1

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395 rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file / Votre dossier

Quelle / Notre adresse

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

**THE PROFESSIONALIZATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE'S EXPERIENCE**

By

SHERILL JOHNSON, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Geography

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

December, 1994

©copyright

1995, Sherrill Johnson

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Author's name (if known)

Author's address (if known)

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-08945-2

Canada

Name _____

Dissertation Abstracts International is arranged by broad, general subject categories. Please select the one subject which most nearly describes the content of your dissertation. Enter the corresponding four-digit code in the spaces provided.

--	--	--	--

U·M·I

SUBJECT TERM

SUBJECT CODE

Subject Categories

THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

Architecture	0729
Art History	0377
Cinema	0900
Dance	0378
Fine Arts	0357
Information Science	0723
Journalism	0391
Library Science	0399
Mass Communications	0708
Music	0413
Speech Communication	0459
Theater	0465

EDUCATION

General	0515
Administration	0514
Adult and Continuing	0516
Agricultural	0517
Art	0273
Bilingual and Multicultural	0282
Business	0688
Community College	0275
Curriculum and Instruction	0727
Early Childhood	0518
Elementary	0524
Finance	0277
Guidance and Counseling	0519
Health	0680
Higher	0745
History of	0520
Home Economics	0278
Industrial	0521
Language and Literature	0279
Mathematics	0280
Music	0522
Philosophy of	0998
Physical	0523

Psychology	0525
Reading	0535
Religious	0527
Sciences	0714
Secondary	0533
Social Sciences	0534
Sociology of	0340
Special	0529
Teacher Training	0530
Technology	0710
Tests and Measurements	0288
Vocational	0747

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LINGUISTICS

Language	
General	0679
Ancient	0289
Linguistics	0290
Modern	0291
Literature	
General	0401
Classical	0294
Comparative	0295
Medieval	0297
Modern	0298
African	0316
American	0591
Asian	0305
Canadian (English)	0352
Canadian (French)	0355
English	0593
Germanic	0311
Latin American	0312
Middle Eastern	0315
Romance	0313
Slavic and East European	0314

PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

Philosophy	0422
Religion	
General	0318
Biblical Studies	0321
Clergy	0319
History of	0320
Philosophy of	0322
Theology	0469

SOCIAL SCIENCES

American Studies	0323
Anthropology	
Archaeology	0324
Cultural	0326
Physical	0327
Business Administration	
General	0310
Accounting	0272
Banking	0770
Management	0454
Marketing	0338
Canadian Studies	0385
Economics	
General	0501
Agricultural	0503
Commerce-Business	0505
Finance	0508
History	0509
Labor	0510
Theory	0511
Folklore	0338
Geography	0366
Gerontology	0351
History	
General	0578

Ancient	0579
Medieval	0581
Modern	0582
Black	0328
African	0331
Asia, Australia and Oceania	0332
Canadian	0334
European	0335
Latin American	0336
Middle Eastern	0333
United States	0337
History of Science	0585
Law	0398
Political Science	
General	0615
International Law and	
Relations	0616
Public Administration	0617
Recreation	0814
Social Work	0452
Sociology	
General	0626
Criminology and Penology	0627
Demography	0938
Ethnic and Racial Studies	0631
Individual and Family	
Studies	0628
Industrial and Labor	
Relations	0629
Public and Social Welfare	0630
Social Structure and	
Development	0700
Theory and Methods	0344
Transportation	0709
Urban and Regional Planning	0999
Women's Studies	0453

THE SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Agriculture	
General	0473
Agronomy	0285
Animal Culture and	
Nutrition	0475
Anim. Pathology	0476
Food Science and	
Technology	0359
Forestry and Wildlife	0478
Plant Culture	0479
Plant Pathology	0480
Plant Physiology	0817
Range Management	0777
Wood Technology	0746
Biology	
General	0306
Anatomy	0287
Biostatistics	0308
Botany	0309
Cell	0379
Ecology	0329
Entomology	0353
Genetics	0369
Limnology	0793
Microbiology	0410
Molecular	0307
Neuroscience	0317
Oceanography	0416
Physiology	0433
Radiation	0821
Veterinary Science	0778
Zoology	0472
Biophysics	
General	0786
Medical	0760

EARTH SCIENCES

Biogeochemistry	0425
Geochemistry	0996

Geodesy	0370
Geology	0372
Geophysics	0373
Hydrology	0388
Mineralogy	0411
Paleobotany	0345
Paleoecology	0426
Paleontology	0418
Paleozoology	0985
Polymology	0427
Physical Geography	0368
Physical Oceanography	0415

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Environmental Sciences	0768
Health Sciences	
General	0566
Audiology	0300
Chemotherapy	0992
Dentistry	0567
Education	0350
Hospital Management	0769
Human Development	0758
Immunology	0982
Medicine and Surgery	0564
Mental Health	0347
Nursing	0569
Nutrition	0570
Obstetrics and Gynecology	0380
Occupational Health and	
Therapy	0354
Ophthalmology	0381
Pathology	0571
Pharmacology	0419
Pharmacy	0572
Physical Therapy	0382
Public Health	0573
Radiology	0574
Recreation	0575

Speech Pathology	0460
Toxicology	0383
Home Economics	0386

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

Pure Sciences	
Chemistry	
General	0485
Agricultural	0749
Analytical	0486
Biochemistry	0487
Inorganic	0488
Nuclear	0738
Organic	0490
Pharmaceutical	0491
Physical	0494
Polymer	0495
Radiation	0754
Mathematics	0405
Physics	
General	0605
Acoustics	0986
Astronomy and	
Astrophysics	0606
Atmospheric Science	0608
Atomic	0748
Electronics and Electricity	0607
Elementary Particles and	
High Energy	0798
Fluid and Plasma	0759
Molecular	0609
Nuclear	0610
Optics	0752
Radiation	0756
Solid State	0611
Statistics	0463
Applied Sciences	
Applied Mechanics	0346
Computer Science	0984

Engineering	
General	0537
Aerospace	0538
Agricultural	0539
Automotive	0540
Biomedical	0541
Chemical	0542
Civil	0543
Electronics and Electrical	0544
Heat and Thermodynamics	0348
Hydraulic	0545
Industrial	0546
Marine	0547
Materials Science	0794
Mechanical	0548
Metallurgy	0743
Mining	0551
Nuclear	0552
Packaging	0549
Petroleum	0765
Sanitary and Municipal	0554
System Science	0790
Geotechnology	0428
Operations Research	0796
Plastics Technology	0795
Textile Technology	0994

PSYCHOLOGY

General	0621
Behavioral	0384
Clinical	0622
Developmental	0620
Experimental	0623
Industrial	0624
Personality	0625
Physiological	0989
Psychobiology	0349
Psychometrics	0632
Social	0451

The undersigned recommend to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
acceptance of the thesis

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE'S EXPERIENCE

submitted by
Sherrill Johnson, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim MacGregor", written over a horizontal line.

Thesis Supervisor

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. W. Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Chair, Department of Geography

Carleton University

January 12, 1996

Acknowledgements

I am fortunate that the researching and writing of this thesis has been both a participatory and collaborative process. I am thankful to all those who assisted and supported me in the preparation of this document.

In particular I am grateful to my thesis supervisor, Professor Fiona Mackenzie, for her commitment, support and encouragement throughout the writing process. I am extremely appreciative of the many invaluable suggestions and insights she offered which made this work so much better.

I am also like to thank Professor William Found, of York University. Working as his research assistant at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was a joyful experience, as well as a learning one. I am grateful for his ongoing encouragement and interest in this work.

I would also like to acknowledge the support received throughout the research and analysis from IDRC. In particular, I would like to thank Fred Caiden of the Evaluation Unit of IDRC, for his thoughtful comments and suggestions on the early drafts of this thesis. The advice of the IDRC personnel involved in this project was also greatly appreciated, as they provided valuable feedback throughout the research process.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Geography at Carleton, and to my friends. Their patience, support, and understanding throughout what was sometimes a difficult experience is greatly valued. In particular, I would like to thank my brother, Bill, for his amazing and fast editing of each draft of this thesis. I am also grateful for his continuing confidence in me and my work, and his ongoing encouragement and support for whatever I undertake.

ABSTRACT

In order to understand and evaluate the role that research institutions can play in supporting the evolution and development of participatory research, the implications and issues of this association must be examined from the perspectives of both the research institution and the recipient community, and at three different levels: the micro (households and individuals); meso (institutional); and macro (national and international policy). A major weakness of current participatory research work is the lack of linkage between these levels. I argue there is a valuable role for research institutions and donor agencies to play in creating these linkages.

This thesis draws on a case study of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa to illustrate the pitfalls and potential benefits of institutional involvement in participatory research. IDRC has supported a variety of participatory research activities over the past 15 years, and as such provides a useful example for understanding and analyzing the implications of institutional involvement in participatory research processes. A case study of IDRC also provides a starting point for the examination of appropriate forms of institutional involvement in these processes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acceptance Page	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	ix
Appendices	x

INTRODUCTION	1
---------------------	----------

CHAPTER 1 PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: AN OVERVIEW

Introduction	10
Participation and Participatory Development: An Overview	13
Participatory Research	17
In Search of a Common Definition	17
History and Evolution of Participatory Research	22
The State of Participatory Research Today	26
Participatory Research: Contradictions, Limitations and Risks	27
Contradictions	27
Limitations	30
Risks	36
Gaps in the Literature	38
Conflict	41
Context	42
Facilitative Skills of the Researchers	43
Conclusion	44

CHAPTER 2 INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Introduction	45
The Professionalization of Participatory Research	46
Relationships in Participatory Research	47
Clash of Interests: Researcher/Community	49
Local Capacity Building/Training Issues	52
Methodological Confusion	53
The Institutionalization of Participatory Research	54

Bureaucratic Nature of Institutions	55
Bounded versus Unbounded Needs	56
Large-Scale Replicability of Participatory Research	57
Demands on Participatory Researchers Working with Institutions	58
Evaluation Issues	59
Political Nature of Participatory Research	61
Benefits of Institutional Involvement	62
Conclusion	63

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction	65
Data Collection	66
Database Compilation	66
Project Case Studies	69
Interviews with IDRC Personnel and Outside Specialists	70
Conclusion	70

CHAPTER 4 IDRC AND PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: GENERAL THEMES

Introduction	72
The International Development Research Centre	73
History and Context of Participatory Research at IDRC	75
Case Study Data	80
Database Results	80
Summary of Database Results	94
Interviews with Participatory Research Personnel	95
Effects of Institutional Involvement	96
Corporate Culture	96
Participatory Research and the 'Scientific' Paradigm	98
Project Mentality	99
Project Evaluation	100
Struggles to Effect Good Participatory Research	103
Recent Popularity of Participatory Research Methodology	103
Entry Points and Lead Organizations	104
Context for Participatory Research	107
Emphasis on Process or Results	112
Micro-Macro Linkages	113
Conclusion	114

CHAPTER 5 IDRC-SUPPORTED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS

Introduction	116
Project 87-0155: Occupational Health in the Metal Industry	117
Project 90-0204: Understanding High Risk Sexual Behaviour	124
Project 92-8465: Food Systems Under Stress	128
Project 93-0008: Sustainable Hillside Agriculture	135
Project 93-1012: Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation	139
Summary of Case Study Information	145

CHAPTER 6 CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Introduction	150
Implications and Issues: Two Perspectives	151
Concerns and Implications of Institutional Involvement	152
Micro Level	152
Meso Level	155
Macro Level	158
Role of a Research Institution in Creating Linkages: The IDRC Experience	161
Lessons to be Drawn from the IDRC Experience	164
The Role of Creative Tension in Institutional Involvement: Collaboration versus Compromise	167
 Appendix A	 171
Appendix B	172
Appendix C	173
 References	 174

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1	21
Figure 2	68
Figure 3	84

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1	81
Table 2	85
Table 3	86
Table 4	87
Table 5	88
Table 6	89
Table 7	90
Table 8	91
Table 9	92
Table 10	92
Table 11	93

APPENDICES

	Page
Appendix A Members of IDRC Advisory Committee	171
Appendix B IDRC Divisions Pre- and Post- 1991 Restructuring	172
Appendix C Regional Office Acronyms	173

INTRODUCTION

The general failure of conventional development activities and research, characterized by their large-scale, top-down approach, is widely acknowledged and has resulted in repeated calls for alternative approaches to development. (Bebbington, 1993; Burkey, 1993; Chambers, 1986, Watts, 1993) In recent years, much attention has focused on approaches which build and draw on local capacity. The prevalence of phrases such as 'grassroots development,' 'civil society,' and 'indigenous knowledge' in current development literature (Bebbington, 1991; Carroll, 1992; Clark, 1991; Redclift, 1987; Taylor and Mackenzie, 1992) suggests a strong interest in bottom-up approaches to development, and with this interest a corresponding acceptance of participatory research as a valid research methodology in international development activities.

Ironically, while bottom-up development trends have been helping to lead to the acceptance and development of participatory research methodologies, countervailing trends toward the professionalization and institutionalization of participatory research are testing both the methodology and the underlying ideology of participatory research. Ironically, the effect of these trends can be to move participatory research in quite different directions than originally envisaged as the methodology evolved in the South.

This thesis will examine one specific example of the effects of these two countervailing trends - the increasing prevalence of bottom-up approaches to development, and the recent potentially contradictory trend toward professionalising

and institutionalizing these same approaches. Using a case study of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, this study will illustrate the pitfalls and potential benefits of institutional involvement in participatory research.

Participatory research is a very fluid methodology, and future growth and acceptance may well depend on how these trends manifest themselves in participatory research practices. IDRC, an international development research institution based in Ottawa, has a long and significant record of experience with participatory research methodology since the early 1980s. In this study the strengths and weaknesses of institutional support for participatory research processes will be examined to determine how collaborative efforts can achieve results which best meet the needs of all involved parties. In this thesis I argue that while institutional involvement in participatory research processes initially appears to be fundamentally contradictory, a collaborative approach to combining the two can produce high-quality research that is community-informed, rigorous, and highly relevant, all critical factors given the recent cutbacks to development research resources. It is useful, both academically and pragmatically, to examine the ways in which IDRC has found to incorporate the unique research demands of participatory methodologies into their existing bureaucratic structures.

I also argue that in order to understand and evaluate the effects of institutional involvement in participatory research, the implications of this involvement need to be examined from the perspectives of the institution and the recipient community at three different levels: micro (household and individuals), meso (institutional) and macro (national and international policy). A major weakness of current participatory research

work is the lack of linkage between these levels, and a research institution such as IDRC can play a valuable role in creating linkages between these levels. This thesis concludes with a consideration of the forms of intervention most appropriate for institutional involvement.

Before a specific case study can be considered, it is important to establish a clear definition of participatory research. The definition used here draws heavily on the Freirian approach to development (Freire, 1968) which has evolved and been adapted for conscientization and research around the world. The essential elements of this model are that it is transformative (rather than reformist), emancipatory, empowering, and people-centred. The locus of control is primarily local. It attempts to break down the traditional barriers between the researcher and the researched, and to involve 'the researched' as active subjects, rather than passive objects, of research. Throughout this thesis the term participatory research will be used to describe this model.

In the literature that has documented and driven the development of participatory research (PR), the terms action research (AR) and participatory action research (PAR) are often used to describe essentially the same processes. Some confusion arises between the use of PR (and PAR) and PRA (participatory rural appraisal) which should be clarified. Occasionally, they are used incorrectly as interchangeable terms, but while there are similarities between the two, there are also significant differences worth noting. While PRA incorporates several elements of participatory research, including several of the research methods and tools, the

underlying ideology of the methodology does not rest as heavily on letting the research subjects (primarily farmers in PRA) control the process. Instead, the emphasis in PRA is on having farmers identify their local problems (as well as solutions) and needs, and then work in conjunction with outside agricultural research experts to solve these problems and meet local needs.

GEOGRAPHIC ENQUIRY AND PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Traditional, discipline-bound academic approaches to development have not proven particularly successful in addressing the most complex and difficult development problems and issues. As noted by Hall et al., "...social science has divided itself into specialized divisions, none of which can explain in a holistic fashion any given social phenomenon." (1982, p. 7)

An example of the problems of discipline-bound academic approaches to development can be seen in standard economic theories of development. These have dominated development discourse until recently in spite of their failure to explain and predict the perils of the developing world. More recent inter- and multi-disciplinary approaches to development have produced richer, more complex, and generally more relevant representations of reality by incorporating a variety of perspectives, recognizing the difficulties engendered by the inappropriate simplification of complex and multi-dimensional problems. Deschler and Selener comment that:

Transformative research should assist in identifying the relationships between the micro and the macro, the part and the whole, the local and

the global, the subjective and objective. It should recognize and emphasize the environmental aspects of all nature. It should also view society as being globally interconnected....Transformative research should not be conducted in a reductionist mode, but should acknowledge the holistic character of reality (1991, p.15).

The complexity of human/environment interactions demonstrates the need for social science research methodologies which recognize and accommodate this complexity. Geography, traditionally the synthesizing discipline of the social sciences, is well-situated to provide a holistic and broad-based perspective to these problems. Given the increasing popularity of inter- and multi-disciplinary research in other disciplines, and the emergence of environmentalism as a major focus of research, it would be regrettable to lose one of the traditional strengths of geographical enquiry at this point in the interests of defending the disciplinary boundaries (e.g. economic, political or social geography) which have framed geographical enquiry in the past. As Short and Lowe (1990) note:

As academics we have a duty and a responsibility to make a contribution to this shifting terrain of argument and debate. As social scientists we have to make some kind of order form the chaos. As geographers we have a special responsibility to make sense of the ambiguities and politics involved in the relationship between people and the environment, the social and the spatial, the structural and the personal, space and place (p.9).

This argument holds true in the area of development studies, particularly in light of the recent emphasis on sustainable development practices. Geographers are currently making interesting and valuable contributions to development discourse, (e.g. Watts, 1993; Peet and Watts, 1993; Holdar, 1993) as they are well positioned to provide a unique synthesizing perspective that many other disciplines lack.

However, there are still many areas suitable for geographic enquiry which have yet to be explored. Holdar (1993) comments on the lack of geographic enquiry into topics such as the effects of foreign aid, and registers this as a fertile area for future research, particularly in light of current globalization trends, noting that:

With increasing economic globalization and growing economic gaps within the third world...such research is needed to understand the geographic variation in underdevelopment and development and the role of trade, official aid, and private investment in the process (p.466).

According to Holdar, some previous development research has been constrained by the limits of traditional geographic thought, resulting in a

...tendency in studies of third world development to generalize the character of first-world/third-world relations....and not investigate the specific value of this relationship (as expressed in, for example, aid and trade relations) further (1993, p. 465).

Corbidge (1990) identifies another area in which geographers can contribute, what he calls the 'central issue which continues to face development studies,' namely, how to be sensitive to the particularities of place and to the essential difference of Southern experiences, while still recognizing the asymmetrical insertion of these societies into the global political economy (p. 391). Johnston (1986) echoes this sentiment, commenting that

...people are neither 'puppets' nor 'free agents' but individuals taking decisions in contexts over which they have little personal control; and that the subject matter of geography (space, place and environment) are integral parts of that theory. (p.3)

Participatory research cuts across a broad number of disciplines, including all of the social sciences. Therefore we could ask what value there is in examining it from a specifically geographical perspective.

It can be argued that participatory research is an effective means by which to start unravelling some of the complexity of development problems, and a useful methodology to examine and analyze interactions between people and their environments. In addition to capturing some of the richness of these interactions, it has the advantage of allowing for the emergence of a local perspective (or perspectives) on these problems and issues.

In arguing for the need for a 'progressive human geography,' Lowe and Short inadvertently articulate many of the strengths of participatory research methodology used in development research.

If we utilize a plurality of methods we are likely to provide both a structured content for our geography and a study which is sensitive to individual and group perceptions, resources and abilities....There is a need for what Gregory (1987) terms 'polyvocal and polylocal strategies' which consider different voices in different places if we are to handle the complexity of social life. (Lowe and Short, 1990, p.7-8)

The authors identify an alternative history of geography, with its emphasis on social concern and social criticism, and the consistent need throughout this history for a

...people's geography, for an intellectual exercise sensitive to social injustice, aware of political realities and economic power yet powered by a belief in the possibility of emancipating theory and liberating practice.... This emancipatory impulse appears again and again in geography, partly in response to wider social changes, partly as a reaction to the incorporation of the discipline into the agenda of the establishment, and partly as a result of an individual's need to say something about pressing questions of social importance and political consequence. (Lowe and Short, 1990, p. 3)

The authors' focus on emancipation and liberation, and their emphasis on social change as a response to unjust political and economic realities is certainly in keeping with the progressive and emancipatory spirit of participatory research methodology.

Lowe and Short also note the need for a geographic analysis of marginalized people in society, and the ways in which many peripheral groups in society have been ignored in previous geographic research (1990, p.4). With this argument the authors continue to echo (again inadvertently) the key tenets of participatory research methodology. These theses will be explored in more detail throughout this thesis.

CONTENT OF THESIS

This thesis begins with a examination of the literature around participatory research. The literature review has been divided into two chapters to illustrate different aspects of the available literature. The first chapter provides an overview of the general literature on participatory research, and includes a brief history of its evolution, an examination of the limitations of the methodology, and a discussion of gaps in the literature. The second chapter discusses the literature specific to issues of the professionalization and institutionalization of participatory research processes, particularly with respect to donor agencies and academic institutions. The evolution of the methodology is closely linked to both of these topics.

Chapter three details the data collection methodology used in this study. Chapter four begins with a brief overview of IDRC and continues with an examination of the general themes which emerged in the study. These themes were primarily drawn from the analysis of a database constructed for this research, as well as interviews with several participatory research specialists both inside and outside IDRC. Chapter five details case studies of specific projects supported by IDRC to illustrate

salient points around the potential and pitfalls of institutional involvement in participatory research processes. In this chapter, a brief overview of each project is provided and is followed by a more detailed analysis of the nature of the participatory research used and the specific areas of interest in each study.

Chapter six, in conclusion, provides a more detailed analysis of the results of this study, and compares the results with issues and concerns raised in the literature review chapters. It examines the constraints and risks of institutional involvement, as well as the corresponding strengths and benefits, for participatory research processes.

This research originally arose from an expressed interest by IDRC in collecting and synthesizing information about the Centre's experience with participatory research methodologies since the late 1970s. Recent literature on participatory research there has identified the need for a synthesis and analysis of the issues surrounding the institutionalization and professionalization of participatory research in development processes. In this thesis I will link these two issues, and present a synthesis of some of the substantive and structural concerns IDRC has faced in the last decade and a half.

CHAPTER 1

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Since its evolution in the late 1960s participatory research has risen from obscurity and is rapidly becoming popular and accepted in both development literature and practice. It is currently studied and practiced in many circles, some far removed from the ones in which it originally developed.

This chapter will briefly trace the development of participatory research methodologies, which have existed formally as research approaches since the late 1960s. Initial interest began with the shift toward participatory development and other areas of 'people-centred development' by development theorists and practitioners in both the North and the South in the 1970s. To understand the converging forces that have made participatory research as popular and prevalent as it is today, it is important first to have a sense of the context in which it evolved.

After tracing its roots, this chapter will define how participatory research is understood today and take a closer look at the history and evolution of the methodology in the South. Finally, this chapter will examine the often overlooked limitations of participatory research.

Participatory research methodology developed relatively independently in the North and the South, in part because practitioners of the methodology used it to address problems in substantially different ways. The Northern tradition (often

referred to as activist research in the early literature) developed as a model of reformist ideals -- primarily in North American business and industry -- as a means of creating a more satisfied and productive workforce (Whyte, 1991; Eldon and Chisholm, 1993; Lewin, 1948). In the South, participatory research developed in the activist tradition, growing out of the practice and experience of conscientization in Latin America (Chambers, 1994a, p. 954). The Southern tradition was initially inspired by the controversial writings of Paulo Freire, particularly Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968).

While the two traditions contain a number of areas of overlap, such as their emphasis on linking knowledge to action and ultimately social change, they also possessed some striking differences in their approach and ideology. The Northern tradition is reformist in nature, aiming to adjust rather than overthrow the existing systems of authority. It works on the assumption that participation in decision making processes is necessary and positive as a mechanism to increase efficiency and productivity within a workforce (Whyte, 1991). While Northern participatory research explicitly links knowledge production to change and action, it is essentially assumed to be an apolitical process. By contrast, the Southern tradition is revolutionary rather than reformist in nature, and advocates explicitly linking control over knowledge production to radical social change, aiming for a more just and equitable distribution of resources amongst participants. In this sense, Southern participatory research is an explicitly political process.

The rapid spread of participatory research methodology in recent years has led to a great deal of terminological confusion. Depending on the author or the organization, the terms participatory research (PR), action research (AR) and participatory action research (PAR) are used interchangeably. However, the term "action research" is more often associated with the Northern tradition and the term "participatory research" associated with the Southern tradition. Participatory action research is presently gaining favour as a term which emphasizes both key elements of the methodology, research and action. For the purposes of this paper, participatory research will be used throughout.

It should be noted, however, that participatory research (PR) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) cannot be used interchangeably. Participatory rural appraisal refers to one specific form of participatory research, usually conducted with farmers, and incorporating a variety of visual techniques and tools to elicit information on topics of local concern. Methods commonly associated with PRA include transect walks, seasonal diagramming, participatory mapping and matrix scoring and ranking (Chambers, 1992). Participatory research, as used in this thesis, refers to a broader research context, in which participatory methodology is used as a mechanism for discovering local priorities and interests as a first step in informing relevant and useful development research in the South.

PARTICIPATION AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT - AN OVERVIEW

Development theory in the period immediately following World War II postulated that the path to development and prosperity for the South would occur through a process of modernization and industrialization. Non-industrialized countries of the South were expected to develop in a similar fashion to that of Northern industrialized countries several decades earlier. It was believed that the only impediment to this growth was the lack of an adequate inflow of capital (Rostow, 1960). Development projects financed during this period, therefore, were almost exclusively large-scale and capital-intensive. They also relied heavily on the experience, advice, and money of Northern 'experts.' (Frank, 1968; Cao Tri, 1986; Wiardia, 1988;)

The seminal work of dependency theorists in the late 1960s (e.g., Frank, 1968) illustrated early frustrations with the modernization approach, and by the 1970s and early 1980s, it became increasingly apparent that this top-down approach to development was not working. Locally, the provision of long-term development assistance often left individuals and communities worse off than before the development intervention. With this realization, an alternative approach to development began to emerge, one that recognized the need for local involvement in development processes and encouraged the active participation of those most affected by development projects. Participatory approaches to development emerged as a result of recipients' discontent with the bureaucratic rigidity of previous "traditional" approaches to development; the high costs of mega-projects coupled with generally

poor results; and the lack of adaptability of large-scale development projects to local customs, culture, constraints and needs. (Beaulieu and Manoukian, 1994)

The increasing importance accorded to participatory approaches is reflected by the growing number of publications on the topic (e.g. Cao Tri, 1986; Ghai, 1988; World Bank 1992, World Bank 1994; Beaulieu and Manoukian, 1994). A 1994 World Bank report highlighted the importance of the Bank learning more about participatory approaches, and offered a working definition of participatory development as a

...process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them. (p. 1)

More simply, advocates of participatory development argue that development projects and activities have the greatest chance for success if they fully involve those most affected - directly or indirectly - by the activities. They argue that when people feel they have some degree of ownership over the development process, they take a greater interest in its success and become much more involved in the project.

The amount of funding directed toward participatory development has grown rapidly over the last fifteen years, during a period when the majority of development activity experienced cutbacks and downsizing. To understand this growth it is important to look at the context in which it is occurring.

While the benefits of participatory development - better long-term results, more locally appropriate action, lower costs for higher returns - seem obvious in hindsight, it is still a relatively new approach within mainstream international development circles. For many years it has been practised almost exclusively by small to mid-size

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other community-based groups, rather than larger and resource-rich development institutions and agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the World Bank.

Notwithstanding an interest in the approach dating back to the 1970s, it was noted as late as 1988 that

....the participatory approach to development has made little headway in official programmes and policies at the national or international level. (Ghai, 1988, p. 35-36)

Participatory development approaches rapidly gained popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s as donor agencies and large international organizations searched for more effective and cost-efficient ways to operate in an increasingly complex international context. CIDA began fostering participatory development processes in the late 1980s by supporting local initiatives and micro-realization projects (Beaulieu and Manoukian, 1994). The World Bank launched a bank-wide learning group on participatory development in 1990, charged with

...examining the issues of participation and identifying the challenges to the Bank in stepping up its efforts to support participation in its operations. (World Bank, 1994, p.1)

Recent interest by the development community as a whole in participatory development has been motivated by two parallel trends: an increasing interest in citizen involvement in projects and the development of civil society; and the continuing divestment of state responsibility for the provision of social services and human resource development under structural adjustment program. . In today's

political and economic climate, a high degree of local participation has become a necessary component of sustainable development strategies. (World Bank, 1994)

The concept of participatory development is now being embraced at local, national and international levels, by individuals and organizations from widely divergent ideologies and backgrounds. The widespread international consensus on the need to increase participation within development projects is of particular interest. It is one of few areas in which the World Bank, regional and international NGOs, local community groups, and governments occupying virtually the entire political spectrum have found to agree upon, albeit for very different reasons. Those on the political right see it as a mechanism by which to increase the efficiency, output and sustainability of development projects, while those on the left see it as a mechanism by which those affected most by particular activities can have some input into the process. (Gilbert and Ward, 1984)

As a result, there has been an influx of funding for participatory development projects which shows no signs of abating. The expected benefits of participatory development include: increased uptake of project services by project beneficiaries; lower operational costs of development projects; and increased benefits to those directly affected by the outcome of the project or process. While acknowledging that participatory development is neither easy nor certain, the World Bank Learning Group (1994) noted that

...more often than not, the benefits of participation (and the costs of not using participatory approaches) outweigh the costs, though this is not always easy to quantify. (p.3)

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

In Search of a Common Definition

Participatory research is an umbrella term describing an approach to research combining several traditions of theory and practice (Deschler and Ewert, 1995, p. 1). Because of this it is difficult to develop a rigorous definition of what constitutes participatory research. In the past

... activist participatory research has taken different forms and been practised by people with a range of ideological positions, from radical crypto-paternalism to open-ended facilitation. (Chambers, 1994a, p. 954)

Although there are some variations among both researchers and practitioners, three characteristics of participatory research are common to most definitions: shared ownership of the research; shared learning from the research; and a shared commitment to action based on research findings. (Maclure, 1990; Grisdale, 1989; Couto, 1987; Deschler and Ewert, 1995)

Shared ownership in participatory research recognizes that those who have to live with the results of research are most affected by this research, and accords this group some degree of control over the research process. Ideally, shared ownership means that participants will be involved in all stages of the research process, from project identification and development through data collection and the analysis and the dissemination of results. (Grisdale, 1989, p.5)

Through shared learning, the distance between the subject and objects of research (or the researcher and those she or he is researching) decreases until the roles of educator and learner become interchangeable. (Maclure, 1990, p.4) Shared learning

assumes there is no hierarchy of knowledge; that all participants can learn from one another and from collectively documenting and analyzing their experiences.

The third characteristic of participatory research, a commitment to action, is critical to its success. Participatory research assumes that the methodology will lead directly to change

...by the people doing the research rather than other research which assumes that change will come more indirectly through 'those who read the work of others'. (Couto, 1987, p.84)

In participatory research the path between knowledge generation and knowledge utilization is direct, as the same people are involved in both activities. Unlike more conventional research, in participatory research scientists and/or researchers do not act as "middle-people" or "brokers of knowledge" (Park, 1993, p.3). Participatory research differs from many research methodologies in that it is iterative rather than linear, and attempts to

...substitute a cyclical ongoing process of research, reflection and action for the conventional linear model of research, recommendation, implementation and evaluation. (Cornwall, 1995, p.1)

It also differs in its explicit desire to have those most affected by the research control the process, with the researcher in the role of 'facilitator' rather than 'expert.'

In some ways, however, participatory research is methodologically similar to other research approaches. Maclure outlines a four step process for participatory research: context familiarization; problem identification and development of a research design; data collection and analysis; and action formulation and implementation (1990, p.5-6). The main difference between participatory methodologies and others is the

time spent in each stage of research, with a participatory project generally taking longer in the first two stages, and with correspondingly less time required for the latter two.

Maguire argues that the purpose of participatory research is not merely to describe or uncover interpretations of social dynamics, but to repair social contradictions and inequalities (1987, p. 10). This sentiment is echoed by Petras and Porpora, who comment that underlying participatory research is a commitment to

...use this knowledge for the community to expose and improve social relations that are inequitable and unjust. (1993, p.109)

Other aspects of participatory research have also been highlighted in the literature. Couto identifies two distinguishing characteristics of participatory research: the heavy emphasis on researchers as learners, thus bridging the gap between the subject-object dichotomy; and the focus on action (1987, p. 5). Another theme which emerges is the emphasis on ongoing dialogue between participants in the process. (Park, 1993, p.12)

Some have attempted to broaden the definition of participatory research to include a wider range of research work than it originally encompassed. Petras and Porpora, for example, argue that participatory research can include anything from what they term parallel process work (researchers and a community working together to further their individual goals) through to a far more radical version of research which emphasises social transformation (1993, p.115). Restricting the definition too much, they argue, will establish such a high standard for practice that it will discourage rather than encourage participatory practices (Petras and Porpora, 1993, p.120).

But Petras and Porpora also acknowledge the dangers of widening the definition of participatory research too much. A methodology too broadly defined, is 'threatened by vacuity' in which the term ceases to mean much of anything. The challenge is to find a balance between a rigid and exclusionary definition, and one that includes all types of research which involve local participation in one form or another.

Misunderstanding of the term has plagued participatory research from the beginning, and with the recent increased interest in participatory processes the lines between true participatory research and community involvement have become more blurred (Grisdale, 1989, p. 5). With the resultant confusion, both methodological and terminological, many have come to believe that participatory research encompasses any process which involves community participation, regardless of the form or underlying rationale for this participation.

Others confuse qualitative and participatory methodologies, mistaking anthropological methodologies such as ethnography and participant observation for participatory research methodologies. While many qualitative and anthropological research methods can be incorporated into participatory research projects, they do not constitute pure participatory research if the participants are not the ones setting the research agenda. (Petras and Porpora, 1993, p. 110)

Figure 1 has been developed to illustrate the range of research which has been described as 'participatory' and to illustrate the ways in which these types of research can be differentiated. This figure will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Figure 1

The x-axis represents varying degrees of control exercised by the subjects of research. At one extreme there is no distinction between the researchers and the subjects of research, and the latter maintain control over the research process. At the other extreme the boundaries between the two groups are strong, and the researchers maintain control over all aspects of the research process.

The y-axis represents the level of analytical abstraction of the research projects. On one end, the level of abstraction is high, drawing on complex theoretical work and previous research experience. At the other end, the emphasis on theoretical abstraction is low, and the work focusses on achieving tangible results rather than on furthering the academic discourse around participatory research methodology.

By separating the various aspects of participatory research methodology according to these scales, it becomes more obvious that the term can be used to encompass a variety of approaches and levels of analysis. The importance of understanding the many facets of participatory research methodology and related inquiry will be discussed further in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

History and Evolution of Participatory Research

Two general trends have influenced the growth and development of participatory research. First, it evolved in opposition to (and as a reaction to) the assumptions of dominant, positivist-informed social science research (Maguire, 1987,p.10). As one researcher commented in the early 1980s:

Persons involved in research who are at the same time committed to a fundamental transformation of society have found many of the tools of empirical social science to be inadequate to the task. (Hall et al., 1982, p.6)

Criticisms of earlier research approaches included their ignorance of the importance of social relations, their often acontextual approach, and emphasis on finding generalizations. This led to charges that this research was producing theories that were severely limited by the narrow parameters of accepted research methodology. (Mustafa, 1982)

Second, participatory research was also greatly influenced by the corresponding interest in participatory development which provided

...a new, popular, bottom-up and endogenous version of development, free from its colonial and techno-economic shackles. (Rahnema, 1990, p.200)

A growing number of development theorists and practitioners began to recognize the benefits of including local participation in development activities. As the 1970s came to a close, 'local participation' had lost some of its subversive connotations and became a politically attractive approach. It also became an economically effective slogan, as it was recognized that more output (results) could be achieved with less input (resources). The growth of participatory development also assisted the

supporters of the free-market system in their latest drive to privatize development processes and move the state out of social service provision. (Rahnema, 1990, p. 202)

Although participatory research began emerging prior to these trends, it benefited greatly from them in later years. In Latin America, participatory research emerged in the late 1960s as a formal ideology and methodology, heavily influenced by the work and writings of Paulo Freire. Much of the early work was associated with the adult education movement, particularly in Latin America, and grew directly out of Freire's work as an adult educator (Chambers, 1994, p. 953). Freire argued that:

The fundamental role of those committed to cultural action is not properly speaking to fabricate liberating ideas, but to invite the people to grasp with their own minds the truth of their reality. (Freire, 1974, p.76)

At the same time, however, participatory methodologies were also developing in many other fields, particularly agriculture and health. By the early 1970s, participatory research was emerging and developing in Asia and Africa. This led to the establishment of regional participatory research networks in both continents in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Chambers, 1994, p. 954). The world-wide interest and acceptance of participatory research methodology led to the establishment of the International Participatory Research Network of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) in Canada in 1979 (Deschler and Ewert, 1995, p.2-5).

Participatory research evolved somewhat concurrently in many different sectors. As participatory research evolved in each, however, two separate (but related) strands emerged: participatory research as an ideology, and participatory research as a methodology. Ideologically the methodology is explicitly radical and political;

methodologically it has both radical and conventional aspects, and can be practised in explicitly politicized ways, or as an apolitical way of collecting information.

Ideologically, participatory research borrows heavily from the work of Karl Marx and Paulo Freire (Couto, 1987, p.84). It also incorporates many elements of neo-Marxist and dependency theory, contending that social systems are

...inherently conflictual, with political and economic elites defending their interests at the expense of non- privileged groups. (Maclure, 1988, p. 2)

Participatory research is more than merely an approach or a methodology, it is

...above all a critique, built on a critical analysis of assumptions underlying knowledge derived from historically shaped and politically beholden institutions. (Heaney, 1994, p. 46)

Park recognizes that the discourse around participatory research signals social, political, and even psychological dimensions that are not accounted for in the scientific, control-oriented production of knowledge (1993, p. 4).

At the heart of participatory research is the relationship between knowledge, power and action. In the relationship, knowledge is assumed to be directly related to power and power directly related to the ability to change or maintain the status quo (Deschler and Ewert, 1995, p.3). It is this explicit recognition of the dynamics of power inherent in research that separates participatory research from conventional research methodologies.

Methodologically participatory research has evolved from a variety of domains. Deschler and Ewert (1995) cite five different traditions which contemporary participatory research draws from: action research in organizations; action research in

schools; participatory research in community development; farmer participatory research; and participatory evaluation (p.2-5). Of these, the first two are Northern traditions, the next two Southern traditions and the last developed in both contexts. As this paper is concerned only with the application of participatory research methodologies in the Southern context, only the three traditions emerging from the South will be discussed.

The use of participatory research in community development grows directly out of the Freirian tradition, and relies heavily on dialogue as a method of conscientization. It also borrows methods from adult education and popular theatre traditions. (Chambers, 1994(a))

Farmer participatory research emerged out of a frustration with traditional, top-down approaches to agricultural research and extension. In these approaches the transfer of technology from North to South was emphasized, often inappropriately. Farmer participatory research, which sought local knowledge as the starting point for research, was developed as an alternative (Deschler and Ewert, 1995, p. 5). Ideally, the locus of control in this research shifts from agricultural experts to the farmers themselves, with outsiders being asked for help only once local problems and priorities have been determined.

Agricultural participatory research methods also evolved as a reaction to the frustrations of many development recipients with the biases of 'rural development tourism,' the difficulties associated with questionnaire surveys (including high costs

and long turnaround time on results), and the recognition of the cost-effectiveness of participatory assessment methods. (Chambers, 1994a, p.956)

In the social sciences, participatory research borrowed heavily from qualitative and anthropological methodology. It incorporates research methods from both, but has taken the process one step further by incorporating the priorities of local people into the research process (Maclure, 1990, p.2). For example, while standard participant observation requires only the interpretation of the researcher, a participatory approach to observation would likely require that the community be asked to provide their interpretation of events, or at the very least, have access to the researcher's analysis in order to provide comment and critique. Similarly, several qualitative research techniques are incorporated into participatory projects, with the principal difference being the amount of control the subjects of research have over the process, and the blurring of the boundaries and roles of the researchers and the researched. It should be noted as well that some participatory research methods also incorporate elements of quantitative enquiry. The critical point is not which type of approach is employed, but rather how it is employed within the context of a participatory framework.

The State of Participatory Research Today

The recent popularity of participatory research has led large development agencies to study the possibility of, and in some cases incorporate, participatory research methodologies into their projects (World Bank, 1994; Beaulieu and Manoukian, 1994). Practitioners and theorists view this interest with mixed feelings:

some believe that the use of participatory research methodology by development agencies is progressive and useful; less optimistically, others are concerned about the obvious contradictions in having large, bureaucratic organizations co-opting a methodology they view as inherently radical and transformative in nature. The implications of the involvement of development institutions in participatory research will be discussed further in the next chapter.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH:

CONTRADICTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RISKS

While participatory research has the potential to be a powerful and effective means of mobilizing communities for development activities, it does carry some contradictions, limitations and risks. General methodological weaknesses will be discussed here. Specific weaknesses and their implications will be discussed in greater detail in following chapters.

Contradictions:

While participatory research appears deceptively simple at first glance, the methodology contains a number of contradictions. The most obvious inconsistency is the frequent need to bring in an outsider to facilitate 'empowerment' and to 'validate' local knowledge (Couto, 1987, p.85). Unequal power relations are exacerbated by the fact that the facilitator is almost always an 'educated' outsider. The effect of this on the participatory research process must be considered (Maclure, 1990, p.7-10). For

example, the strong possibility exists that researchers will feel most comfortable with those in the community who have higher levels of education, and who are able to express themselves clearly and articulately. The danger in researchers forming bonds with this group is that other less articulate (and often less powerful) segments of the community will not be heard.

The danger of these outsiders bringing their conscious and unconscious biases to the process must also be recognized and watched for (Petras and Porpora, 1993, p. 122). Voss (1989) identifies the ways in which differing perceptions of the role of knowledge within a community and varying forms of community interaction affect participation in different contexts. Outside researchers bring their own perceptions of these concepts to the research process, and attempts should be made to make these as explicit as possible.

However contradictory outsider involvement may seem, it also delivers benefits. First, it can open up otherwise forbidden areas for discussion, as outsiders are likely to be less intimidated by the political sensitivity of raising certain issues. Second, outsiders often bring in specialized skills and knowledge not available within the community, and provide a link with opportunities and issues that exist outside the local sphere. While the emphasis on 'local knowledge' is a critical component of participatory research, it is important that it not become an impediment to the use of outside resources and skills which research and development specialists and institutions bring to the process (de Treville, 1991, p. 90).

One of the most important reasons for using an external agent as a catalyst stems from pure necessity. When people are seriously disadvantaged and lack the cohesion to initiate self-reliant development processes, external agents are needed to act as catalysts. The poorest of the poor are unlikely to have the resources to identify and respond to their problems spontaneously (Burkey, 1993, p.211) and proposing that participatory research must be initiated internally is naive at best.

An inherent contradiction exists between the ideology of participatory research (which advocates working with the poorest of the poor) and the reality of working with these groups. As noted by Hondagneau-Sotelo (1993):

Implementing participatory research is seldom easy or automatic. It requires time, resources, organizational skills and a strong commitment to outcomes that are impossible to guarantee ahead of time. For these reasons, conducting participatory research where it is most needed - amongst the poorest, disenfranchised sectors of society - may be the most problematic. (p. 57)

It is critical before beginning projects to assess the limits of local knowledge and awareness, and recognize the constraints and barriers which affect the capacity of the community to solve its problems (Mosse, 1994, p. 521).

There is also a contradiction in the necessary juxtaposition of time, rigour and simplicity that lies at the heart of participatory research (Maclure, 1990, p. 7-10).

Ideally, some participatory research methods (particularly PRA) should be fast, simple, and provide good solid data. Achieving this requires that a set of pre-conditions be set in place. While the idea that an initiative be fast and simple has obvious appeal in community development, it is critical that the importance of methodological rigour not be lost. For the data and analysis to be valid and useful, participatory research must be

carried out with trained people, with the capacity to understand the complexities of both the research and the methodology (de Treville, 1991, p. 91).

This assertion stands in direct contradiction to the claims of many that 'anyone can do participatory research' (Chambers, 1995), starting with little more than good intentions. Without sufficient research capacity in place, it is difficult to carry out effective and valid participatory research projects. Petras and Porpora echo this sentiment when they pose the question:

In our enthusiasm...do we risk assigning greater powers to the communities we research than is commensurate with their actual resources? (1993, p. 122)

Finally, there is the contradiction between research and action, and the political, economic and social barriers which often make social change difficult (Maclure, 1990, p.7-10). These will be covered in more detail in the following chapter.

Limitations:

In addition to the contradictions listed above, certain methodological limitations exist which should be noted. Many of these limitations centre around the problematic concept of participation. Much has been written on the problems of defining participation in development processes (Oakley et al., 1991; Rahnema, 1992; Goulet, 1989) but an extensive discussion of these issues is outside the scope of this study. For the purposes of this thesis, however, two main points about participation should be recognized.

First, there are several different definitions of participation, and each has a somewhat different connotation for development processes. For example, participation can be conceived as either an end in itself, or as a means to an end (Goulet, 1989). Alternatively, it is possible to distinguish between participation 'encouraged' from above, spontaneous participation from the grass-roots, and participation catalyzed by an independent outside third party, for example, a participatory research facilitator (Goulet, 1989; Rahnema, 1992). Other methods of evaluating participation can also be used.

Second, participation has different meanings to those on the left and the right of the political spectrum. As Gilbert and Ward comment:

Many on the right support community action in poor capitalist societies in the sense of community self-help. Not only does self-help overcome resource deficiencies by producing community services and infrastructure, but it is also good in reducing dependency on the state. It promotes self-improvement and independence: two valued right-wing values. For those on the left, community action may serve to improve physical standards but is most necessary to raise consciousness. (1984, p. 769)

Having identified these two issues around participation, the following section discusses some of the issues which arise around the issues of participation in participatory research.

It is important for outsiders to understand the local context of participation. Behaviour considered non-threatening in some cultures and contexts may appear highly suspicious and deviant in others (Mosse, 1994, p. 505). Without an understanding of how 'participation' is defined and perceived within a specific culture, the concept becomes even more problematic. It is very difficult for outsiders to perceive power

relations in a community, but it is critical that they have some understanding of where power lies in a community and how it is used (Mosse, 1994, p.506).

Maclure notes problems around the ethics of participation and discusses some of the ambiguities inherent in the concept (1990, p.11). Participatory research requires that people take time away from other activities in order to participate. To do this, they must feel they and their community are receiving a benefit in return (Hondagneau-Sotelo, 1993, p.64). This observation raises the explicit question of who participates and why. This question will be examined in more detail in later sections of this thesis.

In much of the literature around participation, the community is presented as an unproblematic concept (Ramphele, 1990, p. 7). This is at best naive, and at worst hazardous to those involved. While the

...rediscovery of the 'grassroots community' may be well-intended and desirable from both ideological and epistemological points of view, there is a danger that this resulting sense of 'ideological correctness' may mask hidden interests of different actors on the stage, and prevent us from asking critical questions. (Sikana, 1995, p.1)

It is important to recognize that intra-community power relations affect participatory research processes substantially, and it can be argued that the more unequal the power relations, the more cautious participatory researchers have to be in ensuring that the voices of the poorest and most marginalized are heard. The public nature of participatory research activities affects the production of local knowledge, and emphasizes the impact that social dominance, authority, gender relations, and project outsiders will have on the creation of knowledge (Mosse, 1994). Noting that

"Information does not just exist 'out there' waiting to be 'collected' or 'gathered' but is constructed, or created, in specific social contexts for particular purposes" (Mosse, 1994, p.499), he cautions against assuming that power relations do not affect the production of knowledge.

Mosse also recognizes the dangers of assuming that a publicly generated consensus reflects the needs of the community as a whole. He notes the existence of officializing strategies "whereby the particular interests of key sectors of the community become identified with the general interest" (Mosse, 1994, p.509). While reaching consensus publically may work well in communities which are relatively egalitarian and where power imbalances are offset by intra-communal obligations and kinship relations, it is unlikely to be successful in very hierarchical communities, where inequality between individuals is a fundamental principle of social organization. (Voss, 1989)

One final caution concerns the use of participatory research where severe power imbalances exist. However well-intentioned participatory researchers may be, Cornwall (1995) argues that:

Wading into communities with ideas about empowerment and representation for those who are marginalized and powerless can create all kinds of problems. These may be practical, restricting participation among those upon whom domestic duties and reproductive burdens fall. They may arise from a conflict of interests provoked by the demands of a democratic agenda, for example, the issues arising from involving women as equals in strongly patriarchal settings. And not only can this kind of research threaten established interests both within communities and within the institutions that adopt it, it can also unleash a backlash that further disempowers those taking part. (p.8)

Another limitation exists in that some topics are more suitable for discussion in an open and public forum than others. Researchers examining sensitive issues such as class, gender, ethnic divisions, and access to scarce resources must be particularly careful in their use of 'public' participatory methods (Park, 1993, p.11) and aware of the implications for and risks to those participating in research involving these issues.

The overwhelming emphasis on the general and the communal over the particular and individual is another limitation of some participatory research methods. While there is obvious significance in achieving community consensus, downplaying community differences and conflict should be avoided if possible. The consensus opinion tends to represent the dominant views of the community (or powerful groups within the community) (Mosse, 1994). It is important to differentiate between employing participatory methodology and embodying participatory ideology (Cornwall, 1995, p.7). Using participatory methodology does not guarantee that a process is participatory. Instead, the methodology need to be accompanied by a corresponding respect for the community and willingness on the part of the facilitator to give up some degree of control over the process.

Participation problems in participatory research will be exacerbated if the community is so marginalized or impoverished that sufficient organizational capacity is not in place to employ the methodology. Burkey writes that a distinction must be made between acts of charity and acts of development, and that participatory research is definitely an act of development (Burkey, 1993). If a community is so impoverished that it cannot feed, clothe and shelter itself, it is unlikely to respond well

to the idea of conscientization, particularly if it makes demands on time and resources without meeting immediate survival needs.

Problems of participation will also be exacerbated in communities with a history of previous authoritarian or highly paternalistic governance. In these cases it will be even more difficult to ensure that 'true' and genuine participation will occur (Ramphela, 1990, p. 2-3). This should be recognized and accounted for when planning participatory research activities.

The issue of macro-level results from micro-level activity is often raised as another limitation of participatory research. Often, while exemplary work is done at the micro-level, it is difficult to tie the work into macro-level processes which are working in direct opposition (de Treville, 1991, p. 89). Many participatory research projects succeed in raising the consciousness of the people, changing the behaviour of individuals, and solidifying community networks, but fail to alter the structures of established institutions (Hondagneau-Sotelo, 1993, p. 64). The possible creation of long-term problems due to raised expectations which are not met is a severe limitation in a methodology that explicitly works toward large scale social change and societal transformation.

Finally, one of participatory research's strengths can become one of its more subtle limitations. Many of the techniques used by facilitators, particularly those of the PRA stream, are visual, and work well in representing certain types and classes of problems. But other problems cannot be represented visually, (e.g. violence against women) and it is important that they not be overlooked because they do not lend

themselves to the more 'popular' and 'fun' participatory research methods. (Cornwall, 1995, p. 8)

Risks:

Because participatory research is an inherently political research methodology, aimed at social change and transformation, participants who speak out against the status quo or actively work to change it face certain political risks. This is particularly true in communities with severe power imbalances. Threatening powerful interests can be economically, physically, and socially dangerous. For those who are marginalized and have few resources to begin with, the constituency that participatory research most often tries to help, this risk can be devastating. Even when oppressed members of a community are willing to bear this risk, they often face other process-related risks which must also be taken into account. The enthusiasm that participatory methodology generates is very powerful, but this excitement can be damaging if the capacity of the local community is overestimated or if unrealistic expectations are created in the community. (de Treville, 1991, p.89, 91)

Chambers (1994c) notes the danger of automatically using methods of participatory research because this methodology is currently fashionable, warning that one can fall into ruts when using the same techniques every time without evaluating whether they are the most appropriate for the issues at hand. There is also a temptation to use participatory research as a one-off means of data collection rather than a process which can stimulate self-reliance and community development (p.3).

This methodology can create dependency if not used carefully and judiciously, fostering the antithesis of what the ideological roots of the methodology suggest. Burkey (1993) suggests that participatory research practitioners follow one rule: "Don't do anything for people that they can do themselves." (p.211)

In any research project, the danger of misinterpreting and/or misrepresenting data exists, but it is particularly acute in cross-cultural participatory research. Outsiders need to be sensitive to this risk, and careful to cross-check their data and analysis with the community at all times. (Mosse, 1994, p.517)

As enthusiasm for participatory research increases, there is the distinct danger of the methodology being incorporated into projects without sufficient controls, or that it will be carried out by untrained and/or unqualified people.

As the 'new kid on the block' (participatory research) is similarly being grabbed for, often without the rigorous assessment and judicious use and associated analysis that it, or any other methodology, requires. (de Treville, 1991, p.92)

While participatory research's emphasis on local knowledge and action is a distinct advantage, it must not come at the expense of the research component. As with any other methodology, participatory research practitioners require a mix of skills, experience, and judgement in order to carry out the research successfully.

Rahnema (1990) counsels practitioners and agencies against going overboard with participatory methodologies.

It serves no one to make a new fetish out of participation only because non-participatory development has failed in every way. To do so will be to create yet another illusion. (p.222)

While participatory research is a powerful and useful research methodology in the appropriate circumstances, it is less appropriate than other methodologies in many contexts.

There is a risk of getting excited by participatory methodologies ...to the extent that the most positive aspects of [conventional] approaches to research and development could not (or would not) be incorporated. (de Treville, 1991, p.91)

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

It is interesting to look at what is not being written about participatory research as well as what is. Some of the gaps in participatory research literature exist because the field is still in its infant stages. Both the ideology and methodology are currently developing so quickly it is hard to find a cohesive body of knowledge in wide and general use.

Until very recently, one of the major gaps in the literature has been the lack of rigorous critique from proponents of the methodology (Mosse, 1994). Previous criticism of participatory research has come primarily from those working within the positivist paradigm, who criticize participatory research as being 'unscientific' and therefore not methodologically valid. They also argued that the results of participatory research are highly specific to the circumstances, thus negating the generalizability and replicability of the studies. (Grisdale, 1989, p.7)

Participatory research practitioners have responded to these criticisms primarily by renewing their enthusiasm for the benefits of participatory research, or attempting to show that participatory research can fit within existing conceptions of knowledge

generation. It would be more beneficial at this point, however, to generate solid critiques from within the field. Doing so would establish that participatory research results are as valid as other widely accepted methodologies of knowledge generation, and often more appropriate in certain circumstances. It would also be beneficial to explore and illustrate mechanisms which generalize and replicate experiments, and make linkages between micro and macro-level activities. (Grisdale, 1989, p.7)

Despite the obvious need to explore questions about the rigour and methodological validity of participatory research little work has been done to date in these areas.

Given the growing importance of rapid research methods in development planning of all kinds, there are surprisingly few theoretical or critical reflections on methodology, particularly those based on field experience. (Mosse, 1994, p.498)

More feedback on the failures of participatory research is needed from those who have tried it and chosen not to adopt it, and from organizations which were unsuccessful in introducing participatory research. (Chambers, 1994a, p.962)

The question of participation within participatory research processes has not been explored in sufficient depth. More research is needed which includes a thorough analysis of the complex issues around participation, namely: an examination of who participates and who does not participate in various activities; whose voices are being heard in communal decision making; whether the methodology imposes a selectivity on participation and the sources and types of information collected; and whether the ideal of community participation serves to increase equity in the community. (Mosse, 1994, p.499)

As well, the literature on participation at the community level is incomplete. It is important to recognize that communities are not homogenous entities, and that within each power structures are at work which influence the type and quality of participation of community members (de Treville, 1991, p.91, Mosse, 1994). These power structures also influence the type of knowledge collected and its content, as the concept of 'local knowledge' is no more homogenous than 'local community'. (Mosse, 1994, p. 518)

There is also a glaring lack of attention paid to gender differences and their impact on participation in participatory research projects to date. Maguire wrote about gender and participatory research in 1987, using the methodology to undertake PhD research on the issues facing battered women, but since then disappointingly little work has been done analyzing the gendered aspects of the methodology. This is an unfortunate oversight, as there are many parallels and areas of overlap between the methodologies of feminist and participatory research. The literature of the two, unfortunately, remains largely separate.

Mosse recognizes the importance of participatory researchers recognizing and acknowledging the constraints and barriers women (and other marginalized groups) face (1994, p. 511). For example, in societies where women are silenced in the public forum, it is important that the research design recognize and compensate for this. The same holds true for issues around class and ethnicity. Participatory research can only be strengthened by a careful analysis of the community with a deconstruction of the different voices, assisting in the analysis and interpretation of the generated knowledge.

Conflict:

One seldom acknowledged effect of fully participatory processes is that they can lead to increased intra-community conflict (de Treville, 1991, p. 91, Mosse, 1994, p.511) and thus require some sort of corresponding conflict resolution mechanisms. Authentic participation within a community will invariably increase conflict among those members, as they debate the allocation of scarce resources, the priorities of the community priorities, and challenge the status quo. Conflict is an inevitable and unavoidable result of social change. As Saul Alinsky notes,

Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction or conflict. (1971, no page given)

In spite of its ubiquitous nature, conflict is still widely perceived as a negative force. What is unfortunately not acknowledged, however, is that it can also be a great source of strength, creativity and cohesion if handled well (Augsburger, 1992). Often the conflict is subverted by the establishment of communal preferences' meant to reflect the wishes of the majority, if not all of the participants. This usually leads to situations in which the needs of the powerful are voiced and validated, and the needs of the poor and the marginalized are drowned out. This is in direct opposition to the spirit of the methodology.

Participatory methodologies are sometimes

...not so good at identifying and handling differences of perception within communities. Indeed, at times, writing on [participatory research] appears to reinforce weak and sociologically naive views of the community (Mosse, 1994, p. 509).

In fact,

...far from providing a neutral vehicle for local knowledge, [participatory research] actually creates a context in which the selective preservation of opinion is likely to be exaggerated and where minority or deviant views are likely to be suppressed. In practical terms, 'community priorities' such as a school, soil and water conservation, social forestry or well deepening conceal private interests (Mosse, 1994, p. 508).

These factors should be recognized and compensated for wherever possible in the design and implementation of participatory research projects.

Context:

The context in which participatory research can successfully occur is another area which has not been adequately explored in the literature. As noted, participatory research is not an appropriate blanket methodology to be used anywhere, under any circumstances. It can be a powerful methodology, but only when applied carefully, used to examine appropriate questions, and where the necessary context and suitable pre-conditions exist. The need to assess the social context in which the methodology is used, as well as the methods themselves, is therefore a crucial aspect of participatory research which demands a more careful analysis. (Mosse, 1994, p.498)

Little work has been done on the necessary pre-conditions which influence the suitability of a situation, region, or problem for participatory investigation. For future participatory research to be more effective, more attention needs to be drawn to this area and the establishment of guidelines as to where resources used for participatory research will contribute to a solution. Areas which are suitable for examination as necessary pre-conditions are: the local organizational capacity; the cultural concept of

(and feeling toward) participatory processes; and a relatively equitable distribution of power.

Another area ripe for more rigorous exploration is the effect of regional differences on the participatory research process. While participatory research evolved independently in Asia, Africa and the Americas, there was a great deal of cross-fertilization, particularly within the South, during this period (Chambers, 1994(a), p.957). This evolution (and the cultural underpinnings that affected this evolution) has resulted in inter- and intra-regional variances which have yet to be acknowledged widely in the literature.

Facilitative Skills of Researchers:

The openness to local realities and knowledge has resulted in the belief that participatory research is a relatively simple task anyone is capable of. This is particularly evident in the work of Robert Chambers, who argues that anyone can be a facilitator or participatory researcher if they possess a willingness to follow the formula 'start, stumble, self-correct, share' (1995, p.1). In this view of participatory research, risk and failure are seldom mentioned. One can stumble and fall, but Chambers argues this is acceptable as long as one 'falls forward.' This line of thought is summarized in one sentence: "Always use your best judgement at all times." (Chambers, 1995, p.1)

Missing from this optimistic but simplistic analysis is an acknowledgment of the very specialized skills a good facilitator possesses. Effective participatory research

is political, radical, and subversive, in addition to being highly challenging and difficult. To facilitate this kind of work one needs solid skills ranging from interpersonal and organizational through to strong political ability and analytical capacity. While acknowledging the tenets of 'popular participation' which underlie participatory research, researchers doing participatory work should ensure that they have the appropriate skills to facilitate the processes they are encouraging and initiating.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to illustrate several of the limitations and concerns which arise around this methodology, rather than to dwell on the negative aspects of participatory research. It is critical at this stage of methodological development that criticisms be aired, and constructive discussion occur as to how best to deal with the problems which will inevitably arise. Mosse states this sentiment well, noting that his observations

... are not intended as bald statements of the limitations of [participatory research] but as challenges for further innovation to generate methods which will better serve the needs of participatory planning. (Mosse, 1994, p. 521)

One other notable gap in the literature has been the lack of attention paid to the consequences of the recent trend towards institutionalizing and professionalising participatory research methodology. This subject will be explored in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

As the methodology, if not the underlying ideology, of participatory research becomes more popular, there are also pressures to standardize and institutionalize it. With this, the 'professional' participatory research practitioner has emerged, despite the inherent contradiction between participatory research ideology and the concept of bringing in outside 'experts' for their specialized talents and skills. As the formalization of participatory research becomes an issue in research and academic institutions, these organizations will have to address some fundamental tensions this shift raises.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the available literature on issues around the professionalization and institutionalization of participatory research in order to illustrate the potential strengths and weaknesses of collaborative work between professional, bureaucratic organizations and participatory research carried out at the community level. The content has been divided into two sections, the first focussing on professionalization and the second on institutionalization. While there is overlap between the two, they are fundamentally different issues, with different consequences, and so have been treated accordingly.

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The professionalization of participatory research raises many contentious issues, most notably the fundamental tension that exists by bringing specialized practitioners into a methodology originally developed with the explicit intent of getting away from dependence on outside research experts. It is ironic that a methodology which evolved in part as a reaction to the perceived inappropriateness of outsiders directing local-level community problem solving is now the focus of a debate about professional codes of conduct and standards. This trend can be viewed as once again erecting barriers between the researcher and the subjects of research, and as such is in direct contradiction of the spirit of participatory research.

Yet a dilemma exists: the rapid proliferation of participatory research around the globe has created a situation in which many are purporting to practice participatory research, but consciously or unconsciously misusing the methodology and debasing the philosophy. It is hard to argue against setting standards which attempt to ensure that practitioners have adequate training and skills to undertake the research. As Chambers observes:

In early 1994, the warning signs of instant fashion are evident: demand for training which exceeds the small cadre of competent trainers;....consultants who say they will do [participatory research] when they lack the experience and orientation; the belief that good [participatory research methods are] simple and easy, quick fixes, which they are not;....The practical implication is a caveat to donors and policy makers to proceed in a measured manner, not to request or require PRA immediately and everywhere, and to recruit expertise in the South. (1994b, p.1441)

He goes on to comment, however, that attempts to formalize and professionalize participatory research have created their own particular set of tensions.

With any innovation there is an urge to standardize and codify, often in the name of quality. Manuals are called for and composed.... Paragraphs proliferate as intelligent authors seek to cater for every condition and contingency. Some farming systems research gave rise to manuals the weights and volumes of which was itself a problem. (Chambers, 1994b, p.1441)

These sentiments illustrate the importance of not defining participatory research so rigidly that the strengths of the methodology - flexibility, creativity, and an ability to adapt to local conditions - are lost. At the same time, however, the damage that can be done by untrained, unskilled, or otherwise unsuitable participatory research practitioners should not be underestimated.

In spite of arguments for and against, the trend toward the professionalization of participatory research continues and recent interest shown by large donor agencies, including the World Bank and CIDA, suggests that it will continue for some time in the future. With this in mind, it is useful to examine a number of issues which arise from this professionalization.

Relationships in Participatory Research:

At the heart of good participatory research are genuine rapport and good relationships between participants and the facilitator, and among the participants themselves. A number of sensitive and delicate factors are involved in building these relationships. The appropriate people and context are the two critical pre-conditions.

Other situation specific conditions will also be necessary (Rahnema, 1990, p.217). It is extremely difficult to replicate these conditions and relationships en masse.

Good participatory research relationships, as with most human relations, grow and evolve organically. The trust and goodwill needed for genuine participatory research will not likely be created by

...the sum of conditioned, repetitive interactions taking place among persons sharing only a defined physical space and brought together by chance. (Rahnema, 1990, p.218)

The professionalization of participatory research affects the establishment of these relationships in two critical ways. First, it is a safe assumption that 'professional' participatory researchers have their own agenda, and most likely a set of research timelines and deadlines to meet. If so, they often cannot afford the luxury of working at the community's pace (Heaney, 1993, p.45). If the researcher is trying to do participatory research as academic work, for example as part of PhD or for tenure, these problems are often compounded. (Heaney, 1993, p. 44)

Second, villagers with more formal education are more likely to establish rapport successfully with institutional officials and other professionals (Sikana, 1995, p.4). If this is the case, these groups will have disproportionate influence over the process, a direct contradiction of the tenets of participatory research which advocate making power relations more, rather than less, equitable. (Mosse, 1994)

Clash of interests: Researcher/Community

The professionalization of participatory research often creates some obvious collision points between the needs of the community and the professional aspirations of the participatory researcher. These conflicts occur in both the academic and the commercial sphere of participatory research practice.

Until recently, participatory research was largely either ignored or condemned in the academic world. Now undergoing a remarkable transformation, however, it is suddenly considered appropriate material for graduate level courses. But this transformation is not without costs.

However well intentioned and zealous the efforts of individual faculty who have brought participatory research into the academic arena, one can only question by what compromises such researchers are likely to survive. (Heaney, 1993, p.43-44)

Petras and Porpora highlight the conflict participatory research is raising in academia.

In doing community development work, academics

...consequently inhabit two separate communities with competing claims. On the one hand, they have engaged themselves with an outside community and in that capacity have committed themselves to research that is directly useable by that community. On the other hand, they are part of an intellectual community that expects its own return from their research. It is not evident that these two agendas will necessarily collide. (Petras and Porpora, 1993, p.121)

When evaluating participatory research processes carried out within the academic sphere, it is important to question exactly whose needs are being met by the research. The vested interests of professional participatory researchers in the results of their research may directly contradict the original intent of the participatory process.

As Cancian notes:

The major requirement for academic success in research universities - publishing regularly in academic journals - is incompatible with doing research that is controlled by the community members and includes radical social change. (1993, p.105)

While some may disagree with Cancian's strong position on this issue, it is nonetheless an area of potential conflict which must be addressed if academics are to be actively involved in participatory research.

As well, single author academic and professional contributions are at odds with the composite nature of participatory research work. The usual process, or at least the notion, of someone becoming 'well-known' for being an 'expert' is at odds with the collective nature of participatory research (Heaney, 1993, p.45). Cancian argues it is difficult to integrate work in participatory research with a successful academic career.

In particular, sharing power over the research with community members can make it very difficult to produce frequent academic publications that meet academic standards, and incorporating social action into the research slows down and complicates research projects, and may antagonize academic colleagues and administrators. Because of this approach many participatory researchers argue that their approach cannot be integrated with professional academic standards; in their view good participatory researchers must give up trying to succeed in academia. (Cancian, 1993, p.96)

Underlying the question of professional success in participatory research within the academic and institutional world is whether these bodies are appropriate venues for participatory research in the first place. Many argue that these are not the appropriate bodies to legitimate participatory research. Petras and Porpora comment that

...ultimately, if we return to the academy to engage in dialogue, our primary measure of success is the reaction of our colleagues to what we have written. (Petras and Porpora, 1993, p.120)

Heaney is less subtle about what constitutes 'appropriate' and 'relevant participatory research, commenting that:

Participatory research is credible and legitimate when the action to which it leads brings about better conditions for life. Period. (Heaney, 1993, p.45)

The incompatibility between the needs of the academy and the requirements of community-based participatory research, while not insurmountable, are significant and must be addressed by researchers interested in undertaking participatory research. Similar contradictions exist within the growing commercial (for profit) practice of participatory research. Those in the private sector have an interest in establishing themselves as effective and successful participatory research practitioners. As a result, they may become averse to taking actions which might risk disturbing the reputation they have built over time. This can lead to a conservatism which runs counter to the nature of the ideology. (Argyris, 1991)

Argyris identifies this trend among consultants, arguing that in spite of their reputation for being flexible and open learners, they are often quite slow to adapt to change because they are used to being very good at what they do. They have a considerable amount invested in their conception of themselves as experts.

Nearly all of the consultants I studied have stellar academic records....Before they enter the world of work, their lives are primarily full of successes so they have rarely experienced the embarrassment and sense of threat that comes from failure.... People who rarely experience failure, however, end up not knowing how to deal with it effectively. And this serves to reinforce the normal human tendency to reason defensively. (Argyris, 1991, pp.103-104)

At the heart of the debate over the professionalization of participatory research is the question of how much control and power outside researchers are willing to hand over to the community. One researcher summed up the dilemma by stating:

We need to ask ourselves whether we are participating in their research, or are they are participating in ours? (Chevalier, 1995, interview)

It needs to be established clearly whose interests will take priority in the case of conflict between researchers and the subjects of research. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with researchers maintaining control over the process, but there is a difficulty in using participatory research methodology and handing some control of the research process over to the community only when convenient.

Local capacity building/training issues:

Another issue raised by the professionalization of participatory research is that of training in participatory research and local-level capacity building to support this research. Those in favour of the use of outside experts argue there is a danger in overestimating local capacity to carry out participatory research, and that trained outside researchers bring new perspectives to old problems. They can also help in defining and prioritizing problems and suggest outside options to solve them. (de Treville, 1991, p. 89; Grisdale, 1989, p.8)

Those who oppose special training programs for participatory research point toward several examples of successful grassroots activity that did not involve a formal training component. Rahnema, for example, cites the Gandhian and Chipko movements in India as examples of grassroots initiatives that had large-scale impact

without formal training activities in participatory research (1990, p.217). It should be noted, however, that these were not research initiatives, nor were they catalyzed or facilitated by outside sources, and therefore do not share many of the characteristics of institutionally supported participatory research.

One of the critical issues in this debate centres around the nature of the participation by the local community. If participation is coerced, or given in exchange for access to material resources, it is unlikely to continue once the outside influences have been removed. However, if participation is genuinely bottom-up, with the motivation coming from inside, rather than outside the community, there is a greater chance that the facilitator will be able to act as a catalyst for local-level capacity building.

Methodological Confusion

As participatory research becomes an increasingly popular methodology in the South, and more people from non-participatory backgrounds attempt to use the methodology, confusion around methodological issues become increasingly common.

Due to the relatively early stage of development of participatory research and the fact that it originated outside of mainstream development research, developing a clear understanding of exactly what constitutes participatory research has been an ongoing problem. Many mistakenly believe participatory research to include any research method involving participation, rather than being a distinct methodology which grew and evolved out of a particular ideology. The original intent of

participatory research is also seriously breached when it is understood to be a methodology which studies community involvement rather than incorporating it.

It is useful to clarify where the interest and demand for particular participatory research activities originates. Ideally, it should originate from the communities that will become involved in the research. In many cases this cannot be achieved and an outsider is needed to catalyze the research process. However, the recent influx of Northern interest in participatory methodology as a cost-effective and workable solution to development has resulted in a situation where

...participation is a 'development technology' which is being pushed by the development agency (to satisfy a range of economic, intellectual and political objectives) rather than being demanded by the local people themselves. (Sikana, 1995, p.3)

It is naive to think that outsiders enter another community without needs and interests of their own. Carrying out participatory research in a professional capacity only compounds the problem. Both researchers and the community have needs which must be met by the research. Petras and Porpora note that there will always be

...a tension between theory and practice that, for such research to be feasible, needs to be resolved. It needs to be resolved, moreover, in a way that does not reject either source of the tension. (1993, p.121)

One of the challenges for participatory research in the future will be to find ways to navigate these conflicts that allow both sets of needs to be met as fully as possible.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH:

The institutionalization of participatory research adds another dimension to the conflicts and issues raised by the professionalization of the methodology. Given

participatory research's radical roots, it is not surprising that some degree of conflict should exist when this methodology is taken up by bureaucratic institutions. This section will examine the conflicts which can arise from tension between the two, as well as the benefits of bringing the two together.

Bureaucratic Nature of Institutions:

The most glaring contradiction of institutional involvement in participatory research centres around the clash between an organic research methodology which demands flexibility and frequent adaptation and the bureaucratic demands of institutional commitment. (Chambers, 1994(b), p.1447).

How can we be sure that an institution, being more or less a bureaucratic machine, will continue to participate, and not become opposed to the interests of [people] ...How can we reconcile demands for movement, adaptability and creativity with institutionalization which by definition provides a stable framework for systems of human and industrial relations that are considered desirable? Is there not a danger that the institutionalization of participation will crystallize social and political conflicts and exacerbate inequalities and excessive individualism? (Cao Tri, 1986, p.16)

When institutions become involved in participatory research processes, many of their mechanisms directly contradict both the philosophy and methodology of participatory research. The project orientation of many institutions, for example, emphasizes rigid time frames for research processes, the need to predict expected results ahead of time, and a desire to justify all research as 'scientifically valid.' Funding is granted on the basis of written proposals, and proposal acceptance is often based to some degree on the relation between research objectives and expected results.

In many participatory research projects, however, the process is as important, if not more important, than the results, but this is difficult to capture in a standard research proposal format.

The advantages of participatory research do not conform well to standard institutional policy. By 'making them fit' this mould, much of the power of the original methodology can be lost. Burkey argues that some attention should be paid to the less tangible signals that gauge how a project is going, but recognizes that

...in most projects these subtle, yet important, psychological signs are unfortunately not taken into account. Durations are rigidly fixed in advance, and desirable aims, goals and outcomes are pre-determined by technocrats without any consultation with the people concerned (1993, p.217).

In some cases, this clash can lead to inappropriate and/or premature closing of projects (Bernard, 1987, p.4) effectively nullifying any of the potential benefits of participatory research.

Bounded Versus Unbounded Needs

Following the incompatibility of the bureaucratic structure with the philosophy and methodology of participatory research, Sikana identifies the problem of 'bounded' supply and 'unbounded' demand for participatory research in rural development. It is common for institutions to fund research in only one geographical area, one sector of the economy, or study one particular problem. This approach is difficult to justify to a community that does not understand why problems are evaluated this way.

Thus, for the local people, it does not make much sense to distinguish between 'research problems' 'marketing problems' 'transport problems'

etc. because these problems do not constitute discrete and isolated moments, but are interrelated, simultaneously experienced, and directly impinge on the livelihoods of the local people (Sikana, 1995, p.5).

Institutional intervention is often narrowly confined within rigidly defined boundaries while simultaneously claiming that a response to 'local needs' is a priority.

Large-scale Replicability of Participatory Research

From an institutional perspective, there are benefits in funding research that is widely replicable and easily generalized. This 'cookie cutter' approach to participatory research is another hurdle practitioners affiliated with institutions have to address. One of the strengths of good participatory research is that the approach provides enough flexibility to tailor the research to local culture and needs. Ironically, from an institutional point of view, this is as much, if not more, of a methodological weakness than a strength.

As noted earlier in this paper, participatory research is most effective, and most appropriate, when adapted to local conditions. For example, the conception of what constitutes genuine 'participation' varies dramatically around the world, and to be successful, participatory research methodology has to accommodate these differences (Voss, 1989). Much of this information may not be apparent until a researcher is actually working in the field, and begins to understand some of the nuances of social and economic relations in the community.

Yet institutions are constantly searching for successful research models which can be replicated in different places, and under different conditions, with relatively

little adaptation. Replicable research justifies the high cost of developing and testing pilot projects, and this is particularly relevant in the case of new research methodologies such as participatory research. For participatory research Chambers recognizes some advantages to the 'routinization' of participatory research methods, and argues that in some cases there is a certain logic in having sequences of methods for particular purposes (Chambers, 1994(b), p.1447). However, the trade-offs inherent in attempting to make participatory research replicable on a large scale, and to ensure that research results are widely generalizable, should not be taken lightly.

Demands on Participatory Researchers Working with Institutions

As mentioned earlier, researchers undertaking participatory research in a professional capacity face a number of challenges. For those attached to an institution, the difficulties can be manifested in the clash between the tenets of participatory research which advocate participants designing the study and deciding what will benefit the community and the standard academic research criteria institutions must meet to justify their own sources of funding. (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1993, p.67)

In theory,

...the institutionalization of [participatory processes] should be designed primarily for those categories which most need social advancement - the poor rural dwellers, women, young people, ethnic minorities, migrants.
(Cao Tri, 1986, p. 15)

In practise, this proves very difficult to do. The poorest and most marginalized in a community are least able to put forward cohesive and viable proposals to start this

work. Citing the experience of the International Development Research Centre

(IDRC), Grisdale notes:

Community groups, grassroots organizations, trade unions, etc. are the groups most likely....to employ this methodology, but they are also the groups least likely to have the financial or human resources to submit proposals to IDRC. (Grisdale, 1989, p. 16)

If development institutions are truly committed to 'transformative' research processes, and to helping the 'poorest of the poor,' it is imperative that they address the difficulties inherent in working with these groups in an honest and open manner. While the benefits of this are obvious, the challenges of confronting these contentious issues should not be underestimated. As Cornwall comments:

Putting participatory ideals into practice brings about a number of practical, political and professional dilemmas. Conventional structures may be entirely inadequate to cope with the implications of participatory practice. Far-reaching institutional changes are needed if these processes are to be supported. (Cornwall, 1995, p.8)

Evaluation Issues:

The institutional evaluation of participatory research processes is another difficult issue. Yet proper evaluation is critical, as recommendations for strengthening or restricting participatory roles are often made on the basis of these evaluations. As participatory research stresses the importance of both the research process and the tangible results, evaluations should be designed which capture both aspects, which is not an easy task. "Since the aims of participation are multi-dimensional, in assessing its value we must look further than considerations of cost-effectiveness or efficiency." (Cao Tri, 1986, p.25)

Participatory research projects generally operate under a different time frame than conventional research projects, with more time spent on 'up-front' activities such as participatory project identification and project design, and less time on the actual project implementation. This requires an evaluation framework which reflects this different project emphasis, or at the very least, a framework which does not penalize the different approach.

Secondly, there is the difficulty of determining what constitutes a 'successful' participatory research project, and whose concept of project success will dominate. Project evaluators need to determine whether community perception of project success will play a role, or whether only the conventional outsider perspective on project success will be considered. Difficulties may arise, for example, where the emphasis of a project has been on community mobilization and empowerment, but where evaluation is based only on the evidence of tangible results.

Finally, participatory research can produce change on several different levels.

For individual participants, it develops confidence and critical consciousness. For the local community it strengthens activist organizations and improves living conditions, and for the wider society it helps to transform power structures. (Cancian, 1992, p.95)

Designing evaluation mechanisms capable of measuring change at all these levels, and accurately reflecting the complexity of participatory research goals, is an intimidating, but necessary, task.

Political Nature of Participatory Research

Finally, the politicization of institutional activities raises many questions which need to be addressed. Participatory research is an inherently political activity which works to transform existing power structures into more equitable and just forms. Institutions, particularly academic and research institutions, tend toward theoretical reflection rather than actively campaigning for social change at the grassroots level, and the dissonance between the two approaches can cause difficulties in the practice of participatory research.

A clash between the politics of the status quo and the politics of change is likely. Institutions involved in participatory research work must measure their willingness to work in areas or situations where that social change is highly politicized. If participatory research is carried out in the radical manner many advocates prefer, it leads to

...the frightening prospect that conscientization, which lies at the core of the methodology, must logically lead to political action (Burkey, 1993, p.214).

If institutions choose to get involved in these areas, it is critical they be willing to follow through and support the process and results of the participatory research (Grisdale, 1989, p. 19). Balancing political agendas and varying degrees of political involvement is a difficult, but necessary task. Burkey comments that:

Most development agencies, both local and international, have refused, again unconsciously in most cases, to recognize that there is an unavoidable relationship between human, economic, political and social development. (Burkey, 1993, p.214)

The potential risk to the institution must also be considered. Grisdale, again discussing IDRC, notes that:

While participatory research may be the most relevant methodology for investigation and development at the local level, it may create reactions at the broader level in established political economic and cultural structures. IDRC must understand clearly that in alleviating suffering and improving the lives of the poor it may also threaten established interests. The ensuing results could be problematic for the Centre. (Grisdale, 1989, p.17)

Again, this is a difficult question for institutions to address, but one that must be grappled with if participatory research is to be a part of the organizational future.

Benefits of Institutional Involvement

In spite of the obvious risks and contradictions of institutional involvement in participatory research activities, the process also offers several benefits. Institutions have (or have access to) tremendous resources that would be otherwise unavailable to the community. Financial resources are one obvious benefit, but the human and technical resources that institutions can provide access to are equally important. All can act as catalysts for participatory research processes. For example, in the area of health.

participatory research methods can, if users are committed to exploring the solutions people suggest and if institutions are flexible enough to permit this, be used to set in motion a participatory process in health promotion. (Cornwall, 1995, p.8)

While there are dangers in depoliticizing inherently political activities in participatory research work, depoliticization can also benefit the community under certain circumstances. If a topic is extremely volatile politically, the neutralizing

effect an institution acting as an intermediary can bring to the process can be advantageous. Institutional affiliation may also provide some degree of protection for those involved in the research, allowing them a degree of freedom to speak and voice their concerns that might not exist without outside involvement.

Institutional and professional legitimization of participatory research gives it certain mainstream credibility that has not existed previously. While this is not without its own set of risks, it does have the benefit of allowing participatory research projects to receive more funding and support. It also allows practitioners some amount of professional credibility within their field for their work where little existed before, a welcome change for many.

CONCLUSION

Whether the benefits of formalizing participatory research as a legitimate research methodology outweigh the risks has yet to be determined. Regardless, the professionalization and institutionalization of the methodology continue unabated. This area is one which demands much more analysis and debate than it has received to date, as there are complex concerns on both sides. Heaney sums this up by noting that:

Embedded within the growing recognition of participatory research as 'legitimate' research is an inevitable contradiction ...It is not difficult to imagine the day when Third World governments will hire only professional participatory researchers trained and certified by graduate institutions. (1993, p.44)

The contradiction between the popular approach of participatory research and the institutional demands made on professional researchers presents a difficult problem,

one that will be demanding for organizations to deal with. There are great benefits to be realized from doing so, however, and hopefully these will provide some incentive to begin the arduous process, as the transformative power of participatory research can only be reached through an openness to inevitable conflicts, and a willingness to meet the challenges this brings.

The next section of this thesis details the results of a case study of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, conducted between January and May, 1995. The case study will be used to reflect and illustrate some of the points discussed so far.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The data used in this thesis were collected for a project commissioned by the Evaluation Unit whose objective was to document and evaluate IDRC's experience with participatory research over the last 25 years. The data were collected over a five month period in early 1995 under the guidance of an expert from York University. This chapter details the methodology of data collection for this study.

Prior to commencement of the project, an advisory committee was established to comment on the project through its duration. This committee consisted of seven full-time IDRC staff members from the headquarters in Ottawa. The advisory committee included representatives from all IDRC divisions active in participatory research programming: Corporate Affairs and Initiatives (CAID); Environment and Natural Resources (ENR); Health Sciences (HSD); Information Sciences and Systems (ISSD); and Social Sciences (SSD). The individual members of the advisory committee are listed in Appendix A.

Information for the project was collected from a variety of sources. A literature review highlighted recent research and writing on participatory research, paying particular attention to issues around institutionalization and professionalization. A search of the Inter-Agency Development Research Information System (IDRIS) database identified all IDRC projects which used the keywords 'participatory research'

(or commonly used variants of these keywords) in their abstracts. Unstructured interviews were conducted with participatory research specialists inside and outside IDRC. Interviews conducted outside IDRC primarily involved project leaders or other staff affiliated with IDRC-funded participatory research projects. Other information was gathered from IDRC publications and documents, administrative files from participatory research projects and videotapes of recent speeches by the President.

DATA COLLECTION

The analysis in this thesis is based on information drawn from three main sources: a database containing information from 145 IDRC projects which had participatory research components; a more detailed case study of five of these projects; and extensive information on various themes related to participatory research from interviews. Details of these three sources are as follows:

Database Compilation

A database containing 145 projects which were identified as using participatory research methodologies was compiled. Projects for the database were selected using the following three criteria:

- 1) A keyword search was done on the IDRIS database (which lists IDRC projects as well as those of 5 other donor agencies) using 'participatory research' as a keyword. Other searches were run using 'action research,' 'participatory action research' and 'participatory rural appraisal.' No searches were run on

peripherally related topics such as 'farming systems research' 'qualitative research' or 'rapid rural appraisal' or others which sometimes overlap with participatory research.

- 2) Two previous papers detailing IDRC's experience with participatory research were examined (IDRC, 1988; Grisdale, 1989) and the projects identified in both were added to the database. These projects came from three divisions: Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Sciences (AFNS); Social Sciences (SSD), and Health Sciences (HSD).
- 3) Throughout the project, interviews were conducted with 20 of the IDRC staff in Ottawa, all of whom have had some involvement with participatory research methodology. These people were asked to suggest projects they knew of involving participatory research, which were also added to the database. As participatory research is a relatively new field, and the terminology to describe such projects is still evolving, it was felt that a cross-referencing via 'word of mouth' could highlight projects not listed under the keywords used in the database search.

The database was built using dbase III+. The information fields used to describe each project are shown in Figure 2.

-
- * File Number
 - * Project Officer
 - * Alternate Project Officer
 - * Project Title
 - * Division responsible for project (e.g. Health Sciences)
 - * Sub-Division responsible for the project (e.g. Health and the Community)
 - * Recipient Institution
 - * Research Institution (often the same as the recipient institution)
 - * Project Leader
 - * Funding from IDRC (CAN \$)
 - * Project Duration (Months)
 - * Recipient Contribution
 - * Other Contributions
 - * Administered by: (either Centre or Regional Office)
 - * Regional Office affiliated with project
 - * Area(s) involved (e.g. Africa, South Asia, Latin America)
 - * Country(ies) involved
 - * Nature of recipient institution
 - Public or Private
 - National/Regional/International
 - * Centre Administered Portion of Funding
 - * Recipient Administered Portion of Funding
 - * Funding Category (External, Centre-Partnership, Centre-Administered)
 - * Project classification (according to typology developed during project)
-

Figure 2

These data fields were chosen because the information was perceived to be useful for analysis and because it was accessible through IDRC in the project summary reports which are available for each project.

Some data fields within individual project records could not be used for analysis due to inadequate (or inconsistent) documentation in the project summaries. Situations where this occurred are indicated in the analysis results.

Project Case Studies

From the initial project set of 145 records, five were chosen for more detailed analysis. They were not chosen randomly, nor are they a representative sample of the entire set. Rather, choice was based on the following criteria:

- 1) They were examples of genuine attempts at participatory research, i.e. projects which attempted to involve the community in all stages of the project, and in which there was some attempt to break down the traditional researcher/researched dichotomy. Projects which used qualitative methodologies without handing over 'researcher power' to those involved in the process, which involved the community only in one stage of the project (usually data collection) or projects which were more collaborative than participatory were not included in this subset.
- 2) The projects are illustrative in some way of the strengths and weaknesses of participatory research itself, or of institutional involvement in participatory research projects.
- 3) The availability of documented information from IDRC's files, including general project files, project summaries, project completion reports, technical reports and trip reports.

- 4) The availability of non-file sources of information: project officers who are still with IDRC, either in Ottawa or in regional offices; funding recipients with offices and staff in Canada; on-going projects which allow for access to current project leaders.

Interviews with IDRC Personnel and Outside Specialists

During the course of the project, interviews were carried out with 40 people who had previous involvement and/or specialization in participatory research activities, either inside or outside of IDRC. All interviews were unstructured, consisting of a series of open-ended questions. Several of these interviewees were contacted more than once.

These interviews provided some of the most interesting and in-depth information obtained in the study. The themes which emerged from these interviews will be summarized and analyzed in some detail in the following chapter.

CONCLUSION

Information for this study was collected from a variety of sources over a five month period in early 1995. There was a great deal of interest in this research within IDRC, as well as some interest from outside. Several people interviewed during this period commented on the longstanding need for the compilation and analysis of data on this topic, and as such were highly interested in seeing the results of the evaluation. It was felt that the compilation and analysis of IDRC's experience could not only

provide insight into IDRC's participatory research practices, but also provide some valuable lessons for other research institutions interested in future involvement with participatory research methodology. The following two chapters of this thesis provide details of the information collected during the research process. The final chapter provides an analysis of IDRC's experience as well as an examination of the most appropriate roles for research institutions and donor agencies to play in the future development participatory research methodology.

CHAPTER 4

IDRC AND PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: GENERAL THEMES

INTRODUCTION

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC), based in Ottawa, was chosen for this study to examine the analytical and methodological issues surrounding the institutionalization and professionalization of participatory research. Established by an Act of Parliament in 1971 to fund researchers of the South and assist them in creating their own solutions to development problems, IDRC provided some of the first development assistance which focused exclusively on research support and the development of science and technological capacity in developing countries. Funding has been primarily provided for projects proposed and managed by Southern researchers affiliated with Southern universities, institutions or non-governmental organizations.

IDRC constitutes an excellent case study, as it has been actively supporting participatory research activities since the late 1970s, long before most development agencies were aware the methodology existed. Found comments that

'Empowerment through knowledge' is both the mission of IDRC, and an essential aspect of participatory research. It is no accident that participatory research has played a significant role in the research activities supported by IDRC during its 25-year history. (1995, p.1)

In recent years, budgetary cutbacks have forced IDRC to reexamine its operating goals, and seek to reposition itself by "...making strategic choices on where and how to capitalize on its particular strengths and niches" (Found, 1995, p. 2). For participatory research, the critical question becomes whether this is an area of strength

to be drawn on for future IDRC activities. The global trend favouring the increased use of participatory methodologies is continuing, putting IDRC in an excellent position to draw on its long and extensive history of experience with participatory research. Before looking at what future participatory research might have at IDRC, it is worth examining the organization's past activities.

This chapter will first begin with a general overview of IDRC's involvement with participatory research, then examine its involvement in more detail with the analysis of a project database designed for this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of research interviews conducted over the course of the study which identify and describe themes relevant to the use of participatory research methodology by the institution.

THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

Although financed primarily by the Canadian government, IDRC is directed by an international Board of Directors, comprised of 11 Canadians and 10 individuals from other countries; men and women with expertise in science, technology, finance, public policy and international development. (Stockdale, 1995)

The IDRC evolved out of an amalgam of several trends, including a strong internationalist impulse in Canada at the time of the Centre's formation, manifested in the government and vision of Lester Pearson. As one researcher comments, "Non-Canadian development research and internationalist influences are evident in the

nature of the Centre, its programme, and the way it has been sustained." (Stockdale, 1995, p. 300)

From its inception in 1971 until 1991, the structure and the mission of the Centre were relatively stable, with few major structural changes taking place during this 20-year period. In fact, the most obvious change and sign of growth in its first two decades was the proliferation of regional offices around the globe.

Nearly all Regional Offices seem to have appeared without being a response to particular events, but a filling in of the global map....Regional Offices are the most tangible proof of the Centre's international roots and Southern concerns. (Stockdale, 1995, p. 298)

During the 1980s, a shift towards a thematic integration within the Centre, and a more holistic approach to development research began to occur. This happened alongside the breakdown of strict disciplinary boundaries in the social and natural sciences, both within the Centre, and in the larger academic sphere. The trend culminated in 1991 with a Centre-wide restructuring in which six interdisciplinary core research themes¹ were chosen emphasizing the environmental dimension of sustainable and equitable development. The rationale behind this move was to highlight "the priority given to environment and development by UNCED and to recognize the inevitable - and now urgent - interdependence of the two" (IDRC, 1993, p.5).

Appendix B lists the divisions of IDRC before and after the 1991 restructuring. IDRC

¹. The six core themes on Environment and Development are: Food Systems Under Stress; Health and the Environment; Technology and the Environment; Biodiversity; Information and Communication for Environment and Development; and Integrating Environmental, Social and Economic Policies.

is currently undergoing another major restructuration as a results of significant cuts to its budget by the federal government.

HISTORY AND CONTEXT OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AT IDRC

IDRC was one of the few international funding agencies to support participatory research at an early stage, and has continued to play an important role in the use and development of the approach (Found, 1995, p.9). Found, drawing on the work of Stockdale, recognizes that early interest in the methodology may have resulted from the fact that:

IDRC was founded on the proposition that the application of knowledge to the poverty of the developing world was best generated by Southern academics themselves. Such an idea presupposed a partnership based on generosity, self-help and mutual respect, all deeply held Canadian values (Stockdale, 1995, p.322). Participatory research, which epitomizes joint-ownership of research, mutual learning, and action, ought to be one of the preferred research methodologies of a progressive agency such as IDRC. Indeed, the examined record does reflect this trend. (Found, 1995, p.14)

The evolution and development of participatory research at IDRC is an interesting example of methodological progression. Participatory research began in earnest at IDRC in the early 1980s with the majority of the early projects being conducted by the Social Sciences Division (SSD). At this time there were five programs in SSD, but initially it was almost exclusively the Education and Population program doing participatory research work. By the mid-80s the Environmental Policy program became involved, and slightly later the Urban Development program became active in participatory research work as well. The Economics branch of SSD has

never been involved in participatory research work. Participatory research in the early 1980s was associated almost exclusively with SSD.

One IDRC staff member suggested this was the result of a much more discipline-bound Centre in the early 1980s, with the Social Science Division doing the bulk of social science research, while others divisions concentrated far more on the 'scientific' aspects of research. For example, work being done in the Health Science (HS) Division was mostly biomedical research, carried out by doctors and scientific specialists. Research in the Agriculture and Nutrition Sciences Division (AFNS) was primarily technical, and the Information Sciences Division was composed of specialists interested in the technical, rather than human, side of information problems. At that time there were no medical anthropologists, rural sociologists, or other social scientists associated with these divisions.

During the period between 1985 and 1987 the Centre made some policy changes and moved to a more interdisciplinary focus. Divisions became less bound by the traditional focus of their disciplines, and researchers became increasingly interested in the range of alternative research methodologies which could be used to undertake more holistic and interdisciplinary research. It should be noted that this also gave rise to some tension between those who viewed traditional research methodologies as the most appropriate for IDRC projects, and those who wanted to explore new and emerging alternative research methodologies.

The rise of participatory research popularity was also due to the fact that some groundwork had been laid, especially in SSD, by the use of qualitative methodologies,

including some methods borrowed from anthropology, particularly ethnography and participant observation. Early use of these alternative methods, which were considered acceptable as they came from recognized academic disciplines, helped pave the way for later acceptance of participatory research work. Also, the Centre's increasing acceptance of the value of multi- and inter-disciplinary work began to change the way people conceived of research and what was and was not acceptable.

At this time several trends began converging which affected the growth and development of participatory research at IDRC. It was noted that in the late 80s the climate was right for methodological experimentation: there was more money, project officers had more time to dedicate to projects, and the existing corporate culture supported experimental methodologies. It was also a period of increased interest in the funding of projects affiliated with NGOs and other grassroots organizations, which converged with the ethos of participatory research.

This led to a period in which participatory research moved out of the exclusive domain of the Social Science Division and other divisions began expressing interest as to the appropriateness of participatory research methodology for their areas of research. AFNS began using it in the areas of agricultural and farming systems research; HS began using it for socio-medical research, and ISS undertook several projects looking at the development of participatory communication systems.

Three publications were produced by IDRC in the late 1980s, reflecting the growing interest in the use of participatory research. In 1987 a state-of-the-art report on participatory research was produced (Bernard, 1987) and the following year a

Working Group paper on participatory research within IDRC appeared (IDRC, 1988). The latter paper was originally intended to provide an overview of participatory research activities across the Centre, but concentrated instead on participatory research in two divisions: AFNS and SSD. In 1989 the Health Sciences Division followed this up with their own paper, an internal evaluation of participatory research in the division (Grisdale 1989).

The rapid increase in participatory research popularity at IDRC is confirmed by the increase in the number of participatory research projects conducted during the late 80s. Prior to 1988 the maximum number of participatory research projects started in any given year was 8. In 1988 the number doubled to 16, and has stayed in this range since.

In 1991 a major re-organization took place in IDRC, with implications for the use of participatory research within the Centre's activities. At this time AFNS disbanded and the staff moved primarily to either the Environment and Natural Resources or Health Sciences Division. This had the effect of moving several social scientists into ENR, which had been previously composed primarily of natural scientists, also making it the largest division in the Centre.

Corresponding outside influences on IDRC influenced participatory research work within the Centre as well. In Latin America there was already a long tradition of participatory research, especially coming out of an adult education tradition started by Paulo Freire, but interest in the methodology continued to grow. In Africa and Asia there was also burgeoning interest in the potential of participatory research, although

initially with less indigenous capacity to carry the work out due to the lack of people familiar with participatory research in these regions. This resulted in increasing numbers of participatory research proposals from Southern institutions being put forward to IDRC. There is disagreement within the Centre as to what impact recent trends will have on the future of participatory research work, with the potential for these trends to be interpreted two ways (Found, 1995, p.15-16). On the negative side, reductions in general levels of funding since 1990, increased emphasis on 'results-oriented' research with a high degree of predictability, and the shift to larger projects, could be considered problematic for participatory research at the Centre. On a more positive note, however, Found comments that:

...the increased emphasis on Regional-level decision making, with close ties to the "roots" of development need and expertise, might be seen to increase the demand for participatory research activities. Similarly, the designation of IDRC as "an Agenda 21 organization" (Stockdale, 1995, p.288), with increased responsibility for research and development which was sustainable and related to local environmental matters, ought to have heightened the importance of participatory research. (Found, 1995, p. 16)

Other development trends can also be interpreted as encouraging for the use of participatory research. There has been a recent global shift towards more 'participatory' development methodology and strategies, partially due to demands from the South for an increased role in development activities, and partially due to the realization that non-participatory development is expensive, frequently inefficient, and often not cost-effective. This latter point is critical in today's global economy with a shrinking supply of development resources coupled with increasing demand for these resources. Finally, as the methods involved in participatory processes become more

complex and sophisticated, there is a tendency to incorporate participatory research as one part of a larger project, rather than as a stand-alone approach.

CASE STUDY DATA

This section presents data collected on IDRC's participatory research projects carried out between 1978 and 1994. These data provide an illustration of the depth of IDRC's participatory research during this period.

Database Results

As discussed in the previous chapter, a database of IDRC supported participatory research projects was compiled, drawing on project summary data from 145 projects which used 'participatory research' as a keyword in project descriptions. The data were sorted and evaluated according to various criteria. This section describes these sorts in detail, with an explanation of the findings of each sort accompanying the data tables.

Table 1 shows the results of an evaluation of the differing ways in which 'participatory research' was used in the projects included in the database. This information reveals a critical problem with the use of participatory research in IDRC-supported projects, in that there is widespread confusion as to what the exact methodological parameters of the term 'participatory research' are. For some, any project that involved local participation, in any form, was classified as participatory, while others used the term only to describe projects which met the criteria used in the

literature review of this thesis. This discrepancy illustrates the need to ensure that a clear and generally agreed upon definition of participatory research is used in discussions of IDRC's involvement in participatory research projects.

Table 1: Typology of "Participatory Research" Projects

Category	Number of Projects
Participatory Research	33
Collaborative Research	27
Community Involvement	26
Methodological Development	16
Capacity Building	11
Participatory Research Training	11
Qualitative Research	6
Other	15

In this table, Participatory Research refers to projects where participatory research methodology was employed, within the constraints imposed by the institutional structure of IDRC, and where the distinction between the researchers and the subjects of research became blurred. Collaborative Research refers to cases where there appeared to be community involvement but in which the divisions between those being researched and those doing the research remained, as they do in more conventional research methodologies. Farming systems research is an example in this category - the community may have some input into the research, but still relying on some form of outside expertise to carry out the desired research.

Community involvement refers to projects which appeared less participatory than those classified as collaborative research. In most cases the community was involved in the research, but peripherally rather than centrally, and the community had no control over the research agenda. Participation was most likely initiated for processes of data collection or more likely to be described as 'research assistance'. Methodological development refers to projects which either analyzed or further developed participatory research methodology, rather than conducted participatory research projects per se. This includes projects in which results generated by participatory research were cross-checked and validated.

Capacity building refers to projects in which local capacity was being developed in order to accommodate future participatory research methodology or other types of participatory work, and in many cases this 'organizational groundwork' had to be laid before participatory research could be conducted. Participatory research training refers to projects where the explicit purpose was to train others in participatory research methodology and techniques. This is more specific than the capacity building category, and refers primarily to workshops and exercises designed to train people in participatory research methodology. Capacity building activities were far more general and diverse.

Qualitative research refers to projects where it was stated specifically that conventional qualitative methodology (including anthropological techniques such as ethnography) were used rather than participatory research methodology. 'Other' describes projects which were not clear examples of any of the other categories, or in

which the project documentation did not provide enough information to make an informed guess as to the research methodology used.

These results have significant methodological implications for the Centre. Only 33 of the 145 projects examined appear to be attempts at transformational participatory research per se. The majority of the remainder illustrate other ways in which institutional support can provide useful assistance for participatory research activities. For example, the collaborative category includes projects subscribing to the underlying philosophy of participatory research, while also acknowledging the importance of specialized knowledge from outside the community (e.g. scientific/agricultural) where appropriate to the research.

Similarly, the group of projects classified as 'methodological development' illustrate some significant contributions made to participatory research methodology. The majority of these projects, however, were not participatory in their methodology or scope. This is not to suggest that projects which stray from archetypal participatory research methodology are not useful, but only to highlight the importance of making a distinction between the variety of ways in which researchers can contribute to the future evolution and development of participatory research methodology and scholarship. For this reason, all projects using 'participatory research' as a keyword are included in the following analysis.

Figure 1 was used in the literature review to illustrate the variety of ways in which 'participatory research' projects could be classified: by the degree of control the subjects of research exercised over the process, and by the level of abstraction of

analysis. This diagram can be used to classify the above data to visually illustrate the range of participatory research activities IDRC has supported over the past 15 years. For example, many of the projects which fall into the 'participatory research' category allow the research subjects to take an unusual degree of control over the process. However, one of the effects of handing over this control to those without formal research training is that the level of rigorous analysis is low. Alternatively, projects which are classified as furthering 'methodological development' exhibit the opposite characteristics; the researchers maintain a high degree of control over the research, but the level of analysis is high. Other classifications can similarly be organized on this grid according to the degree of local control and the level of analysis.

Figure 3

2

PM-1 3 1/2"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

Table 2: Project Overview by Year, Number of Projects Initiated

Year and Number of Participatory Research Projects Initiated in Each															
<80	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94
1	2	3	4	6	6	3	6	8	16	14	15	17	17	19	8

The data, sorted by the starting year of each project, can be divided into three distinct periods: 1987 and earlier; 1988-1991; and 1991 onward. Prior to 1987, participatory research at IDRC was still quite new, relatively unknown and fairly experimental. This is reflected in the small number of projects which were initiated in the late 70s and early 80s. In 1988 participatory research gained prominence within IDRC as a research methodology with potentially wide-ranging benefits as interest in participatory methodologies grew. Reflecting this new found interest, an internal Working Group was established to examine the role of participatory research within the Centre. A sharp increase in the number of participatory research projects funded by the Centre followed.

The third distinct period of participatory research began in 1991 with IDRC's re-organization and continues today. During this period, the Centre became involved in more interdisciplinary research, and pushed more divisions to work in closer collaboration. With the re-organization came a shift to larger and more complex projects, with some involving a participatory research component.

Early participatory research projects were usually small, relatively straightforward and involved a target sector and target problem. More recent projects

are much larger in scope and reflect IDRC's 1991 shift in structure and priorities. This had implications for the type as well as the scope of participatory research work being done. As the emphasis on sustainability, local participation and indigenous knowledge increased, opportunities arose to use participatory research as one aspect of a more sophisticated and complex methodology, rather than as a stand alone methodology.

Table 3: Project Distribution by Region

Region	No. of Projects
Central America	11
Latin America	37
South Asia	7
Southeast Asia	34
Middle East	5
East Africa	24
West Africa	23
Other	4

The data in Table 3 indicate a relatively even split of participatory research projects between regions. The one exception is the Middle East where very little IDRC-funded participatory research activity has occurred, which may reflect a lack of interest but may also be a function of the small size of the regional office. In total, 47

participatory research projects were undertaken in Africa, 41 in Asia, and 48 in the Americas and Caribbean.

Table 4: Project Distribution by Division

Division	No. of Projects
AFNS	16
CAID	2
COM	3
EARO	2
EES	2
ENR	27
FAD	3
HS	21
ISS	2
SPA	4
SS	39
Multiple	16
Misc/Don't Know	4

Note: Division acronyms given in Appendix B.

In looking at the distribution of projects by division, it becomes clear that some have been far more involved with participatory research than others. Prior to the 1991 restructuring, Social Sciences and AFNS were the most active. Since the restructuring ENR has been the most active division with respect to participatory research work. This shift occurred in part because several former AFNS social scientists were placed

in ENR during the reorganization. HS has been consistently, but not heavily, involved in participatory research, funding a project or two every year.

When examining the project summaries, the names of certain project officers arise repeatedly. This demonstrates a willingness on the part of IDRC to let staff follow their own research interests. Those who wanted to do work in participatory research were given room to do it, while those who were not interested chose not to get involved.

Table 5: Distribution by Regional Office Affiliation

Regional Office	Number of Projects Affiliated with Regional Office	Number of Projects administered by Regional Office
ASRO	34	28
EARO	21	12
LARO	48	15
MERO	5	0
ROSA	2	1
SARO	9	1
WARO	23	11
Other	3	59

Note: Listing of Regional Office acronyms given in Appendix C.

All projects funded by IDRC are affiliated with a Regional Office. Table 5 shows that the distribution of participatory research projects is relatively even throughout the regions. While the Latin America Regional Office (LARO) appears to have been affiliated with a large number of projects, this is explained by the fact that

the office is responsible for the whole of the Americas region. In Asia, two regional offices (ASRO and SARO) have been affiliated with a total of 43 projects. Africa's three administrative offices (EARO, WARO and ROSA) have been affiliated with 46 participatory research projects in total. All IDRC projects are administered from either its Head Office in Ottawa or from one of its Regional Offices. Among the regional offices, ASRO has been by far the most active in managing participatory research projects from the region rather than Ottawa, managing 28 out of the 34 participatory research projects affiliated with their regional office. Other regional offices managed less than half of all projects affiliated with their regions. This may have implications for the focus or the quality of the research carried out, particularly given the sensitivity of participatory research to local context.

Table 6: Length of Project

Project Duration	Number of Projects
12 months or less	28
13-18 months	20
19-24 months	41
25-30 months	9
31-36 months	41
More than 36 months	6

Participatory research has long had a reputation for being a methodology that requires a lengthy time frame to deliver results. The IDRC data do not bear out this

reputation. The majority of IDRC's projects were funded for a period between 12 and 24 months. The next most common length of funding was 36 months. Since participatory research, by its nature, takes longer than a 'standard' research project where the questions have been pre-determined and the fieldwork component of the project primarily involves data gathering, this result is somewhat surprising. However, given the nature and constraints of institutional funding, it appears that participatory research projects are designed by researchers under the assumption that they must fit into time frames similar to that of other IDRC projects. One result of this is that many participatory projects are designed as a series of short (18-30 month) projects which together comprise longer-term participatory research goals and objectives.

Table 7: Distribution by Grant Type

Type of Grant	Number of Projects
Centre Administered Grant	9
Centre Partnership Grant	54
External Grant	67
No information	15

As Table 7 shows, IDRC allows recipient organizations a considerable degree of latitude in the administration of funds once a project has been approved. Grants are broken down into three categories. Centre administered grants are those in which funds are administered entirely by IDRC. External grants are those in which funds are

administered entirely by the recipient institution. Centre Partnership grants are those in which funds are administered by both IDRC and the recipient.

More than half of the projects which provided information on their funding indicate that the recipient institution controls all the funding. The majority of the remainder share the responsibility of the administration of funds with IDRC. Only in a minority of cases was IDRC solely responsible for administering funding for projects. In 15 cases the information regarding grant type was not available on the project summaries.

Table 8: Distribution by Recipient Institution Type (Part I)

Recipient Type	Number of Projects
Private	36
Public	73
Unknown	36

IDRC funding is allocated to institutions and organizations rather than individuals, and these are classified as public or private organizations. Public refers to state-funded organizations and institutions, private to organizations and institutions which function without public assistance. Of the 145 projects selected for this database, 36 of the recipient organizations were private research institutions or agencies and 73 were public institutions or agencies. 36 organizations did not provide this information on the project summaries.

Table 9: Distribution by Recipient Institution Type (Part II)

Recipient Type	Number of Projects
National	78
Regional	17
International	26
Unknown	24

Each recipient organization was classified as working primarily at either the national (or sub-national), regional (e.g. East Africa: South-East Asia) or international level. The majority of the recipient organizations, 78, worked at the national level. Another 17 undertook projects at the regional level, and 26 worked on at the international level. Categorization was not possible for 24 projects as insufficient information was provided in the project summaries.

Table 10: Funding: Centre-Administered Portion (CAP)

Amount of CAP funding (\$CDN)	Number of Projects
None	51
10,000 or less	26
10,001 - 50,000	40
50,001 - 100,000	10
100,001 - 500,000	9

500,001 or more	1
Unknown	8

Table 11: Funding: Recipient Administered Portion (RAP)

Amount of RAP funding (\$CDN)	Number of Projects
None	4
10,000 or less	2
10,001 - 50,000	18
50,001 - 100,000	34
100,001 - 500,000	69
500,001 or more	11
Unknown	7

Table 10 shows the Centre Administered Portion (CAP) of project funding to participatory research projects. Table 11 shows the Recipient Administered Portion (RAP) of the projects. The data presented in these two tables show quite clearly that IDRC is not adverse to handing over the administration of large proportion of project funding to recipient organizations involved in participatory research projects. In more than a third of these projects, the money was administered solely by the recipient organizations. It is interesting to note, as well, that in more than half of all cases the recipient organizations are receiving and administering IDRC funding in excess of \$100,000, a significant amount by IDRC funding standards.

A final analysis of the 145 'participatory research' projects in the database revealed some interesting things about the nature of participatory research at IDRC. While all the projects were identified by keywords as using participatory research, a closer look at the projects indicates that sub-division into several categories related to participatory research is possible, as Table 1 illustrates.

Summary of database results

The data indicate growing interest in participatory research methodologies from initial IDRC involvement in the early 1980s. They also reflect certain geographical trends, including regional differences in the use of participatory research methodology. Contrary to what might be expected, the data confirm that participatory research projects do not, on average, take longer than other types of research projects, although it is difficult to determine how much this is influenced by the institutionalized funding requirements of IDRC with their emphasis on short (two to four year) funding cycles. It should be recognized, however, that many of the self-identified participatory research projects employ more 'conventional' research approaches, such as qualitative methodology, rather than participatory research as it is defined for the purposes of this thesis. The data on centre- and recipient-administered funding illustrate IDRC's willingness, in a majority of situations, to hand control of financial resources over to recipient institutions, in keeping with the Centre's philosophy of Southern empowerment. Finally, the data illustrate the variety of ways a research institution can become involved in the methodological and ideological development of participatory

methodologies, and the importance of examining these distinctions when evaluating the capacity of research institutions to contribute to this development.

The following section provides a qualitative complement to this information, with a summary and analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews.

INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PERSONNEL

A total of 40 interviews were conducted for this research between January and May 1995 with IDRC staff, people knowledgeable in participatory research from outside the Centre, and with staff and project leaders from IDRC supported projects. This section will highlight and explore recurring themes which emerged throughout the interviewing process.

The issues which emerge in the following discussion are organized around two central themes. The first focusses on the direct effects of institutional involvement in participatory research processes, including the effect of the prevailing corporate culture at IDRC; the clash between participatory research methodology and the prevailing scientific paradigm; the effects of 'project mentality' on participatory processes; and the need to develop appropriate project evaluation criteria for participatory research projects. The second focusses on the struggles involved in effecting good participatory research practices, including the effects of recent popularity of the methodology; the importance of entry points and lead organizations to successful research; contextual factors which affect participatory research; the tensions implicit in a methodology

focussing on both process and results; and the ways in which micro-level research can be used to effect macro-level change.

Effects of Institutional Involvement

Corporate Culture

Recent changes at IDRC have resulted in a changing corporate culture at the Centre. The 1991 restructuring, recent budget cuts, and increasing interest in accountability for the justification of resources have all had an effect on the future of participatory research at IDRC.

Many of the people interviewed believed that future work in participatory research was threatened by these changes. The shift in recent years toward larger projects has been justified by the attitude that small projects are "not worth the time and effort they take to administer." This could prove detrimental to future participatory research work, as it is easier to get small projects through the IDRC funding system, since individual project officers can approve them. In the past, this has meant that project officers could 'champion' small projects they thought valuable and ensure some degree of funding for the work. If the recent shift away from small projects continues, it will be up to participatory research advocates to show that the methodology can be used successfully in larger projects or at least incorporated as one research approach in large-scale, multi-method projects.

The Centre's current attitude towards participatory work is somewhat different from that which prevailed for projects initiated between 1986 and 1991. During this

period, there was a conscious effort to entrench the ideas of community participation into IDRC supported projects. As one IDRC staff member commented, in the 1980s projects officers had more time to spend on projects. They also had more money, and IDRC's corporate culture supported experimental methodologies. In contrast, many felt that today's corporate culture is focused far more on entrepreneurial and free-market based activities.

As well, recent changes at IDRC have resulted in more emphasis being put on projects with quick turnaround times, as well as projects which show promise of producing 'tangible results' relatively quickly. As participatory research projects often do not guarantee a set of quick or predictable results, this change has the potential to greatly affect the chances of future participatory research projects receiving funding.

Some interviewees perceived a contradiction between IDRC's increasing recognition of the failure of conventional development processes, which coincides with the rise in interest in participatory processes, and the corporate trend of funding ever larger and more conventional research projects. It was also recognized that the holistic nature of participatory research conflicts with the bureaucratic structures which exist in institutions such as IDRC, with their resultant emphasis on sectoral, divisional and/or geographic boundaries. Although recent changes at IDRC have moved the institution toward a more integrated and holistic approach to research, the majority of research projects are constrained by some types of boundaries.

Finally, it was felt that there was a serious contradiction between the bureaucratic application process and the popular nature of participatory research. For

those without formal academic training. developing a complex and time-consuming project proposal is often intimidating. expensive and difficult. Some worry that this discourages applications for some very interesting and worthwhile projects.

Participatory Research and the 'scientific' paradigm

It was felt by many of the interviewees that participatory research proposals and projects suffer when they are evaluated through a 'scientific lens' and measured against indicators designed for quantitative scientific procedures. One IDRC staff member commented that project proposals are evaluated on the strengths of three things: the research problem itself; the objectives of the project; and the methodology. While participatory research projects often do well in the first category, they run into difficulty in the other two areas. The expected outcome and objectives of a project are often difficult to evaluate, as these are likely to change and evolve if the work truly is participatory. One possible way around this dilemma is to evaluate participatory research proposals on the strength of their methodology. This approach assumes that if the proposal is methodologically sound, the objectives which emerge will also be solid.

Some interviewees also felt a contradiction exists between the holistic nature of participatory research work and the institutionally defined boundaries (e.g. Health Sciences, or Information Sciences) of IDRC. One person commented that most of IDRC's staff received their PhDs at a time when disciplinary boundaries were rigidly enforced within the academy, and that this contributed to difficulties in getting inter-

and multi-disciplinary research projects approved. This difficulty has decreased somewhat in recent years with the implementation of structural changes favouring a more integrated and holistic approach to research.

Many people believed that participatory research was viewed as being either not rigorous enough, or else perceived as not rigorous enough, to justify it as scientific enquiry. This problem has been exacerbated by a lack of documentation and evaluation around participatory research. These people felt that a good critical examination of the issues around participatory research would help assuage some of the fears of those reluctant to fund participatory research projects.

Project Mentality

The prevalence of a 'project mentality' was cited as an area which strongly constrained the use of participatory research methodologies, creating a fundamental tension between project requirements and participatory processes. Project structures impose several constraints which can hamper participatory research effectiveness. As well, the linear structure of most projects, in which it is assumed they proceed linearly from question formulation through data collection to analysis and results production, is not conducive to effective participatory research, which is far more iterative in nature.

Conventional project structures require that projects are capable of being completed within an allocated time period, that costs and expected benefits of research are known at the start, and that the research process itself will follow a predictable course. Participatory research, by its very nature, does not accommodate these

demands well. It needs to be recognized that while the sequence of participatory research processes is similar to that of conventional research processes (e.g. problem identification, project design, implementation, evaluation) the amount of time and resources spent on each stage varies significantly. Participatory research projects often require more 'up-front' time, as participatory project identification and design are time consuming activities. However, if done well, the extra time spent on this stage will be recouped in the project implementation stage, which can proceed very rapidly if it enjoys full community support.

Many interviewees commented that participatory research projects generate tension regarding the time frame of the research. In some cases, participatory research is introduced with the goal that long term results will be achieved within a community. However, with project cycles of typically two to three years in length, researchers often feel a great deal of pressure to provide a series of short-term benefits during the course of the project to justify the research costs. While there is an element of this phenomenon in most research projects, the effects it has on the type and the scope of participatory research work being done is important.

Project Evaluation

Issues around evaluation arose during discussions. It was noted repeatedly that the first step in formulating appropriate evaluation mechanisms must be to define participatory research clearly. Whether the evaluation would focus on long or short-term results also had to be established, as well as whether the scope of results

will even be considered in the evaluation. While some expressed concern that this would result in a rigid definition that contradicts the methodologies of fundamental flexibility, most acknowledged that IDRC's projects have to be evaluated on the basis of some criteria and that these criteria have to be established clearly before research can begin. If different criteria are the focus of project implementation and project evaluation, it is unlikely that the resulting evaluation will adequately reflect the research process and its ultimate successes and failures.

One common evaluation indicator of project success is output. The appropriateness of this as a measure of participatory research projects should be considered carefully. In participatory research, it is difficult to predict accurately the outcome of the research, as an integral part of the research process involves giving the subjects of the research considerable control over the process. For an evaluation to be effective and useful, it is important to be explicit as to whether the research process, the outcome, or elements of both are being evaluated. In any evaluation of participatory research projects, it is critical to observe who is, and who is not, involved in each stage of the project, and develop a sense of how decisions are being made.

One individual recognized a growing realization among participatory researchers that the overall focus on process may have occurred to the detriment of substantive research results and action. This individual suggested that results-oriented participatory research would likely be more sustainable in the long-term. An IDRC staff member suggested that an evaluation be based on substantive results, while simultaneously acknowledging that the process and context of the research are

important as well. Following on this point, it was suggested that a number of small evaluations, based on different intended results and project scales, might be the fairest way to evaluate participatory research projects. This eliminates the need to have one overall set of criteria that all projects are expected to adhere to.

In evaluation, the needs of IDRC must be considered alongside those of the project and research methodology. As an institution, it was noted that IDRC is in the 'business of research.' Therefore, questions of intellectual rigour, research reliability and validity, and the replicability and general application of results must be considered in all research projects.

It was suggested that IDRC's role in participatory research might be in examining questions around inputs, results and the replication of participatory research processes, as few organizations in the world have the capacity to do this. One individual went so far as to comment that IDRC had a responsibility to do this, as it is one of the few organizations with long-term participatory research experience which can also do advanced participatory research work and methodological analysis. Few other donor agencies in the world have enough experience with participatory research to undertake such a study, and local organizations with participatory research experience often do not have the analytical capacity to do so.

More specific issues raised with respect to evaluation included the need to examine the complex process of project initiation more closely, and the importance of doing longer-term follow-up studies on projects. Both were suggested as means by which useful information on the project cycle could be obtained. One caveat

was offered about any evaluation of participatory research work -- the evaluators need to be realistic about the difficulties in doing 'perfect participatory research' given the complex realities of both the methodology and development work in general. It should be seen as an ideal to strive for, rather than a goal which can easily be reached, and the approach taken to the methodology will have a definite impact on its perceived success overall.

STRUGGLES TO EFFECT GOOD PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Recent Popularity of Participatory Research Methodology

Many interviewees acknowledged the recent popularity of participatory research, but two distinct themes emerged from their comments. One group was happy to see the evolution of participatory research and hoped its newfound popularity would give this methodology a higher profile within IDRC. The second group viewed the increasing popularity of participatory research methodology in a less positive light, expressing a fear that participatory research would be used not because it was the most appropriate methodology, or because of its potential in a particular situation, but rather because it is currently in vogue and therefore perceived as more likely to get funding than other research methodologies. Some worried that the recent influx of inexperienced participatory research practitioners could damage the quality of research being done. With more people practising participatory research, often without proper training, it is now more difficult to ensure the rigour and validity of research.

A related concern was that non-participatory research would be remodelled and "dressed up" as participatory, but would proceed along standard scientific tenets, with little real control being handed over to the subjects of the research. This was particularly noted in cases where natural scientists, with little or no social science background, used participatory methodology without some form of training in the subtleties of the process and its specific methodological needs.

To examine and understand what really happens during participatory research, and to use this knowledge to improve future research work, many people noted it is necessary to evaluate critically the numerous contentious or difficult issues which surround participatory research, without shying away from controversy. It is also necessary to get at the various complexities of participatory research, which can be easily glossed over. As one project officer repeatedly said, it is crucial to separate the rhetoric around participatory research from the reality of the experience.

Entry Points and Lead Organizations

The entry point into the community, and the nature of the lead organization undertaking research, are often factors which affect the ultimate success of participatory research methodology. Each of these is examined in detail below.

i) Entry Point

One project leader pointed out that communities are not homogenous and villagers are not interchangeable. This is an important point for researchers to

remember when locating entry points into a community. They should be chosen with considerable attention to the needs of the project, the needs of the community, and the practical intersection of the two. It was generally found to be most effective to start with a simple and clear project, which had an entry point in which the community could see the benefit of work being done. The trust of the community could then be won while building local capacity slowly in the initial stages.

The local elite can play a critical role in the success of participatory research processes, it was noted, by supporting, ignoring or actively discouraging participatory work. Some argued for a 'real politick' approach which acknowledges the benefits of channelling a percentage of project resources into meeting the demands of the local elite. While this runs counter to the ideology of participatory research, it was seen by some to be a constructive alternative to remaining ideologically pure and watching a project fail due to elite resistance.

ii) Lead Organization

The capacity of a project's lead organization to undertake participatory research is critical to its outcome, many interviewees believe. For participatory research to be successful, it is important that lead organizations have the skills and the desire to forge alliances with the wide variety of groups and individuals affected by the project. They also need to be willing to use holistic examination methods to support participatory research processes, and to tailor the methods to the context of each particular research

question. Lead organizations which do not fit these criteria are unlikely to be effective implementors of participatory research methodology.

The nature of the lead organization should also depend on the size and scope of the research project being undertaken, said many of the interview participants. Larger and more sophisticated projects require more experienced lead organizations. Smaller, simpler projects can involve local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups. The critical point in producing reliable and valid results lies in the matching of project needs with the capacities of local organizations.

It was suggested that it might be interesting to examine the interfaces between IDRC, lead organizations, and communities in participatory research projects, to determine which combinations work best in different contexts. For example, is it more effective to work with research institutions or NGOs when implementing participatory research? If it is the latter, is it better to work with established organizations, or newer organizations which tend to be more radical? What are the advantages of working with research institutions rather than community groups?

The issue of regional differences also arose with respect to lead organizations. One program officer suggested that in Africa it was best to conduct participatory research work through local and/or international NGOs, as they have more credibility within the community than government agencies and universities. As well, international NGOs have the additional advantage of having their head office located outside the region, and are therefore not bound by some of the constraints that local organizations face. For example, NGOs which have a strong funding base outside of

the region they are working in often possess more autonomy than those directly dependent on local governments for support.

A second program officer raised a different but equally important point regarding regions, noting that the term NGO had different connotations in different regions. He argued that in Africa the term is applied primarily to small, community-based development organizations, while in Latin America it is used to describe a range of institutions which are non-governmental in nature. This includes community-based organizations, but also intermediary organizations and even, in some cases, official research institutions.

When one term is used to describe such a broad range of organizations, it becomes important to differentiate between those that have the capacity to carry out participatory research work successfully and those that do not. It was also noted that some community-based organizations choose participatory research as a research methodology because it is thought to be more accessible than other forms of research. While this degree of accessibility is one of the original tenets of participatory research development, it can constitute a problem for donor agencies that require research results which are intellectually rigorous. Again, the need to match the capacity of the lead organization with the project needs is critical.

Context for Participatory Research

A recurring theme in interviews was the need to understand the context in which participatory research is conducted, and allow the context to influence the

design and focus of the research. Three general sub-themes emerged within this category: the effect of regional differences; the need to ensure participatory research methodology is appropriate to the research question and to the context; and conditions which favour the successful implementation of participatory methodology.

i) Regional Differences

The issue of regional differences in participatory research planning and implementation was identified in many interviews. The consensus was that Latin America, which has the longest tradition of participatory research, was the region most conducive to doing participatory research. It has the advantage of a common, albeit colonial, language spoken across the majority of the continent, as well as better access to communications infrastructure than most of Asia or Africa. As well, among the three regions, the starting point for knowledge collection in the three regions differs. Finally, the degree of self-reliance (particularly within groups most likely to be involved in participatory research activities) is highest in Latin America. The NGO sector in Latin America, it was felt, was considerably stronger and more confident than that of the other regions, and therefore more likely to encourage research leading to action for social change. While definite interest in participatory research exists in Africa, some interviewees said, there is much less indigenous capacity to carry the research out, thus necessitating participatory research activities which can be conducted with less accumulated participatory research experience. Minimal communications infrastructure and the lack of a common language across the continent make regional

networking and collaboration around participatory research difficult as well. Finally, African NGOs were considered to be more cautious and concerned about government reaction to their activities than NGOs in Latin America. Despite this, NGOs were considered the best agents of participatory research, as government support was considered weak in many cases, and universities were seen to be too closely tied to, and dependent on, the government to be effective agents of social change.

Asia was perceived to fall somewhere in the middle of these two extremes, having better infrastructure and fewer communications problems than Africa, but not functioning at the same level as Latin America. It must be recognized that these are very broad regional generalizations, with significant differentiation across regions as well as between them. These sub-regional differences are equally important to consider when developing participatory research in accordance with the local context and capacity for participatory research activities.

ii) Enabling Contexts

Several people interviewed noted the importance of ensuring that the research question was appropriate to participatory methodologies, and that the context was right. Some research questions are more appropriate, and therefore more amenable, to participatory methodologies. If an inappropriate question is chosen initially, it will impede the success of the project.

The context in which participatory research is carried out is also critical to the success or failure of projects. The 'best' context for participatory research is highly

dependent on the emphasis of the project, with different foci demanding different contexts. For example, if capacity building for future participatory research work is the focus of a project, a different context might be required than if the focus were on producing concrete and tangible research results. Interviewees commented that both the internal and external environments that participatory research operates in have to be considered, including the stability and governability of the area, the research capacity of local partners, and their ability to interact with other agents involved in the process.

It was repeatedly suggested that an understanding of the role of culture was critical when introducing and implementing participatory methodology. Factors that appear to be good indicators of participation to outsiders, such as groups meetings and discussions, and communal discussion of culturally sensitive subjects, may work well in one culture and context but fail or be threatening in another. Methods which work well in Latin America do not automatically work in Asia and Africa.

Finally, it was suggested by some that in general, certain contextual factors favour participatory research, while other factors work against it. Of course, the specific needs of each project have to be considered as well. Two factors identified as being conducive to participatory research are stable and settled communities, and an overall political context which is generally stable and governable. As one person commented, it is difficult to conduct research, particularly participatory research, in an unstable and chaotic environment.

Prior organizational experience within the community was cited as a critical factor for effective participatory research implementation. Several people noted that it was easier and faster to identify participants and issues in areas where groups representative of either the community or powerful segments of the community are already established.

As well, these groups can provide organizational structure within which the research can be carried out. It must be recognized, however, that groups representing powerful segments of the community may actively work against research and action which aims explicitly at the redistribution of scarce resources and knowledge within a community. Implicit in this argument is the fact that participatory research works better in communities where there is a relatively equitable initial distribution of power, and where there is a relatively small degree of conflict based on racial, ethnic, gender or class distinctions.

In participatory research, as with any other research methodology, it is critical to question constantly whose needs are being served by the research and the resulting articulation of 'community knowledge and needs.' It was noted that smaller communities are more conducive to participatory research than are larger communities where it is very difficult to work with the community as a whole and reach a genuine consensus on the needs of the community. Participatory research work in larger communities usually compels the exclusion (explicitly or implicitly) of some groups from the process. If this is the case, it was suggested that explicit justification be made as to why certain choices were made. Involving large numbers of people in the

decision making process also leads to increased potential for conflict, which can also affect participatory research processes.

The use of participatory research exclusively in small communities is seldom a panacea either, as it raises difficult questions regarding the replicability of studies and the validity of results derived from different contexts.

Some degree of literacy within a community is found to make for better implementation and use of participatory research. As one person commented, it is difficult to co-publish research results with an illiterate community, though innovative ways have been found to prevent illiteracy from interfering with the process of gaining community approval and input into research publications.

Emphasis on Process or Results

Several people recognized that emphasizing process for its own sake in participatory research was not an effective organizational tool. Some thought it better to work toward some form of tangible results and let process (and the resultant capacity building that accompanies process) exist as an inevitable and valuable side effect. To sustain participatory work over the long term, it was felt there had to be an emphasis on concrete results which accrue to those participating in the process. The action component of the research is also critical, as those participating in the research are usually far more interested in results than in process.

Some argued that it was better for organizations such as IDRC to support capacity building within local organizations carrying out participatory research rather

than to support participatory research projects only. Providing high-quality training in participatory research methodology and increased capacity building can, and ideally does, result in a multiplier effect as these organizations often go on to train and support other organizations in the future. This multiplier effect is more in line with IDRC's objectives and priorities than is the actual administration of participatory research projects.

The need for adequate training in participatory research was stressed by several people interviewed. As one project leader noted, it would never be expected that someone could undertake any form of rigorous statistical analysis without a good deal of training. Therefore it made little sense to assume that effective participatory research could be done without a similar degree of training. It was also stressed that good training is critical in participatory research because of the risks associated with poorly conducted participatory processes.

Finally, one IDRC staff member stressed the importance of bringing a cost-benefit approach to participatory research involvement. In order for participatory research to occur, justification of the high input costs of the methodology was necessary. These costs are not limited to the financial sphere, but include time, human resources, risks, research potential, and other related factors.

Micro-Macro Linkages

Some commented that the preoccupation with the methodology and politics of participatory research over the last two decades has resulted in a methodology that is

heavily case-study driven and difficult to replicate on a large scale. While micro-level studies can provide valuable information, if their results cannot be replicated (or at the least, generalized) at a macro-level, it is difficult to justify the high front-end costs of many participatory research projects. To promote these projects in the future, it will become increasingly important to find ways to "scale-up" the results of earlier research.

Several people commented on the importance of looking for mechanisms by which micro-level participatory research can have an effect on macro-level processes such as policy analysis, social change, and resource distribution. This is integral to participatory research, as work done in isolation is not likely to be very effective. The future success of participatory research, some suggested, hinges on the successful bridging of the gap which currently exists between micro-level activity and macro-level change.

An IDRC staffer suggested one possible solution to this problem, noting that many successful farming systems research projects have incorporated both participatory and non-participatory methodologies. The success of these projects was derived from knowing when to use participatory research methodology (for example, to discover local priorities in research areas) and when to use conventional scientific methodologies (for example, in the development of new seed types) and in the innovative ways these research methods were combined (for example, using information about local priorities to determine the direction of future agricultural research).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a general overview of IDRC's previous involvement with participatory research, focussing primarily on the analysis of a database designed for this research, and an exploration of various themes which arose during the course of interviews with participatory research specialists. The former provides a quantitative snapshot of the Centre's involvement in participatory research over the previous decade and a half, while the latter draws on qualitative data to highlight some of the issues donor agencies must deal with if when undertaking participatory research. The next chapter will supplement this data with a more detailed look at selected IDRC projects which have employed participatory research methodologies.

CHAPTER 5

IDRC-SUPPORTED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore five IDRC-funded participatory research projects in some detail, in order to illustrate how the themes identified in the literature and by various individuals experienced in participatory research manifest themselves in actual research projects. These five projects are not a random sample, but were chosen for specific reasons. First, projects were chosen because they reflect and highlight certain themes pertinent to the study of participatory research and donor agencies. Although there is some overlap, each illustrates unique aspects of participatory research concerns.

Second, projects were chosen where enough data were available to build an effective case study. Data were compiled from a wide variety of sources, including project proposals, project files, post-project summaries and evaluations, and interviews with affiliated project officers, project leaders, and other project personnel. Some unevenness may be noted in the data set as varying amounts of documentation were available for different projects.

It should also be recognized that due to the structure of IDRC funding, a great deal of documentation is available on pre-project processes (for example, project proposals, supporting documentation, proposal evaluation) but considerably less is available on project and post-project processes. While technical and financial reports

are prepared throughout the duration of the project, these provide specific information on certain aspects of the research process (for example, research results) while providing almost no information on others (for example, reflection on the research process itself) which would be valuable for an examination of participatory research projects. Because of this, in several projects the bulk of the information about participatory research is contained in the project proposal, and as such indicates intentionality rather than actual results. Where no other information was available this was used as the basis for project evaluation.

Each case study provided in this chapter is comprised of five components. First the overall purpose of the project will be described briefly. This is followed by an overview of project details, and comments on the nature of the participatory research employed over the course of the project. An analysis of each is then provided, highlighting points of interest in each project. Finally, there is a brief summary, highlighting how the project reflects and illustrates previously discussed themes.

PROJECT 87-0155: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN THE METAL INDUSTRY

Purpose of Project:

This project tested the validity of participatory research data gathered by Mexican workers at an integrated steel industry production plant (SICARTSA). It analyzed the reliability of the data, tested the data for possible bias, and determined its utility as a base for specific measurements. The initial research, which IDRC was not

involved in, was carried out by steelworkers in conjunction with the Metropolitan Autonomous University in Mexico City, and determined that the average worker in the plant under study suffered from a combination of four or five health problems, and acquired a new ailment every two to three years. Working in conjunction with the steelworkers' union, researchers helped labourers identify and measure their own afflictions as well as the health-related working conditions in the plant.

Project Details

In 1987 the Health Sciences Division of IDRC agreed to fund the second phase of a broad research program on labour process, risks, and work-related health problems implemented at an integrated steel industry in collaboration with a local Mexican trade union. Over 18 months, IDRC provided \$90,750 for the project. The Mexican Autonomous University provided an additional \$11,550.

IDRC did not become involved in this project until the second phase began. It funded the follow-up and verification of validity of the participatory research methodology used in the initial research. Overall, the project set out to demonstrate that the steelworkers 'intuitive' findings could be backed up with hard scientific evidence and testing. It allowed for extensive medical testing of the participating workers to determine the extent to which their assessment of their own problems could be substantiated through scientific testing.

While the steel company, SICARSTA, initially supported the participatory research work, it later barred the university researchers from the plant when it realized

the implications of the research. It is interesting to note that the company was 50% owned by the government of Mexico. In this case, it would appear there was little incentive for the government to intervene on behalf of the workers to press for better conditions.

Although the company could bar the researchers from the plant, the union's mandate stated explicitly that it was the union's responsibility to look after the workers. As a result, the government was unable to stop the union from conducting tests inside the factory (light, heat, and dust measurements) while the university researchers conducted health research on the grounds outside the plant.

Nature of the Participatory Research

This project did not involve the use of participatory research methodology from the outset, but rather provided a methodological verification and validation of results produced by the workers and the union. One of the final products of the research was the publication of a 'how-to' booklet detailing worker involvement in occupational health issues. Published in Spanish, the document was never translated into other languages as it was written in 'shop floor vernacular' by the workers, and it was felt it would be more difficult to translate than something written by professionals.

Analysis

In the project appraisal, carried out by IDRC, the potential benefits of the project were thought to be relatively high. "...The Centre has an opportunity to

validate, at least in a circumscribed area of science, the concept and methodologies related to participatory research" (Project proposal, p. iii). The risk element of the research was perceived to be low. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

In general, the IDRC-sponsored test of the methodology did validate the data generated through participatory research methodology. The project also generated two unexpected side effects. First, once the extent of the negative working conditions began to be revealed, SICARTSA, as mentioned previously, vigorously opposed the research.

Ultimately, most of the workers who had participated in this study were fired; and the union, rather than fighting for better working conditions, ended up simply trying to preserve jobs for its members. (Found, 1995, p. 84)

Second, political allegations of inappropriate Canadian involvement in the project were raised which resulted in demonstrations outside the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City. This led to the temporary suspension of the project until the eventually disproved allegations of improper IDRC intervention were investigated. It ultimately took between three and six months of intervention to convince the Mexican government that IDRC had made all the necessary and legal arrangements before starting work on the project.

Although the project was successful in terms of its research validating the participatory research methodology, it raised the issue of how effective participatory research can be in contributing to social change at anything above the micro-level. In this case, the owners of the factory, including the Mexican government, had no interest in changing working conditions. Regardless of how empowered the local community

felt from the research, the lack of support at higher levels bears examination in terms of the long-term effects of participatory research.

The starting point for the project is also worth commenting on. This project was initiated as a direct result of union interest in local working conditions. Given that unions are inherently political organizations, the path for transformative participatory research work was well prepared. However, it was perceived by some that the intensely political nature of the union members may have presented a danger to the integrity of the research, as some members may have been more interested in 'getting the owners' than in producing valid and replicable results. The perception of worker bias can be damaging if it results in the automatic discounting of research data and conclusions on the grounds that these were pre-determined before research began.

Summary

This project clearly illustrates both strengths and weaknesses of institutional involvement in participatory research. On the positive side, IDRC played a valuable role in furthering the methodological development of participatory research, something that grassroots organizations do not have the capacity to do. This is a valuable contribution to methodological development, and could also be valuable in demonstrating and confirming that workers have the capacity to analyze their own problems. With the current interest in sustainable development and capacity building in development projects, this finding has important implications.

This project also illustrates the benefits of working with established people's organizations such as unions. These groups provide project organizers with access to an already organized and politicized group through which participatory research can be initiated, although the danger of employing a group with an agenda of its own should be acknowledged as well.

On a far less positive note, this project is a striking illustration of some of the risks of initiating participatory research, particularly in a highly politicized and adversarial environment. In this case the risks were high: several people lost their jobs, IDRC's international reputation and credibility were questioned, and severe tension developed between the university and SICARSTA. This raises questions of institutional accountability and responsibility to the intended project beneficiaries in participatory research projects. That is not to say that donor agencies can or should be held responsible for anything that happens, but rather that potential risks should be acknowledged and considered before projects are undertaken.

PROJECT 90-0204: UNDERSTANDING HIGH RISK SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Purpose of Project:

This project examined the behaviour of those at risk of HIV infection in the Rakai District of Uganda, an area with high rates of infection. The study aimed to understand sexual behaviour and its determinants among persons at risk from HIV. Research results were to be used to design and implement appropriate and culturally sensitive health education and counselling programmes for the area.

Project Details:

IDRC's Health Sciences Division committed a total of \$83,445 in funding to this project in 1990. The recipient institution, the Makerere Medical School in Kampala, Uganda, supported the project with contributions in-kind. The project was carried out in the Rakai District of Uganda over an 18 month period.

During the project, the Makerere Medical School's research team identified epidemiologically and clinically high-risk groups at risk. They found that not only were the usual groups (including prostitutes and long-distance truckers) at a high risk, but others as well, including alcohol vendors, adolescent girls and mobile traders.

Nature of Participatory Research:

The exact intended participatory research methodology is difficult to determine in this case study. While this project was self-identified as using participatory research, the methodology laid out in the proposal is decidedly and conventionally ethnographic and qualitative. It employed a participatory component involving local participation rather than local control over the substance of the research.

The proposal states explicitly that participatory research will be used, and that 'bargirls' will be employed to

...mobilize and motivate their colleagues, participate in implementation, and in actual data collection.... Their involvement in the project as assistants will provide them with an alternative source of income and hopefully dissuade them from continuing with prostitution.... The use of observers that are minimally intrusive because of their shared cultural identity with persons under study can reduce the amount of distortion arising from an outsider's presence. (Project proposal)

There is no reference to these 'assistants' having any input into the research design, question formulation, research analysis or results dissemination.

Analysis:

Although this project was in fact eventually carried out using conventional qualitative and ethnographic, rather than participatory research methodology, some interesting reasons lay behind the decision not to employ participatory research. The project's principal researcher raised two significant points during an interview.

First, he commented that the original intention of the project was to use some type of participatory research methodology. On arriving at the study site, the research team found this approach was not feasible. The prevalence of HIV-infected individuals in Rakai district was extremely high, with approximately one-third of the population affected. With a large proportion of the populace of the area dying, people were extremely demoralized. As a result, the research team felt the preconditions for effective participatory research did not exist, as there was not a sufficient number of people willing and/or able to engage in the research. The reasons they cited for not participating included poor health, lack of time, and a general feeling of hopelessness. Under these conditions, people were unwilling to invest time and energy toward social change when health concerns dominated their attention.

Second, the researcher contended that those who undertake this kind of study, and want to get close to people in these situations, are ethically and morally bound to work for social transformation. In other words, it was thought not to be enough to

merely document the problem and then leave to seek solutions. Rather, it was put forward that researchers must be willing to go one step further and actively work with the community toward some kind of resolution of the problem. This assertion echoes the activist sentiments of transformative participatory work.

The same research team is now proposing a second phase of the project which explicitly employs participatory research methodology as a follow-up to earlier qualitative work.

Summary

This project illustrates the necessity of an appropriate context in which participatory research can occur. While participatory research may have looked like a fitting approach to the research problem initially, it was obviously not feasible to ask this community to take on more responsibility or to undertake time consuming and difficult research. This project also illustrates the importance of flexibility in participatory research approaches, and the need for researchers to be able to make adjustments to the methodology as necessary once community conditions become apparent. Finally, the principal researcher in this project explicitly raised the questions of researcher responsibility to the community. It is interesting to note that this question was not addressed in several of the other projects examined in this study, nor in sufficient detail in much of the literature.

PROJECT 92-8465: FOOD SYSTEMS UNDER STRESS

Purpose of Project

The Food Systems Under Stress (FSUS) project aims to facilitate coordinated interdisciplinary research involving both social and natural scientists around food systems issues. A training component is built into the project, focusing on "...often neglected social science aspects in food systems work and on process thinking" (Project abstract).

This project represents the preparatory phase of a major regional network initiative which has been developed over a period of nearly two years. The objective of this phase is to institutionalize food systems research projects in each of the participating countries and to achieve a broad consensus on the research and training approach to be taken in this project.

Project Details

IDRC approved funding of \$99,810 over a 15 month period for the initial phase of the FSUS project for research which began in 1993. Five countries of East and Southern Africa were involved in this phase: Botswana, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In each country local views regarding food insecurity problems were solicited.

The research was co-ordinated in London by the project leader, a researcher affiliated with the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. For future

phases of the project, the administrative centre has been relocated to the Makerere Institute of Social Research in Kampala, Uganda.

Nature of Participatory Research

Regional workshops were held in each participating country in order to elicit views about the nature and causes of local problems related to food insecurity. A project report makes it clear that

...workshop participants did increase their awareness of the importance of local-level information and planning in addressing the problems of food insecurity. Many of the issues important to villagers were highly localized, and called for local solutions....This places these workshops in a clear contrast with many other conferences, which tend to concentrate on the macro-level problems of the economy or of technology. (Found, 1995, p. 94)

The project appraisal, conducted by IDRC, notes that

...the emphasis on involving local communities (stakeholders) in problem definition and in the research process ...[is] fully consistent with the new IDRC strategy 'Empowerment through Knowledge.' (Project appraisal, p. ii)

Stated outcomes include the mobilization of a range of institutions in each area, including local rural organizations, in an attempt for each to analyze problems around food insecurity from their own perspective, employing participatory research and capacity building methodologies and to successfully initiate consensus-building processes among the diversity of participants with the goal of developing a shared problem definition and research methodology. (Project appraisal, p.iii-iv)

Analysis

Several points of interest emerge in this case study, but these fall primarily into two general categories: the appropriateness and limitations of participatory research methodology; and contextual factors influencing participatory research. Information from this case study is quite detailed as I had the opportunity to interview the project leader, an associate researcher for the project, and the IDRC project officer.

i) Appropriateness and Limitations of Participatory Research

While project staff were obviously in favour of the use of participatory methodologies, all argued that participatory research used independently of other research methodologies is not enough. It is critical that participatory research data be supplemented and cross-checked using other research methodologies where appropriate. This, of course, is true of any research methodology. On the positive side, participatory research methodology can be used to generate a lot of data very quickly, and the data may or may not be easily available in any other form. It was recognized that participatory research methodology could be highly effective for collecting some types of data, particularly if information is common to the community and the data are not personally or socially sensitive. However, the more public participatory research methodology may not be the most appropriate to get at sensitive personal information, particularly if this information carries some kind of social stigma.

On the positive side it was felt that many participatory research activities (especially those used in participatory rural appraisal activities) were good for the expression of some types of social relationships. It was also felt that talking to people

while looking at things (for example, during transect walks) could be a very useful way of collecting information about a variety of areas. In terms of technique, it was suggested that it was better to talk to the local people about specific external things (e.g. what is that building there for?) than generalities (e.g. tell me everything you know about community meetings) as it leaves people feeling more like experts on a subject and less like their personal knowledge has been invaded.

On a more cautious note, however, the problem of group consensus obscuring important individual details and degrees of difference of opinion was raised. One researcher stressed the importance of recognizing that the often difficult processes around consensus building. It is critical to take account of who is involved in the process (and who is not involved), whose opinions are being heard, and how consensus is reached. The underlying point of all this is that communities are not homogenous, and villagers are not interchangeable, and that it is very important to evaluate participatory research results within a contextual framework.

One researcher commented it was naive to think you could overcome all typical research constraints by moving from the verbal to the visual, or that one or two simple exercises would change people's established patterns and behaviour. These are part of the process, or maybe the start of the process in many cases, but are not the end in themselves.

In this project, previous experience with participatory research (or at the very least with group organization) was felt to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of participatory research exercises. In this project the experience of research teams

with participatory research varied substantially, with some having substantial experience, while others were not familiar with the methodology or the underlying ideals, and had difficulty operationalizing the research ideas. This raises the question as to how the participatory research process (especially in large projects) can be standardized enough to ensure valid comparisons of results, while still leaving some flexibility for differing local conditions. For example, when people create their own research categories (such as wealth rankings within a community) it has the advantage of bringing in their cultural interpretation of the terms (e.g. what constitutes wealth) but the disadvantage of creating data which are not easily comparable across different communities. This again highlights the need to use other research methodologies to cross-check the validity of results obtained using participatory research.

ii) Contextual Issues

Several issues relating to the contextual framework of participatory research were raised. The importance of noting the political, economic and social context of the participatory research study area, and in particular, the 'politics of information' came up repeatedly. Researchers must be careful to evaluate whether they knew enough about the area they were working in to interpret information they received from participatory research exercises correctly.

One researcher thought the critical question to ask about participatory research was whether it could help establish a new relationship between local administration and villagers, encouraging administrators to start thinking of villagers as cooperants in

development, and to get villagers to see administrators as people who can help them meet their needs. In order to do this, however, local contexts must be taken in to account - local salaries, available resources, survival strategies, and so on. He thought a much-neglected research area was the issue that local government officials have their own survival strategies (and corresponding set of needs) which have to be taken into account in participatory research work.

Over the course of this project five regional participatory research workshops were conducted, one in each participating country. The contextual differences between these workshops are fascinating. Zambia was the only FSUS project which was part of a larger ongoing project. There was a history of participatory activity in the area prior to this project, and the villagers chosen from various groups were used to participatory workshops and activities. However, it was also thought some were suffering from research fatigue, and from a scepticism brought on from experience with previous participatory work that failed to produce the promised results. With this combination of factors, the villagers were very critical of the PRA exercises, and asked some very tough and challenging questions. The level of participation in this workshop was quite open and very reflexive, particularly around questions of who was involved, and who was benefitting from workshop activities.

In Tanzania it was found that the senior researchers on the research team dominated the junior researchers, and there was real tendency amongst the senior researchers to support and justify the ruling government's view. Obviously this is not a context in which good participatory research is likely to happen. The result was a

research team which was not all that interested in exploring alternatives with the farmers, and in one case completely ignored some farmer evidence that ran contrary to what they believed was happening.

This highlights one dilemma for participatory researchers. In this case they tried to intervene in this situation, but in a tactful way so as not to offend the research team and create animosity toward the whole process. In this case the junior researchers had very little independence, and they were very conscious of their status within the research community. In conflict, they were most likely to choose a safe and comfortable course, rather than challenge their colleagues and the status quo. In this case the long term goal was to create a situation where researchers could feel safe to challenge the status quo.

In Uganda, one of the researchers noted it was common for people to challenge the authorities, and the workshop was very open, with people expressing their views quite freely without feeling intimidated. People were vocal about voicing concerns and priorities. It was noted, however, that while this seemed like a very participatory process there were still dominant voices in the community which were far more likely to be heard than those of the marginalized.

Botswana illustrates another situation entirely. Almost everyone who attended this workshop was there in an official capacity, primarily members of the local bureaucracy (e.g. health workers, teachers, etc.) and the meeting evolved as a coming together of administrators rather than all levels of the community. As a result the workshop was heavily bureaucratic, with people being very inclined to follow the

government line rather than take risks. Participation was 'top-down' and the actual results were far from participatory.

Zimbabwe was a success story, with people being very candid and challenging in the workshop. There was a lot of openness, and heavy criticism of the government and the market system. In this case the introduction was done in the local language which may have affected the results. It also may have helped that the workshop was in the home village of one of the researchers, ensuring a certain degree of commitment to its success. Finally, they also had a local PRA expert there who was very good at training, and it was felt that formal training in the methodology helped considerably.

In terms of context, an examination of 'survival strategies' of people in different areas was recommended, in order to know what types of participatory intervention would work and be appropriate. For example, it was noted that there really was no comparison between the survival strategies of government workers and local people in Zimbabwe - the government workers earn enough to live comfortably while the average person does not. This would entail a very different participatory research strategy than in Uganda where government workers are paid much less and have evolved their own survival strategies probably comparable with those to the local people. If participatory research is used to validate the voices of different people, it was felt it was important to recognize the voices of government workers as well, and that there has to be an acknowledgement of the importance of relationships between people and between groups.

Summary

This project illustrates one way in which a relatively large research project, encompassing five different countries in Africa, can be adapted to suit local conditions and priorities while maintaining the strengths of a large project, for example, providing data which can be compared across countries. It also highlights the need for local flexibility and adaptation of the research question to suit local contexts. One of the drawbacks of this flexibility, however, is that some data comparability is lost, and this increases with the amount of local control of each project. For example, where people are encouraged to create their own research categories, data comparison becomes far more difficult than if pre-chosen categories were used. However, this project also highlights the importance of having knowledgeable local people on each research team to assist with data evaluation and analysis, and a good research team can help overcome this difficulty.

One other interesting aspect of this project is the creation of a network of researchers able to draw on each other's experience and knowledge around food security problems and the uses of participatory research methodologies to identify and analyze these problems. It has been noted by many involved with the processes that participatory research projects have high input costs and may need to justify the initial costs of establishing this research. The creation of a network to provide long-term support, training and information provides one way in which the up-front costs can be offset over the longer term.

PROJECT 93-0008: SUSTAINABLE HILLSIDE AGRICULTURE**Purpose of Project:**

This project proposes to address the relationship between food security, poverty and environmental deterioration in Colombia, Nicaragua and Honduras. The principal objective of the project was described as the improvement of land use systems in order to maintain and improve food security, labour productivity and income generation without further degrading the natural resource base. Ultimately, it is hoped this would improve the livelihood of poor hillside farmers in tropical America and lead to the sustainability of the natural resource base.

Project Details:

In 1993 IDRC approved funding of \$514,420 for this project, to be administered by the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) in Cali, Colombia over a 27-month research period. The project leader was an internationally recognized expert in participatory research and development, with a background in rural sociology. The project involved research in three hillside communities in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Colombia respectively.

Nature of Participatory Research:

The methodology section of the project proposal states that the project will use a novel approach combining analysis of land use and management, including

geographic information systems (GIS), community-based survey methods, policy analysis and participatory research to generate new knowledge.

At the time of an interview with one of the project's research associates in April 1995, the pilot phase of the project had been running in two different communities for one-and-a-half years. It will eventually be expanded to 11 communities in the three hillside regions. In each community, local agricultural research teams known as CIALs (an acronym drawn from Spanish terms) are drawn from the community. Each consists of four people, including a research coordinator and a treasurer. These teams act as the de facto liaison between the researchers and the community, with responsibility to ensure that information flows between the two.

In each area it is the community which determines the problems to be studied, and passes this information through the CIALs to CIAT researchers who draw on their scientific expertise to suggest ideas and solutions. In each community under study, a small-scale start-up 'risk fund' of about \$200 is created to finance experimentation around the problems identified by the community. This eliminates the risk to farmers if it fails. If the research is a success, any money generated is channelled back to the risk fund for future activities.

Found (1995) comments that two levels of participatory research work are found in this project: individual farmers are trained to conduct on-farm research, and to participate in community activities; and local steering committees are formed in each site with representatives from organizations active in the area. These committees carry out participatory planning, and conduct on-going monitoring and evaluation of

research activities. They will also set research priorities, and be held responsible for the budget for a limited number of local research and development sub-projects.

In both cases, individuals and groups are empowered to identify their problems, to conduct research, and to help in the formulation of solutions. The community as a whole develops the capacity to work toward common goals. (Found, 1995, p. 97)

Analysis:

One researcher involved in the project commented that differences have already become apparent in the way the project was operating in the two pilot communities. In the first, a well-established community with strong family ties, the participatory research process has been open, and the community as a whole has been egalitarian in sharing information. In the second community, a newly formed migrant community, the process has been quite different and much less open. Some members of this second community attempted to keep new information secret, even though the structure of the CIALs appears to work against this. It was recognised that there was no way to avoid the effects of power relations and structures in participatory work, and that it was important for these to be identified explicitly. It is only if researchers recognize what is happening that they can search for ways to adjust participatory processes to compensate for power imbalances between community members.

The researcher also commented that one of the most visible outcomes of the project came from watching the community learn to deal with problems and develop some type of problem solving capacity for future use. In terms of project evaluation,

she thought it would be useful to develop indicators to measure and evaluate project success in a way that reflected community norms and ideals.

It was recognized that 'participation' always involved the same people in this project, something that can easily be a limitation of the methodology. This raises the difficult question of defining what is 'broad participation in participatory research' and whose agendas are being served by becoming involved. If it is not possible to get full participation across the community, perhaps other methods, aimed at eliciting information from non-participants, would be valuable in supplementing the research.

Summary

This project highlights a few critical areas where institutional involvement has benefitted participatory research. With IDRC funding this project was able to attract one of the top participatory researchers in the field to act as project leader, something that would not have happened without major institutional support. This is beneficial not only to the implementation of the project, but also for the advancement of the methodology and development of theory for participatory research.

A second benefit is directly related to this point. Because the participatory model tested was successful, it has since been used for other participatory projects, thus insuring the replicability of the results of the original methodology. This is important to note, as one recurring criticism of participatory research is that it is so situation specific that replicability becomes almost impossible. Finally, one of the researchers involved commented on her satisfaction in watching people develop and

improve their problem solving skills, a point worth noting given the current interest in sustainable development practices and human resources development.

PROJECT 93-1012: COMMUNITY BIODIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION

Purpose of Project:

On-farm conservation and the use of genetic resources is becoming an increasingly important subject as the genetic resources of many important food staples are being eroded at an increasing rate. This project set out to "...document, validate and strengthen community innovation systems that promote the use and conservation of plant genetic resources" (Found, 1995, p.98) and examine farmer conservation of crop biological diversity in order to aid in the future protection of genetic resources.

Project Details:

Global in scope, the Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation (CBDC) project began in 1993, involving partners in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Regional headquarters for the Southern partners are located in Ethiopia, the Philippines, and Chile. Southern partners involve farmers directly or associations oriented to the needs of farmers, and include three basic types of organizations: community; non-governmental; and scientific.

In 1993, IDRC agreed to contribute \$927,000 in funding to the project over a 48-month period. Other contributing agencies involved include: the Dutch Directorate

for International Cooperation (\$1.5 Million); the Norwegian Centre for International Agricultural Development (\$800,000); and the Swedish International Development Authority (\$2 Million).

The project has three pertinent administrative levels: local/national; regional; and global. In this way local and area-specific concerns and issues can be addressed at that level, while common concerns and issues can be addressed at either the regional or the global level, depending on which is most appropriate. For example, policy level concerns are dealt with at the international level, while agricultural practices are often dealt with at the local level.

Nature of Participatory Research:

The project's abstract states there will be a strong focus on participatory research involving farmers and the research community. The results are hoped to aid in the development of innovative methodology and policy recommendations on sustainable agriculture and practices for the preservation of genetic biodiversity with national, regional, and global relevance. The project abstract states that it seeks to involve farmers fully in both the research and its rewards.

Participatory research was chosen as an appropriate methodology for this project as it

represents an approach whereby the farmers' indigenous plant varieties, their procedures for improving those varieties (e.g. through natural selection) and their methods of using and conserving local varieties can become known and shared. Only through close cooperation with individual farmers can this information be elicited. (Found, 1995, p. 100)

Analysis

Two important themes critical to the effective implementation of participatory research emerge in this project. The first is the importance of taking regional differences into account when implementing participatory methodology. The second is the innovative ways in participatory research often allows some facets of research control to be handed over to the community without a loss of methodological rigour or validity.

Given its global nature, regional differences were notable in this project. As such the adaptations and mechanisms created to deal with these differences were also substantial. Notable regional differences included: different starting points for the collection of knowledge; different communication patterns in the regions (African patterns tended toward an information flow to metropolitan centres, Asia and Latin America had a less hierarchical flow of information); and finally difficulties with languages and structural communication barriers, particularly in Africa and parts of Asia. Latin America has the distinct advantage of a common language spoken across most of the continent, a facilitating factor in the diffusion of participatory research.

Regional differences in attitude were also identified amongst NGOs and other agencies involved in various aspects of participatory research. One researcher interviewed felt that African NGOs were so concerned about the reaction of their respective governments to participatory research that progress was very slow. By contrast, the Latin American NGO sector is substantially stronger and more confident, allowing it to move the project along much faster in that region. Asia again proved to

be the middle ground; the NGO sector is quite consultative with the government, but advancement of the project can still happen relatively quickly.

Despite these differences, regional similarities were also found. Farmers identified common areas of concern across all regions. They commonly viewed themselves as being in a defensive position versus the rest of society, and worried about the protection of their rights in a broad sense. A common concern was also raised with regard to intellectual property rights and who would have access to and control over germoplasm in the project.

All of this has interesting applications and lessons for participatory research. Most obvious is the need to plan and account for different local contexts and regional differences in a participatory project. In general terms, it is possible to do more complex participatory research work in Latin America than it is in Africa, in large part because of the greater familiarity of researchers in the Americas with participatory methodology. The accumulated expertise and research capacity which has developed over the last two decades greatly facilitates participatory research in the Americas. At the least, work in Africa will take more planning, more facilitation and more time. These differences should be recognized during the planning stages of a project. It would also seem to be the case that less support for the recipient and intermediate organizations is needed in Latin America than it is in Africa.

There are certainly some differences within regions as well, but this project illustrates the unique problems that one can run into when operating in a larger context. The CBDC project also illustrates some interesting and innovative ways in

which elements of research control were handed over to the community without sacrificing subsequent macro-level activity or jeopardizing the reliability or validity of the research. This is partially achieved through the structure of the project, constructed to focus on three different levels of research activity: local/national; regional; and global.

In each community farmers are directly involved at the local level. Collectively they determine their research priorities and work with project scientists to ensure these needs are met. Farmers can draw on the resources of various groups involved in the project as the need arises. In scientific matters, they can draw on help from scientific groups functioning at both the regional and the global level. Regional groups are the 'court of first resort' for the farmers. As the regional and global groups each have their own funding, there is a considerable degree of flexibility and autonomy within the structure as it is set up.

Each involved community must approve the proposed research before it can go ahead. As well, projects are designed at the local level by community organizations that retain control over the financial and legal aspects of the activities. Before research results are published, all community-related material must be passed through the associated community committee for approval. The community retains final authority on the content of anything written which involves them specifically.

Community-level control over certain elements of the research process is made explicit in the research proposal.

Information about plant genetic material is almost as important as the material itself. Partners recognize that source communities have the

right to know what is being done with their material and what information has been drawn from it. Source communities also have the right to determine access to their information and to determine the conditions under which the information may be used. (Project proposal, p. 13)

A subsequent section of the proposal states that where farmers interests clash with research priorities, farmer interests will take precedence.

It is interesting that some resistance from the other donor agencies was noted to the idea of handing so much control over to the community. At the donor agency meeting where this was discussed, IDRC and the Norwegian Agency for International Agricultural Research were reported very enthusiastic about the idea of local control, but the Dutch Directorate for International Cooperation did not support the proposal. No representatives from the Swedish Development Agency were present at this meeting.

Summary

This is a good example of a large project in which participatory research was not only successfully incorporated along with other methodologies, but is in fact, driving the project in many ways. Institutional involvement allows for the project to be carried out on an international scale, allowing for some global identification of common problems and policy development. However, the structure of the project also allows for genuine participation at the local level, and the flexibility built into the research methodology allows for differences in local conditions, while simultaneously

linking common problems and concerns at the global level, thus providing much needed linkages between micro-level research and macro-level change.

This project is also a good example of a genuine transfer of research control from the researchers to the community. In practice, then, this project has turned the standard research model upside down, much like Chambers (1983) 'last first' strategy, and allowed farmers to drive many aspects of the research by drawing on the knowledge of experts, rather than the reverse. This project illustrates some innovative ways in which some aspects of research responsibility can be handed over to the community without losing scientific rigour. One example of this is in the communication of results, and the amount of community control exercises over the publication of results.

SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY INFORMATION

These case studies illustrate several of the positive and negative aspects of institutional involvement in participatory research projects. In many ways these case studies provide data which further support and confirm the issues raised in the literature on this topic, as well as the concerns raised by many of the people interviewed. However, they go one step further, and illustrate not only the enormous difficulties of putting these methods into practice, but also the tremendous successes which can result if the research is done thoughtfully, creatively, and rigorously.

A few preliminary conclusions can be drawn from these case studies, and these conclusions will be elaborated on further in the following chapter. The first, and most

obvious, is the critical importance of participatory research being conducted within an appropriate and suitable context. Some indicators of contexts which are most likely to support participatory research efforts are: a previous history of social and/or political organization (e.g., the Mexico Steelworkers Union); stable communities connected by social, economic or other ties (e.g., as illustrated by the different communities in the Sustainable Hillside project); communities without severe power imbalances or elite domination of resources (e.g. note the differences between countries in the African Food Systems Under Stress project); and research in which the project results will benefit as wide a cross-section of the community as possible.

Some contextual factors indicate that participatory research will be difficult to carry out successfully: communities where severe disempowerment of the majority of the populace exists (e.g. the poor health prevalent in the Ugandan AIDS project, or communities in which severe military repression or extreme financial hardship exist, resulting in widespread apathy); communities with several power imbalances, or in which certain groups are severely marginalized; or in transient populations where it may be as easier to leave difficult situations than to stay and work through participatory solutions.

The responsibility of the researcher to project beneficiaries also emerges from these case studies. Transformative social research does not occur without conflict, and the Mexico Steelworkers project illustrates how severe the repercussions of undertaking this research can be. The Uganda AIDS project also highlights the demands participatory research makes on involved communities, and stresses the

responsibility of the researcher to undertake some concrete action which benefits the community in return. The \$200 revolving 'risk fund' set up by researchers in the Sustainable Hillside project addresses the risks faced by those attempting innovative practices, and mitigates much of the financial risk of doing so, while ensuring that any financial benefits realized will be shared throughout the community.

The importance of good lead organizations and the right entry point into the community is also highlighted in some of these studies. One of the researchers involved in the Sustainable Hillside Project commented that it was critical to start small, and build trust with the community before attempting more ambitious, large-scale research projects. In the FSUS project, it was noted that research teams were more committed to the work if members of the team were drawn from the communities where workshops were being conducted. In these situations, not only was there a valid entry point into the community, but also increased incentive for the community to support and assist with the project.

All of the projects that used participatory research illustrate the capacity building and training potential of the methodology, albeit in very different ways. This is an important consideration in the context of strong current interest in sustainable development processes and human resources development. In the Mexico Steelworkers project, the research validated the earlier findings of the workers, proving that grassroots research can be valid and relevant. The Sustainable Hillside project illustrated ways in which local problem solving capacity could be developed in collaboration with an outside research team, and the CIALs model used has since been

exported to other projects. One member of the research team commented that this model could well spread throughout a network, with the more experienced facilitators acting as trainers. This project also illustrated the benefits of starting slowly and letting the beneficiaries determine the speed and direction of change.

The FSUS project and the Global Biodiversity project are excellent examples of large projects maintaining a commitment to micro-level grassroots development and capacity building while simultaneously working for change at the meso- and macro-levels. In both the emphasis is on ensuring that a bottom-up approach is used at local levels, and addressing local level concerns which are then incorporated into the project at other levels. This commitment to allowing each community to determine local priorities ensures that some degree of local capacity building occurs.

These case studies illustrate the holistic nature of participatory research, and the multi-disciplinary approaches required to undertake this type of research. All of the case study projects involve multi-disciplinary research teams, and most involve some combination of researchers from the social and the natural sciences.

Finally, the FSUS and Global Biodiversity projects illustrate some highly innovative ways in which micro-level research and information can be incorporated into macro-level change processes. In the FSUS project the emphasis on determining research questions for each country which are locally relevant is juxtaposed with the size and scope of the project which addresses the much larger regional questions of food security in Eastern and Southern African states. The Global Biodiversity project addresses local priorities, while simultaneously searching for areas of common concern

both within regions and globally, and then attempts to address these questions with high level policy formation and development.

The final chapter of this thesis will draw some overall conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of institutional involvement in participatory research processes by analyzing the results of the IDRC case study. It will also examine ways in which collaborative efforts can be developed to draw on the strengths of both participatory research methodology and institutional support, and contemplate the lessons which other research institutions and donor agencies can draw from the IDRC experience.

CHAPTER 6

CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The preceding chapters of this thesis have discussed various aspects of institutional involvement in participatory research activities, beginning with a discussion of the general literature on participatory research and an examination of the more specific material on the institutionalization and professionalization of the methodology. This was followed by the details of a case study of IDRC's involvement with participatory research over the last decade and a half.

In this chapter I begin my analysis by arguing that in order to understand and evaluate the role that donor agencies can play in supporting participatory research, the implications and issues of this association need to be examined from the perspectives of both the institution and the recipient community, and at three different levels: the micro (household and individuals), meso (institutional) and macro (national and international policy) levels. I then argue that a major weakness of current participatory research work is the lack of linkage between these levels, and show how donor agencies can play a valuable role in creating linkages between these levels. I conclude by considering the forms of intervention most appropriate for institutional involvement.

IMPLICATIONS AND ISSUES: TWO PERSPECTIVES

Participatory research is a fundamentally different approach to research, with its explicit goal of democratising the process, and involving the subjects of the research as active participants. This approach acknowledges the importance of incorporating local priorities and knowledge into the research process, noting that many development efforts take place in highly complex social and physical environments (Mosse, 1994, p.498). However, it also creates difficulties for institutions supporting and using the methodology. As Maclure comments,

...precisely because it involves moving beyond the formal standards of applied research, participatory research is also subject to complexities and limitations which can too easily be overlooked or glossed over by proponents. For research funding agencies, participatory research thus poses a major challenge. (1990, p.1)

On the surface there appears to be a fundamental incompatibility between the demands of transformative participatory research methodology and the bureaucratic nature of international donor agencies. The former is, ideally, essentially radical, confrontational and committed to social change, while the latter is primarily conservative and committed to maintaining the status quo. However, a deeper examination reveals a powerful combination exists if ways can be found to combine the strengths of both.

This chapter will first explore the general strengths and weaknesses of institutional involvement in participatory research at the micro, meso and macro levels. This will be followed by an examination of the IDRC experience, highlighting some of the strengths and weaknesses illustrated by the case study. Finally, the 'lessons

learned from the IDRC experience will be summarized, and their applicability for other donor agencies analyzed.

For this paper, the micro level refers to activities taking place at the individual, household and community levels; meso refers to activities taking place at the institutional (and intra-community) level; and macro refers to activities at the regional, national and international level, including policy formation and implementation.

CONCERNS AND IMPLICATIONS

Micro Level

The bulk of the participatory research literature has focussed on the effects of the methodology at the micro level. This is hardly surprising, as the methodology emphasizes individual empowerment as a mechanism for social, political and economic change. The recent recognition of the need for active grassroots involvement in sustainable development processes has evolved in reaction to three distinct, but interconnected, development trends: a decrease in the available resources for international development activities; the devolution of state responsibility for social service provision in the South; and the generally acknowledged failure of large-scale, top-down development processes.

Participatory research appears to be a suitable approach for addressing all of these concerns, and one that could effect support from those on both ends of the political spectrum, with those on the right emphasizing its efficiency and focus on self-reliance, and those on the left highlighting its recognition of local empowerment and

capacity building potential. However at the micro level one must be careful not to overestimate the power of the methodology, or to underplay its inherent constraints and limitations.

On the positive side, there are numerous micro-level benefits to participatory research efforts if used in the right context and conducted by trained, competent facilitators. These include the inclusion of local concerns and priorities into research projects, the benefits gained from drawing on and incorporating local knowledge and experience into the research process, and the consciousness-raising and empowerment which occur as people develop their analytical and problem solving capacities. Ideally, participatory research will be used to foster sustainable development and community wide capacity building activities which will provide benefits in both the short and long term. It should also be recognized that outsiders often act as vital catalysts in the social change process, a factor often overlooked when discussing bottom-up development.

Yet there are also significant risks in using participatory research methodology at the micro-level, and these need to be acknowledged as well. First, there is the risk which accompanies activities devoted to ensuring social change, and which threatens the interests of the powerful elite in a community. This risk increases with the severity of the power imbalances in a community, and can result in the further marginalization of the oppressed in the worst case scenario. This is of particular concern when community divisions occur across contentious lines of gender, class or

ethnicity. Sikana identifies the danger in ignoring these cleavages at the community level, commenting that while:

...this rediscovery of the 'grassroots community' may be well-intended and desirable from both the ideological and epistemological points of view, there is a danger that this resultant sense of 'ideological correctness' may mask hidden interests of different actors on the stage, and prevent us from asking critical questions.....this facade of participation may translate into a conspiracy for furthering segmentary interests of diverse categories of the more economically and politically powerful social actors. (Sikana, 1995, p. 1-2)

This trend is exacerbated by the tendency of professionally trained researchers to feel more comfortable with their 'social equals' in the community, generally the local elite, a factor which can have a significant effect on the type of knowledge generated by the participatory process. Closely connected to this is the danger of outside researchers misinterpreting data due to an incomplete understanding of the local context and culture, or the deliberate manipulation of the researchers by powerful segments of the community with vested interests in seeing a certain type of result.

At the micro-level there are also risks to the outside researchers and to donor agencies sponsoring the research. By its nature, transformative research is political and in conflict with the status quo. Outsiders run the risk of becoming caught up in highly politicized struggles, which may or may not be appropriate depending on the circumstances. In addition, if perceived as taking sides on issues, research credibility may be damaged, with implications for future research in the community.

There is also a critical risk of raising community expectations to a level which cannot be met, resulting in short-term frustration and long-term apathy. Recipients who have been through previous unsuccessful participatory processes develop research

fatigue, and a marked lack of enthusiasm for learning new methods which promise 'transformational change' but require a large up-front investment of time and energy on the part of the recipients. There is also the difficulty of negotiating the conflict between a 'bounded' supply of resources, where participatory research is targeted to one set of problems in a community, and 'unbounded' demand on those resources, where local beneficiaries fail to understand why some problems are being addressed by not others.

Finally, there is the obvious contradiction of 'outside experts' entering a community with the explicit intention of 'empowering the populace' and 'validating local knowledge.'

Meso Level

At the meso level, institutional involvement in participatory research presents a different set of issues and areas of concern, primarily centred around the clash between the bureaucratic requirements of donor agencies and the non-linear nature of genuine participatory research. Even the increasing recognition of the remarkable benefits of participatory approaches has not changed the reality that "...the community-based research enterprise has often been as tumultuous as the community-based change it seeks to spawn or encourage" (Nyden and Wiewel, 1992, p.43). The authors go on to note that "...at the crux of the academic-community tension is the lack of predictability of results, both in terms of timing and of conclusions." (Nyden and Wiewel, 1992, p.48)

The conflict lies primarily in the 'bad fit' between the demands of bureaucratic project structures and the required flexibility of genuine participatory research, and the fact that the advantages of participatory research do not conform well to standard institutional policy. Project proposals are structured and evaluated around the needs of deductive research, where a hypothesis is formulated and tested with pre-determined research strategies and questions, a format which leaves little room for local involvement, particularly at the decision making level.

In addition, participatory projects have different timelines, with far more time spent in the community on project identification and design, ideally with the full participation of the community. If the standard project formats is the only one supported by the institution, those applying for funding of participatory research projects must find ways to make their project conform to this structure, often to the detriment of the participatory process. Rather than trying to make participatory research projects fit the project mould, it might be more useful to evaluate whether the project is even an appropriate vehicle by which to mobilize participation.

This fundamental conflict manifests itself in a multitude of ways at the meso level. It makes participatory research difficult to evaluate using standard project evaluation mechanisms, much in the same way it makes proposal development difficult. It also forces donor agencies to evaluate the amount of political involvement they are willing to take on, and whether it is best to be involved directly or indirectly. While there are risks for the institution in both, the former is definitely an area in which involvement should be evaluated carefully. The conflict between bureaucratic

requirements and local needs also emerges in questions of research replicability and generalizability. Good participatory research is designed to take the specifics of local context into account, but this makes project replication and results generalization difficult in many ways. This is an important issue when participatory research projects have to justify the high up-front research costs.

This conflict also creates an elemental tension for researchers supported by the institution, as they try to meet the needs of the community while also producing research which will advance their own career. The institutional demands placed on the researcher require that deadlines be met, finances allocated according to the original project proposal, and that the research proceed consistently. Genuine beneficiary participation, however, can result in a project with substantially different goals and objectives than originally envisioned, and the participatory researcher is forced to navigate a difficult path between the two sets of often conflicting demands. In addition, the resulting research and analysis is expected to be rigorous and valid, as well as relevant, a difficult task even with full institutional support. As Nyden and Wiewel comment,

It is ironic that in most universities, discipline-oriented research, sometimes referred to as 'pure' research, is seen as more complex, more challenging, and more intellectually sound. This is a myth that needs to be turned on its head. In many ways applied research is the more complex, more challenging and more relevant research. It is often difficult to manage a research project through the various political struggles in the communities, constraints of funder regulations, and tensions of conflicting community organization strategies. (1992, p. 50)

In spite of the evident difficulties in conducting non-linear participatory research work within a bureaucratic structure, there are also substantial benefits to be

reaped from this unusual partnership. Donor agencies can supply significant resources for participatory research, including much needed human, financial, and administrative capital. In addition, they can provide valuable links with the larger world, and act as a neutral third party when research involves contentious social, economic or political issues. In some cases, donor agencies may provide a degree of protection that would not be afforded otherwise, or have enough influence to get certain topics on the research agenda.

Macro Level

The implications of institutional involvement in participatory research activities change again when examined at the macro level. The importance of participatory research making an impact at this level should not be understated, as micro-level change will have little impact without change occurring at the regional, national and international levels as well. As Sikana notes,

...the quest for empowerment should not end at enabling the local people to articulate their demands (this we have achieved already) but to also enable them to realize those demands. In my opinion, the greatest disadvantage of the local people is not their powerlessness to voice their demands, but their powerlessness to assert their interest at the extra-community level and their inability to access resources and services from outside. (1995, p.8)

In many ways, one of the most difficult tasks facing participatory researchers is to find ways to transform local level change into larger-scale economic, social, and political change. Policy level advocacy, however, has been a long-neglected aspect of participatory researchers.

There are two valuable roles institutional involvement can play in participatory research activities which have an impact at this level. The first is in supporting high-level and high-quality research, and donor agencies have the resources to bring in some of the best researchers and to develop projects which span geographic regions and are multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary in nature. It is possible that policy formation could take grassroots interests and needs into account, but this is only likely to happen as a result of research that is rigorous and valid as well as relevant.

International institutional support can also provide some degree of stability for projects for which it might be difficult to receive national support. Donor agency funding, coupled with an international reputation and guarantee of donor support, provides a potent combination which may be enough to offset other concerns, such as the volatility of certain research projects.

Yet at this level there are also dangers of institutional involvement. Donor agencies, much like any other large bureaucratic organization, can fall into the trap of maintaining the status quo and protecting their own interests while claiming otherwise. Ferguson recognizes this trend in international development, and critiques the concept of development itself. He argues that once a particular type of knowledge is created,

...interventions are then organized on the basis of this structure of knowledge, which, while 'failing' on their own terms, nonetheless have regular effects, which include the expansion and entrenchment of bureaucratic state power, side by side with the projection of a representation of economic and social life which denies 'politics' and, to the extent that it is successful, suspends its effects....it is an 'anti-politics machine,' depoliticizing everything it touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight, all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power. (1994, p. xiv-xv).

The degree of politicization of the research process is not an easy question to answer, nor one that is easy to find consensus on. However, it is a vital question which must be considered by donor agencies when contemplating participatory activities and interventions.

From the preceding discussion, it is obvious that institutional involvement in participatory research processes has different implications at each level of analysis. To date, the primary weakness of participatory research overall has been the general failure to find ways to create linkages between these three levels, and to negotiate the different interests and concerns which exist for all affected parties at each level.

This problem is unlikely to be resolved without some form of intervention, something donor agencies are ideally positioned to provide. Sikana notes the critical role outside agencies can play in creating linkages between communities and the resources available in the larger world.

...[I]nstead of exclusively focussing on community-level intervention, participatory programmes should make deliberate efforts to mobilise extra resources and support by linking local communities with a wide spectrum of institutions and services outside the local community. In short, the project should act as a broker between the local community and the outside world. The tendency in the past has been to overlook this important role, or at best to undertake in on an ad hoc basis. (Sikana, 1995, p. 8)

The following section examines the lessons learned from the IDRC experience in this area.

THE ROLE OF A RESEARCH INSTITUTION IN CREATING LINKAGES: THE IDRC EXPERIENCE

Two themes emerged from interviews conducted with participatory research specialists on the subject of institutional involvement in participatory research activities. The first recognized the struggles inherent in effecting good participatory research practice, focussing primarily on micro-level activity, with some into the other levels. The second was concerned with the effects of institutional involvement on participatory research processes, and the concerns here focus more on meso and macro-level effects. IDRC's experience with participatory research over the previous fifteen years reflects elements of both themes.

One conclusion which emerges from the IDRC case study is the need for a common definition of what constitutes participatory research, as the Centre projects which identified themselves as using participatory research methodology varied substantially, and included some with little participatory methodology, and others which were merely conventional research methodologies going under a different name. With the increasing interest in participatory methodologies worldwide, it will be critical for IDRC to determine a generally agreed on set of criteria by which to evaluate and participatory research proposals and projects. Another finding which emerged in this case study is the Centre's ambiguity about handing over full control of research processes to those in the South. In some ways the IDRC has gone above and beyond the norm for similar agencies, and should be commended for a long-standing involvement in participatory research, and willingness to take risks in

trying an experimental methodology. In other ways, however, there appears to be a fundamental unwillingness to give up control over many aspects of research, and this is reflected in the conflicts over project funding, monitoring, and evaluation structures, even when this is to the obvious detriment of the research goals. While IDRC appears more flexible than many other research institutions, whether it is flexible enough to incorporate the demands of participatory research is debatable.

The case studies illustrated several of the strengths and weaknesses of donor-agency supported participatory research activities at the micro, meso and macro levels. This includes the risks which can accrue to both donor and recipients, the importance of taking the local context and capacity into account when designing research projects, and the impact regional differences can have on participatory processes.

The case studies also illustrate some of the innovative and exciting ways which IDRC supported projects have found to create linkages between different levels of research, thus addressing one of the fundamental overall weaknesses of the methodology to date. The FSUS project conducted research in which participatory methodologies were used to incorporate local concerns into the research questions, while still producing results which were comparable at the country level. The Sustainable Hillside Project developed a model of participatory involvement (CIALs) which has since been exported to other South American projects, thus addressing the question of replicability in participatory research, while still allowing for local and regional differences in research implementation. The CBDC project is an example of a large scale project which incorporates grassroots knowledge and concerns, but is also

structured in such a way that common concerns and issues are united at the regional and the international level, and addressed by policy committees at each. In addition, all of these projects have stayed true to the spirit of participatory research methodology, while also providing specialized knowledge and resources to the beneficiary communities. These projects have also shown that participatory research methodology can be used effectively at varying scales, and is not limited to use only in small-scale micro-level projects. At any scale, however, the methodology is most effective when combined with other methodologies which compensate for the particular weaknesses and constraints of participatory research.

These case study projects yields examples of three interesting and innovative ways in which IDRC-supported projects have grappled with the problem of incorporating participatory research methodology in the face of increasing demand and institutional support for larger-scale projects. The CBDC project illustrated one way in which a hierarchical structure could be used to bring grassroots concerns up to the meso- and macro-levels without interfering with micro-level participatory methodology. The FSUS project focusses on the creation of a network of researchers in the study region to facilitate further research specific to local priorities and demands. Finally, the Sustainable Hillside projects developed the CIAL model for local research teams which is easily adaptable to the needs of other research projects, allowing local research priorities to be incorporated into the larger research sphere.

Ultimately, good participatory research projects acknowledge the difficult balance between ideological purity and methodological necessity and that often

tradeoffs must be made. They also recognize the impossibility of doing 'pure' participatory research through a hierarchical and bureaucratic institution, and that it is often more realistic to set achievable goals than to embark on a hopeless search for the perfect participatory project, noting it is possible to keep the many of advantages of the participatory methodology by making relatively minor sacrifices in other ways. Ultimately, if done well, participatory research can contribute unique knowledge and add some new and interesting perspectives to the research process. Many of the lessons learned by IDRC were summed neatly in a 1988 memo on the subject in which it was noted that

...participatory research as an end in itself may be appropriate in some societies, but... may not have broad application. Perhaps criteria could be formulated to determine in which circumstances participatory research is relevant as an instrument of change. Certainly, though, participatory research could be increasingly adopted as a component of wider development and action programs. Orchestrating its incorporation into such programs is where the challenge may lie. (IDRC Internal Memo, 1988, p.2)

LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE IDRC EXPERIENCE

The IDRC case study illustrates both the potential and pitfalls of institutional involvement in participatory research activities. The case study also demonstrated that while supporting and effecting high-quality participatory research is not an easy task, the rewards can be substantial. With increasing institutional interest in participatory methodology, greater involvement in participatory processes is likely to occur, and IDRC's experience provides some valuable lessons for other donor agencies.

First, donors need to be clear about what constitutes participatory research, and be willing to provide institutional flexibility and make allowances for the unique nature of this approach. It is critical to ensure that participatory researchers are not penalized for adhering to the ideology and methodology of the approach merely because they do not fit the standard research model. It is equally important to ensure that those who claim to be doing participatory research actually undertake this research, and not use the now popular term to improve their chances of receiving funding for conventional research methodology.

Second, there is the problem of the boundedness of most institutionally supported research, in which even the most 'holistic' projects are limited to working in certain geographic areas, economic sectors, or by some other institutionally defined parameter. While these may be advantageous for the institution, it is often difficult to justify these at the community level, where the same boundaries are often meaningless.

Sikana suggests one method for combatting this problem with the creation of a

... 'miscellaneous development fund' for participatory projects. This miscellaneous fund can then be deployed to address the articulated needs of the local people which do not fall within the ambit of research and extension. (Sikana, 1995, p.9)

Third, it is possible, and highly appropriate, to incorporate participatory research methodology into large projects using a combination of research approaches. This allows for the unique advantages of participatory research, including the emergence of local priorities and concerns, while simultaneously using other methodologies to compensate for the its weaknesses and to corroborate the data and analysis.

Fourth, institutions need to recognize that the context in which participatory research occurs is critical. Under the appropriate conditions it can be an extremely powerful tool for individual empowerment and social change. In the wrong context, however, it can aggravate local conflicts and fragment communities rather than bring them together. However well-intentioned participatory research, used poorly it can be dangerous and damaging to both the institution and the intended recipients.

Fifth, the ambiguities of participation need to be considered in any participatory process. While 'participation' is currently a highly popular term, institutions supporting participatory work of any kind must be aware of the multiple meanings of the term, and the ethical implications of different meanings. To give just one example, there are vast differences between community participation imposed from the top and genuine grassroots participation, but both are described in the same terminology nonetheless.

Finally, and most importantly, institutions need to be aware of the implications of involvement with participatory research methodology, particularly around their explicit commitment to transformative social change which espouses action as a critical component of this change. At the micro-level the explicitly political nature of participatory research is incompatible with many institutional policies. Institutions unwilling or uncomfortable with this level of direct political involvement, but still interested in participatory processes, may find indirect involvement in these processes far more appropriate.

Where donor agencies are able to make the most valuable interventions, in fact, is not in conducting participatory research projects per se, but rather in supporting a wide variety of peripheral activities aimed at increasing the capacity of Southern communities to undertake the most productive participatory research possible. These peripheral activities include training, methodological validation, capacity building for future participatory activity, collaborative research, and undertaking activities which act as catalysts for participatory research. These are areas in which outsider capacity and specialized knowledge can play a valuable role without diminishing the importance of local knowledge and experience. In an ideal partnership between donors and recipient communities, participatory methodology will be used in ways which pull on the strengths each bring to the alliance. In the process, institutions can assist in creating vital and much-needed linkages between the highly political micro-level participatory research activities, and transformative social change at the meso- and macro-levels.

THE ROLE OF CREATIVE TENSION IN INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT: COLLABORATION VERSUS COMPROMISE

I have argued that institutional involvement in some aspects of participatory research activity, if conducted thoughtfully and with full awareness of the implications of this involvement, can be a positive force for social change. While initially there appears to be significant conflict between the bureaucratic nature of donor agencies and the demands of genuine participatory research, inherent in this conflict is

substantial potential for interesting and innovative collaborative ventures. While there will undoubtedly always be tensions in this partnership, if used constructively and creatively this tension can produce better research and results for both than would exist otherwise.

This is particularly important in the current context, in which cuts to development assistance in the North combined with growing unmet needs in the South have resulted in a difficult climate for critical development research. As Nyden and Wiewel note:

The austerity of the 1980s and early 1990s has produced an environment where more efficient use of existing resources, in this case research expertise, is highly attractive. (1992, p.53)

However, they also note the potential in this situation, and recognize that:

Just as this historical moment has produced difficulties for grassroots resources, so has it produced opportunities for taking steps forward in community research. (1993, p.49)

A collaborative approach to institutional involvement in participatory research recognizes that each stakeholder in the process has a unique set of needs and demands, and that the most successful research will be conducted when as many of these needs are met as possible. This requires institutional flexibility and a certain degree of faith in the participatory process itself, as well as a recognition that some degree of loss in the ideological purity in the research methodology is inevitable.

While collaboration requires that compromises be made, it also allows for valuable convergence between the goals and requirements of the researchers and the community which can be used to inform practical and relevant research practices. The

community needs to recognize the benefits trained researchers can bring, including high-level analytical abilities, access to resources, and linkages with the larger world. Similarly, researchers need to recognize the benefits of producing community informed research that is valid, rigorous and useful to the community. The more openness and trust created in the process, and the more genuinely involved the research beneficiaries, the better research ultimately produced, ideally addressing the concerns of a wide cross-section of the beneficiary community as well as the academic community.

Perhaps where research institutions and donor agencies can make the greatest contribution is with the support of activities which create an enabling environment for participatory research methodology, rather than in the direct support of participatory research per se. Referring again to the diagram in Figure 1, with axes representing the degrees of control research subjects have over the process, and the levels of theoretical analysis being undertaken in various activities related to participatory research, it becomes clear that some areas of inquiry on this grid are more suited to institutional involvement than others. Those most appropriate for institutional involvement are the ones in which the researchers maintain control over many (if not all) aspects of the process, and where the level of analysis required is high.

While the difficulties of doing collaborative research of this type should not be underestimated, neither should the potential. Schon summarizes this wonderfully, noting that

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is

that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients and the larger society, while in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern. (Schon, 1983, p.42 in Nyden and Wiewel, 1992, p.53)

In conclusion, institutional involvement in participatory research is an area of increasing interest, but one on which surprisingly little research has appeared to date. This thesis addressed several of the issues and implications of institutional involvement in participatory research from both an analytical and applied perspective, using a case study of the International Development Research Centre to highlight the potential and pitfalls of this partnership.

One of the major weaknesses in participatory research has been the failure to create linkages between micro-level activities and transformational change at the meso- and macro-levels. Despite an apparent incongruence between essentially conservative and bureaucratic donor agencies and the radical, political and transformative nature of participatory research processes, the tension between these two can be a powerful force for change if used creatively and constructively. Donor agencies can play a valuable and critical role in the creation of linkages between the levels of social, political and economic change (micro, meso, macro) by drawing on institutional strengths while simultaneously making allowances for the unique nature of participatory research methodology. By using the attendant tension between two disparate styles, the final result can be community-informed research which maintains academic rigour and validity while reflecting local concerns, priorities and experiences.

APPENDIX A

MEMBERS OF IDRC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Anne Bernard, Social Sciences Division

Guy Bessette, Information Systems Division

Fred Carden, Evaluation Unit

Jean-Michel Labatut, Social Sciences Division

Yianna Lambrou, Environment and Nature Resources Division

Bertha Mo, Health Sciences Division

Gisele Morin-Labatut, Corporate Affairs and Initiatives Division

APPENDIX B

IDRC DIVISIONS: PRE- AND POST-1991 RESTRUCTURING

Pre-Restructuring:

AFNS:	Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Sciences
COM:	Communications
EES:	Earth and Engineering Sciences
FAD:	Fellowships and Awards
SPA:	Special Projects
SS:	Social Sciences
HS:	Health Sciences

Post-Restructuring:

ENR:	Environment and Natural Resources
CAID:	Corporate Affairs and Initiatives Division
ISS:	Information Sciences
HS:	Health Sciences
SS:	Social Sciences

APPENDIX C

REGIONAL OFFICE ACRONYMS

ASRO (Regional Office for Southeast and East Asia)

EARO (Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa)

LARO (Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean)

MERO (Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa)

ROSA (Regional Office for Southern Africa)

SARO (Regional Office for South Asia)

WARO (Regional Office for West and Central Africa)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alinsky, Saul. 1971. Rules for Radicals: A Primer for Realistic Radicals. New York: Random House.
- Argyris, Chris. 1991. Teaching smart people how to learn. In Harvard Business Review, May-June.
- Ashby, Jacqueline A. 1990. Evaluating Technology with Farmers: a Handbook. Cali, Colombia: CIAT Publications.
- Augsburgur, David. 1992. Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns. Kentucky: John Knox.
- Baldwin, S. and J. Cervinkas (eds.) 1993. Community Participation in Research: Proceedings of a Workshop Held in Nairobi, Kenya, September 1991. Ottawa: IDRC.
- Barndt, Deborah. 1989. Naming the Moment - Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups. Toronto: Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice.
- Barnsley, Jan and Diana Ellis. 1992. Research for Change: Participatory Action Research for Community Groups. Victoria, BC: Women's Research Centre.
- Bartunek, J.M. 1993. Scholarly dialogues and participatory action research. In Human Relations, Vol. 46, No. 10, pp. 1221-1233.
- Beaulieu, R.C. and V. Manoukian. 1994. Participatory Development: A Brief Review of CIDA's Experience and Potential. Ottawa: Canadian International Development Agency.
- Bebbington, Anthony. 1991. Indigenous agricultural knowledge, human interests and critical analysis. In Agriculture and Human Values, Vol 8, No. 1/2, pp.14-24.
- Bebbington, Anthony. 1993. Modernization from below: an alternative to indigenous development? In Economic Geography, Vol.69, pp. 274-292.
- Bernard, Anne. 1987. Participatory Research in IDRC: State of the Art and Practice. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.
- Burkey, Stan. 1993. People First: A Guide to Self-Reliant Development. London: Zed Books.

- Cancian, Francesca. 1992. Feminist science: methodologies that challenge inequality. In Gender and Society, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 623-642.
- Cancian, Francesca. 1993. Conflicts between activist research and academic success: participatory research and alternative strategies. In The American Sociologist, Spring, 1993.
- Cao Tri, Huynh. 1986. General Introduction in Participate in Development, Cao Tri, Huynh et al., eds. Paris: UNESCO.
- Carroll, T. 1992. Intermediary NGOs: The Supporting Link in Grassroots Development. West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press.
- Case, Darcy D. 1990. The Community's Toolbox: The Idea, Methods and Tools for Participatory Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation in Community Forestry. Rome: FAO.
- Chambers, Robert. 1983. Rural Development: Putting the Last First. New York: Longman Inc.
- Chambers, Robert. 1986. Normal Professionalism, New Paradigms and Development. Sussex University: Institute of Development Studies.
- Chambers, Robert. 1992. Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory. Discussion Paper No. 311. Sussex: Institute for Development Studies Publications.
- Chambers, Robert. 1994(a) The origins and practice of participatory rural appraisal. In World Development, Vol. 22, No. 7, pp. 953-969.
- Chambers, Robert. 1994(b) Participatory rural appraisal (PRA): challenges, potentials and paradigm. In World Development, Vol. 22, No. 10, pp. 1437-1454.
- Chambers, Robert. 1994(c) A Note for the Staff of Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Agencies and of Northern NGOs on Participatory Rural Appraisal. Unpublished paper.
- Chambers, Robert. 1995. Start, Stumble, Self-Correct, Share. Notes from seminar held at CIDA, June 1995.
- Clark, J. 1991. Democratizing Development: The Role of Voluntary Organizations. London: Earthscan.

- Corbridge, Stuart. 1990. Development Studies: Progress Report. In Progress in Human Geography. Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 391-403.
- Cornwall, Andrea. 1995. Towards Participatory Practice: PRA and the Participatory Process. Draft paper.
- Couto, Richard. 1987. Participatory research: methodology and critique. In Clinical Sociology Review, Vol. 5, pp. 83-90.
- de Treville, Diana. 1991. Problem areas in PRA and related methodologies. In Community Participation in Research, Colloquium held in Nairobi, Kenya, September 1991. Ottawa: IDRC.
- Deschler, David and Merrill Ewert. 1995. Participatory Action Research: Traditions and Major Assumptions. Ithaca: Cornell, distributed via Par-talk network.
- Deschler, David and Daniel Selener. 1991. Transformative research: in search of a definition. In Convergence, Vol 24, No. 3, pp. 9-22.
- Dudley, Eric. 1993. The Critical Villager: Beyond Community Participation. New York: Routledge.
- Eldon, Max and Rupert Chisholm. 1993. Emerging Varieties of Action Research: Introduction to the Special Issue. In Human Relations, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 121-141.
- Eldon, Max and Rupert Chisholm. 1993. Special Action Research Issue. Human Relations, Vol. 46, No. 2, 177p.
- Fals-Borda, O. and M. Rahman (eds.) 1991. Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action Research. New York: Intermediate Technology/Apex.
- Ferguson, James. 1994. The Anti-Politics Machine. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Feurestein, Marie-Therese. 1988. Finding the methods to fit the people: training for participatory evaluation. In Community Development Journal, vol. 23, No. 1, pp.16-25.
- Found, William. 1995. Participatory Research and Development: An Assessment of IDRC's Experience and Prospects. Report Prepared for the International Development Research Centre. Ottawa: IDRC

- Found, William. 1995. Evaluation of Participatory Research Supported by the International Development Research Centre. Paper presented to the International Evaluation Conference, November, 1995, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Frank, Andre G. 1966. The development of underdevelopment. In Monthly Review, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 17-31.
- Freire, P. 1968. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. 1974. Cultural Action for Freedom. Middlesex: Penguin Education.
- Ghai, Dharam. 1988. Participatory Development: Some Perspectives from Grassroots Experiences. UNRISD Discussion Paper No. 5. New York: UNRISD
- Gilbert, Alan and Peter Ward. 1984. Community action by the urban poor: democratic involvement, community self-help, or a means of social control? In World Development, Vol. 12, No. 8, pp. 769-782.
- Goulet, Denis. 1989. Participation in development: new avenues. In World Development, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 165-178.
- Grisdale, Debbie. 1989. Participatory Research and the Health Sciences Division. Internal document, prepared for the Health Sciences Division of the International Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada.
- Hall, Bud. 1992. From margins to centre: the development and purpose of participatory research. In American Sociologist, Winter, pp. 15-28.
- Hall, B., A. Gillette, and R. Tandon. 1982. Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly. Society for Participatory Research in Asia, ICAE: Toronto.
- Heaney, Thomas. 1993. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em: the professionalization of participatory research. In Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada, Hall, B. et al. (eds). Toronto: OISE Press. Pp. 41-46.
- Holdar, Sven. 1993. The study of foreign aid: unbroken ground in geography. In Progress in Human Geography, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 453-470.
- Hondagneau-Sotelo, P. 1993. Why advocacy research? Reflections on research and activism with immigrant women. In The American Sociologist, Spring 1993.
- International Centre for Adult Education (ICAE). 1981. Participatory research: developments and issues. In Convergence Special Issue, Vol. 14, No. 3, 68p.

- International Development Research Centre. 1991 Empowerment Through Knowledge: The Strategy of the International Development Research Centre. Ottawa: IDRC.
- International Development Research Centre. 1993. Corporate Program Framework: 1993-1996. Ottawa: IDRC.
- International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). RRA Notes - ongoing series of publications. London: IIED.
- Johnston, R.J. 1986. On Human Geography. New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- Kirby, Sandra and Kate McKenna. 1989. Experience, Research and Social Change: Methods from the Margins. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Lewin, Kurt. 1948. Resolving Social Conflicts: Selected Papers on Group Dynamics. New York: Harper.
- Lineberry, William (ed.) 1989. Assessing Participatory Development: Rhetoric Versus Reality. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Lowe, Michelle and John Short. 1990. Progressive human geography. In Progress in Human Geography, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 1-11,
- Maclure, Richard. 1990. The challenge of participatory research and its implications for funding agencies. In International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 1-21.
- Maguire, Patricia. 1987. Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach. University of Massachusetts: Centre for International Education.
- Mascarenhas, J. et al. 1991. Participatory Rural Appraisal: Proceedings of the February 1991 Bangalore PRA Trainers Workshop. RRA Notes, No. 13. London: IIED.
- Mosse, David. 1994. Authority, gender and knowledge: theoretical reflections on the practice of participatory rural appraisal. In Development and Change, Vol. 25, pp. 497-526.
- Mustafa, Kemal (ed.) 1982. African Perspectives on Participatory Research: A Report on the African PR Network. Working Paper No. 8. Toronto: Participatory Research Group, ICAE.

- Nyden, Philip and Wim Wiewel. 1992. Collaborative research: harnessing the tensions between researcher and practitioner. In The American Sociologist, Winter, pp. 43-55.
- Oakley, Peter et al. 1991. Projects with People: The Practice of Participation in Development. Geneva: ILO
- Park, Peter. 1992. The discovery of participatory research as a new scientific paradigm. In The American Sociologist, Winter, pp. 29-42.
- Park, Peter. 1993. What is participatory research? A theoretical and methodological perspective. In Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada, Hall, B. et al. (eds). Toronto: OISE Press. pp. 1-20.
- Park, P., M. Brydon-Miller, B. Hall and T. Jackson. 1993. Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Peet, Richard, and Michael Watts. 1993. Introduction: development theory and environment in an age of market triumphalism. In Economic Geography, Vol.69, pp. 227-253.
- Petras, E.M. and D.V. Porpora. 1993. Participatory research: three models and an analysis. In The American Sociologist, Spring 1993.
- Posebo, Hasan, Fred Carden, William Found and Louise Grenier. 1995. Working With People: Indonesian Experiences with Community-Based Development. York University, Toronto: University Consortium on the Environment.
- Pottier, Johann. 1991. Representation and Accountability: Understanding Social Change Through Rapid Appraisal. Unpublished paper.
- Pottier, Johann. 1994. Food Systems Under Stress Project - Phase 1: Project Report. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.
- Pratt, Brian and Peter Loizos. 1992. Choosing Research Methods: Data Collection for Development Workers. Oxford, UK: Oxfam Print Unit.
- Rahman, M.D.A. 1987. Theoretical and Methodological Questions in the Promotion of People's Participation in Rural Development. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- Rahnema, Majid. 1990. Participatory action research: the "last temptation of saint" development. In Alternatives, Vol. 15, pp. 199-226.

- Rahnema, Majid. 1992. Participation. In Sachs, W. (ed.) The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power. London: Zed Books pp. 116-131.
- Ramphele, Mamphela. 1990. Participatory research - the myths and realities. In Social Dynamics, Vol. 16, No.2, pp. 1-15.
- Rathgeber, Eva. 1990. WID, WAD, GAD: trends in research and practice. In Journal of Developing Areas, Vol. 24.
- Redclift, Michael. 1987. Sustainable Development: Exploring the Contradictions. London: Methuen.
- Rostow, W.W. 1971. The Stages of Economic Growth. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Schuurman, Frans. (ed.) 1991. Beyond the Impasse: New Directions for Development Theory. London: Zed Books.
- Sikana, Patrick. 1995. Who is fooling whom? Participation, Power and Interest in Rural Development. Draft paper, presented at IDRC in May, 1995.
- Stockdale, Peter. 1995. Pearsonian Internationalism in Practice: The International Development Research Centre. PhD Dissertation. Montreal: Political Science Department, McGill University.
- Tilakaratna, S. 1987. The Animator in Participatory Rural Development: Concept and Practice. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- Taylor, D.R.F and Fiona Mackenzie. 1992. Development from Within: Survival in Rural Africa. London: Routledge.
- Uphoff, Norman. 1992. Monitoring and evaluating popular participation in World Bank assisted projects. In Participatory Development and the World Bank: Potential Directions for Change, World Bank Discussion Paper No. 183, pp. 135-153. Washington: World Bank.
- Voss, Joachim. 1989. An Anthropological Perspective on Agricultural Research: The Philippines and Rwanda. Unpublished paper, Environmental Policy Program, IDRC.
- Watts, Michael. 1993. Development 1: power, knowledge, discursive practice. In Progress in Human Geography, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp.257-272.

- Wiardia, Howard. 1988. Toward a non-ethnocentric theory of development: alternative conceptions from the third world. In Wilber, C. (ed.) The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment. New York: Random House.
- Whyte, William F. (ed.) 1991. Participatory Action Research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Working Group Paper. 1988. Participatory Research in IDRC. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.
- World Bank Discussion Paper. 1992. Participatory Development and the World Bank: Potential Directions for Change. Discussion Paper No. 183. Washington: World Bank.
- World Bank Report. 1994 Learning Group on Participatory Development. 1994. The World Bank and Participation. Washington: World Bank.

3 of/de 3

PM-1 3 1/2" x 4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

END

0|4-06-9|6

FIN