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Principles Of and Obstacles To Participatory Communication Research

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All research begins with some set of assumptions which themselves are untested but believed. Positivistic research, which comprises the mass of modern communication and development research, proceeds from the presupposition that all knowledge is based on an observable reality and social phenomena can be studied on the basis of methodologies and techniques adopted from the nature sciences. In other words, "reality" exists apart from our interpretation of it, we can objectively perceive, understand, predict, and control it. Social scientists, enamored by the notion of a predictable universe, therefore concluded that, by applying the methods of positivistic science to study human affairs, it would be possible to predict, and ultimately to control human social behavior. Furthermore, its methodological premises and epistemological assumptions are based almost exclusively on the Western experience and world view; a view which holds the world as a phenomenon to be controlled, manipulated, and exploited.

If we subscribe to the notion that social research should have beneficial impact on society, it is imperative that we pay more attention to research philosophies that can profitably handle, and indeed stimulate, social change. Therefore, participatory research, in our opinion, borrows the concept of the interpretive, inter-subjective, and human nature of social reality from qualitative research, and the inherency of an ideological stance from critical research, combines them, and goes one step further. Rather than erecting elaborate methodological facades to mask the ideological slant and purpose of inquiry, the question becomes, "Why shouldn't research have a direct, articulated social purpose?" Instead of relying on participant observation or complex techniques to gain the subjective, "insider's" perspective, it is asked "Why shouldn't the "researched" do their own research?" Why is it "The poor have always been researched, described and interpreted by the rich and educated, never by themselves?"

In regards to the topic at hand, why is it such a great deal of research has been conducted about participation in a non-participatory fashion? As in the case of participatory communication, the major obstacles to participatory

research are anti-participatory, often inflexible structures and ideologies. We cannot be reductionistic about holism, static about dynamism, value-free about systematic oppression, nor detached about participation. Participatory research may not be good social science in positivist terms, but it may be better than positivist social science for many development purposes.

PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

That the mass of social research is largely guided by the social context in which it operates, and largely does not function to serve those studied, has been argued at length. Participatory research was conceived in reaction to this elitist research bias. It is ideological by intent; it is the research of involvement. It is not only research with the people — it is people's research. As such it largely rejects both the development policies of states and the 'objectivity' and 'universal' validity claims' of many methodologies in the social sciences. Even if we momentarily assume contemporary research practices are free of ideology and do not constitute a means of oppression, the fact remains they are of little utility to the poor.

"We have moved beyond the whole notion of some of us leading the struggles of others. This shift ... in the control over knowledge, production of knowledge, and the tools of production of knowledge is equally legitimate in our continued struggles towards local control and overcoming dependency. It is here that PR [participatory research] can be an important contribution ... PR is quite the opposite of what social science research has been meant to be. It is partisan, ideologically biased and explicitly non-neutral" (Tandon, 1985:21). It is the realisation that most of the present professional approach to research is in fact a reproduction of our unjust society in which a few decision-makers control the rest of the population that has led many to move away from the classical methods and experiment with alternative approaches. In urging participatory research, we are not speaking of the involvement of groups or classes already aligned with power. These groups already have at their disposal all the mechanisms necessary to shape and inform our explanation of the world.

Therefore, a basis tenet of participatory research is that whoever does the research, the results must be shared. They must be available to the people among whom research is conducted and upon whose lives it is based. Data is not kept under lock and key or behind computer access codes, results are not cloaked in obfuscating jargon and statistical symbols.

Further, and perhaps most importantly, the inquiry must be of immediate and direct benefits to the community, and not just a means to an end set by the researcher. This direct benefit is contrasted to the circuitous theory-research design-data-analysis-policy-government service route which neutralizes, standardizes, dehumanizes, and ultimately functions as a means of social control: "People's voices undergo a metamorphosis into useful data, and

instrument of power in the hands of another. Rather than assembling collectively for themselves, political constituencies are assemled by pollsters, collecting fragmentary data into "public opinion" (Even, 1983:222).

Again, participatory research challenges the notion that only professional researchers can generate knowledge for meaningful social reform. Like authentic participation, it believes in the knowledge and ability of ordinary people to reflect on their oppressive situation and change it. To the contrary, in many cases at the local community level participants have proved to be more capable than "experts" because they best know their situation and have a perspective on problems and needs that no outsider can fully share. This perspective is quite divergent from the abstract concepts, hypothetical scenarios, and macro-level strategies, which occupy the minds and consume the budgets of development "experts" and planners.

Differences between Participatory Research and Action Research

Because of this nature of involvement, participatory research is often known under the rubric of social action or action-research (Argyris, 1985; Fals Borda, 1988; Kassam, 1982; Whyte, 1991). In numerous respects they are similar, and participatory research is not really new. It is a novel concept only to the extent it questions the domains of the research as well as the economic and political elites.

However, there are fundamental differences between action and participatory research. Chantana and Wun Gaeo (1983:37) write that action research "can be non-participatory and related to top down development ... whereas participatory research must involve the people throughout the process. Action research can be intended to preserve and strengthen the status quo, whereas participatory research ... is intended to contribute to the enhancement of social power for the hitherto people".

By way of example, in the realm of media production, Varma et al. (1973:4) define action research as a "systematic study, incorporated into the production of media, the results of which are fed back directly and immediately to the production staff to help them to improve the effectiveness of their communication".

Conversely, participatory research asspmes a bias toward the poor rather than the professional. Participatory research is related to the processes of conscientization and empowerment. It was probably Paulo Freire himself who introduced the first version of this approach in his philosophy of conscientization. Rather than agendas being defined by an academic elite and programs enacted by a bureaucratic elite for the benefit of an economic or political elite, participatory research involves people gaining an understanding of their situation, confidence and an ability to change that situation. White (1984: 28) writes this is quite divergent from "the functionalist approach which starts with the scientist's own model of social and psychologi-

cal behaviour and gathers data for the purpose of prediction and control of audience behaviour. The emphasis is on the awareness of the subjective meaning and organisation of reality for purposes of self-determination".

Participatory research is egalitarian. Thematic investigation thus becomes a common striving towards awareness of reality and towards self-awareness. It is an educational process in which the roles of the educator and the educated are constantly reversed and the common search unites all those engaged in the endeavor. It immerses the exogenous "researcher" in the setting on an equal basis. Considering the necessary trust and attitudes as well as cultural differences, the task is not easy, and makes unfamiliar demands on researchers/educators.

A definition of Participatory Research (PR)

The recent popularity of participatory research, the act of labelling it as such, may have implied that it is something special that requires a particular expertise, a particular strategy, or a specific methodology. Similar to participation, there has been great effort towards definitions and models of participatory research to lend an air of "respectability." Also similar to participation, perhaps this is no more than an attempt to claim title or credit for an approach which, by its very nature, belongs to the people involved. As one is dealing with people within changing sosial relations and cultural patterns, one cannot afford to be dogmatic about methods but should keep oneself open to people. This openness comes out of a trust in people and a realisation that the oppressed are capable of understanding their situation, searching for alternatives and taking their own decisions.

Because there is no reality "out there" separate from human perception and, as put forth in the multiplicity paradigm (Servaes, 1989), there is no universal path to development, it is maintained each community or grouping must proceed from its own plan in consideration of its own situation. In other words, to the extent the methodology is rigidly structured by the requisites of academia, participatory research is denied.

By its nature, this type of research does not incorporate the rigid controls of the physical scientist or the traditional models of social science researchers. Chantana and Wun Gaeo (1985:39) state: "There is no magic formula for the methodology of such PR projects ... However, there are common features taking place in the process: (1) It consists of continuous dialogue and discussion among research participants in all stages: [and] (2) Knowledge must be derived from concrete situations of the people and through collaborative reflections ... return to the people, continuously and dialectically".

Therefore we would like to delineate participatory research as an educational process involving three interrelated parts:

(1)   Collective definition and investigation of a problem by a group of peo-

statistics is more than made up by the enhanced richness of data."

The implication is not that other methods or exogenous collaboration in evaluation are forbidden. Writing of research participants, D'Abreo (1981:108) states: "While they, as agents of their own programme, can understand it better and be more involved in it, the outside evaluator may bring greater objectivity and insights from the programmes that might be of great use to them. However, the main agents of evaluation, even when conducted with the help of an outside agency or individual, are they themselves".

Turning to the question of validity, Tandon (1981:22) suggests, on a methodological level, "getting into a debate about reliability and validity of PR is irrelevant because it is quite the opposite shift in understanding what this research is." Its focus is on authenticity as opposed to validity. However, referring to generalizeability and validity addressed in relation to qualitative research, it can be argued that validity in its less esoteric sense is participatory research's hallmark. "If ordinary people define the problem of research themselves, they will ensure its relevance" (Tandon, 1981: 24), and their involvement "will provide the 'demand-pull' necessary to ensure accuracy of focus" (Farrington, 1988:271).

Finally, the basis of participatory research, indigenous knowledge is inherently valid. This is not to say conditions are not changing or that this knowledge cannot benefit from adaptation. The argument is that, in most cases, this knowledge is the most valid place from which to begin.

A Word of Caution

Participatory research can all to easily be utilized as yet another tool of manipulation by vested interests. Charges are correctly made that it is often a means of political indoctrination by the right and the left alike. Often organizers have been attacked for manipulating people's minds and managing their actions towards their own ends.

While the approach strives towards empowerment, challenges existing structures, and is consequently ideological, rigidly prescribed ideologies must be avoided. In addition, knowledge and perspective gained may well empower exploitative economic and authoritarian interests instead of local groups. Far from helping the process of liberation, if the researcher is not careful, he or she may only enable the traditional policy-makers and vested interests to present their goods in a more atttractive package without changing their substance.

Even the best intentioned research/activist can inadvertently enhance dependency rather than empowerment. If s/he enters communities with ready-made tools for analyzing reality, and solving problems, the result will likely be that as far as those tools are successful, dependency will simply be moved from one tyrant to another.

In other words, overzealous researchers can easily attempt to compensate for an initial apathy by assuming the role of an advocate rather than a

facilitator. "What looks like progress is all too often a return to the dependent client relationship" (Kennedy, 1984:86). This approach is no better than more traditional researchers with hypotheses and constructs to validate, or the diffusionist with an innovation for every ill.

OBSTACLES TO PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Participation is currently popular, and one can hardly argue against the concept, broadly conceived. However, even though it is widely shared theoretically, it is difficult to promote in practice, as most scholars admit, in fact, that participation in communication hardly exists, except, in a very limited way, in a number of small localized experiments. In translating broad policies to specific practices, obstacles arise: "The danger for development practice is that we will mistake the consensus of academics for the prevailing situation of the real world and the existing obstacles to social change. It is clear that proclaiming development to be "a widely participatory process of social change... to bring about both social and material advancement...for the majority of the people through gaining greater control over their environment" (as Rogers did in 1976:133) would be readily accepted by many academics. Yet when such efforts are implemented they are complicated by real world realities and sharp political conflicts.

The inherency of conflict, and the propensity to avoid it, is but one example of barriers to participation. Another is that participative endeavors are not in the interest of those seeking high visibility. Their demands for detailed, up-front planning, coupled with rigorous adherence to fast-paced implementation schedules and pre-planned specifications ... ensures that the real decisions will remain with professional technicians and government bureaucrats.

In organizational excitement and zeal to demonstrate quantitative results from new projects, the tendency is to promote rapid expansion of highly structured program models which emphasize quantititative targets and quick evaluation, reflecting a 'compulsion for measurement'. The thrust is results over process, ends over means. Efficiency is their watchword, and ... participation is not likely to be efficient.

Change and Agencies

Frustrated with the participatory approach, a social marketing specialist states "participation was just not consistent with the organizational realities of development where you have fairly narrow time frames, you've got to get projects off the ground" (McKee, 1989:26). McKee (p.40) also states funding agencies introduce their own bias in this respect. Their concerns are budgets and "reports on progress". They are rewarded according to the size of their portfolios and are often looking for a 'blueprint' to follow, not a

complicated community process that may take years to realized."

Hence, even though when people authentically participate and are thus committed to an idea, they can often mobilize an astonishing variety of resources to realize it, is certainly not the most expedient or easily assessable route from this "quick and visible results" perspective because it takes time, money and effort to consult the people. Therefore one could say that building roads and dams and breeding high-yielding crops is "child's play" compared with the difficulties of working with people.

Such highly publicized, tightly structured and deeply institutionalized projects also serve to "give the appearance that social development is underway, thereby throwing a smoke-screen over the deeper causes of poverty" (Fuglesang, 1984:46). Nyoni (1987:53) adds that "most development agencies are centers of power which try to help others change. But they do not themselves change. They aim at creating awareness among the people yet they are not themselves aware of their negative impact on those they claim to serve. They claim to help people change their situation through participation, democracy and self-help and yet they themselves are non-participatory, non-democratic and dependant on outside help for their survival".

Participation and Power

Neither is genuine participation congruent with the concerns of those who would maintain a facade of social harmony, order, bureaucratic and economic efficiency, or political continuity. Participation can lead to developments that are of an unpredictable nature. However, to embark on a conscious policy of participative or democratic decision making is consciously to sacrifice the ability to make fast and stable decisions. Conversely, policies implemented in the name of order and efficiency are often more akin to repression.

Authentic participation directly addresses power and its distribution in society. It touches the very core of power relationships. Consequently, it may not sit well with those who favor the status quo and thus they may be expected to resist such efforts of reallocating more power to the people. In other words, it is not in the interest of dominant classes, both at national and conditions of the lower classes or masses. In a certain way every center needs its periphery!

Just as "another development" or "multiplicity" argues for structural change, it also asserts that the route to individual and social development is seen as precisely as being the route to increased participation. Development and participation are inextricably linked. Participation involves the more equitable sharing of both political and economic power, which often decreases the advantage of certain groups. On the political front, when participation is likely to encourage such changes, it is probable that it will be viewed as a potential threat to those who stand to lose some of their power.

For instance, Bordenave (1989:8) writes that "it is difficult to imagine a participative society in which the means of production are owned by a few persons who have the capital and who reserve important decision exclusively for themselves. The organization of the economy, then, is the crucial difference between a non-participative society and a participative one. However, the major resistance to participation is most often not such overt, cataclysmic actions. Rather, the main obstacle is the much less visible, yet insidious and continuous reluctance to organizational change".

Government and Bureaucracies

Even though development advocates encourage change and discourage maintenance of the status-quo, believing that only when change takes place will there be progress and improvements, criticism of peoples' traditionalism, under-education, and recalcitrance are often lamented as major obstacles to change. However, far less attention is given to the reverse, institutional or bureaucratic intransigence. In describing efforts to promote participation at the local level, Blair (1981:80) relates: "The programs were seeking the benefits of structural change for the poor while trying to avoid substantial change for the status quo. For participatory institutions to make decisions that can improve the lives of the participants, they must have political power. "Empowerment" at the bottom, however, was the one thing that those in charge were unwilling to give".

Governments have historically been timid toward direct or participatory democracy. In framing the U.S. constitution, for instance, many of America's founders feared the political influence of undereducated people, and participation was therefore deliberately restricted through the establishment of a representative system and an electoral college, in order to establish government by those thought best able to contribute. This representative democracy is not to be confused with direct democracy or popular participation, which more directly realizes the conditions of self-management and participation in decision-making by all those affected by it. The premise here is that control over an action should rest with the people who will bear the major force of its consequences, not with their mouthpieces, nor their representatives. Granting this direct participation is often not feasible, efficient or, at broader levels, even possible, logistical constraints are not foremost among reasons political and cutural structures do not include a more direct mode of participation. Silberman (1979:100) states "bureaucrats and planners tend to look with disfavour on participation, particularly when it involves their own domain ... participation could reduce their own social status." Further, change may be resisted even in institutions which publicly acknowledge the need for alternative communication for development and take pride in their progressive stance.

Participation and Hierarchies

The elites go to great lengths to maintain their positions of power and what those positions bearing to them. What those positions of power often bring is more power and material wealth. The purpose is not only maintenance, but expansion. For some, it is advantageous to conserve a particular social arrangement that allows for their own development as a group or, in a stricter sociological sense, as a class. During the British occupation of India, Lord Macaulay portrayed one of the goals was to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect [who would] be interpreters between us and the millions we govern" (Narula and Pearce, 1986: 65). Terms such as "morals," "intellect," and "govern" are open to interpretation, of course, but an argument could be made this class continues not as interpreters, but as governors.

It is argued that the primary objective of any bureaucracy or organization, much like all living organisms, is its own sustenance, perpetuation, and possible expansion. The Peace Corps/Vista adage, "To work oneself out of a job" is contrary to the individual and collective aspirations of government personnel. Describing efforts in "streamlining" the government sector of the Comillia project, Khan (1976:73) states "the prospect of fewer government "workers" did not at all please the departments. Instinctively they hated decentralization, delegation, and autonomy."

The overriding interest of bureaucratic personnel in the country side, as that of most people, is to perform well enough so that they will be transferred back to the metropolis as soon as possible. They tend to practice upwards orientation, they care mainly to please their superiors. And rightfully so, they are rarely rewarded for being responsive to local conditions nor contributing toward the development of local institutional capacity. This is antagonistic to the requirements of participation, which mandates a focus toward the poor rather than promotion.

Change, especially structural change, involving the redistribution of power is inherently antagonistic to the need for continuity. An organizations's need for self-perpetuation necessarily requires the continued existence of the larger system of which it is a part, which it serves, and from which it benefits. Consequently, even minor change is a sensitive issue in discussion, and often a revolutionary one in advocacy. But it is quite simple, convenient and popular to place all faults with existing structures, with much "wringing of the hands," which, in turn, blames the intransigence of the people, who, in turn, blame the government, etc. These patterns of reciprocated blame wreck the kind of coordination necessary to achieve development objectives. Again, structural change alone will accomplish little. As it is not enough to provide participation in the system, even if this can be made less formal and more substantial; the aim is to create a more just society. Participation is necessary but not sufficient for this to happen. What is needed is self-government, a decentralized order through which the masses

are empowered. The "chicken and egg" paradox is that, while existing structures are a substantial impediment to participatory processes, valid, applicable restructuring can occur only through some degree of authentic participation. Therefore, unless policy making and the social process are themselves participatory, it is unlikely that the result will be a democratic pattern of communication.

Participation and Vested Interests

There is no magic formula for injecting participation into projects, it must come from within. Further, barriers to participation are most certainly not limited to government-populace or powerful-powerless relationships. There is little substantive interaction among various governmental and private units, and that which does occur is often continuous infighting over budgets, prestige and power. Therefore, sectarianism or/and propaganda interests of specific government departments often enmesh and destroy projects. Heim et al. (1983:20) explained: "The budget is divided centrally, various department vying for larger amounts of the limited fund by presenting and showing off their plans and schemes ... such departmental jealousy and competition, cooperation and team work among officials of various departments at the local level are very weak or almost non-existent".

Nor do problems stop at the gates of the rural community. Each charge above is applicable to the local context. Communities are seldom unified groups of people. To be avoided is "the romantic image of a community as one big happy family ... Each of the sub-communities or factions has its own self-interest to protect — and endeavor which may or may not serve the needs of the community at large" (Kennedy, 1984:85).

We see that elitist attitudes are not limited to exogenous leaders, and neither are elitist aspirations. Khan (1976:70) relates, in the Comillia project, "wolves quickly volunteered to herd the sheep," and Nanavatty (1988:97) writes, as a result of democratic decentralization within development programs, "the dominant caste and class got a free hand to usurp the resources of development in its own interests". In other words, the local elites often hijack the struggles of the poor in order to meet their individual needs. More powerful community members take advantage of any available opportunity for influence, thus corrupting the purpose of the participatory approach and destroying the spirit of cooperative effort. In particular reference to the Indian context, Narula and Pearce (1986:43) write that within communities "partisan relationships, caste memberships, resentments ... and the traditional power structure can preclude the cooperation necessary for popular participation." Further, even though village "Panchayats" were established through egalitarian ideals and "are elected by the community ... decisions are often governed by vested interests ... panchayats no longer remain a democratic forum for village participation" (p. 131).

Self-Depreciation

Finally, from international to local contexts, the long-term existence of hier-archical structures have often conditioned rural people to see "themselves as 'consumers' rather than 'participants' in development" (Narula and Pearce, 1986:21), and as a consequence, people often have lost the power to make decisions affecting their communities, and expect solutions to come from above. "Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed ... So often do they hear they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapa-ble of learning anything .. that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive ... that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness. Because people are not stupid about how others regard them, the communication that oper-ates according to these principles puts people's backs up. It may be much more effective at creating resentment than change" (Freire, 1983: 49).

Narula and Pearce (1986: 149) define this as "learned dependency." In Indian democratic socialism, there are "two mutually exclusive forms of action: providing for the masses' material welfare and eliciting active par-ticipation." The paradox is often the development agents, intending to foster increased social welfare, participation and self-reliance, and seeing themselves as the participation "experts," interject themselves into the local context and simply transfer dependency from local elites to government elites. "The pattern is such that the actions taken by various agents to change it them-selves become the forces that perpetuate it" (p. 183).

Development, participation, and such become, from the perspective of the poor, notions which are conceived, initiated, and controlled by the gov-ernment. Why shouldn't it be the government's responsibility to carry them out?

Culture

What exactly constitutes a culture, or different cultures? Culture is the col-lective equivalent of personality, and consequently is not amenable to sim-plistic classification or "pigeonholing." Cultures have indistinct peripheries; and they shade off into one another in a quite indefinite way. We do not always recognize a culture when we see one. Cultures can overlap, absorb, encompass, and blend. They can be differentiated according to environment, custom, social class, world-view or Weltanschauung. The tendency is to think of another culture as somewhat foreign or exotic, as existing outside of one's national borders. However, some intranational communications can be far more cross-cultural than international communications. Often, for instance, there exists an easily discernable cultural gap between the ruling elite and the masses in many developing nations. In other words, culture varies with the parameters through which we choose to look at it. Culture can be taken as the way we perceive and interact with the world, and those with whom we share similar perceptions. It is precisely such shared, often

unarticulated and sometimes inarticulable patterns of perception, communication, and behavior which are referred to as 'a culture'. Culture is subjective, and it is personal. Alder (1985:413) believes the core "of cultural identity is an image of the self and culture intertwined in the individual's total conception of reality. This image, a patchwork of internalized roles, rules, and norms, functions as the coordinating mechanism in personal and interpersonal situations".

Hence, the nexus of intercultural communication is that any two individuals or groups can communicate effectively in so far as they share past experience and world views, but they differ culturally to the extent they do not share these same phenomena. As cultural variance increases, so does the difficulty of communication.

In sum, one could conceive culture as the manifestations of man's and woman's attempt to relate meaningfully to his or her environment. An excellent conceptual, though very poorly labelled, delineation of the differences between agrarian and bureaucratic cultures in their orientation is discussed by Howard (1986:241), who divides world-views into "primitive" and "civilized." "The primitive world view is essentially a personal view of the universe in which humans are seen as united with nature ... [It] reflects the close social relationships that members of small-scale societies maintain with each other and the close relationship with nature that their technology and adaptive strategies entail. The civilized world view ... reflects the impersonal nature of social relationships in large-scale societies ... and a technology that allows people to become distant from nature ... [It] stresses our separation from nature and our role of conqueror of nature" (Howard, 1986:241).

An association can be drawn between these world-views and Hall's (1975) "high context" and "low context" cultures. Operating from their world-view and a low context culture, officials ("developers") analyze a situation as a discrete entity, existing "out there", something to be overcome with technology, "know-how" or sheer numbers. "He [or She] perceives and evaluates the promises and performances of development from his [or her] concrete, here and now, location in the factual order" (Ramashray and Srivastava, 1986:77). Khan (1976:69:74) paints a picture of those with such an orientation: "Their proposals were precise; more assistants, more demostration plots, more teaching of improved methods, more supplies ... The system seized them like a boa constrictor. They rushed from one time-consuming meeting to another, and, in between, read heaps of files and received numberless visitors and telephone calls. Always busy counting the trees, they never saw the woods". The richness, complexity and diversity of local life and self-help action often blend into highly aggregated statistics or are reduced to the abstractions of theoretical models, and once removed from consciousness, cease to exist in practical in practical reality.

On the other hand, if the rural farmer, the "developee," subscribing

primarily to the another world-view and living in a high-context culture, sees the same situation as a problem at all, s/he may approach it as something to be tolerated, or addressed in consideration of the total physical and social environment. S/he sees the situation in its social context. S/He is "guided more by intuitive understanding than by organized and systemized knowledge" (Ariyaratne, 1986:32). It is important to recognize that this intelligence of the farmer is often a more necessary possession than abstract intelligence of the "expert". For example, the "expert" sees the social orientation, the time spent on the maintenance of relations with other community members, as laziness, as whiling away the hours in gibberish. The "expert" does not often realize that in the community, the production system is communal, that in many rural, agrarian contexts 'sitting' is not a 'waste of time' nor is it a manifestation of laziness. Sitting is having time together, time to cultivate social relations. Quite possibly ensuring good social relations is as important as producing food. In other words, different people see the same phenomena and, based on different cultural perspectives, indeed different realities, they arrive at different conclusions.

Logic and Language

To assert that logic is culturally relative may approach blasphemy to the "scientific" mind, but the fact remains that foreign systems of reason are usually deemed illogical using the accuser's system of logic. Logic "is a cultural product, and not universal. Logic ... is the basis of rhetoric ... Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and from time to time within a given culture" (Ishii, 1985: 98).

Considering Suzuki's study of Zen logic, Ishii (1985: 99) continues. "Being is Being because Being is not Being; i.e., A is A because A is not A. Suzuki's logic is in absolute contrast with Aristolian dichotomous antimony." It follows that the logical and rhetorical framework of a culture influences the manner in which that culture perceives and employs language and communication, as well as what constitutes knowledge. This, in turn, relates back to the question of "expert" and "indigenous" knowledge. Perhaps Fuglesang (1982: 71) puts it best in saying "There cannot be a formal logic which is universal ... So, how can there be a knowledge which is universally valid?" As such, each culture has to be analysed on the basis of its own 'logical' structure.

The reverse, that communication, language, and knowledge also impact logical frameworks and world-views follows. Logic and language are linked. "We overlook the simple circumstance that the universality is not a fact in reality, but only a feature in the linguistic picture we are using" (Fuglesang, 1982: 21). Rockhill (1982: 15) further states "The symbolic interpretation of gestures and words is of primary concern as they mediate human interaction and provide the lenses through which the inner experience

is viewed," in brief, symbolic interactionism. It is mistaken to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.

To carry linguistic relativity to its extreme, it can be held that even our most "certain" presuppositions, those of time, space and matter, are not "real" at all. Fuglesang (1982: 41) attests "Newton did not find these concepts in reality but in language." And Kozol (1975: 116) writes words can be a major factor "in determination of our ideologies and our desires ... Words that seem the most accessible, or those we have been trained to find most pleasing, are powerful forms of limitation on the kinds of things we can experience, or advocate, or even learn to long for".

Perhaps no one understood these ideas of culture and language better than Gandhi. He adamantly used the local language and lived by, and in, the indigenous culture. He sought to propagate new ideals, values and thought patterns consonant with modern times, but in terms of the traditional cultural symbolic systems.

In comparing "Eastern and Western" orientations to the used of language, Kim (1985: 405) postulates that the Western (taken here as broadly representative of the bureaucratic low context) mode is largely a "direct, explicit, verbal realm, relying heavily on logical and rational perception, thinking, and articulation." Thunberg et al. (1982: 145) apply this concept to the development professional's style, whose "manner of expression or style often seems unnecessarily complicated and abstract, and particularly bureaucratic prose tends to follow formal codes far removed from daily usage." This contrasts with the orientation of the East (loosely associated here with agrarian, high-context cultures) where "the primary source of interpersonal understanding is the unwritten and often unspoken norms, values and ritualized mannerisms relevant to a particular interpersonal context" (Kim, 1985: 405). To relate this to India as well as alternate views of communication: "According to the Indian view, the realisation of truth is facilitated neither by language nor by logic and rationality. It is only intuition that will ensure the achievement of this objective. To know is to be; to know is to become aware of the artifical categorisation imposed on the world by language and logic. It is only through an intuitive process that man [and woman] will be able to lift himself [or herself] out of the illusory world which, indeed, according to the Indian viewpoint, is the aim of communication. Therefore, if the Western models of communication are rationalization-oriented models, the Indian one is intuition-oriented" (Dissanayake, 1983: 30).

Halloran (1981:42) illustrates this variance in relating scholars from different cultures "had difficulty in finding a level for mutual understanding, not only because their national languages differed, but because they classified reality in different ways." The cross-cultural communication effort par-

excellence is the technical expert in the rural village; the man [or woman] whose thinking and acting are shaped in the concepts of the written language, trying to communicate with the people whose minds and behaviour are moulded by an oral tradition — or conversely.

These incongruencies have profound implications for both communication and participation between exogenous development personnel and rural populations, as well as instances where models, methods and strategies formulated in the West are applied, largely intact, in other cultures. "The exchange between government officials and their constituencies is conducted in a bureaucratic sub-language which has one meaning to the official and an entirely different meaning to the average citizen ... In this situation, communication has not "broken down", it has never even begun" (Kennedy, 1984:87).

To reiterate, we see that culture is a function of collective world view, perception, logic and language rather than geographical location or nationality. There is an inverse relationship between cultural differences and communication ease. Whereas communication between national development institutions and rural populations is often assumed to be intracultural in nature, this is not often the case. Culture, when not understood, or seen as antagonistic as in the modernization paradigm, constitutes a substantial barrier in development communications and participatory endeavors both inter - and intra-nationally.

'Insiders' and 'Outsiders'

Interaction fosters a pedagogical environment for all participants. The researcher, as a newcomer, contributes in that s/he requires the membership to give an account of how things are done, which fosters an atmosphere where participants may better know themselves, question themselves, and consciously reflect on the reality of their lives and their socio-cultural milieu. Through such interaction, a fresh understanding, new knowledge and self-confidence may be gained. Further, awareness, confidence, and cohesiveness are enhanced not only for group members, but also among and between those members and 'outsiders' who may participate, thereby increasing their understanding of the context and obstacles under which the people strive. Education goes both ways. This learning process can instill confidence and ultimately empowerment. The intent of participatory research is not latent awareness. Relevant knowledge increases self-respect and confidence, and leads to exploration of alternatives towards the attainment of goals, and to action. Through this process, the givenness of the group is revealed on which one can build up a superior, higher vision.

Trust, Attitudes, and Listening

Trust can foster or inhibit communication and participation between and among all groups regardless of education, culture, social, or economic status.

It is "a priori requirement for dialogue ... without this faith ... dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation" (Freire 1983: 79). It may be more important to know about trust than about educational standards, pedagogical methods, media technology or communication benchmarks.

Trust is egalitarian. We may succumb to superiors, and condescend to subordinates, but these are not manifestations of genuine trust. In Pakistan, Khan (1976:70) felt people "valued my human worth, not my office or patronage. Trust, not cleverness, was the medium of communication." Freire (1983:53) contends those who do not trust others "will fail to initiate (or will abandon) dialogue, reflection and communication, and will fall into using slogans, communiques, monologues, and instructions." Trust isn't manifest in positions or labels, but in persons. In contrasting the "professional" and rural world, Fuglesang (1982:20) writes "a judgement of reality made by a technical expert is more trusted than a judgement by the village farmer. We disrespect the ideas and opinions of people who happen to have their knowledge from sources other than books".

If we do not trust, we deem others untrustworthy. But is that quality within them, or in our own attitudes of insecurity and aspirations of superiority? More often than not, it may be the latter. Again, to the extent we trust, we are equals. We often do not trust those we want, and are socialized, to feel above, those "lower on the ladder."

We erect elaborate status symbols, orate eloquent speeches, and conduct village meetings with much pomp and formality, all in the name of credibility and integrity. Yet it often seems more akin to an injudicious pageant of unbridled egos. In promoting "expertise," trust is destroyed. A fundamental distrust therefore often exists on the part of the officials which is manifested in their opinion and actions.

Hence, participatory research and planning requires first of all changes in the thinking of development workers themselves. The needles, targets, and audiences of communication and development models, combined with self-righteousness, titles, and insecurities, perhaps sprinkled with a dash of misdirected benevolence, often renders "experts" a bit too verbose and pushy. Perhaps this is because it requires much more imagination, preparation and hard work to have dialogical learning. It is far easier to prepare and give lectures. However, there is possibly a valid reason why we have two ears, but only one mouth. Communication between people thrives not on the ability to talk fast, but the ability to listen well. People are 'voiceless' not because they have nothing to say, but because nobody cares to listen to them. In this perspective it is legitimate to say that development begins with listening. It is so simple and yet we fail often because of an egocentric attitude. Fuglesang and Chandler (1986:3) maintain that in the oral culture of the Massaii "no one dare talk before learning the art of listening. Perhaps the best advice to the modern development communicators is to shut up for

awhile." Authentic listening fosters trust much more than incessant talking. Participation, which necessitates listening, and moreover, trust, will "help reduce the social distance between government leaders and villagers as well as facilitate a more equitable exchange of knowledge and articulation of group interests" (Awa, 1987b:24). However, the need to listen is not limited to the poor. It must involve the governments as well as the citizens, the poor as well as the rich, the planners and administrators as well as their targets. This is not to imply that lack of trust is limited to the "experts." Trust, or the lack thereof, is reciprocal. A condescending and paternalistic attitude "tends to build resistance among local peoples to ... "foreign ideas" (Awa, 1987a:9).

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Like all research, participatory research is ideological. It is biased in the sense it holds research should be guided by, available to, and of direct benefit to the "researched," rather than privileged information for a manipulative elite. It further believes research is not, nor should it be, the domain of a powerful few with the "proper" tools.

Participatory research is similar, but not equal, to social action research. It is research of involvement, not of detachment. It includes all parties in a process of mutual and increasing awareness and confidence. It is research of conscientization and of empowerment.

There can be no strict methodology for participatory research. However, it must actively and authentically involve participants throughout a cyclical process and the general flow is from study to reflection to action.

Evaluation is inherent in participatory research. However, it is formative rather than summative evaluation. Its purpose is not for journals, ego-boosting, or to solicit further funding, but rather to monitor and reflect on the process as it unfolds. Further, people's involvement in the research assures validity of the inquiry, their validity.

Even though participation and social development are mammoth, complex issues, we believe complexity too overwhelming for one person to handle can be figured out by all of us together. We will need a new kind of school; not a school for teaching writing and arithmetic, but a school for problems. This type of "school" necessitates the latitude for participation, for the appropriate attitudes and structures on the part of exogenous personnel and institutions. A school which gives people the opportunity to identify their problems, deal with their problems, and learn from their problems. "Analysis should begin at the level of the people within their own experience and their own level of understanding. This ensures people's collective initiative and participation in the direct development process" (The Xavier Institute, 1980:11).

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