade's experience of Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) in introducing PR to the field of OH. It describes a variety of interventions through which the inadequacies of conventional OH research can be addressed.

Role of PR in Occupational Health

The role of PR in OH becomes clearer if the issue of occupational health is examined from different vantage points—particularly that of employers and the workers. Consider the issue of wearing masks at the workplace. Masks are worn to prevent dust, fumes and toxic gases from entering the human air passage. From the employer's point of view, masks serve as a reasonably cheap way to ensure occupational safety. If wearing a mask is uncomfortable, the employer considers it the worker's problem not his. In the case of health problems, the affected victims can be blamed for not wearing masks all the time or not wearing them when needed.

The opinion shared by most workers however, is quite different. From their point of view wearing masks for extended periods of time, particularly in hot and humid weather conditions, is quite uncomfortable. Masks also limit communication between workers. Furthermore, there have been cases where masks have failed to prevent occupational hazards. Large-sized dust particles can block the pores of a

mask and prohibit the passage of air. This suffocates the user. Alternatively, fine dust particles may pass through the pores of the mask and reach the nose and nasal passages of the user. Fine dust is amongst the worst occupational health hazards as it enters the lungs with disastrous consequences for the affected workers.

Employers save on the costs of establishing proper control mechanisms to prevent dust, by transferring these costs to the workers in the form of deteriorating health and lung ailments. Employers are correct and rational from their viewpoint. Workers are also in the right for demanding better protection against occupational health hazards. Quite often when these two perspectives clash, society intervenes in the shape of laws which are in favour of one party. After the industrial revolution in United Kingdom for example, the impact of industrial pollution was so disastrous, that a series of laws were passed to protect future generations of workers. We have laws in India as well. They, however, remain mostly on paper. Workers are not powerful enough to ensure that societal pressure and laws are directed in their favour.

What better way to become powerful than being armed with knowledge? PR can play a major role in this clash of perspectives. Let us begin with the process of knowing more.

Knowledge is Power

Experts use the word 'byssinosis' to describe a type of lung disease. The usage of words like this is an example of how workers can be marginalized from the OH knowledge domain. In PRIA, an important aspect of our work is de-mystifying technical jargon by explaining terms and definitions to workers in correct but simple language. Our experience tells us that workers can understand OH as a subject and use this knowledge. A simple illustration of this is narrated below.

Byssinosis is a lung disease caused due to cotton dust. Workers are often unaware that they have this ailment, particularly as it cannot be detected through x-ray reports. The only symptom in the initial stages, is a slight tightening in the chest. The only way to diagnose byssinosis is on the basis of the worker's occupational history and lung function tests. The problem is that most doctors find it difficult to interpret lung function tests.

Sometime ago PRIA facilitated an exercise in bringing together experts and workers to understand the symptoms of byssinosis. Lung

function test machines are available in a portable form. We made these available to workers in a factory. Through a series of educational events, the diagnosis of bynossis was explained to the workers. Thereafter, the workers appeared before a medical board. As they were now familiar with the causes and symptoms of the disease, they were able to answer relevant questions and actively participate in the diagnosis. Any reluctance to be tested or fear of experts on their part, was reduced considerably.

In the process, we also noticed that there are several experts who do not want to confine their knowledge to books, technical reports and medical conferences. When given the opportunity, they were enthusiastic to share their knowledge with the workers.

Thus, a participatory approach where both experts and workers are involved in the research process, helped narrow the divide between expert knowledge and the worker's own understanding of their ailments and the treatment of these. In the educational events, workers could freely ask questions, express doubts and the experts accepted the challenge of providing explanation in a simple language. The process was insightful for the experts as well.

A similar situation where workers knew very little about the cause for their ailments; was observed in Orissa. A cement plant was operating in a hazardous manner. Hundreds of workers and community members living around it were suffering from respiratory disorders. The added complication was that their respiratory disorders had been mis-diagnosed as tuberculosis; an ailment which does not occur due to occupational health hazards. In our country, workers ailments are quite frequently mis-diagnosed. This leads to the denial of the basic rights due to the workers under the law. The challenge for us as participatory researchers therefore was two-fold: one, to challenge and explode the myth about tuberculosis; and second, to demonstrate the real cause for the workers' ailments and to arrive at solutions to safeguard their health.

As a first step towards this, a two-day workshop was organized with the representatives of the local trade union, workers and other community members. The workshop was for mutual information sharing. The local people provided information about their ailments, along with descriptions about the working conditions in the area. The researchers present shared information about occupational health hazards, legislation to safeguard workers' rights and prevention techniques. At the end, a detailed questionnaire was prepared. This was

an open-ended questionnaire covering aspects such as: occupational history, symptoms, legal provisions and the facilities available or absent. A group of data collectors were selected from those present. The time allocated for data collection was 15 days. A sample size was not stipulated. They were required to collect as much data as possible within the 15 days duration. At the end of this exercise, the researchers assisted the data collectors in writing a study report.

Following this exercise, a series of clinical examinations and tests were conducted for the affected individuals. Here also a group of local people were involved and trained.

Outcomes

The outcome of the two experiences narrated above, was that workers became more aware of their suffering and the causes for it. In the Orissa example, a high degree of sensitization and awareness-building took place not only amongst the workers, but also their families, local trade unions etc. Some other important outcomes are described below.

The Reality at the Surface

In the Orissa example, our intervention brought to light the fact that the workers were actually suffering from silicosis—a lung disease caused due to silica dust. The lesson that can be drawn from this is that PR enables us to probe for a deeper understanding of occupational health hazards, bringing hidden problems out in the open. It also leads to a better understanding of the workers' perceptions of these.

Workers Who Were 'Shy' of Experts

The workers who were involved in these two exercises also became capable of articulating their knowledge and understanding in front of experts. In other instances, workers involved in participatory research projects, have voiced their grievances in front of government officials and magistrates. Some of the workers consider going to courts as a comparatively easy form of struggle. Other forms of struggle such as 'go slows' or strikes involve more risks. In certain PR projects the degree of awakening has been so high that workers have refused to choose the 'softer' option of resorting to the legal process.

The 'Negligent' Workers

Finally, we have observed that as struggles for a better safer workplace advance, workers themselves begin to participate in actions to improve safety in the workplace. We have come across several instances where workers had designed better platforms for cranes, made changes in the type of ventilation, got ladders installed for work at dangerous heights and so on.

Issues

In facilitating research of the nature described above, we need to be sensitive to the following issues.

Equality in the Research Process

PR requires the active participation of workers as well as external researchers, experts and technicians. In most situations, a 'gap' exists between these parties and the workers are usually less powerful. To promote authentic participation therefore, one should work towards establishing equality in the research process. This involves the development of a common understanding over the goals of the research project and some degree of trust between different stakeholders. According to the philosophy of PR our research should serve the cause of the workers. Through discussions and dialogue we can become more sensitive to their perceptions and views. This process can be enriching for experts as well

Role of Learning

The issue of equality is linked to the role and 'space' for learning in the research process. In our education system, teachers have a store of knowledge. This knowledge is provided to students in stages. The question of 'what knowledge to provide?' and 'when?' is decided by the teachers. This process is true for research activities as well. The workers, if at all, are assigned the role of passive learners.

In OH, the dichotomy of active researchers and passive workers is even easier to perpetuate because of the 'technical' aspects of the field. As part of the PR process therefore, continuous efforts have to be made to ensure that both experts and workers are exposed to new knowledge and have opportunities to understand this from different perspectives. It also implies that stereotypes about workers' knowledge and capacity to learn need to be exploded. The image of a

'negligent', 'ignorant' worker is constantly projected in training courses, posters and propaganda material on health and safety. Some activists also share the above impression. Along with providing new knowledge we also need to enhance the capacities of workers to use this knowledge.

As facilitators in the above processes, we also felt the need to educate ourselves as well. To learn more than what we knew already. We had to learn how to perform lung function tests and use technical equipment. We had to explore disciplines as varied as chemistry, ergonomics, toxicology and so on. It was not an easy process.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Finally, PR is not satisfied with collection of hard data. It involves investigating more qualitative dimensions of worker's realities. In PRIA we have found it useful to adopt a two-pronged strategy for data collection and analysis. Although we have engaged in several initiatives to collect hard data, the methods involved for this have always been participatory. We emphasize discussions and dialogue, particularly with the workers and their families.

The data collection and analysis process also involves 'giving' information to the workers and their families as we find that when some information is provided by the researchers, the workers are also able to contribute to it. In other words, new data emerges. This two-way process leads to a relationship of trust between the researchers and those engaged in the research process and ensures the authenticity of data.

PR therefore is not just about conducting research to ensure safety and occupational health, it is also about the way we view ourselves, the workers and the role of research in improving their lives. In the contexts we have worked in, the PR approach has definitely brought about some change. If we work with the assumption that experts and workers or employers and workers will always be unequal, then differences will persist. If we are interested and committed to the upliftment of workers however, the opportunities to use PR in OH are immense. Commitment to the oppressed sections is one of the hallmarks of PR and this aspect is responsible for PRIA's achievements over the past decade.

Reflections of a Feminist Political Scientist on Attempting Participatory Research in Aotearoa*

DELLE SMALL

Participatory research is not well-established in Aotearoa (New Zealand), but there are precedents, and current examples of work which incorporate some of the elements of participatory research. Here I record my reflections as a pakeha (non-Maori person) on personal attempts at participatory research. The process has been valuable in both the Aotearoa and international contexts. It has helped me to identify some wider issues in Aotearoa which have implications for social action.

Learning from Developing Countries

At the end of 1983, soon after setting out on leave, I attended a seminar on participatory research in Manila given by Rajesh Tandon, now the co-ordinator of the International Participatory Research Network of the ICAE (International Council for Adult Education). That was the first time I had heard of the term participatory research. The name had suggested to me the possibility of academics working in teams.

Rajesh Tandon's statements on social science methodology corresponded with both my intellectual and gut reactions. After having spent six years doing "rigorous" research on what had seemed an important topic: "A Study of Property Theory in the Eighteenth Century Scottish Historical School", and investigative work on New Zealand national development policy, with its "Think Big" projects and philosophy, I had become disillusioned about the value of both of these types of research in the history of ideas and public policy. What I

*This article was earlier published in *Convergence*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 & 3, 1988, pp. 85-97.

empathized with so readily in participatory research, was the methodological critique from which it has sprung.

At that stage I was not aware that there was an international network of participatory researchers. I planned to go to India to see some of this research in action, but in the meantime, I was off to Nigeria, or so I thought. At the Nigerian Embassy in Nairobi, I found out that I was denied entry. Whether it was because I was from a university, or whether I was trained, or because of New Zealand's sporting contacts with South Africa, I can't say. The extraordinary thing was that coincidentally, I found myself a few weeks later in the office of Kamal Mustafa at the University of Dar Es Salaam, who was the coordinator for participatory research in the African continent. Intrigue was added to interest. We talked and I went away with all of the literature he had available.

At this point in my learning process I understood the essence of participatory research to be a living engagement with a community group. It required the principal researcher to recognize that it should be the group that defined the problem, and that having participated in the research, the group would subsequently own the knowledge.

My next stop was Britain, where I had contact with development people—academics whom I respected, and regarded as challenging in terms of both theory and experience. Still buoyant with my new insights, I was shocked to meet strong resistance to the notion of participatory research. The current notion seemed to be that it was something “Third World and gimmicky”. So I turned my attention instead to what I could learn from some very alive and active feminists in England.

My understanding of participatory research developed no further until I reached India, where all of my expectations were surpassed. I was no longer just talking about a methodology, but meeting “academics” and “social workers” who were engaged in participatory research, so I was confronting the evidence of the effectiveness of their work. It was a brief exposure, but it confirmed the viability of the methodology as a tool in the relief of oppression.

Problems of Getting Started

I returned to Aotearoa in August 1984 keen to talk with two close Marxist colleagues. I had come to Marxism through development studies and had not yet integrated my own feminist and ecological

convictions. I hoped that through adopting a creative methodology, a single theoretical perspective would emerge. However, I was not able to convey these prospects to my colleagues. For a second time, my enthusiasm for participatory research met with a dampening response. (I have since come to recognize more clearly the constraints of the university institution, which, through its own power structure, claims the allegiance even of Marxist scholars. There are also practical difficulties in combining the roles of participatory research and university lecturer.)

To begin with, I tried to find out whether anyone else was doing this type of research in New Zealand. A few people were on a regional mailing list and I traced them. None had been able to incorporate it in their work. One had tried in a limited way, but was handicapped by being under contract to a government department. It seemed that there was no participatory research being done anywhere.

Most of my time was taken up with teaching, but I stayed open for any opportunity to get started. Fortunately, in 1985, two of my honours students Jan Andrews and Nicola Armstrong became interested in participatory research after I had introduced works on the subject by Tandon, Mustafa, Bryerson, Hall and Fernandes.

Jan had a temporary job with a small agency, the Women's Employment Trust. This was early days for the new Labour Government and they had set up a task force to call for submission on taxes and benefits. A small amount of money was available. Jan brought together a working group, and in the space of a few weeks we planned and held some workshops involving 200 low-income women. It was a start, but not a basis for continuing work.

I had begun to do some background research about women outworkers (home-based workers). With the economic restructuring that was occurring, more women were being employed to work in their own homes—often under exploitative conditions. Some women in Christchurch were working for 50 cents an hour. (This was at a time when the legal minimum wage for full-time factory machinists was over \$5 an hour.) Jan was a member of the combined trade unions women's sub-committee, and through her, I was invited to the meetings. The group was concerned about the growing problem of outwork, and we began to explore possibilities of working together. Eventually, it proved to be problematic partly because there are outworkers in a number of different industries, and I learned that trade unions are not comfortable working across areas. Secondly,

unions are mainly interested in protecting full-time jobs, whereas outworkers theoretically undermine factory jobs. On the part of the outworkers, there is a degree of suspicion towards union people who may be after them to pay dues. Fundamentally, we found that for women, the basic stumbling block was fear: fear of what a new venture might lead to, fear of conflict on the sub-committee. While a few of the women were responsive to something which seemed to them progressive, a basically different approach was deeply institutionalized within the organization.

If Jan and I were going to launch any participatory research amongst outworkers, we would have to do it ourselves. By now we had a lot of information on the history of outwork in New Zealand, the legislation, and the current problems. We put together a proposal for funding from a government department, ready to work together on a job-sharing basis. For many weeks we waited, only to be turned down, and told that this was a problem for unions to deal with.

New Strategies

At the end of 1985, I returned to India, where I confided to my friends that all I was doing was becoming an expert on the problems of getting started. Those were heady days for SPARC (Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres) in Mumbai, which had just successfully completed its mammoth enumeration of pavement dwellers. In Delhi I spent time at PRIA (Society for Participatory Research In Asia), where amongst other things I noticed an increased emphasis on women. Again the exposure was confirming, but this time I looked more closely at strategies for initiation. SPARC, for example, in doing its enumeration, had used a standard tool in an innovative way. PRIA was busy initiating national workshops on Women and Wastelands. On my return I discussed these things with Jan, but her overall comment was: "Delle, do you think participatory research really is something that goes better in a country like India where the problems are so acute?" I felt that the time had come for me to get off the back foot.

The new year brought the start of my new course at third year level "Women and Development." I put it to the students that development was not something which just happened overseas, and that we might initiate something which could lead to the formation of women's groups in the working class area of Hei Hei. We constructed

a survey, and generated local interest by holding a public meeting. We then organized around the survey itself, fully aware that our priority was to enable women to come together for their own purposes. It was a small-scale venture, with twelve students, eight local women, and sixty-eight other local women who responded to us.

This initiative was enough to demonstrate the effectiveness of the methodology. Participatory research came alive for me, and stopped being a prospect. The information gathered was unique because it shed light on dependent poverty and interrelated pressures on low-income women, with disturbing facts about their health.¹ For some of the local women, the process had a marked effect: they were able to identify their own experiences as part of a pattern common to the women; they identified myths which conceal women's oppression by men (for example, a woman's first duty is to her family); they identified myths which legitimize women's oppression of other women (such as society's attitude to single mothers); they felt power in shedding oppression. They brought their own knowledge to university and talked to the students. For over a year, a local group continued to meet, applying the new insights they had gained to other areas of concern to themselves.

Since then some of the members have gone separate ways. The small amount of organization which we had been able to inject tended to be ad hoc. Even though in the following year, I took out a new group of students, and we followed-up one particular problem which had shown up—the big propagation of women taking mind-changing, psychotropic drugs (anti-depressants and minor tranquilizers), it became clear that organizationally, more leadership was needed than I could supply.

Within the university, a parallel development was sparked off by a group of women students disgruntled about the lack of courses to do with women. (At the time, it never occurred to me that here were elements of a participatory research project.) The students had conducted a survey which showed clearly the need and demand for feminist studies. All of the likely women lecturers in the university were contacted. So, to see what could be done about it, some of us began to meet regularly, although at first reluctantly since we were already overworked. More than 44 per cent of the student population was female, whereas approximately 12 per cent of the staff were women. The students had identified their part of the problem. They wanted to

work with feminist academics to bring about a new development. We formed a collective.

Feminist Methodology

A significant discovery for me came from an article by Maria Mies. For the first time, a feminist was describing the principles of participatory research in the context of a quest for “a new methodological approach consistent with the political aims of the women’s movement.”² In the article, Mies acknowledged earlier criticisms of the dominant quantitative social science research methodology which had identified its hierarchical nature, its political bias alongside its claim of value neutrality, and the structural separation between the theory and practice of positivism. The problem she saw was that as long as this critique was “confined to the magic circle of academic institutions”, and did not reach the working masses, it merely reproduced the separation. Alternatively, the evidence from feminist scholarship and political experience, is that only when there is a struggle against women’s exploitation and oppression can the extent and form of the patriarchal system be understood.³ Ironically this last claim was being borne out within Canterbury University with the opposition being shown to the establishment of feminist studies. We did not have to go far to test the theory.

In 1987, at Canterbury, we enrolled our first students for feminist studies, 211 women and men. The struggle was by no means won because we lacked resources and were doing the work voluntarily. We had established that the demand was there, that a future programme would be viable, and also that as a working collective we could function effectively.

A Role for Feminist Studies

It has been said that academically, the focus for feminists has been shifting from a preoccupation with theory to the question of methodology.⁴ I would argue that a key concern is to bring theory and method closer together. Feminist methodological criticism, not only of positivism and naturalism, but also of ethnography and participant observation,⁵ is clearing the way for the political role of feminist research to be recognized.

Feminists interested in bringing about change, cannot rest with the notion that the goal of social science is to discover the nature of

social phenomena. Not only does that goal fall short of our aims, but we have learned that it is only in action for change, that the phenomena come to be fully promising: the empowerment of women in a process that brings theory and practice together, allowing a political development, as it leads to the generation of new theory.

In teaching courses in the Political Science Department on Women and Development, I have sought to combine discussion of the problems with theoretical and metatheoretical analysis, while at the same time providing opportunities for students to engage in research at a grassroots level. They have generally accepted the principle that the only appropriate form of research to do with women, is that which has the empowerment of women as an integral part of the process. And when they themselves have joined in that process, their own learning has been greatly enhanced.

While it has been possible to combine classes and research for students at a third-year level, beyond that, at Masters level, the pressure to produce written work is too great to allow time for practical work. For working on theses, individual research is required and the constraints are such that almost inevitably the student defines a problem which can be investigated and written up in a limited time.

In 1987, as Stage One level of Feminist Studies, I ran two sessions in which I conducted intra-class research, introduced the students to basic concepts of participatory research, giving examples from India and from here, and once again, invited some of the women from Hei Hei to come to the university and take part in small group discussions. I was taken back by student enthusiasm. They wanted to get me on television, wanted to turn history essays into participatory research and were intent on applying a participatory research label to a range of endeavours. I reflected on my own role. Was I anxious to be the guardian of participatory research in its pure form? I was not prepared to expose the local women of Hei Hei to more than they had bargained for by bringing in the television, and I felt strongly that the knowledge they had generated was their own. As for history essays, did this mean reintegrating a method into an academic exercise? Also I was uneasy about participatory research being used as a middle-class tool. The problems were solved by forming a group of those students especially interested in participatory research. We met a few times and talked through the methodology at greater depth.

By this time, the projects with the Hei Hei women, and the contacts I had made, particularly with mature students, had begun to gain

credibility for me with two grassroots women's organizations, Women's Refuge and Rape Crisis. These groups already function in a non-hierarchical way, and they are keen about doing this type of research. They each invited me to work with them, and now two projects are underway. One is a local initiative, similar to the Hei Hei experiment, involving students again, but with good organizational backing. The other is a national evaluation which is urgently needed by Rape Crisis. Previously these groups had not sought academic help, partly because of a lack of trust, but also because they had no clear idea of how to proceed, or whom they might engage. For me, the contact was timely.

I had learned the difficulties of trying to organize women locked into a 70 hours-a-week treadmill of household work, child-care, and paid employment. I had become interested in a massive shift going on in Aotearoa where across the spectrum of age, level of education, and socio-economic status, women are going out on their own. In 1986, for example, there were more women who abandoned relationships with men, and went on the solo parent's benefit than there were marriage licenses issued. Statistically, psychologically, and theoretically, there are thousands of women, who already know the meaning of oppression and have begun to take a hand in their own development. Society individualizes them, keeps them poor, and treats them with derision. Many are helped through their crises by Women's Refuge and Rape Crisis. The hope I foresaw was eventually to build beyond the crisis stage.

The research I am now doing with the organizations was envisaged by them as basically preventive. What is actually happening with our first endeavour is that a participatory research project is just beginning, and a process is underway which looks set to generate organization of women, information, definition of problems, and pointers for strategy as well as refinement of theory and methods. Preconceived ideas about pre-crisis or post-crisis potential seem set to merge with the momentum of whatever it is we have sparked off.

It is fitting that the link with feminist studies is already there. After all, feminist studies, an academic subject, grew out of the women's movement, which in turn grew out of women's consciousness-raising groups, and not from abstract theory. Feminist scholars cannot allow an academic discipline to develop which is detached from women's struggles. A chief role for feminist studies is therefore the facilitation of research which not only avoids a separation by

linking women in a common task, but has the capacity to vitalize the struggle and inform the study.

Community Outlook

The discussion of women's organizations touched on one aspect of community development, but there are other issues and particular features of social change to be considered, which bear on the prospects for research.

Most of the research done in Aotearoa of a standard type is funded either by companies for their own profit or by the government. As social tensions rise due to racial problems and unprecedented levels of unemployment, it seems likely that the government will need to give priority to the question of order. Meanwhile, most people assume that knowledge is obtained for the common good (and that there is a public accountability system if the government fails to deliver the goods), and they continue to look to the government as to a godfather, expecting problems to be solved, when in fact, the government has had a hand in creating those problems.

An assumption of the futility of this assumption was provided by former student Nicola who, after she graduated, took up a position in a government department. She reported on the prospect of a participatory research project: Maori and Pacific island women, hundreds of them working as cleaners in government departments, were about to have their employment put in jeopardy, and their lives disrupted following the onset of corporatization. She drew up a proposal, but the departmental head would not allow the research to be done, because it was too politically sensitive.

"Voluntary" organizations in the community have been confronting hard times. Two years ago, the government withdrew a funding scheme on which most small organisations had relied for paid workers. In place of the old scheme, a new structure was established which was to administer a finite and reduced sum. The effect was that groups were pitted against one another in the competition for diminished resources. This destructive process has still not been documented because nobody has had sufficient time or money to do it. Meanwhile, corporatization⁶ has caused the loss of many jobs. This, coupled with the axing of government-funded work schemes and a systematic fragmentation of unions, has brought hardship and disarray, which in turn has served to dispel effective opposition. Dis-

illusionment has been setting in amongst traditional Labour Party Supporters.

Whereas the process of disillusionment takes time, one group in the society already had 150 years of experience to draw on. History will show that the most systematic work which has been done in this period of the fourth labour government has been done by Maori people.

They would not label their efforts 'participatory research' as such, yet their style of working is close to what has been defined in this way. They automatically have a bottom-up approach because as indigenous people they are on the bottom of the society, socially and economically. The chief aim in Maori development is development of Maori people, pride in their culture, and an all-out bid to save their language from extinction, and to gain the restoration of their land and fishing rights in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi, on which the colony of New Zealand was founded. Reviewing ten years of struggle, Donna Awatere wrote of herself and three other leading Maori women—Hana Jackson, Eva Rickard and Titewhai Harawira: "We women didn't always agree on the plan, but as to the goal, always agreement: our Land, our Language, kaha Maori and taha Maori."⁷

In Aotearoa, not a week goes by without a hui (meeting) being held in some part of the country. A massive amount of research is going on in various forms, and at different levels, but in a concerted way. Maori people are already linked through connections and they have traditional ways of dealing with conflict, and reaching consensus. New organizations have sprung up to meet specific needs. Networking happens as part of a communal culture. Oral history enriches and informs the present. It would be wrong to paint too rosy a picture, especially since the renewed Maori struggle is only now gaining momentum, and many Maori people have been socialized in over a century of assimilation with white culture. My point is that within the Maori community, research and action are being successfully combined in Maori development.

By contrast, a number of non-Maori groups are floundering. For example, in Christchurch in 1987 a housing network came together comprising one representative from seven different agencies. I was invited to discuss the possibilities of a participatory research project with them, to mark the year of shelter for the homeless, but I discovered that the agencies themselves, church and secular, operate like

small servicing bureaucracies, without any substructure of organization. Within a few months, two key people had changed their jobs and the small group had folded. There is now a new network which has formed in response to a government initiative to form a national housing authority, with the aim of informing government policy!

What is to be Done?

There is, right now, a moment in our history when certain radical forces for change are already at work in the society. Maori people are not the only disaffected group. Sexism has been just as systematically institutionalized as racism, and this explains in part, why it is in the area of feminist activity that developments are also taking shape. Amongst other marginalized people low-paid, and unemployed, there is little sign of new movement, mainly due to lack of political coherence. From the top, the strategies of international capital, aligned with a national Business Roundtable and the Labour Government are having a major impact on the society. There is worse to come, it seems, and the natural resources and social security and peace which we have enjoyed are seriously threatened.

There is plenty of potential work for participatory researchers, but I doubt that this will be done by academics, even if they have the talent and inclination. (We know that grassroots people tend to be anti-intellectual, and that intellectuals in universities generally get their rewards from more patently scholarly work.) Participatory research needs an input of time and energy which academics can rarely give. In theory, they could link with a community organization, but this implies that organizations are themselves ready to work in this way, and even then there is the contradiction that for university staff to make themselves available to community groups, they may need to reduce their commitment to teaching, and resist some of the other demands being made on them within the institutions. By definition, the responsive people have the least spare capacity, and they are few in number. Another factor is that we still have, as a result of the colonial mentality, a preponderance of university teachers who were born overseas and have come here to take up positions. For whatever reason, academics, who are predominantly male, and almost all non-Maori, are not generally in touch with the community.

They serve a conservative institution which as a result of economic and political measures is becoming increasingly elite.

Within the university, but more particularly, beyond the university, the politics of funding is an issue. It is not surprising that for the most part, radical research has had little support in the past. It is not surprising that the professional researchers have not been interested in participatory research methods or that the most oppressed groups are finding those methods fit with their aims. It is significant also, that collaboration between the Maori, Pacific Islander and pakeha is found in the women's refuge organization.

With many volunteer organizations barely able to survive financially, the problem of funding is compounded. One reason Maori groups have been doing so well with respect to research is that they have long made do on minimal outside support, they tend to share resources, and some funding has been made available. Another key factor is that they have identified the problems. This element of the methodology is the cornerstone.

The challenge of participatory research is not only in the work itself. But in the need for some degree of self-reliance on the part of the facilitating researchers. As a political strategy for empowerment it will grow in acceptance as it transforms grassroots organisations, and as its process generates new formations.

In Aotearoa, events are overtaking any research plans we might have. We are entering a period when the problems of trying to merge all of the elements of participatory research, could be overshadowed by crisis. Perhaps then, what has been learned methodologically from participatory research will be of help as we are forced right back to the basis of our survival, with the need to establish networks, and the need to develop anew.

References

1. Small, D. 'Working Class Women' in *Race Gender Class* No. 5 (Christchurch: Race Gender Class, P.O. Box 1372, July, 1987).
2. Mies, Maria. 'Towards a Methodology For Feminist Research' in *Theories of Women's Studies*, Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein (eds.) (Berkeley: University of California, 1980) p. 118.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
4. Currie, Dawn and Kazi, Hamida. 'Academic Feminism and the Process of De-radicalization: Re-examining the issues' in *Feminist Review* No. 25, March 1987, p. 81.
5. Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London: Tavistock, 1983). Chapter One: Judith Stacy, 'Can there be a

Feminist Ethnography?' in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1988, 2, (1), pp. 22-7.

6. Corporatization was a process whereby a range of national services, administered by the government were made into separate entities, called state-owned enterprise. The new structures were headed by prominent businessmen, to be put on a profit-making basis. The second stage in this process is to sell them off.
7. Donna Awatere, 'Wahine Ma Korerotia' in *Broadsheet*, July 1982.

SECTION II

Participatory Research & Social Transformation

Section Outline

Participatory research emerged as a critique to dominant social science research, with the main objective to produce new knowledge or synthesize existing knowledge. Its role however is not restricted to only the phase of inquiry and education, but also transcends—to contribute to social transformation and change. It however needs to be emphasized that social transformation requires a number of interventions: organizing, mobilizing, struggle, knowledge. PR thus does not directly lead to social transformation. It however can make an important contribution to that process.

This section of the book highlights the political dimension of PR, with a focus on tracing its contribution to people-centred development and social change. The section consists of eight papers by educators and practitioners.

L. David Brown introduces the political role of PR, in his paper 'People-centred Development and PR'. He argues that PR is a vehicle for people-centred development. As an approach which includes inquiry, education and action, PR highlights local problems, facilitates collective action and attitudinal change among the poor and assists in building local people's organizations—all leading to people-centred development.

This viewpoint is supported by Rajesh Tandon in his paper 'PR and Participatory Social Action'. He highlights the significance of participatory social action as one "characterized by an equal distribution of power, reliance on local resources, continued control by the people, small and locally evolved technology and qualitative outcomes." Based on the close relationship between top-down social action and top-down social research, he argues that PR needs to

develop certain key characteristics, which mark participatory social action, in order to enable its alliance with the latter.

The links between PR and social action are further strengthened by an early writing of Rajesh Tandon—'Issues and Experiences of Participatory Research in Asia'. Besides providing insights into the characteristics of experience of PR in Asia, the paper also highlights that "PR in its attempts to bring social transformation, has a necessary relationship with social action." A trend, which according to Tandon "has scared many professional researchers from joining PR". The political implications of PR, and its contribution to organization building for the poor is clearly illustrated in this chapter. The paper 'Participatory Research in North America and India' by John Gaventa and Juliet Merrifield explore three approaches to participatory research: (1) The reappropriation of knowledge, (2) Developing the people's knowledge, and (3) Popular participation in the social production of knowledge. They further provide insightful illustrations from North America and India to support the three approaches to participatory research. The paper explodes the myth that the relevance of participatory research as an approach for social change is restricted to the domain of developing countries.

Broadening the purview of social transformation to include 'cultural reconstruction', Rajesh Tandon addresses the contribution of PR to cultural reconstruction in general and in Pozzuoli in particular. His paper 'PR as a Contribution to Cultural Reconstruction' illustrates four critical steps, which include "understanding crises, discovering historical roots, visualizing the future and generating commitment to reconstruction."

Building on the premise that PR makes an important contribution to social transformation, Anthya Madiath's paper on 'Tribals and Land Alienation' highlights the use of the PR approach in the organization of landless tribal labourers in Orrisa to fight against land alienation. The paper thus links the process of 'inquiry' and 'education' to the political dimension of 'collective action' for social change. Eileen Belamide's paper 'Participatory Research Among Farmer-Settlers in Southern Philippines' further highlights the process whereby farmers in the Philippines engage in social analyses of their existing situation to raise political pressures about the existing structure of the village.

The political dimension of PR also extends to assisting poor tribal women of Dhulia district, Maharashtra in their struggle for liberation

of land, equal wages, security and a greater role in decision making in the family and in the community. Vijay Kanhere highlights this struggle in his paper 'Women's Struggle for Empowerment'. PRIA, as an educational support organization has been working on the philosophy of PR since its inception. Rajesh Tandon in 'Knowledge, Participation and Empowerment: PRIA's Experience' provides an overview of how the perspective of PR has influenced PRIA's work on participatory learning, occupational health, women's economic development, local self-governance and strengthening of civil society. The link between PR and empowerment is clearly illustrated.

People-Centred Development and Participatory Research*

L. DAVID BROWN

Theories and strategies of development have focused on expanding production of physical and economic resources, and treated deterioration of ecological and human conditions as short-term evils necessary to that expansion. But in recent years alternatives to "production-centred development" have been proposed (e.g., Lehmann, 1979). Proponents of "people centred development", for example, have emphasized human development, equitable distribution of resources, and ecological and temporal sustainability as central concerns of development strategy (Gran, 1983; Korten, and Klauss, 1984). The social techniques of people-centred development contrast sharply with those of production-centred development: organizational self-regulation instead of regulation by hierarchical command; interactive social learning instead of expert-dominated positivist social research; and political and economic analyses that treat people and environments as central rather than as external costs (Korten, 1984). People-centred development strategies place a high premium on the development of human resources and social systems. Education is potentially central to planning and implementing those strategies.

But education has been central in the development strategies of many countries for years, and its record as a catalyst for development is mixed at best. Investments in formal education systems were expected to fuel rapid economic development, promote equitable distributions of resources, and provide the human base for political and social as well as economic development. Experience has been disappointing. Expanded formal education has not been consistently related to expanded economic production (e.g., Walters, 1981). Educational expansion appears to be largely irrelevant to reductions in

*This article was earlier published in *Harvard Educational Review*, 55, 1, 1985, 69-75, Copyright © by the President and Fellow of Harvard College.

economic inequalities (e.g., Fry, 1981). Formal educational systems appear to be more consequence than cause of the political economies in which they operate, a dependent rather than an independent variable (Bowles, 1980). These results have raised serious questions about the roles education and educators play in the task of development (Simmons, 1980).

Question: If expanding educational systems—widely undertaken in the last two decades—does not have the expected developmental impacts, how can renewed emphasis on expanding human resources be a credible development strategy?

Answer: Education will not contribute much to people-centred development unless it differs fundamentally from the formal education of the past.

Formal education in most countries—developed and developing—has grown out of the logic of production-centred development, preparing students to work in command-regulated organizations, teaching principles and methods of physical science-based inquiry, and emphasizing technical and production outcomes rather than human or ecological consequences of decisions. The logic of people-centred development calls for educational processes that emphasize self-regulating organizations, interactive learning that empowers both learners and teachers, and decisions that contribute to human development and ecological sustainability as well as economic productivity. Participatory research is a learning process consistent with the emphasis of people-centred development. It has implications for inquiry, education, and organized intervention to transform local patterns of awareness, distributions of power and resources, and participation in development activity.

Participatory Research: Description and Example

The participatory research tradition has emerged from work with oppressed peoples in many developing areas. Paolo Freire and his colleagues in Latin America, for example, developed widely influential concepts for adult education and “conscientization” of the urban and rural poor by engaging adults in critical analyses of the causes of their powerlessness and impoverishment (Freire, 1970; 1974). Similar principles of inquiry have been developed in projects in Africa and Asia (Hall, 1981), though lack of communication channels and op-

portunities for contact among investigators delayed recognition of their common concepts and methods.

Participatory research brings outside researchers and local participants together in joint inquiry, education and action on problems of mutual interest. Ideally all parties become learners; they share control over the research process; they commit themselves to constructive action rather than detachment; their participation promotes empowerment as well as understanding (Hall, 1981). Outside researchers who undertake participatory research projects join with local participants to define problems, design data collection methods, analyze results, and utilize research outcomes. In many developing country situations, commitment to the interests of local participants requires challenging oppressive structural arrangements, so participatory researchers take political positions on behalf of their local colleagues.

Participatory research, like action research, sometimes sacrifices rigorous control for pragmatic utility (Susman and Evered, 1978). Unlike action research, participatory research focuses on actors (e.g., oppressed groups), issues (e.g., conflicts with power-holders), and values and ideology (e.g., empowerment, equity, self-reliance) that put it in opposition to dominant forces in society (Brown and Tandon, 1983). Participatory research can change the understanding of both outside researchers and local participants, and catalyze shifts in activity by all parties. Participatory research has the potential to produce mutual education, new knowledge, and solutions for specific problems.

The following example illustrates some characteristics of participatory research projects (see Tandon, 1981; Tandon and Brown, 1981):

Outside researchers from a private voluntary agency working on rural development projects began participatory research workshops with groups of small farmers in rural Indian villages by posing questions such as "why are you poor?" Responses were initially sparse—five-minute silence followed the first question in the initial workshop—for participants had no experience with such dialogues, and they were overawed by the status of the outsiders. The researchers were uncomfortable for different reasons: outsiders and farmers lived together on equal terms during the workshop, and researchers felt disoriented by lack of familiar facilities, such as toilets, running water, and chairs.

Previous projects with these farmers provided information for improving crop yields and quality, but relatively little change had

resulted. Farmer groups did not take new initiatives after those workshops. The participatory research differed from earlier efforts in several ways: (1) dialogue encouraged participants to take initiatives in analysis, (2) discussions clarified agreements and common concerns among participants, (3) problem-solving exercises required participants to work collectively, so they learned by experience about skills needed for joint action. Villagers and outsiders together developed better understanding of village problems, and together discussed strategies for dealing with those having high priority in the eyes of the group.

Outcomes of the participatory research workshops were assessed in village follow-up visits and in systematic analysis of journals kept by peer group leaders. The level of problem-solving initiatives by participating groups increased dramatically over past performance and in comparison to groups from other villages that did not have participatory research workshops. For example, groups started local schools, increased school enrollments, and elected new representatives to local governments. Other villagers observed the success of participant groups and began to emulate them. The agency decided to train the rest of its staff in participatory research skills so they could extend the impacts of the project to other villages.

This project began with a single outside researcher, skilled in experiential learning, organization building, and participatory research. Within a few months workshop participants had become more aware of their situations and more active about influencing them; coalitions with neighbouring villages had evolved, and these villages were also beginning to take collective initiatives. The sponsoring agency had decided to alter its basic technology to achieve similar results elsewhere. This pattern of spreading initiatives and self-reliant activity grounded in local needs exemplifies the potentials of people-centred development.

Some Implications of Participatory Research

Participatory research differs in important ways from other traditions of inquiry, education, and action. Some illustrative differences and their implications are identified in this section, since space precludes any treatment in depth.

A. Participatory Research as Inquiry

Participatory research in the Indian villages focused first on explaining the circumstances of local participants, and then on using that understanding to plan strategies for improving the situation. In the course of the research outsiders learned the realities of village life from farmers, and farmers learned organization and action skills from outsiders. Each learned to work effectively with the other, and each learned how village groups might take initiatives to influence their situations. The process produced both solutions to immediate problems ("How can our village get a school?") and information relevant to theoretical questions ("Can experience-based learning help small farmers organize themselves?").

Participatory research differs from the dominant positivist traditions of US social science research in both goals and procedures. Positivist research seeks to build a network of general laws to explain social phenomena across all cases. Positivist researchers insure the validity of their findings by carefully controlling the design of research, the analysis of data, and the impact of researcher values on phenomena. Rigorous research seeks to reduce the ambiguity or the relevance of competing explanations as much as possible.

Participatory research, in contrast, focuses on explaining single cases. Participants from Indian villages are less interested than outside researchers in developing general laws, particularly if those laws are not obviously relevant to understanding and improving their situations. Shared control of the research process encourages local problem analysis in terms intelligible to local participants. They understandably value theories that offer explanation, prediction and control of local events more than theories that sacrifice local applicability of general validity. So participatory research has an idiographic and pragmatic bias that violates many of the assumptions of positivist social science (Susman and Evered, 1978).

Participatory researchers often violate many procedures and constraints by which positivist researchers seek to validate their findings. The participatory researcher's control over research design is often limited by the tolerance of local participants, the press of external events, and the unavailability of information. Comparison groups of Indian villages were only available by chance in the study described earlier. Complex statistical analyses require expertise and resources often neither available nor recognized as useful by other participants. Value-free stances are inconsistent with the need of establishing com-

munity of interest with other participants, with the participatory research tradition of explicit commitment to oppressed groups, and with the goal of taking constructive action on the basis of research findings. This is not to say that standards of validity are not relevant to participatory research: participatory research findings may meet the "pattern validity" criteria used by clinical and anthropological investigators (Diesing, 1971) or the "heuristic logic" appropriate to complex and uncertain systems (Sutherland, 1973). But those standards may not satisfy those strongly committed to positivist criteria.

These differences may separate participatory research irrevocably from other social science traditions—participatory research may not be "science" by positivist criteria. But, as Susman and Evered (1978) have pointed out, there are epistemological bases other than positivism that can underpin inquiry, and positivist science has not provided a fruitful basis for developmental action in many settings. Many people-centred development theorists argue that positivist social science is part of the problem, for failure to recognize the investigation as part of the system undercuts its capability to effectively intervene or promote development (Dunn, 1971; Ackoff, 1977; Korten, 1984). Participatory research may not be good social science in positivist terms, but it may be better than positivist social science for some development purposes.

B. Participatory Research as Education

The Indian participatory research projects reshaped the ideas and attitudes of both outside researchers and local participants in a powerful experiential learning process. Participatory research differs significantly in both content and process from formal education in most developed and developing countries.

Educational content in participatory research projects can seldom be planned or predicted across many projects. Formal education curricula are often designed by experts in content areas, planned well in advance, standardized across regions, and adopted and disseminated through centralized bureaucracies. The content of learning in participatory research, in contrast, is often negotiated between local participants and outside researchers to fit specific local problems. Some Indian villagers were concerned about educational resources; others wanted new representation in local governments; still others wanted better services from state and government functionaries. Educational topics for participatory researchers/educators cannot easily cover all

the issues that might be relevant. Such diversity of interests also makes centralized organization and control of content difficult. Waiting for central agreement to curriculum changes would debilitate both local interest and researcher motivation for participatory research projects.

Participatory research also implies an educational process different from most formal education. Participatory research asks adults to be inter-dependents, participants and co-learners, while most formal education assumes teacher control of young and dependent students. Successful participatory research projects employ two-way discussions more than "teaching" in the form of one-way communication from teacher to student, though either outsiders or local participants may instruct each other about topics on which they are better informed (e.g., research methods, local conditions). More generally, participatory research is an interactive, reciprocally influential process very different from the instruction patterns of formal education, and it implies shared responsibility for learning rather than active teachers and passive students. The assumption of interactive learning proved difficult to introduce in the Indian workshops, since the farmers expected lectures rather than discussion. But participation, once launched, unlocked farmer energy and initiatives, and laid the groundwork from which village groups undertook later independent initiatives. The interactive process of participatory research can empower learners as it contributes to new understanding.

Participatory research makes unfamiliar demands on researchers/educators. Participatory researchers need less content expertise in a specific area (e.g., math, history), and more skills for facilitating general problem-solving (e.g., managing meetings, organizing work, planning activity, getting information). Participatory research strategies also call for changes in the organization and administration of educational organizations: centralized, formalized, and standardized organizations may be appropriate to communicating well-defined and routinely executed curricula, but bureaucratic organization of participatory research can rapidly strangle commitment to local problems and the emergence of local problem-solving innovations (see Korten, 1980).

C. Participatory Research as Organizational Intervention

Participatory research potentially produces organizational innovations by participants and researchers that can catalyze development changes.

In the Indian villages farmer groups initiated actions with implications for local education, political mobilization and representation, and influence over government agencies. The project created new organizational combinations that linked villagers both to each other and to the outside world.

Building relations between participants and researchers for action is not easy. They ordinarily live in very different worlds. It took courage and perseverance on the parts of both outside researchers and village participants in the Indian projects to develop mutual trust and influence. But cooperative relations enable effective combination of outsider resources (e.g., information about national and regional plans, methods for learning about local problems, organizational strategies for collective work) and resources of local groups (e.g., information about local problems, commitment to understanding new options, energy and skill for solving problems). Linkages to outside researchers provide local participants with connections to the larger system, in terms of information and in terms of outside alliances. Linkages to local participants provide outside researchers with access to information and collective local action. Participants groups in the Indian project negotiated alliances with neighbouring villages to elect representatives to local governments, but they depended on researchers for contact with larger agencies and issues.

Interventions that grow out of participatory research are locally developed, targeted, and "owned". The village groups defined problems, analyzed alternative solutions, chose action strategies, and implemented plans in the Indian project. They learned how to organize themselves to take action, and they learned about the benefits collective action could achieve. Participatory research can create new agencies for developmental intervention, in the form of participant groups aware of alternative possibilities, skilled in organization and planning, and experienced in successful action. Successful local projects can have ripple effects. There are indications that control villages in the India projects learned about collective initiatives from participating groups, and organized themselves to take their own initiatives. Participatory research develops organizations, not just knowledge and educated individuals—organizations that connect local participants to a larger world, and enable them to act more effectively at the local level.

Conclusions

Participatory research offers a strategy for local education, research, and organization that is consistent with the assumptions of people-centred development. It encourages inquiry that focuses on local problems and pragmatic concerns. It provides education that encourages activist attitude and informal collective action. It builds organizations that enable cohesive local action and link local groups to the larger context beyond the village.

Participatory research is a micro-strategy, most relevant to local level mobilization and development. The larger context of political, economic, and cultural patterns can facilitate or impede local participatory research. In politically centralized and economically concentrated systems, for example, participatory research may threaten powerful established interests. Mobilized local groups may challenge arrangements that they perceive to illegitimately concentrate power and wealth in a few hands. Contextual events and forces may impede or even overwhelm participatory research activities, so it provides no panacea. But in political and economic systems that encourage local empowerment, participatory research offers a promising tool for promoting people-centred development.

References

- Ackoff, R.L.: National Development Planning Revisited, *Operations Research*, 1977, 25, 212-18.
- Bowles, S.: 'Education, Class Conflict, and Uneven Development', in J.L. Simmons (ed.) *The Education Dilemma*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980, 205-31.
- Brown, L. David and Tandon, Rajesh: 'Ideology and Political Economy in Inquiry: Action Research and Participatory Research', *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 1983, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 277-94.
- Diesing, P.: *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences*, Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971.
- Dunn, E.S.: *Economics and Social Development: A Process of Social Learning*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971.
- Freire, P.: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- Freire, P.: *Education for Critical Consciousness*, New York: Seabury, 1974.
- Fry, G.W.: 'Schooling, Development and Inequality: Old Myths and New Realities', *Harvard Educational Review*, 1981, 51, 107-16.
- Gran, G.: *Development by People: Citizen construction of a just world*, New York: Praeger, 1983.

- Hall, B.L.: 'Participatory Research, Popular Knowledge, and Power: A personal reflection', *Convergence*, 1981, 14, 6-17.
- Korten, D.: 'Community Organisation and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach', *Public Administration Review*, 1980, 480-510.
- Korten, D.: 'People Centered Development: Toward a Framework' in D. Korten and R. Kaluss (eds.) *People Centered Development*, West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 1984.
- Korten, D. and R. Klaus (eds.): *People Centered Development: Contributions Toward Theory and Planning Frameworks*, West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 1984.
- Lehmann, D.L.: *Development Theory: Four Critical Studies*, London: Frank Cass, 1979.
- Simmons, J.L. (ed.): *The Education Dilemma: Policy Issues for Developing Countries in the 1980s*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980.
- Susman, G.I. and R.D. Evered: 'An Assessment of the Scientific Merits of Action Research', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1978, 23, 582-603.
- Sutherland, J.A.: *General Systems Philosophy for the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, New York: Braziller, 1973.
- Tandon, R.: 'Dialogue as inquiry and intervention' in P. Reason and J. Rowan (eds.), *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*, Chichester: Wiley, 1981, 293-302.
- Tandon, R. and L.D. Brown: 'Organisational Building for Rural Development: An Experiment in India', *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 1981, 17, 172-89.
- Walters, P.B.: 'Educational Change and National Economic Development', *Harvard Educational Review*, 1981, 51, 94-106.

Participatory Research and Participatory Social Action*

RAJESH TANDON

Social Research and Social Action are similar and interdependent. They both entail certain human activity in a given social setting. They are interdependent because they rely on each other and feed each other. Social research invariably seems allied with social action; social action is invariably based on some social research. One can even argue that coercive and repressive social action also entails a certain database. Investigative and police agencies all over the world rely upon certain research processes to meet their objectives. This paper is an attempt to highlight such a relationship and mutuality between various forms of social research and social action. Its primary intent is to demonstrate this similarity in the case of traditional social research and top-down social action: two streams of which are currently very popular. Its further objective is to argue for a similar linkage between participatory social research and participatory social action.

The paper is organized in four parts. The first part, which follows right after this introductory note, identifies certain dimensions on which the similarities of social research and social action can be analyzed. The second part is an attempt to utilize these dimensions to analyze traditional social research and top-down social action. The third part develops significant characteristics, on these dimensions, of participatory social action based on the case studies presented in the International Forum of Participatory Research, Ljubljana, 1980. And finally, the last part derives certain implications for participatory research in the light of the above.

*This paper was presented at the International Forum of Participatory Research, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, during April 13-22, 1980.

Social research and social action are basic human activities of knowing and acting. They become sometimes more formalized and organized, but occasionally not. When we come across disciplines, schools, institutions and professionals of social research, we are then in contact with its formal and organized face. Similarly, social change agencies, development programmes, departments of development, development administrators and consultants represent a formalized and organized face of social action. In many ways, social research and social action activities are similar. However, there are some very basic differences as well. The goals and purposes of social action are different from social research. While social change, in some broad sense, is the common objective of social action, generation of knowledge, in at least vague terms, is the overall objective of social research. The methodology of social research is quite distinctive and well-developed. So is the methodology of social action. Each follows different methods. The professional training of social researchers is quite different from that of social action agents. The culture of social research organizations is quite different from that of social action ones. One could probably add several more differences. However, our interest in this paper is to highlight the dimensions in which social research and social action are likely to be similar. These dimensions are intended to focus upon one crucial set and this does not imply that it is the only set.

One dimension of this set is the *distribution of power*. It is quite frequent that one comes across such questions as knowledge for whom? And social change in whose interest? These are the questions of distribution of power. Knowledge in itself is power; and change implies use of power. So it is important to analyze the existing, maintained and implied distribution of power in analyzing social research and social action.

Assumptions about what constitutes *critical resources* are another dimension of this set. Every human activity, including research and action, involves certain resources, which types of resources are assumed to be critical for the successful accomplishment of social research and social action is the question being raised here. Several categorizations are possible: internal vs. external resources; physical vs. human resources; small vs. large resources; primitive vs. sophisticated resources. This dimension sets out some of these possibilities.

Linked to the above two and yet distinct in some ways is the question of *control*. What groups of people control these activities?

And what is the basis of that control? It is conceivable that even unequal distribution of power may allow control in the hands of those who are initially powerless. This control may be based on numbers, expertise or distances. This control may be limited to a few activities. So while it does appear that control is linked to the two earlier-mentioned dimensions, it is being used here as a separate one mainly to highlight its importance in social research and social action.

Technology of social action or research is the next major dimension being used here. Technology implies both tangible and intangible. Tangible technology is reflected in physical elements of social research or social action. Intangible technology means techniques and frameworks for those techniques. As intangible technology, frameworks for doing social research or social action become very important. What is the nature of technology used?

Finally, measurement of *outcome* is the last dimension of this set. Outcomes could be measured in gross, aggregate terms or micro, human terms; it may emphasize quantitative outcomes or qualitative ones. The outcomes may be determined by some external reference group or standard; they may also be evolved internally. These are the questions that concern us regarding outcome.

The above dimensions have been used to analyze traditional social research and top-down social action in the next part. This analysis is intended to underscore their similarities as well as to further clarify and establish the significance of these dimensions.

Traditional Research and Top-Down Social Action

Based on accumulated experience of last three to four decades, it is possible to examine some of the similarities between traditional social research and top-down social action. This comparison of similarities between them can be further illuminated by using some illustrations. Table 1 presents these comparisons.

(a) Distribution of Power

One of the most visible characteristics of traditional research is the remarkably skewed power distribution between the researcher and the so-called "subjects". The researcher has complete power to decide upon the focus, methods and outcomes of research. The most frequently carried out experimental and survey research projects demonstrate this distribution of power very clearly (Brenner, et al., 1978).

Table 1: Similarities Between Traditional Social Research and Top-Down Social Action

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Traditional Social Research</i>	<i>Top-Down Social Action</i>
1. Distribution of power	Unequal, only with the Researcher	Concentrated at the top from where action flows
2. Critical Resources	Primarily of the Researcher	Externally obtained
3. Control	By expertise, Norms of Traditional Research	By experts in the field
4. Technology	Computerization; Western Model and Frameworks	Borrowed, Big; Reconstructed
5. Outcomes	In quantitative terms, defined externally	Aggregate, Quantitative Indices

Similarly, top-down social action efforts are, almost by definition, characterized by concentration of power at the top. The elites decide what social action is good for the masses, they design strategies for carrying them out and they implement such efforts. Any developmental project in the developing countries during the last three decades will bear this out. Take the case of agricultural development projects. Most notable among them is the so-called "green revolution". This social action effort was conceived by the elites in the government of various developing countries, mostly in consultation with their counterparts in developed countries and international agencies like the FAO and the World Bank. The farmers in these developing countries had relatively little power in this entire effort of agricultural development. Of course, other sections of rural society, like the landless labourers, were completely ignored.

It is also interesting to observe that the strategy of "green revolution" was fed and supported by massive traditional research carried out in agricultural research institutes of advanced countries and their subsidiary counterparts in developing countries. Of course, the launching of "green revolution" created major funding opportunities for further support of traditional research in these research institutions. This generated a mutually supportive cycle for traditional research and top-down social action.

(b) Critical Resources

Both traditional research and top-down social action efforts rely heavily on resources external to the particular social setting they are focusing upon. In the case of research, these resources are primarily the expert researchers who are alien and external to the system. He is seen as the most critical resource on which the success of the research effort is assumed to be dependent. No attempt is made to recognize or utilize the resources available within the setting. The "subjects" and their resources are denied and neglected. Many research projects do not even consider the possibility of consulting the "subjects" in their design of research instruments.

Similarly, top-down social action projects rely heavily on resources brought in from outside. The expertise, capital, know-how and equipment are all brought in from outside. In the case of "green revolution", massive inputs in the form of High-Yielding-Variety seeds, fertilizer, agricultural implements (like tractors) and credit, were made available from outside. No effort was made to even supplement these from internal inputs. This was based on the primary assumption that external resources are critical to the success of agricultural development.

The dynamics of bringing in external resources and relying upon them as critical to successful research and social action efforts also have international aspects. Several examples are available where external personnel (external to the culture and the country) are heavily relied upon in research and social action efforts. Mbilinyi et al. (1979: 31) present the example of a World Bank Research Project in Egypt: "Of the six principal investigators, just two are Egyptians. The rest are high standing World Bank officials with the required expertise and research experience. None of the five advisers come from Egypt".

It is a still more common occurrence in the case of top-down social action projects dependent on international or bilateral assistance. Roberts (1977: 19) gives an example of a project to eradicate leprosy in one province of an East African country. He shows that 44.5% of the annual budget went for supporting eight European personnel, 22% on supporting 60 African personnel and only 1.5% on drugs. A glaring example of external resources obtaining criticality!

(c) Control

Another dimension, related to the two above, is that of control. In traditional research, control is primarily with the expert researcher.

As a professional researcher, he uses his expertise to control the entire research activity. The “subjects” are controlled, their responses are controlled, spurious influences are controlled. The basic tenet of traditional research is control—obtained through statistical or experimental manipulations based on the expertise of the researcher. The “subjects” are ensured to be passive and the target of influence by the researcher. The questions, designs, and analysis are controlled by the researcher; only answers and information is to be provided by the “subjects”. Moreover, the “subjects” have no control over what happens to this information, how it is used and for whose benefit. In the World Bank Research Project in Egypt mentioned earlier, the respondents had no control over any aspect of the research activity. Since the World Bank was interested in finding out the threshold level of schooling, young children between the third and sixth grades had to provide information. They remained passive information—providers, that is all!

Similarly, top-down, social action efforts remain primarily expert-controlled. These experts decide the elements of the social action project, obtain and provide resources and tell the people how to use them. The people who are the targets of such social action efforts, do not have any control; they have to passively take what is made available to them. Continuing our analysis of “green revolution” efforts, it is easy to see that the farmers were left with no control as to what crops to sow or what methods to follow. It was a package made available on the basis of the experts’ judgement about what was good for the farmers in that region. The expert-controlled “green revolution” was initiated by setting up a large delivery system that controlled the supply of inputs to the farmers.

(d) Technology

Both traditional research and top-down social action rely on borrowed and big technology. The bulk of the traditional research uses western models of research. These research projects entail sophisticated instrumentation and use of computerization and machine-based calculations for analysis. Mbilinyi et al. (1979: 5) outlines the characteristics of the technology of traditional research.

As research has become subordinated to the interests of capital, increasingly capital-intensive techniques have developed in the social sciences. The application of mathematics to social science research in the form of statistical analysis is highly identified with

computer analysis. In turn, such techniques demand large-scale endeavours involving large sample populations and highly efficient (cost-saving) techniques of data-collection, with the questionnaire format (including rating and ranking scales) being the most common technique world-wide.

My own experience in working with small farmers in India has convinced me of the irrelevance of questionnaires as a reliable method of data-collection. What was clear from my experience was that I used the Western framework of research in the rural Indian setting.

What Mbilinyi et al. (1979) described for Africa is also true for other underdeveloped parts of the world. Kaplan (1976: 151) describes similar impact of foreign training and frameworks on social science researchers of Latin America: "The influence has been brought to bear through the training of professionals, teachers, and research workers in the United States, through joint research projects implemented in that country and in Latin America and through the financing of national and regional centres." Kaplan goes on to argue how social science researchers have become a techno-bureaucracy where they have assumed the technical proficiency and expert-control of a techno-bureaucrat. The phenomenon of high, imported, technology-based research is widespread and well-rooted in the developing countries across the world.

Similarly, top-down social action efforts are based on the models developed in the advanced countries of the world. These models are firstly based on the reconstructed logic of that situation; and secondly, that situation has few similarities to the situation obtaining in developing countries today. These models of social action have, therefore, relied on capital-intensive, sophisticated and big technology borrowed from the developed countries. The example of "green revolution" further illustrates this case. The model of Integrated Agricultural Development was based on the assumption that input of capital and know-how will lead to a spur in agricultural production. This was obtained by massive inputs of HYV seeds, fertilizers, credit, tractors, etc. Of course, this led to increased agricultural production. But only the medium and large farmers benefited from it. They increased their production substantially, they generated a lot of surplus. But small farmers and landless agricultural labourers did not benefit; most of the small farmers became landless; and, the gap between the rich and the poor in rural areas further widened. Yet, the reconstructed logic

of this model based on American experience made sense: inputs of capital and modern technology can trigger development. It did not happen this way in India.

The international aspects of this borrowed technology and these models of social action are further intensifying the dynamics described above. Roberts (1977: 19) puts it succinctly:

The European discovered illness among the tribesman and had an immediate line of thought: CURE: bring in hospitals, pharmacies, medical schools He came across illiteracy, but thought: EDUCATE: build primary schools, secondary schools, universities ... He found man drinking palm wine, with several wives and shamelessly naked, he decided to SAVE: establish mission stations, seminaries, cathedrals

Clearly, high technology dependent: both traditional research and top-down social action efforts.

(e) Outcome

Lastly, both traditional research and top-down social action efforts are primarily concerned with quantitative outcomes. Both are likewise goal-directed, not process-oriented. In traditional research, concern with quantitative data outweighs other considerations. The success of research is seen by how much quantitative and quantifiable data has been generated. The other related outcome is publication. Publication in a "reputed" journal or as a book is highly valued outcome. Moreover, the criteria for determining the success of these quantitative outcomes are determined by other researchers. The portrayal of a certain social reality is judged as valid or invalid not by the people who participate in and create that reality but by those who are professional colleagues of the researchers. In most traditional research, no outcomes from the point-of-view of the "subjects" are either aspired for or valued. What happens during the process of research is not important; what is important is the outcome in terms of quantitative data after the research.

Likewise, top-down social action efforts are primarily concerned with outcomes in quantitative and aggregate terms. That is why Gross National Product, Per Capita Income, Birth Rate etc. are the indices that are most commonly used in assessing the outcomes of top-down social action projects. Again the emphasis is on goals, not the process. The process of liberation/development is not a valued outcome;

it is the positive shift in aggregate indices that are valued outcomes. Therefore, Integrated Agricultural Development Programme was called a successful "green revolution" because all major aggregate indices showed improvement. Per capita production and income, overall agricultural output, etc. showed improvement. But the process-orientation analysis brought out the fact that only certain groups benefited, the poor became poorer; landlessness increased. What happened to the life of a small farmer and his family was never an important outcome to be examined in this project.

In sum, therefore, the traditional social research and top-down social action are very similar to each other in the five respects presented above. They tend to support and feed each other largely because of these similarities. The remarkable similarity between the two is not accidental; it has evolved historically to benefit each other.

Participatory Social Action

In recent years, there has been a growing realization that top-down social action efforts do not serve the development objectives. It has now been amply demonstrated that the logic of top-down social action is antithetical to development. In some ways, a paradigmatic shift is taking place in the concept called participatory social action here. In the framework of Kuhn (1970), a paradigmatic shift leads to a radically new way of perceiving and analyzing reality. Participatory social action is a radical shift from top-down social action. Increasingly large numbers of people are finding answers to developmental problems through this new paradigm of participatory social action. As an emerging paradigm, different definitions are being put forward for participatory social action. This section is an attempt to bring out salient differences between participatory social action and top-down social action using the dimensions of the earlier section. In presenting the key elements of participatory social action, I have relied heavily on the case studies presented in the Forum of Participatory Research, Ljubljana, 1980.

(a) Distribution of Power

Participatory social action implies horizontal distribution of power as opposed to vertical which was the case with top-down social action. It means that power is the central theme of participation, and, participatory social action entails widely shared, collective power by those

who are the focus of social action. This in turn also implies that the people themselves become agents of social action. Moreover, the power differential between those who control resources and those who need them has to be reduced in PSA. Pearse and Stiefel (1979: 5) emphasize this aspect: "It must be accepted, therefore, that the struggle for people's participation implies an attempted redistribution of both control of resources and of power in favour of those who live by their own productive labour."

The tribal women of Dhulia in India participated in their own wage negotiations. Their active participation in the strike had increased their power vis-à-vis men who had historically negotiated women's wages. Their participation in the strike and negotiations had also increased their power vis-à-vis the rich farmers. Similarly, the peasants in the Ayacucho region of Peru participated in the development of their communities. This participation increased their power vis-à-vis the professionals and experts; and they worked together as equals. The families of Bwakiri Chini village in Tanzania reduced the power gap vis-à-vis the government officials by creating their own village committee. This participation by the villagers implied greater power equalization than was visible earlier.

Several more examples can be cited to illustrate that participatory social action entails power equalization. The participation of people in designing their own social action efforts promotes collective empowerment and thereby reduces the gap vis-à-vis the elites. To that extent, participatory social action becomes very threatening to the existing status quo.

(b) Critical Resources

Participatory social action implies that people and their skills are the most critical resources. The participants, their knowledge, understanding and skills are primarily emphasized and relied upon in participatory social action. The Tanzanian example shows that there is a belief that 'peasants can solve most of their developmental problems by utilizing skills, experiences and available local resources'. This belief led to the development of improved grain storage facilities by the peasants themselves based on their accumulated experiences. In the course of time, village storage committees became the ongoing resource group in this matter.

Another illustration of people themselves being the most critical resource is available in the women's co-operative store in Bangchuk

village of South Korea. The women's club members decided to run their own co-operative store for essential supplies in the village. They organized themselves to run this store efficiently and goods became available at cheaper prices. The essential point here is that participatory social action is based on people's own resources and skills. This negates the reliance on external resources as demonstrated in top-down social action.

(c) Control

In line with the above, the control of participatory social action is in the hands of the participants themselves. Invariably, it is collective control, even though exercised through a group or representative. Experts are used but only as additional resources controlled by the participants. The expertise of professionals can influence the course of action but it is within the conscious choice of the participants. An excellent illustration of this attempt to control the experts is presented in the case on land ownership in the Appalachian region of the USA. An active citizens' group began to question the land settlement project of the Appalachian Regional Commission by raising the issue of land ownership. The Commission, with its massive resources, attempted to thrust the experts' views on the citizens' group. The citizens' group wanted the experts to be controlled by it. This case brings out very clearly the centrality of control in participatory social action.

Similarly, the villagers of Bwakira Chini in Tanzania knew their grain storage problems and their local resources and environments. Therefore, the outside experts were used as complementary to their skills and controlled to focus upon the prime need of the villagers. External expertise joined hands with the villagers in developing solutions to the latter's problem of grain storage. In the case of the Chemical Workers Union in Norway, the analysis of technological change was initiated and controlled by the union. Professional researchers were used in this analysis but under the constant control of the union. The office-bearers of the union and workers of the plant took major initiatives about what needed to be analyzed. The experts were then used to assist them in the process of action and analysis. In essence, then, participatory social action implies control over the design and process of social action by the participants themselves.

(d) Technology

The technology of participatory social action is embedded in the local context of the participants. Their own models of development

are evolved and utilized in the design and implementation of social action efforts. The technology of such social action efforts is small, relevant, based on local conditions and needs, appropriate and locally evolved. It is based on the participants' own logic though occasionally assisted by the experts. Take the grain storage effort in Bwakira Chini village of Tanzania. The technology is relevant, the storage facilities can be easily constructed and maintained by the villagers; the development of modified storage facility took place from within the experience in the village.

Similarly, the experience of environmental assessment in Big Trout Lake, Northern Canada illustrates the native people's struggle to obtain a locally relevant waste disposal system. The Big Trout Lake Band Council took the initiative to use experts to assess the government proposed sewerage system and treatment plant. The proposed system had ignored the local needs and conditions. The Band Council, therefore, proposed a different system which was based on relevant, small and local technology. In the case of Ayacucho region of Peru, the lack of water was seen as a major problem. Similar attempts were made to obtain technology which is relevant and small.

While participatory social action entails small and relevant technology, it is also based on models of change which are evolved by the participants. The social action against liquor initiated by the tribal women in Dhulia was designed and implemented entirely according to the model evolved by them. The problem, its analysis and methods to solve it were entirely theirs. No "imported" model of tackling their problems was imposed or used.

(e) Outcomes

The outcomes of participatory social action are not measured in quantitative, aggregate terms. They are more micro and processual in nature. These outcomes concern the human beings involved in social action and are in qualitative terms. Several likely outcomes are identified from these case studies. In the case of a women's co-operative store in a South Korean village, the self-governing organisation of women was an important outcome. In the case of Latin American immigrants to Toronto, the EOLA, coordinating body of Latin American organisations, was important outcome.

Self-confidence is another important outcome of some participatory social action efforts. The tribal women of Dhulia gained self-confidence after their participation in strike and wage negotiations.

The participation of students in developing their own literacy materials in England enhanced their self-confidence. A related outcome of such participatory social action efforts is enhanced awareness. The students of the above-mentioned literacy project gained awareness of themselves. The women who participated in Home Economics programme in the urban slums of Lagos, Nigeria became conscientized as an outcome of their participatory experience.

Linked to self-confidence and awareness is the educational outcome of participatory social action. The participants in such an effort learn new ways of perceiving reality and acting on that reality. The peasants of the Philippines learnt how to use their traditional social and political leaders in collective interests. Education also took place among Latin American immigrants who participated in developing community self-portraits. Finally, participatory social action brings about collective empowerment and strength for future actions. This was amply demonstrated in most cases, notably the Appalachian citizens' group.

This analysis reveals that participatory social action is characterized by an equal distribution of power, reliance of local resources, continued control by the people, small and locally evolved technology and processual, qualitative and human outcomes. To the extent these are important elements of the emerging paradigm of participatory social action, there are some major implications for participatory social action. The next section is an attempt to outline those implications.

Nature of Participatory Research

It has been argued in this paper that traditional social research and top-down social action seem to go hand-in-hand. They are similar in many important ways and tend to support each other. Given the emergence of a new paradigm of participatory social action, it is necessary that participatory social research develops characteristics that make possible its alliance with participatory social action. It is quite possible that traditional social research may be supporting the participatory social action. But this is an untenable position; an unsteady equilibrium that is not going to enhance the moves towards participatory social action. In fact, several examples are already emerging which point towards this trend of traditional research aligning itself with participatory social action. One such common example is the

international concern for people's participation. When Robert McNamara talks about participation of the rural poor, does the World Bank support traditional research into people's participation? When FAO shows concern with people's organizations, its Rural Organizations Action Programme (ROAP) suggests action-oriented research which is very similar to traditional research. Another common illustration is the scholastic debate on participatory social action. Conferences and workshops are being organized to generate strategies for participatory social action. And scholars attending these conferences argue for models and approaches based on their traditional research. These trends make it imperative for vigorous articulation of participatory social research as an ally of participatory social action. Both can mutually support each other and only then break the vicious circle of traditional research and top-down social action. Based on this alliance of participatory social action and participatory research, the following are some of the key implications for the nature of participatory research:

- (a) The foremost implication for participatory social research is its clear attempt at power equalization. The participatory research effort is undertaken in a manner that the distinction between subjects and objects is eliminated. The organization of participatory research, therefore, assumes significance. While the researcher may initially begin the research process with an advantageous power position, it has to be followed in a manner that power equalization takes place.
- (b) The second implication relates to the local resource utilization in the research process itself. The assumption that people are the critical resource is to be translated in practice. People can contribute ideas, information, insight and analysis, people can also provide the context for inquiry. Participatory social research relies on people as the most central resource for its success.
- (c) Thirdly, the control over the entire process of participatory research has to be mutually shared. The "expert" researcher is not the sole arbiter of the focus methods and analysis of research. The "expertize" is at the specific request of the people and yet it can influence the direction and preparation of research.
- (d) Participatory social research is in a way people's research. It entails a framework that is evolved from the local context; it uses a technology that is small and appropriate. Methods of data-

collection and analysis are such that they contribute towards an understanding of micro situations and their macro contexts.

- (e) Finally, participatory social research has several outcomes. Educational and action outcomes are equally valued as knowledge and learning outcomes. Moreover, the knowledge and learning outcomes are not confined to the researcher alone but shared by the people. In this notion, the criteria for evaluating outcomes are determined by the people involved in participatory research and not by any external reference group. This dynamics of several valued outcomes makes more complex demands on participatory social research.

References

- Brenner, M., P. Marsh and Marlylin Brenner (1978): *The Social Contexts of Method*, Croom Helm, London.
- Da Vries, Jan (1980): 'Participation in Research', Case studies presented at International Forum on Participatory Research, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, April 13-22, 1980, Sudiecentrum, NCVO.
- Kaplan, Marcos (1976): 'The Vulnerability of Social Science Research in Latin America' in E. Crawford and S. Rokkan (eds.) *Sociological Praxis*, Sage, London.
- Kuhn, Thomas (1970): *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, Chicago University Press, Chicago.
- Mbilinyi, Marjorie Ulla Vuorela, Yusuf Kassam and Kamal Mustafa (1979): 'The Politics of Research Methodology in Social Sciences', Lead paper presented to African Regional Workshop on Participatory Research, July 1-7, 1979, Morogoro, Tanzania.
- Pearse, A. and M. Stiefel (1979): 'Inquiry into Participation', discussion document, UNRISD, Geneva.
- Roberts, Glyn (1977): *Questioning Development*, Returned Volunteer Action, London.

Issues and Experiences in Participatory Research in Asia*

RAJESH TANDON

The concept and meaning of participatory research (PR) has been amply discussed in the various articles and seminars during the past few years. While it is important to briefly indicate my own understanding of PR, this paper is primarily an attempt to put together some key characteristics of PR in Asia. The paper is based on the recent meetings held in India and Thailand as well as a number of reports received from the various researchers.

Participatory research is an attempt, in my view, to move beyond the choking limitations of classical social sciences research. Classical social sciences research has modelled itself after the natural sciences research paradigms and, therefore, describe the existing social reality but also aim at helping people to change it appropriately. As an alternative, PR is an attempt to make research not only relevant to the present socio-economic context but also an educational experience for those being "researched". It is an attempt to direct research to the needs of the underprivileged sections of the society as well as to reduce the unilateral control of the researcher over the entire research process. It is an attempt to dislodge the professional's manipulations of the subjects and methods of research as well as to destroy the myth of objectivity and neutrality in social sciences research. Finally, it is an attempt to restore the processes of knowledge-generation and knowledge-utilization to the level of problems being experienced daily.

Given this orientation of PR, the rest of the paper will describe the special experiences in Asia as well as the major issues arising from these experiences.

*Paper presented during the Adult Education Research Seminar held at Kungälv, Sweden during June 25-27, 1979.

Characteristics of Experiences of Participatory Research in Asia

The concept of participatory research, as it is translated in the Asian experience, brings out the following salient characteristics:

- (a) PR has been, in its broad and loose meaning, a historical and ongoing process in Asia. While the label of this approach is relatively recent, it is quite common to come across examples of people engaged in similar efforts in various parts of Asia. The organization of landless labourers in Dhulia district of the state of Maharashtra in India has used similar methodology in identifying the records of peoples whose land was illegally alienated from them. Similarly, the rural development laboratory in South Korea utilized a similar approach to ascertain the extent of functional illiteracy and indebtedness among the villages.

The relevance of this characteristic for PR is to recognize that while the label is new, the approach has existed in practice over the years. Moreover, while the labelling of concepts is an activity of professional researchers, ordinary people somehow do not see their approach in a similar conceptual framework. Therefore, PR is a new approach for us; it is an accepted and pragmatic approach for those in the field. This poses significant questions for the development of the PR approach. For example, do we have a single, well-defined and well-articulated PR approach? Are we clear that the range represented by those engaged in PR (from professional researchers located in universities to semi-literate field workers in the villages) necessarily implies tensions which need to be addressed in an inclusive manner?

- (b) A related characteristic that deserves mention here is the range of people and their diverse motivation to use PR. In the Asian context, there are at least three sets of people and motivations. One set is comprised of those who have been trained professionally in the traditional empiricist paradigm of traditional social science research. They have moved into PR due to frustration with existing forms of research. For this set, the reality has remained untouched and unchanged despite tremendous development in research technology. They noticed that despite increased volume of printed material, the life of ordinary people has remained unchanged. Moreover, the institutionalization of research in the universities and other such institutes has led to a monopolistic control over the research on one hand, and a distance of research from ordinary people. For this set of researchers, such

an irrelevance of social science research is intolerable in the context of the poor societies of Asia.

The second set of motivations is related to the need to redirect the processes of development in the various Asian countries. The failure of existing programmes and models of development is being well established. These are the activists and field workers who have experienced frustrations and anger over the misdirection of our development strategies. For them, PR is a possible alternative to provide momentum to decentralized alternative models of development—development of the people with their active participation. They are engaged in localized experiments in PR to try out these alternative models of development.

Education as a means of social transformation is the underlying motivation of the third set. For this set of people, research is a learning and educational experience and, therefore, should be attempted in a manner that facilitates society level change. Unless research contributes to learning and unless that learning is widespread (to include those who are part of the setting), research is a meaningless activity. To that extent, PR has been found to be the relevant approach to education and learning.

- (c) The size of rural populations in Asian countries as well as the complexities of developmental dynamics have contributed to the overwhelming rural context for participatory research in Asia. The best examples of PR efforts in Asia are presently available from the rural context only. The Farmers' Assistance Board in the Philippines, the People's Health Centre in Bangladesh, the Integrated Rural Development Programme of Thailand and the joint irrigation systems among tribals of southern Rajasthan in India are some of the example of PR in Asia.

This is an important characteristic of PR in several ways. Firstly, the rural context of PR in Asia has highlighted the relevance of PR in developmental efforts. Secondly, this rural context of PR in Asia aptly complements the somewhat more urban contexts of PR in Europe and North America. Thirdly, it can provide for suitable illustrations for future research in other developing countries outside Asia. For example, the efforts of Tanzania, Venezuela and Chile have immensely contributed to our own understanding in Asia. Fourthly, dynamics of research and its costs in poor countries of Asia can be re-examined through these PR efforts in rural contexts. These efforts demonstrate the value of concentrat-

ing in the rural context where the pay-off is likely to be more meaningful.

Issues in Participatory Research in Asia

The Asian experience of participatory research to-date brings out a number of major issues which are presented here:

- (a) Participatory research in its attempt to bring about social transformation, has a necessary relationship with social action. While classical social science research has conspicuously avoided any connection with social action, the experience demonstrates that PR invariably culminates in some form of social action. To that extent, participatory research and participatory social action are theoretically and empirically closely linked with each other.

It is this very linkage between PR and participatory social action that has scared many professional researchers from joining PR. It is precisely because of this linkage that many have attacked PR as merely a model of community development and not research. In the Asian context, PR is increasingly becoming synonymous with processes of liberation of people. The involvement of poor, marginal farmers and landless agricultural labourers in the twin processes of PR and participatory social action have consequently resulted in enhancing their self-confidence and ability to take collective initiative in their common interest. The PR approach can contribute towards the liberation of people only if it is associated with some form of participatory social action. Are we in a mood to accept this as an operational definition of PR? Are we brave enough to commit ourselves to a research approach which is closely linked with social action? Is it possible, to demarcate separate identities of PR and community development without ignoring the elements of participatory social action?

- (b) To the extent that PR in Asia has invariably been associated with some form of social action, there have been clear political implications of engaging in PR. To use the PR approach in identifying land alienation with the organization of landless tribal labourers is to link enquiry with the political dynamics of the setting. To join with the farmers in the Philippines to engage in social analysis of their existing situation, to raise political pressures about the existing situation is to raise political pressure about the ex-

isting structure. To develop an alternative health care system in Bangladesh which favours the rural poor is to enter into direct conflict with those whose interests are challenged. The PR approach, by its commitment to the underprivileged as well as to social action, enters into a political arena where questions of method and validity become simplistic.

The political implications of PR, therefore, become more visible in the existing political contexts of Asian countries. While some of these countries are explicitly oppressive in silencing political opposition, others are much more subtle. The consequences of such oppressive political and governmental systems in Asian countries are obvious for those engaged in PR. It is not uncommon, therefore, to come across cases of physical injury to some of those engaged in PR.

This situation in Asia has led to a certain amount of hesitation on the part of many to associate themselves with any PR effort. On the other hand, it is made many activists and field workers aware about the value of PR. Most importantly, the information about such PR efforts and the usage of that information become extremely critical in this context. It is possible that some of us might be acting in a naïve fashion by advertizing various PR efforts in Asia.

- (c) The rural Asian context is primarily unorganized. The underprivileged, whether landless labourers or urban slum-dwellers or women, are primarily unorganized. In most of these Asian countries, in fact, in a large measure, their state of poverty, exploitation and helplessness are related to this lack of organization. To initiate PR with such groups of under-privileged people in Asia means to initiate the process of organization-building. Unless there is a somewhat organized group of people in a particular setting, it is inconceivable that the PR approach can be applied to that setting. In the absence of an organization, the PR efforts will become the unilateral manipulation by an outsider. To that extent, initiating PR efforts with such unorganized groups of people in Asia requires an initial effort in developing a rudimentary form of organization of them.

In many instances, it has been shown that the PR effort itself contributed to the building of an organization of the people. The process of attempting to bring a group of small marginal farmers to analyze their own situation, resulted in temporary organiza-

tions of farmers developing in the tribal areas of south Rajasthan in India. This poses some questions about the methodology of PR as well as our definition of it. To the extent that the Asian societies are unorganized in comparison with more developed countries in the world, any PR efforts in such countries have to be simultaneously an effort at building organizations.

- (d) The Asian experience in PR is very diverse in terms of the method utilized as well as the entry point. In some efforts, the entry point has been land, in others it has been health. In some others, PR effort has begun from adult education. There are a number of industrial as well as urban examples of PR.

In terms of the method, some have started with an initial survey and moved on to more dialogical approaches; some others have conducted surveys at the request of the people. There has been, by and large, a primacy of qualitative methods in these PR efforts. Are there any optimal combinations of various methods in PR? Does PR imply a total exclusion of classical methods of research? Are there any guidelines for the choice of entry point as well as methods? These questions acquire a saliency in the light of the wide range of Asian experience in PR.

The question of method in PR becomes a tricky one in many ways. On the one hand, the rigour of method is the hallmark of classical social science research and, therefore, the acceptance of PR is judged on the basis of its methodology. On the other hand, as the Asian experience shows, any rigorous prescriptions for a method in PR might lead to the exclusion of those experiences which are wholly field-placed. What is possible is to define a set of guidelines which are different from those prescribed by classical social science research in evaluating the methodological aspects of PR.

- (e) One of the critical issues in PR, which has been repeatedly visible in the Asian experience, is the larger implication of PR to life and living. For example, if PR entails participation of the people in the research process, what is the style of the researcher that will make it possible? If the researcher or the activist, as the case may be, practices participation in his/her own life, it is much more likely that he/she will be able to facilitate participation of the people in various research efforts. On the other hand, it is doubtful how a researcher with an authoritarian personality can encourage PR with the underprivileged.

It basically leads to two sets of issues in terms of researcher skill in PR. First, the values of the researcher may or may not be in congruence with the value premises of PR. The person who believes in the basic strengths of the people and who cherishes democratic values may be more suitable for PR. Second, the behavioural skills required to encourage and sustain participation of people must be possessed by the researchers. These behavioural skills become critical in the context of the focus on the underprivileged sections of the population. Greater effort is required, and, therefore, greater skills are needed, to facilitate participation of such sections of the population in Asia because one of the dominant characteristics of the underprivileged is their inability to participate and their fear of participation.

The brief descriptions of experiences and issues in PR in Asia provided above does not do justice to the complexity of the Asian situation. However, these issues do highlight the similarities as well as the differences in participatory research between various parts of the world. It has been possible to bring out these differences largely because the network of participatory research is a decentralized regional network. The ideas and experiences of a wide range of people engaged in PR in Asia cannot be summarized in a brief chapter like this. However, it is hoped that this has been able to raise some important issues for those of us who are concerned about future evolution of participatory research.

Participatory Research in North America and India*

JOHN GAVENTA AND JULIET MERRIFIELD

In an essay on research and education, Paulo Freire wrote, "If I perceive the reality as the dialectical relationship between subject and object, then I have to use methods for investigation which involve the people of the area being studied as researchers; they should take part in the investigation themselves and not serve as the passive objects of the study".¹ With Freire's theme in mind, participatory research attempts to break down the distinction between the researchers and the researched, the subjects and objects of knowledge production by the participation of the people-for-themselves in the process of gaining and creating knowledge. In the process, research is seen not only as a process of creating knowledge, but simultaneously, as education and development of consciousness, and of mobilization for action.

Over the last ten years, a great body of literature has developed about the theory and practice of participatory research. Much of it has its roots in experiences of developing countries, and has been labelled and promoted as a concept by persons involved in networks of adult education and development.

The participatory research method and idea are, however, by no means limited to developing countries. Within the U.S., and elsewhere in the developed world, similar ideas have been developed, often growing from groups who, within their own context, share characteristics of domination by the knowledge system which are similar to those faced by their counterparts in the developing world. As such, participatory research may be seen:

*This article draws extensively from: (1) Gaventa, J. (1988), *Participatory Research in North America*, *Convergence*, Vol. XXI, Number 2/3; (2) Merrifield, J. and Gaventa, J. (1984), *Report of Participatory Research Travels in India*.

- In areas, or by groups where dominant knowledge has been a force for control but in which there is little access to sympathetic expertise. This includes rural areas like Appalachia, and oppressed groups whose interests are not well-represented within the knowledge elite: minorities, women, workers, the poor. Lacking the capacity to rely on counter-experts for solutions to their problems, they must create knowledge and wage knowledge struggles for themselves.
- Conducted by groups concerned with education of the people. Such groups may not be part of the formal adult education networks, which have often become highly professionalized and career-oriented, but consist of community groups, labour unions, and minorities involved in concrete, grassroots-based action.
- Growing out of a concern with participation by the people in decisions that affect their lives, a theme that has been part of the New Left, civil rights, community organizing, and environmental movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

In this paper three strategies of participatory research are explored, with illustrations drawn from North America and from experiences of our PR processes in India during 1984.

From the middle of January through March 1984, we visited India at the invitation of PRIA. Both PRIA and Highlander are adult education institutions involved in the process of research and education for empowerment and social change. The visit was aimed at learning more about the process of participatory research and popular education, and in developing links between an underdeveloped region of the United States and the Third World. It helped us to learn about alternative ways of thinking and living, acting on common problems like deforestation, byssinosis, and education on the impacts of US policies overseas. For the Indian counterparts the visit helped in debunking the American myth, facilitated learning from activism on common problems and provided access to information which is available in the US, especially on issues of occupational health.

Participatory Research Strategies for Popular Groups

Three strategies of participatory research have emerged which are particularly important in the North American context. These approaches also have relevance to other countries, with special reference to India:

1. Research by the People: the Reappropriation of Knowledge

In many developing countries information centres are almost entirely out of the reach of relatively powerless groups. Even in North America, the centre of the information industry, there is a vast storehouse of knowledge about people's lives that is often beyond the ready access of those affected by it. Secrecy, privatization, professionalization, or other characteristics of the knowledge society, all keep it from ordinary people. Strategies to gain access to, or reappropriate knowledge from the knowledge elite have been important ones for the citizen- and worker-based research movement.

The approach draws heavily on the investigative research tradition in the United States, and upon the public interest research movement, championed by Ralph Nader. However, this approach not only popularizes information possessed by the knowledge elite, but also the process of obtaining it. It insists that those who are directly affected by a problem have the right to acquire information about it for themselves.

There are numerous examples of this approach:

Community power structure research: In many cases, citizens have learned to research their own power structures through gaining access to courthouse records about property transactions, tax rates, housing codes, land and mineral ownership, as to government records about company finance, military industries etc. Popular manuals and training programs have taught groups to develop these skills for themselves.

Corporate research: Vast quantities of information exist in the public sector about corporations which affect workers and communities in the U.S. and abroad. Other data exists in the hands of federal and state agencies which are supposed to regulate corporate behaviour. While much of such research may be done for grassroots groups by sympathetic professionals, a number of good manuals exist for how workers and communities may obtain information themselves.²

"Right-to-know" movements: Workers, community groups and professionals in a number of towns and states have launched campaigns which lay claim to the public's right to know (i.e., the contents of toxic chemicals which are used at work or which affect their communities). Such information, it is argued, should not be the sole province of either the corporation or of the medical and scientific profession.³

Many of these battles are driven by the claim to public access to information produced by the knowledge system. Compared to citizen's research in other countries, groups are aided greatly by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which provides citizens access to an array of government documents which may be thought to affect their own or the public's interests. Many states have also passed similar legislation. The effective use by groups of the FOIA, and the popularization of it, has caused the powers-that-be, especially in the Reagan administration, to attempt to weaken the legislation, and to invoke such arguments as "national security" to keep the information from the public.

In our work at the Highlander Center*, we have found that this process of people gaining control over knowledge and skills normally considered to be the monopoly of the experts is an empowering one, which produces much more than just the information in question.

While many action groups have considered research as an antecedent to action, to be done by the researcher and then passed on to the group, this approach to research can be viewed as a means of popular action itself. To the extent that power has been exercised through the control of knowledge, then people may confront the power structure through regaining that knowledge, or its tools, for themselves. Those who do so successfully have the thrill and excitement of regaining for themselves what previously had been the property of the expert.

The participatory process of confronting the knowledge-holders also provides an experience which can help to develop consciousness of how the power structure actually works. People may discover for themselves dominant knowledge or interpretations of reality which do not conform to their own experience, in which case they must ask why not. Or the process of popular investigation may reveal previously hidden information that does confirm through "official" knowledge what the people have suspected from their own experience. When the former occurs, people may continue to question and to

*Highlander Research and Education Centre is a residential and research centre located on a mountain farm in Tennessee. Its programmes are based on experiential learning using the perceptions and experiences of the learners as a base. Students have traditionally been those who have been socialized to blame themselves for their plight: workers, minorities and the unemployed.

pursue the contradictions. When the latter is the case, the fusion of the official knowledge with that of popular experience gives validity to the people's claims and may unleash new movement, as in the case of the black lung movement in West Virginia. There, it was when Drs Rassmussen, Buff and others in the medical profession revealed to the miners that they were right to suspect that breathing problems really came from the mines not from their own asthma as doctors had previously said, that popular organization and action emerged.⁴

Within this context, the idea of literacy takes on a new meaning. Historical experience in literacy programs shows that "literacy from the top" is not particularly effective at helping people learn to read, nor at altering their position within society—in fact, it may simply be a way to extend to people who are illiterate the skills needed by the dominant society. On the other hand, when the process of becoming literate is tied to a process of struggle and of gaining knowledge for action, then it is a far more successful experience, both in the skills that people learn and the consciousness they develop about the society as a whole.

Similarly, today, literacy may take the form of those disenfranchised by the knowledge system learning new knowledge or skills, the lack of which excludes them from participation in decision-making about their lives. For instance, at Highlander, we have taught those with low-level education how to read medical textbooks, in order to understand for themselves whether chemicals in their water or workplace are destroying their health. Others have taught workers how to understand corporate accounts, or complex legal records, or how to use computers. Motivated to gain knowledge for themselves, the disenfranchised have an enormous capacity to acquire skills and knowledge normally seen as the province of the expert.

Once people begin to see themselves as researchers, (i.e., able to investigate reality for themselves), they will develop other popular and indigenous ways of gaining information from the power structure (what we have come to call "guerilla research"). Coal miners needing data on their employer have discovered a great deal of useful data by monitoring garbage cans of the corporate headquarters. Alliances may develop within the plant amongst the secretaries in the manager's office, and the workers. Workers on the production line may steal labels off of barrels of chemicals and take them home to look them up in medical textbooks, or sneak them to laboratory workers who run tests on the sly in the company labs to discover what the real

impact on their health might be. Workers and grassroots activists have learned to use their own water sampling kits, or video cameras, or computers to get and compile information they need. Because those who are experiencing the problem also become the ones researching it, they will have a variety of approaches and information sources based in the community open to them which may not be available to the outside professional.

Indian Experience

During our visit to India, we attended a workshop of textile workers in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, which assisted the workers in reappropriation of knowledge. Historically, the textile workers in India have played a leading role in workers' movements. In one of the textile centres of Kanpur, there have been a series of confrontations by workers with the police. Most of the workers' demands have been economic. Wages are among the lowest of the organized sector. Health and housing are equally poor. In the late 1970s such conditions led to demand for nationalization of the mills. The demands were met, but the conditions have not changed substantially. The industry was in decline. Jobs were being lost.

The weekend workshop brought together around 100 shop floor leaders from the 8 mills in the area to analyze the problem. They are members of Rashtriya Textile Shram Sangathan, an independent, democratic union that sprang from the confrontations of the late 1970s, and two other unions. The idea of becoming their own "researchers" was a new one for the activists and shop floor based workers. They felt a need to analyze a very complex economic situation in order to develop an effective strategy for response—especially given the lessons of the Bombay Textile Strike, an important labour struggle in Asia initiated in 1982, involving 250,000 workers from 60 mills in Bombay.

Before coming, the workers had been asked to gather as much information on economic conditions as they could at the shop floor—how much was being produced, what orders were coming in, where they were going, how many contract labourers were involved, etc. On a Saturday afternoon, following a full-day shift, walking and on bicycles, they arrived at a small school, with a blanket for the night. In small groups, and in reports to the large group, they compared what they had found. Carefully, they lis-

tened to a report and analysis of the Bombay strike; then, they came up with questions of what further information they must have to plan their strategy, and how they, as shop-floor workers, could get it. Getting access to management reports, doing their own surveys with other workers, studying government documents—all were part of their plans. Pausing only for a few hours sleep, they met until Sunday afternoon. Before they left, they not only had come up with plans for their own information gathering activities, but they also had issued a call to other textile workers for a conference on the national level, that would involve the handloom and powerloom workers as well. With strong bases of support in both Bombay and Kanpur, two of the major textile centres, PRIA was committed in assisting them to plan a similar meet in the fall of 1984.

One of the exciting aspects of this meeting was the evident keen desire of these workers to analyze, to reappropriate dominant knowledge, to learn and act upon those problems.

—Merrifield, J. and Gaventa, J. (1984) *Report of Participatory Research Travels in India.*

So armed with the information, several things may happen. First, the process of confronting the experts and gaining an understanding of their tools and their knowledge may serve to demystify the myth of expertize itself. People may learn that the “scientific” foundation upon which regulations are made, and through which their own experiences are discounted, are not very solid, that they are subject to fallibility, conflicting viewpoints, misinterpretation, and plain falsification. With this also comes a renewed examination of their own “popular knowledge”, which, since the first days of schooling, they have been taught to deprecate. Attitudes of dependency begin to move towards one of self-reliance.

Secondly, those who participate in the unmasking of dominant knowledge and the exposure of the power structure, have the experience themselves, they “own” the knowledge they have gained and can reflect upon it.

Finally, the process becomes a resource for analyzing the dominant ideas, or it may help to clarify strategies through identifying the Achilles’ heels of the system where action should begin.

While the process of reappropriation of dominant knowledge by those who are affected by it is empowering as a strategy, by itself, it

is limited. While participatory, it is still based upon gaining access to and control over knowledge that has already been codified by others. It is an access to a paradigm which the people had little part in creating. A further strategy evolves as the powerless develop, create and systematize their own knowledge, and begin to define their own science.

2. Research by the People: Developing the People's Knowledge

The intellectual roots for the people's science concept are developed quite forcefully in the participatory research literature, most clearly by Orlando Fals Borda: "We regard popular science—folklore, popular knowledge, or popular wisdom—to be the empirical or commonsense knowledge belonging to the people at the grassroots and constituting part of their cultural heritage." Such knowledge is not usually codified but as the "practical, vital and empowering knowledge which has allowed them to survive, interpret, create, produce and work over the centuries—has its own rationality and structure." It "remains outside the formal scientific structure built by the intellectual minority of the dominant system because it involves a breach of the rules, and hence its subversive potential."⁵ The ideas also draw upon the European Gramscian tradition, which considers the capacity of every person to be an intellectual, and to develop a popular, organic knowledge which converts spontaneous commonsense into good sense.

Much of the writing about popular knowledge places great value on that knowledge which grows directly from nature, from a peasant-based culture, and pits it against the dominant knowledge of the industrialized world. The knowledge of folk medicine, or peasant technology, or means of survival—all are examples of useful knowledge whose validity has been suppressed by Western science and Western technology. The book by Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*,⁶ describes and documents many instances in which the knowledge of primitive, pre-industrialized peoples proved more useful and appropriate to them than did that of the modernization agents. Such knowledge, it is argued by Fals Borda, must be recovered through oral histories and other research, systematized and preserved to provide a power to resist Western industrialization, and to chart a more authentic future.

Given the emphasis on people's knowledge as peasant knowledge, some writers in the participatory research debate have asked, "Is it a concept useful for participatory research within the industrialized and even post-industrialized Western world?" We must answer "Yes". The

experience of Appalachia, blacks, native Americans, ethnic minorities and others demonstrate the existence of cultures whose knowledge has not been fully absorbed by the dominant knowledge structures.

What, though, of the oppressed groups in our society who can lay no claim to a folk or peasant past, who are in some sense a product themselves of the industrialized world and Western science? Do they possess a popular knowledge? Again, we argue "Yes". It must be remembered that Gramsci's ideas, which are often used in reference to the notion of popular knowledge, grew not out of the context of a peasant economy vs. an industrialized one, but out of his experiences with the Italian workers' struggle in which the value of the workers' own knowledge was diminished by the hegemony of the ruling class. Within the Western world, popular knowledge is constantly being created in the daily experiences of work and community life. The legitimacy of such knowledge, too, is constantly being devalued and suppressed by the dominant science.

Within industrial and post-industrial societies, as within peasant societies, popular production and recovery of the common persons' knowledge is also a means of gaining strength. There are many examples:

- Popular planning of new communities and workplaces draws upon people's knowledge, and visions for the future. One of the most significant examples of such planning was that of the Lucas Aerospace Workers in Britain, who, when faced with closure of their industry, developed their own ideas of new, socially-useful products to manufacture.⁷
- People's health surveys have allowed people to systematize their own experiences with environmental and occupational problems. The power of this approach as a mobilizing and knowledge production tool has been seen, for instance, in Rocky Flats, Colorado, leading to a campaign against nuclear poisoning, and in Love Canal, leading to a campaign to clean up toxic waste dumps. In both cases the "discovery" of devastating health problems came not by the scientists but from "housewife researchers", who were led by their own experiences to document and analyze the health experiences of others in the community.⁸
- The workers' history movement, sparked in part by Sven Lindquist's book, *Dig Where You Stand* in Sweden, has encouraged workers to use their own knowledge to develop their own history, as well as to use other methods to reclaim the corporate and "official" versions of their facts.⁹

Indian Experience

There are many examples of popular production and recovery of people's knowledge in the developing countries. During our visit to India in 1984, we attended a workshop on Occupational Health at Bombay. This national workshop for local union activists and their supporters on occupational health hazards, seemed to be the first of its kind in India. Over 50 participants came from all over India. They included textile workers, engineering, chemical and fertilizer workers, paper mill and superphosphate plant workers, slate pencil workers, an organiser of brick kiln workers, and activists from several resource and documentation centres involved with rural unions.

Before the workshop we were told that workers in India were unaware and ignorant about occupational health hazards, that unions had never given the issue much attention, that there had been few studies around health and safety, and that the issue was problematic in many ways, since jobs at all are at such a premium. We could understand these points, for they are commonly made in the U.S.

The workers who participated were quite knowledgeable about their working conditions and the hazards they are exposed to. We were impressed by the detailed ways in which workers could describe production processes, and their knowledge of the symptoms commonly experienced. What they indeed did not know—and for good reasons—were the technical names of the symptoms they felt, the true incidence of disease, and the specifics of how they were caused and how they could be prevented.

Before the planning process for this workshop they had not heard the term byssinosis, did not know there was specific disease linked with cotton dust exposure, or that in other parts of the world, measures were being taken to reduce workers' exposure. As they read the advance materials sent out by PRIA, and even more as they participated in the workshop, learned from other workers and from the resource persons, and watched the videotapes we had brought from the U.S. showing disabled textile workers organizing around Brown Lung, these workers experienced some revelations and excitement about their discoveries. They were eager to get home and spread the word among their fellow workers, to begin their own studies, and to plan strategies for improving worker health.

While it is true that so far little technical assistance has been available to workers in India on occupational health hazards, and there is not a body of material written for workers comparable to that developed in the U.S. by unions and education centres like Highlander, nevertheless we were impressed to find three doctors from government research institutions attending this workshop. The presence of these concerned and sympathetic scientists was very helpful to workers in overcoming the present dearth of technical information accessible to them—providing they don't run up against institutional constraints.

We heard about some remarkable struggles on the issue of occupational health, in which workers overcame many of the difficulties inherent in their situations—their vulnerability, lack of information, lack of technical support, lack of legal rights to information, protection and negotiation.

While the differences between the American and Indian contexts are very great, if U.S. workers had been attending this workshop, they would have felt themselves very much at home. We had brought copies of several videotapes, including *Dust in Our Lungs*, the tape of brown lung and black lung victims discussing strategies at Highlander, the Stearns tapes, on the bitter miners' strike in Kentucky, the Jonesboro uranium bullet workers tape, and a video version of the film *Song of the Canary*, made by Josh Henig on chemical and textile workers' occupational hazards. These were very successful in communicating workers' experiences, despite the technical and language barriers.

These tapes, and the presentations that Juliet made about health and safety struggles in the U.S., attracted great interest, and effectively exploded myths people held about the U.S. as the land of freedom and plenty. Juliet outlined the kinds of struggles that U.S. workers have been engaged in over recent years on occupational health, with examples from struggles in our own region. She outlined the development of health and safety committees and COSH groups; activities to get information on job hazards and their solutions, to educate and inform fellow workers, to confront management, to use the law and publicity to correct problems. She talked about what we often call 'guerrilla research', and the importance of workers taking control of knowledge about their own work, as a means of empowerment.

The workshop lasted 3 ½ days, and ended with participants planning a series of studies on occupational health problems in their own factories. With some assistance from PRIA and technical resource people, these workers will be conducting these studies themselves, with their fellow workers, over the course of the next 6 months to one year. The Kanpur textile workers, for example, decided to draw up a questionnaire to use in assessing the extent of byssinosis and other health problems, and to interview some 100 workers in each of 3 textile mills in the city.

—Merrifield, J. and Gaventa, J. (1984) *Report of Participatory Research Travels in India*

As in the case of reclaiming knowledge from the dominant system, this process of popular production of the people's knowledge has a number of effects upon its participants. In seeing themselves capable of producing and defining their own reality they may become activated for themselves to change it; a greater consciousness and analysis of the political context and of their situation may develop; and the new knowledge becomes a resource for challenging the hegemony of the dominant ideas.

However, this approach also has its limitations. To the extent that it relies upon the people's experience as the basis of knowledge, how does it develop knowledge within the people which it may be in their interest to know, but which is outside of their experience? What about the situation in which neither the dominant knowledge production system nor the peoples' own knowledge have the information to respond to the potential impact of a new technological development, such as the introduction of a new chemical in the workplace? Are there not circumstances, even for the oppressed, in which there is a need for a science which is democratic, but which does not require all of the people to become scientists in order to control and benefit from it? Is direct participation in all aspects of the knowledge production system the only form of its popular control? Is there not some need for a division of labour, which recognizes that it is more useful for certain persons to act as researchers and others to act as controllers of their own destiny in other ways?

3. Research by the People: Popular Participation in the Social Production of Knowledge

Obviously, the only response to expert domination is not to clone the expert in every person, or even in every oppressed group. The alter-

native would suggest forms of democratic participation and control in defining the problems to be studied, in setting the research priorities, and in determining the ends to which the results are to be used. They suggest recognizing the importance of the production of scientific knowledge by scientists, as one type of knowledge production that is not inherently superior to others. Such strategies would insist, as some have proposed, on having lay persons involved in deciding about the production of knowledge, if not actually doing it (i.e., through the development of popularly controlled research centres).

In actual practice, examples of this approach are less developed in North America than are the emerging approaches for popular reappropriation of knowledge, or for developing the people's science. Elements of the approach are found in some research groups in Denmark and Sweden, where "reference groups" of those who are affected by research are involved with professional researchers in carrying out projects. In one such project, the Utopia Project, members of the Typographical Workers Union work side-by-side with professional researchers to analyze the impact of new technology upon their workplaces. Other elements of this strategy are found as relatively powerless groups demand a voice in allocation of public research funds, as was found in the Appalachian Land Ownership Study.¹⁰

Such models demand new forms of accountability. While scientists and experts may conduct research for the people, it is very different from that which originates when the professional in the knowledge system defines what knowledge should be provided to the

Indian Experience

This strategy was reflected during the workshop on Land Ownership and Alienation, at Udaipur, Rajasthan, during our visit to India in 1984. In India, 70% of the population still work and depend on the land for a living. Who owns the land, and how it is used are key factors of survival and the of production. Land ownership in India is highly unequal and the problem of land alienation is prevalent to a large extent. People are losing their land to moneylenders and foreclosure, to enormous developments like dams, and to the growth of large scale capitalist farming—the so-called "Green Revolution". The lower castes and the tribal area are being affected the most, the tribals because their remote areas are now subject to search for new supplies of timber, minerals and natural resources for the industrialized world.

This workshop was one of the first in India to bring together grassroots activists from across the country to discuss the problem. Some people travelled for as long as 60 hours by train to get to the five-day meeting. Held at a rural training center which was still being constructed; the setting was excellent, but by no means luxurious.

For many there was the excitement often found at Highlander workshops as people come out of their local situation and discover others facing the same problem elsewhere. And, like in the early days of the Appalachian Land Ownership Study, there was a felt need to develop more research and analysis on the extent and reasons for the land problem, in order to strengthen local action, as well as to develop more regional and national strategies.

Participation was serious and intense. The group met 10–12 hours a day, as a whole and in small groups. In order to bridge regional and ethnic differences, all of the large group sessions were translated by participants into English and Hindi—an important process but one requiring enormous concentration and patience by all.

The workshop provided an overview of the land problem, with inputs from resource people on the history and legal aspects, as well as small group discussions about their own experiences. A series of case studies of strategies for action by local groups, an analysis of state policies that affected the local situation, and a cultural evening which included skits developed by participants from Tamil Nadu on land alienation were part of the workshop proceedings. We shared the land problem in Appalachia, as well as how the Land Ownership Task Force had developed the Appalachian Land Study. Then, small groups began to discuss their own information needs, and to plan research/action projects in their own districts.

Many of these groups were very action oriented. They had been involved in direct confrontations—blocking dam sites, seizing land and crops etc. For them, this process of collective sharing of experiences, analysis, and planning research was a new one. In addition to the learning which took place, there also emerged concrete plans for 18 participatory research projects, to be done by the local groups and aimed at strengthening their work. PRIA's role in the future was not to do the research for the groups, but to provide support and assistance where called upon.

—Merrifield, J. and Gaventa, J. (1984) *Report of Participatory Research Travels in India*

people, or when the committed intellectual seeks to build awareness through research with the people.

In the situation in which the people have become active, self-conscious of their own knowledge, and aware of the limitations of the experts' knowledge (i.e., when they have thrown off their knowledge-based domination), then they can also participate fully in decisions about the production of new knowledge, for themselves and for society. The domination arising from the people-as-objects of research is transformed to the people-as-subjects, determining the directions of scientific and theoretical inquiry.

Implications: Towards a Knowledge Democracy

In recent years there has been much debate about the need for an economic democracy, which suggests that the control and concentration of economic production in the hands of a few must be altered if we are to realize a real political democracy. The concentration of dominating knowledge in the hands of the few and the power to proclaim it as "official" is also producing new debates about what constitutes genuine democracy in a knowledge society. In their conservative neoelitist forms, the argument is for greater government by expertize, and against the irrationality of participation by the masses in the knowledge production system. In their liberal form, these arguments are for greater access and more equal opportunity for all members of the public to benefits of the existing knowledge system and paradigms. But in their most radical form, these arguments recognize that it is not enough simply to democratize access to existing information. Rather, fundamental questions must be raised about what knowledge is produced, by whom, for whose interests and towards what ends. Such arguments begin to demand the creation of a new paradigm and organization of science—one that is not only for the people, but is created with them and by them as well.

Genuine popular participation in the production of knowledge has implications, of course, not only for the realization of classical notions of democracy but also for the body of knowledge that will be produced. By altering who controls knowledge, what knowledge is produced, and indeed, the very definition of what constitutes knowledge may also change. For example, given a chance to participate in the production of knowledge about products, not simply in the production of products, the Lucas workers chose to develop plans that

met basic social needs, not that served as instruments of war. Given the opportunity to define the reasons for poverty through self-analysis, the participants in the Appalachian Land Ownership Study gave a very different set of reasons than had been developed by the mainstream social scientists. The believer in popular participation must hope that the vision and view of the world that is produced by the many in their interests will be more humane, rational and liberating than the dominating knowledge of today.

References

1. Paulo Freire, "Creating Alternative Research Methods: Learning To Do It By Doing It", in Budd Hall, Arthur Gillette and Rajesh Tandon, *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly* (New Delhi: PRIA, 1982).
2. For example, Food and Beverage Trades Department, AFL-CIO, *Manual of Corporate Investigation* (Washington, D.C, AFL-CIO, 1984).
3. See, for example, Dorothy Nelkin and Michael Brown, "Knowing About Workplace Risks: Workers Speak Out About the Safety of Their Jobs", *Science for the People*, Vol. 16, 1 (1984), pp. 17-22.
4. See, for example, Alan Derickson, "Down Solid: The Origins and Development of Black Lung Insurgency", *Journal of Public Health Policy*, March 1983, pp. 25-44.
5. Orlando Fals Borda, "Participatory Research and Rural Social Change", *Journal of Rural Co-operation*, Vol. X, #1 (1982), p. 26.
6. Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (London: Longman Press, 1983).
7. Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott, *The Lucas Plan: A New Trade Unionism in the Making?* (London: Allison and Busby, 1982).
8. See, for example, Adeline Gordon Levine, *Love Canal: Science, Politics and People* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1982).
9. For an article on this movement in English see Lindquist, Sven, "Dig Where You Stand", in Paul Thompson and Natasha Burchardt, eds., *Our Common History* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J, Humanities Press, 1982), pp. 322-40.
10. See description by John Gaventa and Billy D. Horton, "A Citizen's Research Project in Appalachia, USA", *Convergence*, Vol. XIV, #3 (1981), p. 32.

Participatory Research as a Contribution to Cultural Reconstruction*

RAJESH TANDON

Introduction

Participatory research is a growing methodology around the world. Its practice and conceptualization is continuously enriching the methodology. New experiences, projects, meetings and publications are being generated in various underdeveloped areas of the world. And the struggle of oppressed and marginalized people to regain their collective identity and to improve the quality of their lives provides the arena for the utilization and development of participatory research itself. Very few efforts are known to have been made so far to utilize participatory research methodology to deal with the problem of cultural reconstruction. In this chapter, I will attempt to outline key characteristics of participatory research as we have understood them and to explore its contribution to the problem of cultural reconstruction.

Characteristics of Participatory Research

Participatory research is characterized by the following:

1. Participatory research is based on the realization that knowledge is increasingly a major source of power and control. The cult of the expert is a major phenomenon of our times. Under the guise of expertise and specialization, we have created a situation where outside, faceless experts are increasingly determining our fate. The historical practice of local control and autonomous collec-

*Paper presented at the International Seminar on 'State of Emergency and Local Development: Contribution of Participatory Research', Pozzuoli, Italy, May 23-25, 1984.

tive 'commune' has been substantially eroded. The validity of any knowledge, plan or action is to be certified by an "expert."

Participatory research promotes analysis of their own situation by a group of ordinary people themselves. In this process of analysis, the questions and concerns of ordinary people receive attention, not those deemed necessary by the experts. People acquire and generate their own knowledge in order to act in their own interest.

2. Thus acquisition and generation of knowledge in participatory research is linked to the peoples' need for taking action. The ultimate objective of creating this knowledge is to plan and implement actions which the group of people involved in this effort consider appropriate to their own interests. The processes of data collection, analysis and reflection help to make decisions regarding the given situation.
3. As a process of analysis and reflection, participatory research facilitates collectivization. It is a collective process, not carried out by separate individuals in isolation from each other. Hence, it can be effectively utilized to promote collective efforts to solve a given problem that is considered important by that collectivity. It also facilitates the process of bringing people together such that together they reflect and, perhaps, together they act.
4. Participatory research recognizes the value and validity of people's experiences. The experiences and knowledge presently possessed by ordinary citizens can themselves be a basis for more comprehensive and valid knowledge. It does not imply that scientific knowledge can not be utilized by ordinary people. In fact, the scientific-technical knowledge regarding the Phlegraen fields in Pozzuoli is an important contribution to enhance people's knowledge, but not to replace it.
5. Finally, participatory research provides the opportunity to ordinary citizens to make connections between their personal reality and larger social reality. This linking up process between micro experiences and macro dynamics generates the kind of understanding which can then constitute a valid basis for future actions.

This is what creates a sense of empowerment among ordinary people. The methodology of participatory research empowers ordinary citizens by enhancing their knowledge, by improving their analytical and planning abilities, and by mobilizing a sense of

collective self-confidence. Empowerment then implies a shift from the position 'I cannot' to the position 'we can'! overcoming apathy, alienation, cynicism, powerlessness and helplessness is the critical empowering process. And participatory research is most clearly and directly characterized by this process of empowerment.

Seen in this perspective, participatory research can then be a contribution to mobilization, education and empowerment. It facilitates the mobilization of ordinary people around a given issue, it informs and educates them about the issue, and it collectively empowers them to do something about that issue. It is these characteristics of participatory research which make it unique, complex and yet valuable.

Implications for Cultural Reconstruction

Given the above characteristics of participatory research, what are its implications for cultural reconstruction in general and in Pozzuoli in particular? In this section, I will briefly enumerate my understanding of the possibilities and processes of utilizing participatory research as a contribution to cultural reconstruction.

Understanding the Crisis

One of the first things necessary to reconstruct is to understand the current crisis. The crisis created by a continuous state of emergency in the Commune of Pozzuoli needs to be clearly understood. The causes underlying this crisis are as crucial for understanding as the consequences of this crisis on the people—social, economic, cultural.

The first step, therefore, appears to be bringing major stakeholders together to generate this shared understanding of the crisis. These stakeholders could be representatives of various neighbourhoods, ordinary citizens, experts, political, cultural and religious leaders, etc. The criterion for selecting the people should essentially be who are affected most by the crisis. Providing relevant technical information regarding the causes of this crisis and sharing its consequences on various stakeholders are the starting points for developing a common and shared understanding.

Discovering Historical Roots

Participatory research can facilitate the process of historical discovery by people. It is important to reflect upon the cultural roots of people in a historical perspective. This historical discovery of cul-

tural roots can provide the basis for future reconstruction. In this context, people's culture has to be seen as a historically continuous and continuing process—a dynamic collage of values, norms, symbols and expressions, not something static at a given point in time.

The methodology of participatory research has been used to facilitate this process of self-discovery of one's own culture. Photostories, oral-histories, video documentations, personal narratives, reflection on stories, songs and art have all been effectively used in different settings to facilitate this process of discovery. These methods should be used selectively with various stakeholders, and with both individuals and groups, in order to have the maximum utility.

Visualizing the Future

Based on the understanding of the current crisis and a historical discovery of culture, it is then possible to visualize a desirable future. What are the cultural elements that should characterize that future? Which of those cultural elements already exist in our history? Which new elements are needed? What is the nature of education that will enhance the desirable future? These issues are important aspects of visualizing the future. And these demand a look into the future—a look ahead—with all its uncertainties and ambiguities. But it is crucial for any kind of reconstruction, as the plans for cultural reconstruction have to emerge from this futuristic perspective.

Participatory research process can contribute to this task of visualizing the future only to the extent of assisting people to search for alternatives based on their preceding analyses. This search process can be facilitated by the methods of participatory research.

Generating Commitments to Reconstruction

Finally, generating desired commitment among ordinary citizens to reconstruct that desirable future is also important. Such cultural reconstructions are not possible through experts alone or through administrative actions. Citizens' participation is critical for reconstruction. And commitment is necessary to promote and sustain this participation. If the preceding steps have been able to create a sense of ownership and control by ordinary people, it is possible that they may develop the kind of commitment needed for this cultural reconstruction.

In essence, participatory research is based on the principles of ownership and control to be exercised by ordinary people. And, therefore,

it should be the ultimate contribution of participatory research. The availability of information, feedback of that information to people's actions are key methods of ensuring ownership and commitment. The more people decide themselves, the more committed they would feel.

Conclusion

In this brief chapter, I have tried to highlight salient characteristics of participatory research and its potential contribution to cultural reconstruction. The challenges faced by Commune di Pozzuoli are complex and tough, and it is not going to be easy to find appropriate and lasting solutions. The methodology of participatory research can make a small contribution through mobilization, education and empowerment of ordinary people. Yet, it is only a small contribution, and it should not be seen as a panacea. It is as important to keep in view its limitations, as its potential.

Select Bibliography

- Fernandes, W. and Tandon, R. *Participatory Research and Evaluation*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1981.
- Hall, B., Gillette, A. & Tandon, R. *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly?* New Delhi: Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1982.
- Kassam, Y. and Mustafa K. *Participatory Research*, New Delhi: Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1982.
- Participatory Research: An Introduction*, New Delhi, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1982.
- Tandon, Rajesh: *Participatory Research in Asia*, Canberra: ASPBAE, 1980.

Tribals and Land Alienation*

ANTHYA MADIATH

The first part of this paper describes the specific situation of tribals living in the Kerandimal hills of Ganjam District, Orissa, India. Gram Vikas, a development organization, has worked with the Kerandimal tribals in three blocks, since 1977. The next part of the paper traces the course of Gram Vikas's involvement with the tribals in the last ten years. Against this background, the paper traces a historical sketch of the causes of land alienation among tribals in general. It moves on to describe the process of land alienation, as it has occurred in the Kerandimals, some specific illustrations of the problems, and the actions that people have taken to stall further loss of their land.

The Kerandimal Tribals

The Kerandimal range of hills form a distant backdrop to Berhampur, the teeming commercial centre of Southern Orissa in the district of Ganjam.

These undulating hills that stretch over several blocks of the district are the homeland of a few thousand tribals of Kond and Saura origin. The Konds outnumber the Sauras. Today, little is known of the history of these tribals who seem to have strayed from the main Kond hinterlands of Phulbani and Koraput districts. Were they brought there by the small *rajās* whose fiefdoms flourished in these parts? What has perhaps contributed to their lack of oral history today is the process of 'alienation' and 'acculturation' that has been taking place especially in the last 20–30 years.

The tribals live in small, scattered villages that dot the hills and upper plains. The villages on the hills are far from each other and can

*This article has been extracted from the following paper: Madiath, Anthya: 'Tribals and Land Alienation' presented at XI World Congress of Sociology, New Delhi, August 18–22, 1986.

only be reached by trekking narrow, steep paths. The Konds speak Kwi—a tribal dialect which has no written script. Oriya, the lingual franca, is used for communicating with outsiders and is the medium of formal education.

The tribals earn a meagre livelihood from land and the forests. About 60 per cent of the Kerandimal tribals are landless. Only a few families that live on the plains own some wetlands. The tribals living on the hills have no land at all and are totally dependent on the forests for their living. Those who own land are largely subsistence farmers whose main crop is ragi. Almost all tribals engage in 'bogodo'—hill-side shifting cultivation of several indigenous grains and vegetables which on an average feed a family for three months in the year. For the rest of the year, the tribals fall back on the forests which they cut to sell as firewood. Firewood is usually sold in small, neat bundles to middlemen for about Rs 5 per bundle. These merchants sell the same bundles in the town for double this amount. The cutting and selling of firewood is illegal in the Kerandimals, where tribals only enjoy the right to cut firewood for their own use and not to sell. Thus, the tribals are virtually at the mercy of the forest guards and forest officials who must be bribed to turn a blind eye to these happenings.

The collection of minor forest produce such as *sitaphal*, and other fruits, nuts of various kinds, leaves used to make leaf plates, creepers used as ropes etc. formed another important supplementary food and income source that has reduced considerably from the past. Caught in this nexus of increasing landlessness or near landlessness on the one hand and traditional dependence on a dwindling forest resources, the tribals are rapidly finding themselves in a back-to-the wall situation.

On the education front, hardly 2 per cent of Kerandimal tribals are literate, further vindicating the general socio-economic malaise that characterize their lives. This is so, despite the existence of 23 government primary schools (the teachers seldom attend these schools!). Almost all other government schemes and infrastructural institutions function in the same way as the education department.

Unlike the Konds of Phulbani and Koraput districts who have a rich cultural heritage of song and dance, the Kerandimal Konds are conspicuous by the absence of these cultural forms. Generally speaking, the tribals of Kerandimal reveal a marked dilution of the intrinsic tribal character. This 'acculturation' may be because of the proximity to Berhampur, geographical isolation from the main body of Konds,

ethnic penetration etc. 'Collective' and 'co-operative effort' are low key in comparison to the general tradition of tribals, though a limited form of common ownership does exist in most villages, in the institution of the '*Khoto*' which may be in the shape of trees, land or money. The leadership of the village has, by-and-large, exercised full control over the *Khoto* with very little accountability to the rest of the village. A few of the tribal leaders are themselves the biggest enemies and exploiters of their people.

The role of the women in the tribal society is important. She is really the backbone of the family. It is she who brings home the day's food while the man often relaxes at home. Tribal women generally enjoy greater freedom of movement and expression than their non-tribal counterparts. But despite these concessions, they receive a poor bargain. They are often subject to the barbaric behaviour of an alcoholic husband who is still the head of the family and the main decision-maker, though not necessarily the bread-winner.

Shaping and controlling the lives of the tribal people is a powerful force, Black Magic. So steeped are they in their superstitious beliefs, that introducing them to a rational system of thinking is often impossible. The tribals of the Kerandimals are doubtless a fascinating combination of simplicity and complexity, of strength and weakness, of selfishness and integrity.

The Work Done by Gram Vikas Among the Kerandimal Tribals

Gram Vikas first became involved with the Kerandimal tribals towards the end of 1977. The tribals, as we saw them at that time, lived in relative isolation from the larger world about them. The initial reaction we encountered was one of distrust. What we noticed first, was the complete absence of even basic healthcare facilities in the tribal villages we visited. Malaria and tuberculosis especially, appeared to be major scourges. As we came to know each other better, the tribals pressed us into doing something to alleviate their immediate health problems. And so we began a basic health programme initially in eight villages (this later spread to nearly 80 villages) with the training of tribal women as health workers as the fulcrum. Knowing that health was directly related to the politico-socio-economic base of the tribals, we constantly understand this nexus and its impact on their lives. The basic pattern of working in a village was the formation of a 'village committee' that would function as a leader-

ship group. This was done, among other reasons, with the long-sighted intention of developing a grassroots organization among the tribals.

Some of the facets of tribal life that soon emerged in the course of working with them were:

- The stronghold of the liquor merchants, called '*Sundies*', over the tribals.
- Widespread alcoholism. The tribals no longer drank the traditional '*mohuli*' but a new alcohol prepared from molasses and ammonium sulphate that was introduced by the *Sundies* who turned the brewing of alcohol into a lucrative business that brought them quick and easy profits and the tribals a life of degradation and bondage.
- The complete dependence on liquor merchants, petty traders and landlords for loans and other kinds of support.
- The large-scale appropriation of tribals' assets (land, trees, gold, brass and copper, cooking vessels) by the non-tribal group mentioned above through an outrageous system of mortgage.
- The total non-availability of institutional credit and government subsidies to the tribals.

Land and trees are the instruments of gainful economic activity and production among the tribals. The system of usury that had flourished in the Kerandimals, accounts in large measure for the present-day impoverishment of the tribals. Around September–October 1978, a campaign to mobilize the tribals around this core issue of usury was initiated. The Moratorium of Rural Indebtedness, a government policy that came into effect around this time, gave the movement effective legal protection. The first step in this process was to collect detailed information on the extent of the problem. This was done by village leaders in various small group and village meetings. The next step was to prepare the leaders and the people to face the moneylenders. Thereafter, area-wise meetings best described as a 'people's court', were organized, at which each and every known case of mortgage was arbitrated upon by the tribals in the presence of the moneylenders. Judgement was always just and impartial. Whenever the moneylender had taken more than his due through interest (the range was 60% to 400%) and the use of land and trees, he was paid nothing. But where he had taken less than the capital amount borrowed, he was compensated at 4% interest, the rate at which tribals were receiving bank loans.

By the end of 1979, the movement to redeem mortgaged tribal property had spread like a forest fire across more than 100 tribal villages in the Kerandimal with stupendous results. Every known case of mortgage had been settled. The moneylenders *raj* in the Kerandimals had been successfully demolished and the Kerandimal Gana Sanghathana (KGS), a registered organization of the tribals was born like a phoenix from the ashes of the past. All tribals across the length and breadth of Chikiti, Mahuri and Sana Khemundi were united in solidarity under the banner of the newly formed KGS.

This phase also saw the removal of the long-entrenched *Sundies* from most tribal villages and the decline of alcoholism. The mobilization of institutional credit for productive purposes—purchase of bullocks and goats, land reclamation, digging irrigation wells etc. was accelerated. A large-scale campaign for promoting small-scale savings was instituted as a safeguard against further resumption of the moneylending-mortgage trade. Impressed by the quantum of collective savings by the tribals, the UCO Bank, introduced a unique scheme to give consumption loans to tribals for marriages, death and illness against savings held. This was a phase of intense economic activity, of strengthening the economic base of the tribals. The movement against usury, the birth of the KGS, and their new-found economic strength put the tribals in a hitherto unknown position of confidence and strength vis-à-vis the non-tribals in the area.

We see the period 1980–1982 as a plateau stage in the history of our work in the Kerandimals. This period stands out as a period of economic consolidation, in contrast to the years before, which were as clearly a period of wresting economic and related control from the exploiters and so-called agents of development like the banks, Block Development Office, etc.

While the economic programmes were useful (after the first mobilization and victory) in consolidating the initial gains, they also tended to increase individualism and a weakening of the group spirit that was the rallying point of the early struggles.

The course was re-set in 1981 towards promoting once more the spirit of collective organization and not individual benefit. In keeping with this decision, we adopted an 'area approach' wherein the people of an area become the focal point, rather than a programme or a service. Hence, small teams were formed for each area, to spearhead more cohesively the formation of a people's organization, using vari-

ous programmes that had emerged, such as health, education, agriculture, etc., as tools to consolidate the people's organization.

In 1983 we undertook what is called a 'participatory evaluation' of Gram Vikas with the help of two outside facilitators. This exposed us to the dynamic concept of participation, which we had not formally known about, but which we had been intuitively following all through our work with the tribals.

Since 1983, our main focus has been on building-up the KGS organization, structurally, functionally, ideologically and financially, at the zonal level. A zone is a geographical grouping of about 10-15 villages. The area we work in has been divided into seven zones. Each zone is governed by a zonal committee that consists of representatives from every village in the zone. Most zones have their own full-time worker who is paid from the zonal fund. Zonal funds are raised through family membership fees, income generating programmes, and small grants from Gram Vikas. The zones also run schools, self-help health programmes, and promote socio-economic activities.

The nature of our role in the Kerandimals has kept changing in keeping with the problems that surfaced and the people's own ability to cope at each point in time. One cannot say that the tribals have been freed of all exploitation; the forms have certainly changed.

Visible exploitation in the form of moneylending has moved to a stage where the enemy is now 'invisible' and 'within'. The new enemies as we understand, appear today in the form of various laws, worsening corruption that is almost universally accepted as a way of life and the ideologies and implementation strategies of most government sponsored poverty eradication schemes whose targets are the 'individual' and vague 'economic growth' and not the quality of life of the community as a whole.

The Problems Related to Land in the Kerandimals

Following the action on indebtedness, that began in 1978, and mobilization around the Forest Bill in 1983, getting involved in issues related to land followed quite logically.

The story of the tribals in the Kerandimals, especially in the context of land alienation, reads no different from the body of documented research findings on this problem among tribals elsewhere in India.

In the words of Banamali Malik, a tribal leader of village Tamana, "I have heard from several tribal elders that the forest extended to as close as 4 km from Berhampur till as late as 75 years ago. Today the forest line stands at about 25 km from Berhampur. A tribal village once stood where the present village of Mohuda (a large non-tribal village) stands, 6 km from Berhampur. Our people who were the only inhabitants of Kerandimals at that time, cultivated small strips of fertile land. They were literally the proud owners of all they surveyed and had enough to eat and drink. The first tribal lands were given away for a 'Cheroot'. So plentiful were our resources at that time. Our forefathers also began to take small loans from non-tribals in the town on impossible terms. These sharks took a man's land if he could not repay a loan. Later, these moneylenders turned landlords, brought their people to live on this land and the first non-tribal villages emerged in the Kerandimals.

As this was happening, we the tribals, were pushed further back into the hills. We started the practice of '*bogodo*' to survive, as we were losing control over our fertile lands.

Today, the best land in the Kerandimals is all owned by the Oriyas. We tribals have the worst land—small tracts of barren earth that we have arduously brought under the plough. Close to 70 per cent of us are landless.

Another reason why we are landless today is the settlement and what it did to us. During the time of the settlement operation in this part in 1968–69, the settlement officers settled a lot of our land in favour of outsiders, land which we had been cultivating. We came to know of this cheating too late."

Banamali Malick's narration gives us the picture of landless people today. The main causes of land alienation in the Kerandimals appear to be related to:

1. indebtedness;
2. illegal transfers of land;
3. illegal occupation of tribal land; and
4. construction of irrigation projects.

The large-scale loss of land due to indebtedness is more or less a phenomenon of the past. Outside moneylenders are no longer willing to risk lending money to the tribals today. They have not forgotten the shock they got in 1980–81. Some of the existing legislations/regulations mentioned below have also to some extent curbed the process of land alienation in the Kerandimals.

1. Orissa Debt Bondage Abolition Regulation
2. Orissa Scheduled Area (1948) of Immovable Property Regulation 1956 and Amendment Act, 1975.
3. Orissa (Scheduled Areas) Moneylending Regulation, 1967.
4. Orissa (Scheduled Areas) Debt Relief Regulation, 1967.
5. Orissa Land Reforms Act, 1960.

The continuing problems relate to:

1. lacunae in the existing legislation;
2. complicated legal procedures;
3. an unresponsive and exorbitantly expensive judicial system that takes several long years to dispose of the cases pending in the courts; and
4. ignorance of the tribals of the increasing value of land, and the laws/regulations related to land.

The relation of the tribals to the forests is bound by a long history of tradition. In the prevailing situation in the Kerandimals, the traditional relationship of the tribals to the forests is out-stripped by sheer economic considerations. Tribals who are deprived of land fall back on the only resource available to them, the forest. Increasing land alienation, increasing degradation of the forests and increasing poverty, are several spokes of the same wheel, that is crushing the life-breath of the tribals today. The future appears bleak.

Illustration of Participatory Research

In 1983, the tribals of village Buruda and Chadiapalli in Buruda zone heard that the height of a Minor Irrigation Project that had been constructed in their area 13 years ago was going to be raised. About 80 acres of land belonging to both tribals and non-tribals had been lost to the project at that time. Apparently, only the non-tribals had been fully compensated for their loss of land and, despite several promises, only two tribals had received cash compensation so far.

In the first meeting we had with the people of Buruda and Chadiapalli at their instance, we found that people's information was rather confused. As a first step, we decided to collect clear information on the issue before any action was initiated. The second meeting was used to list out the information to be collected. This was put in a simple format. Three or four of the tribals themselves were to collect this information. In the third meeting, the preliminary findings collected by the tribals were discussed. It was found that five families of Buruda

and one family of Chadiapalli had lost eight acres of land to the project and that 14 families of both Buruda and Chadiapalli would lose about ten acres of *patta* land and six acres of government land that they had encroached since several years, if the height of the NIP was increased. The other interesting discovery that was made was that the people had been paying taxes to the government for the last 13 years for the land they had lost. Another, by now familiar, ploy of the revenue department was also uncovered. The revenue officials had pointed out certain plots of land and had verbally told the people they could cultivate this land in lieu of the land they had lost. No documents were issued. Since the tribals had no documentary evidence to substantiate their claim, these lands were forcibly occupied by non-tribals of village Gopalpur. In the meanwhile, officers were transferred. The new officers disclaimed any knowledge of assurances made by their predecessors.

The tribals immediately petitioned the Tahasildar and the Sub-Divisional Officer to re-examine their case and right the wrongs done to them. The Tahasildar finally visited the site, several months later, at a time when the land under dispute was covered by the monsoon waters, which meant that the measurement of this land would be postponed till after the monsoons.

To add this to this frustrating delay, the people's efforts to unearth records at the Land Acquisition Office at the district headquarters in Chatrapur, 30 km away, pertaining to this case, led to further confusion. Records there revealed that only about two acres of land had been acquired for the construction of the dam from the tribals. And yet, in actual effect, eight acres of land are submerged by the dam water in the rainy season, the only season when this land can be cultivated. In the non-rainy months, this land is bone dry and of little use to anyone, as it cannot be cultivated without water. Thus, the tribals are 'neither here nor there'. Moving from one office to another, meeting one or other elusive officer means precious time and the day's wages lost. It is understandable why tribals caught in similar situations give up their efforts to secure justice for themselves!

In the meanwhile, we kept the other villages in Buruda zone informed of what was happening in Buruda and Chadiapalli. This set the stage for a major mobilization in all the eleven tribal villages in this zone on the issue of 'land'. A fairly comprehensive but simple information format was chalked out by the people with help from Gram Vikas activists in a workshop held for this purpose in 1984.

Again, young semi-literate tribals of the zone volunteered to be responsible for the survey, the findings of which would be analyzed collectively. Given below are the survey findings:

1. The most striking findings were that out of a total of 210 families in the zone, 60 were absolutely landless.
2. The average land holding of the remaining 150 families is 5.759 baran (5 baran = 1 acre) which is insufficient to feed a family for the whole year.
3. Several tribals who had encroached government land were not registered as legal encroachers, or those who were legal encroachers had not taken further steps to get these lands titled in their favour.

A strategy to plug these various loopholes was devised, the salient features of which were:

1. That the landless would immediately encroach revenue surplus land in the vicinity.
2. That all encroachers would legalize their encroachments without further delay.
3. That all legal encroachers would press for 'land titles'.

As a result of the people's pressure on the revenue administration in the last year, nearly 30 landless families were given land and all those whose encroachments were not legal have taken steps to have these legalized.

Similar land surveys have been done in other zones as well.

Illegal Land Grab in Village Sindurapur

Sindurapur is a small tribal village 2 km outside the sleepy town of Chikiti. Thirteen families of this village have been cultivating about 20 acres of land, since the last 40 years or so. This land was once forest land.

Ankura Pattanayak, a man of Chikiti town acquired some land close to the land cultivated by the people of Sindurapur. In 1973 in connivance with some staff of the Chikiti Tahsil, he filed a case claiming that the tribals' land also belonged to him. The matter went to court.

Again in 1979, he filed a criminal suit against the tribals and during the harvest season with the help of the police he had sections 14 and 145 under the Code of Criminal Procedure imposed. The tribals who ignored this order found themselves in serious trouble.

Following a protracted hearing of the suit, the Court ordered that the land under dispute was forest land, and was thus not receivable by either of the parties.

Ankura Pattanayak went on an appeal to the higher court. The lawyer appointed by the tribals at this time was negligent. He took a lot of money from the tribals, but never followed the case carefully, as a result of which the case was decided *ex-parte*.

In 1984, the court appointed a receiver for the land under dispute and it was put up for auction. The Sindurapur case, in the meanwhile, was taken up by the zonal organization, as the impoverished tribals of Sindurapur no longer had the financial strength to fight on. The tribals out-bid Ankura Pattanayak in the auction (the money for this was a loan from the zonal fund).

The next step the tribals are planning, is to petition the Government to change the classification of this land from forest to Revenue land and give them this land which they have been cultivating for the last 40 or more years.

The battle in Sindurapur is not fully won. Given the vagaries of the judicial system, one never knows what to expect next. However, the people have firmly decided, with the backing of the entire area, that come what may, they will not vacate the land which is rightfully theirs.

The above two cases briefly describe the process whereby the tribals, assisted by Gram Vikas, undertook a process of critical investigation, analysis and collective action to fight for their rights.

Readings

1. Sharma, B.D. *Tribal Development: the Concept and the Frame*, Prachi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1978.
2. Sharma, B.D. *Planning for Tribal Development*, Prachi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1984.
3. Madiath, Anthya. 'When Tribals Awake: The Kerandimals Movement' in Walter Fernandes (ed.) *Development with People: Experiments with Participation and Non-formal Education*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1985.
4. *Statistical Abstract of Orissa-1981*, Bureau of Statistics and Economics, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

Participatory Research among Farmer Settlers in Southern Philippines*

EILEEN BELAMIDE

Migrant Farmers and Land Rights

The subject of the study is a village located some 21 km from the town centre of a province in southern Philippines. The residents are migrant farmers from central Philippines whose desire to have their own land led them to settle in the plains. The pioneer settlers migrated to the village as far back as 1939.

Today there are about 80 to 100 families in the village, the majority being Catholics. A small per cent are protestants and members of a nativistic cult centred around Jose Rizal, the national hero. There used to be a complete elementary school from Grades I to VI with a faculty of nine. This was closed in 1958. The majority of the villagers have completed only six years of elementary education. Only very few can afford to send their children to high school.

As among most farmers in the Philippines, there is widespread poverty among the farmer-settlers in the village. Their average yearly income is 1,200 pesos. To supplement this meagre income they hire themselves out as agricultural workers in corporate farms and nearby areas during the period of transplanting or harvesting of play or corn. Some do carpentry work in the village to add to their income. This is necessary for the survival of their families which average from eight to twelve children.

Their years of hard work have resulted in the clearing of around 957 hectares of what once was a thickly forested area. These lands they planted to rice and corn. From these lands they were able to produce enough for their families. But this period of self-sufficiency was short-lived.

*This article was earlier published in: Callaway, Helen, *Participation in Research. Case Studies of Participatory Research Studies in Adult Education*, Studiecentrum, ncvo, 1980, pp. 1-7.

In 1952 a corporation acquired legal title to the land. The settlers contested the claim through a court case. One of their objections was the manner by which the corporation acquired the title to the land. Public land laws require that an area first be declared as alienable and disposable before it can be privately owned. The land was declared alienable and disposable in 1953. The corporation got its title in 1952. In the court case that followed the settlers lost, but they refused to vacate their lands. In the meantime, the corporation started cultivating the land and was able to plant 15 hectares to rubber trees. By 1973, a total of 65 hectares had been planted to rubber.

To eject the settlers from the land the corporation secured a permit for the demolition of houses and confiscation of property. The settlers refused to give up their lands without struggle. In the process, a series of killings took place. The victims included the young lawyer of the settlers, the government sheriff and his eight military escorts who carried out the demolition order, and a settler-leader with two others who were shot to death in an early dawn house-strafting raid by military soldiers aided by the local home defence force. The settlers' corpses were dragged by wooden sled to the military camp, rifles put on top of their bodies, and then photographed and publicized as rebels.

Because of this uncertain situation, many families left their homes to live in nearby areas accessible to their farms. In May 1979, only 31 families remained in the village. However, with the easing off of tension, families started returning after four months. Today there are around 80 to 100 families in the village. Despite the conditions, the villagers have expressed their resolve to fight for their right to the land. They maintain that they will not abandon these lands.

Rural Development and People's Organizations

This case study is a description of how participatory research was used as a vital tool in rural organizing work. The widespread depressed conditions in rural Philippines have given rise to a variety of rural development programs. Some of these merely reinforce the existing system; others are merely reformist and have led to the creation of new forms of dependency; and there are programs aimed at transforming the existing system through the building up of genuine people's organizations.

The subject of this case study belongs to the last category. The agency which initiated the program is a non-governmental organization which believes that development is a process that cannot be brought to the peasantry but, rather, it is an aroused and mobilized peasantry acting on their own problems which brings about a development process that is protective not only of their interests but also of nature and environment. This agency has tried to come up with rural development programs which are responsive to the felt needs of the peasantry. This is done through a continuous process of dialogues and consultations with local farmer groups and their friends from the different sectors of society.

One of its projects was to help support a rural organizers' development training program in southern Philippines in 1977. Participating in this training program was a farmer-settler from the village. He is one of the poorest among the settlers in the village but is looked up to as a natural leader due to his personal qualities, his educational attainment, and his knowledge of town life. The conditions in his village, especially the land problem, motivated him to join the training program. He was hopeful that something could be done to help solve their problems in the village. After the six-month training program, the farmer-settler returned to his village.

The Research Process at Two Levels

The research process was implemented at two levels: first, in the rural organizers' development program phase; and, second, in the village itself, after the completion of the training program. A basic requirement for rural organizers is skill in research. This is regarded both as a phase of a long process of social transformation and a process in itself. Doing research work also means having a standpoint. The research process is conducted to bring into focus the features of a general or particular oppressive situation and to define the starting point of a liberating transformation. It is a mass undertaking, involving not only the organizers but also the people to be organized.

- a. *In the rural organisers' training program:* The training program lasted for six months. Provisions were made in the planning so that there were phases devoted to data gathering, data analysis, and inputs on the research process and organizing work. The program was divided into the following phases:
 - Phase 1 – Preliminary survey of respective areas (4 days).

Phase 2 – General awareness seminar (10 days).

Phase 3 – Comprehensive survey of the community (2 weeks).

Phase 4 – Structural analysis of society (4 weeks).

Phase 5 – Actual organizing work (4 months).

Phase 6 – Continuity phase. Follow up.

The training emphasized that data gathering is not just for study or research purposes but for community action. Its main purpose is to get a picture of the different groups and classes in the community so as to have a firm basis for realistic planning and action. It was also emphasized that data gathering should be biased in favour of the oppressed. This means that sources of information are the oppressed. The organizers will obtain this data by living with them, talking with them, eating what they eat, and working with them. It also means that data gathering is to be used for any by the oppressed so that they can build self-reliant Christian communities.

The trainees were introduced to different methods of data gathering such as meetings, the house-to-house survey, and interviews. Sample questions for interviews and surveys were formulated by the trainees. Guidelines for interviewing were also presented, discussed, and practiced. The need for recording and data and events was also emphasized.

Data analysis of the preliminary survey was done in phase 2 of the training program. The facts gathered were discussed and analyzed in the context of the discussions on the concept of man and society, property, people's organizations, collective leadership, and people's power.

Further data analysis was made in Phase 4 after trainees went through a more intensive data gathering based on the concepts and tools they learned in Phase 2. The data findings were analyzed through a dialogical process and workshops. The main framework for analysis was based on the economic-political-cultural situation. What is oppressive? What is not? Who are for us? Who are against us? How is it against us? How is it for us? How are the economic, political, and cultural structures interlinked both on the micro and macro levels? Phase 5 involved actual organizing work through a process of getting contacts, forming core groups, and building up indigenous structures. Phase 6 was a follow-up program through visits, exchange, and consultations with experienced rural organizers.

- b. *In the village:* When the farmer-settler returned to his village, he replicated the process of data gathering and analysis. In the beginning, he was able to recruit seven local partners who were also the elders and recognized natural leaders in the village. In turn, these seven partners were able to recruit their own partners. Groupings usually followed kinship lines or depended on common province of origin.

Data gathering and analysis were carried out through informal discussions, conversations, house-to-house visits, during social occasions like baptisms or weddings. Different settings and occasions were made use of: while farming, during lunchbreaks under the shade of the trees while the farmers rested, on the way to the market, while washing the laundry in the river, or while hunting.

Formal meetings, where data findings were collated and analyzed, were also called by the core group and the various groupings. These meetings were not only study sessions but also business meetings where they discussed their plans of action. This process was gradual and continuous. Evidence of the work bearing fruit was seen not only in the growth of the number of recruits but also in the transfer of research and analysis skills to other farmer-settlers.

The group decided to conduct a three-day seminar on structural analysis to gain a deeper understanding of their problems and to discuss alternative measures. This time it was on a large-scale level instead of the usual small study groups. Rural organizers in a nearby area who had longer work experience were invited to facilitate the seminar. During the seminar, they studied the interlinkages of the economic-political-cultural structures on the local, national, and global levels.

In the seminar they came up with the following conclusions. They saw that the prevailing socio-economic-political situation in the country escalated their problems. Any mobilization or organizing work was apt to be interpreted by the government as subversive and the settlers as rebels. They saw how the government agencies and officials were acting for the corporation as against the settlers. The corporation had easy access to the Bureau of Lands and the Bureau of Forestry because a high official was a relative of the owner of the corporation. So was the judge who tried the case. The incumbent mayor during the election

campaign period assured the settlers that he would support their land claim. After he won the election, he tried to persuade the settlers to vacate the land in compliance with the court decision.

The Ministry of Agrarian Reform advised them to sign leasehold agreements with the corporation. This was interpreted by the settlers as a trick to make them desist from claiming the land as their own. They also foresaw that accepting the leasehold agreement would mean paying back-rent to the corporation which they could not afford. In fact, they have consistently refused to pay rent to the corporation since the conflict started in the 1950s. This refusal was one of the reasons why they were being harassed and threatened by the corporation.

As a result of the seminar, the perception of the settlers as to who are for them and against them became sharper. Their plans of action were necessarily determined by this analysis.

Villagers Taking Decisions

Through the process of research-analysis-action-analysis, the villagers coped with events and came up with alternative measures and programs. Their most crucial problem is the land question. The corporation expected the settlers to vacate the land. It had a court permit for the demolition of the houses and confiscation of property. The alternative offer to the settlers was for them to become tenants of the corporation. The settlers were adamant on the stand that they would stay on the land. Because of the circumstances, they embarked on a two-fold step of fighting a legal battle, while at the same time fighting by arms in self-defence as a result of the violent incidents in which the settlers were victimized.

In both cases, the decision of the villagers was to rely on their own resources and their creativity and talents to respond to the situation. Despite the killings that have taken place, their decision is to pursue their court case and to follow this up. While some of the villagers are still hopeful that they will win the case, there are those who believe that they will win but not under the present conditions. The latter believe that the land can only be theirs if they will all work together to transform the oppressive system. This means strengthening not only their own peasant organizations but helping other communities build up genuine people's organizations.

To retaliate against the corporation the settlers relied on their indigenous arms, as well as by mobilizing their soliders sons who were serving in the army, and a roving bandit group in a nearby area. They were able to prevent the corporation from expanding the rubber plantation by uprooting the rubber trees by one or two inches from the ground so that these seedlings would die.

The escalation of violence in the village led to pressures from the church and other groups for the government to take action. The governor sent a fact-finding team which investigated the situation. However, no recommendations were made nor measures taken. At present no more violent incidents have taken place, but the situation is volatile. Probably as an offshoot of the situation, the government has distributed some 80 to 100 hectares to ten families who were given certificates of land transfers. To the villagers it was very significant that the ten families selected were those friendly with the corporation.

The settlers have also tried to come up with economic projects like communal farming, collective marketing, and putting up a collective rice thresher. The communal farming project was not pursued due to the tense situation prevailing then. It was not safe for the settlers to be seen together in groups. When the situation had eased off, the villagers began thinking of economic projects that could help solve some of their immediate economic problems. With continuing analysis, they are able to identify whether particular projects are helping them transform the system or reinforce it.

Another instance where analysis is used is in their community health program. Health is a perennial problem among the villagers. The doctor is too far away and his fees expensive; so are the western medicines he prescribes. The problem of health is further aggravated by malnutrition. That the situation is but part and parcel of the system that has to be transformed is realized by the villagers. An alternative measure which they have utilized is to popularize the use of herbal medicines and to produce these in their home gardens. This of course necessitated the process of research both by field work and library work. They interviewed the local healers about the uses of herbal medicines and collated these. Contacts were made with persons who have access to libraries and agencies to help gather more data on the use of herbal medicine. This knowledge was disseminated among the villagers.

Description of Outcomes: Awareness and Action

Basically it can be said that there are two principal outcomes: the ongoing transformation in their perception of society and the gradual transformation of certain components of the social structure in the village. Transformation of their perception of society was made possible by a transfer of research and analysis skills to the grassroots level. This was a deliberate task to move away from the previous practice where awareness-building among peasants was a monopoly of external agents—intellectuals, students, and others. Such awareness-building has merely led to the creation of dependency patterns.

In terms of the land question, the perception of the problem was localized in the beginning and the standpoint taken that they were fighting for their legal rights which were being denied to them. Through the dynamic process of research-analysis-action analysis, this perception gradually changed. They now realize that the struggle for land is part of a much wider struggle which has national as well as global implications. They have also realized that it is not only their legal right but also their moral right to fight for their land as rooted in the gospel message of justice.

Their theological perceptions of Christianity are also undergoing change. Biblical study and reflections are always part of discussions and dialogues among the villagers. The concept of the church as the community reaching out for liberation is one important theme of their discussions.

They have also begun to see the dynamics of social-economic-political-cultural interlinkages. Whereas before they blamed the corporation for taking the land away from them, they now realize that it is the existing system of society which made it possible for the corporation to claim the land and have that much power to keep it. Militant observation of what is happening around them is another important outcome. Where, in the past, events were taken for granted, at present, events in the village and elsewhere are discussed and analyzed.

The fabric of social structure is also changing. Before the cohesiveness of the village was based on kinship lines and common province of origin. Today, cohesiveness has gone beyond this, to a feeling of purpose born out of their common struggles and their common vision as to how society should be transformed. Unity has also transcended geographical boundaries. Fellow oppressed peasants and others

beyond the village who work to transform the oppressive society are also their friends and comrades.

Reliance on traditional social and political leaders has weakened and has been substituted by a burgeoning self-reliance based on political power and decisions being made by the settlers themselves.

Women's Struggle for Empowerment*

VIJAY KANHERE

Background Conditions of Tribal People

Dhulia district is in the north of Maharashtra State of India. Shahada and Taloda are the two most fertile *taluks* of Dhulia. The *adivasis* (the term used for tribal peoples) in this area are mostly landless labourers. For a long time, they have been subjected to oppression by the upcoming rich farmers. During the British rule, they went through the difficult process of settling down on the plains as labourers. They were forced to labour in order to repay loans. The old forms are still used for making them work harder. Loans, advances, false accounting, threats of law—all are used to oppress them. And through these methods, their exploitation continues.

Any idea of rebellion or small acts of disobedience were forbidden. They were caught by the watchmen, confined, beaten up, and forced to pay fines. The cooperative crop protection societies had a great deal of power. These societies were registered with the registrar of cooperative societies. They were virtual rulers of this area. No labourer could challenge their orders. In Manrad village of Shahada *taluk* the society had given a public notice saying: "No farmer should pay more than 75 paise per day; or else he will have to pay a fine of Rs 51."

Land owned by tribals was forcibly cultivated by the rich farmers. The *adivasis* had lost their rights on most of the land. These conditions were oppressive for all the labourers, but even more so for the women. Rich farmers considered the tribal women as their own private property. Sexual harassment was rampant. Women were insecure

*This article has been drawn from: (1) Kanhere, Vijay P., 'The Struggle in Dhulia: A Women's Movement in India' in Dubell, F., Erasmie, T. and Vries, J., (1980) *Research for the people—Research by the People—Selected Papers from the International Forum of Participatory Research in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia*, 1980, Linkoping University, Sweden, pp. 110–117, and (2) Kanhere, Vijay (1983), 'Some Reflections on PR' in *Shramik Sansthan*.

not only in lonely fields but even in their own huts. The police and the forest officials had their own share of pleasure at the cost of the women.

Women used to get lower wages than men. And they had to do work in the fields, as well as do all the domestic work and look after the children. Unlike in the upper castes, the *adivasis* have a system of giving bride price. A man often tells his wife, "I did not buy you for nothing." Women had to undergo beatings by drunkard husbands. Women had no voice in the meetings of "elders". In this system, the older men used to give their judgement about divorces, marriages, re-marriages, and fines with respect to sexual relations.

Tribal women are in a *little* better position than the upper-caste women as far as divorces are concerned. They go out of their homes and earn; they can think of being financially independent. They can demand a divorce more easily and get it through the "elders".

The Struggle

The struggle for the liberation of land and against atrocities started against the above background under the leadership of Gram Swarajya Samiti (affiliated to Maharashtra Sarvodaya Mandal). From January to March 1972, women had sporadically participated in the struggle for land. In the months of April and May 1972, the struggle for wages began. This struggle affected women more, as most of the tribal women were labourers. Previously there had been regular propaganda against rapes of *adivasi* women and other sexual atrocities. In March 1972, during the assembly election, the Gram Swarajya Samiti had adopted the slogan of "returning the votes". This was due to all the problems of *adivasis* and two or three immediate reasons. One of them was the rape of an *adivasi* woman. In this manner, women's problems were touched upon. In the wage struggles, women came out more actively. At Mod, they participated in a *morcha* (loosely translated as a "sit-in protest") with some doubts, but with a desire to shout slogans against atrocities. At Pariwardha, they were more militant and took the lead in persuading strikebreakers.

At Pariwardha, in the negotiations, male labourers and rich farmers said, "We will settle the women's wages." The women present objected saying, "We will negotiate our own wages." Because the women had taken an active part in the strikes, the males had to concede that women would negotiate their own wages.

Women's problems were discussed in the context of the land question, the sexual atrocities, and women's wages. Propaganda was also waged against the habit of drinking liquor by men who did not look after their families and beat up their wives. These issues, however, were not discussed as *women's* problems.

It was thought necessary to attempt to increase the participation of women in the struggle, to understand their problems and to set up a women's camp. The objective of the camp was that women from various villages would come together. By being together in the camp for three days, they would develop a feeling of solidarity and be able to broaden their views beyond their own village. Secondly, they would get an opportunity to speak out about their conditions and discuss their problems. The main objective, however, remained that of increasing the participation of women in the general class movement.

The initial involvement was of the full-time activists, some women, and young boys. The basis of the activity of the full-timers was that every person should be treated as a human being and participate in matters that concern him/her. The specific awareness of "Women's Liberation" was not there. Women were enthusiastic because it concerned their issues, but more so because it was going to be their camp.

The Women's Camp

After taking the decision about the women's camp, it was discussed in night meetings at villages. Women were greatly enthused. Still they had doubts. "What can we discuss for two full days? We cannot talk much, nor express ourselves much." Only at places like Tarhavad village, the men voiced their doubts, "If women go for camps, who would cook, who would look after the children? Men may go to camps, not women," they said. The women murmured their protest, their dissent. But they wondered who would look after their children. The activists proposed that three women be chosen to go and others volunteer to look after their children. This was accepted. But actually, not a single woman from this village came for the camp. In the other villages, the response was greater. In some villages, in the place of four or five women who were going to come from one village, ten to eleven women came. Some women attended the camp only at intervals. Women from the nearby villages used to come in large numbers, attend the sessions, and rush back home. Women from Kharvad

village had taken the responsibility for the food and water arrangements. Young boys were extremely helpful in the preparations.

In the camp, firstly, we tried to explain why a women's camp was necessary. We briefly touched upon the women's participation in the movement and the necessity to increase it, the importance of taking up women's problems. The women first introduced themselves. It was not a mere formality. It was a novel experience for the women to stand up and tell their names and villages with nobody to threaten them. Many women and very few males attended. Getting to know other women from 15 villages at a time was a rich experience for them, a beginning (though small) of the realization of a feeling of solidarity.

Then the women described their conditions in their own language and the rest of the women listened, relating these accounts to their own experiences. Some women felt very shy about speaking before such a big gathering. Some could not express themselves properly. Others felt that they should not discuss their personal problems in a gathering. But slowly they learnt to describe their village, their conditions, the sexual harassment in the past, the usual filthy practices of watchmen and the rich farmers. Under the pretext of a suspicion of theft, the watchmen of the crop protection societies tried to search the clothes of women. The women were very angry about this practice of the crop protection societies.

Malibai from Karankheda village was extremely agitated. She said, "We complain that men drink liquor, that they become corrupt due to drinking. We complain that they beat us up. We want to do something about this problem. Our village is small. But it produces hundreds of litres of liquor, and the men beat us up. We women of Karankheda are not organized. Can the other women help us? We need help." This sparked off a heated condemnation of Karankheda men. At the same time, the women became aware of the necessity of solidarity, the help which Malibai had talked about. They all wanted to do something about the liquor at Karankheda and this village was just a mile away from Kharwad, where the camp was going on.

Next day was the last day of the camp. Ambersingh, the *adivasi* leader, related a news report he had read. When the then Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi was on the tour of a certain state, there were many policemen for her protection and many thousand rupees had been spent for the purpose. He compared this with the *adivasi* woman who had to go to the fields and to the jungle all alone for gathering food,

cutting wood, and agricultural work and who was always in danger of being harassed, sexually molested or raped by the rich farmers, watchmen, and forest guards. The police do not do anything if she dares to lodge a complaint. There is nobody to protect an *adivasi* labourer woman. "No," he continued, "It is not correct to say so. *Adivasi* women themselves have to protect themselves and their sisters. They should carry knives with them to protect themselves and collectively beat up whoever tries to make use of their bodies." They learnt this in their first camp. Ambersingh had expressed and voiced their own desires.

After the public meeting, all the women attending the camp went to Karankheda and they all cordoned off the village so that no bootlegger could run away. They broke all liquor posts and bottles. They also declared that thenceforth any bootlegger, any man who drinks and beats up his wife would be heavily punished. And they should remember that Karankheda women are not alone anymore.

This was the beginning, a firm beginning, of women's more conscious participation in the movement. Initially, women from villages like Mod used to move in groups of fifty, go to nearby villages, tell the women to indicate the place where liquor was brewed, ask the women to get organized and punish the husbands who beat their wives. In some villages, guilty men were forced to bow before the women; in others, their heads were shaved.

Women's participation against sexual harassment increased and with that their agitation against wife-beating. They realized their strength for the first time. By uniting, they had taught a lesson to the wife-beating husbands in at least one village. With this beginning, women moved ahead. The activists and women could deepen their understanding on this basis. A more organized struggle against the arrogant, rich, corrupt officials and rapists could take place, could develop through this initial beginning. The women and the activists could reach this stage because of the specific methods employed by the movement. At Pariwardha women *could* insist that they negotiate their own wages because of the practice developed: all the women and men labourers being present outside the place of the negotiations. It was impossible for the representatives to bypass the labourers and for the male representatives to bypass the women. The labourers sat just outside and constantly kept in touch with the negotiations. This particular method made it possible for the women to force their claim of participating in the negotiations.

The idea of the camp was not forced down the throats of women. Only the date, place, and so on was fixed by the activists. In the night meetings, the necessity of women coming together, of women participating vigorously in the struggle was discussed. It was felt that they represented half of the labouring population and should not remain outside the movement. During the camp the women spoke out and this itself brought forward the fact that what they considered to be isolated, personal problems, were in fact social problems. After their initial efforts to speak out, they became bolder and their self-confidence increased. As women from Mod commented, "we never thought we had the strength to speak in a gathering of 100-150 women, that we could shout slogans in front of and against the *maaldars* (rich)."

Here we can pinpoint the second aspect about the process, namely that women first emboldened, had greater self-confidence in their struggle against the *maaldars*, the watchmen, on class issues. Only later could they think of struggling within the family against wife beating. But this could take place because there was an awareness of taking up issues that affected them *as women*, of going forward to take up women's issues. Short of this, the potentialities of the women to struggle against women's oppression could not have been realized.

A constant self-critical discussion, and dialogue was the method adopted for going ahead. In some of the later study circles, a very stereotyped method was adopted: the necessity of the subjects discussed was not established. But self-criticism led to change. A continuous reflection on their past activity by the activists and also by the leading non-full-time women is a must for the healthy development of the movement.

As was seen before the camp, the problem was identified by the women at Pariwardha in their own way: "Men are sure that women cannot think, cannot talk, cannot negotiate their own wages. The men who drink and beat us up think this." At various places, the identification of the problem was done by the activists and the women. During the camp, it was a collective identification of the problem by the women themselves. They heard each other and identified the immediate problems: sexual harassment by the rich, wife-beating, bootlegging. In the later camps, we saw the problem of the "elder" system, the male-dominated value system, myths like the woman becoming unholly during menstruation, as problems being discussed

and tackled. For these discussions some urban non-full-time women were also present.

I do not think such compartments as data gathering, data analysis, etc. are valid in the above process. In the first women's camp and before too, we saw all the aspects merging one into the other. For instance, the Karankheda women talked about their plight, the rest of the women asked what the other Karankheda women thought, whether if they organized themselves there would be some men to support them. Immediately after this, all the women marched to the village and acted, i.e., broke the liquor pots. In this way, problem identification, data gathering, and concrete action went hand-in-hand.

Village Women Learning to Participate in the Wider Society

In the camps, the women came to know about the worker's movements in other areas of India. They also learnt about the women's movement in other areas and in other parts of the world. When they went to *morchas*, some of them visited huge factories, met factory workers and other activists. The activists learnt about the "elder" system and the divorce procedures and their social meaning.

The women started regarding themselves as human beings and began fighting for their rights. They soon realized that women all over the world are struggling for their rights and against oppression, that the problems of women were not restricted to their villages but are faced by all the toiling masses, especially women. They felt that a deeper analysis of these problems was necessary. Through the initial struggles of the women, the activists were exposed to the perspectives and problems of women's liberation: the problem of male domination, the relationship between the emancipation of women and the stage of development of society, the history of women's liberation and the workers' movement and the problems it poses.

A deep-seated male chauvinism gets expressed in apparently small comments, attitudes, etc. The male activists learnt the necessity of analyzing these at every instance. Every workers' movement has to be conscious of the important task of tackling women's problems.

When women came out of their homes in order to struggle against the rich classes, they became potential fighters for the women's liberation movement and workers' liberation. All conscious activists should be aware of helping in developing these potentialities. A continuous process of exchange of thoughts between the participants, a

critical attitude towards ones own practice is necessary for any healthy development of the movement. The basis on which a researcher may begin his work may change. One has always to keep this possibility in mind. The best process is collective identification of the problem.

Some Reflections on Participatory Research

Participatory research plays a supportive role in the struggle for emancipation. Participatory research aims at the 'objects' of research becoming the subjects of research. The final *GOAL* of participatory research is the abolition of itself as a special activity, i.e. people doing research as a normal activity of reflection and study of their actions, history, ideologies, internal relations etc. Even today, participatory research, at times, merges with the struggle because within struggle, action and reflection go hand-in-hand. Realization of participatory research itself is going towards its abolition as a special activity.

The first experience of agitation, for the women, was going for *morchas* demanding a wage rise. *Morcha* was a totally new experience for men and women here. Before the 1972 wage struggle, people here were going through hardships without any direct resistance for quite some years. The rich farmers were the absolute rulers of this area.

As an outsider, one may look at a *morcha* and slogan shouting in the streets of the rich farmers, as nothing very special. There are hundreds of *morchas* taking place everyday and so many types of demands are raised, slogans shouted. In the discussion with women it turned out that for them, that particular *morcha* had a special significance. They breathed free air in the rich farmers' *basti* and shouted slogans of unity. Everyday every woman had to face an atmosphere of domination all alone. That day they were present as a collective for the first time in their memories. Shantabai said, 'I would never have believed that I could raise my voice in their *basti* and demand more wages, say that I resent their *dadagiri* and that so many women would be with me to say so.'

The important lesson we learnt was that one should attempt to understand an event from the eyes of the participants and not get confined to ones own 'developed' viewpoint.

In the camp, one saw the merging of the various aspects of research. Identification of the problem, areas of research, data collection, interviews, choice of the course of action based on the data, action, all these aspects had merged into a single process. The initial conceptions about women's problems went through a change as the enquiry and action unfolded.

One more aspect revealed itself. Women in Dhulia began to act on their own, their consciousness became more sharpened. At the same time, certain inherent limits to local action were also realized. That women there cannot change the basic structure of today's system by local action only. Their action and understanding cannot engulf the global change at one stroke.

Unfolding such limitations is part and parcel of the process of becoming more conscious and attempting a greater control over ones own life.

Knowledge, Participation and Empowerment: PRIA's Experience

RAJESH TANDON

History

Efforts to understand and change a given social reality have always been based on perspectives of those promoting such change. Knowledge systems and knowledge producing institutions have been at the forefront of defining and organizing such perspectives. In most societies and periods of human history, the elite have maintained hegemonic control over such knowledge systems. These dominant perspectives for understanding and changing social reality have mostly been the perspectives of those in positions of power in a given society. Thus dominant knowledge about and perspectives on social reality have largely been those supported by the elite and the powerful in a given society.

The subaltern (or 'bottom-up') perspectives on social reality have been largely negated and undermined throughout human history. The perspectives and knowledge systems of 'underdogs' and marginalized sections of society have rarely been acknowledged as legitimate or 'scientific'. The representation of social reality from the point of view of ordinary citizens was largely rejected or ignored.

Participatory research as a philosophy of 'bottom-up' knowledge systems attempted to articulate such a perspective of ordinary citizens. It gathered together and provided a voice to popular knowledge and wisdom gained over generations of struggles and living by ordinary women and men. More than 20 years ago, participatory research began to provide a coherent framework to explore alternative perspectives, processes and methods of knowledge production and utilization from the point-of-view and in the interest of the marginalized and the powerless.

Participatory Research

The critique of the dominant perspective of knowledge as illustrated through participatory research grew out of the practice of adult educators in poor communities of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Teaching of literacy and new functional skills to illiterate and poor women and men in the developing countries during the 1960s and early 1970s demonstrated immense knowledge and analytical capacities of such persons. This became a major challenge to adult educators. National, regional and international networks of participatory research promoted by such NGOs as a Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) became the fragile breeding ground for new experiments in promoting participatory research in different parts of the world.

Participatory Learning

PRIA (Society for Participatory Research In Asia) was founded on this perspective of participatory research more than 20 years ago. Its fundamental purpose was to promote meaningful participation of ordinary citizens, hitherto excluded from processes and institutions that influence and shape their lives. In order to promote such meaningful participation, PRIA began to strengthen the capacities of such citizens and their organizations through a series of interventions aimed at consolidating and augmenting their learning process. This was the beginning of the development of participatory training methodology.

As we began to experiment with, and further refine, participatory training methodology as an intervention towards strengthening learning of ordinary citizens, we began to feel the need for reaching out to like-minded and similarly inspired initiatives within the region and beyond. ASPBAE's support in the early years helped to extend the use of these methodologies in various situations where community education and organization was being undertaken.

The need for building capacity at local levels among groups and organizations voluntarily created by local people and activists began to influence our own interventions. We began to see the real meaning of empowerment at local levels. For us, in our practice, empowerment meant interlinked twin processes of organizing and learning. We began to see how participatory training methodology could accelerate and consolidate learning among such individuals and groups in a manner that helped further collectivization of their initiatives.

The perspectives of participatory research also inspired our approach to monitoring and evaluation. Through a series of experimental efforts applied in diverse developmental contexts, we evolved methodologies of participatory monitoring and evaluation. Its application to issues of natural resources, access and control over land, water and forest by those whose livelihood and survival depended on them, provided a wide-ranging set of experiences and insights.

Empowerment in Action

Over the years, application of participatory research perspective spread to issues related to workers' education and occupational health. Expert knowledge and management influence had, by-and-large, excluded the issues of workplace health and safety from the agenda of workers' education and organization. Through a series of micro studies within the perspective of participatory research, PRIA began to integrate the articulation of workers' knowledge of these issues. Ten years later in the mid 1990s, while continuing its work in that stream, PRIA extended the focus to include the experience of communities on environmental health. Water and air pollution was the daily experience of ordinary citizens and communities, though experts and state institutions have maintained apathy towards this. Thus learning to act in support of occupational and environmental health became an ongoing part of PRIA's interventions.

The struggle of ordinary women to given visibility to their productive economic role in society became a further focus of our work in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many development programmes and policies of the government and other international institutions viewed women as housewives, mothers and familymakers. The economic role of women was largely overlooked. Through a series of interventions inspired by the perspective of participatory research, PRIA started a number of capacity building initiatives to strengthen the abilities of ordinary, semi-literate women to pursue their economic activities with greater effectiveness and improved results. Management capacities of these women and their organizations were strengthened to enable them to participate more meaningfully in productive economic enterprises, and to gain a sense of collective influence over market forces.

In recent years, our efforts have extended to include building capacities of local self-governance at the village and neighbourhood

levels. Top-down development methods, including educational interventions centrally planned and executed, have historically undermined the capacities of our citizens to organize their self-governance process and institutions. With opportunities for devolution being created worldwide, educational interventions aimed at strengthening the capacities of citizens and their groups to meaningfully participate in self-governing institutions and processes have emerged as a major challenge. PRIA's own work in recent years has focused upon this issue as well.

In a broader sense, civic engagement and strengthening of civil society requires sustained and deliberate educational interventions. Perspectives on knowledge and social transformation from the vantage point of civil society also require sustained and long-term engagement. Therefore, building social capital in our societies will be the future challenge for practitioners of adult education and participatory research. This is a challenge that we in PRIA are preparing ourselves to respond to creatively and authentically.

Challenges Ahead

The history of our experience is also full of frustrations and obstacles. A dominant force contributing towards such obstacles is the centralized and bureaucratic state institutions. This has included institutions and programmes of learning and education started and resourced by the state. Statism as institutions and philosophy has entered our life in a comprehensive way and, therefore, needs to be addressed as a new challenge. Ordinary citizens have been made to behave in a passive manner ever so dependent on government agencies and programmes. This dependence further fuels forces of population and demagogy, enhancing the power of the state over ordinary citizens. Adult education has a major role to play in enabling citizens and their organizations to regain their capacities and initiatives.

Similarly, the new forces of globalization are integrating economies and spreading the new information technology. Knowledge of these forces and meaningful participation by ordinary citizens to influence these global forces and institutions is a huge obstacle. Macro global forces are increasingly shaping micro contexts and constraining local initiatives. Our perspectives on participatory research need to be scaled-up in a manner that meaningful participation of citizens could encompass globalization and new information technology in

the next millennium. Otherwise, the decades of work in local empowerment would get wiped out in the face of such powerful global forces. We are discovering that the new information technology is further distancing the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Its access and control needs to be made an agenda for adult education in the new millennium.

SECTION III

Methodology of Participatory Research

Section Outline

Participatory research, as an alternative research approach and as a political approach shares a common methodological framework. In both its 'professional' and 'political' roles it recognizes popular knowledge, it facilitates people's control over the process of 'inquiry, education and action' and it encourages collective action. PR methodology thus assists in uniting the above-mentioned philosophical stance with the steps and method of investigation and action. As a methodology of an alternative system of knowledge production, it is, thus, not merely a set of tools, techniques and methods.

This section provides a 'critical insight' into the methodology of PR, building on the key characteristics of PR as illustrated in the earlier two sections.

Deborah, Linzi and Yusuf raise some critical issues regarding the methodology of PR in their paper 'The Methodology of the Participatory Research Approach'. They argue that political activism supported by the PR approach leads to 'naïve idealism' and 'methodological ad-hocism'. According to them, the PR approach reflects an eclectic orientation, which is embedded in the philosophy of 'pragmatism'. The paper highlights that value judgements and moral imperative reflect the idealism in the PR approach. This idealism leads to 'naïve positing of participants' whereby objective socio-economic conditions as causes for problems and their solution are ignored.

As a critique to the above paper, this section includes Rajesh Tandon's response in 'From Clarity to Anarchy: Participatory Research Approach'. He argues for the need to integrate the professional and political role of participatory research. In response to the claim of 'methodological ad-hocism' of the PR approach, Rajesh argues the need to recognize that 'the PR approach is a holistic approach to inquiry and knowledge generation with feeling, thinking and acting as independent and correlated modes of inquiry.' By open-

ing many more modes of inquiry, the PR approach tends to appear ad-hoc and anarchic to those schooled in the present methodology of Conventional Research Approach. He further highlights the importance of joint analysis by researcher and participant, to address the critique of 'naïve idealism'.

The section touches upon some ambiguities in PR as an alternative research, which have surfaced as a result of its practice. David Brown, in his paper 'Ambiguities in PR' includes issues of research objective, relationship between participants and researchers, methods and outcomes. These ambiguities have been addressed in Rajesh Tandon's paper 'Social Transformation and Participatory Research'. He re-emphasizes that the primary objective of PR is production of knowledge and encouraging the poor and oppressed to generate their own knowledge, control their knowledge and control the means of production of knowledge. 'The primary outcome of PR is new knowledge, or fresh syntheses of old knowledge. Learning by people and becoming organized are by-products of the collective pursuit of knowledge.'

The section further illustrates some key steps of undertaking PR intervention, building on the paper of Rajesh Tandon on 'Participatory Research, Educational Experiences and Empowerment of Adults' and Francisco Vio Grossi's paper 'The Socio-political Implications of Participatory Research'.

Having addressed certain critical dimensions of the methodology of PR, the section illustrates the key steps and outcomes of PR in 'People and Forest, A Participatory Study'. This paper clearly illustrates the methodology of PR, in supporting the ongoing struggle of local tribals of Gadchiroli (Maharashtra) in regaining access to and control over natural resources. It addresses some of the critical insights raised by Deborah et al., on issues of 'methodological ad-hocism' and 'naïve idealism' in PR methodology.

Supporting this illustration are three case studies, included in the paper 'Knowledge and Social Change: An Inquiry into Participatory Research in India'. These case studies highlight the PR methodology used in undertaking research, action and fighting deforestation in Himachal Pradesh and Orissa, and on women's involvement in defining development needs in Rajasthan. Analyzed across the three dimensions of 'Participation and Control', 'Awareness and Empowerment', and 'Mobilization and Organization Building', the three cases provide practical illustration to the methodology of PR.

The Methodology of the Participatory Research Approach*

DEBORAH BRYCESON, LINZI MANICOM AND YUSUF KASSAM

This paper aims at critically examining the participatory research approach (PRA). The paper is divided into five main sections; the first two sections explain the context in which the PRA developed. The third section looks at what the PRA is purported to be and its different political expressions. The fourth section argues for the primacy of methodology in both understanding and evaluating the PRA, while the fifth section concludes by posing issues regarding the future of the PRA in its inevitable institutionalization, both professionally in the social sciences and politically with respect to development efforts in the Third World. This paper is intended as a basis for discussion about the PRA. It represents a compendium which is by no means exhaustive on the topic or claiming to be the 'final word'. We ask for constructive and if necessary destructive criticism of our ideas.

1. The Social Context in Which the PRA Developed

The PRA arose in the context of thorough-going questioning within the field of social research. Such issues as the relationship between the means and ends of social research, the relationship between researcher (whether individual or institution) and the researched, neutrality and objectivity, were re-problematized in the light of a critical reflection on methodological and epistemological questions.

Importantly, this questioning of the precepts of social research was an expression and development of the popular struggles in the advanced capitalist countries. These struggles were posited against

*This article was earlier published in Kassam, Yusuf and Mustafa, Kemal (1982), *Participatory Research, An Emerging Alternative Methodology in Social Science Research*, PRIA, New Delhi, pp. 67-82.

the establishment, the 'post industrial' society, and the streamlined bureaucracy of the computer age. The dominant ideological response of humanism assumed an individualized, rather than social form. The articulated goals were the realization of self, the quest for the free human essence, and the subversion of the corporate machine through the reinsertion of the human being. This tendency was translated into social research methodologies and techniques where the researcher was encouraged, not to contain, but to employ his/her subjective human attributes in order to extend his/her understanding of the people under study. The action component of social research rested on the belief that a recognition of the elements and facets of domination in social life on the part of individual subjects would release them from their conditioned acquiescence. This process on a social scale would bring about liberation. The researcher's role was therefore to actively promote an inter-subjective context conducive to this actualization of people's inner selves; in other words, to unlock the door to the inherent human thrust for an undefined freedom.

In Third World countries, the glaring contradiction between, on the one hand, the super-sophisticated, politically sterilized, technicist social research practice and the persistent poverty and entrenched underdevelopment on the other, threw the issues of social research into even starker political relief. Questions about the objectives of social research, the researcher-researched relationship, were necessarily posed in the light of basic development goals increased food production, mass literacy etc. Furthermore, these goals were set against the background of escalating anti-imperialist struggles and strengthening capitalist penetration. The answers were equally couched in humanist ideology, but a humanism with a distinctly social focus, that looked to the *people*, the *nation*, the *oppressed* as its subject. Social research in this context, it was recognized, had to be directed towards development, and some went on to say, towards liberation where development and liberation as concepts with unspecified content were generally seen as synonymous. The social researcher became a self-conscious actor and participant in the process of development and liberation. The PRA took roots in this broad context.

2. The Professional Context in Which the PRA Developed

The PRA developed within the frame of a qualitative approach to social research. The qualitative approach represented a reaction to the

quantitative approach which was charged with reducing human beings to scores on socio-economic indices to facilitate computer tabulation. The qualitative approach was advanced in an attempt to study human beings multi-dimensionally. The qualitative data gathering techniques tended not to be structured on interviews of large numbers of people. Large sample size and statistical significance were sacrificed. But the question remains, to what extent did the qualitative approach overcome the legacy of the quantitative approach? This can be examined with respect to participant observation, the qualitative social research technique that was in fact the forerunner of the PRA. Participant observation was described by Freilich (1970) as:

'An important data-gathering technique in active research, since it:

1. maintains and/or increases the anthropologist's rapport;
2. provides checks on data collected in other ways;
3. provides novel data not otherwise collectable; and
4. helps to isolate and to type key informants.' (Freilich 1970:567)

Described as such, clearly participant observation was merely a more effective means of data collection still bound up with the positivist methodology which held objectivity as the primary requisite of social research. *Objectivity* thus referred to an attitude of scrupulous non-partisanship on the part of the social researcher on the one hand, and the subjecting of qualitatively collected data to rigorous verificational processes on the other. The latter implied the separation of the data-gathering process (the context of discovery) from, not only the policy-making process (the context of social action), but also from the context of validation. In other words, once data had been qualitatively gathered, it could be subjected to verificational techniques and serve as the basis of policy-making without further recourse to the concrete situation in which the research had taken place and to which it referred.

What then, it must be asked, is the specificity of the PRA? What distinguished the PRA from other techniques of the qualitative approach, particularly participant observation?

3. The Participatory Research Approach

The PRA succeeds to a far greater degree to break with the legacy of so-called objective social science. The participatory research approach is not purported to be a methodology but rather has been conceived

by its advocates as an approach going beyond the boundaries of a mere data gathering technique. It must be pointed out immediately that the distinguishing features of the PRA can be designated only at a high level of generality. This, as will be shown, is due to the fact that a wide range of research practices and an equally wide range of political ideologies are embraced by the broad category, the PRA. However, it can be argued that the following broad features are integral to the PRA in all its expressions.

Firstly, subjective commitment on the part of the researcher to the people under study is essential. This implies a rejection of the possibility of value-neutrality and of the conception of the social researcher as a tool or technician. The researcher must have a sensitivity and democratic identification with the people, the oppressed.

Secondly, there is close involvement of the researcher with the researched community. The researcher is perceived as a committed, participatory social actor, who must seek to combine his critical insight and knowledge with the understanding and resources of the local people to trigger new awareness of contradictions facing them. The concept of dialogue between the researcher and the community is emphasized as a reaction to the manipulateness of positivist social research, the over-simplification of social reality through the use of conventional research methodologies such as the survey approach and the alienating, dominating and oppressive character of such methodologies.

Thirdly, the approach is problem-centred. Research is perceived not as mere data-gathering, the result of which can be acted upon by others, the policy-makers. Rather the objective of social research is to understand the conditions underlying a problem in order to resolve the problem by transforming those conditions (be they perceived as social, political or social-psychological).

Fourthly, the Participatory Research Approach is conceived as an educational process for both the researchers as well as for the people with whom the research is conducted. The close and active interaction between the researchers and the people through dialogue and discussion, is ultimately aimed at action towards the solution of social contradictions.

Fifthly, the Participatory Research Approach stipulates respect for the people's own capability and potential to produce knowledge and analyze it. Knowledge creation as being the monopoly of the profes-

sional researchers alone, as commonly practiced by conventional researchers, is challenged by the PRA

In short, the PRA has been described as a three-pronged activity: an approach to social investigation with the full and active participation of the community in the entire research process; a means of taking action for development; and an educational process of mobilization for development, all of which are closely interwoven with each other.

There are actually several different versions of the PRA, differing in the degree to which they imply or advocate the researcher's political activism amongst the local people. A few examples will be cited below.

Freire (1972 and 1974) was the first to popularize the PRA on an international scale. His version of the PRA which he refers to as conscientization is conceived as a strategy in the liberation of oppressed peoples. He refers to those employed in the strategy as revolutionaries rather than researchers. The revolutionaries in union with the local people engage in cultural action in opposition to a dominating power and/or culture revolution under a revolutionary regime. The revolutionaries' political activism is conceived as democratic in form but guiding:

The fundamental role of those committed to cultural action for conscientization is not properly speaking to fabricate the liberating ideas, but to invite the people to grasp with their minds the truth of their reality (Freire 1974: 76).

de Oliveira and de Oliveira (1975) present another version of the PRA known as militant observation. The technique of dialogue central to Freire's conscientization is supplemented with more traditional data collection in the vein of participant observation. Reference is to the researcher not the revolutionary, however the context of the research process is depicted as revolutionary. The researcher's role is to actively politicize in a more pedagogic fashion:

The process of political education ... is at the heart of the process of militant observation (de Oliveira and de Oliveira 1975: 4)

Stavenhagen (1971) wrote about activist observation which he describes as:

The true synthesis between research on, and participation in the social change process, not as is so often the case from the vantage

point of the administrator, the outside manipulator or the transitory participating visitor (a common breed of applied anthropologist); but rather at the level of the political organizer, the social agitator (in the noblest expression of the much maligned term), or the fish in the water (to use a relevant Chinese metaphor). Thus action and research would be joined both in the interests of furthering knowledge and of contributing to change (Stavenhagen 1971: 339).

Stavenhagen argues for social change reformist or revolutionary depending on the context. He affirms his approach is compatible even with research under the auspices of organizations firmly a part of the international capitalist system:

Of course, international aid programs are a far cry from social revolution, and if taken in isolation their efforts will be minute; but then the role of applied social scientist, as I see it, is to act to the best of his ability in terms of his personal ethical commitments, within the institutional framework that he has chosen as his field of action (Stavenhagen 1971: 341).

Other versions of the PRA delimit the process of politicization. Rockhill's (n.d.) notion of qualitative research is effused with complacency for the status quo. In this case political activism is irrelevant and hence ignored. Qualitative research conceived in entirely humanistic terms is aimed at 'promoting individual and social capabilities' (Rockhill, n.d.).

Swantz (1977) defines the boundaries of the researcher's activism as:

Today the task is to bring these people (poor, middle-class peasants and government servants and politicians) into communication with one another within the present political structures and to use first their given rights to demand more say and become more aware of their situation. The people can be made conscious of the existing exploitative practices of self-interested chairmen, petty traders or government leaders. But this can be done within the framework of Tanzanian socialist practice and it does not at this point of historical development require a class war, in which energy would be spent in dividing instead of building up unity within the existing political structure in rural areas (Swantz 1977: 16).

Kassam's (1979) anthropocentric approach synthesizes humanism with national development goals. The researcher's political activism becomes defined by national objectives. This is exemplified in his study of literacy evaluation:

By using an anthropocentric approach, this little study is primarily designed to capture at least at part of that excitement of the Tanzanian literacy campaign by illuminating its impact on the most personal and qualitative aspects of people's development, a campaign which constitutes one of the most profoundly significant development endeavours in Tanzania (Kassam 1979: 1).

These examples strikingly illustrate the enormous range of political activism that can be accommodated by participatory research's basic approach. The reason why this political spectrum is possible is because the approach is subjective, and idealist. It is explicitly subjective being dependant upon the individual researcher's political views, sensitivity, knowledge and insight. The PRA rarely stipulates what the researcher's frame of reference is or should be beyond recognizing that the people he/she is studying are oppressed or have unrealized capabilities and potential. But within this stipulation implicitly resides the philosophy of idealism, which posits the humanness of the researcher as the basis for his/her identity with the oppressed, while the oppressed are viewed as having answers to their self-emancipation by virtue of being oppressed. In other words, oppression is morally romanticized. Furthermore, no criteria are offered for evaluation of what constitutes oppression.

Generally, advocates of the PRA acknowledge that the researcher will enter the field with pre-conceived ideas and expectations based on past experience, reading or even ignorance. As field work progresses his/her original ideas will be reinforced, altered or entirely rejected as a result of interaction with the people being studied. Never theorized and rarely even questioned are the class interests that the researcher objectively serves, and the false consciousness or ignorance of the oppressed who are blinded by ruling class ideologies or their own petty property interests, as in the case of the peasantry.

The PRA encourages entirely open-ended inter-subjectivity. What of course results is that the individual researcher's philosophical and theoretical biases with their attendant political implications become the basis for the incidental development of an ad-hoc methodology. The ad-hoc methodology develops as the product of the unconscious

assimilation of eclectic and often contradictory ideas and value judgements, generally pregnant with dominant class interests which in turn are operationalized in an arbitrary and haphazard fashion.

4. Methodology

It is important to note that there are an array of methodologies that can be consciously adopted which in turn result in a variety of analyses and hence arrive at differing conclusions and problem solutions. Methodologies are identifiable with particular historical class outlooks. This section includes a brief examination of some of the more common eclectic premises of the ad-hoc methodology associated with the PRA. These premises will be traced to particular philosophical traditions.

A. Definitions

For clarification it is necessary to begin with some definitions of terms used with reference to research.

Research is activity aimed at gathering and analyzing information for the production of new knowledge.

A *technique* is defined as a means of appropriating information, whereas an *approach* is defined as a mode of appropriating information.

A *methodology* is a much more comprehensive term. The means and mode of acquiring knowledge as well as the foundations of the researcher's perceptual and theoretical understanding are embodied in the term. The axis of any methodology is its conception of reality and causal effect which provides the foundation for the production and justification of new knowledge. The way a researcher relates to the people he is studying and the manner in which he gathers information and what he does with the information all follow from his particular conception of reality and causal effect. In other words, a methodology is the unity of a philosophy with a method of abstraction and method of investigation.

A *theoretical framework* is both a product and an essential adjunct to the methodology. The theoretical framework is composed of explicit concepts used as a basis for gathering, ordering and analysis of information.

A *problematic* is the particular focus of analysis within the confines of the theoretical framework. The problematic arises from the area of study and the nature of contradictions found therein.

B. Eclectic Premises of the PRA's Ad-hoc Methodology

Through specification of a researcher's methodology and theoretical framework, the researcher transcends his subjectivity. The researcher's work can then be easily identified with particular class outlooks, philosophical traditions and political tendencies.

The PRA can be primarily traced to the philosophical information of pragmatism. However, PRA's tendency towards eclectic absorption makes it vulnerable also to other often conflicting philosophies currently dominating the social sciences, especially idealism and empiricism.

The philosophy of pragmatism first formulated by Dewey is summarized by Oquist (1977: 10-17). The following brief description extracts the most salient points of Oquist's exposition.

Pragmatism posits knowledge as eventual rather than antecedent. Knowledge arises from human action. The production of knowledge is viewed as beginning with practical problems. The resolution of problems is guided by values. Values are defined as purposes guiding behaviour. Values are conceptualized as criteria for the judgement of external relations, which avoids the usual moral connotations involved when they are denoted as inner personal conditions. In the words of Dewey (1929: 247), a value statement is 'a judgement as to the importance and need of bringing a fact into existence; or if it is already there, of sustaining it in existence.'

Values are arrived at through affirmative judgement on conditions and results of experienced objects. Values are not regarded as certainties but rather as hypotheses of prospective questions. Ideas guide actions. Actions are undertaken to maximize desired values. As Oquist (1977: 14-15) explains:

The only goal of knowledge is the solution of problematic situations. Knowledge is not an end in itself. It is always a means to the end of 'control over values'. Ideas are simply acts to be performed. They are means rather than ends, they are also proximate relative means.

The different versions of the PRA discussed in Section III are firmly rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism as indicated by their

disregard for theoretical construction either before launching field work or while the study is in progress.

In addition, the PRA takes the pragmatic position that the relationship between theory and practice is produced by experimental practice. Practice is primary. Knowledge begins and ends with practice. As Oquist (1977: 15) explains:

Practice is where the problems that originate in research arise and where one must return for a final accounting of the validity of the knowledge one produces to solve the problematic situation.

The PRA is however logically inconsistent with pragmatism in some respects. Notably suspect is the PRA's adherence to a value judgement while all other ideas are considered operational and testable in relation to practice. The initiating and motivating premises throughout the participatory research process are the value judgements that the people being studied are oppressed or have unrealized potential. These value judgements cannot be discarded without jeopardizing the PRA.

As mentioned before, these value judgements and their moral imperative signify the idealist component of the PRA. Idealism is defined as a philosophical outlook which ignores material causation. Idealists embed social forces in the realm of ideas and trace history as a chronology of men and ideas instead of an unfolding picture of the development of forces of production and production relations. Participatory research clearly evidences idealism in its naive positing of participants (i.e. the researcher and the people being studied) and their interaction as capable of problem solutions at the level of ideas while ignoring or de-emphasizing wider context of the economy and objective social forces which could impinge or facilitate remedial social action.

All the versions of the PRA so far discussed exemplify elements of idealism. It is important to note that originally the PRA as it was first conceived by Freire had conflicting elements of idealist and materialist philosophy. The authors following Freire, possibly with the exception of the de Oliveiras, are inclined to increasingly stronger idealism. However, even in the case of Freire notions of materialist causation seem to be incidental to a far more basic acceptance of idealist causation. Even though Freire writes about a dialectic between the superstructure (ideology) and the infrastructure defined as that 'created in the relations by which the work of man transforms

the world' (Freire 1974: 58), these notions are not an integral part of 'conscientization'. Conscientization remains an individualistic and spiritual experience despite the background of revolutionary activism in which it is situated. The following passage from Freire (1974) is effused with humanistic idealism:

Che Guevara is an example of the unceasing witness revolutionary leadership gives to dialogue with the people. The more we study his work the more we perceive his conviction that anyone who wants to become a true revolutionary must be in communion with the people. Guevara did not hesitate to recognize the capacity to love as an indispensable condition for authentic revolutionaries. While he constantly noted the failure of the peasants to participate in the guerrilla movement, his references to them in the Bolivian Diary did not express disaffection. He never lost hope of ultimately being able to count on their participation.

In citing Guevara and his witness as a guerilla, we do not mean to say that revolutionaries elsewhere are obliged to repeat the same witness. What is essential is that they strive to achieve communion with the people accessible only to those with a Utopian vision, in the sense referred to in this essay is one of the fundamental characteristics of cultural action for freedom. Authentic communion implies communication between men, mediated by the world. Only praxis in the context of communion makes conscientization a viable project. Conscientization is a joint project in that it takes place in a man among other men, men united by their action and by their reflection upon that action and upon the world. Thus men together achieve the state of perceptive clarity which Godman calls the maximum of potential consciousness beyond real consciousness (Freire 1974: 74-75).

Idealism which ignores the objective class interests of the researcher as well as the oppressed themselves can simply posit liberation as an attitude of mind. The *oppressed* and the researcher somehow transcend their classes and mutually partake in a spiritual *communion* whose basis is a common humanity. While the experience may provide romantic passages for the researcher's future book, it leaves the *oppressed* in much the same state of affairs.

The PRA's absorption of empiricist elements is possible only at the expense of its pragmatic foundation. Empiricists regard acts as

value-free and based upon neutral observation of reality. In opposition, pragmatists bring the facts into existence on the basis of value judgements. But pragmatism nevertheless bears similarity to empiricism in the sense that both philosophies take facts as unproblematic. Empiricists claim to derive facts directly from reality. Pragmatists, on the other hand, derive facts from problematic situations, i.e. only the situations are considered problematic not the facts. Both philosophical traditions mystify the nature of facts.

Facts are actually never given even when they may be viewed as conditional on a specified situation, as in pragmatism. Facts are always problematic. In other words, facts are always theoretical interpretations of empirical conditions.

As facts are being observed by the researcher and especially after they are recorded, they are already implicitly or explicitly a part of the theoretical constructs of the researcher. The categories in which information is either unconsciously perceived or consciously collected orders reality. For example, a researcher gathering information on peasants' annual monetary incomes for a particular area would ultimately be able to present a picture of social stratification based on his *facts*. Another researcher gathering information in the same geographical area collects data on ownership of means of production: land, ploughs, stock, etc. On the basis of his *facts* an entirely different picture of much greater social differentiation emerges. His *facts* reveal that there are landed property owners with wealth tied up in fixed capital (a phenomenon which would not have become evident using the annual monetary income category of the first researcher) versus landless rural proletariat who are forced to sell their labour power for a wage.

Neither researcher has distorted his respective facts. But the facts are different for the same reality, based on differing theoretical frames of reference. Why the frames of reference and hence the facts differ has to be understood in relation to the developing class struggle and the role the researcher objectively plays in the class struggle.

The PRA, as was explained before, aims at social change but there is no surety the net result will be revolutionary, reformist or even reactionary change. The PRA's stipulation that the researcher be sincerely interested and sympathetic to the people he/she is studying is nothing more than romantic idealism which provides little guarantee one way or the other. What is far more significant is that the inherent eclecticism of the PRA gives rise to an ad-hoc methodology

which flexibly allows various political versions of the PRA to emerge. The PRA researcher's stated intention to facilitate progressive social change for the oppressed is realizable only to the extent that the political implications of his specific ad-hoc version of the PRA coincide with the objective interests of the oppressed. If and when progressive social change occurs it is never accountable to the PRA, but rather is attributable to fortuitous subjective factors on the part of the individual researcher or the 'oppressed' being studied.

5. The Institutionalization of the PRA

There is one final consideration to be made in this paper related to the theme of the politics of research. It is necessary to take note that each and every social researcher who adopts the PRA and practices it, whether discriminately or indiscriminately with regard to methodology, contributes to the institutionalization of the PRA both in a professional sense vis-à-vis the social sciences and more importantly in a political sense vis-à-vis development efforts in the Third World.

What does institutionalization imply in the world of social science and social development at large today? It is perhaps too early to say. The PRA has not congealed into any one political tendency and perhaps given its eclectic nature it never will, but rather will take on different political complexions in response to different national, regional and local contexts.

Nicholaus (1972: 52) stated that there is only one general *sociological law*, namely 'that the oppressors research the oppressed'. Clearly the PRA rejects this, and embraces the belief that social commitment can invalidate the *sociological law*. However, there is a need to be alert to two issues regarding the use of PRA in social research. These issues are related to the fact that even within the context of PRA tenets, the PRA could very easily degenerate into *social espionage* in the Third World, despite the best intentions and commitment towards those being studied on the part of the PRA researcher.

Firstly, this is possible because the PRA social researcher rarely escapes being in a position of paid employment or financial sponsorship by one or another agencies with vested interests in Third World development. Under these circumstances the PRA researcher is rarely given complete discretion to carry on research in the manner he/she sees fit, regarding content, tempo etc. Thus the inter-subjectivity of the PRA portrayed as a dual relationship between the researcher and

the oppressed is actually three-fold. There is almost always a third party, the sponsorship agency, who may remain a shadow, but nevertheless makes its presence felt. This third party may intervene in various ways, e.g. by demanding practical results of a certain sort at a certain time or project documentation at awkward moments etc. Thus the results generated by the PRA project can ultimately become a programmed product of the sponsoring agency. The question that all researchers committed to the tenets of the PRA would have to ask themselves is: 'what are the interests of the sponsoring agency?' The sponsoring agency may be benevolent, patronizing, domineering or dangerously counter-reform and reactionary. Almost all PRA projects are thus bounded by the expectations and intentions of a sponsoring agency.

Secondly, any output of a PRA project whether it be the form of material reform or even just project documentation once released outside the boundaries of the inter-subjective relationship of the participants (i.e. the researcher and those studied) will have social repercussions that are beyond their control. If the commitment upon which the PRA is premised is to have any meaning, then the researcher in conjunction with those studied would have to anticipate the possible effects on the PRA project. In the more materialist conceptions of the PRA, depending on their political interpretations of social forces, participants would have to consider the possible impact on progressive struggles in the wider community. Of course, as stated above, the amount of control the participants have within their power even regarding the release of the material and/or ideological products they generate is limited. However, to the extent that control is possible, for the sake of conformity to the principle of social commitment, control would have to be exercised in a responsible manner.

References

- Dewey, J., 1929: *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London.
- de Oliveira, R.D. and de Oliveira, M.D., 1975: *The Militant Observer: A Sociological Alternative*, IDAC document.
- Fals Borda, Orlando, 1977: 'For Praxis: The Problem of How to Investigate Reality in Order to Transform It', a paper presented at the Cartagena Symposium on Action Research and Scientific Analysis, Colombia.
- Freilich, M., 1970: *Marginal Natives: Anthropologists at Work*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York.

- Freire P., 1972: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Sheed and Ward, London.
- Freire P., 1974: *Cultural Action for Freedom*, Penguin Education, Middlesex.
- Kassam, Y.O., 1977: *The Voices of New Literates from Tanzania*, Department of Education mimeo, University of Dar es Salaam.
- Nicholaus, M. 1972: 'The Professional Organization of Sociology; A View from Below', in Blackburn, R. (ed.), *Ideology in Social Science*, Fontana Collins, Suffolk.
- Oquist, P., 1977: *The Epistemology of Action Research*, Asociacion Internacional de Sociologia Comte Organizador del Simposio, Colombia.
- Rockhill, K., n.d.: *The Uses of Qualitative Research in Adult Education to 'Enlighten, Enoble and Enable'*, U.C.L.A. Faculty of Arts and Social Science mimeo, University of Dar es Salaam.
- Stavenhagen, R., 1971: 'Decolonializing Applied Social Sciences', *Human Organization*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Winter.
- Swantz, M.L., 1977: 'Bagarnoyo Research Project "Jipemoyo": Introduction to Its General Aim and Approach', *Development and Culture Research*, Jipemoyo No. 1, Ministry of National Culture and Youth, Tanzania.

* * *

Editor's Note

From Clarity to Anarchy: Participatory Research Approach*

(A critique of *'The Methodology of the Participatory Research Approach'* by Deborah Bryceson et al.)

This paper presents conceptual arguments to delineate the methodology of the participatory research approach (PRA). After presenting an excellent analysis of the social and professional contexts of the origin of PRA, the authors describe various points of view which are broadly subsumed under PRA. The degree of the researcher's political activism is seen as the main dimension on which these various points of view differ.

There is a major fallacy in the argument presented by the authors that the wide range of political activism supported under PRA leads

*This article was earlier published in Kassam, Yusuf and Mustafa, Kemal (1982), *Participatory Research, An Emerging Alternative Methodology in Social Science Research*, PRIA, New Delhi, pp. 83-6.

to naive idealism on the one hand and methodological ad-hocism on the other. First, let us be clear that PRA is not an invention of the seventies, by a group of dedicated social science researchers. What is new is the label 'participatory research', not the approach. People engaged in mobilizing and organizing the rural poor in India, and other Third World countries, for example, through their very concrete actions, demonstrating all the aspects of PRA we have conceptualized recently. Many of them, those engaged in PRA today, do not know the label, and some of them even shy away from it.

Second, PRA can be looked at from two contrasting starting points. It can be approached from the point of view of the activist struggling in the field. For an activist, PRA, by very definition, entails political activism in the field. The other way of looking at PRA is our own familiar professional researcher's point of view. For us researchers, direct political activism may appear to hurt the process of knowledge generation. Moreover, we have our own constraints of institutional membership. We may not be free to commit ourselves to direct political action. Is it possible to reconcile these two points of view? And if yes, the PRA will necessarily have the range of political activism in its fold, as described by the authors. If not, then PRA will become the future discipline of academic professional researchers and join hands with action-research and participant-observation in the classrooms. This is an important issue which has implications beyond the methodology of PRA.

To the extent that we define the origins of PRA in the social and developmental context of the Third World countries, we cannot argue for the separation of PRA from the increasing demands of participatory social action. Consequently, we cannot ignore the activists' points of view. And, that implies that the major challenge for PRA is to accommodate and integrate these two points of view. Till that happens (and if it is possible and desirable), PRA may have to continue reflecting the wide range of political activism and choices of methodology.

The second aspect of this paper which has methodological implications, relates to the issue of subjectivity. The authors highlight the argument that PRA reflects open-ended inter-subjectivity and eclectic approach. They feel that this eclectic orientation is embedded in the philosophy of pragmatism. According to the authors, such an orientation leads to methodological ad-hocism. In order to understand the subjective and eclectic aspects of PRA, we have to examine the basic

difference between the classical research approach (CRA) and PRA. One of the hallmarks of the classical research approach is its clarity and precision in methodology. Moreover, this methodology of CRA is based on the control of external, spurious influences and the subjectivity of the researcher. This implies that CRA encourages the thinking aspect of the researcher; and, it attempts to reduce the feelings of and actions by the researcher which are believed to contaminate the research.

This rigid delimitation of thinking as the only mode of inquiry is the foundation of CRA. Its proponents have advocated this methodology and its teachers have presented philosophical justifications for thinking as the only valid and legitimate mode of knowing and inquiry. However, human beings are somewhat different from machines. They feel and act, as well as think. As feeling, thinking and acting individuals, they not only learn but also contribute to others learning. To the extent that CRA is limited to the thinking mode of inquiry, it truncates the essential humanity of the researcher and makes unrealistic demands on him/her as a researcher. PRA, on the other hand, accepts feeling and acting as equally important modes of knowing as thinking. The entire existentialist philosophy supports feeling as a valid mode of knowing; and the theoretical underpinnings of action-research provide the basis for acting as a legitimate mode of knowing.

If we recognize that PRA is a holistic approach to inquiry and knowledge-generation, with feeling, thinking and acting as independent and correlated modes of inquiry, we begin to understand the apparent eclecticism and ad-hocism of the PRA. To the extent that PRA opens up many more modes of inquiry as opposed to the narrow, limited, unimodal approach of classical research, it is inevitable that the methodological options thrown open by PRA will appear to be unruly, anarchic and ad-hoc to those of us who are schooled in the neat, well-defined and pre-set methodology of CRA. Moreover, the eclectic orientation of PRA is a reflection of not only the wide range of modes of inquiry as described above, but also the variety of contexts, researchers and issues presently being encompassed by PRA. Different researchers with different previous experiences are engaged in PRA in different settings. This variety is so overwhelming to us who are used to CRA, that we almost label it ad-hoc and open-ended.

The third aspect of this paper, which has attracted me is the notion of idealism in PRA. The authors argue that PRA implies value

judgements and moral imperative which reflects the idealist component of PRA. Moreover, they maintain that such idealism tends to overlook material causation. The paper further describes how this idealism leads to naive positing of participants, whereby objective socio-economic conditions as causes for problems and their solutions are ignored. I tend to agree with the authors partly. It is conceivable that the PRA can degenerate into a subjective, local and superficial analysis of the social reality. It is possible that the researcher places entire emphasis on the subjective experiences of the participants in developing an understanding of reality. In my own field experience, I have found that the small, poor farmer is unaware of the systemic causes of his poverty and impoverishment. If I agree with him blindly, the only plausible explanation for his poverty is his own stupidity, ignorance and incompetence. However, this will be my naivete as well as a distortion of PRA. One salient methodological element of PRA is the joint analysis performed by the people as well as the researcher. The researcher develops his/her own analysis of reality (and that includes objective systemic conditions) just as the people have their own subjective analysis of reality. These two are then brought into active interaction whereby a joint analysis of reality develops. Without this joint analysis, the methodology of PRA is incomplete. And having engaged in this process of joint analysis, the researcher can avoid the pitfalls presented in this paper. Moreover, it is this element of joint analysis in PRA that brings out the key learning for the participants.

In sum, therefore, it is useful to underscore the anarchic appearance of PRA. It appears anarchic because it is a major departure from our present modes of conceptualization of the research process. It seems anarchic because it is pregnant with unmanageable variety. And it just may be anarchic because it is ambiguous, unclear and incomprehensible.

Ambiguities in Participatory Research*

L. DAVID BROWN

The manifold potentials of participatory research are amply illustrated by earlier chapters in this book, and this chapter will not try to add to that catalogue. I will focus instead on 'ambiguities' in participatory research—points at which disagreement and controversy have rumbled in the past and may be expected to erupt again in the future. Discussions of these issues have often generated more heat than light. But I believe such controversial areas are potential crucibles of new insight, understandings and action. Identifying, confronting, and transcending ambiguities and contradictions in present practice is a path to creating methods of inquiry and action beyond our present rudimentary arts we now have. So I focus here on ambiguities to pose issues for the future rather than list resolutions from the past.

I will discuss ambiguities in participatory research from the perspective of a researcher for two reasons. First, I am myself a researcher, often a participatory researcher, to be sure, but nonetheless socialized and experienced as a social scientist. Second, most participants have little time for reading books about research methods and probably even less time for writing them. This is not to say that participant perspectives on participatory research would not be valuable, but those perspectives will not be strongly represented in this chapter.

I have identified four areas of ambiguity and controversy that seem important in participatory research. Those areas include: (i) the nature of participatory research objectives, (2) the relation between participants and researchers, (3) the choice of methods and technologies, and (4) the outcomes of participatory research activities.

*This article was earlier published in: Hall, Budd, Gillette, Arthur and Tandon, Rajesh (1982) *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly Participatory Research in Development*, PRIA, New Delhi, pp 203–9.

Objectives: Knowledge, Awareness, or Social Change?

What objectives should participatory research pursue? There are several alternatives or combinations of alternatives possible. For example, a traditional objective of research has been increased knowledge, which enables explanation of events and phenomena previously poorly understood. Research designed to develop abstract knowledge is centrally concerned with issues of validity and relations to the larger scientific context. Research may also focus on the objective of increased awareness, so that researchers and participants recognize and engage more fully with the realities of their situations. Research activity that centres on awareness is particularly concerned with the personal relevance of issues and actions. A third possible objective for participatory research is social change based on the development of new information and understanding. Researchers concerned with social change attend particularly to issues such as distributions of power and wealth or the nature of social justice. Different research objectives imply quite different researcher concerns and orientations.

The objectives of participatory research remain ambiguous. Different investigators adopt different emphases and combinations of knowledge, awareness, social change and other objectives. Most accept enhanced participant and researcher awareness as an important objective. Some explicitly promote social change (e.g., Freire, the de Oliveiras); others implicitly advocate social change objectives. Some explicitly reject the abstract understanding of traditional research as a useful objective (e.g., Freire); others implicitly reject that objective or accept it only in combination with others. Ambiguity about objectives may be further complicated by competing theoretical and ideological perspectives. Investigators may agree on the need for social change but propose very different analyses and means to that end.

How should ambiguities about the objectives of participatory research be handled? I do not believe that dogmatic prescription of 'correct' objectives is particularly desirable, even if it were possible at this point. The freedom to pursue multiple objectives and to adapt objectives to the situation at hand can foster cross-fertilization and creative mixtures that contribute to several ostensibly incompatible objectives.

But I also think it is important for participatory researchers, to articulate as clearly as possible the objectives they pursue. Unclear objectives hamper development of appropriate approaches to inquiry, and they allow participants and researchers to ignore tensions and

contradictions that merit exploration. Diverse but clearly articulated objectives may galvanize researchers and participants to create the new strategies for inquiry and action we desperately need. Ambiguity about the objectives of participatory research in general provides space and tension for creativity. Clarity about the objectives of specific participatory research projects mobilizes researchers and participants to solve the resulting dilemmas and contradictions.

The Roles of Participants and Researchers

'Researchers' and 'participants' may negotiate a variety of roles with each other in the course of a participatory research project. The role definitions that emerge greatly affect the outcomes of the project. One pitfall in negotiating participant and researcher roles is overemphasizing differences. The differences between participant and researcher roles are made extremely clear, and similarities between them are accorded little recognition. In laboratory experiments on human behaviour, for example, the roles of researcher and subject differ greatly in power, expertise, and autonomy, with the experimenter dominant in the situation. Participatory researchers are typically wary of dominating participants (e.g., Le Brun, Colletta), but the potential always exists. Roles that overemphasize differences hinder effective use of resources from both parties by encouraging one party to surrender responsibility to the other.

Another pitfall is overemphasizing similarities. Differences between parties are not recognized, and researchers and participants act as if they are equal in all respects. Participatory research sometimes suffers from role definitions that deny the differences between parties, and so hamper learning from each other. Researchers who insist on being 'just another participant' may be as ineffectual as researchers who cannot step out of the laboratory experimenter role.

I think ambiguities about researcher and participant roles are best resolved in negotiations which recognize both similarities and differences. Similarities provide a foundation for communication and trust; differences offer possibilities for mutual learning and development. Researchers often have class backgrounds, educational and occupational experiences, and personal concerns very different from those of participants. Roles that distort the parties' similarities or differences reduce the flow of valid information between them and reinforce stereotyped interactions. The development of researcher and

participant roles that permit two-way influence may take time and effort (e.g., Swantz, Tandon, et al.), but the rewards may be substantial in terms of mutual understanding and joint action.

In some circumstances the differences between researchers and participants may create serious conflicts. Draper, for example, reports disagreement that resulted in the researcher consciously subordinating his interests to those of the participants. In other circumstances, cooperation may be impossible. When researchers sympathetic to oppressed peoples seek information from elites, participatory research methods may produce little useful information. Such circumstances may require adversarial research strategies and tactics that assume fundamental conflict between the parties (see the de Oliveiras). Clarifying the different roles of researchers and participants may indicate appropriate strategies and tactics as well as create relationships for productive discussion.

The Choice of Methods and Technologies

The methods appropriate to a given participatory research project depend in part on its objectives. When the objectives include contributions to abstract knowledge, the methods of social science may be appropriate; when personal awareness is an objective, methods from the field of education may be useful. When social change is desired, technologies from political reform and revolution may be needed. Projects with mixed objectives may require methodological syntheses across different traditions.

Several authors have largely rejected the methods of 'traditional' social science research. Tandon, Halland Pilsworth and Ruddock have extensively critiqued the frailties of many social science technologies. On the other hand, some authors have noted the efficacy of those methods for maintaining the status quo and in serving the interests of elites (e.g., Freire, the de Oliveiras). If traditional research methods contribute to the hegemony of the present elite, can participatory researchers afford to ignore those methods entirely? It seems to me that we should keep the door open to social science research technologies for two reasons: (1) to neutralize their contributions to an undesired status quo, and (2) to utilize them where possible for participatory research objectives. Some elements of survey research methodology, for example, can be adapted for use in participatory

research projects and other social science methods may also be suitably altered to fit participatory research assumptions.

More generally, I believe the lack of an 'established' method and technology for participatory research encourages widespread borrowing and invention from many traditions. Participatory research may define itself in distinction to other social science traditions. But I think that continuing ambiguity about the methodology of participatory research is desirable. Participatory researchers can and should draw on social science, education, political movements, and any other activities that offer methods relevant to project objectives. It is the syntheses that emerge from this borrowing that will simultaneously vitalize participatory research and in turn enrich donor traditions.

The Outcomes of Participatory Research

There is inevitably ambiguity about the consequences of a participatory research project, both in terms of short-term events and in terms of long-term consequences. These ambiguities flow from the interaction between researchers and participants, and from the interaction between research project and the larger context within which it is embedded.

The events and activities of a participatory research project are by definition under the joint control of researchers and participants, in contrast to the preplanned and largely research-controlled events of laboratory experiments or survey research. Joint control makes it difficult for either party to predict project events before researchers and participants have negotiated their roles and their plans for the project. In Colletta's Indonesian experience, for example, the researchers found that their definition of 'participation' was inconsistent with the local culture, and complex negotiations were needed to identify the 'participants' who could join the researchers. The process of participatory research, in short, creates ambiguities about project definition and outcomes very early in its existence.

In the longer term, since participatory research often influences the behaviour of participants, the project is likely to be influenced by difficult-to-predict responses from the larger context. Vio first describes the success of the Talco Peasant School in educating poor Chileans and then points out that researchers and peasants from the School were imprisoned after the overthrow of the Allende regime. Participatory research projects that mobilize the oppressed or other-

wise redistribute power are never riskless enterprises. But researchers and participants who are not alert to the possibilities of external intervention may set themselves up for otherwise avoidable disasters. Participatory research that produces new behaviour contains seeds for project growth or destruction, and the blooming of those possibilities depends in part on the alertness of researchers to ambiguity about project outcomes.

Conclusions

I have suggested four critical areas of ambiguity for participatory research. Ambiguity about objectives offers freedom to innovate but calls for clarity about goals of particular projects. Ambiguity about the roles of participants and researchers poses the risk of reinforcing undesirable stereotypes, but offers opportunities for mutual learning. Ambiguity about methods opens a bewildering array of options but offers opportunities for invention and synthesis across many traditions. Ambiguity about outcomes offers potential for catastrophe or triumph.

Participatory research is a concept of inquiry whose time has come. The diversity of perspectives and the variety of experiences reported in this volume bear witness to the worldwide relevance of the concept. The ambiguities I have discussed simultaneously present threats and opportunities, and resolving those ambiguities is the essential challenge to researchers and participants.

Social Transformation and Participatory Research*

RAJESH TANDON

Roots

The term 'participatory research' has now been in existence for about 15 years. It began with the practice of adult educators in the countries of the South Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These adult educators were confronting the contradictions between their philosophy of adult education and their practice of research methodology. Their philosophy of adult education placed learners in the centre and focused on learners' control over their learning process. The major element of this philosophy is based on the premise that adults are capable. They are capable of learning, of changing, of acting, and of transforming the world. It is this essential faith in people as an integral part of the philosophy of adult education that was being contradicted through the adult educators' training as professional researchers. When these adult educators began to examine the problems related to the reality in which they were situating their practice of adult education, when they began to evaluate the impact of their adult education efforts, and when they began to study the learning process of adults, they realized their research methodology was alien to the adult learners and unilaterally controlled by these adult educators as researchers treating their learners as objects of manipulation in the research process.

The social science research methodology became an elitist and dominant methodology after the Second World War. The growing importance of development and debate on various models of the dominant method, in the newly independent countries of the South witnessed a growing use of this research methodology in identifying

*This article was earlier published in *Convergence*, Volume XXI, November 2 & 3, 1988, pp. 5-15.

and determining the agenda of development by the ruling cities of these new nation-states. Professionally trained researchers were being produced by the emerging 'factories' of knowledge production to carry out research on problems of poverty, development and growth. The research methodology they learned, imbibed and practiced, had borrowed heavily from the natural sciences and was based on myths of neutrality, objectivity and scientificism. Under the guise of these tenets of natural science research methodology, the social science research methodology became heavily dependent on behaviourism and empiricism as the basic defining paradigm of research. Professionally trained adult educators were no exception to this historical trend.

Recovery

It is this critique of the classical research methodology which led to the coining of the phrase 'participatory research' as an alternative research methodology. The further pursuit of those involved in the practice of participatory research and its theoretical elaborations led to several discoveries worldwide. First, we discovered that the theoretical underpinnings of participatory research are much deeper than classical research methodology. We discovered that participatory research is a methodology of alternative systems of knowledge production that has been in existence since the very beginning of the human race. It is a knowledge production system of ordinary people, those who are deprived, oppressed and underprivileged. Historically, this system has been unrecognized, neglected and delegitimized. We discovered that elite control over knowledge and the production of knowledge was the dominant system in much of human history. This dominant system tended to serve the interests of the elites in perpetuating the status quo.

It was this recognition which began a widespread search in different regions and continents to examine the historical contexts of the origins of participatory research. We discovered its links with the struggles of people over long periods of history in our cultures, countries and continents. We saw that control over knowledge and over the system of production of knowledge has been traditionally used as one of the ways to control poor and oppressed people. Control over knowledge production systems, dissemination and use of knowledge, and access to knowledge historically have been used in different

societies to continue the systems of domination of the few against the many, to preserve the status quo and to undermine the forces of social transformation. In the contemporary context, the control over all aspects of knowledge has become a major source of control over ordinary people, their lives and their minds.

However, throughout history, popular systems of knowledge and an alternative system of knowledge production have existed parallel to the dominant system. This has been the system of producing knowledge for the purposes of the daily survival of poor and deprived people. In the contemporary context, participatory research is the methodology of this alternative, popular system of knowledge production.

Participatory research emphasizes the use of knowledge as one of the major bases for power and control in our societies. It has enormous potential as a major contributor in transforming the struggles of poor and deprived people.

Alternative Systems of Knowledge

When we examined the purposes of knowledge production, also involved in its production, the ways of producing knowledge and the resources needed, we saw major differences between the dominant systems of knowledge production and participatory research. The dominant system of knowledge describes its purpose (answer to the question 'For what?') as the pursuit of truth. This appears as an objective truth; though in practice it is a subjective representation and interpretation of reality. In contrast, alternative systems of knowledge production are involved in answering questions of daily survival and providing insights into the daily struggle for life and living of ordinary people in struggle. The methodology of dominant systems of knowledge production is the classical social science research methodology (based on empiricist and behaviourist traditions) which emphasizes the concepts of neutrality, objectivity, distance from the subjects and methods of data collection which exercise unilateral control over the process of inquiry.

In contrast, participatory research methodology as a representation of an alternative system of knowledge production explodes the myth of neutrality and objectivity and emphasizes the principles of subjectivity, involvement, insertion and consensual validation in order to develop its methods of data collection and analysis.

The dominant system currently and historically recommends the use of trained and exclusive personnel as the sole pursuers of knowledge production. In contemporary terms, these are the trained professionals and researchers, like their historical counterparts of the Brahminical origin. In contrast, participatory research attempts to present people as researchers themselves in pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily struggle and survival. It recognizes the need for an occasional special input of expertise and contribution of certain skills, but it rejects the myth of professionally trained experts as the only legitimate pursuers of knowledge.

The resources for the production of knowledge also differ. In the dominant system resources came from the elites themselves, be they kings, rulers or ruling classes. In their contemporary manifestation, these resources come from the state and its agencies, and from national and multinational corporations, foundations and other such elite institutions. In contrast, the resources for alternative systems of knowledge production, have been generated by the people themselves. In some cases in recent times, however, some participatory research efforts have received support from the institutions of apparent elite control, though much of the grassroots practice of participatory research continues to be supported by the people themselves.

It is this fundamental difference in the two systems of knowledge production which becomes the context for further elaboration of the theory and practice of participatory research.

Knowledge Enterprise

In uncovering the origins of participatory research, it becomes important to analyze the knowledge enterprises in contemporary societies. The twentieth century has seen the emergence of the dominant system's production, use and dissemination of knowledge as a major modern enterprise. In some so-called developed countries of the world like the United States, the knowledge industry is contributing to close to half the gross national product. In some of the so-called developing countries of the South, this is increasingly becoming a major enterprise. The knowledge industry now has specialists, experts, projects, grants, research assistants, statisticians—a whole range of people specially trained for a narrow part of the knowledge industry.

With the growth of literacy in the early part of the twentieth century in the countries of the North, knowledge systems use the

printed word as a dominant form of representing knowledge. Hence, over the decades, it has been equated with knowledge. With the increasing specialization of the knowledge industry, special disciplines, journals, guilds of editors and experts, emerged subtly yet powerfully regulating the knowledge industry. Financed by the state, corporations and other elite interests in society, the knowledge industry determined what society called 'legitimate knowledge' and 'subjective opinion'.

With the rise of specialization on the one hand, and the cult of expertise on the other, two important social processes were set in motion in different societies at different points in time during the last few decades. The first major process was the dismissal of popular knowledge and the alternative system of knowledge production. With the growth of specialization and increasing centralization of the knowledge industry, only a particular mode of knowledge production recommended and pursued by the dominant systems of knowledge production was accepted as the legitimate mode of knowledge production.

The second and related process which occurred over this period was the undermining of the capacities of ordinary people to engage in serious inquiry about problems and issues of daily concern to them. On the one hand, the increasing organization of the knowledge industry began to produce its own agents—the professionally trained researchers, who alone were seen as legitimate producers of knowledge; and on the other, it created a widespread notion that ordinary people lacked the capacities and the tools for production of knowledge and that it took extraordinary training in elite academic institutions to be able to acquire the competencies needed to produce the knowledge.

The second half of the twentieth century has seen the powerful use of the media of mass communication to change and influence the opinions, attitudes and values of people in a given society. The growing investment in communication technology in recent decades has further strengthened these trends. The cutting-edge research and development efforts of new communication and information technology in the North, and growing fascination with and deployment of it in the South, has led to enormous power in the hands of ruling elites due to the essentially centralizing and controlling nature of this technology. One of its major uses has been to control the minds of people, not merely the minds of the middle classes but also the minds of

the poor and the oppressed. In fact, this control has been so successfully exercised in some societies that poor and oppressed people have been made to believe in the inevitability of socio-economic inequalities in their societies. Their expectation is to continue in that lowest socio-economic strata of society. Even ordinary people began to believe that they lacked the capacities, the intellect and the competence to produce their knowledge for solving their own problems their daily struggles and survival.

The rise of the knowledge industry in the twentieth century has narrowed and limited epistemological options. Historically, knowing was a comprehensive integrated human process. Earlier epistemological positions described the broad modes of knowing: thinking, feeling and acting. It was believed that humans knew about social phenomena by the use of their rational self through the processes of thinking and analyzing. It was also believed that inquiry and the process of knowing were pursued through feeling the emotional self of human beings. In fact, the phenomenological writings seemed to support feeling as an important mode of knowing. Acting was also a legitimate and important mode of knowing about a given situation. Early writing on action research seemed to support this epistemological position.

The rise of the knowledge industry, however, with increasing specialization and the cult of expertise, led to the dismissal of feeling and acting as legitimate modes of knowing. The narrow definition of epistemology became a rational pursuit and not an emotional and action pursuit. In fact, the academics—professional producers of knowledge, were given the label of ‘thinkers’.

Thus the narrowing definition of epistemology and the dismissal of feeling and acting as important and legitimate modes of knowing a given reality, found support in the increasing forces of division of labour between the mental and the manual. The new class of intellectuals thought of themselves as thinkers, while the rest of the ordinary people were left out. The gulf between theory and practice widened. All human pursuit, in particular, development actions, became applications of theoretical principles, derived through abstract manipulation of symbols and constructs by these professionally trained, certified and male agents of the dominant system of knowledge production. The production of knowledge and understanding from the daily practice of the people was dismissed, just as feeling and acting were as epistemological modes.

The close linkage established between thinking and writing in this century led also to the undermining of traditional and popular forms of knowledge dissemination. The oral tradition and the use of art and culture in its various forms and manifestations as the major ways of sharing and understanding knowledge produced through the alternate system were cast aside. The dominant system instead emphasized the written and printed words, both for the certification of those who wanted to be legitimate knowledge producers and for the rest of the society. Thus papers, books, journals, seminars and conferences became the only legitimate modes of dissemination of knowledge. In fact, they became so dominant in certain societies that they often became confused with knowledge per se.

Contemporary Contribution of Participatory Research

It is in this historical context within the framework of the political economy of knowledge and knowledge production that we have to examine and explore the contributions of participatory research.

1. Valuing People's Knowledge

In the face of continuing delegitimizing of people's knowledge and alternative systems of knowledge production, a major contribution of participatory research is to strengthen the forces of relegitimizing people's knowledge. Counter forces must be established to demonstrate that popular knowledge and alternative systems of knowledge production continue to be practiced by the poor in support of their daily struggle and survival. One of its major contributions, for example, is the rediscovery of traditional health practices as important ways of sustaining health in a community. Other areas include traditional agricultural practices, systems of irrigation and water management, protection of forests and other natural resources. However, it has to be recognized that these alternative forces continue to face the growing onslaught unleashed from the dominant system of knowledge production.

2. Refining Capacities

The second major contribution of participatory research has been the recapturing and refining of ordinary people's capacities in conducting their own research. This entails enhancing their self-confidence in their capacities in order for them to analyze their situation and to develop solutions; in doing so the analytical and critical facilities of

ordinary people which have been undermined and undervalued can be reinstated.

3. Appropriating Knowledge

A third major contribution of participatory research is the assistance it provides to primary people to appropriate the knowledge processed by the primary system. In contemporary societies the dominant system produces knowledge about various socio-economic phenomena and processes, in particular about the conditions of the poor. Participatory research has assisted the poor and their organizations in acquiring, incorporating, appropriating and reinterpreting the knowledge produced by the dominant system for their own use.

4. People's Perspective

The fourth contribution of participatory research has been the development of knowledge that is relevant to ordinary people in struggle. Participatory research has uncovered pertinent questions like alienation from the land and other natural resources, the continued struggle to resist the forces of domination—questions which are not the focus of inquiry in the dominant system of knowledge production. These are questions that derived from the perspective of the ordinary people themselves.

5. Liberating the Minds

And finally, participatory research has contributed to the forces of liberating the minds of the poor and the oppressed by helping them reflect on their situation, regain their capacities to analyze and critically examine their reality, and to reject the continued domination and hegemony of the elite and the ruling classes. By encouraging critical reflection, questioning and the continuous pursuit of inquiry, participatory research liberates the minds of the poor and the oppressed, and challenges dominant forces.

Continuities and Ambiguities

The early writings on participatory research began to emerge in the late '70s. Many of these writings including case studies, critiques, and theoretical reflections, were an attempt to document the early formulations and theorizing on participatory research to the world at large, albeit in the form of the printed word. These initial writings served the twin purposes of inviting other like-minded practitioners

of participatory research to join them in the nascent movement on the one hand, and to pose tentative challenges to the promoters of the dominant system of knowledge production on the other.

The early documents thus became the focus of great attention, both by the protagonists and the antagonists. The conceptual, practical, epistemological and methodological critiques of participatory research pointed out several ambiguities in theory and inconsistencies in practice. A decade later, with the development of practice and the refining of theory, participatory researchers can respond to these ambiguities and inconsistencies.

Four categories of ambiguities were highlighted in the writings on participatory research about a decade ago. These ambiguities related to the objectives of participatory research, the role of the researchers and the participants, the methods of research, and the results of research.

The primary objective of participatory research is the production of knowledge and encouraging the poor and oppressed, and those who work with them, to generate their own knowledge, control their knowledge and control the means of production of knowledge. Awareness as an educational process is a product of this process of participatory research. In pursuing knowledge, the ordinary people experience an educational process and as a result become aware of forces that control them and delegitimize their experiences and competencies. But awareness as an educational experience is not the primary objective. Social change has never been a direct outcome of participatory research and therefore it cannot be construed as one of its objectives. Social transformation requires several types of intervention: organizing, mobilizing, struggle, knowledge (control over knowledge, control over means of production of knowledge, appropriating knowledge produced by the dominant system). Participatory research can make a small but important contribution to the social change process but it cannot lead directly to social transformation.

The second ambiguity is related to the question of the roles of researchers and participants. This ambiguity arises out of those of us who have been products of the elite system of knowledge production, who have rejected that system, and who are trying to find relevance for ourselves in the context of the alternative system. We are called researchers. For ordinary people in participatory research, the distinction between the researcher and the participant is irrelevant—they are both. For us, it becomes difficult to behave as participants in the

ongoing social realities of the poor and the oppressed because we are not part of it. We must therefore try to focus on the processes of participatory research and the alternative system of knowledge production. Participatory research is a collective process of inquiry, as opposed to the individualistic nature of classical research methodology. As a collective process, therefore, it rejects the separation of roles and the emphasis on the researcher as an individual. In fact, there is a danger in this type of separation of roles because it reinforces the division of labour between the mental and the manual—the researchers and the participant. Do researchers like us who have been trained in the dominant system but who have rejected it in favour of the alternative system have a role to play in our system of choice?

Formally trained researchers like us can contribute our skills and expertise by bringing additional information and constructs produced from the dominant system to the service of the alternative system and the processes of appropriating such constructs. Those of us who have a philosophical faith in the underlying principles of participatory research, have a definite role in the contemporary context and must play that deliberately and actively.

This is a manifestation of one of the inconsistencies in the actual practice of participatory research. Many of the contemporary experiences and illustrations of participatory research seem to involve professionally trained researchers. But then this is the very nature of dialectics—the contradictions being the basis for further movement and change. In fact, the use of the label 'participatory research' came from those of us who were trained in the classical methodology, as many of us began to question the empiricist, behaviourist and controlling tenets of the dominant paradigm, we began to sow the seeds of an alternative view of knowledge and its production. It is this dialectic which promoted several of us to recognize the alternative paradigm of knowledge and system of production of knowledge and to promote participatory research as its methodology.

The next ambiguity involves methods. Historically, references have been made to methods which are appropriate to participatory research and others which are inappropriate. Methods of data collection which are qualitative in character have been seen as more appropriate to participatory research, while survey and other quantitative methods of data collection are seen as irrelevant. If concrete information has to be collected from a large number of people in a given

situation for strengthening people's action, surveys and questionnaires are appropriate.

Participatory research is the methodology of the alternative system of knowledge production. It is a set of tools, techniques and methods. Embodying the values and philosophy of alternative and popular systems of knowledge production, it is based on the belief that ordinary people are capable of understanding and transforming their reality. Its articles of faith include a commitment to collective participation, and empowerment of the ordinary people in having and knowing their world; in envisioning a new society; and in playing their collective roles in that process of transformation. It is this faith in the participation of ordinary people that also acts as the philosophical basis for participatory research methodology. The determinants of this participation in participatory research are three-fold:

1. People's role in setting the agenda of inquiry,
2. People's participation in data collection and analysis, and
3. People's control over the use of outcome and the whole process.

Practice shows that different combinations of the three determinants have been employed.

Additional methods of data collection which do not rely on the written word have been used in several examples of participatory research. These methods derive from the oral traditions of communications and dissemination of knowledge like songs, dramas and music which express ideas in a way that is an integral part of the life of ordinary people in our societies.

The fourth ambiguity, results of the participatory research, relate to the objectives. The primary outcome of participatory research efforts is new knowledge or a fresh synthesis of old knowledge. Learning by the people and becoming organized are byproducts of the collective pursuit of knowledge. The primary result is knowledge. Who uses the results? Do people control the use of results?

The question of the relevance of participatory research presents a new challenge. It has been argued that participatory research is relevant only in developing countries. This argument seems to negate the existence of developing work situations in the developed countries. If we continue the exploration of participatory research and contemporary representation of the alternate system of knowledge production by the poor and the oppressed, then wherever such people exist (and they do exist in the North as they do in the South today), such systems of knowledge production exist. As a result, participa-

tory research as a means of strengthening alternative systems of knowledge production can be practiced anywhere, irrespective of the North and the South divide and irrespective of the socio-political and geographical context of a given country. If we also look at the contributions of participatory research as referred to earlier, this confusion disappears. These contributions can be made in any society.

Links to Social Movements

What have been the links between participatory research and contemporary social movements? Historically, alternative systems have been related to and based on the ordinary people's need to survive, which has meant maintaining close links with the struggle of people. In its contemporary manifestation, participatory research must discover, as well as build such links to the people's struggles and social movements.

The links of participatory research with contemporary social movements have varied in different parts of the world depending on the strength and location of those movements. It also seems that voluntary organizations, grassroots practitioners, development workers and other catalysts of social change have been providing the major momentum to the practice and conceptualization of participatory research around the world. Four social movements in particular have links with the participatory research movement.

The movement to preserve natural resources provides one such link. In different parts of the world, movements have emerged in response to lack of access to, and control over natural resources like land, water and forests, by the poor and ordinary people. The centralized, elite-controlled, development strategy is leading to dispossession of the poor and displacement from their traditional access to and ownership of natural resources. Degradation of natural resources has been another major consequence of the current development strategy being followed worldwide. These issues have been rallying points of the natural resources movement. Participatory research has contributed by helping ordinary people to generate new knowledge, and to appropriate knowledge produced by the dominant system.

Participatory research has developed links with the workers' movement, particularly workers in the unorganized and the informal sectors of the economy. The struggles of rural labourers, informal sector workers and women workers on issues of wages, rights, workplace

health and safety, and living conditions in slums and housing colonies, have been the areas where participatory research practice has played an active role. It has also served to highlight their own experiences as workers to provide them with a legitimate basis for the representation of their rights in society. In some contexts, workers' takeover of economic enterprises in order to collectively manage and control them has been the focus of participatory research efforts. Workers' cooperatives in different parts of the world have also provided links with participatory research in several countries. Workers' inquiry as an ongoing theme of the struggles of the working class as an integral component of that struggle seems to be the basis for the links to this social movement.

Participatory research and the women's movement have well-grounded links. The special experiences of women as women, the recognition of unique modes of inquiry have been the basis for establishing these links with participatory research. The points of interaction between the two have included the struggle to overthrow women's double oppression, to be treated as persons in their own right and the formation of women's organizations; the efforts to expose domestic violence; and the struggle to gain equal and just status for women in society.

The human rights and peace movements have been arenas for links with participatory research. In many societies with military dictatorships, the daily violation of human rights has been the basis for organizing social movements. The links to participatory research, however, are fairly weak at the moment.

The links of participatory research with contemporary social movements are theoretically inevitable yet practically very difficult. Our earlier elaboration of the concepts and the origins in the meaning of participatory research makes the establishment of close links with contemporary social movements inevitable because of the nature of the struggles. Yet it is very difficult to establish these links when professionally trained researchers are involved in trying to support the alternative systems of knowledge production. Nevertheless, participatory research must be used to strengthen the alternative systems of knowledge production. The links between the two are historically necessary. The future practice of participatory research needs to focus on these links in order to realize its historical potential as a contribution to contemporary efforts at social transformation.

Participatory Research, Educational Experience and Empowerment of Adults*

RAJESH TANDON

Introduction

The last three decades have seen an increasingly diverse range of models and theories of social change. The implementation of these models in developing countries like India has brought mixed results. While some improvements, for example in overall agricultural production, has taken place, the situation of more than half of the rural population has not improved, if not worsened. Starting from community development in the '60s as the basic programme for changing the situation in rural India, we now have people-centred models of development. These models emphasize the principle of people's participation in developing themselves.

This concept of people's participation in development has gained currency in the last 10 years. Various definitions and meanings are attached to people's participation. It is perhaps useful to clarify, at the very outset, that people's participation in this paper is seen both as a means as well as an end in itself (Fernandes, 1981). Social change, therefore, is that process where people actively define their desired goals and collectively work towards them. It also assumes that present society in a country like India comprises of a large mass of 'have-nots' who have so far been left out from this process of social change. These are landless labourers and marginal farmers, tribals and Harijans, women, workers in the unorganized sectors, urban slum-dwellers, etc. These are generally characterized by lower

*This article has been extracted from the following paper: Tandon, Rajesh: 'Participatory Research, Educational Experience and the Empowerment of Adults', in Ghosh, Ratna and Zachariah, Mathew (eds.), *Education and the Process of Change*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp. 212-22.

levels of education, consciousness and organization, besides a very weak economic base (Tandon and Brown, 1981).

Thus social change implies collective and organized efforts on the part of these 'have-nots' to transform their situation in their common interests. It is only through an organized, informed and collective action that the 'have-nots' can influence the direction of social change to their common benefit.

Viewed in this way, the role of education in promoting social change becomes critical. In particular, the role of adult and non-formal education acquires major significance in the pursuit of this model of social change. Educational process in informing, mobilizing and organizing the 'have-nots' has been demonstrably effective (Tandon, 1981).

Knowledge as Power

In the early period of this century, the bulk of the control exercised by the 'haves' over the 'have-nots' was a direct one. The 'haves' controlled land and other resources and the 'have-nots' were landless. They were able to manipulate the 'have-nots' largely because they exercised this direct power which many-a-times was reinforced with physical force. While this form of control still continues in a country like India, a more subtle form of control has also emerged since World War II. This is the form of control that is exercised through knowledge.

Knowledge has increasingly become a major source of power and control. The very process of thinking and valuing of the ordinary people is being indirectly influenced through the control and use of knowledge (Gaventa, 1980). This also allows for indirect and remote control so that Delhi and Washington D.C. can control the destiny of those living in far-flung villages. This exercise of power through control over knowledge has been further consolidated with the help of more organized research enterprise. The ordinary persons and the 'have-nots' have been facing two forms of assaults in this regard. Firstly, their own knowledge, the popular knowledge, has been completely devalued with the rise of modern knowledge-producing enterprises.

This is most evident in the case of healthcare, for example, where traditional healthcare practices have been made to appear meaningless with the rise of modern medicine. This devaluation starts from

the experts, who in the process of establishing the reign of the modern knowledge-producing enterprises, have done so at the cost of popular knowledge. The 'cult of expertise' has acquired much more significance in the recent years and this has been supported by the institutions of research. Over a period of time, the 'have-nots' themselves began to devalue their own knowledge, and the mechanisms of producing that knowledge, which have been relevant for their survival and development throughout the history of humankind.

Secondly, ordinary people have been systematically deprived from having an access to either the knowledge produced by experts or means of production of that knowledge. In fact, the research enterprise has created such an impression that ordinary persons are not considered capable of creating their own knowledge. This is further fortified with degrees, scholarships, institutions, etc. Unless one has been 'properly' trained through a long schooling, one is not considered capable of producing any knowledge (Tandon, 1981).

If social change implies people's collective participation in determining their own destiny as mentioned above, then knowledge is a necessary ingredient in that process. If people can learn to value their own knowledge, and produce as well as use new knowledge, then it will be contribution to the process of their empowerment.

Steps in Participatory Research

A series of simple steps are taken in conducting participatory research. They are as follows.

1. What is the problem?

A group of people first agree on a common statement of a problem. Some common problems, for example, are landlessness, low income, indebtedness, sickness of children, etc. The problem should be stated clearly and concretely.

2. Do we need a solution?

The group should express interest in solving the problem. Sometimes problems are identified merely because someone asked them about their problems. This step should ensure that there is a willingness to understand the problem in its entirety and its underlying causes, as well as an attempt to solve it. Questions like: 'Why do we want to solve the problem?', 'How will we benefit if the problem is solved?' may help in clarifying this.

3. What do we know about the problem?

The group records all that they already know about the problem. For example, if the problem is sickness of children, then they can each describe the sickness, its type, intensity and duration in the case of their own children. This helps in focusing on the problem in a concrete way.

4. What else do we need to know about the problem?

Having articulated and recorded what they already know about the problem, they can then begin to identify what else they need to know about the problem. For example, how widespread is the problem? Why does it occur in this form? Continuing with the example of sickness of children, the group may need to know how many children in the hamlet (or the village) are affected by those diseases, why they occur, what are the ways to prevent and cure them.

5. How are we going to collect additional information?

This is the step of data-collection. The group needs to decide how to get the information, whose assistance is needed, when they will get the information, and who in the group will do what.

6. What do we learn from this information?

Having obtained the information, the group collectively analyzes that information. It is important that analysis and reflection are undertaken as collective processes, not to be done by one person alone. This will help the group understand the causes of the problem and provide clues for possible solutions.

7. What solutions are possible? What actions are needed?

Various solutions to the problem are generated, their workability is assessed and the choice of solution is made. Then, in order to solve the problem, what actions are to be taken by whom, when, where, and how, are also discussed and decided. Then these actions are taken.

8. What do we learn from these actions?

In this step, the impact of the actions taken is systematically assessed to see if the problem is fully or partially solved. The actions taken may sometimes create new problems. So, this step is once again the beginning of another process of participatory research. Thus, partici-

partory research becomes an ongoing process in the group, as part of its normal activity and not something separate.

Implications

Participatory research promotes the capacity of adults to seek and utilize knowledge in their interest, thereby promoting their collective empowerment (Hall, 1981). It is this aspect of participatory research that makes it a potent tool in the context of empowering people and transforming reality. What are the implications of the above for adult and non-formal education?

Some of the important implications are briefly mentioned here:

- (a) Participatory research as an educational process reiterates our commitment to the ability of the ordinary people. As for adult education, we need to continue to strengthen our faith in the people as self-initiating adults. It is this faith which provides the starting point for the educational process. In essence, our involvement in participatory research justifies that faith in the capacity of the ordinary people.
- (b) It shows that those of us working with adults can strengthen our work if we acquire a greater degree of competence in the process and not in content. Adult educators like participatory researchers, need to have process expertise and orientation and need not be in all the various contents. This is so because the educational contents in participatory research get determined by the concrete situation. But the educational process can be generalized.
- (c) It also brings out the need for developing an orientation of inquiry among adult educators. Many of us do not approach our work with the 'have-nots' with an orientation of learning. Many-a-time the adult educators themselves lack a questioning and research orientation, which if they develop, can help them in their work. Training of adult educators in participatory research acquires importance in this context.

References

- Brown, L. David and Rajesh Tandon, 1983: 'Ideology and political economy in inquiry: Action research and participatory research', *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 19: 277-94.
- Fernandes, Walter, 1981: *People's Participation in Development*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.

- Fernandes, Walter and Rajesh Tandon, 1981: *Participatory Research and Evaluation*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.
- Gaventa, John, 1980: *Power and Powerlessness*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hall, Budd, 1981: 'Participatory research, popular knowledge and power: A personal reflection'. *Convergence*, 14: 6-17.
- Tandon, Rajesh, 1981: 'Participatory research in empowerment of people', *Convergence*, 14(3).
- Tandon, Rajesh and L. David Brown, 1981: 'Organisation-building for rural development: an experiment in India', *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 17: 172-89.

The Socio-Political Implications of Participatory Research*

FRANCISCO VIO GROSSI

This chapter introduces some brief and general remarks around the relationship between participatory research and the socio-political context in which it takes place. I believe that, at this stage of the development of the subject, it is redundant to insist on the close links between this approach and politics. The articles presented in the African, Asian and Latin American workshops have emphasized this point sufficiently. It seems to me more useful to attempt to introduce a discussion intended to illuminate the problem of the relationship between the method (the internal element of participatory research) and the socio-political context in which it operates (the external element), both expressions of the same political phenomenon.¹

This paper will start by locating the concept of participatory research in the light of recent contributions, emphasizing the insufficiencies of certain approaches that have been developed in Latin America and elsewhere. Afterwards, some elements connected with the relationship between participatory research and popular organization will be discussed, and finally, participatory research vis-à-vis the socio-political context will be presented as a way of introducing the question of its viability within particular dependent capitalist societies.

Trends, Self-criticism and Some Clarifications

When the network met for the first time in Toronto in 1977, participatory research was defined as a research process in which the community participates in the analysis of its own reality in order to pro-

*This article was earlier published in Dubell, F., Erasmie, T. and Vries, J. (1980) *Research for the people—Research by the people. Selected papers from the International Forum of Participatory Research in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia*, 1980, Linköping University, Sweden, pp. 69–80.

mote a social transformation for the benefit of the participants, who are the oppressed. It is therefore a research, educational and action-oriented activity.

This statement, like other similar ones published simultaneously, captured the attention and enthusiasm of social scientists, popular educators and political activists. To some extent the attempt was seen as an approach able to resolve the permanent tension between the process of knowledge generation and the use of that knowledge, between the 'academic' and the real worlds, between intellectuals and workers, between science and life.

The network that was born, and which has been in continuous expansion, has contributed to enriching the discussion, to enlightening aspects that we did not consider then and to opening new avenues. But at the same time, it has originated some trends that rely on conceptions, though not absolutely erroneous, at least insufficient.

In the Latin American meeting in Ayacucho we thought that, if these trends continue to develop, we could be led to weaknesses in our analysis similar to those experienced in the region during the sixties. These trends can be defined, to the best of our knowledge, as manipulative, only formally participative and spontaneous-naive. Through their description an attempt will be made to introduce a more accurate approach to participatory research, its role within the development process and its external constraints.

The trend I shall call *formal participation* arises linked to the rejection by participatory research of the principles of objectivity and value neutrality, as these have been introduced by empiricism. Participatory research adopts a relativist approach, and therefore emphasizes the relevance of values and ideologies in the process of producing knowledge. In other words, if the degree of participation of the 'researched' is increased, the research itself is enriched, because the people's perceptions are integrated into the analysis. The research becomes more scientific than before.

Those who have emphasized only this contribution of participatory research have tended to look at people's participation exclusively as a way to enlighten their final product, rather than as a tool for developing a process of social transformation. As such, these researchers are more related to participant observation than to participatory research. With new words, but old techniques, the separation between the subject and the object of research persists and the dominance features of such practices continue. An instrument such as

participatory research, devised for liberation, is thus converted into a new, and perhaps more efficient tool for manipulation.

Another manipulative, rather than participatory, approach has been developed under the guise of participatory research. Some activists and social workers have seen participatory research as an instrument that can improve the transference of their own ideas on development and change to the communities. The trick of utilizing surveys as a means for diffusing concepts has been utilized not only by them, but also by different professionals, including cosmetic salesman. This time, a new and fascinating concept (for them) is added which may help in the attainment of their objective: the word 'research'. It is so far from the language of the common people as it is near to an ivory tower. It constitutes an invitation to be intellectual and wise. To make the object believe that he is a subject, is a new and more sophisticated manner of manipulation and what is intended is, again, imposition and domination through sophisticated ideas and concepts not well understood by its objects.

Others, perhaps more honest, have been genuinely enthusiastic about the ideas of social transformation and participation that participatory research puts forward. To some extent, they assume implicitly that the adherence to both concepts must imply a radical or revolutionary position. This, unfortunately, is not necessarily the case.

First of all, to talk nowadays of social transformation does not necessarily mean to be precise enough. Social reality is dynamic, i.e. in a condition of permanent change. That is so to the extent that when change does not occur with the necessary fluidity, the dominant sectors themselves tend to introduce some minor modifications in order that everything go on as usual. Secondly, the idea of participation alone is also insufficient these days. It is as likely to lead to social integration as to radical change. I do not need to spend much time on this issue, because I doubt any of our readers have not experienced a certain frustrating feeling when observing that community participation may result, in the field, in the development of trends towards the consolidation of the status quo, rather than change. Even more, when the process of creating knowledge is adequately led by the community toward the goal of transformation, the data gathered may turn out to be useful for the dominant elites, making their analysis more accurate and therefore permitting them to extend and deepen their domination.

These trends of formal participation, manipulation and spontaneous-naivete have been developed to a great extent under the banner of participatory research. Our own insufficiencies have been mainly related to the question of the characterization of participatory research, a lack of accuracy in the definition of participation and the limits of our concept of social transformation.

When we defined participatory research, although it was never explicitly stated, some people understood that we were calling for the creation of a new research and action alternative vis-à-vis the classic ones. This was partly true and partly wrong. It was true in so far as we attempted the abolition of the traditional distance between research object and subject, between common and scientific knowledge. We not only put forward a revaluation of the accumulated knowledge of the people, but we stressed also that the process of knowledge generation could be a continuum from the popular knowledge to a scientific one, and therefore the roles of object and subject could be merged. We thus rejected logical positivism. However, some went beyond that and understood that we were implicitly rejecting as well as the other available method, historical materialism. We were accused of integrationism and reformism. In the regional seminar of Ayacucho there was a consensus on the need to resolve this confusion.

Participatory research is not, and has never intended to be, a new ideological and scientific holistic system, an alternative to historic materialism. On the contrary, it attempts to start the research from concrete reality, incorporating the people's viewpoint, in order to contribute to a type of social transformation that eliminates poverty, dependence and exploitation. This assertion requires a further analysis of some of its components.

Historical materialism, as has already been stated, is a method for investing reality intended to reveal the main tendencies or changes in order to orient action. It has never intended to be a complete set of financial answers or permanent 'instructions' for action, whatever the regional, social or political context may be. It is a way of looking at reality in order to transform it.

This distinction has not been present in the minds of the 'manipulator', including some radicals. For them, historical materialism, in simple terms, indicates what is wrong and what to do. Therefore, what would be necessary is to diffuse these recipes. The most efficient diffusion techniques suggest that the people adopt them, partici-

pating by themselves in the rediscovery of what has been written for them. Confusing content with method, these activists of ideological and political orthodoxy fall into the most conventional manipulation.

On the other hand, the spontaneous-naives understand that popular wisdom has to be idolized when participatory research affirms that the observation and analysis must start from the representations of the community itself. The people have all the answers because they have the real knowledge they argue. Nothing further from the truth. If that were the case, we would not need either adult education, or activists, or even participatory research. To agree with this assertion would be equivalent to denying nothing less than the very existence and efficacy of the whole ideological apparatus of domination, set up by the hegemonic sectors. For ages the people have been indoctrinated to make them unable to comprehend the reality beneath the superficial appearances of their situation or to mobilize in order to transform that situation. What participatory research attempts precisely is to initiate a process of disindoctrination in order to allow the people to detach the cultural elements that have been imposed on them, and are functional to the status quo, from their own cultural elements, to discover their own socio-economic position and orient their action for overcoming their condition of oppression. In other words, this process will allow them, in the final analysis, to distinguish the secondary contradictions that exist within society, to locate the main one, and to act in consequence. The 'investigative' aspect of participatory research collaborates in the application of the method to a specific reality, and the 'participatory' component contributes to making this start precisely from the people's viewpoint or stage of development. These are its most outstanding contributions.

An effort is also required to define more accurately the concept of 'social transformation'. The magnitude of our insufficiency was already indicated when we stressed that change was needed even for maintaining the status quo.

Fals Borda and Freire have adequately faced this issue when adopting the Heglian concept of 'praxis'. It is not any action at all, but one that relates specifically to activity leading to structural social change. Neither does participatory research intend to contribute to the development of any activity at all, as may be done by conventional research. It is linked closely with a particular field of action that is intended to lead to change in the fundamental conditions that engender poverty, dependence and exploitation.

Having rejected the formally participatory, manipulative and spontaneous-naïve approaches, participatory research emerges as a fundamental contribution to the effort to fully integrate in people's subjectivity into a scientific analysis adequate to the dimensions of the work to be done: the structural social transformation of our societies.

Participatory Research and Popular Organization

We would be very naïve if we assert the idea, totally unsupported by experience, that it is enough that the people 'know' in order to mobilize. This is a misconception that has occurred more often than we are prepared to recognize. A labour of mediation capable of operationalizing praxis is required. That mediation cannot be research itself, unless it is participatory. In that case, the basic unity between theory and practice that participatory research advocates implies the existence of a popular organization able to conduct the whole process.

When these issues are touched, intellectuals interested in participatory research frequently ask: How can I relate myself to the community? What must I do? How do I need to behave in order to lead the community to conduct by itself the participatory research process? What is my role as 'participatory researcher'?

In the field of the relationship between intellectuals and the popular organization, it is particularly difficult to offer 'recipes'. Anyone of us who has seriously worked with workers, peasants or marginal communities will agree with the assertion that indicates that people perceive easily the class origin of a stranger. They are also particularly keen in evaluating the reliability of the newcomers. The level of communication that is established frequently relies upon the way that the community sees the services that the outsiders can provide and the degree of loyalty to the short and long run common goals of the group. Intellectuals usually misunderstand the relevance of manual work and tend to share it with labourers, although frequently peasants and workers are aware of what the intellectual knows and what he does not. They tend to prefer the contribution of a lawyer as a lawyer rather than as an inefficient labourer. The point of encounter is not located at the level of the specific working activity but in the sphere of the basic loyalties, which implies a recognition of the organization's leadership and the subordinate role of the 'researcher'.

This, leads us, besides, to ask ourselves about the very origin of this type of questions. Its formulation by itself may be seen as implying that we are continuing to assume the separation of the two roles (subject and object of research) and consequently also continuing to differentiate between the importance of scientific knowledge and people's knowledge. The psychological, emotional and, in the final analysis, class barriers continue raising obstacles to the need to adopt the people's perspective. If the people's viewpoint is adopted, and therefore I immerse myself in its culture, the communication problems will be solved as a consequence of the very dynamic that the decision engenders. This very dynamic will also teach that, in due time, a new right will emerge for the 'researcher' to speak for the community. In the real facts, the distinction between object and subject will be broken and both roles will start merging, not only in the community but also within the 'researcher' himself.

But in the meantime, the researcher must play a specific role as such. He is in a position that enables him to raise the most relevant questions, due to his access to the information on the relevance and utility of the method and management of the techniques.

The issue of the relationship between the intellectuals and the organization, as old as the popular struggles, must be solved therefore more from the side of the former than that of the latter. The tensions that have historically arisen over definition of the role of the leadership and the relative autonomy of science have usually rested upon spontaneous-naïve attitudes. Sometimes also on liberal-ethical principles, unrelated to the popular cultures. When a real immersion of the intellectual into the people's world occurs, these tensions disappear and the 'organic intellectual', as Gramsci called him, emerges, enabled to undertake active and full participation in the common struggle.

Theory and practice, mediated by popular organization, meet each other finally in praxis.

Participatory Research and the Socio-political Contexts: the Question of Viability

To analyze the relationship between participatory research and its socio-political context in most cases implies asking about its viability in dependant capitalist societies, especially in Third World countries. In other words, it is necessary to inquire about the limits and oppor-

tunities that the system puts on participatory research activities in a given political situation.

When a discussion like this one starts, the first temptation is to assume that the hegemonic sectors will offer total resistance to a kind of action that is intended; experience tends to show it is not necessarily that way. In most capitalist societies, even the very repressive ones, there exists some room for maneuver.

On the other hand, any analysis of the problem area must be done within the limits imposed by the framework of participatory research itself, i.e. the praxis. Otherwise there arises the risk that, with the intention of doing at least something, concessions go beyond the limit and we end up not contributing to the structural social transformation. At the same time we have all witnessed interesting and hazardous attempts that have been destroyed by the system precisely because they went beyond what was considered permissible by the local, national or transactional dominant elites.

Therefore, the question of the viability of participatory research is to face the issue of the limits to engendering partial transformation towards global change imposed by the parameters that determine functioning of the system.

The task implies the assumption that, on the one hand, the different factions of dominant sectors do not necessarily maintain a high level of unity around the definition of common interests, but rather that their interests can be contradictory. This fact permits the emergence of relatively wide room for manoeuvre. On the other hand, this effort requires the determination of the specific restrictions imposed on the oppressed sectors by the hegemonic groups. From the analysis of these factors will appear the chances for relatively successful action for participatory research, to be applied in a given social context.

In the following part of this article some brief, general and preliminary ideas will be presented with the intention of offering elements useful for the elaboration of a pattern that allows us to know the degrees of viability that we enjoy for the praxis in a given moment.²

It is assumed that participatory research, as has been said, is a permanent process of observation, analysis and action in which the participants advance constantly toward continually higher degrees of accuracy in their analysis and therefore in their social awareness. Within this ascendant process, the structural transformation may be

defined as the strategic goal to be reached in the medium or long term. In the present stage of development, the need is for the utilization of the instruments offered by participatory research in order to advance as far as possible toward the strategic goal. The new stage thus reached needs to be consolidated not only at the material level, but also at that of social awareness.

Our proposition is a strategy of seven interlinked phases in order to determine the viability of acting toward the strategic goal in each stage of development.³

1. *Definition of a provisional goal.* The initial phase is the definition of a provisional strategic goal, starting from the basic needs and expectations of the community. It is provisional because, with some degree of certainty, the goals thus established will be more consistent with the existence of secondary contradictions than with the main one. Its level of provisionality will depend on the degree of development of consciousness and the level of accuracy in the analysis that the community has attained at a given moment. If that level is high, the provisional goal will be nearer the definitive one than if it is low. The important point is that this entrance level allows us to start the process from the present situation of the community, integrating its perspectives as fully as possible.
2. *Analysis of local obstacles.* This second phase is related to the study of the local constraints that impede the achievement of the provisional goal. This phase will allow us to single out a set of local variables that will be useful for a global diagnosis at the micro level.
3. *Analysis of the extra-local obstacles.* This third phase starts with the process of redefining the local reality in the context of the wider one. It will permit the elaboration of a list of extra-local causal factors that impede the satisfaction of the provisional goal.
4. *Elaboration of the extra-local obstacles.* The disorganized set of causal factors of various levels that impede the achievement of the provisional goal is structured in this phase, according to their relations of causality. The carrying out of this process will allow the discovery of the existence of the main contradiction and the location and identification of the secondary ones. In this way, the research process as such reaches its climax, i.e. a method is applied to the analysis of an apparently chaotic set of social facts and phenomena and subsequently a logical, coherent and inter-

connected set of variables is produced for the purpose of the determination of the social change dynamics. This process will thus open the path to the two following phases.

5. *Determination of the strategic goal.* This emerges precisely from the location of the main contradiction.
6. *Determination of the different levels of viability.* These emerge from the analysis of the causal structure, the secondary contradictions, the analysis of the partial interests that rest behind each one of them, that is to say, the class structure, and the socio-political implications of their transformation on the functioning of the system as a whole.
7. *Determination of the tactics, immediate objectives and actions.* These will create new conditions at the material level and the level of consciousness, which, in turn, will allow the initiation of a new cycle, this time at a higher level of development.

A final comment. There is an element in this presentation that for more than one diligent reader cannot have been missed. For our groups in Venezuela it is still a question without a definite answer. The alternative, partial and viable paths may contribute to consolidating the conditions that are opposed to structural change and, furthermore, to postponing the stage of maturation required for the implementation of those changes. The achievement of the strategic goal can thus be delayed, rather than facilitated.

For us it seems difficult to go beyond the limits that I have here described. For the moment we know that we have two main alternatives before us:

Either to continue debating about structural reform, as if we were demonstrating that knowledge by itself is able to transform reality, or to act collectively upon reality, making use of its potential and overcoming its limitations in order to achieve, sooner rather than later, the final victory. This paper has been based on the assumption that participatory research has opted, precisely, for the second alternative.

Notes

1. I have been asked to avoid bibliographic notes, so as to lighten the presentation. However, I need to mention the discussions with the participants of the Latin American Seminar on participatory research in rural areas, held in March 1980 in Ayacucho, Peru, under the sponsorship of the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga and the Latin American network of participatory research. Furthermore, I would

like to mention the work of Orlando Fals Borda, Alfredo Molano, Ernesto Cohen, Budd Hall, Luis Rigal, Anton de Schutter and Paul Oquist. They have influenced some of the ideas and concepts of this presentation. Richard Melman made valuable comments and polished my disastrous English. Obviously, all the responsibility is mine alone.

2. These ideas have been the result of the involvement of the author in a rural development project in the State of Guarico, Venezulela.
3. We must keep in mind that these phases are developed by the popular organizations.

People and Forests—A Participatory Study*

MOHAN HIRABAI HIRALAL AND SAVITA TARE

Context

An enormous amount of knowledge exists with the people about food, fuel, fodder, fertilizer etc., i.e. about things that directly affect their livelihood. This knowledge is still unknown to the so called 'experts'. Each villager, too, does not have the entire set of such knowledge but collectively they come to know about most of it.

This knowledge is not only restricted to forest produce, but also encompasses the patterns and processes of utilizing these resources. This information is used by the people in the struggle for survival and thus contributes in making them more confident, self-conscious and understanding about issues that affect their lives, directly or indirectly.

The livelihood of people has been adversely affected due to the ecological imbalance that we are seeing nowadays. This is felt through growing insecurity of food, fuel, fodder, water and employment. These problems greatly affect the poor, especially the women among them.

We got acquainted with these problems while working among landless labourers, labourers working on Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) projects, and small peasants. This was while working along with Jagrut Adivasi Sanghatana and the 'Jangal-Bachao Manav-Bachao' (Save Forest, Save Man) Movement in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra.

Discussions with informed individuals at concerned research institutions and the reading of relevant literature led to an acquaintance with the concepts and models of development and economic planning. Through this process we got an idea of problems at the macro level, and felt that these problems should be studied in detail at the

*This article has been extracted from the following: Mohan Hirabai Hiralal and Savita Tare: *People and Forest, A Participatory Study*, PRIA, New Delhi, 1993.

micro level. It was felt that micro studies will facilitate a deeper understanding of factors affecting the lives of tribals and their knowledge systems to improve the same.

The purpose of this study was to generate a thinking process about such problems in small groups at the village level through the review of traditions, social and moral ideas, social structure and institutions, with the emphasis on pooling of information and experiences of the people. It is thus a participatory study project about the issues centred around the problems of food, fuel, fodder, fertilizer, water and employment.

However, it has to be made clear that the people of villages with whose participation we were supposed to conduct the study did not participate in taking the above decision.

Expectations from the Study

An important question that has to be answered before any such study is undertaken is: What will the study achieve, both for the participants as well as the organizers? In this respect, we can list the benefits we perceived from undertaking this study as the following:

- It will help people in understanding the problems of food, fuel, fertilizer, water, employment and in seeking solutions to them;
- The participants will be acquainted with the process of studying from experiences and through discussions;
- The participants will realize that they improve their self-confidence and understanding of the concerned issues through recollecting and analyzing experiences;
- The participants will feel inspired and confident to find ways for solving their problems on their own rather than depending on others for the same;
- The study organizers will gain knowledge of the subject and experience and skills in conducting the study.

Identification of the Field of Study

We started by giving thought to the questions like:

- What would be our area of study?
- How will it be selected?
- How are we going to initiate the study?, etc.

We had a good contact in Dhanora tehsil of Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra through the 'Jangal Bachao Manav Bachao Movement'

and decided to concentrate our field study there. Historically, tehsil Dhanora can be divided into seven sectors according to the zamindari area: (1) Dhanora, (2) Khutgaon, (3) Rangi, (4) Jambhali, (5) Murumgaon, (6) Kotgul, and (7) Pendhari. Zamindari existed in this area until its legal abolition in 1950. All these zamindars were Gonds. The religious structure and organization in this area was formed in accordance to the zamindari sectors and they are still the same (on the religious and social matters). The adivasis in this area still identify themselves according to the zamindari sectors. This led us to think on the same basis and we decided to select the villages from Khutgaon, Dhanora and Jambhali sectors for the purpose of the study as we had comparatively better contacts and acquaintances in those sectors.

Steps in the Process of Awareness Raising

The main activists from these three sectors were contacted. They were also concerned about the forest issues of the area. Hence we discussed the different problems associated with forests. We usually arrived at a common conclusion that it was necessary to go deeper into the subject and also awaken the people on this matter. The question that came up was the nature of this awakening and study. It would not take place just by giving a public speech. It was decided to try the way of discussion with the people. For that, the idea of launching an awareness campaign using bicycles was appreciated and accepted by the activists.

Activists came to know that a meeting of all the village chiefs of Khutgaon zamindari was going to be held at Mendhatola Ashram School for some religious cause. Activists took this opportunity to raise their view at this meeting. There were about 70–80 participants out of which 40–45 were village chiefs. Activists planned to involve the local MLA to introduce the topic to the chiefs and the activists then explained and elaborated these issues.

After listening, the village chiefs gave their consent to the cycle tour and agreed to provide all the required support. Details of the cycle tour like number of tours, dates, duration and coverage of each tour were discussed at the meeting. Four cycle tours were planned, the first lasting six days, the next four days and the last two of three days duration each. The village chiefs agreed to receive them at their respective villages.

In most of the tribal areas, village chiefs and priests have a major role in deciding the course of action on most of the issues confronting the village. Due to the political process in the past few years in this belt, the influence of the priests has considerably reduced. We did not emphasize that we should involve them. Even though we needed the co-operation of the chiefs initially, we were very clear that we would not be solely dependent upon them. Our approach was that those among them who expressed interest, were welcome to participate.

Cycle Tour Begins

We reached Udegaon on schedule. After conducting the meeting and discussions there, we reached the next spot where three other activists of Dharonia area joined us. On the sixth day, when we had already covered fifteen villages, the total number of cyclists became sixteen. Everyday we covered 3 to 4 villages and had meetings. These meetings lasted 1–2 hours or sometimes even more. The normal participation ranged between 25–125 people. In some villages women's participation was low, in some others it was greater. The process of discussion was natural and proceeded in both ways—among the activists of the cycle tour and the villagers.

What Are Our Problems?

People had prior information of our programme, hence they would gather on their own after our arrival. The meeting would start with a group song. First, we would explain the purpose of our visit, explaining that we were interested in understanding the nature of our problems, the factors causing them and their solutions, that is why we had started the campaign. We explained that we believed that our problems would not be solved by any single individual or by a group of a few, but all of us must come together and think about the situation collectively. Every person is bestowed with enough wisdom and intelligence. Everyone's outlook and experience is also important. We explained that here nobody was going to deliver a lecture but that we would all discuss and express ourselves; that we would start from our major problems.

People Reaction

Generally people would put forth the difficulties such as village tanks, roads, electricity, hospitals, schools, unemployment of their educated children and then turn to the problems of poverty, forests, and unem-

ployment in general. Of course the order of difficulties would be different. If the attendance of women was good, and if they started speaking, they would come out with the problems of forests and alcoholism as priorities.

Involvement of Village Women

Among Gonds there is no tradition of women attending meetings. Hence to get women to attend, we had to contact the chiefs and convince them. The women naturally felt awkward and embarrassed to participate in the discussion. At times, we had to take a stand that, 'now men will please keep quiet for some time, and let the women put forward their views', so as to make them speak.

We Must Act on Our Own

As the people came out with a list of problems they would be asked to point out those of greater importance so that they could be discussed first. Most of the times the order came out as the problems of forest, alcoholism, unemployment and poverty. The nature of these problems, their causes and remedies would then be discussed.

Through the discussions, in the limited period of one meeting, one thing which became clear was that, 'whatever assurance the government, political leaders, or bureaucrats may give, nobody is going to solve our problems. The problems kept increasing day-by-day as we have trusted and relied on them. Now we must not depend on others to solve our problems and must try on our own. There have to be two steps in our attempt: (1) to study the problem collectively, and then (2) implementation of the action-programme which will come up as result of the study.'

In the end, we used to discuss our interest in studying the interdependence of people and forest and ask them if they would participate if we plan to do such a study together with them. At most of the places, people agreed wholeheartedly but at some places it was evident that their positive response was just casual and not very sincere.

By this process, we conducted meetings and discussions in 48 villages of Khutgaon, Dhanora, Jambhali and Potegaon Zamindari sectors during four cycle-tours spread over 15 days of 'People's Awakening Campaign'.

Advantages of Cycle Tour

During the cycle-tour the activists kept discussing among themselves whenever and wherever they halted, either to rest, or to drink water.

Of course, the topics were not at all restricted. All the issues from international to local entered the discussions, but most of the time the discussions used to end up on the issues of forests and people. The cycle tour benefited the activists in one or more respects, especially mutual introduction and developing healthy relations.

On the whole, the experience was quite new to all those involved in the process of the cycle tour. The MLA had experienced cycle touring for the first time in his life. In the beginning he was a little frightened at the idea of cycle touring. But now he gives a special lecture on the topic of the advantages of cycle touring.

The most important thing that was realized was that public contact and communication can be made in its real sense by the method of cycle touring. The kind of people who approach you when you travel by a jeep are quite different from those interacting with you when travelling on a cycle. With a jeep the whole programme becomes a hurried one and the type of interaction and association with the people is of a very different nature as compared to a cycle tour.

Outcome of the Awareness Campaign

1. The meeting and discussions with the villagers helped the activists to understand more about the people, their problems, the geographical setting and about themselves. This further helped in the selection of the villages under study.
2. The activists participating in the campaign were exposed to a new outlook and a new way of approaching the solution.
3. The people gained more knowledge and a different comprehension of their situation. A process of change in their outlook itself was initiated. They realized the necessity of using their collective potential rather than relying on others.
4. The process of communication was initiated at two levels through a single programme; one with the people of the villages visited and the other with the activists at the regional level.
5. It helped in the selection of the proper villages for the study.
6. It made it possible to identify like-minded voluntary colleagues.
7. With the help of this experience and information gained through this campaign, it became possible to make proper changes in the working methods of the study.

In-depth Study

Selection of the Villages

In our earlier plan it was mentioned that 10 villages would be selected at a distance of less than 15 km from the market place and another 10 to be at a distance of more than 20 km from the market place. Our assumption behind this selection was that a faggot of fuelwood or any other load can be carried by a person upto a distance of 15 km. Therefore, it would be possible for us to select two types of villages, one from where such supply is made and another where the long distance did not allow the possibility of such a supply.

Changes After Cycle Tour

During the cycle tour it was noticed that the people from no other place than Dhanora (i.e. the market place itself) sold the faggots of fuelwood. Therefore, the criteria of selecting the villages within and more than 15 km and 20 km respectively got automatically cancelled. However, we were careful to select the villages of mixed population together with the tribal villages. Also, villages of both types were chosen in such a way that some of both types were close to the forests and some away from them. We sat and discussed the selection of the villages with the local activists and then finalized the list.

Honey-bee Method

After finalizing the villages to be studied, we started visiting them one by one and having casual discussions with the people. Although the conversation started with any topic, we would soon arrive at the issues regarding forests. The participants could get a chance to relate different pieces of their experiences and information and try to understand them in different contexts. Everyone would argue on the basis of ones work, liking and experience. We used to proceed from the same argument, asking questions and sub-questions and adding our responses and opinions either for or against it. Thus the discussions proceeded smoothly. The relevant information gathered informally was like the manner in which honey is collected by the bee, and like in the process of pollination in a flower; some very different kinds of seeds are sown automatically in the minds of the people participating in the discussions. This allowed the establishment of a very informed and smooth communication with the villagers. (An example is given in the Box.)

The Forest Belongs to Whom?

Generally, the discussions with the people were based on taking up the following questions:

Q: Forest belongs to whom?

A: The government.

Q: To whom did it belong earlier?

A: Either to the king or the zamindar.

Q: And before them?

A: It has always belonged to them.

Q: Did the government or the king or the zamindar create it?

A: No.

Q: Who created forests?

A: God/nature.

Q: Which other things are created by God/nature?

A: Man, animals, birds, other insects, the whole universe.

Q: What do all of them need for survival?

A: Food, air and water.

Q: Has it not been created/provided for them?

A: Yes.

Q: What does an infant need for survival?

A: Mother's milk.

Q: Suppose mother's milk can be sold in the market for Rs 1000 per cup, will it be right for the father to deny milk to child and sell it in the market?

A: No.

Q: Why? Is it not because an infant's survival depends on it and selling it for money will not be right?

A: Correct.

Q: Who has, therefore, a right over mother's milk?

A: The infant/child has the right.

Q: On what do we depend for our survival?

A: Agriculture and the forest.

Q: Who, therefore, has a right over agriculture and forest?

A: Those who depend on them for survival, that is, us.

Q: Then who should the forest belong to? To the government?

A: No.

Q: Then, the zamindar?

A: No.

Q: The industrialist?

A: No.

Q: Then to whom?

A: To us.

Q: Will it then be right to sell the forest for money/profit, depriving those who are dependent on it for survival?

A: No.

Q: Why?

A: The first right is of those for whom it is necessary for survival.

Q: Whose dependence is greatest for survival on forest?

A: The poor, the cultivator, animals, birds, and other living beings.

Q: For whom is the forest being denuded?

A: For rich people, businessmen, government servants, political leaders, contractors, industrialists.

Q: In that case, will these people save the forest?

A: No.

Q: Who, then, can save the forest?

A: We, the poor people and cultivators.

Q: For whom should it be saved?

A: For us.

Q: And for who else?

A: For our children.

Q: And for who else?

A: For animals and birds who cannot speak.

Q: And for who else?

A: For the whole world.

After experiencing this we felt that the method of random sampling is not necessary for this study. In the random sampling method, the researcher goes on tracing a particular family. This, naturally, causes certain questions to arise in the minds of people as to why only a particular family is being traced and not the others? Where and how did the researcher get their name, etc. This leads to a feeling of mystery and distrust about the researcher in the minds of the people. This can easily be avoided by following the honey-bee method.

It was possible for us to include both the poor and the rich as well as the adivasi and the non-adivasi families and individuals in the discussions. Another observation was that occasions when all members of a village are available at leisure are rare other than the occa-

sion of 'polo' (an irregular day declared to stop all kinds of work and business for some social or religious cause). Such occasions were the best to conduct discussions. Hence, we decided to accept the informal and natural method of discussing only with those who are available and at leisure and only at the time that is convenient to them, rather than accepting the method of random sampling and to keep hunting and chasing people all the time. Considering the objectives, we did not feel the method of random sampling to be appropriate at all and so it was avoided.

Study Approach

We decided about the things which ought not to be done. They were as follows:

1. Not to tell the people that we are going to solve their problems or that the report of our study will make the government know the actual plight of the people and that would induce it to solve their problems. Also not to behave in such a way so as to create such an impression in their minds.
2. The study should not be conducted in villages where the people were not found to be willing to participate after knowing that we are not going to do anything for them.
3. Questionnaires should not be filled up for collecting and recording the problems.
4. No paid assistants to be employed for carrying out the work of the study.
5. The families were not to be selected by the random sampling method. This meant that the identified families would not be specifically searched for in the villages.
6. Contact should not be established with any village through the medium of any government servant.
7. No identity card should be acquired from the organisation sponsoring the study, collector, other officials or political leaders for carrying constantly with us so as to get recognition or for convincing people wherever necessary.

Study Process

Based on some of the principles outlined in the approach above, the study process characterized a few elements that were found to be significant in elaborating the methodology.

Realization of Self-power

The process of realizing self-power was initiated through the following things: however small the contribution of their information and experience was in the discussions, seeking new meanings while trying to connect two instances of experiences or information and thus realizing that they too have something that the others can learn from and also the consciousness that they themselves can find the answers to their questions. Once this process was initiated certain questions started arising in the minds of the participants; then began the search for their answers. This, in turn, leads to new questions and so a chain of questions and answers was formed. Such a process does not allow a person to keep quiet. We had a pleasant experience of this through our study.

In every meeting we made clear to the participants that we were not there to provide them any benefit except providing a chance to participate in the study to understand their problems themselves. We said, 'we want to know your situation; you can come and participate, understand us and also the problem from a different angle. We felt that understanding brings commitment and without understanding, commitment is a burden.'

After going to a new village, the initial four to five meetings or even more were started by everyone introducing themselves. We would insist that every man and woman present in the meeting stated their name, village of residence and the work they do. Many of them, particularly the women, felt very embarrassed to say out their names in front of all. This simple act of self-introduction in front of a group/crowd initiated a feeling of self-recognition leading to self-confidence.

An attempt was made that people should be active partners in the study themselves because this develops a different kind of a capacity. It generates knowledge, helps building confidence to understand the complex relationships of forests, soil, species etc. with the villagers.

Ask Questions

This generates a thinking process leading to questions arising about forest use—everybody starts thinking and puts forward their own views. This helps in building up respect for each other. Every person has some special interest; identifying it and talking to them on the subject will make their interest grow and knowledge broaden.

Information Exchange

This will open up avenues of knowledge generation. This process generates knowledge, knowledge generates understanding of the issues and thus a feeling of confidence.

Involve All Sections of the People

An attempt was made to involve all those who could have an interest in this process (politicians, teachers, women, revenue and forest staff of the government etc.). Care was taken that people do not get the impression that only a particular group is attending the meetings or is involved in the process.

Individual Knowledge Should Spread

Everyone does not know everything. Therefore identification of the people who have the knowledge and spreading it to others is of crucial importance. These people should be encouraged to tell their observations; the idea being the spread of individual knowledge to others.

Identification of Key Persons

Three activists from Dhanora and its surroundings were constantly interested and involved in the study right from the beginning. They became our colleagues. The interest of these activists lasted upto the end of the study, in fact increased over time. All of them had a real liking for social work and they worked in their own village apart from helping people in other villages. Whenever we visited any village, at least one of them would accompany us. All of them were adivasis, the Gonds, from the local area. The presence of each one of them contributed immensely to the completion of the study. It is necessary to mention their most important virtue here. They were quite clear from the beginning that they would not be given any kind of monetary return for the participation, involvement or the time spent on this study. In addition, their economic condition was not good. Even then they used to spend their time and participate in the study. We knew about their economic condition but any sort of remuneration was purposely avoided, even though it was possible. The reason for this was that we were keen to search for our real colleagues and not paid employees. We had not made any provision for more paid co-workers in our project proposal. And this decision really helped us to recognize our colleagues.

We observed the increasing involvement of our colleagues even after eight months of the study and also the resulting economic pressure on them. It was at this time that we discussed the issue of remuneration with them and it was decided that remuneration would be given in proportion to the time spent by them in the study (we adjusted and shared this amount from our honoraria). Since we had been working together for a period of eight months, enough understanding had developed between us so as to not destroy our relationship with them due to the payment of remuneration.

It was decided to conduct a three-day camp of all activists working with democratic means in the adivasi areas of Gadchiroli. It was also decided not to get money for conducting the camp from any external source but to meet the expenses through individual contributions, both in kind and in money. The idea behind this was that if money is taken from an external source then we would become dependent. Contribution by the people will lead to a feeling of self-confidence as they would feel that it is their own work.

The people came to know that individuals and groups at the national level were also struggling about similar issues and so it was decided to invite some of them for the meeting to get their views also.

Involvement of MLAs

With the view to invite all the activists in the district, it was felt that it would be better to send the invitations in the names of both the MLAs of the area. They were also leaders of the 'Jangal Bachao Manav Bachao' movement. Both of them gladly accepted the people's decision. This was exceptional as they belong to two different political parties: Congress (I) and Janata Dal.

In our process, the established leadership of the area was used as they had some inclination about the issues involved. We had decided that we will not compromise on the issues even if it meant that we would not get the co-operation of some of these people.

The camp was conducted between the 16th and 18th September 1988 at Heti in Dhanora Tehsil. About 500 people participated in this meeting. Most of them came to listen and some did ask questions occasionally. About 60 active participants were present throughout the process.

This led to a chain of such *Sahyog Shibirs* being held, each after an interval of three months. The second camp was held at Edapur,

tehsil Kurkheda on 23–25 December 1988 and the third at Potegaon, tehsil Gadchiroli between 3–5 March 1989. A conference on 'Forests and Development' was also organized in Potegaon in continuation of the third camp. These *shibirs* proved to be an excellent method of advancing the study on issues as well as people's mobilization on the same.

Issue-based Action

There are some issues that are relevant at the village level while others can only be handled at relatively macro levels. With the expansion and contraction of spheres, the most appropriate and useful levels of dealing with an issue were identified. The people also gained a good opportunity to experience and test their strengths and weaknesses at different levels.

As issues began to emerge and action began to be taken, it was felt that people's awakening and study had to deepen.

It was decided to arrange a people's awakening procession in the Dhanora region so as to awaken the people to the issues of *nistar* (usufructory) rights, forest and alcoholism. The date of 12 April 1989 was fixed. The plan was as follows. One procession would commence from village Lekha Kanhartola, pass through Mendha, Tukum, Kharkadi, Markegaon, and Heti and reach Dhanora. The other procession would commence from Chevala and reach Dhanora via Malkanda, Pawani etc. Both the processions would join at Dhanora and proceed via Salebhatti, Vadegaon, Dhawari and terminate at Japtalai where there would be a concluding function.

In each procession a small sapling of Mahua was decorated and was carried in a '*palankee*' (a box with its top open, borne on horizontal poles on men's shoulders). Men and women participated enthusiastically with their traditional musical instruments. They were playing drums and were dancing on the way. The atmosphere was filled with the tunes of Re aa Rela s Re sss Rela s s Re (the tunes of their traditional dance). The procession proceeded to the tunes of Gondri songs composed to the topics of *nistar* rights, forests and liberation from alcoholism. The whole surroundings were filled with lively slogans, the themes of which were: 'Save Forest, Save Man', 'Forest is the support for Life—stop its business', 'Right to *Nistar* is a Right to Live', 'From Organization—Save the Forest', 'We are one—Prohibit Liquor', 'Our government in our village—Distribute the powers of Delhi', etc.

At every village the procession was joyfully received and the women welcomed it in the traditional way. Then the procession would move on all the roads and reach the major spot, where the *Palanke* would be kept down. In the public meeting the activists would explain the purpose of organizing a procession and about the issues of *nistar*, forests and alcoholism in Gondi language.

Late in the night the procession reached its terminus. In the concluding meeting, the representatives of all villages expressed their intentions and motives. After expressing the firm determination to save forests and to achieve liberation from alcoholism, the function ended in the loud acclamation of slogans.

Link with Action

One of the interesting aspects of the study was its close, and at many times, immediate link with action. As issues of people's concern emerged and were discussed, it also resulted in developing some plans about action. This was largely due to the mobilizational aspects of this method. Actions related to four issues are briefly described here.

Nistar Rights¹

In the first *Sahyog Shibir*, the people who had come from outside Gadchiroli gave information that the process of notification of the forests of Gadchiroli district as Reserve Forest was being carried out by the government and had already reached its final stage. The only thing that was left was its publication in the government gazette. The news was shocking to everyone present, including both the MLAs who were also not aware of any such action being taken by the government. None of the people remembered if the government had informed them as it is essential for the government to give the people a due chance to put in their objections and claims.

It was felt that, once the notification is published the people would lose their traditional *nistar* rights and the powers of the forest department will increase many-fold resulting in the increased outrage, harassment and injustice with the people. This act of the government may also lead to the danger of people losing faith in the legal procedures. There is thus the danger of anti-democratic and destructive forces getting encouragement.

It was decided at the meeting that both the MLAs would send a telegram to the Chief Minister as well as the Commissioner, Nagpur

division informing them about the feelings of the people on this issue and requesting them to stop the process of notification. We were assigned to collect all the relevant information and prepare a petition on behalf of the people which was signed by the two MLAs who submitted it to the collector.

The telegram, the petition and the awakening initiated through the village meetings, the discontent displayed through the public meetings and the reporting by the LIB (Local Intelligence Branch) all collectively resulted in the halting of the notification. The Chief Minister called the MLAs for discussing the issue. A high level conference was organized by the government with ministers and senior officials. Before the conference held at Potegaon, public opinion was expressed by conducting public meetings. At the conference itself the people registered their fierce emotions and discontent against this notification and gave a warning through passing a resolution. The Chief Secretary of the state government had personally come to Gadchiroli district to get a clear understanding of the situation. The people's point-of-view was explained to him at the meeting in Potegaon. After his return from Gadchiroli, another high level meeting was organized in Bombay by the government. It was learned that the conference led to a decision that the government should not be in a hurry to finalize the notification. But the government did not cancel the wrong procedure of forest settlement. Thus the people had won a small battle but the activists were quite aware that the real battle lay ahead.

Development Planning

Gadchiroli district has become famous through the media as a district infested with Naxalites. The government feels that the root cause of the problems of the district lie in the neglect towards its development. The then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Sharad Pawar, declared a special action programme for the quick development of Gadchiroli District. A draft plan with an expenditure of Rs 134.30 crore was prepared to carry out the special development of the district.

Critique of the Development Plan

Discussions on this topic in the village meetings were inevitable. An enquiry of this special programme was started. The following conclu-

sions/inferences were drawn from the study with reference to the above information:

- A large portion of the district comes under forests but proper consideration has not been given to it. It is essential to give priority to forest development and forest-based employment development programmes.
- Excessive importance has been given to electrification and road development, neglecting the needs of the majority. The people's first need is of year-round employment and its just remuneration. For this, it is necessary to plan such a programme that develops both the human and the natural resources of the area.

Preparation of People's Programme

The question that we now faced was that we had criticized the government's programme but what is the type of development that we want? What would be its practical form? This led to further thought and search from that perspective. A draft of 'Programme of plantation and development on the wasted, denuded forest land by the unemployed rural poor' was prepared and discussed with the Divisional Forest Officer of Gadchiroli district. The Forest Department took interest and suggested many other points. These were then discussed in the village meetings and the programme draft was finalized.

Movement for the Liberation from Alcoholism

From the women's point of view, alcoholism was the second most important problem after forests. Initially, women were hesitant to initiate discussion on the topic of alcoholism in the meeting. Once initiated, they discussed it earnestly. Money earned through hard labour goes waste on liquor, besides wife-beating and the suffering of children.

A study had been done on the problem of alcoholism in Gadchiroli with the co-operation of 'Search', an institution working in the field of service and research regarding health. It had been observed that liquor worth Rs 7 crore is sold every year in the district, either legally or illegally. In addition, about 1000 people die every year in the district due to addiction to liquor.

Through the discussions in village meetings, people have realized that, 'not only economic loss is caused due to liquor, but as a majority of the people are in an intoxicated condition, they are not able to sit and think collectively. That is why we are not organized, and can not protest against injustice done to us. We cannot save our forest and

secure our rights due to this.' Wherever people fought for nistar forests or against Trench-cum-Mound (TCM)², they decided to stop the business of liquor first and it was only then that they could succeed. In some villages, the people from surrounding villages had to say, 'We would join you on forest issues only if you stop the liquor business in your village, as we don't want to accompany you and make our situation embarrassing.' This had a favourable effect. The drunkards of Chavela village who had threatened to beat up the activists when the issue of liquor was first discussed in the meeting, realized the relationship between liquor and forests. When issues of 'Nistar Rights' and TCM came up, they took the lead to stop the business of liquor.

Tendu Leaf Movement

The people received an instrument of education through village meetings, discussions, study, answers and new questions emerging from those answers. They started experimenting with this instrument easily on every problem confronting them.

Plucking of tendu leaves is a job which lasts for a whole month from 1 May. This provides guaranteed employment for the people in this region. Every year the government gives a contract for plucking and collecting these leaves to private contractors. The minimum wage for plucking and collecting the leaves is fixed by the government. The people received a minimum wage of Rs 14 per hundred bundles of 70 leaves each in 1988.

In 1989, government declared a rate of Rs 20 per 100 bundles of tendu leaves. After much discussion among the villagers of Medhna, it was decided that Rs 20 was not enough and a fairer amount would be Rs 25 per bundle. It was strategically decided that Rs 30 per bundle would be demanded initially and then they would agree on Rs 25. Also, it made no point for only people of Medhna to demand a just wage and so it was decided that all villages lying in the area where the contractor operated had to be involved. The responsibility to inform all those villages was assigned to different people. After discussion with the other villages, a strong organization of all villages was formed. The contractor tried to break the organization by adopting various tactics, but without success. At last the contractor was forced to agree to Rs 25 per bundle on the third day. This story spread like wildfire and all contractors in the area were compelled to pay Rs 25.

The issue did not stop at this point. Some more thought was given and more decisions taken. Every year some workers come from outside the area during the tendu leaf collection period. It was noticed that some people cut down trees so that they can collect more leaves. This was done out of greed. Hence it was decided to prohibit labour from outside from entering the area and it was also decided that if anyone from the village cuts a tree, then that person will be severely fined. This decision was successfully implemented by the people and it further helped them to realize their potential and increased their confidence.

Beyond the Study

As the previous description shows, the process of enhancing understanding of people's issues moved from broad to specific, from vague to concrete, from local to macro, and from education to action to education. The cyclical nature of this process generated a great deal of understanding of issues and collective mobilization. The process did not end in Dhanora. It has since continued.

People from other Zamindari areas were observing the developments in the Dhanora area, and invitations from Murumgaon, Rangi and Potegaon Zamindari villages were received to visit their areas for a similar study. The invitations of Devsur and Gyarapatti villages of Murumgaon Zamindari were accepted on two conditions, firstly, that the meeting will last for the whole day and secondly that people (men and women in equal numbers) from twenty surrounding villages should join the meeting.

On reaching Gyarapatti, we found that people from 28 villages had gathered there. In order to enable the women to participate in the meeting, it was necessary to free them from cooking and hence it was decided to arrange for food at the venue of the meeting. Collection of money and grains was done for this. It was decided in the meeting that, as a beginning of the movement of gram-swarajya, a programme to take over nistar forests and their development and preservation be taken up initially. As a part of solving the problem, it was also decided that meetings should be organized in every village to study and understand the problems and to form a village committee of adult men and women to undertake implementation programmes. After discussing specific problems of the area and deciding on how to tackle them, we had dinner followed by collective songs and dances.

These commenced with a few people and soon others mingled and joined in smoothly. This made us think that the people of the Devsur-Gyarapatti had joined hands with those of Dhanora-Medhna and that they will be soon joined by the people of Potegaon, and then Rangji, Khutgaon, etc., so that one day the entire Gond-van (Lands of the Gonds) will reverberate with songs of freedom, equality, fraternity and justice.

Notes

1. People's traditional rights over forests, land and water are known as '*nistar* rights'. People enjoyed free rights for fuel, timber, grazing and other necessities of life until the abolition of zamindari in 1951. In the later years the government policy has been to put an end to these rights in one way or the other.
2. In many villages the work of surveying to mark the boundary between the Forest and Revenue land and the work of digging a Trench-cum-Mound (TCM) on this boundary was being done by the forest department. The people's reaction was that the TCM was being dug between the village and the forest to create an obstacle for grazing cattle as well as for not allowing them to exercise their *nistar* rights and so they were against it.

Knowledge and Social Change: An Inquiry into Participatory Research in Asia*

RAJESH TANDON

Introduction

During the past decade, innovations in research methodology have been attempted in different parts of the world. These innovations have arisen out of dissatisfaction with the dominant social science research methodology that became the bulwark of all inquiry in social problems and phenomena during the twentieth century. Critiques of traditional social science methodology have been made on the grounds of neutrality, objectivity and control by professionals. The recent criticism has been most sharply voiced by adult educators from the Third World countries where they experienced traditional social science research methodology as alienating and dehumanizing, an anti-thesis of all the principles and beliefs of adult and popular education.

The exploration and practice of alternative methodologies in research, particularly related to the problems of socio-economic injustices, has been going on in different parts of the world. Some of this has been documented and analyzed. Yet newer experiences are emerging as well and the practice is becoming further refined.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in India as well on seeking alternatives in research in development promoting activities in the field. The conceptualization of development strategies has moved away from top-down, preplanned programmes to bottom-up, peoples' initiatives. People's participation in their own development has begun to acquire central focus in these strategies. Though as yet

*This article has been extracted from the following book: *Knowledge and Social Change. An Inquiry into Participatory Research in India*, PRIA, October 1985.

scattered, efforts in research, evaluation and training have also begun to base themselves on these participatory processes. Consequently, participatory research has been and continues to be attempted in diverse settings.

Several theoretical and methodological characteristics of these experiences in participatory research are beginning to emerge. However, very little is available in the form of documentation, analysis and synthesis of these experiences. Moreover, the field level activists, organizers and educators have little material for their own learning as whatever little is available is inaccessible to them. This paper, based on the study, 'Knowledge and Social Change: An Enquiry into Participatory Research in Asia' proposes to fill this gap by documenting and analyzing several such experiences in participatory research.

Cases on Participatory Research

Seven cases constituted the basis for the whole study. In this paper three cases are briefly described from the point of view of methodology. Of the three participatory research cases, two were forest studies in Orissa and Himachal Pradesh (H.P.), and one was a baseline survey of the needs of the poor rural women in Udaipur.

1. Forest Studies

Two forest studies in Orissa and H.P. emanated from the same historical background. This background provides the context in which these studies are to be viewed.

Origins

Towards the end of 1981, some individuals and local action groups began to get concerned about certain provisions of the new draft Forest Bill (1980) that the central government was planning to introduce in parliament. A copy of the draft bill was obtained and circulated among several concerned professional and action groups to elicit their reactions. Their unanimous reactions suggested the need for organizing a workshop to discuss this bill.

Jointly organized by 14 institutions, the national workshop on a New Forest Policy was held at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi during 12-14 April 1982. It was attended by about eighty activists and professionals.

After discussions on various issues, several follow-up steps were agreed upon during this workshop. One of these steps was to conduct in-depth studies in different forest areas of the country.

The need for the forest studies arose from the realizations that the proposed forest policy of the government intended to protect forests from the forest-dwellers. The assumption behind this policy was that tribals and other forest-dwellers were the main cause for deforestation. This assumption was supported by the data provided by government's forest department in each state.

The forest department records in Orissa blamed tribals for deforestation by shifting cultivation, collection of firewood and grazing. Firewood and grazing were assigned as the main reasons for deforestation by H.P. forest department records. Therefore, any critique of or challenge to the proposed forest policy would need to be substantiated with an alternate data-base, developed from the point-of-view of tribals and forest-dwellers. The forest studies were intended to fill this gap.

Besides, the national workshop had also planned steps for enhanced mobilization of the forest-dwellers for their own organization and struggles, as it was realized that they alone through their collective efforts could ensure the development and implementation of an appropriate forest policy in the long run. It was then hoped that the forest studies could assist in this process of mobilization of the forest-dwellers.

Thus, forest studies were initiated to serve these twin objectives of developing an alternative, authentic data-base on the state of the forests and causes of deforestation, and of developing awareness and mobilization of the forest-dwellers and activists in respect of their own interests related to forests.

In August 1982, the follow-up committee of the national workshop began preparations for the forest studies. It was decided that different organizations should be asked to take responsibility for these studies in different parts of the country. While the overall focus of the studies was seen as the extent and causes of deforestation, it was felt that different study coordinators could expand the scope of the study in their area depending on the local situation and the expectations of the local groups. It was also agreed that principles of participatory research would be utilized in these studies in active collaboration with the local groups and activists of the area. The Indian Social Institute (ISI), New Delhi took the responsibility to coordinate

the study in Orissa and the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi in Himachal Pradesh (H.P.).

Orissa Forest Study

ISI, a support organization, coordinated this study with nine field-based action groups from seven districts of Orissa. The study was carried out over a period of about 18 months beginning in August 1982. The following were the key steps in the study:

1. ISI staff made field visits to several action groups in Orissa for an exploratory discussion of the study (August 1982).
2. A planning workshop was held in Kashipur (Koraput Dt.) (January 1983) to plan the study. Areas of focus and interested action groups were identified. Twenty participants from 12 local organizations attended. The study focus included extent and causes of deforestation, the linkage of tribal economy with forests, the nature of minor forest produce and its impact on tribals, cultural relevance of forests for tribals, etc.
3. Another workshop was held (March 1983) in Mahimagadi (Dhenkanal Dt.) attended by 16 participants from 9 local groups. A data collection tool (questionnaire) was finalized and choices made about the selection of villages and villagers.
4. Between April and June 1983, the activists of local action groups collected data from the field. ISI staff collected data from the government officials and secondary sources. An orientation camp for activists was held in early May 1983.
5. A workshop was held at the end of June 1983 at Kesinga (Kalahandi Dt.) to review the experience of data-collection so far and to plan further steps. The issue of overload of questionnaire (too big and cumbersome) was raised by the members of the field-based groups and it was decided to reduce the scope.
6. Further data collection in the field and preliminary analysis of data took place between July and November 1983.
7. A workshop at Khariar Road (Kalahandi Dt.) in early December 1983 was used to discuss the preliminary findings and to evolve future action.
8. This was followed by a final workshop in March 1984 at Gopalpur (Ganjam Dt.) which finalized the report and planned concrete future actions.

H.P. Forest Study

The H.P. forest study was carried out by PRIA in collaboration with three groups in three districts of H.P. It took about 18 months to complete the study beginning October 1982. The main steps in the study were as follows:

1. PRIA staff established contact with one of the action groups that attended the national workshop (October 1982). Two other groups were contacted through this group.
2. A workshop was held in mid December 1982 in Jagjithnagar with 8 activists from two local groups. The broad focus of the study and areas of investigation, sharing of responsibility and tools of data collection were evolved. The focus of the study was the extent and causes of deforestation, local forest-dwellers' role in it, the nature of the forest contract system, etc.
3. Newer groups were identified over the next three months. In the meanwhile, the first two groups dropped out of the study. The search for local partners started afresh in April 1983. It was recognized that 'ideal' field-based groups may not be available in H.P. and hence local partners must be identified from a wide range of possibilities.
4. PRIA staff collected data from government officials and secondary sources during May-June 1983.
5. One action group and two adult education programmes of the University became new local partners in the study in July 1983.
6. Three training camps and field data-collection was conducted during August-November 1983. Training camps became both data-collection events and awareness-raising occasions for local investigators.
7. Data-analysis was made and a draft report was prepared over the next two months.
8. A popular report in Hindi was prepared and published for wider local dissemination in May 1984. An English report was subsequently also prepared and published.

2. Developmental Needs of Poor Rural Women

A study of the development needs of poor rural women was launched in Girwa and Badgaon Blocks of Udaipur District in Rajasthan by Seva Mandir, a field-based voluntary organization, during 1983. As an ongoing part of its work with rural women, Seva Mandir initiated

a process of ascertaining the needs of and problems faced by poor rural women and organizing them. At the same time, Special Schemes Organization of the Government of Rajasthan and UNICEF wanted Seva Mandir to conduct a baseline survey of women's needs so that special programmes could be designed to meet these needs.

Seva Mandir utilized Participatory Research Methodology in meeting these twin objectives of organizing women at hamlet levels and influencing policy through the baseline survey.

In collecting baseline data, it was assumed that women themselves were the best source of information and analysis. So, the field staff of the Women's Development Unit of Seva Mandir assisted the poor rural women to share and analyze their experiences, which were documented and systematized as baseline survey by the field staff.

In forming hamlet level groups of women, the field staff initiated a process whereby women came together to share their experiences and analyze their situation. These women gradually become a stable group as the process of reflection and analysis led to concrete actions in respect of solving some local problems. Thus some of the steps in organizing women and in collecting baseline data were identical in this experience.

As the process of documenting the needs and problems of women was going on, government officials demanded the use of a questionnaire for survey. After considerable discussion, Seva Mandir gave in to their whims, designed a simple questionnaire of a page and a half and used it to conduct group survey of 15 workmen's groups. In the end, they realized that the survey did not add any new insights to the existing data.

At the end of the year, there were 45 groups of poor rural women (with membership ranging from 10-20) as well as comprehensive analysis of developmental needs and problems of poor rural women.

The women's groups have become stronger since then, and the document submitted by Seva Mandir to the government has already influenced the planning of some new programmes.

In this case, no support organization was involved; Seva Mandir as a field-based organization initiated the research process with local women.

Methodological Analysis

As mentioned earlier, support organisations (ISI and PRIA) were involved in Orissa and H.P. In Orissa, they were involved with nine

field-based organisations; and in H.P., with one field-based organization and two college-based adult education projects. People's organization did not exist in H.P., but cluster or village level groups of tribals existed in four districts of Orissa. In the case of the rural women, only the field-based organization (Seva Mandir) started the process. The following analysis keeps the above categorization of actors in view.

Participation and Control

The forest studies started with the initiative of support organizations. These organizations initially perceived the needs for such studies and the began the process of exploration with the local field-based organizations. This exploration in Orissa yielded positive response from nine action groups, two of which had themselves articulated the need for a systematic study. In H.P., the local field-based organizations were almost non-existent. Hence, the process of exploration took considerably more time and resulted in a compromise of selecting one action group and two adult education projects.

In both cases, initial planning of the study—its focus, areas of investigation, methods of data-collection and time scheduling—was done through a participatory process where representatives of action groups were involved with the support organization. The various workshops were seen as methods to achieve this participation.

Despite formal participation, the degree of active involvement varied considerably. In Orissa, four action groups played a more active role in planning of the study, others just agreed to go along. The groups that influenced the study most had already been building local people's organization, and were aware of and concerned about the issue of deforestation even prior to the starting of the study. Thus their own knowledge, experience and concern made it easier for them to influence the course of the study.

The involvement of local forest dwellers in the study was non-existent in the beginning. Their needs, views and opinions were gradually brought into the study as field-based organizations began the process of initial data collection. The specific interaction with forest dwellers in the context of the study began to influence field-based organizations and action groups, which in turn influenced the study. This was certainly evident in Orissa. The local people's concerns began to get articulated as problem-focus by the field-based groups.

In H.P., on the other hand, the three field-based partners of PRIA did not significantly influence the study initially. The action group suggested an additional focus in the study as its own needs—who are the forest contractors and contract labourers. This was included in the study. For the rest of the study, their participation was high, but their control over the study remained minimal. This was largely due to the fact that the three partner organizations did not have any major concern about or understanding of the issues of deforestation prior to the beginning of the study. They had themselves not raised this issue with the local people.

They got involved in the study as they were influenced by the support organization to see the importance of the issue. The training camps further sustained this initial interest through sharing of information and analysis.

However, the involvement of local forest dwellers did take place in both the studies in the form of the activists and field workers of these field-based organizations. In all the three partner groups in H.P. and in a majority of the Orissa action groups, many persons involved in the planning and conducting of the study were local forest dwellers. Thus their own involvement did bring in, to some extent, the opinions and views and concerns of the local forest dwellers into the study. An interesting aspect of control over the study was that the field-based organizations began to exercise much greater control as the study progressed. New ideas and directions were suggested after the initial round of data collection. They also controlled the use of study findings. In Orissa, the draft of the report and its initial analysis were openly discussed by action groups. They then planned follow-up action in this aspect on their own. In H.P., the local partners demanded a popular report first, which was prepared before the formal report. And their own follow-up action increased with the dissemination of the popular report. The action group in H.P. subsequently initiated a big project on social forestry.

In contrast to Forest Studies, the study of the needs of the poor women involved primarily a field-based organization and local women. The study was initiated by the field-based organization, primarily with a view to build local women's organizations. The field-based organization catalyzed the process of women coming together, sharing their problems and openly discussing the causes of those problems. The research process, to begin with, was focused upon the needs of women for women. Hence, the involvement of poor rural

women in the initial analysis of their own needs was rather high. They were also able to specify the precise focus of what was to be ascertained and also provide the underlying causes for the same. The outcomes of their own analysis were largely controlled by the women themselves.

An additional objective of baseline survey for government was subsequently added. The field-based organization then performed the function of written documentation based on collation and synthesis of experience of different groups of women. They thus evolved an additional purpose of the study—to influence government policy. It was for this additional purpose that this collation and documentation became necessary. Thus poor rural women largely controlled the processes and outcomes of the study as they defined it in the beginning. The same process was used by the field-based organization to serve another outcome of the study. The two significant ways in which government policy got influenced arose out of this experience itself: involving women in defining their problems, and group (not individual) basis for developing women's programmes. The two key principles used in the process were the main influence on the government policy.

Awareness and Empowerment

The most salient aspect of the Forest Studies was their contribution in building awareness around the issue of deforestation. In H.P., the main outcome of the study was enhanced awareness among the activists and field workers of the partner groups. They gathered insights about the issues; they understood the importance of these issues; and they decided to act on these issues. This enhanced awareness clearly gave them a push to work on the problems of forests. The action group follow-up included a social forestry programme; in case of adult education projects, little follow-up took place largely due to the fact that the field staff was transient and temporary.

The local forest dwellers developed a better awareness of issues only towards the final stages of the study. The popular report made a great impact on them. An enhanced awareness was visible only after the report was circulated and discussed. The action group and adult education projects discussed the findings written in the report with local people; many literates among the forest dwellers took copies home and narrated the findings. This also enhanced their sense of

ownership of the study, perhaps for the first time in the entire process. The sense of empowerment was only accomplished among some activists of the action group. They began to act on the basis of their newly acquired insight and confidence about the forest issue. However, another element of this empowerment among the activists arose out of their involvement in the study itself—they felt that they can now systematically conduct their own studies, for which they earlier felt they had no expertise.

The local forest dwellers in H.P. could not develop any empowerment largely due to a lack of sustained interaction with them by the field-based organizations. Since the participation and control of local forest dwellers during the early phase of the study was marginal, continued and close interaction with them was needed to generate and sustain empowerment. The two adult education projects hardly did any further local work, and the staff of the action group was just beginning a serious local effort.

On the other hand, examples of awareness raising and empowerment abound in Orissa. In all the cases, activists of the action groups have become much more aware of and sensitive to the issues of deforestation. All the nine groups began to also act on these issues by the end of the study, though initially only four were doing so. Their own sense of empowerment, both for action on forest issues and also in conducting their own future investigations, enhanced considerably as the study progressed.

Several activists of these groups have subsequently initiated, on their own, in-depth investigations of problems of land and land alienation. They are doing it with great self-confidence, which they confess they acquired through their involvement in the forest study.

In Orissa, local tribals also acquired greater awareness of these issues, the most striking of these is their enhanced sensitivity to the impact on forests of their practice of '*podu*' (shifting cultivation). Considering that tribals in most places in Orissa are economically dependent and culturally bound to this practice, it is quite interesting to know that they are debating among themselves to abandon this practice in some places.

The enhanced empowerment of tribals is also visible in Orissa. Though it is uneven in its degree in the nine locations, it is clearly visible in all. The tribals have approached officials with their own community forestry schemes; they have demanded land for afforestation in some places; they have protested when outsiders came in to

cut trees in some places; they have demanded the variety of saplings they need, not what the forest department gives, for planting in some places. This enhanced collective decision making and action taking has clearly emerged among many of them. In one case, the tribals have themselves carried out a survey on the type of saplings needed by them.

The awareness and empowerment in the case of rural women has been clearly demonstrated in the process. The process of defining and analyzing their own problems has contributed largely to enhancing their awareness of the causes of their problems. The empowerment is visible from the fact that a collective consciousness evolved to do something about their own situation. Women acted to help fellow women with their personal problems as well as with general community problems like deepening of the wells. A common activity undertaken by many women was to strain drinking water, for better health of the family. The issues varied, but women's actions showed enhanced understanding of and collective desire to act on the issues as the analysis progressed.

Mobilization and Organization-Building

The contribution of Forest Studies to mobilization of local forest dwellers and building their organizations varied considerably. In H.P., hardly any initial mobilization was visible. Local village-level organizations of forest dwellers had existed historically. But the study did not seem to enhance or strengthen these in any way.

This was largely due to the transient nature of the field staff of the adult education project, and the action group in H.P. was just beginning to get sensitized to this issue and the need for mobilization and organization building of the local people. They were earlier not focusing on the need for mobilization around the forest issue.

On the other hand, the Orissa experience was quite different. In most of the cases (seven out of nine), local tribals did get mobilized to take collective action. Protection of bamboo forest, undertaking a social forestry programme and forming local organizations are indicators of the mobilization. In some cases (three out of nine), initial beginnings were made to form local organizations around these issues. Tribals of several villages came together to plan what they could do collectively.

Two out of the four cases where local people's organizations did exist beforehand had earlier worked on the forest issue. For them the study acted as a reaffirmation of their own analysis and position, thereby strengthening their own organizations. In the other two cases, local people's organizations had not worked on the forest issue before. But they got interested and concerned about the issue as the study progressed. And their organizations are now actively pursuing these issues. This has also contributed to the strengthening of these people's organizations by adding important new issues as central concerns of the tribals.

The mobilization and organization and organization building of poor rural women is most obvious from the experience narrated earlier. Not only were 45 women's groups formed in the process, but many of these groups had initiated concrete action during the process itself on issues of concern to them. For example, one group acted to put pressure on local government officials to provide them with safe drinking water; another group has started collecting information on new income generating efforts.

Conclusion

The preceding methodological analysis of three sets of cases of participatory research, brings out some principles and patterns.

A Comparison

Though each set of cases, and each specific case, has unique aspects, a comparison of them brings out some interesting principles and patterns. Some of these are highlighted below.

- (i) The process of participation of the ordinary people in research efforts appears to be a cyclical and iterative one. Participation builds on participation, and success at each stage creates the conditions for the next stage. The control exercised by ordinary people is linked to participation, but not necessarily identical to it. The key step, participation, as well as control, appears to be the first one. The participation of ordinary people in formulating the research questions in a participatory research effort determines whether that particular effort serves their interests or not. Hence, influencing the very first step in a research effort helps in ensuring the participatory character of these efforts.
- (ii) Another important element in ensuring the participatory character of these efforts appears to be the ownership of knowledge,

reflection and learning by the ordinary people. This ownership is enhanced through the influencing of the first step, as mentioned above. Influencing the outcome of research also contributes to enhanced ownership. In the event of initiative for research coming from outside (as in the Forest Studies), it is important that greater time is spent in problem formulation and outcome identification so that ownership is enhanced. In some cases, the outcomes may not be immediate and real effect will be visible after some time (as in case of tribals in Orissa after the Forest Study). In some cases, unplanned outcomes also occur (for example, coming together of action groups in Orissa on issues other than Forest Study got catalyzed through the study). These considerations can be helpful in ensuring local ownership of the outcomes of the effort.

- (iii) Awareness of the people gets enhanced in the course of their involvement in the process of research. Both participation and control contribute towards enhanced awareness, and vice-versa. Initial variations in awareness tend to influence the participatory character of these efforts. In a single effort, different sets of actors can acquire different levels of awareness. The field workers of action groups and local forest dwellers are different on their levels of awareness through their involvement in the forest studies.
- (iv) Both awareness and action appear critical for building empowerment in any effort of participatory research. Awareness or action is not enough. When people become aware, acquire knowledge and test it in a concrete situation through action, empowerment takes place. It is the continuous linking of knowledge with action that sustains and strengthens the empowerment. The tribals of Orissa felt empowered to do something when they were able to take action on the basis of new knowledge and learning.
- (v) The process of empowerment is speeded up where local people are already aware of the issues that form the basis of participatory research. Existing concern for and interest in a set of issues, and even action on them, facilitates the development of empowerment. Where such concern or awareness does not exist, the process of empowerment, is slower and gradual. The tribals of Orissa felt empowered, the forest dwellers of H.P. did not, partly due to this initial variation in levels of awareness.

- (vi) Mobilization of people is facilitated by their participation in and control over the process. Where awareness is high and empowerment exists, mobilization is crystalized through the process of participatory research. The nature of existing organization can also contribute to, and be influenced by, the mobilization of the people. The rural women in Udaipur got mobilized around a murder case partly because high levels of awareness and empowerment existed among them.
- (vii) Organization building process is enhanced by participatory research because of its emphasis on a collective process. Participatory research is not an individual exercise. It deliberately and concretely brings people together for a collective analysis. It is this collective nexus that facilitates formation of groups and organizations and strengthening of existing organizations. The rural women of Udaipur got organized thus.
- (viii) The process of participatory research promotes meta-learning. People investigate a given reality, and also learn how to investigate in future. People get trained around a set of issues and skills, and also learn how to conduct future trainings themselves. And, people reflect upon and evaluate a given experience, activity or programme, and also learn how to design and carry out their own continuous reflection. This is the single most important contribution of participatory research. People acquire the tools of research for their continuous future use. And thereby their dependence on external expertise is gradually reduced. People become equipped to do it themselves. The field workers of action groups in Orissa and H.P. felt equipped to initiate their own research after forest studies. There are variations across cases, but there is a definite movement in this direction in all of them.

In a way then, participation and control, awareness and empowerment, and mobilization and organization building seem to interact with each other in a given situation and build on each other. Figure 1 illustrates this dynamics.

This dynamic process can be sustained over an extended period of time through continuous effort. The comparison of Orissa and H.P. forest studies suggests a pattern that either sustains or stagnates this dynamic process. It appeared that the Orissa forest study was somewhat successful in sustaining this process; the H.P. forest study could not sustain it beyond the initial phase.

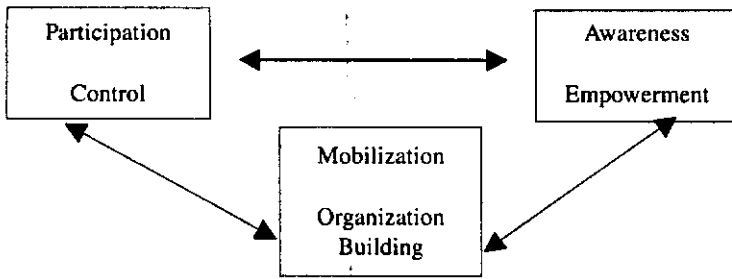


Fig. 1

The causes for these variations could be partly explained by the nature of the intervening agents.

The Nature of Intervening Agents

The cases analyzed show that there are different sets of actors in a given participatory research. There are examples where a local people's organization carries out its own investigation, reflection or learning entirely with its own resources. Such examples are few in India (and none in this study). The most frequent examples are those where a field-based organization works with local people (or their organizations) on a concrete investigation. In this set, Udaipur was in this category. A third type of example is that where a support organization works with a field-based organization, and local people and their organization. The Udaipur and H.P. cases in the set here are in this category (people's organizations were stronger in the case of Orissa and Udaipur, and weak in case of H.P.).

The support organizations and field-based organization can be called intervening agents in the process of participatory research. These intervening agents sometimes take initiative in starting the process (as in Forest Studies), sometimes local people take initiative through the field-based organizations. Certain aspects relating to the nature of the intervening agents are worth highlighting here.

1. It is important to recognize that control over the process of participatory research, is initially exercised by the intervening agent(s). This is more so when the initiative comes from them. However, this control gradually shifts over a period of time into the hands of the local people and groups. Thus it is the direction in which this control shifts over a period of time during and after the

process that is important, and not just an *a priori* nature of control. However, this shift in control does not occur automatically. The local people and groups as well as the intervening agents have to consciously work towards this shift.

2. The nature of control, and its extent, is partly determined by the nature of local organization. When a field-based organization alone is involved with local people, the relationship between them determines the extent of participation and control of the local people. Greater the organization of local people, greater is their control over the process.

When a support organization is also involved, two sets of relationships become critical.

- (a) the relationship between local and field-based organizations, and
- (b) the relationship between field-based and support organizations.

The quality of each relationship can be independently assessed, but one affects the other in the concrete case of a participatory research process. If the first relationship is such that local people have influence over the field-based organization, then the second relationship can effectively support the enhanced local control. In the examples given here, the participation of and control by field-based organizations in the process of research gradually pushed them to enhance the participation of and control by local people as well. But the degree of the shift towards enhanced control varied in these cases as the field-based organizations differed in their own relationship with local people. Thus the extent of control by local people in the Orissa forest study was higher than their counterparts. This indicates the constraints on local participation and control in a participatory research effort.

3. The nature of control also changes depending on the scope of participatory research. In the macro level investigation, local control is initially non-existent and builds only to some extent. The intervening activists of field-based organizations maintain higher control than local people in a macro level issue. On local and micro issues, the control of local people is relatively easily sustained in a participatory research effort. To enhance local control on macro issues, longer and more sustained effort is needed on the part of the intervening agents.

4. The democratic interaction between the intervening agents and local people is a key element in participatory research. This democratic interaction is built over a period of time and provides the basis for enhancing local control. The process of investigation, reflection and learning derives its strength from the quality of this democratic interaction. Conscious effort is needed to build and sustain this democratic interaction.
5. The person of the intervening agent(s) is as important as the organization. The facilitator role played by the intervening agent in participatory research derives its credibility through the person of the facilitator. The analysis of the cases highlights various aspects of this facilitator role.

Aspects of the Facilitator Role

The analysis revealed that effective participatory process requires that the following roles be played (by an external or an internal person):

- a. Initiating, activating and stimulating actors and processes
- b. Providing information and examples for other similar experiences
- c. Interpreting of external environment, help create micro-macro linkage
- d. Building skills of evaluation, research and training
- e. Recording, synthesizing, summarizing the proceedings
- f. Managing and facilitating the process, interactions and relationships
- g. Seeking information, asking questions, learning
- h. Data gathering and analysis
- i. Sensitive to actors' needs, listening, empathizing
- j. Respecting others, valuing their experiences
- k. Identifying with the missions and concerns of the organization, and maintaining a distance to develop distinctive perspective
- l. Creating conditions for open sharing, collective analysis
- m. Managing time and other resources
- n. Understanding differences among the set of actors and appearing to be open to all parties and viewpoints
- o. Using visuals (charts etc.) to record and document the movement of the process.

Thus, development of the person of the facilitator is an important element in sustaining any participatory research. This personal development is not merely an intellectual and cognitive development, but also an emotional and ideological development. The commitment and

social skills in the person of the facilitator are important for any effective participatory research effort.

The Underlying Ideology

To a large extent, the underlying ideological and philosophical framework influences the definitions and practice of participatory research. The starting point for understanding this underlying framework is a worldview: how does a society function? This is central to any understanding of participatory research. A historical analysis of our society indicates that a large number of people are poor, weak, unorganized, ignorant, oppressed, alienated and marginalized. And a few are the haves, the rich, the informed and the organized. The social relations between these two (and many-a-times more) sets or classes of people determine how the society functions. The actual form and expression of these relations will vary from one society to another. But the economic, political, social and cultural domination and control by the few of the many is a reality in all societies.

This worldwide view then suggests a theory of social transformation. How does transformation occur? With the above theory of society, the social transformation occurs when the dominated, controlled and oppressed people develop collective organizations and act in their common interests. And the process of social transformation becomes an ongoing struggle between the marginalized and the dispossessed on the one hand, and the powerful and the dominant on the other. But the form, content and shape of this struggle will vary from situation to situation and over a period of time.

It is in this context that the role of knowledge becomes critical. Firstly, the have-nots and the dominated mostly lack information and skills, and the tools to acquire that knowledge. Second, the dominant classes have increasingly used knowledge and information to maintain their domination. In the last three decades, and the future to come, knowledge is a major source of power and control. The media, research expertise and the institutions producing them are used to control the thinking of the oppressed; the influence and control over people's minds, opinions, views and beliefs is being continuously attempted by the dominant classes. Thus the oppressed are made to believe that inequality is inevitable, that they are not experts and hence know nothing, and to feel dependent on the dominant classes. This cultural and ideological hegemony over the oppressed is a major obstacle towards their collective organization and action. In fact, this

hegemony prevents them from recognizing their common interests and organizing around them.

It is in this context that participatory research has a meaning and a contribution to make. The central question, therefore, is whose interests does research, training and evaluation serve? And the answer, participatory research must serve, or cause to serve, the interests of the dominated and the oppressed, so that they can attempt to overcome these forces of hegemony.

But, how?

The contribution of participatory research is in the creation, appropriation, utilization and validation of knowledge that can help the oppressed to act collectively in their common interests.

The knowledge and skills necessary for people's collective action is created with the participation and control of the people. They are involved, either directly or through their representatives, in producing the knowledge. In order to do so, therefore, ordinary people need to learn and sharpen the tools of inquiry the methods of data collection and analysis. And, these methods can be the quantitative (survey, questionnaire, etc.) or qualitative (discussion, dialogue). However, newer methods of data collection and analysis need to be invented if participation of ordinary people in creating knowledge is to be promoted. That is why a wide range of methods—camps, tours, workshops, field activities role plays, drawings, songs, theatre, video etc.—have been invented and found useful in the production of knowledge by ordinary people. Choice of appropriate methods is also made on the criterion: which methods will promote ordinary people's participation?

However, there are issues that may require technical expertise (appropriate drinking water system for a village, ecological analysis of trees, legal aspects of a women's federation, etc.) in producing knowledge. And a group of people in a given situation may not have that expertise. This is where the people need assistance of the experts. But the assistance has to be rendered in such a way that ordinary people can appropriate that technical knowledge. Appropriation will entail absorption and integration of this knowledge with the popular knowledge of the people. The expertise has to be guided in order to facilitate this appropriation.

There are also issues on which some knowledge already exists. And much macro level statistics and analysis also exists. Ordinary people may not have access to it: they may not know that it exists, and they may not be able to use it. This knowledge also needs to be

appropriated by the people. It is here that intervening agents, individuals and organizations can play a role. The support organizations and field-based organizations can perform this role of facilitation of appropriation of knowledge by ordinary people.

It is in this context that the role of popular knowledge becomes crucial. The oppressed and the dominated have some knowledge. This is their popular knowledge. Some elements of that knowledge may be authentic and accurate; some may not be. So, the starting point in producing knowledge is the recognition of the popular knowledge. Participatory research methodology facilitates the recognition of popular knowledge. And it also creates the possibility for the oppressed and the marginalized to value their own knowledge. The process of recognition and valuing of popular knowledge contributes to the awareness-raising and empowerment. And appropriation of technical and existing knowledge further empowers them. But the integration of popular knowledge and the technical information, the identification of authentic and inauthentic elements in the popular knowledge and the acceptance or otherwise of technical information takes place in the context of concrete action. Thus mobilization and organization building aspects of participatory research provide the mechanism through which consolidation and validation of knowledge, thus created and utilized, takes place. It is also in the sense that the distinction between theory and practice disappears. The continuous, iterative process of knowing and acting, awareness and action, learning and doing exemplifies the praxis. In fact, the intertwined nature of theory and practice is demonstrated by the fact that acting also contributes to knowing, that action also creates awareness, and that doing also generates learning.

The intervening agents can assist in this process of recognition and valuation of popular knowledge, in identifying authentic and inauthentic elements in the same and in integration of technical and existing knowledge with the popular knowledge. The competencies of intervening agents in being able to play these roles needs to be examined and strengthened.

Thus participatory research can make a small contribution in the process of social transformation through knowledge, reflection and learning. Since this process of knowing, reflecting and learning entails awareness raising and empowerment, mobilization and organization-building, it has the potential to make this contribution to social transformation.

SECTION IV

Innovations in Methodology

Section Outline

Translating the methodology of participatory research into practice involves the use of unconventional methods. This section elaborates on the use of three such methods of doing participatory research, viz., Dialogue, Enumeration or Census, and Popular Theatre. These methods have been selected because they best represent the kind of work that PRIA and its partners have done in the field. Dialogue and Popular Theatre have never been considered as appropriate research methods in conventional research methodology. Enumeration through survey method, however, has found greater acceptance among 'serious' researchers.

Freire first described Dialogue as a method of PR. It presents a potent method of integrating inquiry and intervention. In the chapter entitled 'Dialogue', Rajesh Tandon describes how this method can contribute to the intermingled processes of knowing and changing. The chapter presents a case from the two-year fieldwork by the author where dialogue was used in this manner as inquiry and intervention simultaneously.

The survey method is usually employed by researchers in conventional research methodology to collect data from others and use in their reports. However, the chapter entitled 'Enumeration' demonstrates how the same tool was given in the hands of the community to collect data on themselves, and for themselves. It describes the use of the census method as an instrument of conscientization to enable the marginalized and dispossessed pavement dwellers to view their situation from a different perspective, and demand plausible solutions to their problems. As they became more aware of their common history, it led to mass mobilization and organization of the pavement dwellers, who had hitherto been divided along barriers of district, state, language and religion. The chapter describes how this tool was first put to use by SPARC (Society for Promotion of Area Resource

Centre) in a unique effort in the annals of participatory research, in which a census of 27,000 pavement dwellers was completed in a short span of four weeks in the city of Mumbai.

During the 1980s, a variety of experiments in popular theatre as a tool for social development, sprung up in various parts of the world, particularly in the Third World. These experiments differed in objective and methodology, but they all started with the notion of 'taking theatre to the people instead of expecting people to come to the theatre'. Popular theatre developed under the influence of two Latin Americans. One is Paulo Freire whose concept of conscientization—the process of enabling people to identify their problem as a consequence of a particular social order—has been a major source of ideas. The other is Augusto Boal who carries the meaning of popular theatre in the direction of making people not just the audiences but also the actors and creators of the drama.

While often used interchangeably with folk media, popular theatre represents a distinct approach from the former. Folk media is the attempt by development communicators to use 'people's media' for propagating the ideas of modernization; popular theatre on the other hand, is applied to cultural/ educational activities in which the popular classes present and critique their own understanding of the world in relation to a broader aim of structural transformation. While folk media uses the people's channels, the people's 'media' but not their ideas—it simply uses the people's mouthpiece as a more persuasive channel for the propaganda of the ruling classes. Popular theatre, on the other hand, is not only the people's voices but also their ideas and expressions on their interests. It makes people question the deeper structures, which shape their situation and the possible outcomes of various courses of action. It is built into a process of organization and struggle that leads to structural transformation.

The chapter entitled 'Popular Theatre' presents such an experience of a group of women who use theatre to study the problems of poor, scheduled caste slum women, to become more aware of their situation, and to try to solve their problems.

Dialogue*

RAJESH TANDON

The notion of inquiry as intervention in social systems has emerged only recently in respectable academic circles. Action research has been the forerunner of such an approach to integrate inquiry and intervention. However, there is beginning to emerge some consensus among the action researchers and participatory researchers (Hall, 1975; Tandon, 1979) that inquiry can be conceptualized and practiced as an intervention process. Some illustrations of such a perspective have also appeared in recent years (Brown and Tandon, 1978). Dialogue as inquiry and intervention was first described by Freire (1972) and it has since been used by Freire himself and his colleagues. Dialogue presents a potent method of integrating inquiry and intervention, and it can contribute to the intermingled processes of knowing and changing.

In Freire's (1972) conception, dialogue entails critical examination of the objective and subjective reality of people and, therefore, acts as a liberating mechanism. A dialogical approach attempts to liberate people from their passivity and silence by focusing upon their concrete situations and by encouraging them to verbalize their perceptions of the same. To that extent, a dialogue can act as a vehicle for raising people's awareness and developing common understandings of their present reality. It is to be noted here that dialogue, in order to be effective, demands critical thinking and an appreciation of the context of people who are engaged in it.

*This paper is extracted from the following sources: (1) Tandon, Rajesh (1981) 'Dialogue as Inquiry and Intervention', in *Reason*, P. and Rowen, J. (eds) *Human Inquiry*, John Wiley & Sons Limited. (2) Tandon, Rajesh (1978) 'Acquisitive Capacity and Interventions Theory: Some Theoretical Guidelines', in *Impact of Organisational Development in Underorganised Communities*, thesis submitted to Department of Organisational Behaviour, Case Western Reserve University.

Characteristics of Dialogue

- Commences with a topic of interest to the particular participants.
- Is not merely discussion, debate or argumentation. May employ special techniques to avoid this where it is a likely scenario (e.g. not getting eye contact or focusing on a central item such as a pot plant).
- Is neither adversarial nor consensus-oriented—able to ‘sit with’ different and conflicting views. There is an emphasis on generating general questioning rather than on one-to-one questioning, discussion or the giving of ‘answers’.
- All contributions are honoured, respected and heard.
- No content is excluded—all is worthy of discussion.
- People speak for themselves (‘I’) and not on behalf of others (‘they’ or ‘we’).
- It is able to sit with silences.
- Involves careful and focused listening, and the giving of attention to other’s and to ones own reactions. Involves also the suspension or ‘holding lightly’ of current beliefs, ways of thinking, assumptions, etc.
- Is held over time, possibly considerable time (at each time of meeting, e.g. two to three hours; as well as numbers of meetings, e.g. over three years). Aims to slow down automatic processes of thinking, to provide space for new ways.
- Over time it engenders trust, openness, transparency and risk-taking.
- It is an exchange, where there is an iteration of listening and hearing and speaking. It rests on collective inquiry—depending very much on what takes place between participants as they trigger new thinking and reflection in each other.
- It formally may be leaderless, or lightly facilitated. The facilitator may work only to introduce and remind people of the rules for dialogue, and gently guide people back from other conventional ‘rut-like’ ways to talking. Any leaders are participants as well.
- It seeks deeper levels of context and understanding of the roots of actions and behaviour. Able to examine assumptions and loops of thinking.

- It requires a group small enough to allow dialogue, but large enough to both be a microcosm of larger social settings and also to generate new thinking (e.g. 15–30).
 - People find their own paths to their own truths. No one is trying to 'help' or change anyone else. There is often an appearance of no goal.
 - While there may be learning collectively, there are no votes and no joint decision-making.
 - By getting insight into ways we think and feel, and ways we think (and feel) about our thinking (and feeling), people can gain individual mastery over this and their consequent acting. Participants are generally voluntary.
 - There is generally no note-taking, no recording, or taping.
 - Clearly the principles of dialogue are demanding to meet in homogeneous much less mixed and mixed power groups.
- (*Dialogue Across Difference*, by Yoland Wadsworth, Cartagena, May–June, 1997)

Inquiry with Marginal Farmers

Pre-encounter

A non-governmental voluntary agency operated in an area that is primarily agricultural and economically backward. The bulk of the population is tribal and owns small (less than ten acres) plots of land. Less than 2 per cent of the cultivated land is irrigated. Of the 230 villages in the area, only two have electricity. Since the area is hilly, only small (less than one acre) plots of land are available for cultivation. As of 1971, only about 14 per cent of the population was literate.

The agency started a programme for poor, marginal farmers in 1975. The agency identified one poor farmer each from 25 contiguous villages to act as 'peer group leaders' in their villages. These farmers were given training in techniques of modern agriculture, cooperative societies, and rural engineering. These peer group leaders were then asked to disseminate this new information and ideas among their peers in their villages. The peer group leaders were young, literate, and cultivated small (less than five acres) plots of land.

The peer group leaders were asked to organize their peers in the villages not only to disseminate the newly acquired knowledge but

also to act as instruments of socio-economic and political change in the villages. The field staff of the agency maintained regular contact with the peer group leaders and organized their monthly meetings. Every peer group leader was asked to maintain a journal of his daily peer group activities and these were periodically checked by the agency staff.

Two years after the start of the programme, the author was approached by the agency to assist them in further strengthening the peer groups. The agency staff felt that despite their training efforts, peer groups were still not organized enough to take initiatives in their common interests. The author agreed to involve himself with these peer group leaders with a view to understanding the dynamics of rural situations in India and developing insights into the processes of rural change. He agreed to enter into a dialogue with these 25 peer group leaders during one of their next monthly meetings.

During the initial discussions with the agency staff, it became clear that the training provided by the agency had essentially been a cognitive input. Most of the knowledge and ideas had flowed from the agency staff to the peer group leaders. The latter had been passive recipients of these inputs. It was felt that attempt could be made to engage in collaborative exploration of the peer group leaders' situation with a view to identifying what could possibly be done.

The author was interested in experimenting with an educational intervention strategy which would primarily focus upon the development of powerful, organized, village-based groups which can take active initiative in their common interest. This intervention was planned in the form of a training programme for the peer group leader (PGLs).

Trainer: *(The participants were asked about their understanding of the relevance of forming peer groups in the villages.)*

Why does the village need a peer group organization?
Why is it that Seva Mandir wants to build peer group organizations in certain villages?

Response: Peer group organization can help in solving the problems of the village. *(This response appeared as a summary statement after struggling with the question for over half an hour.)*

Trainer: How is it that a peer group can solve the problem of the village?

Response: An organization of villagers is more powerful than individual villagers. *(This statement appeared as the gist of their discussion that lasted about 30 minutes; mostly it was a period of silence and brief responses. In order to highlight to obstacles to development of the village, an analysis of developmental process in the context of Indian villages was undertaken.)*

Trainer: Can you explain how the various developmental efforts of the government during the past 30 years have or have not reached the rural poor?

Response: *(from the Pura group)* For example education and health have not reached our village so far.

Response: *(from the Pati group)* While education has reached our village, health has not.
(These responses were preceded by mumblings and soft exchanges among the group members.)

Trainer: According to your description, two channels of development between the rural poor and the resource providers, i.e., the government, can be identified. There are certain developmental items like education which come through the panchayat samiti. There are other developmental items like health which come through the various government agencies. Can you identify the different government officials who help the developmental work in the village?

Response: Gram Sevak,¹ Patwari,² teacher, policeman, Malaria Inspector, Cooperative Society Manager, etc. *(Three persons gave most of the answers; others sat quietly)*

Trainer: Why is it then that developmental work, e.g., education and health, has not reached some villages while it has reached others? *(This question led to long pauses, brief remarks and a lot of hesitation; the following response was the summary of what was verbalized.)*

Response: Because villagers are illiterate; they are weak; they are lazy.

Trainer: That means if you are organized, if you become literate, and if you become active in your own interest, then it is possible that your villages can be developed. *(Discussion among the participants for about an hour was low-key.)* We have seen that both the channels of

development, i.e., the panchayat samiti and the government officials, have to be continuously pressurized; they have to recognize that we are strong and vocal, and that we are not going to sit idle. If we are organized, strong and powerful, it is conceivable that the panchayat samiti and the various government officials will be forced to listen to and deal with our problems. However, I want to warn you that in the process of becoming organized and strong, you will face a lot of difficulties. Those vested interests, e.g., the local rich and powerful persons, governmental officials and panchayat samiti members, whose interests will be challenged by the emergence of strong village-based organizations, will create conditions for the failure of emerging village-based organization. They will try to buy off or threaten you and create similar hurdles on your way to getting powerfully organized so the question is: are you prepared to face those threats and dangers? *(About four hours have passed since the beginning of this training. Discussion has been mostly low-key and marked by long periods of silence; struggle to overcome hesitation can be observed in the brief, short sentences and phrases being used. About two persons from each group act as spokesmen of their respective groups.)*

(The two peer groups then took some time to discuss and understand the issues raised so far in the context of developing their organisations. Within the group, discussions have become more lively, and all seem to be participating. They have spent about an hour in their groups and a lot of mutual explaining and clarifying can be observed. Having developed an understanding of the costs and gains involved in getting organised and having shown a willingness to go ahead with their peer group organisations, further dialogue with the trainer begins.)

Trainer:

In fact, if your group members start facing these types of obstacles then you should know that your organization is getting stronger. Moreover, why is it that Seva Mándir has appointed one person from each village to

act as a peer group leader? (*Discussion among the participants was again very soft and limited.*) It is difficult for the Seva Mandir to call all the villagers for sharing information with them. Therefore, one person from each village has been identified to act as a contact person and prime mover for initial work between Seva Mandir and the villagers. This does not imply that only the leader is responsible for all the developmental work. I would suggest that you discuss in your groups how you are going to share the responsibility of the various tasks which the village peer organization will face. Moreover you might also discuss the objectives of your peer organization.

(Each of the two groups then discussed the above-mentioned issues and there was a general agreement, verbalized by all of them, that they are prepared to equally share the responsibility of the peer organization. This time the discussion was much more lively and loud. More than an hour was spent within groups and more and more people started to share their views clearly. It was evening by then and so the session was folded.)

(One of the groups had raised the question as to how exploitation of the villagers by the various governance officials could be curtailed. In response to this question, the trainer introduced an exercise.)

Trainer: There is a scheme just started by the government for improving health in the villages. The government wants two persons from each village panchayat to be in Udaipur for a period of three months. After the training, these people will be sent back to their villages with a stock of medicines which they will distribute for primary health care. You represent the two village panchayats from your area. I would like you to select unanimously two persons from each of your groups for the proposed training. You may discuss among yourselves and decide whom you want to recommend but there will be a secret ballot to confirm your choice. If even one person disagrees with the choice made in the secret ballot, then the election will be void.

(The two groups recommended two persons each. The secret ballot was conducted. In Pura, one person got 8 and another 9 votes out of 10. Similarly in Pati, one candidate got 9 and another 11 out of 12 votes. It was evident that internal dissension in the groups was being reflected in the results of the secret ballot. The groups were then instructed to reconsider their nomination and put the candidates up again for secret ballot. In case no unanimity emerged this time, there would be no representatives from those panchayats for this health scheme.)

(While in Pati the candidates were changed, they remained the same in Pura. Roop Lal and Thawar Chand were the candidates earlier, and Vir Chand and Kanji were the candidates now in Pati. This time the results of the secret ballot were unanimous. The trainer started processing the exercise.)

Trainer: I would like to ask the Pati group about the reasons for changing their candidates in the second round.

Response: *(from the Pati group)* We had an internal election to determine the candidates initially. While Roop Lal and Kanji become high scorers, the name of Thawar Chand was recommended by a few members to replace Kanji. This led to some dissatisfaction among a couple of members who privately expressed it during the secret ballot. Moreover, there were some who were confused during the ballot about the voting procedure. In the first round, no attempt was made to explain the voting procedure to everyone. When the group met after knowing the results of the first round, Kanji expressed his desire to be nominated by the group. Then the group changed the representatives and Kanji along with Vir Chand was nominated. This time, Kanji made a special effort to explain the voting procedure to all the members. *(He admitted that he showed more interest in the election because he was a candidate the second time.)* *(Most of the above response was made by two members of the Pati group but others chipped in their opinions and points of view, too. It looked more like a group presentation than individual.)*

(The trainer asked the same question to the other group. The Pura group explained the reasons for initial differences as a lack of clear understanding of voting procedure. However, the results of the first round came as a shock to them and they decided to explain the voting procedure thoroughly to all members before the second round of voting. The trainer then asked the otherwise silent members of the various groups, especially the Pura group, to discuss with each other and to explain to each other, in their local dialect, the learning from this exercise. At this point they were also told that this election was an exercise in testing internal solidarity of the groups. When some members showed hesitancy in talking, the trainer allowed time and patience for them to feel free to say whatever they wanted to say. After some time, two members from the Pura group started talking and very soon all the participants were intensely engaged in discussing the issue of internal solidarity and how to counteract external attempts to create internal differences.)

(After the tea break, the trainer introduced another exercise to test and demonstrate the dynamics of inter-group decision-making. Each group was asked to nominate two persons. These four persons would have to select one representative among themselves who would be made responsible for a very important developmental work. Moreover, this selected representative would be monetarily compensated for this job. These four persons would sit right here to select this representative for the entire group. While doing this selection, they would have to specify the criteria of selection. When the groups are nominating two persons, they should attempt to send the generally silent members.)

(When these four persons assembled in a fish bowl, they were hesitant in their selection process. With very little discussion, they came up with one person from Pura. This committee of four was then asked to confirm the choice with their respective groups. While the Pura group agreed to this choice, the Pati group was not satisfied. After briefing their two representatives,

the four person committee met again to reselect the representative. One of the Pati representatives was such a smooth and influential talker that the two representatives of Pura accepted this choice of representative from Pati. They decided that one of them had to make the compromise. The trainer then started processing this exercise.)

Trainer: What have you learned from the above exercise?

Response: In order to select one or two representatives from a large area, mutual trust and understanding is critical. We have to arrange a number of meetings in order to develop a consensus for the desired representation. This requires interest in involving others and hard work to ensure the same.

(After an afternoon of volleyball by the participants, the programme started again after dinner. In order to develop further skills among the participants in joint decision-making and consensus-building, the groups were given another task.)

Trainer: To the extent that personal honesty is an important characteristic for rural leadership, I would like to reward Rs 5 to one person selected by you who rates high in personal honesty. In order to choose this person, you may follow the procedure of the previous exercise and send two of your representatives from each group for a fishbowl in the middle.

(Each group nominated two persons for the fishbowl. Interestingly enough, both the groups nominated their silent members. In their discussion, these four persons decided that personal knowledge based on the previous activities of an individual was the only basis for determining personal honesty. Then these four persons came up with the names of two persons, one each from the two groups. Since there was a constraint in terms of choosing only one person, the group again faced the difficulty of compromise. When the group was unable to reach the decision, it was recommended that one person from the observers could be invited for consultation. Through his intervention this committee of four selected one person from Pura for high personal hon-

esty. Apparently, it was a magnanimous gesture on the part of the peer leader of Pati. The committee of four was unanimous on this choice. In order to test the acceptance of this decision by their respective groups, they were asked to ascertain the opinions of their constituency.)

(It turned out that group members from Pati were disappointed because nobody was selected from their group for personal honesty. It was seen as an emotional affront to the Pati group since no person of high personal honesty was selected from it. The trainer intervened to reconvene the committee of four to reassess their choice. They were asked the basis on which the Pura person was selected; especially the question was posed to the Pati representatives.)

(This reassessment led to another dead-lock in the group. These four were sent back to their constituencies and each group was asked to deliberate upon the issue. This time a new set of representatives, two each from the fishbowl. The new representatives were more vocal and they presented data-based logic for nominating persons from their own group. The pattern of discussion in the committee of four continued to be self-oriented just as in the beginning; each set of representatives started the discussion by nominating one person from their group; none of them approached this problem from a perspective which might reflect overall concern for the community. On the intervention of the trainer, the group of four agreed to call the two recommended persons for a personal interview in order to obtain more information about them. During this interview process, the Pati representatives were much more active and strategic in their questions. From the interviews it could be seen that they had established the supremacy of their recommended candidate. So when the group of four started making the decision for nominating, a person from Pati was nominated again.)

(The various dynamics obtained in the above exercise were pointed out by the trainer. First, the self-orientation of the group representatives which was coming in

their way of making a consensus choice. Secondly, their repetition of the morning pattern was highlighted. It was mentioned that due to aggressive logic and presentation of the Pati representatives, the Pura group lost out again. While they had one of their men nominated in the first round, his name was deleted during the second round of discussion. It was emphasized that inability to present ones interests in a forceful and united fashion may result in exploitation by others and inadequate response to our needs.)

(The identification of this dynamic for the Pura group appeared to have agitated the group members. While others dispersed for the night, the Pura group continued their high-pitched discussion late into the night.)

Trainer: Who are the people in your village who irritate you or cause difficulty for you?

Response: *(Pura group)* Patwari—in matters of land.

Response: *(Pati group)* Forest officer—in matters of obtaining wood for house construction.

Trainer: Let the Pura group discuss a strategy to meet with their Patwari. *(Patwari was role-played by one of the staff members. The Pati group started preparing itself to meet the forest officer.)*

(Each of these groups was asked to enter in a role-play based on the most pressing problems of their village identified by them. This was intended to develop an understanding of skills and strategy needed to confront these problems.)

Role Play by the Pura Group

After discussion among themselves, one person from the group came to the Patwari. The Patwari asked for Rs 20 to do his job. This person said to him with folded hands—"I am poor; I cannot pay this fee." The Patwari responded that the fee is universal and the government does not distinguish between the rich and the poor. Disappointed, that person left. After discussion within the group, two more persons came to the Patwari and begged him with folded hands for consideration. The Patwari was adamant. The conflict could not be resolved.

Role Play by Pati Group

After discussion among themselves, the whole group approached the forest officer for obtaining wood for house construction. The forest officer told them that he has not received government orders for chopping down the trees as yet. He is expecting the order any day and asked them to come back after a few days.

When one of them pointed out that no such orders were necessary last month, the forest officer said that this is a new system. When they asked him to give a rough estimate of the cost, he quoted a figure which was much higher than the usual. When asked about this change in cost, he responded that there had been no change in price. Anyway, the whole group returned to meet him after a couple of days and still the forest officer was hesitant in issuing the orders. Promptly the group threatened him with complaint to his boss.

(These two role-plays were so contrasting in the process as well as the outcome that all could see which strategy worked and which did not. The trainer pointed out three key differences between the two role plays in terms of their contribution to task accomplishment: first, approaching the official in a group of 8 to 10 persons as opposed to individual; second, presenting the problem in a clear and forthright manner; and third, threatening further action with higher ups as opposed to begging for consideration and pity.)

(The trainer highlighted that in such a stalemate situation where the officer does not agree to do the job even after the threat, further action is called for. While the group is approaching the higher officials for action against the forest officer, some interim arrangements must be made to ensure that the person who needs a house immediately does not remain homeless. If no such arrangement is made, he will approach the forest officer privately and offer him the 'fees' necessary to obtain wood for constructing his house. It is conceivable that villagers could contribute some wood on their own to build the house for this person or to provide temporary shelter for his family.)

(Finally, four quiet members from the two groups were called to role play a similar exercise with the Sarpanch.)

When these people approached the Sarpanch for obtaining his signatures on one of their applications, he asked for a fee of Rs 10. His point was that this fee is needed for the purposes of development of the villages. He announced that the government had given authority to the Panchayat to collect fees in order to finance various devel-

opmental projects. When somebody pointed out that the fees cannot be charged without a 'chorum', he confidently said that the chorum can approve this any time. In fact, the other ward 'panchas' were his own favourites. Suddenly, one person pointed out that the Sarpanch was elected only by them. And so he threatened the Sarpanch that he could be changed in the forthcoming Panchayat elections.

(The trainer emphasized the need for organizing across the villages in order to select their own Sarpanch in the forthcoming elections. It was pointed out that by electing an honest and sincere Sarpanch of their choice, they might ensure continued development of their villages.)

(By this time the groups appeared ready to do some action- planning. The trainer then asked each group to identify three problems of their village that they want to take on as a peer group for solution over the next six months.)

After discussion among themselves which lasted over an hour, the groups came out with the following problems:

- Pati group:
1. Connecting road between the village and the main road.
 2. Problem of drinking water, therefore, need a hand pump.
 3. No provision for drinking water for the cattle.
- Pura group:
1. No post office.
 2. Getting canal from the nearby dam.
 3. Primary school in the village.

(When the trainer noticed that the election of the new Sarpanch was not mentioned by any of the groups, he asked this question. This was based on his previous experience with the two peer groups of Bawalwada region. The Pura group said that they wanted a Sarpanch from their own village because the previous Sarpanch was from the other village. However, they had not done anything so far in this direction. Though the Pati group also had not done anything so far, its peer leader was willing to fight for the Sarpanch. The trainer suggested that the Meena village was also within the Gram Panchayat of Pati. And since we have a peer group there which is also looking for a change in local leadership, the two peer groups can combine their efforts to make it more successful. The Pura leader said that he was ready to contest for ward panch.)

Trainer: Now that you have identified the problems that you want to take up as a peer group, I would suggest that

you engage in developing detailed plans for the same. It is one thing to desire the solution of a problem, and it is quite another to plan and execute it.

(The trainer then explained briefly the various ingredients of planning with special emphasis on the process of participative planning. This presentation included items like identification of objectives, resources necessary, detailed activities to be undertaken, time schedule, and assignment of duties. It also included items of reporting, writing, and monitoring. The two groups then broke out to work on detailed plans for each of the three problems that they have identified.)

(This exercise took about three hours and it had to be done on paper. Then the groups reassembled and made their presentations.)

Response:

(Pati group)

Problem 1: Connecting road: Hold the meeting of the village on 8 November 1977. Discuss this issue and seek ways of obtaining government assistance. To give a report of this effect to the Block Development Officer (BDO) by November 15. If no response from the B.D.O., give a reminder after 15 days. A copy of the reminder to be sent to the district collector (D.C.). By December 10, five persons from the village will go to meet the district collector. In the meanwhile, every household from the village will be persuaded to arrange its share of help in cash or kind.

Problem 2: Drinking water: In the meeting on November 8, discuss the issue of drinking water and send a letter of request to the B.D.O. asking for installing hand-pumps. The request will be certified by the Gram Panchayat, and if not, sent without certification. If no response by December 10, go and meet the district collector. If the above scheme is accepted, villagers will be persuaded to provide free labour.

Problem 3: Water for cattle: Discuss the issue in the meeting of November 8. A request letter signed by everyone is to be carried to the B.D.O. by five villagers before November 15. A letter to the D.C. if no response by December 10.

Response: (Pura group)

Problem 1: No post office: Hold the meeting of the village on October 15 to discuss the issue. Send a letter of request to Udaipur by October 25. In the meanwhile, find out the relevant authority in the postal department to whom the letter will be addressed. In the event of no response by the end of November, approach the D.C.

Problem 2: Canal: Since it involves other villages in the vicinity, meeting to be arranged by November 1. Each member of the peer group will go to different villages, discuss this problem, and invite them to the meeting. A report signed by persons from all the villages will be sent to the B.D.O., irrigation department and local M.L.A.³ Five persons from the village will meet the M.L.A. by November 25. In the meanwhile, approach the irrigation department for survey purposes.

Problem 3: Primary school: Since this problem has been going on for the last two months, continued effort will be made to get the school sanctioned quickly. However, in the event of further delay, some alternative arrangement can be made locally. The teacher of the night school could be persuaded to start a class for children for two to three hours in the morning.

(The above was followed by a closing session where the groups were asked to recapitulate the happenings of the last three days and highlight their learnings. An attempt was made by the trainer to integrate and reemphasize the key issues.)

(The group from Pati dispersed after this. However, the trainer was asked by the Pura group to stay for another hour. The discussion that followed was on different socio-economic issues bothering the members. It could be seen that left to themselves, even the quieter members of the group become very open. The trainer felt that, the Pura group being the weakest and the more hesitant of the two, separate discussions with them avoided crowding and put them at ease. It was evident that this separation was needed to allow them free expression and consolidation of the three days. The issues included drinking practices, dowry system⁴ superstitions, need for literacy, advancement of women, etc.)

(Before the groups left, a date for a follow-up meeting, to be held roughly after six weeks, was fixed. The follow-up was to take place separately for the two groups in their own villages.)

Implications

The above case highlights the close connection between inquiry and intervention. It indicates that the processes of understanding and changing were taking place simultaneously. Dialogue as the principal method led to both enhanced understanding and significant changes. Dialogue becomes the vehicle for critical consciousness and praxis (Freire, 1970). Action and reflection together can generate understanding and bring about changes. Therefore, dialogue acts as a method to integrate inquiry and intervention. Several implications follow from the notion of dialogue as inquiry and intervention. The case presented above highlights some of these implications.

(1) *Dialogue as inquiry and intervention has mutual impact.* The traditional paradigm emphasizes distinction of researcher and subjects. They are seen as two separate parties; and inquiry is the process of researcher's knowing about subjects. In the traditional research paradigm, the process of inquiry does not entail any impact on the researcher, nor on the subjects. However, this is not so in dialogue as inquiry and intervention. Both the researcher and the subjects learn from each other; they also learn together from the very situation that they are a part of and are engaged in analysis of. The interests of both parties are mutually inclusive and supportive in dialogue.

The case presented here demonstrates this point clearly. The dialogue during the training had significant impact on the peer group leaders. Their levels of initiatives increased significantly and they had acquired greater collective influence in their villages. They developed an understanding of the dynamics of their poverty and made attempts to counter it.

Similarly, the researcher was influenced by those meetings. The author experienced discomfort in the village situation and had to unlearn his urban stereotypes. Understanding and inquiry become possible only afterwards. In dialogues with peer group leaders, he obtained insights into their lives and rural situation. In jointly analyzing the actions of peer group leaders, he developed an understanding of processes of rural change. His emotional and cognitive orientations were first challenged by the situation and then modified by dialogues.

(2) The second implication relates to the concept of validity in research. Simply stated, validity implies an authentic representation of reality. Traditional research paradigm emphasizes an elaborate set of criteria for validity. The dialogue as a method of inquiry and intervention negates some of these criteria of validity. The data collection process that is most relevant to both parties determines its validity. When the data collection process is disjointed from the context and content of dialogues, it becomes invalid. This makes it imperative for the researcher to be inventive about his methods of data collection. The challenge to innovate such methods of data-collection can be met most successfully in a collaborative effort between the researcher and the subjects. The researcher alone cannot set the limits of validity in such a research process. Consensual validation that is relevant and meaningful to both parties can facilitate innovation in the data collection process.

(3) As argued earlier, such a process of inquiry has substantial impact on people and their lives. To the extent that there is impact on people, voluntariness of the researcher is a myth. Dialogue as inquiry and intervention thus becomes a political and ideological process. The ideological and political implications have two primary aspects. First, the initiation of inquiry depends upon the acceptance of the researcher's value positions by those who are his relevant 'clients'. In this case, the author's beliefs and motives were ascertained by agency staff and marginal farmers before inquiry could begin. It is important to note that verbal statements of value positions are not enough; behavioural congruence with those values needs to be established with the 'clients'. It was not enough for the author to tell the agency staff that he was for the rural poor. They believed it only when they saw the author in action.

The second aspect relates to the political consequences of ideological positions of the researcher. When the researcher's values are in alliance with one class, antagonists to the researcher also exist in the same social situation.

Thus, the researcher has enemies too, and this may have repercussions on the inquiry—from subtle sabotage to physical injury to the researcher.

Dialogues in this case resulted in increased organization and empowerment of marginal farmers. As some peer groups become active in the politics of panchayat elections, they challenged those in positions of power. There were also some instances of political and

physical confrontations. The author had his own fears of physical assault, based on his being openly identified with the marginal farmers, especially during field visits. Similar fears related to possible adverse repercussions on his employment if political influence was used by those whose power positions were challenged by the marginal farmers. As the process proceeded further, such fears intensified. While nothing noteworthy happened in this regard, it is important to underscore the political nature of such inquiry so that enthusiastic researchers do not find themselves surprised, caught unprepared in the midst of a major political conflict. At the same time, researchers need to be cautioned so that they do not unwittingly act to subvert their own value positions by supporting the wrong side.

(4) When the processes of knowing and changing occur simultaneously, the researchers face a dilemma. If the situation under study undergoes changes by the process of study, then what is finally studied is something different from what was originally intended. Dialogue as inquiry and intervention presents this dilemma. The dialogue generates both understanding and change. To that extent, it contaminates the situation it purports to study.

In this case, the rural situation obtaining in the villages of peer group leaders was altered after the training. As peer group leaders took more initiatives and became more empowered, the village situation underwent changes. What the researcher and the farmers then understood was the changed village situation and the dynamics of change. It was then possible to understand why the earlier village situation was the way it was.

This indicates one method of studying underorganized systems. L.D. Brown describes underorganized systems as those which are characterized by lack of regulation and formal structures, unclear purposes and poorly defined boundaries. Dialogue as inquiry and intervention may be the only possible way to study such systems. Any attempt to study underorganized systems will make them more organized. Dialogue will certainly do that; therefore, it is through the process of organizing the underorganized systems that one can understand the forces that were keeping it underorganized. Dialogue as inquiry and intervention can help in that.

Notes

1. Gram Sevak is the village level worker (VLW) who performs agricultural extension functions.
2. Patwari is the clerk who maintains land records.
3. M.L.A. is the elected representative to the state legislative assembly.
4. The system of bride price among tribals is called 'Dapa'. It is the reverse of dowry as the groom has to pay a certain amount of cash to the bride's father before marrying her.

References

- Brown, L.D. and Tandon, R. (1978) 'Interviews as Catalysts in a Community Setting', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63, 197-205.
- Hall, Budd (1975) 'Participatory Research, Popular Knowledge and Power: A Personal Reflection', *Convergence*, Vol. VII, No. 2.
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Herder and Herder, New York.
- Tandon, Rajesh (1979), 'Participatory Research: An Exploratory Statement', paper presented in Participatory Research meet held at New Delhi, February 7-9, 1979.

Enumeration*

SRILATHA BATLIWALA AND SHEELA PATEL

In 1985, the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centre (SPARC) undertook an enumeration of over 6,000 households of pavement dwellers in the island city of Mumbai (See *We the Invisible*, Bombay: SPARC, 1985). That census was the formal expression of a participatory exercise undertaken by SPARC to help isolated groups of pavement dwellers develop insights about their own situation and that of others like them. Because the census employed formal data collection methods and reporting style, it became a means to communicate with policy makers at various levels in government.

This helped develop insights into the potential of such a large scale enumeration. It also clarified the necessity for a network of strong grassroots organizations with different capabilities. Field and research objectives were seen as having to be oriented, not to static single dimensional data gathering, but instead, as linked to a process which sparks off a series of distinct responses for the variety of people who participate.

This description is an ambitious attempt to describe the richness of participatory enumeration. It is especially ambitious because, given our involvement in the process, it is not easy to be objective.

SPARC was working at the time with only pavement dwellers and attempting to develop women's participation in community decision making. In fact, much of the preliminary gathering of information about pavement dwellings was carried out in a manner that gave women the confidence to use this knowledge.

*This article has drawn extensively from the following two papers: (1) Batliwala, Srilatha and Patel, Sheela (1985), *A Census as a Participatory Research Exercise—Case Study of SPARC's Pavement Dweller Census*. This paper was presented at the World Congress of Sociology, 1985; (2) Patel, Sheela (1988) 'Enumeration as a tool for man mobilization: Dharavi Census', in *Convergence*, Vol. XXI, Numbers 2 & 3, 1988, pp. 123-32.

At that point, representatives of the NSDF (National Slum Dwellers Federation) approached SPARC to inquire into the methodology of the enumeration. Soon some very interesting points emerged in the course of discussion: for one, slum dwellers constantly fight for better basic amenities and land use. Allocations are made on the basis of official enumerations which are unreliable because they are highly selective, and often tend to ignore the existence of most poor urban groups.

It also became clear that slum dwellers and their organizations are very ill-informed about urban programmes. It is as if a desert dweller arrived at the oasis but was denied water because he did not know the protocol. Ignorance denies access: even the NSDF, confident of their organizational capabilities, had much to learn from this enumeration.

SPARC and NSDF in their working relationship focused on the question of how this Dharavi census could be harnessed to the cause of the urban poor. Initially we had stimulating discussion of techniques and of existing lacunae in research. We pooled information about what rules and regulations governing amenities meant for the poor—further highlighting present ignorance. The general state of misinformation amongst the poor and the misdirection of organizational and activist energies was brought home forcefully.

For instance, every slum group in Bombay is fighting for amenities, yet little is known of the overall context which creates this present low allocation, nor are means available to the poor to demand a better allocation of basic services.

The Enumeration as a Path to Better Allocation

Few enumerations accurately represent people. There is an interesting pattern: a government department in need of statistics carries out a survey. Later, the slum people find that through a law only those who were listed in that particular headcount have certain rights to either a new land lease or inclusion in the general upgrading of that slum.

Such back-dated government censuses act as gates which restrict entry and participation. They cannot be challenged by slum dwellers—it is too late. Unaware of the significance of statistics, their unfamiliarity robs them of access to census-dependent services. Yet, the paradox lies in the fact that in a country like India which seeks to allocate state resources for the alleviation of poverty, these very

same statistics are again the basis for allocation of funds for the poor. Thus the very same exercise of enumeration by government first acknowledged the existence of some groups only, and gave them some resources, later lower level of allocations were also made on the same basis.

Past enumerations of slums included Dharavi. As a result of several such government surveys, the estimated population in Dharavi as per government records were 55,000 families. Later, it will be seen that the population as per the people's census was 125,000 families. Further, the government also decided that since in their records, only 35,000 people had records, only that number was to be the 'recipients' of the proposed schemes for Dharavi.

Enumeration as a Tool for Organization Building

Most urban centres in India witness the paradox; on the one hand 30 to 50 per cent of the urban population can fall into the category of 'urban poor' by most accepted indexes of income, housing, nutrition and so on. However, there is no organized strength to seek resources for themselves. Instead the majority allows itself to be seen as isolated pockets of poor. Discussions with the NSDF and other poverty groups had indicated that while everyone was now ready to acknowledge that urban poor are the major segment of the city population, no one—neither the city fathers nor the poor—seemed to accept this information. The exercise of a census in which all groups participate to collate statistics which they then all learn to understand, and learn to interpret can help build coherent federations.

There is a magical quality to creating knowledge out of seemingly individual information. Instead of being the mere objective of research, people pool what they know to gain knowledge of their community, and the excitement of using statistics spreads by word of mouth and creates a growing motivation. The mobilization of groups snowballs.

The value of participatory surveys has to be seen in yet another context. Especially in cities, information is the basis of the currently established hierarchy. If leadership at local, community or city level is analyzed, we see that it is their strength; and not the traditional virtues of charisma or age. Why do 'dadas' and 'goondas' (touts) hold sway in the local community? Not because they are popular, but only they know how city systems work for the poor. They know how to

get ration cards or release without bail from the police station. People's isolation, and powerlessness accompanied by threats of violence, are the basis of their control.

Most rural migrants into the city, despite living in the city for several years, are unable to grasp the very basic differences which exist between urban and rural systems. Although services for education and health are available, the poor rarely make use of them.

In this situation the participatory census can become the basis of transformation. It begins with a set of questions which accompany the 'head count'. Each group of people collects this information about itself, then passes it to the collation point. The numbers in front of them represent their own experiences. A familiar frame of reference to view statistics is now established.

This organizational work, can have a structure, process and content which emerges from within. On this foundation, other processes can be built.

The Backdrop—What Led to the Census?

A brief review of SPARC's objectives and work from January to August 1985 is a necessary prelude to understand how the pavement dweller census came about.

SPARC was convinced with the idea of working with the poorest of poor urban women, which in Mumbai's context means the pavement dwellers. We chose to begin our work within the confines of 'H' ward (the administrative unit of the city council), an area with a high density of pavement slums, or 'clusters' as we call them.

Our first task was to locate all the clusters in the wards, i.e. to systematically 'map' them. Using an official street map of the areas, we walked every street and lane in concentric circles, marking every group of pavement huts on the map until the centre point was reached. The mapping exercise was also meant to acquaint ourselves with the people—especially women—and vice-versa. The most common questions asked were, 'Who are you? What are you going to do? If you are social workers, why don't you give us something?'

It was from this very early stage that we introduced our concept of participation in the way these questions were fielded: we were a group of people interested in the problems of pavement women. We did not know what we would do. We had nothing to give. We wanted to sit and talk with women and see if we could understand their problems and work together to find solutions.

During the visits to each of the identified clusters which followed mapping, we soon realized that women know very little about their clusters as a whole. For example, they did not know how many families lived in their clusters, where they were from or how long that particular settlement had been there. Indeed, there had really been no need for them to know these things. But if SPARC's objective was to first build bridges across the women within each cluster, and later across clusters, then generating awareness of the community as a whole and creating a feeling of common cause was important.

To do this, we again utilized a very informal participatory research approach; a 'cluster profile' comprising some twenty basic items of information about the community, was devised. It included the place of origin of the different families in the cluster, their duration of residence in the current location and in Mumbai city, major occupations of the men, women and children, how many possessed ration cards (an important identification and legal document in India), how many were registered voters, water sources, toilets and health facilities used. The cluster profile achieved several ends:

1. It provided useful data about the community to the people and to us;
2. It enabled women to learn about and become aware of their own clusters while sharing information with us;
3. Since the cluster profile required women to consult each other before providing answers acceptable to all, it initiated the process of collective reflection and viewing their environment and daily life objectively; and
4. It established the process of collecting, sharing and analyzing information together as the hallmark of SPARC's approach.

One Example Will Serve to Prove the Point

Women in one cluster wanted to get ration cards and explained the failure of their past attempts to do so through the usual middleman. Would we get them cards? No, but we could all go together to the ration office and find out how to get them. In this exercise, even finding out the location of the ration office was done together, along with going there, meeting the ration officer, learning the procedure, etc. Thereafter, we only played the role of scribe to fill in the application forms, though each woman had to independently get her family details which were required on the form.

For us, the value of the participatory approach does not lie so much in the achievement of the objective or goal, but in the process. In the above illustration, for example, women did not merely learn how to get ration cards, but gained experience and confidence in dealing with the system—a confidence that can be carried over to tackling a whole range of problems in their lives.

Feedback of cluster profile information across clusters and regular meetings with women from the various clusters formed the bulk of our work until the onset of the monsoon in June when the fury of the rains caused a serious disruption of our work. We were just beginning to resume our normal routine when a historic event occurred which led, eventually, to the massive census which is the subject of this paper.

The Supreme Court Judgement

On 11 July 1985, the Supreme Court of India delivered judgement on what had come to be called 'The Pavement Dweller Case' (Olga Tollis and others vs. Bombay Municipal Corporation). This was the outcome of a four-year-long legal battle which began in July 1981 when, overnight, thousands of pavement dwellings were demolished by municipal authorities and their hapless dwellers departed from Bombay City. A Bombay journalist, among others, sought and obtained a stay order from the Bombay High Court contending that both the demolitions and the deportation of an Indian Citizen from a city of their Union was completely illegal. The case soon moved to the Supreme Court, which delivered the now historic judgement granting that the Bombay Municipal Corporation (hereafter BMC) Act of 1888 was both legal and constitutional. This act authorizes the BMC to demolish all illegal encroachments on public lands, including homes, *without providing any alternative shelter sites to the affected*. By upholding the BMC Act, the Supreme Court dealt another blow to the poor even while paying prodigious lip service to the socio-economic realities which forced them to migrate to the cities for survival and create for themselves the only form of housing which they could afford, i.e. on the pavement or on vacant lands.

The impact of the Supreme Court Judgement on both SPARC and the nearly 3,000 pavement families we were working with was devastating. While we had, when choosing to work with pavement dwellers, anticipated this eventuality to some extent, we had hoped that the

highest court in the land would consider the plight of the marginalized and dishoused in their judgement and provide them a just and human alternative.

As many families came to us for advice, information, help and reassurance, we determined that SPARC should play five major roles in the impending crisis:

1. As a resources centre, read and understand the judgement and all its legal implications and disseminate this information to women and their families.
2. Seek out all authorities who may be involved in the implementation of the judgement, determine what they proposed to do and provide the feedback to people.
3. Interact with other agencies/groups/lawyers/concerned citizens who were involved in the issue and participate in and provide feedback about their strategies to people.
4. Identify and collect all available information about the number of pavement dwellers in the city, public housing policy, urban development plans, and any other programmes which people could utilize to their benefit in the situation.
5. Assist people in planning how they will face the impending crisis and devise alternatives for themselves.

It was in the course of taking the above steps that the need for a people's census was born:

1. In the course of relating the facts and implications of the judgement, it became clear that the vast majority of people had no idea whatsoever that what had been obtained in 1981 was a stay, and not a judgement in favour of pavement dwellers. Apparently, the several legal and other activists who had been mobilizing people at the time of the 1981 demolitions had never returned to provide any feedback to people about the status of the case once the stay had been obtained.
2. In the several meetings SPARC had with BMC and state government officials, two things become clear: first, that no mass demolitions would be undertaken; rather, clearing of pavements would be done in a 'phased' manner. All officials expressed their desire to find a 'humanitarian' solution to the problems, offering to give serious consideration to any 'feasible' alternative solutions that organizations like SPARC might care to work out.

Second, none of the concerned officials had any idea of the numbers involved. even if, hypothetically, every pavement dum

in the city were to be cleared. The oft-quoted 1976 government slum census had not, by their own admission, included pavement dwellers. Thus, the questions uppermost in our minds, viz., how many people would be affected if all pavements were cleared?

Meanwhile, all possible information gleaned from these meetings was given back to the people.

Initially, we had concentrated on keeping women informed of all developments, but the menfolk soon protested that they would be equally affected by demolitions and so why were we only meeting the women? We had been waiting for this and soon began our Sunday meetings where as many as 200 people attended at a time. However, sensing that men would now once again monopolize information and take over leadership roles, we insisted that there must be a heavy representation of women from each cluster at the meetings. Our rationale for this—that more often than not it was the women who were at home when the demolition squads arrived, and hence they needed to know their rights and what steps to take—convinced most of the men.

3. Simultaneously, SPARC participated in several meetings called by a host of joint action committees, concerned citizens forums and housing action groups which sprang into being after the judgement. In these meetings, certain commonalities as well as differences in approach emerged. For instance, many elements were vehement about what pavement dwellers should be told to do, such as physically resisting demolitions, while groups like SPARC felt that no one should dictate any one course of action except the affected people themselves. We felt that our role was only to facilitate people in identifying their own alternatives and in achieving consensus within their own areas so that such community was not fragmented among themselves.

Feedback about these meetings was also given to people.

4. Meanwhile, SPARC's own data search on pavement dwellers revealed a blatant lack of facts and figures. No one—whether research or demographic institutes, government and municipal authorities, or action groups—seemed to know how many pavement dwellers lived in the city. Moreover, our literature scan on low-income housing, slum upgrading and general urban development policies showed that pavement dwellers had never specifically figured in any of these. Clearly, in the urban development totem pole, even slum dwellers were well above those who sought

shelter on the pavement. In personal meetings with some of the above-mentioned bodies, moreover, we discovered a number of myths and misconceptions about the difficulty of enumerating the pavement population.

The chief one was that pavement dwellers are a floating population, drifting from one foot-path to another at frequent intervals, thus making an accurate census impossible. But from our years of contact with pavement women (several of our group had been working with pavement dwellers long before the formation of SPARC) we knew this belief to be quite incorrect. In fact, most families we knew had been living on the same foot-path since their arrival in the city, as much as four decades ago. As a rule, they moved only when they were forced to by the municipal authorities.

Lastly, the three major studies of pavement dwellers which we came across were all sample surveys, covering at best a few hundred families (Mahtani, 1982¹, Ramachandran 1972²). Since the sampling methods used here had been rather rough and ready (in a cluster of 50 huts, canvass 5, if more, canvass 10) skewed results could not be ruled out. The fact is that scientific sampling could not be done when no one knew the size of the universe. Most important, these exercises had been one-sided: pavement dwellers were surveyed and analyzed, but the results were never shared with or given back to them. Reports had been given to the powers that be, but not to the people from whom the information had been taken. As such, these surveys had been of no use to the people they purported to represent.

All these discoveries convinced us that effective advocacy by the people, whether for alternative accommodation prior to demolitions or any other relief, had to be based on solid, sound enumeration of their numbers. This was even more vital since the State Government and BMC announced that only those covered in the 1976 slum census would be given alternate accommodation and notice prior to demolition. It therefore seemed evident that pavement dwellers must enumerate *themselves* and demand alternatives in the language of the bureaucracy, viz. the language of numbers and statistics.

Most important of all, they had to eradicate their invisibility in the eyes of the policy-makers, planners, civic and government administrators, political parties and the powerful city elites who benefited most from their labour: they had to demonstrate their vital role in the urban economy and the factors which led to their settling on pavements with hard facts, *not* by appealing to the non-existent humani-

tarianism or sense of justice of a society based on inequality and exploitation. At that point in time, the most effective and feasible way of doing this seemed to be census of pavement dwellers.

The Census

When the feedback from SPARC's three main endeavours (interaction with officials, with action groups, and the data search) was given to people at the Sunday meetings, the issue of their invisibility was defined by people themselves. The more articulate among them immediately perceived the need to make their communities 'stand and be counted'. We suggested that even though their leaders were busy making demands and representations to the BMC and to local officials, without a list of families in each cluster, their major occupations, length of residence and other basic facts, they could not even begin to negotiate with the BMC for alternatives. From this emerged the plan that in each cluster, one or two literate people would be nominated to prepare such lists for each community. Even if the authorities ignored these efforts, such data would help them put their plight before the public and mobilize opinion.

The people's census was already underway in three or four clusters and we began exploring the possibility of computer-processing the results. When talking to friends, well-wishers and select officials about it, we found that the data thus collected by people was fine as a means of mobilization, but had no credibility whatsoever in the eyes of anyone else. The data would be dismissed since it was collected by the affected, and not by an 'objective', independent body.

This caveat did not, in our view, negate the people's census since we saw it not purely as data collection but as a means of people's mobilization and empowerment by providing a basis for them to plan their own alternatives. However, we did realize that in the political climate prevailing at the time, a mass census by an objective 'respected' organization could turn the tide! It could force everyone to face the reality that a problem of such magnitude and complexity could not be solved by demolishing hutments and evicting people. It was a gamble, but one which might pay off.

Accordingly, we approached the College of Social Work which had undertaken the last major sample survey of pavement dwellers in 1981. This was in mid-August, with two and a half months to go before demolitions were scheduled to begin on 1 November. At that

juncture, unfortunately, the response was negative. It was felt by the college that there was not enough time to carry out a city-wide census or even a census of a few wards and that the financial, human and other resources required could not be found to undertake the task.

These were perfectly reasonable if somewhat discouraging constraints. Little did the college realize that their response triggered SPARC into taking a step which, for its sheer audacity if not insanity, continues to amaze our associates and ourselves. We simply decided to conduct a census of our own.

The process and results of the census and brief history of pavement dwellers is available in *We, the Invisible*, available from both SPARC and PRIA. Therefore, we concentrate here on the nature of people's participation in the census and then to raise certain questions about both this exercise and participatory research as a whole.

The idea of doing our own census took shape on 18 August 1985. Within a week, cluster meetings were held throughout 'E' ward to discuss the idea with people, who ratified it with few reservations. The objectives and a list of tentative questions were defined during these discussions. We sought the assistance of sympathetic research professionals who helped us design the questionnaire which we ourselves pre-tested and then had printed. The scope of the census was expanded from only 'E' ward to the major arterial roads of the 'island city' (or southern third of Bombay city) since these areas were to be prime targets of clearing operations.

Pavement clusters on the arterial roads were charted on city maps by volunteers over one weekend. According to the their hut-counts and SPARC's 'E' ward cluster profile data, approximately 6,000 households would have to be covered.

By the third week of August, investigators and 8 coders were hired from a market research agency and trained. A field supervisor was appointed and all 6 members of SPARC's staff undertook on-the-spot supervision of the investigators. The census began on 30 August in 'E' ward and concluded on the last arterial road on 29 September. One in every ten questionnaires was cross-checked by a SPARC staff member. Coding was commenced almost as soon as investigators began their work, so that all questionnaires were coded (under the continuous supervision of one of our staff) and dispatched for data entry on 2 October 1985.

Ironically, electronic data processing posed more difficulties than any other aspect of the census. Our data was stuck at this stage for

over a week and our final tables delivered only on 11 October. Working round the clock, the results were analyzed, writing up simultaneously in English and Hindi and the final report printed overnight to be released at a press conference on 14 October. The report was also given, on the same day, to every BMC and state government minister and official concerned directly or indirectly with the issue. Copies were also dispatched the same day to key decision makers in New Delhi. Meanwhile, vernacular copies were distributed among the concerned population.

Census: A Participatory Research Exercise

Let us now examine the census as a participatory research exercise. What were the main elements of people's participation in this census?

First of all, the idea for the census was not a brilliant brainwave of our own. It may never have occurred to us without the catalyst of the people's own desire to represent their economic contribution to the city and the reasons for their dwelling on pavements. During the numerous discussions and meetings which followed the Supreme Court Judgement, people voiced their feelings of despair, injustice and anger in terms which triggered our own thoughts. 'They want to throw us out,' said many women, 'but who will sweep and swab their floors and wash their dirty clothes and vessels for a pittance?' 'Break our houses and drive us away,' said the men, 'and who will ply the handcarts? Who will unload vegetables at the wholesale market? Who will come to your door and sell you your daily needs at a cheap price? Do they think we like living on the pavement? Let them give us houses and we will live like them.'

It was the feelings of the pavement dwellers themselves which made us realize that indeed, their contribution to the urban economy was totally unrecognized—invisible. They were seen only as eyesores; noticed only for the apparent squalor and filth in which they lived. The need to represent them differently, truthfully, arose from people. The census was merely the shape and form which we used to express that need.

This brings us to the second participatory element. Having conceptualized the census, we sought the people's ratification for it. It must be stressed that at the time, we had established sufficient credibility and rapport with people to ask for and get their co-operation

for any endeavour we might undertake. There was no necessity, strictly speaking, to put the idea before people, discuss its pros and cons and elicit their reactions. We did this because we believed we must do so. We believed that people had a right to decide how their lives and causes were represented and also the methodology by which this was done. We also believed that until people gained a first-hand exposure to research techniques, they could never take control of the outcome of such research and use it to their own advantage.

When the broad framework of the census was discussed, many expressed doubts and reservations. 'So many surveys have been done before,' they said, 'and where have they got us? People keep coming to us and filling up forms and we never see them again.' This was the level of cynicism about the role of research. Still others thought that it may do no good, but also no harm. The majority, however, liked the idea of a census as a means of community mobilization and of presenting ones case to the policy makers in a concrete, factual manner.

As for the cynics, they were somewhat mollified by our pledge that the census report would be distributed, in the local languages, throughout the 39 clusters, and that all findings would be explained to people in detail. We agreed that the census would not affect the impending demolitions very much—such a change of heart was most unlikely—but it could be used to strengthen *people themselves*. By helping them to see the value of their role in the urban economy; and by bringing out common history of rural poverty which could help them unite across barriers of district, state, language and religion.

It would be foolish in the extreme to pretend that everyone of the 3,000 old families SPARC worked with knew about, understood and ratified the census. Anyone with experience in community work knows (even if they won't admit it) that even if one-tenth of a given group becomes actively involved in an issue, that is an optimum level of participation. Nor was it different with us. What was important, however, was that those who actively participated in discussing and ratifying the census idea were the most articulate, aware, strong and concerned in their communities. They were the decision makers, who included both 'leaders' as well as many others who provided the checks and balances to the potential oppression or autocracy of such leaders. Notwithstanding this, every family in every cluster was informed about the census, its objectives and importance. This was done by holding on-the-spot cluster meetings on each street the day before the investigators were due to arrive there. More frequent meetings

were held on the arterial roads where SPARC had never worked before, once again explaining the why's and wherefore's of the census to this population which had no previous contact with SPARC.

In these meetings, which concentrated mainly on women, stress was laid on explaining the questionnaire (why and how each question would be asked) to people, how much time it would take, the fact that the results would be given back to them as well as to BMC and state government authorities, and determining the best time for the investigators to come to each cluster.

The level of participation created by this process was immense: not a single household was suspicious of or refused to cooperate with the investigators. Most important of all, thanks to people's support, data collection proceeded at a speed which most people find difficult to credit. Surely there can be no more convincing evidence of people's participation than the fact that over 6,000 families were canvassed by 15 investigators in a matter of 31 days.

Finally, people's identification with the importance of the census was so great that anyone who was not at home when their area was canvassed came to SPARC's office and demanded that their household be covered there and then, rather than wait for the 'mopping up' stage of the last few days of the exercise.

An interesting feature of the data collection process was its mobilizing effect. Inevitably, no investigator and householder was isolated during the interview. An interested crowd, which grew in size as the investigator moved down the line, always attended each interview. This was a unique and unanticipated bonus of the census; people listened, for the first time, to each other's responses to the same set of questions—indeed to their life stories. The similarity of these had a 'Mantra' effect and created a palpable sense of shared history. Often, when a woman described her family's poverty in the village and their migration to the city, there would be cries of, 'It was the same with us,' or 'It is true!' from the crowd of listeners. It would not be an overstatement to say that the act of answering the same set of questions created for the first time, a conscious sense of a common plight in a group of people who were hitherto isolated and fragmented by the narrow bonds of caste, district or language. Listening to each other's stories made people realize the similarity of their stories—whether Bihari or Bengali, Hindu or Muslim, hawker or labourer.

After the four hectic weeks of data collection, we were at last ready to send the questionnaires in for computer processing. And it was at this stage that we learnt another valuable lesson! Here, we were the ones who could not participate in our own research. We learnt first hand what it feels like to have your data taken from you and not know what is happening to it. Since none of us had had any training in computers, we were totally mystified by the 'computerese' spoken by our EDP friends—as they no doubt were by our 'activese'.

The press conference itself threw up an interesting debate on participation. Some friends and members of the group felt that if SPARC really believed in the participatory research approach, then some pavement dwellers should be present. Was it right for us to speak to the press on their behalf? But this was met with a rebuttal; having pavement dwellers at the press conference would smack of tokenism, it would not be participation but a patronizing gimmick to bring them into an alien milieu which was neither familiar to them nor under their control. When ratifying the census idea and how it could be used, they had entrusted us with the task of doing so at levels where they felt uncomfortable. Finally, we had called the press conference, not the people. If they wished for one of their own, we would help them organize it in their own environment and on their own terms. Having a handful of intimidated pavement dwellers facing 50 journalists as if they were specimens under a microscope was hardly a sign of how deeply we believed in participation.

The doubts and questions raised by this debate were soon resolved when, the day after the press conference, the whole team was absorbed in the task of preparing sets of charts through which the census results would be relayed back to people. The designing of the charts demanded both creativity and effective use of our knowledge of what people would (and would not) relate to. Statistics per se would be meaningless to people who had no need for them in their daily lives. Thus it was a challenge to put the results into terms intelligible to people and to develop corresponding graphics and visuals.

When the data charts were exhibited and discussed at cluster meetings, a number of desperate and interesting responses were received.

Without exception, the one single item of data which stirred everyone was the total number of people surveyed. The fact that in just one segment of the city there were 27,000 others like themselves

moved and visibly strengthened people. 'There are so many of us, thousands and thousands! Now government must do something for us! They can't just sweep us away like dust.' The impact of just this one fact was so great that it alone justified the entire census. Until then, most pavement dwellers imagined that at most there were a few hundred others who would be affected by demolitions. We also witnessed the empowering effect of this statistic when hundreds of people from our clusters attended the protest rallies and marches which were organized towards the end of October. They invariably exchanged their new-found information with co-marchers from other areas.

Other pieces of data, though less galvanizing, created their own effect; the large numbers of people from the same districts and states (Ratnagiri and Sholapur in Maharashtra, Goda and Basti in Uttar Pradesh, Madhubani and Jarbhanga in Bihar, Salem in Tamil Nadu, Gulbarga in Karnataka) impressed listeners who thought they were the only ones from these areas. The large number of people in the same occupations and the importance of these to the city's economy excited comment. Finally, the fact that hundreds of families shared similar reasons for leaving their rural homes—unemployment, low wages, droughts, floods and other calamities, communal riots and desertion, widowhood and family conflicts—moved and stirred people, especially women.

Another manner in which the census data was made meaningful to people was to use it to talk and think about the future in a totally new way. For instance, the census showed that 11,000 of the total population were children below 16. Would these 11,000 children grow up and live on pavements too? How could parents plan for change?

The latter half of October saw a sea-change in the entire attitude towards the pavement dweller 'problem'. This was largely due to the fact that various political parties realized that joining issue with this hitherto ignored population could bring many future gains. Consequently, parties with various leanings, from centreish-liberal to progressive, organized marches and rallies galore. People were exhorted through handbills, loudspeakers and street meetings to participate in large numbers. This they did and the sense of their strength due to numbers—first generated by the census results—was further reinforced. We also distributed abridged vernacular copies of *We the Invisible* during the marches, so that pavement dwellers from all over the city could use the census information.

Having described the census and the elements of participation within it, let us raise some questions:

When does research become participatory? And are there or should there be limits to the 'participatoriness' of any piece of research?

In the case of *We the Invisible*, it was SPARC and not people who decided to do a census. Does that then mean it was not truly participatory, but an idea conceived by others and imposed on people? Does the impact of the census on people (not to mention on the authorities and on public opinion) become negated by the fact that the census per se was not the people's idea but SPARC's? Does the participatoriness of the census become diminished by the fact that we did not have the time to involve people in designing the questionnaire and administering it to each other? Did our excluding pavement dwellers from the Press Conference indicate a serious lapse—a lack of real commitment to participation?

We have attempted to answer these questions from our present perspective. We hope you will examine them from yours. But if this census helps further the debate on participatory research, provides new insights, answers some questions while raising others, we believe it has contributed more than its share.

To conclude, the vital ingredients to undertake such enumeration are:

- (a) A strong community-based organization or a sufficient network to set up such an organization.
- (b) A back-up organization with research capabilities, and a good understanding of the larger urban realities to make the enumeration viable in the larger context. Yet critical in this process is the priority set to local empowerment over paper writing. The local population which creates the information must grow with the knowledge of it. If the process grows before the people, then it swamps their capabilities. It will reinforce the inferiority the uneducated feel in the face of alien facts and figures.
- (c) Forward planning to ensure a great deal of lead time is very important. Empowerment is not a mechanical process; and it cannot be hastened.
- (d) Creating space for the people to discuss, and using this knowledge and information for their own representation is as vital as creating it. This includes meeting officials, and non-governmental organizations.

(e) A vital ingredient in such an exercise is the presence of persons to extrapolate and synthesize and produce reports. Our experience is that the getting together of useful data is something any field organization can do, as it develops the appropriate collection tools. Manpower and motivation they generally have.

However, most groups, once they have understood the phenomenon, give up the further pursuit of knowledge. As a result, the larger use of information is not possible.

If statistics have to challenge the state, the work has to wear sheep's clothing. Such report writing requires objective analysis, which is hard to find.

People's participation in government or voluntary agency activity is often talked about. We have in the past seen several such claims. Contributory participation entails people working on a project. Their labour is evaluated as Rs 5,000 towards the cost of the project or local land owners provide sand or tiles. Beneficiary participation entails people using a service such as a healthcare centre. Representative participation entails selecting certain articulate members of a community for a representative role. This is the basis of Panchayati Raj and all subsequent state action. Bureaucrats do not acknowledge that ordinary people can understand and plan on the basis of empirical data. This is why we feel the Dharavi census is something new and significant.

Finally, a word of caution. The state, appreciating the usefulness of such groups, can easily co-opt them to do much more of their work. Where should we draw the line? This must be decided before a powerful tool that develops knowledge and organization is put into practice only accomplishing superficial 'community participation'

Notes

1. R. Mahtani, *A profile of pavement dwellers in Bombay*, Research Unit, College of Social Work, Bombay, 1982.
2. P. Ramachandran, *Pavement Dwellers in Bombay City*, Tata Institute of Social Science, Series No. 26, Bombay, 1972.

Popular Theatre*

SEEMANTINEE KHOT

In recent years, interest among development workers, communication experts and artists is increasing in the use of popular theatre and folk media for development. There have been attempts to handle the content and form of theatre in such a way that the impact of the performance shifts from pure entertainment to education of the audience. In many examples, theatre has also proved to be an effective method for raising awareness or giving informative or educational messages.

Participatory research believes in the knowledge and ability of ordinary people to reflect on their oppressive situation and change it. That is why participatory research entails that people be involved in the research of their problems and realities, and be equipped to be able to apply the knowledge then gained to bring social change. Popular theatre, by its very nature of appeal to ordinary people, has the possibility to facilitate this. It can play a major role in involving people in the research process by providing them means to mirror the reality and critically observe it from a distance. It proves powerful because it is done by the people themselves, they do not need any help in expressing themselves, their grievances, perceptions, worries, strengths and analyses of their own problems and of themselves.

The purpose of this paper is to present an experience of doing participatory research with the popular theatre method. It is about a group of women who use theatre innovatively: to study problems and images of scheduled castes, poor, slum women; to become aware of their situation; and to try to solve their problems.

Context

The main objective of the women's research project in Pune, Maharashtra was to gather more knowledge about women's self-images, problems

*This article was earlier published in Farmer Assistance Board, *Participatory Research: Response to Asian People's Struggle for Social Transformation*, 1983, Manila, Philippines, pp. 68-77.

and their causes as well as to make women confident of being able to solve their problems. Working as a research associate of the project, I chose to work with women through the theatre method thinking that it would make me able to:

1. build the rapport faster;
2. involve them in the research process in a natural way;
3. draw out their skills and creativity which express their perceptions, concerns and analyses; and
4. make them 'think' and 'do', raise their consciousness and confidence to find alternatives to their problems.

There was a theatre group of dalits (scheduled caste), working with the objective of educating dalits and men dalits about dalit problems through plays written, directed and performed by the dalits themselves. I introduced the objectives of women's research project to them and they expressed their willingness to collaborate as they saw the possibility of enhancing the women's component in their work.

Organising the Group

The beginning: my initial contact was with the only women actor in the group. In our several meetings, we talked about plays so far performed by the group and problems of dalit women we knew, including herself. We thought that in order to represent women's problems in plays, we would have to involve women themselves in it. They would be the best sources to know about their problems. Through theatre we would know their problems and through theatre we would present these. Simple techniques like role play, role reversal, improvisations, could be effectively used with dalit women since they are generally very spontaneous.

We were convinced that in order to reach the poor dalit women, we must put up our performances in slums itself. We cannot expect them to come to auditora. The themes for performances would be drawn from the audience itself, by consulting them before the performance. The actors would come from the audience also. Performance would be simply staged in the local language and on real situations. The time, place and duration should be convenient to the audience. After the performance, there would be a discussion on it which would be used for gathering additional information, analyses

and consciousness raising. This feedback would add new dimensions to the next performance.

The first stage was thus to just formulate the nature of our performances. The group was getting clearer as to how they have to go about it. It was the stage of group preparations and clarifying the framework. It took us three months time.

The next stage: The next two months went in audience preparation, of primary study of general problems of dalit women, which could be used as topics for performances.

We met several women, conducting meetings in different slums. We discussed with them informally their problems and worries. We told them about our plans to start with theatre activity so that they would become more aware of these problems and would attempt to solve them together. It resulted in solidarity between our group and the groups of dalit women that we met for discussion. Some women were influenced by our ideas and joined us.

Initially, through simple role plays among ourselves, we tried out spontaneous plays on different issues like family quarrels, social problems and religious taboos. This we found very interesting and the group continued meeting more often. It is now comprised of five dalit women.

In full swing: After another two months, the group started meeting regularly, i.e., thrice a week. The discussions were now more focused on the problems to be tackled in the plays. Places for the performance were fixed. Each of the five women came from a different slum and took the responsibility of fixing up the performance, suggesting topics for initial plays and organizing discussions after the performance for her slum.

The group picked up the speed of two performances a week. A model of follow-up with the audience as well as evaluation of each performance and of group work was set up.

Developing a Process

The group handled the following problem areas for performances: problems of girls dropping out of school; problems related to marriage system; sexual problems; problems of extra-marital relationships and pre-marital pregnancy; social problems like rape, dowry, illiteracy, community health, problems of working women, problems of blind faith, and religious taboos, etc.

Every performance involved the following steps, which has become a practice now:

1. Investigating problems.
2. Selecting one of the problems for performance and collecting more information regarding that problem.
3. Preparing a story outline for the performance.
4. Undertaking rehearsals and improvisations.
5. Organizing the audience.
6. Putting up the performance.
7. Conducting discussion.
8. Using feedback
9. Taking follow-up action.

In the beginning, those steps were not seen consciously, but realizing the importance of each step, the group had added it to the process and soon found out that a system was already established. That was observed as a basic structure, and depending on the time limitation, knowledge of the problem and familiarity with the audience, the group brought variations in it. (When there was less time for preparation, or when the audience was better known, the preparatory stages were cut down; while in other instances where the audience was not known or the problem area chosen was being handled for the first time, preparatory stages were given more time.)

Here is a detailed illustration of the process.

Investigating Problems

The group chose a community for performance or they were invited by different community groups. In both cases, the group first visited the audience community. One or two of them (if one of them was a resident of the community, she took the sole responsibility) interviewed different women, sat during informal group discussions and observed, in order to collect information about the age group, education level, family background, economic situation, occupations and daily routine of the audience group. This helped the group know about their problems. It also became useful to establish rapport and prepare ground for the performances.

Selecting One of the Problems and Collecting More Information Regarding the Problems

A list of problems expressed by the audience and perceived by the group members was made. The problem which was perceived as

most important, crucial and widely felt, was chosen for the performance. The group members shared different cases in which they had come across the problem. They also presented their first-hand experiences. The causes, impact and possible solutions of the problem were discussed with examples. An attempt was thus made to analyze the problem.

Preparing a Story Outline For The Performance

Based on the main points of the analyses combined with the experiences of the group members and the real cases discussed by them, a story was prepared. Generally, in the first part of the story, the causes of the problems were projected; in the second part, the impact of the problems were shown; and in the last part, the fight against the problem and a solution or a question to the audience asking for the solution was framed. Sometimes a script was prepared, but most of the time, only a scenario was given.

Understanding Rehearsals and Improvisations

After the story outline was prepared, the dramatic elements of the characters were determined; based on this, casting of roles was done among the group members according to their characteristics and personal skills. Then the scenes were rehearsed, in which the dialogue was spontaneously filled in. Gradually, the characters, their dialogues and story-line took form. The final production thus became a collective effort.

Organising the Audience

It was found out that for better impact, the audience should be prepared on the day of the performance itself. In natural encounters like around the water taps, grocery shops, washing corners, etc., the group members introduce the topic of the performance informally. They were made to think about the problem by giving examples, by asking difficult questions. A word on time and place of the performance was spread through enthusiastic children in the area or by door-to-door visits of group members. Later, the days and time for performances in different communities was fixed up in advance and the audience came together without much effort. Sitting arrangements were made with the help of the audience itself. In the beginning, a song on women's liberation or a folk-song related to the performance topic was sung. This helped in creating the atmosphere for the performance.

Putting up the Performance

On a suitable corner or inside a hut in a slum, the performance was put up. The use of slang and local proverbs was very effective. The use of stage props and costumes was minimal.

Conducting Discussion With the Audience

Reactions of the audience were first sought and clarifications were done if needed. Then the discussion was focused on the main points of analyses. The audience was requested to contribute to the analyses. The group members honestly confessed their mistakes and limitations whenever they were pointed out. Further knowledge was gathered about causes of the problems and influence of these problems on women and their families. The analyses was modified based on this. The group gave credit to the audience and discussed with them whatever they learned and what they would like to do about the problem. The answers were not demanded immediately but the audience was geared to think about those questions.

Using the Feedback

Based on the modified analyses and feedback on the performance, the story-line was improved again. It was either done immediately after the discussion involving the audience who contributed to this modification, or on the next visit, if the group thought it needed to be given more thought and time for modification.

Taking Follow-up Action

A process of mobilization of women was set up right from the group's first encounter with them. In many cases a performance or a discussion aroused emotions in women, within the group itself or in the audience group, regarding problems they were facing in day-to-day life. This was followed up in many ways. For example, one of the audience groups strongly felt after a performance on economic dependency of women that they wanted to start some income generating activity. The group then helped the audience community to get organized in a workers' cooperative and to get loans to start small scale projects. In many instances, women expressed personal problems, for example, that of an alcoholic husband; if they could be helped by collective action taken to confront the man.

By sharing and analyzing each other's problems together and ensuring support to solve these, a spirit of solidarity was built up. It was hoped

that it would enable women to take concrete action to solve their problems with confidence and with increased self-respect.

Group Evaluation Activity

The group periodically examined its activities by:

- a. Listening to the cassette tapes of performances and discussions;
- b. Getting feedback from theatre experts and from activists and thinkers in the women's development field; and
- c. Consulting men in the dalit theatre about their performance and reflecting on it. This process was educative and helped them to become more effective.

Elements of Participatory Research in this Experience

1. These women were dalits (scheduled castes) themselves and came from economically weaker sections, with little formal education. Once they believed in their ability to acquire more knowledge about their own situation, they were able to do so. It proved that only they know about their problem, its causes and possible solution.
2. The whole process of using theatre for projecting, studying and analyzing problems was initiated by dalits themselves, which was integrated by dalit women in their own interest.
3. The use of theatre and discussions was completely controlled by the women themselves. Initially, I helped more in each stage but gradually withdrew in order to give way to their creativity and ability. So there was very little interference from outside.
4. Sometimes, these women learned more in the discussions about their own selves and their new awareness changed their behaviour. For example, after a series of discussions on double exploitation in housework, they all felt that they must introduce a new system in their families. They started demanding their husband's time for housework and telling their sons to help their daughters. Once they believed that their sphere should not be limited to cooking and children, they asked their husbands, as equal partners, to share their work. The generation of new knowledge gave them new insights and they critically observed themselves and their problems. From what they experienced, came their theories. And after giving a thought to it, they tried to shape their behaviour in practice for better life and justice. A discussion on blind

faith and religious beliefs in the same way, moulded their behaviour to some extent.

5. These women never believed in the beginning that they knew so much about themselves, that they could also educate other women about it, that they could act. By what they discussed and learned together, they got more knowledge about dalit women's problems, problems of young and old women, problems in families and at work, of religious beliefs and community. They did notice changes in themselves. Their power of expression increased and their skill in theatre was appreciated by the audience.
6. New knowledge increased their self-respect and confidence. This itself helped them to face and solve some of their individual problems. Thus, even action came along with education.
7. Due to the characteristics mentioned above of the participatory research approach, this experience resulted in the creation of a new group (dalit women theatre) and the strengthening of the existing one (dalit theatre) and has initiated organizing of audience groups. This is also an element of participatory research that increases organizational strength.

Conclusions

Popular theatre had proved to be a very effective, insightful and powerful method in this experiment because it gives scope to popular participation and creativity of people to a large extent; without which, acquiring additional and accurate knowledge about them, disseminating it to raise awareness or facilitating its application in day-to-day life in order to bring social change, would not have been possible.

Bibliography of Selected Readings

Brown, L. David and R. Tandon. 'The Ideology and Political Economy of Inquiry: Action Research and Participatory Research' in the *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science and Technology; An International Perspective*.

A useful article which traces the complementarity between PR and action research, a research tradition which has been evolved and been used mainly in organizational and educational development contexts. The authors discuss these two research traditions in terms of ideological commitment, relation to political and economic factors, and phases of inquiry. Differences between action and research and participatory research are also discussed.

De Silva, G.V.S., et al. (1979) 'Bhoomi Sena: A Struggle for People's Power', in *Development Dialogue*, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, 1979.

A landmark case study on a popular movement of tribal people, the majority of whom were landless labourers, in Maharashtra, India. The article describes the educational and organization process through which the movement was formed and its impact on the participants at each stage.

Fals-Borda, O. (1985) *Knowledge and People's Power*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

Compiled by one of the pioneers of PR in Latin America, this book poses the important question of whether PR while useful as a research tool, can also be employed in developing and supporting people's organizations. It covers a variety of methods and techniques used in the production and dissemination of knowledge to empower rural peasants in Latin America.

Friere, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder, New York.

This book is considered to be the most important statement on the theory of 'conscientization' as evolved through the work of Brazilian educator and social activist Paulo Freire. The theory of conscientization emerged through Friere's experiences of teaching illiterates not only to read and write but also to articulate and act upon their social situation. It provides a framework and powerful tool to analyze the relationship between an oppressive system and oppressive relationships (specifically between teachers and students) which is fundamental to PR. Learning is

seen as a political process, dialectically relating the person to the world, through action and reflection.

Friere, P. (1976) *Education for Critical Consciousness*. Seabury Press, New York.

Also by Friere, this book contains his first major theoretical work entitled: 'Education As the Practice of Freedom' in which he lays out the basis for his key methodological concepts in the area of literacy and education.

Hall, B., A. Gillette and R. Tandon (eds.) (1982) *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly? Participatory Research in Development*. PRIA, New Delhi.

A useful contribution to the literature on PR which draws together theoretical writings and case studies from a number of developed and developing countries. Amongst the contributors are: Paulo Friere, Francisco Vio Grossi, Miguel Darcy de Oliveira and Maria Lissa Swantz.

ICAE (1988) *Focus on Participatory Research*, special issue of *Convergence*, Vol. XXI, No. 2/3, International Council for Adult Education, Ontario.

The International Council for Adult Education played an important role in the evolution and promotion of PR in different parts of the world. This special issue of the ICAE newsletter was the second progress report on evolution of PR and adult education with contributions from pioneers and practitioners. It provides a good sampling of articles illustrative of PR debates at the time.

Koning, K. and M. Martin (1996) *Participatory Research in Health—Issues and Experiences*, Zed Books Ltd., London.

A recent compilation of theoretical articles and case material covering the use of PR for research and education in healthcare and development. The case material is drawn from Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as from the UK, USA and France.

Maguire, P. (1987) *Doing Participatory Research: a feminist approach*.

A highly creative work and one of the first written statements on the implications as lessons arising out of using PR with a group of women. The book is based on the author's experiences of dialogue and interaction with a group of former battered women in Gallup, New Mexico. It provides some valuable insights, which reinforce participatory research as an approach that can be employed to challenge the power distribution in social settings.

Mustafa, K. (1981) *Participatory Research Amongst Pastoralists Peasants in Tanzania: the Experience of the Jipemoyo Project in Bagamayo District*, A report prepared for the International Labour Office.

While the approach referred to as PR today, evolved almost simultaneously in different parts of the world, the actual term originated from a group of activist researchers working in Tanzania, who first used the term to describe their research in an experimental pilot survey of skills and resources in 46 villages: the Jipemoyo Project. This report was one

of the first written up accounts on the use of PR in the context of a development project. It analyzes the manner in which PR was used in relation to the mobilization of pastoral peasants.

Participatory Research Network (1982) *An Introduction to Participatory Research*, International Council for Adult Education, Ontario.

A concise, simple to read publication intended to serve as a basic introduction to the subject for community organizers, researchers and field staff. It provides a brief overview of the history of PR, underlying concepts and the processes employed in practicing this approach.

Rahman, M.A. (ed.) (1984) *Grassroots Participation and Self Reliance: Experience in South East Asia*, Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi and Society for Participatory Research in Asia, New Delhi.

The essays included in this anthology represent a significant output of the work carried out in the ILO's programme on Participatory Organization of the Rural Poor. The programme itself was an important milestone in the history of PR and other participatory approaches to social change.

PRIA (1987) *Training of Trainers—a manual of participatory training methodology in development*, PRIA, New Delhi.

The participatory training methodology has been evolved from the perspective of participatory research. This manual was developed out of several years of experience in evolving and applying participatory training in a variety of contexts and situations. It provides an overview of participatory training.

PRIA (1990) *People and Forests—a participatory study*, PRIA, New Delhi.

A booklet based on a participatory research study conducted from 1989–90 in Gadchiroli (Maharashtra, India) as part of an ongoing struggle of local tribal communities in support of their struggles for retaining and regaining access to and control over the natural resources in their area. This booklet was prepared based on the text of the study and intended to highlight the participatory study methodology used as a contribution to ongoing conscientization and organization of tribals themselves.

PRIA (1993) *Participatory Training for Women*, PRIA, New Delhi.

Based on the experiences of a number of groups engaged in women's training, a compendium of case studies was prepared. These cases were shared and analyzed in a workshop and then condensed into this volume. It includes valuable learning material for trainers and practitioners. The overall analysis generated from the case studies is also a significant contribution towards the theme of women's empowerment.

Selener, D. (1997) *Participatory Action Research and Social Change*, The Cornell Participatory Action Research Network, Cornell University, U.S.A.

A recent and extremely comprehensive statement on the convergences and divergences between different approaches to participatory and action research. The author himself a participatory researcher, through a

review of over 1,000 published and unpublished sources and experiences of teaching and practising participatory action research, has identified and critically analyzed four main approaches. These are: participatory research in community development; action research in organizations; action research in schools; and farmer participatory research. The analysis covers the origins of each approach, its main components, underlying assumptions and practical or methodological guidelines. Detailed case studies presented at the end of each chapter capture the value of applying participation action and research approaches in the context of social change.

Tandon, R. and W. Fernandes (1982) *Participatory Research and Evaluation: Experiments in Research as a Process of Liberation*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

This book consists of eleven papers which discuss models, methods and issues of PR and social development evaluation from an Indian perspective. While written over a decade ago, the insights of the authors retain significance in the contemporary development context.

Contributors

This book is the work of a multi-cultural team across the globe. The compilation includes papers of nineteen renowned educators and practitioners of participatory research around the world.

Batliwala, Srilatha, is working as Civil Society Research Fellow at the Hauser Centre for Non Profit Organisation, Harvard University, Cambridge. She earlier worked as Programme Officer in the Governance and Civil Society Unit of the Ford Foundation in New York. She has rich experience of working on issues of women empowerment in India and Asia.

Belamide, Eileen, at the time of writing the article was Director of the Farmers' Assistance Board in Manila, Philippines.

Brown, L. David is the Associate Director for International programs at The Hauser Centre for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University. He was previously a Professor of Organizational Behaviour at Boston University and the President of Institute for Development Research (IDR), Boston. He continues to be a senior advisor to IDR on research and capacity building questions.

Bryceson, Deborah, at the time of writing the article was Assistant Lecturer, BRALUP, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam.

Gaventa, John, is presently co-ordinator of the Participation Group at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex. He is former Director of the Highlander Research and Education Centre, Tennessee, USA. He has rich experience of working on issues of participatory research and governance.

Grossi, Francisco Vio, at the time of writing the article was the secretary of the Latin American Council for Adult Education, San-

tiago, Chile. He is the founder of El Canebde Nos in Chile, and former President of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE).

Hall, Budd, is the Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria, Canada. He is former Secretary General of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), and Head of the Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology, University of Toronto.

Hiralal, Mohan Hirabai, is the Convenor of Vrikshmitra, a voluntary organization based in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, India. He is actively working with tribal groups to promote local self-governance, and is also involved in conducting participatory research studies.

Jaitli, Harsh, is the Programme Director of the Centre of Environmentally Sustainable Industrial Development (ESID) of PRIA. He is involved in research, advocacy, capacity building intervention and networking with different development actors on the issues of occupational health and environmentally sustainable industrial development.

Kanhere, Vijay, is currently working for the Centre for Environmentally Sustainable Industrial Development (ESID) of PRIA. He has been actively involved on issues related to tribal rights and occupational health and safety issues of the workers.

Kasam, Yusuf, at the time of writing the article was Coordinator of the African Participatory Project and Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam. He is also former Programme Director of ICAE and is now a freelance consultant.

Khot, Seemantinee, is working as a Senior Executive with an NGO, BAIF Development Foundation based at Pune, India. She has contributed extensively to the practice of participatory research. She is currently involved in the execution of a national level project on improving livelihood of the rural poor.

Madiath, Anthya, is a development consultant, working on urban poverty issues. She has extensive development experience on issues of post disaster reconstruction, health, water and sanitation, natural

resource management, livelihood system and micro finance and micro enterprise.

Merrifield, Juliet, is currently Principal of the Friends Centre, an independent adult education centre in Brighton, UK. At the time of writing the article, she was working with the Highlander Research and Education Centre, Tennessee, USA. She has worked extensively on the issue of adult education.

Manicom, Linzi, is teaching a Gender and Development course at the Institute for Women Studies and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. She previously worked as program officer and consultant to the Women's Program at ICAE.

Patel, Sheela, is the Executive Director of SPARC, an NGO based in Mumbai, India. For nearly two decades she has been active in facilitating empowerment of slum dwellers and pavement dwellers. She has contributed extensively to innovations in participatory research methodology and participatory development.

Small, Delle, at the time of writing the article was teaching at the Department of Political Science, University of Canterbury, New Zealand.

Tandon, Rajesh, is the President of PRIA, an international NGO, based at New Delhi, India. He has more than two decades of work in articulating, elaborating and facilitating philosophical and methodological issues of participatory research and popular participation in India and elsewhere. He has written extensively on participatory research and participatory development. He has also championed the cause of strengthening civil society organizations and capacities of the marginalized through the twin process of learning and organizing.

Tare, Savita, at the time of writing the article was with Vrikshmitra, a voluntary organization based in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, India.

About PRIA

PRIA is an international centre for learning and promotion of participation and democratic governance. It is a non-profit voluntary organization, promoting initiatives for the empowerment and development of the poor, marginalized and weaker sections of society. Its interventions and programmes are based on the philosophy of participatory research and have a people-centred approach.

PRIA recognizes the value of people's knowledge and the importance of their life experiences and learning. It raises awareness of people's rights as provided for in the Constitution and aims at creating a conducive environment for the promotion of democratic governance. Challenging traditional myths and questioning contemporary policies is a key element in PRIA's quest for promoting equity and justice.

PRIA also undertakes socio-economic research and analysis, as well as a range of training programmes to develop capacities and skills of individuals and institutions. It promotes people's participation through its programmes at the grassroots level and encourages their involvement in the process of reviewing, developing and influencing public policies. Through systematic documentation, PRIA disseminates and shares its experiences, findings, reflections, perspectives and analysis.

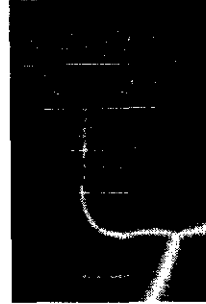
PRIA's contribution in the area of social development gains impetus through effective networks and partnerships. This creates multi-dimensional opportunities for institutions and individuals to interact, dialogue and provide space for growth and progress. PRIA reaches out locally, nationally and globally.

Another Title of Interest

VOLUNTARY ACTION
CIVIL SOCIETY
AND THE
STATE

Rajesh Tandon

160 pages 145 × 220 mm Hardcover 81-901297-1-6
Rs 350/US\$ 30



About the Book

This book is about voluntary action in India. It describes and analyses the history, evolution and challenges facing voluntary association and civil society in India today. It aims at providing an insight into the dynamics of the relationship between voluntary action and government. The book also identifies and elaborates upon the emerging requirements of capacity building of voluntary organisations in India. Leaders of voluntary organisations, donors, government officials and policy makers, academics and students will, therefore, find this book of interest.

Contents

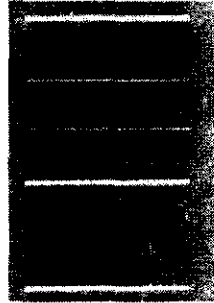
Origins and Growth of Voluntary Action in India • The Contemporary Scene • The Rise of 'Civil Society' • Emerging Challenges • Voluntary Action and the State • Civil Society and the State • Strengthening the Voluntary Sector • Emerging Priorities in Capacity Building • Bibliography

Another Title of Interest

DEVELOPMENT
AID
TODAY

Edited by Abhijit Dasgupta & Georg Lechner

148 pages 145 × 220 mm Hardcover 81-85399-30-1
Rs 250/US\$ 25



About the Book

This book provides a scholarly exchange of views on the vexing question of development aid. It brings together the pro- and the anti-views, and the views of those who choose the middle ground.

In Part I are included three papers on development aid and aid projects as seen from the donor's end. Part II consists of six papers covering the views from the aid receiver's end and a critical appraisal of some aid projects in India and Bangladesh. These papers were presented at a seminar entitled 'Development Aid Today', held in April 1994 at New Delhi. A select portion of the discussion which occurred at the end of the paper presentation has also been included.

The paper by Jayanta Kumar Ray on 'Technology Transfer: Some Aspects of the Bangladesh Experience', was invited specially for inclusion in this volume, since it seemed to be of special interest in this context.

This book would be valuable to all those involved with the giving or receiving of aid, in its various forms.

Contents

German Development Co-operation Today: Some Lessons Learnt in India • The GTZ Experience in Development AID Projects in India: A Case Study • Some Reflections on International Development Aid • Fatal Aid: The Author's View on the Issues of the Book Ten Years Later • How Do We Translate Development Ideology into Action? • Aid and Development in Bangladesh: A Critical Review • Technology Transfer: Some Aspects of the Bangladesh Experience • Development Aid in Bangladesh With Special References to Women-focussed Projects • Development Aid: The Experience of the Narmada Project • A Summary of *Tödliche Hilfe* (Fatal Aid) • Media Reports • Contributors