participatory research

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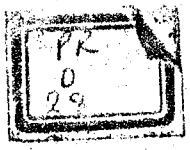
Popular Knowledge and Power
Two Articles by
Budd Hall



PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH GROUP
TORONTO

Table of Contents

"Knowledge as a Commodity and Participatory Research" originally published in *Prospects*, Vol.IX, No.4, 1979.

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Preface

A lot has happened since the first issue of *Convergence* came out in 1975, with several articles devoted to the set of ideas we now call "Participatory Research" (PR). There have been hundred's of national, regional or international events of one kind or another devoted to PR. Thousands of letters and exchanges of materials and articles have crossed the globe. The ideas and actions which have been examined under the term PR continue to attract new supporters and critics. Why is this so?

I believe that it is because of the importance of the combination of elements which are contained within the concept of PR. PR deals with fundamental notions of: How is knowledge created? What is knowledge? Whose knowledge is *real*? What is the relationship of knowledge to power? What is the nature of learning and education in the context of power? Where does action fit in the education or the knowledge production process? Do people working in social movements produce knowledge? What is the nature of science or social science? Who does research serve?

PR also continues to grow because of the inherent contradictions in the better established research communities. PR is an attempt to answer the question: What would research look like if people mattered? Much of the more widely accepted research in universities and institutions gives a marginal place to the question of service to a more equal vision of society. The touchstones of research are adherance to an already recognized method, eligibility of the research funding, acceptability in the existing journals and implications for career advancement.

CROSSROADS

In spite if the vast amount of activity and development in PR, we are at a critical point of development. One of the reasons which accounts for the absence of contributions to research in *written forms* by people in social movements is their marginal financial situations. A neighbourhood has action as its task, not writing accounts of the knowledge gained to pass to others. Academics, on the other hand , have writing and communicating as their goal, but seldom see any action. After nearly ten years of work in PR, the ways of giving either time or money or both for people working in social movements to write up or share their experiences in a systematic way has yet to be found. Even in PR, most of the writing is done by persons who have a relatively firm institutional or organizational base. How can this imbalance be addressed?

Another question which still looms large in our work to date is that of language. We use social science short-cuts and terminology such as "organic intellectuals" or "popular knowledge". They function in small and limited circles, but are alienating and distorting when trying to communicate with many people whose intellectual work is more direct and practical. Of course community workers, trade unionists, peace activists, etc., use short-cut terms as well, but generally these are more accessible.

We need to re-read our own articles, and our own newsletters, to critique how we present our ideas. This is not to say we should never use the specialized languages of our fields, but that we must choose appropriate ways to communicate depending on the audience. For a largely academic audience, the articles which I have written and which are now reproduced in this booklet are fine. But to communicate effectively with social movement activists, they need much more work. I say more work, because explaining some of these ideas to people in everyday language takes more reflection; more intellectual rigour, not less.

Finally we have a challenge. A challenge to all of us. Research in its most conventional forms is being used daily as weapon against us. It is polite, it is attractive, it has a face of impartiality . . . It is "objectivity" and reason writ

large. The links between research--which is alienating and oppressive, or simply redundant--and the larger structures of society, are strong, internalized and pervasive. The people who fight against these entrenched ideas need help. They need the support of people in other aspects of social struggle.

Another dimension is the challange to all of us in social movements to be *reflective*. We will never be given research posts, chairs in universities to collect and refine the knowledge of society . . . not simply knowledge of how to organize . . .which is an enpowering knowledge. The role of knowledge in the control of our lives is real . . .replacing insufficient facts and distorted ideas with reality is a challenge worthy of considerable effort.

Budd Hall,
Sept. 1984.

Knowledge as a Commodity and Participatory Research

> *That a mass of men should be led to think about the immediate reality in a united and coherent way is a more important and original "philosophical fact" than the discovery by a "genius" of a new truth which remains the patrimony of a small group of intellectuals.* (A. Gramsci)

BACKGROUND

It is important to situate this article within the critical historical period in which we are now living. The fact that we have such terms as "the new international order" is evidence that there is nearly universal agreement that the fabric of the international economic system and its corresponding market mechanisms have reached a state of severe disrepair. It is worth noting that the official statements from agencies like the World Bank, Unesco and FAO are as stark and foreboding as the most radical papers of ten or fifteen years ago.

But for us as scholars, administrators and intellectuals of various sorts engaged in questions of social transformation, these times offer one advantage. We no longer need to quibble about whether the world is really in as bad shape as the critics have said. We may disagree about the causes of the decay, and the paths towards solution, but we all stand together in the recognition that, whatever else has happened during the past twenty years, we have not reduced the gaps in wealth between nations nor those between the peasants and working class and the ruling classes. Our ability to work together and co-operate depends on our ability to commit ourselves to the radical transformation of a world which we now agree has not worked for most of the people in it.

And so we turn to the discussion of universities. What is the role of universities to be in the new international order? Based on existing analysis and the experience this author has had in the fields of both youth and adult education, in Nigeria, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and the United Republic of Tanzania, one would suggest that we should not expect too much. Universities (as education generally) inevitably reflect the existing social relations. Supported by the State, funded by the governments of most countries or from the surplus of industrial production in the case of some private institutions, universities on the whole exist to serve the needs of those who rule. The extent to which this means the majority of the population is determined by the specific political conditions in a given country.

This is not to say, however, that the discussion is not of critical importance, for it is only by understanding the role of universities in the existing international order that we can hope to create more favourable conditions. Universities offer, in most nations, higher tolerance for political deviance than any other institution. It is expected that students and scholars will live somewhat closer to the edge of heresy or revolt than any others. Such deviancy is usually tolerated as long as the activities are confined to the realm of ideas

It is within this context then--a commonly recognized economic failure and a realistic view of the role of universities--that we come to the discussion of knowledge.

THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE AS A COMMODITY

> *The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that in consequence the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are, in general, subject to it.* (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *German Ideology.*)

The production of knowledge throughout the world has become a big business. Evidence of this can be found in the size and structure of the universities and research establishments that

we deal with. As early as 1962, estimates were that 28.7 per cent of current GNP of the United States was concerned with the production of knowledge (Machlup, 1962, p. 5).

What is important about these observations is that if the production of knowledge has become a business, then knowledge itself has to some extent become a commodity. Commodities, as products for exchange, are directly subject to the influences of the market economy. This implies that the type of knowledge created is by and large determined by the material social relations.

John Horton, in discussing sociology as a focus of social-scientific knowledge production, has described the situation as follows (Horton, 1971, p. 175):

> *A reifying scientific consciousness expressed the commodity organization of scientific labour. Sociologists have escaped neither the commodity market nor commodity thinking... Like other workers in a capitalist society, intellectuals survive by producing commodities for exchange.*

That there is a form of commodity production is clear. As individual academics our ideas are "packaged" in the form of papers, books, journal articles and reports, which are exchanged directly or indirectly through seminars, international conferences and symposia. Departments within universities are developed and supported by "selling" their services to the State or directly to industry. Within the many industrialized capitalist states, international studies as a specialization have come about directly through the initiative and support of national governments which have had a need for a knowledge base about Third World countries. The "institution-building" grants of the United States Agency for International Development, grants by the Ministry of Overseas Development in the United Kingdom to institutions such as the Institute for Development Studies, and at least partial support for various university departments through the Canadian Intenational Development Agency (CIDA) in Canada, are examples of how economic need stimulates production.

I have in an earlier paper (Hall, 1977, p. 23) characterized

the situation as follows:

> *For a person working in a university or a research institution knowledge is effectively a commodity. In the narrowest sense, researchers gather or "mine" ideas and information in order to survive and advance economically. Priorities are given to collecting data in a central point, summarizing it and then packaging it in such a way that it can be marketed. The need to serve policy-makers is also recognized by some as an additional market (usually the best funded projects). The need to serve the people from whom the information has been gathered (the unemployed, urban immigrants, poor farmers, etc.) is indirect and by necessity of low priority. These groups will not buy the results (and perhaps didn't want the research in the first place).*

But is knowledge strictly speaking a commodity? Are intellectuals workers in the academic form of a capitalist mode of production?

Martin Shaw has argued that the products of the knowledge industry are in fact "pseudo-commodities". He argues that the prices of the articles exchanged, the books and articles, etc., are not as important as the act of publication itself. Most academics are content to have articles published with no direct payment at all. The role which knowledge production plays has much more to do with the career structure within the academic world. Nicholaus (1972, p. 56) describes the American social-science picture in the following way:

> *In the post-war era the road to prominence, hence office within the profession has been paved with research publication. Once he obtains financing for a research venture, the sociologist builds up, through publications, his professional reputation. This form of capital is then convertible into academic promotion, which yields better access to more research funds, permitting further publications and so on up, until, as supervisor of graduate students, the successful sociological entrepreneur is in a position to start and manage younger persons on the same spiral.*

While Shaw is correct about the pseudo-commodity relationship

of the products of individual academics, the viewpoint of knowledge as a commodity can be seen in its direct sense in the form of consultancies, either done on an individual basis, in a university department or in specialized agencies. Large groups of consultants operate in Europe and North America as well as within the international sphere. Consultants do not aspire to political or academic independence. They respond to the direct needs of the State or private industry. Their commodities are clear and obvious. And while there is not space enough at this juncture to expand this issue, it is quite evident that within both the national and international spheres the influence and power of these firms is substantial.

If one carries the analysis of knowledge as commodity production further, the parallels with general commodity production are more clear. Two of the characteristics of commodity production are the creation of uneven development and the facilitation of capitalist penetration and dependency.

To what extent is there an uneven development of knowledge production within the international sphere or even among the universities within countries such as the United States? Is there not a tendency for the large or already important universities to attract more funds for research by virtue of their reputations? Nearly all the books used in sociology courses in African universities are written in the United States, the United Kingdom, or France. The sheer volume of knowledge production is absurdly tipped in the direction of those nations that dominate the international economic markets. Cultural dependency and cultural imperialism result directly from the uneven development characteristic of other forms of capitalist development. This extends, as we will see later, into the questions of legitimating research and research methods.

What seems important to consider in the context of the new international order is the extent to which the existing order has spread these patterns to the universities of the Third World. Do the researchers and faculty at the universities of Nairobi, Madras and Peru have more in common with the other academics in the international academic world than they do with the people and problems in their nations? Has the pattern of knowledge transfer, which is still ongoing, exported more than institutional structures? Does the fact that most of the academics at the

University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania have had their educations in either the United States or the United Kingdom have wider implications than have been generally attributed? What does this say about the kinds of people who produce our world's knowledge?

IS THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE A MONOPOLY?

Have we created a structure for the production of knowledge that has nearly ensured that it is impossible for a farmer living in Bwakira Chini, a Tanzanian village, to contribute to the world's store of information? The standard for research that is put forth by the various influential academic societies and intellectuals has been shaped necessarily by the need the State has for research. We have created a set of requirements in terms of techniques and style that requires years of specialized training, most likely a Ph.D., to achieve. In practice, this has resulted in a situation where a few persons of bourgeois class positions are working on the theoretical and practical academic discussions, are creating knowledge, about the entire universe of people and problems.

What is important to recognize is that some people's common sense becomes recognized as philosophy and other people's does not. Gramsci has suggested that "all men are intellectuals... but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (1971,p.9). He goes on to describe two groups of intellectuals. In the first place there are "traditional" intellectuals, the scholars, the scientists and so forth who, although seemingly detached from class positions, nevertheless are the result of specific historical class formations. Secondly, there are the "organic" intellectuals, the thinking and organizing persons in any class. These persons are not usually recognized as intellectuals, or in our terms as persons capable of creating knowledge, but are the union leaders, community organizers and farm organizers. Gramsci goes on to point out that the working-class is capable of producing its own intellectuals and that one of the functions of those who are engaged in organized working-class politics should be to make the links between the intellectuals of both types and foster the recognition of the worker's right to create philosophy.

Let me illustrate this in a very concrete form. I worked in

a university in Africa as head of a research unit in adult education. I worked in a team with others who were from the country. Our work related to the educational needs of peasants and rural workers in various parts of the country. We were struggling with the identification of problems that might be solved in part through educational programmes. We dealt with, through our research, questions of shortage of water, shortage of food, absence of preventive or curative medical care, and the high incidence of disease. We attempted to interpret and analyse various kinds of data about the lives of these people and their concrete problems.

At the same time as we were working on the concrete problems of those people in their villages, our own lives continued. Our problems continued, but they were not the same problems. Why is this important? The point is that with all the best intentions in the world, the group of us was never going to fully comprehend, much less intuitively grasp, the conditions and the priorities for survival and growth in the village. We were not even likely to understand the problems of our fellow urban dwellers, living in the shanty towns. In the end our ability to plan educational programmes depended on the closeness of our interpretation of their world to reality. By virtue of the fact of our class positions and our class interests, the knowledge we "created" about their lives was bound to be in error.

A.F. Blum has explained the problem differently. If our analysis shows that knowledge is constructed to serve the interests of its producers, then knowledge by definition is constructed by those who do not share the interests of the masses. If furthermore we relate our concept of reality to the world of the masses, the majority of people, then the knowledge that has been created is obviously biased and invalid (Blum, 1971, p. 119).

We have come dangerously close to creating a situation in the social sciences that effectively denies recognition of the knowledge-creating abilities in most of the people in the world. Modes of indigenous education in Africa that have provided structural frameworks and interpretations of the world are missing from what we represent as a universal body of knowledge. What are the implications, for example, of the fact that the peoples of southern Venezuela have a precision of naming the types and colours of grass that grow there which is beyond the scope of common English or Spanish? What is the importance

of the fact that the vocabulary for ants found in Hausa in northern Nigeria is far richer than that of any European language or that the Maasai have concepts for cattle exchange relationships and physical types that even the Texans can't match?

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF RESEARCH WITHIN THE STATE?

We have already touched somewhat on the role of research in the context of the State, but it bears further discussion if we are to get a firmer grasp of the directions in which we might look for alternatives. C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 177) has noted that "increasingly, research is used and social scientists are used for bureaucratic and ideological purposes".

There is, to begin with, the quite basic need of hierarchically oriented administrators and policy-makers to gather information from those who do not make decisions in order to make decisions for them. This operates at both the national level as government ministries go about the task of attempting to "solve" various problems of inequity and distribution and at the international levels as outside organizations or governmental agencies carry out a similar role. As Shaw (1975, p. 11) has noted:

> *Information is not only collected on every conceivable kind of social activity; it is also tabulated and what is more important interpreted in an enormous range of private and published documents for the purposes of informing and guiding the decisions of those who control our society.*

In spite of the tendency of capitalisn to play down the nature of class relations and to represent them in abstract terms, there is a need for the system to understand the human social reality of the worker. But, says Shaw (1975, p. 11), "it needs to do this in a way which helps to maintain its social relations of production, not one which calls them into question".

Another way in which research may be serving as an instrument of social control is through (what at first seems a contradiction) offering a safety valve for dissenters and radicals to vent their concerns. It occupies the time of some in the production of paper rather than power. This can be seen in many universities, which now have groups of Marxist scholars who are completely occupied with the production and counter-

production of papers for the sole consumption of the academic world.

The use of research as a legitimizing tool is all too common to us. The government department needs to make a decision and then hires several researchers to study alternative futures, one of which is bound to contain the decision that has to be made. The field of evaluation is especially vulnerable to the plights of government programmes that have to find some way to show that they have been worth the workers' surpluses. In short, the research backs up the decisions that have to be made or, given a set of specific constraints from the start, identifies the range of acceptable solutions.

Marx's own explanations (Marx and Engels, 1971, p. 35) of how the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas are quite helpful in this regard:

> *The division of labour... manifests itself also in the ruling class, as the division of mental and material labour, so that within this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active conceptualizing ideologists, who make it their chief source of livelihood to develop and perfect the illusions of the class about itself) while the others have a more passive and receptive attitude to these ideas and illusions because they are in reality the active ones and have less time to make up ideas about themselves. This cleavage within the ruling class may even develop into a certain opposition and hostility between the two parts, but in the event of a collision in which the class itself is endangered, it dissapears of its own accord and with it also the illusion that the ruling ideas were not the ideas of the ruling class and had a power distinct from the power of this class. The existance of revolutionary ideas in a particular age presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class.*

The tactical question that must be raised at this point is: To what extent do universities or research institutions allow for some "free space" in a political sense? Does the acceptance of a political economic interpretation of research in universities imply a situation of impotence, fatalism or some other form of inaction while waiting for the revolution? There are a great many committed academics who do not agree. Paulo Freire speaks of committing "class suicide", of dying as

a member of the bourgeoisie and aligning oneself with the working class. Mao Tse-tung spoke of the concept of "Redness" and "expertness", the implication being that one could be both politically committed and specialized in an area of work. And while it might be argued that such a combination was unlikely outside the Chinese context, the question is perhaps the most important one we have to deal with. It is clear that the existence of some free space is assumed by several groups of researchers who are concerned with the methods by which knowledge is created.

HOW IS KNOWLEDGE CREATED?

Discussions about how knowledge is created, in this interpretation how research is conducted, must inevitably begin with some concept of what is knowledge. In order to avoid the pitfalls of epistemological debates, I will refer to the definition of Maurice Cornforth, who writes from a dialectical materialist position. "We gain knowledge... only in so far as we develop our ideas in such a way that their correspondence with reality is proved and tested" (1955, p. 149). It is on the question of proving and testing correspondence with reality that social science has been engaged in one of its most vigourous debates.

By far the most criticism of research methods has focused around the use of the various forms of survey research. This is due in part to its ubiquitousness as a form. While not needing to dwell at length in this article on a subject that has been covered quite widely elsewhere, it is important to review some of the criticisms so as to see how alternative approaches differ.

The survey research approach oversimplifies social reality and is therefore inaccurate.

In addition to the arbitrariness of instrument construction or the class bias of such specific tools as semantics differential tests and various other tests devised by those who work from a primarily psychological base, these approaches have other weaknesses. A research process that extracts information from individuals in isolation from one another and aggregates this into a single set of figures does so at the expense of reducing the complexity and richness of human experience. Social responses

to problems by groups of people are not necessarily the same as the total individual responces of people 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" (Carr-Hill, 1974, p. 30). But even given an institutional framework that encourages popular participation or control of decision-making, the representation shown 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 "42.6 per cent of teachers report problems", is inadequate and unsatisfactory. The illusion of accuracy through numbers has long been perpetuated by many of us at least partly as a way of hiding, obscuring or mystifing research.

A second way in which survey research oversimplifies is the perspective of the forced choice. Information is sought through interviews or questionnaires that provide a framework for the responses. For example, many questions ask people what is the "most influential", "least satisfactory", "first chioce" or "most responsible" regarding some specific attitude or decision when attitudes, decisions and behaviour do not reflect a single cause. The curious fact is that all of us have experiences of this false choice. We have often filled in forms or questionnaires and have felt the desire to say "that isn't really the right question". The forced-choice approach reaches a fetish point in some educational research, as 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 one form of literature in which they were most interested from a list that included novels, short stories, drama and non-fiction. Pity the person who either didn't know the difference between the forms (this is likely enough in modern literature), wanted some of all, or was curious about a specific period.

A third reason 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 ahistorical is a severe limitation; social change is a continuous process, a dialectic or movement from one pole to another over time.

Survey research is often alienating, dominating or oppressive in character.

If one accepts Freire's point that teaching methods have ideological implications then the same holds true for research methods. If one is concerned with increasing people's capacity to participate fully and gain some degree of control over their lives, then research methods themselves can be part of this process, as shown by Swantz (1974[a]). Questionnaires or interviews designed in an office of a university or adult-education institution are by nature one-sided. This process regards people as sources of information, as having bits of isolated knowledge, but they are neither expected nor apparently assumed to be able to analyse a given social reality. At the extreme, researchers take up people's time with often badly formulated questions and make interpretations based on little experience in the area or social class and elaborate programmes that are then expected to be useful and relevant.

C. Wright Mills has noted (1959, p. 89):

> *The style of abstracted empiricism (and the methodological inhibition it sustains) is not well suited to a democratic political role. Those who practice this style as their sole activity... cannot perform a liberating educational role... To tell individuals and publics that they can "really" know social reality only by depending upon a necessarily bureaucratic kind of research is to place a taboo in the name of science upon their efforts to become independent men and substantive thinkers... it is precisely the job of liberal education and the political role of social science and its intellectual promise to enable men to transcend such fragmented and abstracted milieux (the social sciences) to become aware of historical structures and of their own place within them.*

Research approaches of this style often create the illusion among those who are the suppliers of information that research is rigourous, highly technical and scientifically "pure" and that the work can only be done by those who are university trained. The abilities of people to investigate their own objective realities are not stimulated, and the pool of human creativity is kept within narrow confines. Those most familiar with the problems and whose daily existence is affected by poor health, poor nutrition, low levels of production or past failures

of educational provision are effectively taken out of the active process of making the changes that might lead to improvements. Control is left to those who by definition and levels of training are outside the experiences within which change is sought.

One example of this on a large scale was noted in the Unesco evaluation of the Experimental World Literacy Programme. The emphasis on a 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 were not only grossly oversimplifying the relationship of literacy to economic development (an admittedly narrow idea in any case), but went about it in a heavy-handed manner (Unesco, 1976, p. 153):

> *For example, under the general heading of transformation of the milieu, indicators were devised for testing changes in literates' behaviour in the following categories: means of production, volume of production, monetary income, income in kind, consumption of durable goods. These indicators say virtually nothing about vital behaviours concerning social, political or cultural "transformation of the milieu", even though pertinent data were available in certain project evaluations... In one EWLP country where per capita GNP is less then $200, this "consumption" criterion was broken down into indicators that included safety razers and wrist watches...*

Survey research does not provide easy links to possible subsequent action.

Much research in adult education is action oriented. It may be an attempt to determine a community's educational needs or an attempt to modify existing programmes through an evaluation/research process. In either case it is expected that when changes are made the people in the community or the participants in the adult education programme will participate more actively, more efficiently, or will gain increased benefits over what had existed before. Basic principles of planning stress 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. In addition to resulting in a poor source of information, research that alienated respondents, or at best

treated them as source of primitive information, has little likelihood of creating the active and supportive environment essential for change.

A research team working on questions of vocational education in the United Republic of Tanzania, in a reflection on their work, has described this problem well (CCT, 1977, p. 17):

> *The data-gathering methods were not strictly participatory ones and imposed questions upon the respondents, thus leaving them in a passive role. This antagonized their active participation in the research and hindered therefore the creation of a base of action and interaction within the research and after the research.*

This lesson was taken seriously by the researchers, and in the meantime local research teams were formed in the areas where work was being done. These teams have been taking part in the continuation of the research and are in effect taking it over.

WORK ON ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

Some work has been done on finding an alternative approach. A general dissatisfaction with orthodox approaches has been expressed in the work of Mead and Blumber (Blumber, 1969). Qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, strategies have made their strong entry with Glaser and Strauss, in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). Filstead's introduction in *Qualitative Methodology* provides a useful discussion substaining the need for alternatives (1970). Pilsworth and Ruddock have described an alternative approach based on a phenomenological position (1975, p. 33). Still other approaches have borrowed from anthropology and stress the value of participant observation (McCall and Simmons, 1969). Beltran has outlined convincingly the western bias in social science research methods (1976). Helen Callaway has similary singled out the cultural trap which researchers are prey to when attempting allegedly objective research in non-Western cultures (1976).

From Africa comes the work of Swantz and in the same sense Malya with his approach to providing follow-up literacy material and investigation of a literacy environment (Swantz, 1974[a], 1974[b]; Malya, 1975). 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 Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania (1974). Vio Grossi describes some attempts at peasant participation in Chile under the Allende government (1976, p. 70). Beltran and Gerace have developed important concepts of communication among peasants rather than to them (Beltran, 1976; Gerace, 1973). These concepts of "horizontal communication" are important links. In addition to Freire, Pinto has elaborated the forms of thematic investigation (1969). Within the field of sociology, the Oliveras have put forward a compelling set of similar ideas in *The Militant Observer: A Sociological Alternative* (1975).

As a basis for examining or evaluating the various strategies that have been and are being put forward as alternatives, some of the central materialist concepts about knowledge are useful:

- Knowledge is essentially a social product. Although knowledge is built up by individuals, it is built up by individuals working in co-operation, depending on one another, communicating their experiences and their ideas. An individual acting alone, cut off from contact with other people and relying only on himself, could aquire scarcely any knowledge at all--and that only of particular facts.
- Knowledge is always expanding or changing. Knowledge is continually changing and expanding as the concrete reality is continually changing. The concrete historical conditions that are in effect now will change. One may be working elsewhere, engaged in a different aspect of production, or come into contact with different experiences which will require additional changes or modifications.
- Knowledge in its development continually passes through a cycle of three phases: (a) social practice, the development of production and of social relations, setting problems for theoretical solutions; (b) the elaboration of theories arising from those problems based on the experiences; and (c) the application of those theories in social practice testing, verifying and correcting in the process of putting them to use.

- There is no other way to discover knowledge except through entering into practical relations with real objects and processes, striving to master and change them, forming concepts on the basis of the experiences gained and then testing the conclusions once more in practice.

Knowledge does not exist apart from practice. People do not aquire knowledge of things about which their practice has not yet given them the need or opportunity of finding out anything.

THE CONCEPTS OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The concepts of participatory research have grown from the general social critique of the most recent years, but also from the experiences of persons working in various countries to find a way of combining active and engaged commitment with an approach to research. While not all of the persons working within the field of participatory research would base their work on the materialist epistemology presented, some would.

The point of raising it in this article is that it represents and attempts to deal with a possible strategy for research and the role of academics as activists which takes into account overall political economic context particularly bearing in mind the question of distributing not only knowledge but the means by which knowledge is produced to the working classes. In a nutshell, participatory research is defined as a three-pronged activity: it is a method of social investigation involving the full participation of the community; it is an educational process; and it is a means of taking action for development. The following are the basic components of participatory research that are identified:

1. The problem originates in the community itself and the problem is defined, analysed, and solved by the community.
2. The ultimate goal of research is the radical transformation of social reality and the improvement of the lives of the people involved. The beneficiaries of the research are members of the community itself.
3. Participatory research involves the full and active participation of the community in the centre of the

research process.

4. Participatory research involves a whole range of powerless groups of people: the exploited, the poor, the oppressed, the marginal, etc.

5. The process of participatory research can create a greater awareness in the people of their own resources and mobilize them for self-reliant development.

6. It is a more scientific method of research in that the participation of the community in the research process facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality.

7. The researcher is a committed paticipant and leader in the process of research, which leads to militancy on his/her part, rather than detachment.

FINAL COMMENTS

While some of the analyses will benefit greatly from revision and correction, there are a few points which need to be brought out and which should remain after any modifications:

1. Any concern about the role of universities in the new international order must, by necessity, deal with the question of the production of knowledge.

2. The production of knowledge does not lie outside the general structure of material social relations.

3. It is important to ask who produces the knowledge and for what purpose.

4. The ability to maximize the "free space" that exists within and around universities depends on individual and collective stances of commitment and militancy on the part of the researchers.

5. The most promising direction for further work lies in the integration of theoretical work with concrete social practice in solidarity with the working classes.

Participatory Research, Popular Knowledge and Power: A Personal Reflection

INTRODUCTION

The development of the theory and practice of participatory research has been a collective process. It has benefited from the creative and thoughtful work of hundreds of people in about 60 countries. It has been and will remain an international debate and discussion among persons concerned with the issues of research, adult education, popular knowledge and power. The discussion has been characterized by its interdisciplinary nature and by a certain degree of excitement among those who have been involved. The people who have contributed to the present state of affairs have included literacy teachers, community organizers, administrators, social scientists from all the traditional disciplines, artists, singers, factory workers, organizational analysts and urban activists.

This process has been possible through the support and stimulation of a loose and voluntary network of individuals who, since 1977, have formed the Participatory Research Network. The network has been encouraged and supported by the International Council for Adult Education because, from the beginning, it appeared that the concept of participatory research, with its emphasis on "people as experts", shared a common premise with adult education. Participatory research differs significantly from more traditional kinds of research in its commitment to the empowerment of learning for all those engaged in the process. Along with its other characteristics, participatory research stresses the *education* aspect of social investigation as central to its conceptualization. It has been seen as part of the traditions of the adult education movement. As has been said by Ralph Ruddock, one of adult education's outstanding philosophers

> *In our thinking, in our teaching, we must present challenges: What in our system is seen as an appropriate response to the mass of human misery and oppression?... Specific problems in their historical and local setting must engage our thinking. Each of us holding to a political - philosophic position (and others who hold to none) must take up the challenge of the presenting problem: how may it be analysed and understood? How is it to be resolved? (Ruddock, 1981).*

The network of those involved in such challenges and problems for participatory research is composed of five (soon to be six with the addition of the Caribbean) autonomous and geographically - based groups working or interested in participatory research. (The contact addresses appear at the end of this article.) The groups have been financially independent, have worked on a volunteer basis, and have agreed at annual meetings on some common strategies and ways of mutually supporting each other. All relations have been those of equality in the face of similar problems, with the Canadians learning from colleagues in Venezuela, Tanzanians learning from Indians, and so on, according to the various experiences.

More so than in any other work, this paper--and others in the field--are the result of the organizing and dialogue of many people. Few, if any, of us can say we are the author of original ideas and issues; such is the collective and international nature of our work. There are, however, some individuals who have been key organizers and influences of the work since 1977:

AFRICA:	Yusuf Kassam, Kemal Mustafa, Deborah Bryceson (Tanzania)
ASIA:	Rajesh Tandon (India); Eileen Belamide (Philippines); Elizabeth Sommerland (Australia);
EUROPE:	Jan de Vries (Netherlands); Helen Callaway (England); Paolo Orefice (Italy); Marja-Liisa Swantz (Finland);
LATIN AMERICA:	Francisco Vio Grossi (Chile); Ada Martinez (Venezuela); Vera Gianotten, Ton de Wit (Peru); Anton de Shutter (Mexico);
NORTH AMERICA:	Ted Jackson, Deborah Barndt, Dian Marino (Canada); John Gaventa (United States).

WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH?

Participatory research is most commonly described as an integrated activity that combines social investigation, educational work and action. The combination of these elements in an interrelated process has provided both stimulation and difficulty to those who have become engaged in participatory research or who have tried to understand it. Some of the characteristics of the process include:

- The problem originates in the community or workplace itself.
- The ultimate goal of the research is fundamental structural transformation and the improvement of the lives of those involved. The beneficiaries are the workers or people concerned.
- Participatory research involves the people in the workplace or the community in the control of the entire process of research.
- Focus of participatory research is on work with a wide range of exploited or oppressed groups: immigrants, labour, indigenous peoples, women.
- Central to participatory research is its role of strengthening the awareness in people of their own abilities and resources and its support to mobilizing or organizing.
- The term 'researcher' can refer to both the community or workplace persons involved as well as those with specialized training.
- Although those with specialized knowledge/training often come from outside the situation, they are commited participants and learners in a process that leads to militancy rather than detachment.

THE ORIGINS OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

It is important to recognize that, while we may be using a new term, the concerns we are expressing have a history and a continuity in social science. Many of the ideas that are finding new opportunities for expression can be traced as far back as the early field work of Engels in his alignment with

the working classes of Manchester during his early periods. Marx's use of "structured interview", *L'Enquete Ouvriere*, with French factory workers is another sometimes forgotten antecedent (Bodemann, 1977). More recently, aspects of the work of Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and the Tavistock Institute in London have outlined methods of social investigation that are based on other than a positivistic epistimology.

By the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the dominant international research paradigm was a version of the North American and European model based on empiricism amd positivism and characterised by the attention to instrument construction and rigour defined by statistical precision and replicability. Through the elaborate mechanisms of international scholarships, cultural exchanges, and training of researchers in Europe and North America this dominant paradigm was extended to the Third World. Research methods, through an illusion of objectivity and scientific credibility, became one more manifestation of cultural dependency.

The reaction from the Third World--beginning in Latin America--has taken many forms. Dependency theorists, such as Dos Santos, Frank, Amin and Leys, outlined some of the mechaninsms of economic and cultural dependency. Hence, in the field of research methods, Third World perspectives have grown out of a reaction to approaches developed in North America and Europe; approaches that have been not only created in different cultural settings but that contribute to already existing class distinctions. The Third World's contribution to social science research methods represents an attempt to find ways of uncovering knowledge that work better in societies where interpretation of reality must take second place to changing of reality.

Practical experience in what was becoming known as participatory research was the work of the Tanzanian Bureau of Resource Allocation and Land Use Planning. Here, Marja-Liisa Swantz and teams of students and village workers were involved in questions of youth and employment in the Coast region and later in studies of social-economic causes of malnutrition in Central Kilimanjaro. A visit by Paulo Freire to Tanzania in 1971 was a stimulus to many social scientists who might not have been as impressed by the existing experience of many adult educators or community development workers.

What was happening in Tanzania in a small way already had begun in Latin America in the early 1960s. Stimulated in part by the success of the Cuban revolution, Latin American scientists began exploring more committed forms of research. One of the most useful roles of Paulo Freire has been to bring some of the current ideas of Latin American scientists to the attention of persons in other parts of the world. His work on *Thematic Investigation* (1973), first in Brazil and later in Chile, was an expression of this search. Others, such as Beltran and Gerace, have explored alternatives through concepts of horizontal communication (Beltran, 1976; Gerace, 1973). Fals Borda and others in Colombia have been engaged in "investigacion y accion", while Reed and the Darcy de Oliveras have made us aware of militant observation (Darcy de Oliveras, 1975).

NOT THE THIRD WORLD ALONE

While the specific term "participatory research" developed in the Third World, due to crises caused by dysfunctional concepts of one-way, detached research in a world of immediate and urgent problems, a consciousness was growing in Europe and North America.

The "Frankfurt School" was rediscovered through Habermas and Adorno. "Action Sociology" was placed on the agenda of most academic meetings. In Switzerland, researchers in curriculum development adopted methologies from political research to their needs (Moster, 1977). In Canada, Stinson developed methods of evaluation along action research lines for community development work (Stinson, 1977). In the Netherlands, Jan de Vries has explored alternatives from a firm philosophical base. The National Institute for Adult Education pioneered in participatory research through its evaluation of the British adult literacy campaign (Holmes, 1976). In Italy, Paolo Orefice and colleagues at the University of Naples have been applying the methology to their investigation of community and district "awareness" of power and control (Orefice, 1981). In the USA, the Highlander Centre in Tennessee has been using approaches similar to participatory research for years, most recently to deal with issues of land ownership and use (Horton, 1981).

FEMINIST RESEARCH

Feminist critiques of research have been part of the larger search for a form of working with people in a way that empowers rather than prolongs the status quo. Both feminist research and participatory research seek to shift the centre from which knowledge is generated. Dale Spender has described the field of women's studies:

> *Its multi-disciplinary nature challenges the arrangement of knowledge into academic disciplines; its methodology breaks down many of the traditional distinctions between theoretical and empirical and between objective and subjective. It is in the process of redefining knowledge, knowledge gathering and making... (Spender, 1978).*

In a recent book on "new paradigm research", Helen Callaway demonstrates that women have been largely excluded from producing the dominant forms of knowledge and that the social sciences have been not only a science of *male* society but also a *male science* of society (Callaway, 1981). In relation to this fact, Spender urges women "to learn to create our own knowledge". It is crucially important, she states,

> *that women begin to create our own means of producing and validating knowledge which is consistant with our own personal experience. We need to formulate our own yardsticks, for we are doomed to deviancy if we persist in measuring ourselves against the male standard. This is our area of learning, with learning used in a way widely incompassing, highly charged, political and revolutionary sense (Spender, 1980).*

DEBATE AND DISCUSSION

Much of the recent discussion on both the theoretical and practical levels was reviewed at the International Forum on Participatory Research which took place in Yugoslavia in April, 1981. The Forum brought together about 60 activists and practitioners from all regions and, rare for international seminars, nearly half of the participants were women. The Forum's objectives were;

- sharing and consolidating experiences in participatory research;

- development of practical guidelines;
- strengthening of international linkages among regional networks;
- development of future strategies.

A number of key issues, or themes emerged from the deliberations. Whether in working group discussions or theoretical plenaries, participants addressed those issues with a sense of exploration, self- clarification, commitment and mutual respect.

- THE RESEARCHER AS A LEARNER

The role of the researcher was one issue and, in particular, the question of the "outside" researcher. It was suggested that this person must be committed to seeing the participatory research process through to the end, avoid actions that endanger community members, and see clearly, and support, the situation of the subordinate groups within the community. It was recognized that these commitments are likely to run counter to the "class" interest of the professional researcher, but that the researcher along with the community, learns and develops through the educative process. The researcher can make a significant contribution by building new understandings and realities so that he or she is no longer an outsider, by bringing new information, and helping to find funds for development of technical skills. In all cases, the outside researcher is involved particularly in building an *indigenous* capacity for collective analysis and action and the generation of new knowledge by the people concerned.

This issue led to considerable discussion about the development and role of the "organic intellectual" to participatory research. The term comes from Antonio Gramsci, the Italian political activist and theoretician who wrote from his prison cell in the 1930s. Interest in Gramsci was surprisingly spread among Forum participants. Although the term sounds awkward when not placed within Gramsci's overall framework, the idea is not far removed from what many adult educators mean by "the empowerment of the people through learning". The "organic" adjective means that such leadership arises from, and is

nourished by, the actual situation of workers and peasants; such a person is not an outsider, although someone outside the situation can facilitate the necessary growth, awareness and knowledge.

One position by Forum participants is that the "organic intellectual" is really a collective expression of the new consciousness of the working class through its own social organizations--such as political parties--and that, although participatory research may support and help such organizations, it should never seek to replace them. Another position views "organic intellectuals" as individual members of the peasant/working class whose consciousness and technical expertise is raised through active struggle, of which participatory research may be one means. A third position argues that organic intellectuals may be middle-class intellectuals who have been radicalized through active struggle and who may be located along a continuum from those engaged only in intellectual work--such as participatory research--to those engaged in a considerable amount of manual work. A consensus favoured the first two positions. However, the issue was provocative enough for general agreement that further examination of the concept of the organic intellectual is of high priority.

- NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

The meaning of participation was used by Forum participants to cover micro activities, such as the learning of literacy skills, to macro activities of popular organization for class struggle at a national level. The particular role of participatory research, it was argued, is in the process of mobilization of people for their collective creation of new knowledge about themselves and their own reality; again, part of the education component of the process.

An important distinction was advanced between participation and manipulation. Under the guise of participation--rhetoric, slogans, strategies to "involve" the people--outside interests may attempt to manipulate communities or workplace groups for purposes of domestication, integration and exploitation. In contrast, participatory research is seen as a front-line against such manipulation since it advocates and trains in critical

and collective analysis of the kind that establishes and maintains control and learning in the hands of the people, and explicitly rejects manipulation. Participatory forms of social action that lead from such collective analyses were also advocated. Cited as a key methedological issue was the problem of how "collective" a participatory research process may be, given internal power relations within communities and workplace groups and the degree of new learning that the individuals within the group must engage in.

- POPULAR KNOWLEDGE

The creation of popular knowledge emerged as a goal of participatory research. For many, participatory research is a process by which the "raw" and somewhat unformed--or, at least, unexpressed--knowledge of ordinary people is brought into the open and incorporated into a connectable whole through discussion, analysis and the "reflected" knowledge gained with or without allied intellectuals and those who have both broader and deeper insights.

Some discussions highlighted the dynamic interaction between the kind of practical technology and expertise that people who live in the situation have and the kind known by "official" technology and expertise. The identification of the various means of *controlling* this process of interaction that can be available to local community and workplace groups was central to such discussion.

Also explored was the critical question of how the creation and dissemination of new knowledge is linked to social transformation. One position is that participatory research can, through successive movements of popular analysis over time, move people from looking at more peripheral contradictions in the local reality of focusing more clearly on central contradictions that actually influence and control our lives. In the process they become more aware of how power groups can divert their attention to peripheral and short-term issues so that the inequitable status quo can be maintained. Thus, the linking of action to such analysis moves from action that addresses short-term needs to action based on strategies for bringing about fundamental social change.

- HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

The relation between historical materialism and participatory research was pursued at length. A strong position was taken by some that the historical materialist method, in contrast to a "pragmatic" approach, is essential to the participatory research process. Here, class analysis and class struggle are fundamental ideas; popularly-created knowledge in interaction with historical materialistic methodology can be regarded as yielding rich potential for social change. Another position held that participatory research must embrace a variety of analytic approaches and that historical materialism has sometimes been an alienating, elitist endeavour. However, there was considerable agreement on two related points: first, that the use of the historical materialist method should be non-dogmatic, given the fact that participatory research is a generative process; and the second, that the historical method can be used in very strategic ways, such as to study the dominant class forces (state, corporate) both globally and locally. An important challenge is to "popularize" such knowledge, to interpret it and see it placed in the minds and hands of the people it seeks to exclude and dominate.

- LOCAL AUTONOMY AND BROADER STRUGGLES

Exchanges among participants brought out several tensions; for example, the requirement of local autonomy for a given participatory research process and demand for coordinated social action at the national or regional levels. A national struggle must be more than an aggregate of participatory research experiences at the local level; forms of popular organizations developed by social movements are complex and variable and are rooted in the local political and economic conditions.

It was pointed out that, at certain critical moments, a local level participatory research process may, in fact, hinder the process of broader social movements by over-emphesizing the localized nature of the problems. Some participants expressed the need for a way to set ground rules across different levels of stuggles. Again, participatory research was not seen as a panacea or convenient "tool"; there was general recognition however, that, at certain stages, participatory research can enrich broader social organizations.

A QUESTION OF POWER

Emerging from the discussions, debates and activities of participatory research is the central question of power. Participatory research can only be judged in the long run by whether or not it has the ability to serve the specific and real interests of the working class and other oppressed peoples. For John Gaventa of Highlander Research and Education Centre in the Appalachian region of the United States, power can be described as follows: "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to to B's interest." In this idea, A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do; he also exercises power by influencing, shaping or determining B's very wants (Gaventa, 1981).

How, then, can participatory research be useful in shifting more power into the hand of popular groups and oppressed peoples? There are at least three possibilities.

I. UNMASKING THE MYTHS

Vio Grossi has given considerable thought to the task of participatory research as initiating a process of "dis-indoctrination" that allows people to detach themselves from the myths imposed on them by the power structure and that have prevented them from seeing their own oppression or from seeing possibilities for breaking free. In Mexican terms participatory research leads to the analysis of secondary contradictions that exist within society (how does oppression look in *our* world?) to the location of primary contradictions (what are the hidden structures that shape society?), and then to a process of action.

In this context, structural transformation can be seen as the strategic goal to be reached in the medium or long term. A participatory research process carried out in conjunction with popular groups (and under their control) is designed to facilitate the analysis of stages toward that goal.

2. THE CREATION OF POPULAR KNOWLEDGE

The stages of dis-indoctrination that Vio Grossi has outlined are supplemented by working papers on methods that have been used over the past years by the Toronto-based

Participatory Research Group. The papers describe a variety of methods for developing and activating collective analysis. These include drama, drawing, thematic photographs (both still and in photo-novel form), videotape, meetings, radio and interview-surveys as a mean of helping people to examine the deeper layers of the social structure. Such attention can lead to systematization of new knowledge; knowledge not generated by the dominant ideological producers in the "super-structure" but generated by and consistant with the experiences and world view of ordinary people.

Fals Borda has contributed to the discussion of popular knowledge in the paper on "Science and the Common People" (Fals Borda, 1980). He says the creation of knowledge that comes from the people contributes to the realization of a "people's science" which serves and is understood by the common people, and no longer perpetuates the status quo. The process of this new paradigm involves;

- Returning information to the people in the language and cultural form which it originated;
- Establishing control of the work by the popular and base movements;
- Popularizing research techniques;
- Integrating the information as the base of the "organic intellectual";
- Maintaining a conscious effort in the action/reflection rhythm of work;
- Recognizing science as a part of the everyday lives of all people;
- Learning to listen.

The creation of popular knowledge is a form of "anti-hegemonic" activity, an instrument in the struggle to control what the social agenda is. In Gaventa's terms, popular knowledge can be seen as preventing those in power from maintaining the monopoly of determining the wants of others, thus, in effect, transferring powers to those groups engaged in the production of popular knowledge.

3. CONTRIBUTION TO ORGANIZING

Participatory research is conceived as an integrated process of investigation, education and action. When one addresses the question of power it is clearer than ever that the first two aspects are empty without the third.

But action must be explained still further. From the several years of sharing information and results it has become clear that the most common action and the critical necessity is that of organizing, in its various phases. It has meant supporting the efforts of farmer's or women's groups or workers' health committees or neighbourhoods or campesinos to get together to understand issues and discuss options. It has meant building alliances with other social movements and strengthening the links within various progressive sectors. It is, however, *not a substitute for the organizing of the popular movements themselves*. With its stress on collective analysis and of working out of options and solutions together, the participatory research process reinforces the organizing potential of the base groups which use it.

POWER FOR WHOM?

It would be an error to assume that naive or uncontrolled use of participatory research results in strengthening of the power of the powerless at the base of society. Without control over the participatory research process, experience has shown that power can easily accrue to those already in control. There has been a certain lack of clarity in some earlier writings on PR around this issue, and it has resulted in misunderstanding and manipulation.

PROFESSIONAL RESEARCHERS

Participatory research has been used by some researchers to provide them with insight and views they could not ordinarily have access to or know about. Some of my own writings in 1975, with an emphasis on an increased "scientific accuracy", have inadvertently encouraged abuse of our work, including the manipulation of groups by researchers. PR has become the key by which these researchers have gained more power for themselves

within the academic status quo (even admitting that the academic world allows for wide ideological positions.) In these cases PR has fed the process of ideological control by giving more power to the institutions of the state for which they work.

In fairness, participatory research has also legitimized the work of certain researchers in support of various popular groups, thereby resulting in a shift of skills and resources from the institution to the community or workplace.

THE STATE

Some activist and social workers have grabbed on to participatory research as a way to get people to agree to a position, an action, a policy that social workers, adult educators, or others, feel is important for their purposes. PR can be debased as a more effective "tool" for getting the predominant views of the state into the hearts and minds of the particularly meddlesome or opposition parts of the population.

We are all familiar with the use by organizations of a study or commission as an excuse for not taking action, and usually promoted as "taking the pulse of the people." Hours of debate, scores of witnesses, piles of money can go up in smoke--and the real problems are not dealt with. A question remains, however, as to what happens after people who have spoken up on such issues, have made alliances, or had had a taste of countering the dominant forces of the day? Is there a "memory" of power which will re-surface at a later time? Is one role of adult education not to let such memories fade and to build on the momentum, the learning, the collective analysis that inquiries can generate?

POPULAR GROUPS AND LINKS TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Under circumstances of control by popular groups, participatory research processes have produced increased power for some groups. The recently-completed Appalachian Land Use Study, carried out by a coalition of citizen groups with some support from the Highlander Research and Education Center, has produced dramatic evidence of unequal taxation policies--and is leading to legislation and action in several states.

In Big Trout Lake in northern Ontario, a participatory research process enabled the Indian Band Council to thwart attempts by government to install a sewage line that was environmentally damaging and that would serve but a minority. In Norway, participatory research methods were used by workers in the Norwegian Chemical Workers' Union to protect and control the introduction of new technology into the plant.

One often finds that the researcher and the base group are not the only parties involved; usually there is a third: the funder. In some experiences, the funder has presented the most difficulty in maintaining the integity of the work. Funding policies of governments can, for example expand into procedures that regulate certain groups in the society, such as immigrants and native peoples. Research with popular groups that is funded by the state will often be subject to such intervention and influence. Also, what happens when independent researchers apply for funds as an intermediary group for popular organizations is not entirely satisfactory. This has led, at times, to an unsavoury situation where the needs and weakness of some parts of the population are presented to funders for grants, with the result that the funds go to the researchers and the intermediary group but not always to the actual base groups that the work is to serve.

We come back to the question of control of the process and the links to social movements. At present, the most promising results for work might be found through better integration with groups that represent basic progressive interests and which can be characterized as social movements. This means working in conditions where the movement has an ability to control and shape the larger organizational and political process, independent of possible participatory research activities. Working with such social movements gives a natural channel for the mobilizing and creative energies of participatory research to feed the larger struggle. It would mean, for example, working *within* the framework of the women's movement, labour unions, native peoples' political organizations, public interest research groups, tenant associations or groups of landless labourers.

AN INVITATION REPEATED

In a complex world there are no simple solutions. Six years after the original articles on participatory research were

published in *Convergence* we are not able to present a simple formulation of this work, nor would we wish to. We are, however, more convinced, rather than less, of the value and importance of the issues raised by the concept and practice of participatory research. As we now write in late 1981, new groups of sociologists, psychologists and trade union researchers are only now coming across the work in participatory research and making links with adult educators. Such support and enthusiasm is re-encouraging all of us to continue to move forward.

In 1975, we extended an invitation to *Convergence* readers to join in the dialogue and debate. The response gave participatory research its current shape, perspective and network. A similar invitation is repeated so that more of us can work together. Some work includes:

- Strengthening links between feminist studies and participatory research.
- Translation of ideas and experience into everyday language so that we ourselves are not guilty of language control. The discovery of new terms enriches the internal debates but the ultimate test is whether--and how--ordinary people can relate to the stimulating ideas and urgent questions being put forward. There is room for a great deal of popular materials.
- Training, and how a more systematic way can be found for people to have some hands-on experiences in participatory research methods. Not only through the usual kinds of formal seminars or workshops but also through exchanges of people engaged in their own workplace on similar creative approaches.
- Extending the network. In many ways the network still represents a small group of people. This is not intentional; it illustrates the time and energy required to make and maintain contacts in all parts of the world. There is work to be done to strengthen the practice in the field of adult education and to make more links to various social movements that enrich our understanding and our work... the women's movement, peace movements, human rights, organizing the rural poor, workers' education education...

The Networks Contacts

AFRICA
Kemal Mustafa, PO Box 5267, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

ASIA
Rajesh Tandon, 45 Mainik Farm, Khanpur, New Delhi, 110 062, India

CARIBBEAN
Dr. Claudia Harvey, c/o Extra-Mural Studies Unit, University of the West Indies, St.Augustine

EUROPE
Matthias Wesseker, Centre of Professional Studies, University of Kassel, School of Intern Agriculture, SteinstraBe 19, D-3430 Witzenhausen, West Germany

SOUTH EUROPE
Paolo Orefice, Universita Degli Studi di Napoli, Instituto di Pedagogia e Filosofia Morale, Via Porta di Massa, 80133, Naples, Italy

LATIN AMERICA
Francisco Vio Grossi, CEAAL, Casilla 6257, Correa 22, Santiago, Chile

NORTH AMERICA
Participatory Research Group, 386 Bloor St. West, Toronto, M5S 1X4, Canada

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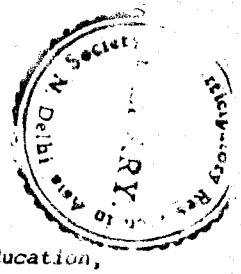

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