

# Summary of “Participation – The new Tyranny”

## Chapter 2: ‘People knowledge’ and patronage – D. Mosse

Participatory approaches **evoke local people to manipulate ‘planning knowledge’** of project organizations to their own interest in stead of development institutions who incorporate ‘indigenous knowledge’ into their plans.

**Needs of local people are shaped by the perception of what the project agency could offer.** Villagers consider what is legitimate to ask for. This likely not fits into the local pattern of usage.

The inclusion of ‘participation’ into projects in an **external concern**. ‘Participation’ is a politically, strategically tool by development organizations to market their project to donors. It is linked to wider political process in ‘local knowledge/community concerns’ is used to justify national or international interests.

**Project agencies ‘own’ the process** of knowledge acquisition, interpretation and representation. They chose themselves what kind of questions they want to ask and which information they are going to use. Participation can have many different readings. Development agencies tend to apply ‘participation’ in a manner in which it fits into their organizational practice.

In practice, the model of ‘participation’ advocated by donors and consultants is **not easily internalized procedurally** into a project scheme. The transfer of autonomy and control to the local population is seen as problematic by development agencies, as their operation is based on its network of patronage between their field staff and the villagers (clients).

Donor agencies and external policy-makers structurally **privilege participatory models over project practices and outcomes**. This is problematic. Although, the outcome of a project is positive in the sense of improved technology and income generation by the local people, it can be judged upon as a failure if it executed by extension services in stead of independent village associations which build upon ‘local knowledge’ systems. The link between participation and successful outcomes is not evident.

**Conclusion:** ‘Participation’ is an external concern, which is manipulated by development agencies and local people to their own interests.

## Chapter 3: Limitations of participatory approaches – F. Cleaver

Participation is claimed to contribute to enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, while there is **little evidence of long-term effectiveness** in materially improving conditions of the most vulnerable people or as a strategy for social change.

Participation has become ‘**an act of faith**’ in development (p.36)t:

- 1) It is intrinsically ‘good thing’
- 2) Focus on ‘getting the techniques right’
- 3) Consideration of power and politics on the whole should be avoided

Focus on efficiency does not achieve ‘true’ empowerment: although empowerment is emphasised, projects keep concentrated on efficiency. Participatory approaches such as PRA and PLA consist of techniques which are tangible and practical, fitting well in project approaches, but do not deal with non-project nature of people’s lives, issues of power and control and lack a

framework for critical reflective understanding of the deeper determinants of technical and social change.

“The predominant discourses of development are practical and technical, concerned with project-dictated imperatives of efficiency, with visible and manageable manifestation of collective action.” While “Radical empowerment discourse, with its roots in Freirean philosophy, is associated with both individual and class action, with the transformation of structures of subordination through radical changes in law, property rights, the institutions of society.”

“As empowerment has become a buzzword in development, an essential objective of projects, its radical, challenging and **transformatory edge has been lost.**”

Preference for formalized institutions for functional ends: Institutional inclusion is observed as essential in participatory approaches. “Institutions help to formalize mutual expectations of cooperative behaviour, allow the exercise of sanctions of non-cooperation (free-riding) and thereby reduce costs of individual transactions.”

Interventions tend to establish community structures that clearly **mirror bureaucratic structures**. There is a **clear preference for formal institutions**, which will clarify and make transparent local arrangements, based on the **‘crafting’ principle of Elinor Ostrom**.

This model is blind for the historical and social context. It disregards that local arrangements for management are deeply embedded in social relations. It ignores that many interactions between people take place outside formal organizations.

Representation in collective, public events is maybe not appropriate to cultural context: participatory approaches focus on **collective, public events** where meaningful participation is characterized by individual (verbal) contributions, while this might not be in concurrence with local norms and practices, it might disguise people’s actual involvement.

A community is condensed to homogenous, harmonious, competent entity: a community is observed as **‘natural’ social entity** characterized by solidaristic relations, whereas it is in fact a site of shifting alliances, power and social structures.

There is strong assumption that there is **one identifiable community in any location**. “A concentration on boundaries highlights the need in development for clear administrative arrangements, more to do with the delivery of goods and facilities than a reflection of any social arrangement.”

Moreover, there is the persistent idea that communities are **capable of everything**, while in fact even a well motivated and organized community, can have limitations in the sense of material resources or other structural constraints.

The **tensions within cultures**, as for example oppressive elements, are rarely debated in participatory approaches. Often the positive aspects, of social ‘glue’ and solidarity are highlighted.

Willingness for individual action is reduced to economic incentive and social responsibility: individual action is perceived as a **‘rational choice’** or obedience to **‘social/cultural norms’**. Social difference is **simply categorized** into general occupational or social groups. While patterns of interaction between individuals and social structure is more complex, diverse and irregular. Participatory literature is often vague about the actual incentives which will people persuade to participate. It is assumed that people will participate for rational reasons related to economic development or to a lesser extent that they feel socially responsible. It does not take into account the personal **psychological reasons**, such as the need of recognition and respect.

Participation is not conceived as beneficial by every agent: Actions of humans should be seen as process, in which not every activity is reasoned and motivated. Little recognition is made for the changing social position of individuals over their life course, of the variable costs and benefits consideration by different placed people, and concerns with production and reproduction.

“Non-participation and non-compliance may be both a ‘rational’ strategy and an unconscious practice embedded in routine, social norms and the acceptance of the status quo.” It might be more easy to delegate participation to another family member for example or it might be negotiated within households in line with the social norm.

**Conclusion:** Participatory approaches should analyse the relationship between social structures within communities and individual agency of differently placed people.

#### Chapter 4: Pluralism, Participation and Power – N. Hildyard *et al.*

Participation has **different meanings** to different people. There is a **wide gap** between the experience of participation on the ground and the rhetoric of development agencies, as the World Bank.

Participation is applied by the World Bank from a perception that participation helps to save ‘transaction costs’. “Participation becomes a well-honed tool for engineering consent to projects and programmes whose framework has already been determined in advance.”

Planners sit behind their desk, assuming that the project area and the people are cooperative and the implementing parties impartial.

“Many participatory projects rest on the dubious assumption that simply identifying different ‘stakeholders’ and getting them around the table will result in consensus being reached that is ‘fair’ to all.” In reality, participation is used by local people to serve their own agenda and the ones that have most bargaining power are able to strengthen their own position.

**Conclusion:** Participation requires wider processes of social transformation and structural change to the system of social relations through which inequalities are reproduced.

#### Chapter 5: Participatory Development at the World Bank – P. Francis

The social agenda has acquired growing prominence in the World Bank, therefore tools for participation and social analysis have come into use. The chapter investigates the relative influence of PRA and two other participatory approaches (beneficiary assessment and social assessment) in the World bank.

**Beneficiary Assessment:** a participatory technique which gathers information on the priorities and attitudes of the beneficiaries in relation to the planned intervention. Data extraction stands central and is therefore comparable to market research.

**Social Assessment:** a participatory technique that tries to analyse the social and historical processes of people’s relations. Its basis lies in academic sociology and anthropology research and requires a specialized mediator.

**Participatory Rural Appraisal:** a participatory technique which promotes rural people to share and analyse their attitudes, values and perceptions and plan and implement interventions. It is associated with RRA, action research and indigenous knowledge movements and its action is focussed on local empowerment. The professional who leads the process is a charismatic specialist, who is trained to employ self-critical awareness and is personally responsible for its own judgements by means of ‘triangulation’. Local constructs and indigenous knowledge are valued over scientific taxonomies, so preference for the emic (actor’s) view. Preference over visual instead of verbal data.

PRA exercises are often collective and pay insufficient attention to social differentiation. Public consensus is rather an appearance of orchestrating social values and norms, than a chance for

opposing parties to show their view. It is naive of the facilitator to think he can transcend culturally rooted differences in a PRA session. Investigating outsiders have generally a dual and ambiguous status.

PRA is putting subtle, complex knowledge into two-dimensional matrices: PRA rejects formal ways of acquiring information, by putting dynamic, visual, experience central and embracing local knowledge, however it simplify collective 'realities' by diagrams and time-lines and neglect other sources of input as the written and verbal.

“The emphasis on personal values and individual judgement, and the premise that power distorts communication make the spirit of PRA quite out of tune with bureaucracy and its hierarchical, rule-bound culture, however it fits in the craving for redemption of World Bank by conceiving 'beneficiaries' as individual consumers of development. PRA is a tool of individual, rather than collective, transformation. The social development agenda is primarily interpreted in terms of process, consultation and partnership. It failed to map alternative strategies for development. Moreover, it far from clear if the increased attention towards this social agenda is reflected in actual operations and causing positive changes. Participation seems to be limited to information sharing and consultation.

**Conclusion:** If the World Bank honestly is willing to incorporate participation, it should take notice of structural dimensions of social relations and give substantial influence of the beneficiaries in project implementation.

## Chapter 6: Beyond the Formulaic: South Asian NGO's – J. Hailey

The formulaic approaches to participative decision-making promoted by development donors have overlooked the importance of informal, unstructured, personal interactions of NGO's with their beneficiaries. Decisions, operational issues and programme design of NGO's are already for years shaped through a process of personal engagement and has created mutual trust and respect between NGO's and their beneficiaries.

Formulaic tools are limited in their effectiveness compared to informal, personal contacts as:

- 1) **Operational inappropriate and suffer practical limitations**, in relation to selecting participations and the influential role and status of the facilitator
- 2) **They fit less in the cultural context**, south Asia is characterized by a collective culture and hierarchical social structure, which decision-making lies within kinship ties and personal connections; the individualistic and low power distance manner of participatory approaches does not fit the cultural context
- 3) **Imposed by outsiders to promote a political agenda**, what is actually the motive and ideology of the promoters of participatory approaches; it seems that donors perceive participation as a tool to ensure value for their money and certain NGO see 'participation' as means of the donor to keep control of the political agenda.

**Conclusion:** Participative decision-making should be rooted in a dynamic relationship of mutual trust and respect between different parties.

## Chapter 7: Social Psychology ---B. Cooke

**Social Psychology** deals with how thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by the actual or imagined presence of others.

This chapter discusses **group dynamics** (1, 2 and 3) and the **role of the outsider** (4) who poses the participatory intervention. Four theories are discussed:

- 1) **Risk shift**: in groups decision-making a greater risk is taken than each individual would do independently. A **diffusion of responsibility**.
- 2) **Abilene paradox**: there exists a risk aversion or inability to contest something in public among certain individuals, as they are afraid to be excluded if they have a deviating opinion. Ultimately, a group action can be taken which almost all individuals do not prefer personally.
- 3) **Groupthink**: in an amiable, strong bonded group independent critical thinking is often neglected. The group perceives itself superior over others, and focuses on making its own fort more sturdy, while excluding outside groups.
- 4) **Coercive persuasion** (brainwash): the shaping of a group process (by an outside interventionist) to intentionally achieve a particular outcome. A participatory process is a means to change the conscious of the participations, it is therefore never value-free.

**Conclusion**: Knowledge in collective, public events is constructed by existing social relationships and cultural values.

### Chapter 8: Insights from Management and Labour process Perspectives – H. Taylor

This chapter argues that organisations in development area are influenced by **managerial thinking**, which included human resource management and employee participation.

Participatory discourses seem to be part of wider attempt to obscure the relations of power and influence between elite interests and less powerful groups, like ‘beneficiaries of development projects’ and ‘employees of companies’.

Global capitalism requires the extension of market relations and the extraction of surplus of value. There is movement among development agencies to direct rural people to capitalist production and institutions of the modern Western state.

There exist a technocratic view that ‘management’ is a universal, rational process which fits, irrespective of the organisational context. The mutual reinforcement of ‘management thinking’ and ‘participatory approaches’ is worldwide.

Employee participation is seen as ‘good for business’, it would keep employee satisfied, while the actual management decisions are still at higher levels.

Moreover, there are significant doubts if employee participation either can deliver improved performance, or employee satisfaction and commitment. The author thinks a thorough analysis of the reason for this should consider:

- 1) A rejection ‘common sense’ and ‘obvious’ notions of ‘natural order’ of social arrangements
- 2) A sustained attempt to understand the underlying social processes within capitalist society
- 3) Rigorous question the means and the ends of productive activity
- 4) Seek an opportunity for transforming social and productive relations

At the moment EIP is only concerned linguistic bases of power, leaving existing power relations on structural basis undisturbed.

EIP/HRM is ambiguous in the sense that on one hand it advocates a 'soft' approach of equal 'partnership' while on the other hand it embraces the 'hard' promise of commitment, and more fundamentally, greater productivity.

EIP seems to be part of a strategy to retain control over the labour process. "The introduction of EIP can be seen a part of an attempt to create a committed and 'responsible' workforce aligned to the goals of the organization without the need to cede control in any substantive way; it offers an alternative to trade union power and collective bargaining." Managers keep in this manner the right to make independent decisions. It is a '**strategic integration**' of the requirements of the profit and efficiency concerns of the employer. Ultimately, it fits in marketing technique of the company to assist good corporate image.

#### Comparison making EIP and PRA

- 1) Project beneficiaries of development projects exhibit an instrumental approach to participation rather than seeing them as liberating practices.
- 2) Participation has been sponsored by the powerful
- 3) Participation is largely cosmetic, has no real substance
- 4) It is a 'hegemonic' device to secure compliance and control by existing power structure

**Conclusion:** The purely cultural and linguistic constructions of participation ignore structural and material constraints. Both approaches should be combined

#### Chapter 9: Power, Knowledge and Social Control – U. Kothari

In participatory approaches there is a discourse present which simplifies the way social power is constructed, the so-called **dichotomy of power**. It puts the powerful at central, macro level against the powerless at local, micro level.

This chapter deals with the techniques of knowledge accumulation and the process of information exchange in participatory approaches. It based on the assumption that: "*knowledge is culturally, socially and politically produced and is continuously reformulated as a powerful, normative construct.*"

Participatory development can for this reason encourage:

- 1) **Reassertion of control and power by dominant stakeholders:** the act of inclusion of disadvantaged group by the outside interventionist does not always benefit those groups. The new brought in programmes disempower excluded to challenge existing power relationships. Moreover, the identification of disadvantaged groups is done on the basis of structural, material inequalities in resources; differences constructed by social rituals, norms and practices are not taken into account.
- 2) **The reification of social norms and fake consensus building:** the participatory approaches accept power relations and inequalities as given, this make them normative and not being challenged. The practitioner perceives what participations do and say often as an individual experience or preference, while in fact their act is often an reflection of wider cultural/social norm. Especially in public, collective events the official, normative view of the community is expressed by the participants.
- 3) **Purification of knowledge and space:** participatory tools deal with the process of acquisition, interpretation and representation of knowledge. They tend to do this in a structured manner, in which easily deviating forms of knowledge or people are excluded, unexpected or irregular events are seldom accommodated and ranking is central.
- 4) **Possibilities of subversion due to emphasis on performance:** the 'front stage' focus of participatory techniques in which performance in public is central, shape participations to play a role. Not everybody has the skills to so. Performance can invert power relations and therefore stakeholders can resist to participate in the process, as they are afraid that

the practitioner makes projections about their lives which they do not like. The use of props is can stress the backward position of certain stakeholders and are therefore not in their advantage, but merely to the practitioner. It gives him the power to regulate the way people represent themselves.

## Chapter 10: Beyond Participation – G. Mohan

**Postcolonial critics** are simplified analysis and not coherent. They have become a fashionable label for critics on Western imperialism and ‘ways of knowing’. In the representation of the Third world in postcolonial critics our Western voice is present. The history of geography of the West and non-West is flatten. Orientalism, as such, is constructed by the West as something mythical; its own truth is created by means of a discourse.

However, colonialism was not purely hegemonic power, but a ‘**hybridity**’ between two cultures. Mimicry has taken place, certain elements of the colonizer have been taken over.

“There is tension between an ultimately situated **localized experience** and a **global condition**”

“The cultural constructions of global hybrids tend to **ignore the structural and the material constraints** of global capitalism.”

“**Subaltern politics** is based around resistance and horizontal community linkages rather than vertical linkages into elitist state structures.” However, it represents a simplified, **dichotomized view**: ‘subalterns’ versus ‘elites’. The SS scholars represent the ‘subaltern’ by ‘speaking of’ and ‘speaking for’, **their voices are deconstructed** by them.

“Yet much of this abstracts cultural processes away from the material conditions and is unable to stand outside the dominant epistemological frameworks against they argue. In this sense many analysis run the risk of reinscribing authority over the non-West in stead of subverting it.”

### Pitfalls of participatory development:

- 1) The participatory approaches carry the **primitivistic dichotomy** between the West and the non-West, being Africa mysterious, exotic and organic and the West modern, rational and capitalist.
- 2) They perceive **communities as harmonious entities** and **promote consensual view**, which in reality may empower the elite vested interests
- 3) There is an emphasis on the **necessity of playfulness and informal meetings** in PRA, while these events are often perceived as very informal by the communities as they are leaded by powerful outsider
- 4) The Western models presume knowledge is mediated by language. PRA leans on **linguistic representations**.
- 5) PRA findings need to be made intelligible to the sceptical audience of development audiences, therefore ‘soft’, **qualitative information is hardened** and made acceptable by pseudo-scientism.
- 6) In the PRA discourse the side of empowerment is at the **local/personal level**, while global/national processes structure power relations for a great part.
- 7) They is **no ‘genuine’ dialogue**, as we outsiders, perceive ourselves as superior, because we respect the validity of traditional knowledge. ‘We’ behave I we have nothing to offer, while in practice we as facilitators intervene in the local environment of others.
- 8) **The state is no ‘neutral black box’**: the state has manipulated civil society, by for example politicizing local difference.

### Alternative possibilities

- 1) Study not only the local level, bt take into account also the global/national one
- 2) Power inequalities should be seen as productive for transformative agenda

- 3) Remove the insider/outside dualism, but start with the idea that all parties are non-knowing subjects and discuss the different interpretations and images of each other and make a dialogue how knowledge is constructed.
- 4) Use the REFLECT approach, in which communities have their own E&M criteria
  - 1) Recognize the political nature of participatory development
  - 2) NGO's should seek to build up the capacity of the state
  - 3) A long-term approach should be taken
  - 4) There should be no imposition of external criteria

**Conclusion:** avoid a simple dichotomized view, integrate participation to different political levels and start with a 'genuine' dialogue

### Chapter 11: Participation as a Spiritual Duty – H. Henkel and R. Stirrat

Participation has become a **new orthodoxy**, however it has no systematic ideology underlying it. It is more a collection of loosening connected approaches in response to older misguided orthodoxy. It fits in the New Social Movements of the 1980's and 1990's and is a key term in recent management theory. The new orthodoxy is an applied, **practical usage of anthropologist science**, better known as Development Anthropology.

This chapter studies in depth the practices, ideas and cosmologies of people planning 'development' projects. It looks from a standpoint of Anthropology to Development.

#### 1) It gives an analysis of the new 'development' discourse

The new orthodoxy is based on the notion that **bottom-up** is morally superior, **empowerment** and inclusion of the **marginal** is stressed, there is general **distrust on the state** institutions and **'indigenous' knowledge** is celebrated.

Critics which are presented towards participatory approaches:

- they are naive in regard to political issues
- they are instrumentally applied by development agencies
- they overestimate the value of 'local' knowledge

This chapter however looks to what participation 'does'

#### 2) It elaborates a genesis of the key concept 'participation'

Participation relates to a specific vision of society, it is **cultural construct**:

Participation has its history roots in the emancipation of the bourgeoisie in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Another interpretation is connected to **relationship between God and the believers**: "man in the infinite grace of God". It became a key issue in the **Reformation** (Luther) movement. Participation is rooted in this specific tradition:

- It made direct readings of the Bible for its believers possible and emphasised on a **direct relationship with God**.
- The Protestant church is compared to the Catholic church far more **decentralised**. This administrative reform was accompanied by the **'subsidiarity principle'**.
- Participation, actively participating in the duties of the community, became a **moral imperative**.
- Many labour parties, trade unions and social movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century grew more or less out of **non-conformist religious backgrounds**.
- In this process of **Enlightenment**, 'religion' was confined to private spheres, while 'reason' became gained space in public spheres. It is in itself a specific system of world-ordering knowledge.

Chambers approach of "Putting the Last First" in his PRA has features of a religious experience:

- Chambers himself is a charismatic person.

- It consist of simple, value-laden **binary oppositions**: 'rich' against 'poor', just as 'evil' against 'good' in holy texts.
- His call for '**reversals**' to obtain development is similar to '**salvation**' seeking in religious movements. The practitioners of PRA should start with **personal change** to attain reversals.
- Workshops have a features of religious meeting and tend to **control people to think in a certain way**.

### 3) It relates participation to the concept of 'empowerment'

Participation is a **form of governance**, as it owns certain subject positions to the participants, to some extent, it presuppose and shape 'participants' from the beginning.

#### **The practice of constructing graphics is not a neutral technology,**

- Mapping is an **instrument of knowledge production**, thus contain power structures and social relations
- Maps are **culturally specific ideologies**, by their means of selectivity of the content and their style of representation. They depict what seems important in the cultural content
- In PRA exercises canonizes already which visualisations are acceptable and which not, in this way it encourages and generates a **particular way of thinking of organizing social life**, which relates to our 'modern' manner of living.

**Conclusion:** Participation and empowerment is given in the sense of **imposing 'modernity'** upon developing societies, it is a form of **subjection** as Foucault would mention it. In similar way, to missionaries and Christians, the new orthodoxy of 'participation' is concerned about its flock and tries to integrate people in one system.

Moreover, the approach tends to **shift the responsibility** for the consequences of project outcomes to 'beneficiaries' in stead of practitioners.