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**THE LIMITS OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IN
RURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

by

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my Children,
Teddy, Maureen, Ben and Lina.

Though far and missing motherly love, your cheerfulness, support letters and encouragement was a source of great inspiration for me. Thank you for standing by me.

And to my parents
Hezron Ajanja and Mary Atieno Ajanja,
Thank you for your never ceasing love.

Acknowledgement

*'A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.'*¹

Indeed this was a long journey that took me through the most difficult terrain. I wish to acknowledge and thank the several individuals who walked with me and gave me the support I much needed which sustained me to the end. Through the hard terrain, I have emerged, empowered and brave to face the challenges that transitions bring. Special thanks to The World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of Kenya for facilitating logistical support for undertaking this study. Special thanks also to Ms, Aurora Galindo and Dr. Mohamed Salih who urged me on whenever I was at the verge of collapse and whose concern gave me the inspiration to face the odds, To Jane Ong'olo, Florence Aate, Jose Haanappel and Iris Shiripinda who never tired to listen whenever I needed someone to talk to, to Ank van De Berg who gave me all the administrative support I needed, to Wop ten Wolden for encouragement and moral support and to the Staff and fellow participants of the ISS for facilitating a warm conducive atmosphere for study. To the many others whose names, though not mentioned, I treasure and hold dear your friendship and support. Thank you all once again for walking the journey with me.

¹ Famous Chinese Proverb, from which I draw inspiration to overcome challenges especially when a task seems too arduous to tackle

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INTRODUCTION

In the last 10 to 15 years social workers have become aware that development requires community participation as opposed to the mainstream paradigm based on blue print plans, which aim at addressing social economic problems identified for the people by experts. These blue prints have overshadowed real life processes and according to Rahnema have consequently led to the construction of fragmented images of how the world should look like. (Rahnema 1990). As a result problems related to development have increased. Poverty, inaccessibility to education, health services and proper nutrition have become the norm in many developing countries.

Indeed there was a need to redefine and shift the concept of development to a popular, bottom up endogenous version. A new discourse that would address the plight of the grassroots sidelined by development policies, while also aiming to design social change by the people on the basis of their reality and aspirations,

Several development scholars and practitioners echoed this shift in development thinking. The Dag Hammerskjold Foundation report of 1975 "What now another development?" states that development needs to be endogenous and geared to the satisfaction of needs in a manner that is in harmony with the environment while also enhancing self reliance of the people (Dag Hammerskjold Foundation report 1975). 'The best promise for development lies with the initiatives of the ordinary people (Rahman 1993). This line of thought is emphasised by Kortens who defines development as 'a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources produce sustainable and justly distributed income improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations (Kortens in Pietersee 1996)

Out of this discourse emerged the concept of participatory development. Several concepts have evolved out of participatory development.¹ Whereas several paradigms have been advanced to respond to the need to shift development thought to participatory development, this study will however limit its analysis to Participatory Action Research hereafter (PAR). This is because while the underlying principle of participatory development recognises that participation of the people is crucial to the success of development action, PAR goes a step further than most participatory development theories, for it emphasises the need to seek out the disadvantaged and the weak and facilitate their engagement in critical reflection about their environment. This

¹ Refer to Figure 1 in chapter one page 8 for an elucidation of the different streams of 5rt participatory development

meet needs' (Chambers 1997). Albeit it is an approach aimed at achieving power and not only growth. This is because PAR maintains that it is right that poor people get empowered in order to be in charge of their own destinies (Chambers 1990). Bergdall adds to this debate by stating that

Participatory action research is built upon a central underlying assumption...[that] rural people can be agents of their own development. Though development is a complex process involving many factors, there is no need for villagers to wait for others to take the lead, be they government officials, academic experts, or foreign donors. Development "by the people" has a much greater potential for sustainability than development "for the people" (Bergdall T. 1993).

Despite the noble intentions of PAR, development has continued to elude development policy makers and practitioners alike. This is because in practise the empowerment discourse raises a series of questions and assumptions. Why is this so? The notion of participation often becomes superficial in light of the complexities between the actors. According to chambers there is need for a detailed institutional analysis of the roles of different actors the divisions and linkages between them. (Chambers 1994) This is because these social interfaces are critical for they form focal points where different social and knowledge systems conflict. The shape and manner, which these interacting focal points take is determined by power relations which consequently determines perceptions priorities and relations of the different actors. In order to understand these interfaces the research aims at addressing the following fundamental questions.

1. What is PAR how did it evolve and what is the difference between this methodology and conventional development processes?
2. Whereas PAR contends to be a feasible viable alternative to conventional development processes why does poverty still persist? What are therefore the limitations of PAR?
3. How does power affect knowledge generation processes and transmission. How do these dynamics in turn affect participation and the success of PAR?
4. How can these power dynamics be reconfigured to facilitate effective PAR process in rural community development?

In answering these questions the study seeks to reclaim the PAR process as a viable development process in light of the current disaffection this process is experiencing. It is high time that development paradigms are analysed in depth so as to discover their strengths and weaknesses in order to address these limitations for purposes of making the concepts viable rather than throwing them off lock stock and barrel whenever they do not produce results. This study therefore sets to analyse how power dynamics influence perceptions, priorities and consequently the participation of actors in the PAR process with an aim to exploring strategies to reconfigure these dynamics in order to enhance the effectiveness of the PAR methodology.

Whereas PAR has been used in several contexts to enhance the participation of the people in actions aimed at them. For instance PAR in Industrial activity² and in academic studies. This study will however limit its focus on PAR in rural development. As we have observed the study will draw its arguments from observations and experiences of PAR in the developing countries while also drawing on my personal experience as a facilitator in the field using PAR as a process for initiating social transformation and development.

Research structure

The research will therefore be structured as follows. Chapter one will look at the background and evolution of the PAR problem and problematise it within the framework of power and participation. This will elucidate the context within which this study is being carried out so as to shed some light as to the rationale for the study. While a comparative conceptualisation of PAR will form the bulk of analysis in the second chapter, the concept of power knowledge and participation will also be discussed here, as this will form the basis of analysis for this study. In chapter three an analysis of two cases drawn from Indonesia and Kenya will serve to contextualise PAR as a rural development strategy. While the cases will illustrate the viability of PAR as an development strategy, they will also serve to illuminate the power dynamics in this process and implication to effective participation.

The analysis in chapter four will be based on theoretical critiques that have been advanced to demonstrate the limitations of PAR within the power and participation concept. This analysis will also expose other assumptions that pose constraints to the success of PAR. One such assumption is the presupposition that communities are homogenous which is not the case. Power relations affect community homogeneity and hence participation. In conclusion, the research will explore strategies to address these limitations with an aim to formulating alternative strategies. that can be incorporated into the PAR process to enhance its effectiveness as a development tool, constituted within a framework of 'rationality, justice, coherence and satisfactoriness' (Mc Taggart 1990:317). In contribution to the PAR discourse the study aims at formulating recommendations for future application into the PAR discourse.

² Refer to Whyte, W F 1984 Learning from the field Sage publications Inc. California USA

1.0 Background and problem statement

1.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the context within which the idea to carry out this research sprung. The frustrations and problems I experienced during my work as a Participatory Action Research facilitator in Kenya is highlighted as the background that prompted this research. However In order to have a better understanding of the problems encountered in the Application of PAR, the chapter will make observations of the context within which PAR as a rural development strategy emerged. The observation will contend that PAR emerged in response to the failure of positivist scientific based conventional development paradigms. Whereas PAR is a feasible methodology in development it also does experience some constraints which the study aims to analyse in a bid to reclaim PAR as a feasible development tool.

1.2 Conventional development discourses

Development thinking within the social sciences is largely a product of the West. It is as such an outsider's view of our development, especially by outsiders from countries who colonised us.

Susantha Goonatilake³⁴

The above sentiment as expressed by Goonatilake probably surmises the whole development discourse as it has been applied or as it has affected the so-called third World countries. The relevancy of this statement is manifest in the major debates and conventional development discourses which have undergone several shifts raising different theoretical frameworks and paradigms, in response to crises, failures and unforeseen impacts. It is worth noting however that development discourse took on a more practical paradigm after the second world war when the United States of America emerged as a super power and hence assumed the role of directing world development, according to the then ideology of modernisation. The reigning ideology was explicitly phrased in Harry Truman's speech 'The new deal' Which stated that more than half the people of the world were backward and living in miserable conditions. Their poverty which accrued from lack of capital, technology, rationality, modern institutions and values, was a threat and a handicap to them. He argued that it was a mission to make the benefits of scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement of the underdeveloped world. (Truman The new Deal)

³ Excerpted from Hettne Bjorn 1990:74

As a result the development paradigm that directed development in the 1960s and 1970s derived from the modernisation legacy of the 1930s and the post world war period where development was perceived as top down, something the government handed down to people. Modernisation became the vehicle through which development was expected to be achieved. Within this paradigm extension of financial and technical assistance was stepped up to help underdeveloped societies catch up with the developed societies. This was done through the state apparatus. Hence by the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s, development discourse mainly evolved around structuralist theories which had a bias on state led development practise.⁵ (Gillis et al 1996) and (Lensink R. 1996.)

In order to attain development, developing countries were expected to discard the so called 'backwardness' in favour of development. This was defined in terms of economic development, in which the degree of progress was viewed against the level of production of economic goods and through the emulation of cultures aspirations and values of the developed countries. (Rahman 1990) Development was therefore associated with the acquisition of scientific knowledge which was perceived to provide the good things of life such as Coca-Cola, chewing gum, ice-cream, modern plumbing, automobiles, refrigerators, electric lighting, good health, good diet and good education' (Viner 1952:176). This was to be achieved through the diffusion of innovations of modernisation, capital, science and technology western values and institutional arrangements. (David Slater. Lecture notes).

This development paradigm generated client states where oligarchies that took up the running of the state were able to enrich themselves and empower themselves relative to the wider population. Hope for prosperity of the masses was based on development plans formulated at the national and global level (Rahman 1990).

However this paradigm proved to be a disempowering process for as opposed to what it was set to achieve the reality was that it undermined tribal ways of life which for centuries had been oriented towards self-sufficiency and long term management of their resources. (David Slater). And consequently plunged the disadvantaged into a vicious cycle of poverty, lack of employment, poor education, ill health and environmental degradation.

These turn of events saw the return of the Neo-classical theorists who explained the retardation of development as a consequence of state intervention in the economy which ended up distorting production and development hence the inability of these economies to sustain economic growth.

⁵ More literature can be found in Gillis et al 1996 Economics of development. W.W.Norton and company New york.

Finn Tarp Stabilization and structural adjustments

Lensink R. 1996. Structural adjustment in Sub Saharan Africa. Long publishing New york.

(Gillis et al 1996:68) Therefore the foremost imperative for development was to eliminate market distortions and enable the magic of the market to run its course (Biersteker 1995). The emphasis was for the state to devolve its role to market forces, which are assumed to enhance growth and efficiency and consequently put into motion an equitable distribution of resources. Despite the shift in these development paradigms development continued to elude policy makers hence the shift in development discourse.

1.3 The problem with conventional development strategies

Whereas development within the framework of formal social sciences of the late 1950s produced some very incredible quantification often at such high costs, there was very little involvement of the stakeholders. A fact which ranks highest among the causes for the failure of conventional development paradigms that were aimed to improve the lives of majority of the poor in developing countries. This is because conventional approaches to development, value the technical knowledge of the outsider as opposed to indigenous knowledge of the people for whom development is directed.

As a result general scientific based solutions divorced from the everyday context of the people were formulated in response to highly localised problems. Attempts to impose these standard top down programmes and projects on diverse local realities where they do not fit or meet needs.' (Chambers 1997) has demotivated ordinary people, whose energies are most needed to be mobilized in the development efforts.(World Bank report 1989:3)

This paternalistic intervention strategies which concentrated power privileges and wealth in the hands of a few, offered general solutions which were not relevant to real life complexities which are specific to a particular time and place. The result was that the interventions further marginalised the poor who while being uprooted from their traditional life have become alienated from their own social contexts and have in turn internalised this negative self image perceiving themselves as poor. Hence, not only do they suffer from economic impoverishment but also from loss of identity and ability to develop endogenously and authentically within their culture, resulting in a 'deeper human misery which economists and scientists are not trained to recognise (Rahman 1990: 217).

The fact is that it is difficult to understand local problems unless we get an idea of the structural imperfections and emotions that shape the people (Edwards 1993) Participatory development arose as a reaction to this realised failure. The argument was for a sustainable development paradigm, which is people centred,

a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and to manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed income improvements in their quality of life consistent with their aspirations." (Kortens in Jan Pietersee 1996:9)

Therefore for development to be relevant it must engage the participation of poor people in the development endeavours aimed at them as opposed to the use of scientific knowledge which separates theory from practise. This is because development cannot be studied and made relevant in the abstract. In order to change the world and to understand the problems of the people successfully we need to participate with the people in the development process.

1.4 Emergence of PAR

Participatory development paradigms explain the phenomenon of economic growth retardation as emanating from lack of incorporating the participation of the people involved, in development initiatives aimed at them. This is because conventional development paradigms classified the vast majority of people as poor and therefore as objects of sympathy whose lives could only be improved through paternalistic intervention and assistance (Rahman 1990) based on new scientific technologies and methods. However the participatory stream of thought presupposes that power is inherent in the people and in order to achieve equitable development it is significant that people organise to participate in initiatives aimed at them.

According to Falls Borda this need was felt much earlier in the 1960s when those who had the privilege of taking part in the cultural political and scientific vivencia tried to response to the dismal situation of our societies (Falls Borda 1991)

The need for this paradigm shift evolved not only as a result of the development crisis but also as a discourse that was seeking alternative development paradigms that would address the plight of people at the grassroots sidelined by development policies which were based on conventional consumerist perceptions of development. These ideologies emphasise consumerist liberalism which seeks to eradicate poverty in economic material terms and which according to Rahman has ‘a negative motivational impact on the society’ (Rahman 1990)

Indeed there was need to redefine and shift the concept of development. Hettne reiterates this by stating that the ‘the major debate on the issue of cultural imperialism and the need for intellectual self-reliance in the third World took place in the 1970s. (Hettne 1990:74) The emerging school of thought laid emphasis on the need to create space for the full participation of the people in decision making in order for them to achieve their development needs and aspirations given their specific situations and life evaluations.

Rahman Concurs with this concept when he states that 'the best promise for development lay with the initiatives of the ordinary people (Rahman 1993). This line of thought is emphasised by Kortens who defines development as a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources. And to produce sustainable and justly distributed income improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations (Kortens in Pietersee 1996). It is therefore right that poor people get empowered in order to be in charge of their own destinies (Chambers 1990).

Out of this discourse emerged several participatory development strategies that aim at putting people at the centre of development. This stream of thought presupposes that power is inherent in the people as opposed to conventional development theories, which alienate the participation of the people in development initiatives aimed at them, consequently leading to apathy. PAR is one alternative development strategy that has been used as a process to initiate a people centred development.

Whereas this paper will not address in depth the principles and processes of the other participatory methods. Table 1 lists the other participatory methodologies that have emerged. These methodologies can be grouped into two criteria. For instance whereas PRA PAR RRA emphasise on the principle of empowerment especially for those who are weak and vulnerable, the rest are attempts to involve farmers into the process of identification of priorities in the design conduct and analysis of experiments and in monitoring and evaluation. They are mostly project oriented as opposed to PAR which aims at enabling the weak to attain countervailing power for challenging unjust inequitable structures.

**Table 1: Some participatory approaches that have developed since the 1970s
(In alphabetical order)**

AEA	Agro-ecosystem Analysis
BA	Beneficiary assessment
DELTA	Development Education Leadership teams
D&D	Diagnosis and design
DRP	Diagnostic rural participativo
FPR	Farmer Participatory research
FSR	farming Systems Research
GRAAP	Groupe de recherche et d'appui pour l'auto-promotion paysanne
MARP	Methode Accelere de recherche participative
PALM	Participatory analysis and learning Methods
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PD	Process documentation
PRA	Participatory rural Appraisal
PRAP	Participatory rural Appraisal and planning
PRM	Participatory research methods
PTD	Participatory Technology Development
RA	Rapid Appraisal
RAAKS	Rapid Assessment of agricultural knowledge systems
RAP	Rapid Assessment procedures
RAT	Rapid Assessment Techniques
RCA	Rapid catchment Analysis
REA	Rapid Ethnographic Assessment
RFSA	Rapid Food security assessment
RMA	Rapid Multi-perspective Appraisal
ROA	Rapid Organisational Assessment
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SB	Samuhik Brahman (Joint trek)
TFD	Theatre For Development
TFT	Training For Transformation

Source Cornwall Guijt and Welbourn 1993: 4 in Chambers 1997:361⁶.

⁶ Literature on the basic principles and methodologies of the participatory methods listed in Table 1: Poffenberger et al. 1992, Longhurst 1981, Chambers 1992a, 1992b, Conway 1985, Bagaduion and Korten 1991, Uphoff 1992, Fernandez 1993.

1.5 PAR

PAR is an empowering process, which, according to Robin McTaggart, enables the stakeholders to improve the rationality, justice, coherence and satisfactoriness of their own situations the understanding of their praxis and the institutions and programmes within which this praxis is carried out (McTaggart 1994). Bergdall reiterates this by stating that PAR,

is built upon a central underlying assumption...[that] rural people can be agents of their own development. Though development is a complex process involving many factors, there is no need for villagers to wait for others to take the lead, be they government officials, academic experts, or foreign donors. Development "by the people" has a much greater potential for sustainability than development "for the people" (Bergdall T. 1993).

However PAR goes a step further for whereas it builds potential for sustainable development it also endeavours to empower the weak to acquire power or countervailing power through techniques from the grassroots. From the periphery up to the centre so as to form social movements to challenge oppressive structures in favour of justice and equity without necessarily seeking to establish hierarchy Falls Borda (1991).

1.6 PAR: The problem

Whereas PAR promises a feasible alternative development strategy, it is bedecked with several problems that affect the successful implementation of the PAR process a review of this process reveals limitations that continue to constrain PAR in development initiatives. While this study acknowledges the existence of other limitations inherent in the PAR approach this study zeros down to power relations in the PAR process. This is because, whereas power relations are given to be equitable, in community contexts this is often not the case, the reality is that power relations is very complex and often times inequitable on most social levels, consequently inhibiting full and effective participation of the disadvantaged groups. It is therefore significant to study this phenomenon for it has such major implications to knowledge creation and participation and consequently the success of PAR. This study therefore aims at exposing these limitations in a bid to explore and formulate strategies that can address and transform power relations which will consequently facilitate effective implementation of the PAR process.

1.7 Problem: Empirical evidence.

In my work as a participatory action research facilitator at the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) I came across situations that frustrated my objectives which was to conscientise communities I was working with on the significance of PAR in their development aspirations.

As I visited communities it occurred to me that there were some very fundamental questions that needed to be addressed especially in relation to full and effective participation of community members in the PAR conscientisation process. It also occurred to me that, whereas I was trying to humble myself and learn in the process, the fact is that this was not the case. I was instead condescending and therefore creating a superficial relationship with the communities hence affecting the whole process.

Further in as much as I tried to condescend, the communities always felt intimidated by the presence of my colleagues and I, who having travelled from the city to the rural areas were perceived to be of a different social status and therefore in some cases were treated with utmost caution and suspicion. This undermined the very essence of the process to the extent that when we ceased contact with the communities the PAR process that we had hoped to be put into motion also died its own death. We were baffled. What were we not doing right? Could it be explained that while working within the old paradigms and structures we were still creating dependency, or was it a question of power relations? An in depth observation revealed some very disconcerting tendencies that constrained the process. There was definitely a problem with participation. The disadvantaged felt intimidated, why was this so? While there are other aspects that need to be studied, this research will aim at exposing the concept of power relations and how this affects knowledge creation and consequently participation. The objective is to reclaim PAR for it is a methodology with a potential for societal transformation.

1.8. Justification

Why does development discourse keep shifting? Why are paradigms formulated and thrown off whenever they do not produce expected results? This study aims at reclaiming PAR as a development strategy. It is high time that scholars need to realise that development cannot be theorised since development is about change, which is ever occurring. Development is best described in terms of paradigms, which coalesce within time and space. Hettne contends that development theories or paradigms need to be inclusive rather than exclusive due to the complex interdisciplinary nature of development (Hettne 1990). It is therefore a pity that useful development discourses have been thrown out lock stock and barrel and energy expended into the formulation of new theories to replace the old. This study will therefore also aim at disproving this tendency through theoretical and empirical analysis in order to formulate strategies to reclaim PAR. This is because a study of the basic principles of PAR portray a development strategy which is capable of not only raising the physical welfare of the people, but also a transformation of individuals, the society and unjust social structures. In essence a

transformation of the whole socio economic political environment to one that constitutes, according to McTaggart, 'rationality, justice, coherence and satisfactoriness' (Mc Taggart 1990:317). The study will therefore try to analyse power constraints to PAR in a bid to explore and formulate other alternative strategies, which can be incorporated in PAR to enhance the effectiveness of this process in development. This will also offer a contribution for future application into the PAR discourse.

1.8. *Research methodology.*

The research methodology employed in this study involved the collection of secondary data from which an in-depth detailed analysis of the competing theoretical conceptions advanced to define PAR is drawn. This was carried out through literature review of books, Journals, working papers and the vast information network on the internet on Participatory Action Research.

To contextualise this concept, two case studies from Indonesia and Kenya are examined. These offer empirical evidence, which illustrate and highlight the problems with conventional development practices in order to justify the shift in paradigm to a participatory approach to development. However the PAR approach is also not immune to problems as illustrated in the cases. Whereas some of the discrepancies that inhibit the successful application of the PAR process are highlighted, we are also able to draw lessons from some of the successes of the cases and from some of the theoretical critiques of PAR. In conclusion the study formulates alternative strategies to enhance the PAR approach.

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2.0 *Conceptual framework*

2.1 *Introduction.*

This chapter will aim at carrying out a comparative analysis of the definitions that have been advanced to conceptualise PAR. The Chapter will also carry out a conceptualisation of the following variables, which form the framework of analysis for this study;

- power;
- knowledge; and
- participation.

The concept of power is significant in the analysis of PAR. The reason for this is based on the contention that, whereas power might seem salient in the PAR process it has major implications on participation, and plays a major role in determining the success of any PAR initiative.

While power might not determine knowledge creation processes it however plays a major role information transmission which has major implications to participation. It is significant that these concepts be understood in order to make clear the premise on which we will base our analysis. This is because these variables have different connotations in different contexts, and whereas they might seem salient in PAR the interface between these three variables are key in determining the success of any PAR process.

2.2 *Towards a conceptual framework of PAR*

PAR as yet can not claim to have a convergent theoretical position however certain concerns and ideological positions are increasingly becoming similar while methodological similarity in application is also being observed. The dichotomies in PAR positions and approaches are manifest in the focus of address by the proponents of this theory. A cross section of the varied focus encompasses communication, access, basic needs and decentralisation. Other Proponents of PAR according to Rahnema have tried to capture the essence of participation in the context of power. For instance UNRISID⁷ discussion paper's definition of popular participation proposes that it is "The organised efforts to increase control over resources and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control" (UNISIR as Quoted in Rahnema 1990).

⁷ (United Nations Research Institute For Social Development) discussion paper as quoted in Rahnema 1990

While PAR shares some fundamental principles of research, this approach however deviates from conventional basic research, often also referred to as 'pure'⁸ research. The basic dichotomy according to Kimmel is that 'whereas pure science produces knowledge for its own sake it remains unchallenged by practical, concrete social problems and issues' (Kimmel 1988:10). While action research, which is also a social science contributes to social science knowledge, which according to Salih is about society, and enables social scientists relate in some way to the society which constitutes the objective of their study (Salih and Hurskainen 1993)

PAR as opposed to pure science seeks to encompass reflection in action. According to Rahman 'The basic ideology of PAR is that a self-conscious people those who are currently poor and oppressed will progressively transform their environment by their own praxis.' (Rahman 1993:82) Rahman acknowledges the role others may play in community empowerment, he however contends that they may play a supportive role but will not dominate.

Falls Borda stipulates that PAR is not necessarily only research oriented neither is it adult education or socio political action but that it encompasses all three not in a consecutive manner but as an experiential methodology that implies the acquisition of serious reliable knowledge upon which power and countervailing power for the poor, oppressed and exploited can be constructed for their authentic 'organisations and movements'. This liberating knowledge enables the oppressed to 'acquire sufficient creative and transforming leverage as expressed in specific projects, acts and struggles and to produce socio political thought processes with which popular bases can identify.' (Falls Borda 1991:4)

Despite the divergence most concepts advanced to explain PAR converge on the similarity in the application of methods and approaches which according to Chambers combine action, reflection, participation and research. (Chambers 1997) This PAR methodology enhances local people's awareness in a manner that empowers them and raises their self-esteem and confidence to challenge structures that inhibit their potentials. A Pedagogy which according to Freire engages the poor in the struggle for their liberation (Freire 1972). This process is also beneficial to professionals for it engages them to act and reflect on what they do while also learning from the experiences of action.

⁸ Basic researchers favour the term 'pure' research. The assumption is that basic research is objective and morally neutral hence value free as the main purpose is often the impersonal pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. However some critics of basic scientific research contend that it is immoral not to use knowledge we have from theoretical research to try and diffuse real-life social problems while others have critiqued the use of this kind of knowledge to initiate life threatening inventions like the atomic bomb and its application in Hiroshima and further the unethical procedures that harm the subjects during a theoretical study. Abuse of these knowledge on

Probably Rahnema gives the most comprehensive definition of PAR. He tries to synchronise Borda's and Rahman's and other theorists' definition of PAR by stating that

'the aim of participation is to achieve a special kind of power-People's power-which belongs to the oppressed and exploited classes and groups and their organisations and the defence of their just interests to enable them to advance towards shared goals of social change within a participatory political system'
(Rahnema 1990)

While for the purpose of this study this definition is most appropriate, for in achieving *people's power*, the exploited class is able to gain leverage over the oppressors and unjust social economic political systems. However, the limitation here is the danger of a re-emergence of the old asymmetrical system, which is perpetuated according to Freire to the question of the state of being. He says that 'As long as they live in a duality where *to be* is *to be like*, and *to be like* is *to be like the oppressor*' (Freire 1972) then transformation of the social environment is impossible. The pedagogy of the oppressed needs to enhance a critical awareness and discovery that both the oppressed and the oppressors are manifestations of dehumanisation hence the need for a total transformation of the whole environment. Freire reiterates that this is a painful process however he says that 'the man [woman] who emerges is a new man [woman] viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanisation of all men [women]' (Ibid).

The other flaw in this conception is the assumption that the oppressed are a homogenous unit. This is not the case for almost all social groups inadvertently experience internal power dynamics that form group strata with structures that can tend to be oppressive to those at the lowest echelons of power within a supposedly homogenous group. For instance gender relations in most communities place women at the lower echelons of power where they are double oppressed if they happen to be within the oppressed group, as we shall analyse in this study. Thus true to Freire's supposition, the concept of liberation should apply to all. The oppressed within the oppressed group and also among the oppressors. It is indeed a painful and taxing process. The analysis of PAR in this study will therefore study these power relations at all levels of social groups since while features may seem salient they are very detrimental to the success of PAR.

2.3 Power.

'what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things. It induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourses. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (Foucault in Gordon (Ed) 1980:119)

Power like most important words has many meanings. Its widest meaning is that of a potential for change. It has special meaning in physics and though not used much in biological sciences it is of significant importance in understanding human social systems. (Boulding 1989) This is echoed by Nelson and Wright who perceive power as a description of how people stand in relation to each other in the socio economic political systems. For them it is a relation and not a “thing” which people “have” (Nelson and Wright 1997). Albert Camus underscores this by portraying that human relations can be explained and understood within the context of power relations where hierarchies, weakness and subordination portrays the kind of power relationship that is in place. He illustrates this by stating that

We can't do without dominating others or being served... even the man on the bottom rung still has his wife, or his child, if he is a bachelor, his dog. The essential thing, in sum is being able to get angry without the other person being able to answer back.

(Albert Camus 1956)

This is true for as observed earlier even within social groups that seem homogenous power dynamics play quite a role in determining group interrelationship. This signifies that power relations vary in contexts and according to persons depending on which social strata an individual occupies in a group for this determines on which axes of power he is. For instance one may enjoy the privilege that power brings depending on his position on the power axes while simultaneously suffer all the insults of domination and subordination.

According to Kruijer the concept of power is far too abstract and wide hence the difficulty in the distinction between harmful power and harmless power. For him ‘Power has a negative connotation’ and most social scientists have arrived at a convergent conception that perceives power as the ability to further the objectives of other persons or groups over the others by limiting the behavioural choices of the others or persons or groups. (Kruijer 1987) This conception concurs with Dorothy Rowe’s perception of power in which she contends that

In the final analysis power is the right to have your definition of reality prevail over other people’s definition of reality (Dorothy Rowe, 1989:16)

In this perspective can empowerment one of the core principles of PAR therefore be positive? Yes. Power can be positive. According to Foucault he contends that in defining the aspect of power as purely repressive, one adopts a purely juridical conception of power which identifies power with the law which says no, where power is taken above all and carries the force of prohibition. For Foucault this is a narrow myopic negative and skeletal way of looking at power. His question is that if power was not anything but repressive, would one be brought to obey it? He contends that

'what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things. It induces pleasure, forms knowledge, and produces discourses. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (Foucault in Gordon (Ed) 1980:119)

Boulding concurs with Foucault in contradicting Kruijer's conception of power. He proposes that the term power can be used to describe the ability to achieve common ends for families groups social movements (Boulding 1989) and in this context community action. Chambers underscores this by contending that power in the context of development is an asset for with it things get done and that many of the good things which have been achieved have been initiated through the guts vision and commitment of one or a few people at the top. (Chambers 1997).

Chambers perception of the positive aspect of power above perhaps reflects how power can be a useful tool in development. Kruijer differs with Chambers and Foucault terminology for he refers to this kind of positive outlet to power as leadership, which he sees as essential for progress. This is because it is essential to have a vanguard whom people can follow with confidence and enthusiasm hence furthering their advance or progress.' (Kruijer 1987).

In my opinion power, which is expressed in terms of leadership is probably more; plausible since most power relations connote a hierarchy which designates others to the lower echelons while leadership in my perception does not connote a hierarchichal relationship. It presupposes a flat relationship where one takes the lead only with the acceptance of the others and as such provides an atmosphere of confidence and enthusiasm amongst those who have consented on his/her taking the leadership. In this context the good things that might have happened according to Chambers perception of power might not necessarily be due to power but due to disguised coercion and fear of exclusion which in my opinion has characterised the top-down development strategies formulated from outside communities. Nevertheless the good things might also have been as a result of leadership which can be construed to mean positive power.

The above divergent perceptions of power serves to demonstrate the complexity of the power discourse and analysis which has taken centre stage in social science debate since the 1960s. This concept was made even more complex by the inclusion of such concepts as participation and empowerment which assumes that some can act on others to give them power or to enable them realise their hidden potentials. Wright and Nelson in a bid to throw more light into this debate prefer to categorise power into three models. The first, the 'power to' which is more at personal level, when one develops ones self-esteem and hence the undoing of internalised suppression. The second, the power over the ability to negotiate and influence close relationships and the third the

decentred aspect of power, which connotes power as emanating from collective action for greater impact.

2.3.1 *The 'Power to'*

The power to is metaphorically compared to human development. The supposition here is that power can grow infinitely if worked on and growth of power of one does not debilitate the growth of power in the other. In this context (Hartsock 1984) perceives 'power to' model as energy which is ever-expanding and stimulating activity in each other to realise what knowledge potentials can be mobilised in a collective way. (Hartsock 1984 in Wright and Nelson 1997).

It is hence perceived as transformative and empowering. This model is compatible with the PAR process for it is applicable in PAR process where empowerment starts with a critical reflection of reality in a bid to gain more understanding and consequently building capacities and 'power to' transform oppressive structures. (Freire 1972 and Orlando Falls Borda 1988) Giddens underscores this by noting that this notion of power enables people to gain more spaces of control. He argues that whereas the people are not powerless to begin with this critical reflection process raises people's self-confidence and esteem and hence enables the people to transform power relations through behavioural and attitudinal changes. At this juncture this 'power' to model overlaps with the next model which is the power over.

2.3.2 *'Power Over'*

This stage according to Wright and Nelson follows from Rowland's 'power to' stage where personal realisation of power synergised into collective action enables the marginalised to influence structures in their locality and at times beyond their locality. This enables them to gain treatment as equal partners in the access to resources and decision making that affect their livelihoods. 'This expansion of 'power to' to the point where they tackle 'power over' may be described as the second stage of empowerment.

The notion of the 'power over' model is that power unlike the 'power to' model is not infinite. It starts from a zero point and is only observed in cases of conflict where power over connotes a collective bid to influence others perception of reality from the perception of those who have power even through coercive measures.

2.3.3 *Decentred Power*

Ferguson 1994 introduces the third 'decentred' model of power, which as opposed to the previous view perceives power as not a thing to be possessed (Ferguson 1994), but as being subjectless. A tool consisting of discourse, institutions, actors and a flow of events interacting invisibly often within the ambit of the state and with a logic that is apparent only afterwards. (Wright and Nelson 1997). This best describes the post war development discourse and practise, which according to Escobar defined other countries as less, developed. Hence the justification for the intervention strategy to tackle the problems of these underdeveloped areas formulated by international organisations and conferred upon the less developed countries through the state machinery, which was seen to be apolitical. However the multiplicity of development oriented project dynamics created state departments and the military hence the expansion of state power. These seemingly apolitical interrelationship served to drive the hegemony of other states over the economically weaker ones.

The failure of these model of decentred power in development has resulted in a shift in operations to professed decentring of power through basing development ideals from the perception of the people. The apprehension however is that how can those who wield power over others profess to empower the powerless? Rowland notes that any notion of empowerment being given by one group to another hides an attempt to keep control. The argument is that this potential bottom up approach can be manipulated to perpetuate disguised top-down attitudes and approaches.(Rowland 1992:52)

The 'power to' notion observes that power is intrinsic and hence grows from within and is able to stimulate others to realise their potentials. A synergy of power to evolves into 'power over' which can have great impacts on structural transformations and is only observed in conflict situations. These two notions of power compliment the notion of power as PAR proponents define it. The contradiction however is that in aiming to transform the whole social economic set-up in favour of the disadvantaged PAR may fall into a pitfall of contradiction. This is because structural transformation may aim to elevate the oppressed who in aiming to be like the oppressors in turn might end up oppressing others.(Freire 1972) Thus empowerment from the duality of being is not beneficial to society. This is because the whole social economic political system needs an overhaul. While Freire's contention serves as a transformation for the whole social set up it is however rather idealistic and utopian for it is a situation difficult to achieve.

The concept of power is therefore quite complex and is derided with many difficulties. Rahnema takes this debate further by contending that the very notion of empowerment is questionable for

this notion assumes that others have power and its secret formula which can be initiated to empower others who are assumed to be powerless. This contradicts with the 'power to' concept which holds that power is inherent in people. Thus empowerment according to the decentred concept of power may only serve to transform the other to perceive reality from another perspective alienating one from one's life source power.(Rahnema 1990)

The debate on the definition of power is a long-running one in the social sciences. However Foucault's conception of power enables us to perceive power from a positive aspect, that is it can be harnessed into a positive tool for PAR whose objectives according to Rahnema is to facilitate the achievement of people's power. The three models of power as expounded by Nelson and Wright give a substantial explanation on power, which is observed from three perspectives, It is therefore possible to contextualise the theories of power within these three power dimensions. However for the purpose of this study we will define power in the framework of Foucault's argument and contextualise it within Nelson and Wrights contention of 'power to' and 'power over.' These three notions also offer a framework within which this study will analyse power, which is a central issue in PAR. This is because the process of PAR, as analysed above attempts to transform power relations to encompass the two dimensions of power. That is power to which entails developing power which is inherent in us and then harnessing it into power over for the purposes of transformation of prohibitive structures.

2.4 Knowledge.

Like power, knowledge is not something that is possessed and accumulated. (Foucault, in Gordon 1980) nor can it be measured in terms of quantities or quality as it emerges out of processes of social interaction. It is therefore essentially a joint product of the encounter and fusion of horizons and experiences. Hence like power it should be perceived in terms of interrelations as opposed to possessions that can be depleted.. In this sense a 'Zero-Sum model is misplaced' for the fact that one possesses power or knowledge does not mean that the others have none.

In life however power and knowledge have constantly been reified as we often think of them as material things to be possessed by agents, yet perceived also as unquestioned givens, hence the unceasing tension which long refers to as the 'struggle over meaning and control of strategic relationships and resources' (Norman Long in Long and Long 1992).

In contrast Mundy and Compton contend that Knowledge resides in people and cannot be communicated. It is created in the minds of people as a result of each persons perception of the environment and interaction with others. (Mundy and Compton 1995) In this respect only

information can be communicated. How? *Knowledge is encoded in the minds of an individual and as information. The receiver then decodes this/ analyses it and forms connotations related to memorised to knowledge that he or she has. The receivers reactions verbal or otherwise form feedback which may in turn create new knowledge. (Ibid) (My own emphasis)* The convergence here is that knowledge like power emerges out of social interrelation with others and with the environment.

In the above perspective, Knowledge then is created within the framework of the social context of the observer whose own perceptions, values and social experience determine what is perceived, what is abstracted what is distilled and the reality that is ultimately constructed. Accordingly construction of the reality of individuals rests with them since the creation of knowledge relevant for their survival and destiny can only be effectively and relevantly carried out within their social frameworks and based on the knowledge they have acquired through their praxis.

For most people life takes place within limited spaces. However decisions made at global, level does affect local situations. For instance World Bank plans formulated in Washington have far reaching effects for the survival chances of rain forest communities. (Hamelink 1994)

This conception rules out the fallacy that has dominated development initiatives for a long time. Wherein the professionals and the 'educated' have been perceived as the only qualified agents able to generate knowledge and construct reality for development action as they have been known to be the repositories of knowledge and wisdom necessary for development, (Rahman 1993) Theories on knowledge have ruled out this argument. As we have observed the theories imply that knowledge cannot be transferred since it is formed out of the social context within which an individual interrelates. From this perspective planned development which is based on scientific blueprint is not knowledge relevant to the peoples social contexts but is alien information which undermines and dampens the creativity of the people consequently making people dependent and unable to participate in defining their destinies.

In this sense endogenous development as presupposed in the PAR process is not possible if it is based on information transmitted from knowledges formed elsewhere (Ibid:219). Development however cannot be successful based only on endogenous knowledge since praxis has been influenced by information from elsewhere and by the changing social economic conditions that have integrated communities into the world economy. Rahman does not question the validity of professionals however knowledge generated by professionals for the people falls within the premise of structural subordination. 'If the people are the principle stakeholders in the

development agenda then '*the relevant reality must be the peoples own constructed by them*'.(Ibid 220)

Thus in peoples development reality will be constructed from the grassroots praxis and not by top-down professional investigation. However this does not deny the fact that professionals can contribute to the construction of specific realities for instance macro national or international aspects which the popular forces might not have immediate access to or specific skills to utilise in the construction or assessing of realities. Whereas interaction between the two need to be and constructive and enriching which can popular initiatives should have the right to adapt or reject any external knowledge as appropriate to their situations. Needless to say the professionals also have a chance of being enriched immensely by this interaction.

Indeed unequal relations of power even from beyond the community and even within community spaces can perpetuate the construction of realities based on the knowledge of a few. community elite or on the knowledge of elite from outside the (Global elite). It is therefore pertinent that community realities actually reflect the knowledge praxis of the community but not of the tiny elite minorities. In so doing structures need to be analysed through critical reflections in order to eliminate domination.. However often times elimination of class or elite domination has tended to reproduce new forms of domination. PAR however aims at transforming this state of the art by stimulating popular knowledge which Borda refers to as indigenous science and wisdom, advanced by the people's self enquiry. (Borda 1991) Knowledge on which the people can base their action on.

2.5 Participation.

According to the Oxford English dictionary participation means 'the action or fact of partaking, having or forming part of'(Oxford Dictionary). In the social sciences the notion of participation varies widely (Oak and Marsden, 1984:chapter 2). Whereas Rahman notes that the key concept in participation is the exercising of people's power in thinking and acting and controlling their actions within a framework (Rahman 1993), Rahnema perceives the act of participation from three angles. He contends that participation can be transitive or intransitive; either moral, amoral or immoral; either forced or free; either manipulative or spontaneous. By transitive he means the act of partaking oriented to certain goals as opposed to intransitive where the 'subject lives and partakes without necessarily seeking to achieve any specific purpose'. It acquires a moral aspect when it is aimed at achieving ethically defined goals of which it is always associated with hence It seldom connotes evil or malicious purposes. (Rahnema 1992:116).

Participation is always associated with free exercise however this conception neither confirms to the word or the way it is often put into practise. For instance conventional planners have recognised the significance of undertaking popular development initiatives and have incorporated some form of participation in their development agendas. However most participatory methodologies used by planners are manipulated or teleguided strategies which coerce people into participating, not of one's free will, but due to salient forces inspired or directed by centres outside their control.(Ibid). The World Bank for instance perceives participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank 1994). As opposed to involving the population right from the initial stage of project formulation, most of the World bank projects and other conventional planners are almost always based on blue prints perceived and formulated from without. These only engage the peoples participation at the point of implementation. According to Rahnema this is manipulated participation because whereas the notion of participation is inferred to coercion is subtle for the people are actually led or inspired by centres from without (Rahnema 1992:116)

Participation therefore does not include interactions aimed at violent, destructive, manipulative or human degrading objectives are not considered participatory. Neither are groups brought together to deliberate on negative or undesirable aims. UNRISID on the other hand defines participation as 'the organised efforts to increase control over resources and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control'⁹ Might these actions not involve violence.? PAR's claim for a transformation of the whole social structures might border on revolution, which is always violent. Can revolutionary joint action to challenge structures be refereed to as participation if participation does not involve violence?

What then is authentic participation? Rahnema perceives authentic participation in the context of PAR as the act of partaking out of one's free will a voluntary and free exercise among responsible adults who in participating together discover the joys of conviviality and potentials both as individuals and as members of a group. This enables them reach a humane and fulfilling life. As such participation is not meant only for achieving objectives 'but also to foster the very process leading to it' (Rahnema 1990:209). Participation in this context is therefore perceived as a serious and important activity that can be counterproductive if the participants are self centred and unable to relate to others, or seek to join groups only to impose their opinions on others.

However, according to the resource mobilisation theory that tries to define participation in social movements, the rational individual is motivated to participate in collective action if the gains are

more than what he would achieve on his own. (Foweraker Joe 1995),¹⁰) This concurs with the Neo liberal economic theory of the rational individual who partakes of an activity on the notion that he gains from it (Gillis et al 1996). Whereas Rahnema's perception of participation is not in concurrence with the economic rational individual theory neither with the resource mobilisation theory, it may concur with the authenticity of the concept of participation as inferred to by Falls Borda. He contends that participation is purportedly rooted in the cultural praxis of the common people that is perceived to be 'resplended with feelings and attitudes of an altruistic, co-operative and communal nature and which are genuinely democratic'(Falls Borda Ibid). These endogenous values are described as having survived from original praxis in spite of conquests, violence and all kinds of foreign invasion?

An observation of reality today renders Falls Borda's and Rahnema's contention of participation as myopic in relation to the Neo-Liberal theory of the rational individual and to the social movement theory of resource mobilisation. This is because as community resources have increasingly become scarce due to socio economic political foreign invasions and also as a result of eminent changes from within, communities praxis have changed and individuals have become more self centred. Hence the motivation for collective participation is not only based on the need for conviviality but also on the gains that might emerge. A study of most forms of participation, portray that the act of participation as a means to an end is often more appealing than the concept of participation as an end in itself, hence the problem with the concept of participation in the PAR methodology. To sum Orlando Falls Borda, Anisur Rahman and other many PAR theorists, the aim of participation is to achieve power.

A special kind of power-peoples' power which belongs to the oppressed and exploited classes and groups and their organisations, and the defence of their just interests to enable them to advance towards shared goals of social change within a participatory system (Falls Borda 1988)

In this study therefore the concept of participation will be based on the above definition. However it will be more inclusive as it will be perceived from the notion of being a means to achieve an individuals aspiration in joint effort with others, while at the same time it is an end in itself. This is because when people gain power and are able to challenge prohibitive 'structures in defence of their just interests, then they have achieved the aim of participation which is not only aimed at achieving goals but is aimed at the very essence of fostering participation' (Rahnema 1990:209), which is achieving people's full development.

⁹ Mathias Stieffel and Marshall Wolfe The quest for participation UNRISID mimeographed preliminary report , June 1984:12)

¹⁰ (Foweraker Joe, Theorising social movements, 1995 Pluto press)

2.6 Conclusion

The analysis of these concepts in this chapter has fostered some understanding of the concepts central to the PAR debate. It is evident from the conceptual analysis in this chapter that in order to examine the limitations of PAR it is significant to review the concepts that form the framework of analysis for this study. The reason for this is because these concepts as we have observed evoke different imageries and connotations which differ in meaning depending on the context. For instance whereas most conceptions of power raise negative imageries, Nelson and Wright elucidate the positive aspects of power whereby 'power to' which is inherent in individuals can be harnessed to form power over which is a positive force that can be utilised to challenge prohibitive structures. Chambers concurs with power as a positive force when he contends that power has been used to achieve positive development action.

Participation as a concept has been abused since we have observed that some forms of action referred to as participation is not authentic participation but is rather forced or coerced participation. It is therefore significant to base our analytical concept on the notion of participation that is inclusive. One that aims at achieving an end that is empowerment of the people and also participation as an end in itself. These two concepts are key to the PAR analysis which in this context seeks to revert the disempowerment of the powerless through processes that increase people's critical reflection of themselves and their social political environment.

The assumptions made by PAR processes are the very same constraints to the processes because as we have conceptualised the claims of PAR to empower others are the reasons for its failure as it falls into similar assumptions like conventional development theories. PAR should begin from the premise that people have power and that the PAR methodology should aim at facilitating the capacities of the people's power which is inherent in them in order that they are not alienated a second time.

The limitations that some of these concepts impose on PAR will form the central analysis in the following chapter which will aim at using cases to illustrate the tensions that power evoke in the PAR process and hence the effective application of the PAR methodology in rural development initiatives.

3.0 PAR Practical Problems

3.1 Introduction

One of the major constraints to PAR is the interplay between power and knowledge. This is significant for whereas the concept of power seems subtle, in PAR it can be a very disconcerting force that affects knowledge creation, information transmission, participation and consequently the success of any initiated development process. This chapter will analyse two cases, which will enable us gain insight into the implications of community power relations to the PAR process. The cases will also portray the fallacy of the notion that development can be delivered from above. This will best capture Fritjof Capra's contention that

What economists need to do most urgently is to re-evaluate the entire conceptual foundation and redesign their basic models and theories accordingly. The current economic crisis will be overcome only if economists are willing to participate in the paradigm shift that is now occurring in all fields. (Fritjof Capra 1983)

As the cases will portray, participatory initiatives maybe stimulated and facilitated by some external elements. However any attempt to force it on the people as a carbon copy of other realities based on other knowledges only yields distortions.

Notwithstanding, the cases will underscore the significance of PAR as a useful Process in development. This is because the underlying concept of PAR is to enable the people achieve a special kind of peoples power. Power which belongs to them and which they can mobilise in defence of their just interests to enable them advance towards shared goals of social change within a participatory political system (Rahnema 1990). This empowerment process is significant as it enables the disadvantaged to challenge structures that inhibit their self-realisation. While the methodologies in the application of PAR might differ in the cases that will be illustrated this should not be construed to signify different understandings of what PAR is.

The experiences and lessons drawn from these three cases will reaffirm the significance of PAR in development while also act as pointers to the exploration of ways in which power relations can be reconfigured to bring participation to a new level. Integrating the strengths of political economy and a participatory methodology that puts people first. One that does not discriminate or privilege particular sectors, but one that places subjugation and poverty as social evils to be overcome through transformation of structures rather than the usual norm of alleviating them.

The two cases will be drawn from two regions both in the developing countries. One case excerpted from Dan Connel 1997 is based on PAR experience in an Indonesian village. This case will illustrate the fallacy of top down conventional development as opposed to the participatory approach which is a methodology that is more feasible and more promising. The underlying currents in this case will be the interplay between power relations and how it affects participation. The participatory approach will portray that once power relations and knowledge creation and transmission is reconfigured then participation becomes,

'an emancipatory approach to development in which inequalities and inequities are addressed together in order to re-configure society to the benefit of the majority whereby people will gain the capacity to define their destinies as they see fit. This demands a delicate and evolving balance between guidance and support, facilitation and response, on the part of the developing agent. from the initial stages in order for development to be meaningful. (Dan Connel 1997)

The other case will illustrate my involvement with the PAR process in the Central Province of Kenya. Herein the interplay of power relations between us the facilitators and the community and within the community itself will be shown. These power relations and their effects on knowledge creation among communities will portray how these consequently affect community participation in participatory development initiatives.

3.2 *The 100 to 1 Cow project*

Introduction.

The farmers in a small village in the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya in Western New Guinea had rarely, if ever seen a cow before provincial government officials announced the imminent arrival of a boatload of them. If the villagers were shocked they did not register, it, for they had grown accustomed to bizarre surprises from the visiting experts, who periodically dropped by to 'develop' their community. But the incident triggered a series of events that typify the evolution of the debate over 'people's participation' in development.

In the 1980s, when the Iria Jaya cattle raising project was first conceived by development professionals, the target village consisted of 300 households. Most people eked out a living from small-scale, subsistence farming. They supplemented this by raising a pig and a few chickens and by hunting. There were no regular links to the few towns in the district, and apart from the government officials and the occasional itinerant trader, the village had infrequent contact with the outside world. Villagers had to walk a half a day for a bus plying the rural routes. No one owned a

boat large enough to travel more than a short distance away. Government development planners were anxious to introduce beef cattle to the region, a former Dutch colony that fell under Indonesian administration in the 1960s, in order to provide a new source of meat for the countries rapidly growing urban areas.

As the people of the village had migrated to the coast from upland areas known for pig breeding, the planners assumed that the people would adapt easily to the challenges of cattle raising. The visiting experts convened a one-day training programme to introduce the idea to the villagers. Soon afterwards, 1000 beef cattle arrived. Almost at once, they began wreaking havoc. Knee high fences designed to keep pigs from entering the village centre were no barriers to these animals: they trampled gardens, damaged homes, broke tools, and fouled water sources. When the cattle were shooed out of the populated area many wandered into the bush and disappeared.

Within days the farmers met to organise themselves to deal with this menace, known as 'development'. Deciding to hunt the cattle down before they did any more damage, villagers armed themselves with bows and arrows and set out into the surrounding countryside. One by one they killed the cows, until there was only one single animal left alive. Satisfied that the danger was past, they spared the lone survivor, a living memorial to the futility of the 'blueprint' method of development. In which experts designed projects far from the community, and then set out to implant them. In Iria Jaya, the development planners learned a hard lesson about participation but the learning process had barely begun.

A few years after the infamous '100-to-1 cow project' as it came to be known, a development team from the provincial university visited the village to make an assessment of community needs. They were committed to drawing up a development plan that grew out of village input., so they brought no fixed plan with them. The team convened a village assembly, and told the people that this time things would be different. They asked villagers to tell them what they needed, and they promised to do their best to oblige them. When the farmers asked to delay their decision until they could consider it more deeply, the team agreed and left. When they returned a few days later, they convened another assembly where village leaders announced that they had come to decisions: they wanted cows!

Now it was the development agents turn to be shocked, for they knew the story of the ill-fated cow project. They asked how could the farmers risk another debacle after their earlier experience? Why cows and not pigs or poultry why not agricultural extension assistance? Why not new infrastructure for transportation to the market, or food storage facilities? What about health care, literacy, income generation, or any number of innovative approaches to rural development?

Once they began asking these questions the answers were obvious: cows were all that the local people knew of development. Since outsiders brought cows, the question for villagers as they saw it, was only: did they or did they not want more cows? In the end, said most villagers, at least the animals could be a source of meat, or something to sell to passing traders. Better to take them than not.

Reconceiving people's participation.

Fortunately for the villagers, the visiting team grasped the fact that participatory development involves more than simply asking people what they want and then providing it, regardless of probable consequences or the prospects for success. They declined the request for cows and set out instead to engage villagers in a thorough process of self-assessment, in order to ascertain what would benefit them over the long term. One researcher came to live in the village reporting regularly to the supervising team at the university and assisted by a student-team of two women and two men.

Several team members spoke the local dialect. The new field team held a series of meetings with segments of the community. Team members also talked at length to individual villagers, and they mapped out the village economy.

What they discovered was that many households supplemented what they produced or personal consumption with the sale of fruit and vegetables in the nearest market, several days journey from the village. Produce was sold in small lots, always by individual producers who had no knowledge of weights or prices. Invariably they were cheated and came back with far less than their goods were worth. What was needed, at least initially, was not production assistance to grow more, but rather marketing assistance to get more out of what they had. This knowledge provided the basis for the village's first participatory development project.

The project began with a training component as the development agents set out to teach villagers about weights and measures. Once again, however, the outsiders ran head-on into the limits of their assumptions. Residents lacked numeracy, a precondition for mastering the complex system of weighing and pricing through which they being cheated in the marketplace. Once this became clear, the team restructured the training component of the project to prepare villagers on several levels, starting with instruction in simple mathematics. Then the team acquired scales not only for practising concepts, but also for weighing produce prior to taking it to the market. Next they worked with villagers to establish small marketing co-operatives, largely on the basis of extended family units in which four or five people pooled their produce before sending it to town for sale. Finally they helped estimate payment options for these lots of produce, relating weights to potential unit prices before villagers confronted the fast-talking middlemen in the town.

However this entry into the market brought with it new problems and challenges. Once the villagers mastered the system, they discovered that prices continued to fluctuate, sometimes wildly. Their conclusion is that they were being cheated again. Yet closer investigation revealed that the problem lay elsewhere. The local market was responding occasionally and from the standpoint of local producers, unpredictably to the downward pressure of over-supply from outside the region. For example, when a boat load of onions or dried fish arrived from the prosperous island of Surabaya and caused a sudden collapse of local prices. This had devastating consequences for those becoming dependent from these sources.

The 100 to 1 cow project case highlights several assumptions that have frustrated the objectives of conventional development planners while at the same time portraying disconcerting constraints

that hinder effective participation of the people in PAR. Both these frustrations are best analysed within the power concept, since all relations are best explained and understood within and along the axis of power.(Calmus 1956)

For coherence purposes I will divide the project into two phases. The first phase will be the point at which the development planners enter the village up to the point where 'development' is hunted and killed reducing the numbers of the cows to one. The second phase will be the entry of the PAR team through the training phase to where the people begin to encounter market forces beyond their social spaces and realities.

3.2.1 Phase 1. Hunting development

True to the adage that 'knowledge is power', Truman's speech of 1949 portrays the beginnings of disempowerment of two thirds of the worlds population who were perceived as having no power because they had no knowledge. And if they did it was inferior as it was traditionally based and not scientific hence the need to free them from this impoverished disempowering state through the transfer of scientific advances to these countries.

To ensure that this knowledge was passed through to 'free' the backward society, structures of governance were perceived as significant to enforce 'power over' these backward societies and force them to accept modern realities. This premise well illustrates the negative conception of power, which according to Rowe is the ability to impose your definition of reality over others. (Dorothy Rowe 1989) thus concurring with Kruijers contention that most social scientists perceive power as having a negative connotation and hence converge on the conception that power is the ability to further the objectives of others by limiting the behavioural choices of the other persons or groups (Kruijer 1989).

The events of the 100 to 1 cow in the village of Iria Jaya serve to demystify the two conceptions of power as defined above. The prowess of scientific knowledge over authentic traditional knowledge implied in the top down strategy, portrays this kind of power relation and the flaws that are inherent in this perception hence the failure of the project As a result, the unfolding events thereafter expose other facets of power. Power as a positive tool in the context of generating knowledge and facilitating learning. This is complementary to Foucault's notion of power which he perceives as a productive network running through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (Foucault in Gordon Ed 1980: 119) hence building each others capability. PAR is an attempt to reconfigure the notion of power through transforming it for the benefit of society. In essence this is surmised in the words of Rahnema when he contends

that PAR aims at achieving power. A special kind of power, which belongs to, exploited groups for the defence of their interests in order to participate towards a shared goal within a just political participatory system. (Rahnema 1990)

Why did phase one of the project fail so miserably? The ambiguity of this top down strategy is clearly depicted. Let us examine the assumptions of the planners when they entered the community at the first phase. The assumption with planners of the conventional school of thought at phase one of the project was that they knew best what was good for macro level development, that is, provide beef for the growing population in town. This project was doomed to fail at the very outset. Why. First raising the welfare of the Iria Jaya was not the main objective of this project rather they were going to be used as vessels through which the welfare of other communities from beyond their spaces would benefit. Of course at their sweat.

Secondly the plan was incompatible with the realities of the villagers as it was based on notions and knowledge created from outside the social context and reality of the villagers hence the incompatibility. For instance cows were completely alien to the Iria Jaya. The fact that cows are a common phenomenon amongst the professionals who came from the city, their reality was not in conformity with the realities of the villagers further the information they hurriedly transferred was not based on the knowledge of the people. It therefore could not be decoded according to Mundy and Compton's theory, which holds that the receivers of the information in this context the villagers need to have previous knowledge in order to conceptualise what cows were. The Iria Jaya had no previous perception of cows for these animals did not constitute part of their reality hence cows were not significant for them.

Thirdly there was no dialogue, which is a most decisive instrument in the genuine process of social transformation. This is because the people were presumed to be backwards having nothing, hence they were perceived as powerless. This of course ended up alienating the people whose apathy could be observed in the manner by which the meeting was conducted. No questions at all were raised even though the people did not understand one bit what the developers were talking about The Iria Jaya villagers were not given a chance to learn. Subordinate interrelation does not enhance the critical capacity of both actors it hinders learning which is a significant aspect of development.

The strategy therefore alienated the people because, the professionals professed the power of the scientific knowledge legitimised by the dominant state structures hence the people were left out. The lesson here is that it is not enough to consult and act on behalf of the beneficiaries. Rather it is significant to engage people's participation in social actions that affect their destinies.

3.2.2 Phase 2: Reconfiguring the Development strategy.

The second phase of the project brings to light the contradiction that power can only hold negative connotations. Nelson and Wright contend that power can grow infinitely if worked upon. The growth of one's power does not necessarily debilitate the growth of power in the others (Nelson and Wright 1997). This is portrayed in the unfolding of events in the village. At the second stage the agents realise the significance of engaging the people in critical reflection about their situations rather than just having a patronising relation where the people are seen as objects to be changed and who have no 'power to' engaged in the change. In this way the people's self esteem and confidence in relating to development agents is increased to the extent that they are able to engage in dialogue where both parties learn. The lessons for the professionals was that, what they conceived to be the needs of the villagers, that which formed part of their reality, in their social contexts, was not the priority of the villagers. Through the use of PAR methodology the researchers embarked on a learning experience. They were able to learn more about the villagers while the villagers got to learn skills that they did not have in order to build their capacity in numerical skills. This they used to enhance their marketing strategies and to analyse market supply and demand situations that affected them while they also realised unjust practises against them in trading.

Through learning both parties built their Knowledge which according to Rahman cannot be transferred. It can be memorised for mechanical application, but learning he says 'is an act of self discovery which can be stimulated and assisted that enables one to be more creative as opposed to memorising which leads to a more mechanical approach to situations. (Rahman 1993). If this be so then who can have predetermined notion of what change constitutes? We constantly have to learn and adjust to change, which needs a critical mental capacity able to keep pace with it. This is valid since at a certain point the PAR change agents have to withdraw and the people having gained a critical capacity, continue with their life. For instance at the case where the villagers thought that they were being cheated in the market.

However through the development of their critical capacity they were able to analyse the cause of price fluctuations hence it was easier for them to develop proactive strategies to deal with such eventualities. However translating 'power to' into community 'power over' to challenge unjust structures is a difficult process, which PAR has not addressed sufficiently. This is because the PAR process takes place within the old socio economic political framework it is therefore indeed difficult for communities to challenge unjust structures since empowerment of the individual may not include economic empowerment, which is in itself another level of struggle. Lack of economic

empowerment can itself be disempowering since the helplessness which the analytically empowered find themselves in, not having resources to challenge unjust structures can be quite disempowering. This is the stage where the Iria Jaya reached. While they were able to generate 'power to' these could not be amalgamated to form 'power over' to challenge structures that inhibited their self aspirations due to lack of resources and the ability to organise themselves.

3.2.3 The power equation

This methodology portrays two things. One, that power relations between the villagers and the development planners was inequitable hence the imposition of realities on them based on perceptions of the planners created from knowledge created within their social contexts which was not applicable in other spaces. However due to power imbalance the development planners with 'power over' backed by government structures were able to impose their realities on the villagers, for they were implementing policies made at government level. Consequently the project failed for it could not be sustained due to the fact that it was alien to the social environment of the community which was not prepared to take up such a huge consignment of cows at a go, without undergoing a gradual process of learning to adapt and to decode this new knowledge. However the success of the project at the second phase came about due to the fact that it was in conformity with the needs of the villagers hence the full participation.

Participation in development initiatives is also often constrained by power inequity within the community which is often stratified along cultural lines, gender lines or economic lines. Those on the lower strata in the mentioned groups often cannot express their aspirations as they are often overshadowed by the culturally or economically well-off who often are in possession of resources that perpetuate their 'power over' the weak. Hence participation among the rural poor is often not carried out on an equal footing with the facilitators and the rich in the community. Nor do women participate on an equal basis with men, owing mainly to their social standing in pre-existing structures that determine and perpetuate their subordinate positions in the society.

Hence the success of PAR depends to a large extent in breaking the asymmetric relationship of submission or dependence. Thus the cadre of facilitators play quite a significant role in this process. For their attitudes and skills in managing and understanding human relations is vital to the success of PAR initiatives. This is because the moments of crisis and disintegration of tasks, as observed in the case above, often can be traced to personal failures by outside or inside change agents. For they could be influenced and coopted by outside powers to act on the interests of the other powerful. Or corrupted or be caught in the web of weariness due to lack of progress as

transformation, by the way, is not an overnight experience it may take years to achieve the objectives.

The 100 to 1 cow project rightly illustrates the validity of this concept. The case shows how difficult it is to unify the thought patterns of base groups and experts so as to foster mutual confidence and achieve praxis the shared goals of social transformation and peoples power. This is because according to Mundy and Compton knowledge cannot be transferred as it is created in the minds of people as a result of each person's perception of the environment in which they live in and in relations with others. (Mundy and Campton 1995) Hence the need for both parties to realise power transformation to break the asymmetry. Whereas both communities concerned and the facilitators, need to realise this transformation the weight lies more with the facilitators than with the community. This is because of their general ideology and technical qualification that pivots them on a power scale, where interacting with communities whom they consider to be at the lower scale of the power ladder constrains effective dialogue. The facilitators have therefore to make a special effort to achieve modesty, understanding, empathy and a capacity for self-criticism which serves to correct the inevitable lapses in their fieldwork just as the facilitators at the second phase of the Iria Jaya development project did.

According to the just concluded case it is my contention therefore that power does not necessarily have to have a negative connotation as alluded to by Kruijers but that it can be reclaimed to perform good things which according to Chambers have been achieved through the guts, vision and commitment of one or a few people at the top (Chambers 1997). It can therefore be reconfigured to perform positive roles in the PAR process.

3.3 *A case for planned development?*

We nevertheless cannot dismiss planned development in total for it has the potential value for serving human aspirations. However its presupposition of the devaluation of culturally determined behaviour has made it alien to popular efforts for authentic development. Hence the non-identification of the people with the cows project. In fact the cows analogous to development wreaked havoc on the socio economic environmental sustainability of the people in a short while. Which is what top-down development does. In this perspective the villagers were able to track down the cows 'development' and eliminate them. Most often villagers' actions are constrained by the 'power over' inherent in the state and which serves to limit the actions of those over whom power is exercised.

3.2 *The National Council of Churches of Kenya: The PAR approach*

Introduction.

The National Council of churches of Kenya hereafter the NCCCK or the Council was founded in 1943. Its prime objective was to bring together member churches of the different denominations in Kenya so as to work towards a common goal of enhancing Christianity and advocating for the rights and freedom of the local people. The organisation then known as the Christian Council of Kenya was at the forefront of the independence struggle in Kenya educating the people on the need to seek for independence from British rule through peaceful means.

After Kenya gained its independence in 1963 the NCCCK continued to advocate for the voiceless and intervening in development efforts aimed at improving the welfare of the people. The NCCCK was therefore involved in several development initiatives in the regions, for instance the provision of water to communities in arid areas.

This was done through building of dams for water catchment, provision of relief services to drought stricken areas, provision of vocational training for school dropouts in polytechnics and through the provision of health services for low-income urban and rural communities.

However these development efforts did little to improve the welfare of the people. The water projects that the NCCCK initiated in arid areas ceased to function, village polytechnics were run down, relief supplies resulted in a dependent people cattle dips failed to service the needs of the people. This was because most development efforts implemented by the NCCCK were based on foreign and complicated technologies in which the local people had no technical know how. Often such projects were based on scientific knowledge that did not take into consideration the local peoples' knowledge and their priority needs. Consequently most of the projects did not achieve their goals either collapsing or being abandoned, once the project life span expired and the experts left, back to Churchhouse¹¹. Indeed something was not right and there was need to revisit the functional aspect of the NCCCK.¹² In 1989 the NCCCK Mission Conference, provided the NCCCK member churches with an opportunity of reviewing their Vision and Mission. A number of strong recommendations to guide the work of the Council were formulated. As their Council, the churches wished the NCCCK to reflect the needs of contemporary Kenya and to enable the churches to respond to those needs. In other words the churches challenged the NCCCK to move from an implementing role to a facilitating one. A role that would work towards empowering the churches and communities to take charge of their own situations and initiate development goals that are in conformity with their needs and aspirations.

¹¹ NCCCK Headquarters in Nairobi.

¹² In general the failure of the top-down approach has been an eye opener to the need to revisit development approaches by institutions involved in development work. This is manifest in the failure of planners whose efforts have ended up in huge deficits which can only be met with massive foreign assistance. This is true of the World Bank Structural Adjustment austerity measures in Kenya which have affected the livelihoods of local communities resulting in high rates of poverty. The same can be said of the NCCCK whose development strategy basically designed in accordance with the top-down development approach was unable to effectively articulate the interests of rural, communities and hence suffered from some of the problems of traditional approaches to development

In an effort to implement this renewed vision the NCKK had to undergo several restructuring processes and a reevaluation of development strategies so as to identify appropriate ones. One aspect of this deliberation was the initiation of an intensive evaluation process, which was carried out in two phases. The results of these evaluations underscored the need for the NCKK to shift its strategy in development efforts to incorporate alternative bottom up development strategies as opposed to the mainstream top down process that has been carried out since. A development paradigm shift that promised a new popular, bottom up and popular endogenous version of development distinct from conventional perceptions of development.

One which aims at designing social change by the people on the basis of their reality and aspirations, albeit an approach which aims at achieving power and not only growth. It is in this perspective PAR was identified as one of the strategies that the NCKK needed to incorporate in this development shift. It is in this context that I being the co-ordinator of the NCKK research department, reformulated the program objectives of the department to incorporate PAR as a methodology that would empower communities to fully participate in development initiatives on the basis of their knowledge.

The illustration that I will use here might not be exhaustive since I was not able to see to the end, the PAR initiatives that we started due to a number of reasons. One, despite the fact that I had enough funds to run the project I could not continue since the NCKK was undergoing some very crucial financial difficulties consequently projects had to be stalled and funds re-channelled to crucial priority areas. Nevertheless I will illustrate using Mwea District as a case since it is in this area that the project was able to reach the third phase.

The PAR strategy: Mwea.

when I first envisioned the need to shift the programmatic strategy of the research department of the NCKK the structure was first to introduce the PAR concept to Church leaders and church development workers. It was crucial that they appreciated this concept and identify with it for then would be it be easier to utilise the church structures to increase awareness creation about this concept to other development workers in the field and to congregations. In this respect I planned for a series of workshops that started at the provincial level. Here I invited church development workers through the church leaders since they knew who among the social workers in their areas was involved in community development activities. We requested for gender balance and insisted that women were also invited.

The expectation was that after the initial introduction of the PAR methodology process through a process of critical reflection, the participants at this first stage would appreciate and begin to own this concept. This would facilitate the PAR process at the next stage, which was to be at the district level. Here more development workers at the district level would be introduced to the concept through a critical reflection methodology by the facilitators who had already been introduced to the concept at the provincial level. This was to be done with minimal support from the NCKK.

From the District level the next stage would be awareness building at location level. Here community development workers and progressive individuals enthusiastic in development initiatives would be the target group of facilitators who were introduced to the concept at District level. Eventually the participants at location level would transcend to sub-location levels to carry on this PAR process at community and at congregational level where the PAR process would be transformed into action.

Whereas I had sufficient funds to cover the project, I was however not able to see the process through in most provinces due to Staff capacity which was low and overwhelmed by the enormity of the program. Scarcity of funds in the NCKK hence the diversion of funds meant to cover the PAR project. Cultural inclination difference between several groups in Kenya and their enthusiasm to development projects.

For this reason, I will therefore use my experience of Mwea to illustrate my point since it is in this region that the PAR process was able to transcend to community level. Herein also enthusiastic community social workers were able to continue with this concept with only minimal support from the NCKK research department.

After the initial PAR introduction at Provincial level, two participants from Kirinyaga District took up the initiative of organising for a follow up workshop at District level to raise awareness to an even larger group of community workers. There were a large number of women also invited to this workshop. A step towards gender sensitivity. We were invited to assist in facilitating some sessions at the workshop. What we did was to facilitate a session on critical reflection of the social economic political state of the art of the people and the region. Out of this came an awareness of the problems that compounded the area and the ineffectiveness of government action in solving the problems.

It was realised that the government could no longer be waited upon to respond to the needs of the people due to several factors that we were obliged to point out. The debt crisis and the resulting structural adjustment programs and corruption within government bureaucracy. It was therefore reiterated that it was up to the people to take action into their own hands to improve their welfare instead of waiting in vain for government assistance that would almost never come or come too late. It was also significant that they become aware of corrupt government practices so that as they initiate community action they needed to realise the significance of challenging these corrupt structures that hinder their development endeavours. Out of this workshop several recommendations were formulated and one was to carry on the process at location level which was more at community level.

The next workshop that followed was at Mwea sub-location. We were again invited to attend the first meeting at the location level. We took a back sit in order to learn from the experiences of the people at community level. The community facilitators scheduled a session for introducing ourselves. We asked the participants what their perception was of the NCKK. Some of the revelations that came out were very outstanding. For instance they equated the NCKK with a political party of which they wanted no involvement, others perceived the NCKK as devil worshippers who had so much money to give to projects in order to win the peoples following. Well we did have a chance to verify what the NCKK stood for and to

reaffirm to them that we were invited to their meeting to learn from their experiences while they could also learn from ours. This calmed the hostility with which we were perceived.

The facilitators then went into a session of critical reflection of their socio economic situation while also allowing the people to share experiences on some of the initiatives they had undertaken. Two initiatives stood out clear.

One was an initiative implemented by a few men. This was an income generating project which was to enable them generate some extra income for their families. They were informed that green beans were selling very well on the market in Nairobi and therefore it was worthwhile to try and put up a green beans growing project for the market. They got together and allocated a plot to grow the vegetables. At harvesting they were compounded with several problems. One they did not know what channels to use to market their harvest, neither could they trace the person who had inspired them to start the project. As a result they were stranded with several bags of beans which got spoilt. They had underestimated the speed and mechanisms that horticultural crops need to reach the markets. This demoralised them and the project was abandoned.

The Nyakio women had a different story though. Amongst them was a progressive enthusiastic teacher who on her own initiative attended a development workshop that was being carried out in another district. On her coming back she organised for a group of women to start meetings to reflect on their situations and to start thinking about initiatives to better improve their welfare. In their reflections they realised that one of their biggest problem was the lack of firewood. The area where they collected firewood was depleted causing them to travel long distances to fetch firewood. It dawned on them that they needed to plant trees for whereas trees would be a source of firewood for them which needs to be continually replenished, the trees would also beautify their environment which had gone tree bare.

While they planted individually they also decided to allocate a plot to grow seedlings. A member volunteered a plot. They took turns to plant and water the tree seedlings which they collected from around the forests in their environment. However a crisis soon loomed. They realised that they needed plastic bags to plant the seedlings in. They had no funds to buy the bags. After a lot of reflections they realised that they could collect waste plastic bags that people had no use for and turn them into use. So they dispatched a few of them to go collecting plastic bags at waste dumps. They soon realised that they had more than they needed. The dump became a supply for the plastic bags. Soon they had more than enough seedlings for their use so they decided to sell some seedlings to the community around. This way their seedlings became popular they had several people buying from them and this way they managed to raise income for the group while tree planting was stepped up and was greening and beautifying their environment.

After this session we officiated as the participants organised themselves into groups to carry on the process. I soon after left for studies so I could not do an actual evaluation of the tangible results of the PAR process. However I made the following observations;

while the composition of participants in most of the workshops we facilitated had more men than women the few women who participated seemed not to participate fully as did the men. The PAR process did not follow a similar pattern as anticipated since most areas were slow in taking off and only a few areas implemented the process. We were further incapacitated by the enormity of the programme for we needed to cover the whole of the Kenyan provinces. It was also not easy to identify participants who were fully committed to this initiative because they had their own commitments which they perceived as being more crucial than the rhetoric of PAR.

3.2.1 Nyakio women's group; Reversing the norm.

Whereas PAR assumes that communities need to be empowered to initiate action the Mwea Nyakio women's project negates this claim by the fact that while we thought that the Mwea communities needed to be empowered to implement the PAR process, we were wrong. We realised that communities used this concept though they might not have named it PAR as was the case of the Mwea Nyakio women's project. It was our turn to be empowered to raise our awareness and analytical capacities to be able to learn from their experiences. Therefore PAR claiming to empower communities falls into a similar impasse like the orthodox scientifically based development projects that made assumptions about communities who were perceived as having no power and nothing to offer.

Though PAR's role was very relevant in most communities we visited, most of the development projects initiated aimed in one way or another to solve peoples immediate economic problems while those of a structural nature were not addressed and hence problems were not solved from the roots. For instance some problems were a result of ineffective policies, corruption and ineffectiveness and inefficiency of government bureaucrats to deliver services. These cannot be wished away through small-scale income generating projects. Further engaging in development projects without addressing issues of a structural nature that inhibit the self aspiration of the people is like throwing pebbles at a bottomless pit. It is all in vain in the long run. Causes need to be identified and challenged in order to install structures that are more effective.

However PAR claiming to challenge structures is ideal indeed but how feasible is that. For a people already impoverished tackling structures was not going to be their priority. Their needs and priorities were of a practical nature those that could give tangible returns fast to improve their welfare. They were therefore not going to bother with strategic programs that take long to realise. Further these strategic programs needed collective organising which could not be achieved within the old structures of power relations where the government utilised power over through economic resources at its disposal to repress and intimidate organised movements that advocate against it.

Power imbalances within community social relations also posed a hindrance to our objectives. Whereas women were invited to attend the workshops as per my insistence, their insubordination was outrightly observed. They were not as active as I had expected in comparison with the male participants. Most women felt incapacitated by cultural tenets that subjugate them and place them at an inferior position in relation with men. They were therefore perceived as inferior not to be heard but just to be seen. Further their low levels of educational attainments perpetuated by the structures in place denied them the capacity to be in step with national and global power dynamics. Hence grasping and comprehending situations beyond their vicinities is an uphill task as compared to the men who through their educational attainments had a wider scope in interactions as observed by the manner in which they got involved in projects that were not only limited to community spaces but beyond. To facilitate the full participation of all members of the community we needed to address power structures at community levels. These are so culturally ingrained and very difficult to uproot a challenge, which PAR points out but does not give suggestions of a methodology on how to go about this.

Despite the constraints it is a fact that PAR is still feasible. The Nyakio women's group attests to this fact. This is because their actions emerged out of their perceived needs and praxis. Further they utilised their knowledge based on their praxis to source and mobilise available resources at their disposal to respond to identified needs in line with their aspirations. In contrast the men's project was not in response to identified needs it was a response to the needs of the markets, which contributed to some of the reasons that caused its failure. Further the inability for communities to relate in spaces beyond them as in the men's group is a hindrance to some of the objectives of PAR. This is because the inability to organise themselves to enter the markets is a reflection of their inability to mobilise into movements to counter unjust prevailing powers. Nevertheless the propositions should not be construed to mean that PAR is incapable, the lessons of the Nyakio women portray the effectiveness of the PAR process once it is internalised and it is owned and appreciated by the people.

Though PAR takes cognisance of the relevancy and significance of people's knowledges it needs to understand the imminence of global socio economic political interrelations. Therefore in order to tackle unjust structures at this level needs some form of scientific knowledge to raise their capacities to challenge unjust structures at these levels. Further some community projects for instance electrifying projects, road building and even managing hospitals, services that might be of use to community among many more, are so technical that the use of technical knowledge and support cannot be assumed.

3.3 Conclusion

Though the arguments herein may paint a grim picture of PAR it is the only way forward. In realising the problems that are assumed at the beginning of a project can help us pinpoint the problems that might be experienced in order to strategise on how to overcome them before they overwhelm us during the PAR process. In analysing and contextualising the constraints PAR faces through practical illustrations as in the cases analysed, we are at a better position to analyse strategies or methodologies to counter these constraints as will be attempted in chapter 5. The following chapter will analyse the theoretical aspects of the power interplay and its constraints to the PAR process also as a pathway for chapter 5

4.0 *PAR A Critique*

4.1 *Introduction*

While this study acknowledges that PAR is a viable development strategy the existence of dynamics that constrain the PAR process cannot be assumed. The objective of this chapter therefore is to analyse the theoretical debates that have been advanced to critique the PAR process basically within the context of power relations.

The significance of undertaking this analysis is underscored by Chambers who contends that, 'in order to explore the direction of change it is necessary to introduce power into the equation and explore the relationship between the character of domination of certain groups and the evolution of discourse' (Chambers 1994:25). This is because, while power determines how people stand in relation to each other (Nelson and Write 1997) it also determines the factors which shape discourse and might also present countervailing force against other discourses that might be externally motivated. (Chambers 1994). This is underscored by Camus who states that development approaches are determined by the nature of relations knowledge creation and information transmission (Camus 1956)

Though the study recognises the existence of several PAR principles the framework of analysis in this chapter will be limited to the critiques on PAR and power relations. While the bulk of critical analysis will be based on the implications of power on the notion of empowerment, knowledge creation processes and transformation within communities, the effect of these interfaces on effective and full participation of the disadvantaged in rural development initiatives will be highlighted. The aim of this analysis will be to offer insight for analysis in the next chapter, which will focus into the formulation of alternative forms of interrelations that will lead to the reconfiguration of power relations for the benefit of all participants in the PAR process.

This chapter will therefore be structured into three distinct sections. The first section will focus on PAR and the Power impasses. Here critiques of the empowerment notion will be analysed. This is because while the very notion of empowerment as a prelude for social transformation is key to the PAR process it contradicts some of the held theories on power. And while social transformation is desirable is it really achievable in lieu of the social economic political diversity.

The second section will focus on power and knowledge This analysis will aim at offering an insight into how power influences knowledge creation and transmission processes and how this

affects perceptions and interrelations between different groups in the PAR process, facilitators and communities and salient groupings within communities. Here the issue of the myth of community homogeneity will be raised. This is because while communities are assumed and perceived to be homogenous entities, in reality they are not. Communities are in themselves stratified along several socio economic political structures that are often so traditionally and culturally ingrained. As a result community knowledge generation processes tend to be influenced and directed by those on the higher spectrum of power even within community social contexts. Thus development strategies that do not take cognation of this fact have often become undermined by these very facts hence the failures of most community based development paradigms and strategies. It is therefore of utmost importance that the PAR process takes this into consideration in order to avoid the pitfalls other development strategies have experienced.

The third section will conclude the critiques by analysing the implications of the above mentioned power dynamics on participation and hence the efficacy of PAR. This conclusion will set the pace for the next chapter which will aim at exploring alternative power reconfigurations that will put into place equitable and democratic power relations which will enhance effective participation and consequently the PAR process.

4.2 *PAR and the Power impasse*

Camus contends that all human relations can be explained and understood within the context of power relations where hierarchies, weakness and subordination determines the kind of power relationship in place (Albert Camus 1956). According to PAR one of the core dimensions of peoples development is empowerment. It is enabling the people to achieve power, thorough understanding the reality of their situations, to assert and articulate their thoughts and aspirations through action aimed at initiating changes to improve and carve their destinies.

To examine whether PAR has the potential to empower, we require a definition of empowerment on which we can judge and assess whether empowerment is, has or is able to take place. Empowerment in the context of PAR is a concept that goes beyond the issue of participation. It is more than just widening access to decision making (Heaven Crawley in Guijt and Shah Ed 1998:26) The challenge for PAR is to empower the lowers who in turn will be enabled to initiate a transformation of the norm, the whole socio economic political structures of power, where, in the words of Chambers, children will be before adults, women before men, the poor, weak and vulnerable before the powerful, the first before the last (Chambers 1997). According to Falls Borda it is the achievement of

a special kind of power - peoples power -which belongs to the oppressed and exploited classes and groups and their organisations, and the defence of their just interests to enable them to advance towards shared goals of social change within a participatory political system (Falls Borda,1988:2)

However other proponents of the power concept perceive it from a different perspective all together. The complexity of the notion of empowerment is perceived in the diversity of its definition. Kruijer states that most social scientists have arrived at a convergent conception that perceives power as the ability to further the objectives of other persons or groups over the others by limiting the behavioural choices of the others or persons or groups. (Kruijer 1987) According to this school of thought power is a contested terrain which cannot be easily passed on. As Camus says

We can't do without dominating others or being served... even the man on the bottom rung still has his wife, or his child, if he is a bachelor, his dog. The essential thing, in sum is being able to get angry without the other person being able to answer back.

(Albert Camus 1956)

Foucault questions this contention of power by stating that if power was not anything but repressive, would one be brought to obey it? He contends that 'what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things. It induces pleasure, forms knowledge, and produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social-body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (Foucault in Gordon (Ed) 1980:119). This is underscored by Chambers who holds that most of the good things achieved in development are a result of actions and commitments of a few at the top (Chambers 1997). In this essence then power can be a positive tool, which can be reconfigured through a transformation process that will put in place an equitable socio economic political environment.

While PAR bases its arguments on the positive aspects of power several contradictions arise. One contradiction is based on the question of empowerment, which assumes that some can act on others to enable them to realise their own potentials. (Nelson and Wright 1995) Rahnema too, questions this notion of empowerment. For he contends that when A purports to empower B then it means that A assumes that B has no power and that 'A has a secret formula of a power to which B needs to be initiated (Rahnema 1990:3050). Rahman concurs with Rahnema's line of thought when he concedes that empowerment, the development of human creativity and ability cannot be initiated from outside, it is an inorganic unfolding which can be stimulated or assisted from outside but cannot be imposed. (Rahman 1990)

A further problem which emerges in the question of empowerment is the yardstick we use to measure whether empowerment is or has taken place and from whose perspective? Also given that transformation is a process how can we gather reliable information over time? Further can any aspects of empowerment be evaluated quantitatively? To what can we attribute transformation given the diverse and complex interrelationship of causal and effects ? (Crawley 1998)

According to Nelson and Wright's conception of power individuals have intrinsic power, referred to as 'power to' an ever expanding energy which can be converged with other peoples 'power to' to form 'power over'. This is a powerful force able to be put into motion to challenge unjust structures (Nelson and Wright 1977)¹³ However while the concept of empowerment aims at reverting power to the people, in itself it is an assertion of the myth of the incapability of the people. Since power is intrinsic and ever growing the question of empowerment is therefore not possible since power is from within and can only be stimulated to grow and to form 'power over'¹⁴ in conjunction with others in order to be a dominant challenge to oppressive structures (Ibid). This is true as observed in such salient manners as when ordinary people sometimes without outside intervention and through intense networks have put up resistance against prevailing power through such acts as tax evasion, diversion of government project equipment to other needs. 'Power to' has also been able to change structures at such large scales for instance through people led resurgence that have toppled oppressive regimes such as the Mobutu regime in Zaire and the Suharto regime in Indonesia.¹⁵ To mention but just a few.

Further the problem with the empowerment concept is that it purportedly takes place within the unequal socio economic political structures in which according to Freire, the 'duality of being' is perpetuated. Freire says that 'As long as they live in a duality where *to be* is to *be like*, and *to be like* is to *be like the oppressor*' (Freire 1972) then empowerment only serves to change the empowered into a new tyrant.

History serves to illustrate this. For instance the case of the ongoing revolutionary process in Algeria where the power of the people against government structures in place has only turned the revolutionaries into worse oppressors than those whom they are seeking to revolutionise. Also the current uprising against President Kabila in Congo on allegations of undemocratic practices, portrays the failure of the empowerment process to initiate a machinery through which the empowered highers can accommodate diversity in opinions of all, even of those uppers who have been turned to lowers as a result of the revolution. Therefore for a process to be empowering it needs the development of iterative sequences that will not mean simply involving people in

¹³ A detailed exposition of Nelson and Wright's conception of power can be found in chapter two.

¹⁴ Please refer to chapter two for a detailed exposition of 'power to'

¹⁵ Ref.; Times magazine May 1997 and May 1998.

decision making processes, it means engaging people in discussions on different levels and the incorporation of strategies that will enable people understand factors that shape their reality and most critically to take steps to affect changes that will improve their situations, (Heaven Crawley In Guijt and Shah Ed 1988) while integrating other skills such as group organisation, and conflict resolution and management. However the lack of resources needed to follow up has led some to comment on the disempowering nature of empowerment strategies.

Empowerment that leads to a total reversal of the norm is not easy to achieve. An attempt would mean dismantling these structures. However according to Nelsons and write, 'power over 'often interacts at conflicting spaces and hence it becomes very difficult for those who are powerful to relinquish their power since they control resources and they are therefore capable of coercing the masses to concede to their demands while imposing their world view upon others' (Freire 1972:129) Further how can bureaucrats who are embedded in 'power over' initiate empowerment of the lowers when power over interacts at conflicting spaces? Rowland states that any notion of empowerment hides an attempt to keep control by those in power.

Transformation may therefore mean going through a revolutionary process which may end up being violent and very painful thus undermining the essence of participation, which does not recognise violence as an act of participation. According to the dynamics of oppression, internalised oppression resulting from the existence of oppressive structures can affect the ability of the less powerful members of the community to partake of participation. Partly due to constraints by existing oppressive powers and partly due to the inability of the less powerful to influence the world around them, as a result of the perception they have of themselves.

The empowerment notion therefore should go beyond the issue of participation. It must be a process that leads the individual or individual to perceive themselves as able to occupy decision-making positions. The limitation of this empowerment though is that it might simply lead to the re-emergence of the old asymmetrical system, which is perpetuated by the duality of being (Freire 1972), as the lowers become the new uppers.

Empowerment therefore needs to tread that thin line of finding a balance where none is left out of the process. It should be a pedagogy that enhances the awareness of the need to transform both the oppressors and the oppressed. For even the oppressors according to Freire need to be liberated from their dehumanising state of being.(Freire 1972)

4.2 *Power and Knowledge*

This analysis springs from the premise that like power, knowledge is not something that is possessed and accumulated. (Foucault, in Gordon 1980) it emerges out of a processes of social interaction, out of the encounter and fusion of horizons and experiences. Hence the fact that one possesses power or knowledge does not mean that the others have none. Knowledge therefore resides in people and cannot be communicated. It is created in the minds of people as a result of each persons perception of the environment and interaction with others. In this respect only information which is encoded knowledge can be communicated (Mundy and Compton 1995).

Though knowledge is intrinsic and is created out of social relationships and experiences and interactions with the environment, the fact that human society is patterned into hierachichal relationships where individuals are multiple uppers or lowers and where one can be an upper in one and a lower in the next (Chambers 1977) has definitely a bearing and implications to knowledge creation and transmission. This is because in life, power and knowledge have constantly been reified since we often think of them as material things to be possessed by agents, hence the well known maxim ‘ Knowledge is power’ perceived in the ‘struggle over meaning and control of strategic relationships and resources’ (Norman Long in Long and Long 1992)

PAR attempts to reverse power relations to enable categories of people traditionally objectified and silenced to be recognised as legitimate knowers , to define themselves, increase their understanding of their circumstances and act upon that knowledge. (Nelson and Wright 1977:11) This is in concurrent with Chambers contention of complete reversals of the norm where the last become the first, where traditional Knowledge is put first. (Chambers 1997). However complete reversals in favour of rural peoples knowledge poses a number of challenges.

One while PAR continues to operated in a socio economic environment that perceives formal education and scientific knowledge as a means to the acquisition of power and wealth, it needs to be unpretentious about its role especially in addressing the issue of class relations and the breaking up of the asymmetric relations between classes. This is because whereas PAR facilitators might not be aware of this, the batch of PAR intellectuals who are being produced have acquired a mental knowledge which separates them from the manual labour class. Further many have gained a knowledge of know-how and privileges of several potentials which have purportedly given them the superiority and presupposed competence and moral responsibility to intervene in others lives with an aim to changing them. (Rahnema 1985). Therefore whereas the PAR processes purports to cut across class dichotomy through the eradication of socio economic political class differences and the reversion of power to the people, it nevertheless ‘perpetuates one of the greatest

contradictions in society' (Rahman 1997). A rather unusual interaction between two social classes the producers and consumers of knowledge, the facilitators and the community, respectively.

Further our education has gained us privileges and knowledge which have conditioned us to think differently about ourselves and to gain a sophisticated image of ourselves which we claim to justify our actions, when we purport that with the knowledge that we have gained we are capable of intervening in other peoples lives. However more often than not our actions are based on distorted forms of realities for as much as we try to acknowledge the superiority of peoples knowledge according to Chambers, 'We can never fully escape our conditioning.' (Chambers 1997:163) Rahman quotes a community facilitator in Sarilaka project in the Philippines who once told him that "In this work you have to constantly fight your enemies, and the greatest enemy is yourself." (Rahman 1993:88) Our perceptions of realities based on the education we have acquired, makes it an arduous task indeed to strip ourselves of these conditionings.

While conscientisation perceives, participants and facilitators as co-learners in the PAR process, both embarking on a learning process. (Freire 1972) The contradiction is that the participants are not really equal. This is because they are perceived as being in a 'primitive' 'semi transitive' stage. And in order for them to participate they have to learn from the facilitators who have purportedly reached higher levels of critical awareness (Rahnema 1990). This contention undermines the very principles of PAR for it perpetuates the notion that the facilitators are the repositories of knowledge. consequently raising a sense of inferiority among the learners, the participants. In this circumstance the mode of education that might in most cases be used to confer this literacy to the non literate can work towards disempowerment. According to Freire, education needs to be an organic process of social awakening that leads to self discovery of oneself as a thinker and creator of knowledge. (Freire 1972)

Further any notion of empowerment being given by another group hides an attempt to control it since according to the concept of 'power over,' the bureaucrats who are embedded in power over cannot claim to transfer power which in normal life interacts at conflicting spaces and is perceived as a possession which is not easily handed down to those on the lower ranks of hierarchy. Further our perception of our superiority convinces us that we are right and when we do not achieve action we attribute it to the primitivity or backwardness of traditional beliefs or the inability of backward communities to comprehend the complexities of life. It never occurs to us that we possibly and probably need to change more than they do.

Rahman further contends that the PAR process may involve two different knowledge generation streams, which may in turn have such major implications to interrelations between the facilitators

and the people. (Rahman 1982) This may subsequently affect communication between the facilitators and the underprivileged masses since these two streams of thought may not be complimentary to each other.

This is as a result of our conditioning, which is determined by past experiences and knowledge, accrued from our traditions and cultures that make us perceive reality through the images we have formed in our social contexts. Indeed professionals and local people differ in their values which are based on the knowledges they have created encoded from their realities which differ from local people's realities. What local people want and need especially the poor is often not what they professional think they need (Chambers 1997). In this perspective our knowledges are limited since they are fragmented. The facilitators for instance have all become dependent on the knowledge they have acquired through formal education and its hegemonic trends and capacities which has robbed us of the capacity to learn. Most problematic however is that the language of empowerment creates an aura of moral superiority. This protects practitioners of PRA and other participatory approaches against criticism, and enables them to avoid critical self-reflection about the truth of their claims. (Heaven Crawley 1988:25).

Whereas it is true that we have a lot to learn from rural peoples knowledge, it is however not sheer prejudice when outsiders sometimes perceive rural people's beliefs and practices as harmful, discriminatory and even prejudicial. For instance most traditional praxis and beliefs are discriminatory to women and are ignorant of gender relations as a critical aspect of power relations. Also feeding habits that deny the lowers in the social strata access the right to protein foods which according to norm are the privilege of men. This is further observed in the use of weaning foods for children, which often lacks proteins and vitamins when available cheap alternatives can reduce the incidences of malnutrition.¹⁶ There are many cases especially in health and nutrition where professional outsiders knowledge in health and nutrition can help rural people better to achieve their objectives.

While it is possible to acquire literacy through methods of social inquiry and communication, in many contexts not being literate leads to surrendering knowledge which the non literate cannot verify. (Whyte 1991) This leads to dependence on the literate for information, as well as for dealing with public spheres and agencies that require written instruments. This helplessness in terms of written language renders the disadvantaged helpless in dealing with structures and this is liable to disempower the people whose esteem is compromised by this helplessness despite attempts at acquiring critical capability.

¹⁶ Among the Luo in Kenya traditions held that children were to be weaned only on porridge cooked out of maize flour without other additions further most protein high foods were only to be served to men only, hence the high incidence of malnutrition among women and children which led to high infant mortality.

'it is a truism that knowledge is power. At the crudest level, technology superiority carries superior physical power: 'Whatever happens we have got the Maxim gun and they have not.' (Chambers 1983:77). Hence those who have more power have more accumulation of wealth, possess most of the means by which information can be communicated, hence the ability to determine what new knowledge shall be created and transmitted. Information transmission might be based therefore on the relative truth of the community, which might favour the powerful in the community. For the powerful control the flow of information.

The manner by which power is associated to modern scientific knowledge, wealth and prestige perpetuates the belief of the superiority of scientific knowledge as the only source of authentic knowledge. (Ibid) To this extent rural people perceive education as one way of leading to this superiority through the acquisition of modern education and thus modern knowledge.

This relationship is further observed mirrored in the kind of relationship that emerges between the facilitators and the community, who often feel intimidated by the formally educated classes of society even before they have had chance to develop their feeling of knowing through self-inquiry. Hence the resulting sense of intellectual inferiority which is often a powerful force constraining the development of confidence in the disadvantaged to rely on and assert their own thinking while carving their destinies. (Rahman 1990)

Whyte states that close collaboration between PAR facilitators and scientist generates power relations that are in itself limiting to the objective of a participatory initiative. This is because more often when social scientists team together with scientists a 'negative minority reaction feeling takes place among social scientists from the beginning he or she overestimates the real value of his or her discipline but provides insufficient explanation of it. As a consequence communication is distorted' (Whyte 1991) Power inequality among change agents stirs unequal relations which in turn affects the nature of relations amongst the change agents and consequently effective implementation of the PAR methodology.

The assumed superiority of formal knowledge is the key weapon that the elite have persistently manoeuvred to make the people wait upon them for leadership and initiative whether in development or social change. Of this type of knowledge the elite have a monopoly unlike popular knowledge. (Falls Borda 1991:31) Unequal relations of knowledge are therefore a critical factor in perpetuating class or elite domination over the people (Ibid)

4.3 Power and Participation.

Though participation in a normative sense is perceived to be good and empowering, its practise and implementation is diverse. It has been sometimes used to describe very rudimentary levels of consultations between facilitators and community members while in some instances it has been used as a coercive manipulatory instrument to garner the support of communities. (Guijt and Shah 1998)

For the purpose of this study participation in the context of PAR is perceived as the act of partaking through ones free will with other people thereby discovering the joys of conviviality and potentials as members of a group. It also aims 'to foster the very process that leads to it.' (Rahnema 1990:20) It is not only a "a means to some predetermined end but the most important end in itself" (Falls Borda 1985:188) hence to participate entails the voluntary break up of asymmetrical relationships of submission and dependence, the subject object binomial (Ibid). Other proponents of participation state that participation does not include such actions that are destructive manipulative or violent it is instead perceived as being rooted in the cultural traditions of the people. According to Falls Borda it is resplendent with feelings and attitudes which are altruistic, co-operative, communal and genuinely democratic in nature. These he says have been resilient to foreign invasion and have continued to offer mutual aid and assistance to extended families to the sick and disadvantaged who have also been allowed the use of communal lands, forests and waters. (Falls Borda 1985).

Though participation in a normative sense is perceived to be good and empowering, its practise and implementation is diverse. The cultural ambiguity of the term participation poses a hindrance to its application and practice. For instance whereas a western perspective of participation involves the open exchange of ideas, and sanctions the right to question which is legitimated by the prerogative to be different, to conduct experiments and to make mistakes. (Maclure and Bassegy in Whyte Ed 1991), in many rural communities in Africa and Asia direct questioning and open dialogue between different subgroups are shunned.

The oversimplification of communities is one of the reasons for emphasising collective participatory action. For most people the understanding of community generates good feelings and element of nostalgic romanticism. That ideal setting where community action plans can be debated upon to yield results. According to Eyben and Ladbury This idealised view of community relates back to the 19th century economists who perceived societies as divided between market and non market societies. In traditional pre market societies, people are romanticised to make decisions based on commonly held values and norms. Due to the fact that the people were thought

to be undifferentiated it was therefore thought that people shared similar interests as opposed to market, or rather modern societies where individualism, impersonality and self interest seems to be the norm. PAR falls into similar assumptions with other development strategies whereby homogeneity is assumed and along with it a populations structured capacity to co-operate and participate.

As clearly observed communities are not homogeneous in composition and concerns, nor necessarily harmonious in their relations. The fact is that inequalities oppressive social structural hierarchies and domination often overlooked limit the participation of most of those who are in the lower echelons of power often women. (Chambers in Guijt and Shah Ed 1988) participation will therefore entail different implications to different groups who occupy different positions in community social stratification For instance women and men will participate in different ways. For instance

Even when the application of participatory methodologies is intended to minimise biases, women are often marginalised. Again and again women are excluded by factors like time and place of meeting, composition of groups , conventions that only men speak in public, outsiders being mainly men and men talking to men. (Chambers 1998)

Thus efforts to create opportunities for equal and wider participation are unlikely to yield fruits within inequitable cultural structures where for instance women as a subgroup among the disadvantaged experience double disempowerment both as members of the disadvantaged group and at the household level. Can participation therefore be an empowering process for women whose subordination stems from socially constructed gender power relations which interlock with caste, class, race, ethnicity and religious identities?

It is therefore, inappropriate to romanticise communities and assume that they are altruistic and homogeneous in nature for they did not, and do not exist as people think of them. Further as the general mobility of community intensifies worldwide problems arise when trying to define and describe community boundaries Participatory approaches have ignored these simple facts and the darker sides of traditional communities. It is therefore significant that these assumptions are addressed and a recognition of conflicting community power relations and interests be highlighted since these pose methodological hindrances to the PAR process.

While the PAR processes aims to reconfigure these unequal power relations in order to build an equitable social economic political environment where norms are reverted. Where the last become first, the first become last, women before men, and men after women (Chambers 1997), reversing power relations is often very difficult, sometimes leading to violent acts in order to achieve it.

Chambers says that conflict is sometimes necessary and positive for change. For instance in the pursuit of gender equity much that needs to be addressed is the question of power and control over resources, men dominance over women, men drunkenness domestic violence, discrimination against women at all levels. (Chambers 1998)

The necessity of initiating conflict to confront these inequitable structures in order to revert them can not be avoided. This will however be a negation of participation which does not recognise violence as an act of partaking, since according to PAR, to cease to dominate, oppress, or be violent is in itself a liberation. (Chambers 1998).

However aiming to reverse these structures without facilitating change and transformation at an individual level may lead to the re-emergence of the asymmetrical system which limits the participation of those who will have been relegated to the lower echelons of power through the liberation process. In this sense participation needs to be transformational leading to the liberation of all. Therefore according to Freire, even the oppressor needs to be liberated (Freire 1972).

The transformation of individuals cannot be achieved unless individuals are liberated from their dehumanising state of being to compassionate human beings free from fears illusions, images, and colonising concepts which prevent the mind from seeing reality as it is. To achieve that one needs to be constantly critical and questioning ones motives attitudes beliefs ways of life thought processes. Not necessarily being sceptical about everything but being critically self-aware and yet passionately compassionate. (Rahnema 1990) Such unique and beautiful individuals are very difficult to come across

Can PAR claim to initiate such transformation from within? Rahnema contends that PAR does not touch at all upon the deeper question of human conditioning, which defines peoples ultimate reason for participating. It remains a strategy to improve the models of participating always within the transitive paradigm of development. (Ibid) Thus PAR alone can not change the psychological conditioning of an individual other disciplines and methodologies need to be employed too in order for full transformation to be achieved.

While participation has also been sometimes used to describe very rudimentary levels of consultations, in some instances it has been used as a coercive manipulatory instrument to garner the support of communities. In the PAR context the continued simplification of participation raises several ambiguities that pose constraints to the objectives of participation which is to achieve ends and to also be an end in itself. An in-depth review of the practise of participation as a PAR instrument for community development and empowerment, reveals the implications of

power dynamics that play a major role in the participatory process. This further makes PAR a difficult complex process on which to build popular participation into a community's self development in order to transform its social relationship and not merely to alleviate the misery of a few. Why is this so?

This is because local contexts are diverse, and communities like nations, are governed by tiny minorities. Clearly communities are neither homogeneous in composition, in concerns nor in their relations (Guijt and Shah 1998) Calmus observes that social relations can only be best understood within the power axes. Power relations vary in contexts and according to persons depending on which positions individuals occupy on which axes of power (Camus 1956) For instance one may enjoy the privilege that power brings depending on his position on the power axes while simultaneously suffer all the insults of domination and subordination.

While Falls Borda contends that authentic participation is built on altruistic moralistic feelings that are characteristic of endogenous cultures, today, such descriptions amount to romanticising endogenous cultures. This is because endogenous cultures have undergone several changes due to intensification of the mobility of societies worldwide. While social mobility has created part time community members others who have received an education outside communities and returned with a new way of thinking find themselves in such ambiguous situations where they are neither one nor the other. In this sense the concept of community altruism is limited due to the dynamic nature of community boundaries and composition. (Guijt and Shah 1998) Such dynamism has resulted in the evolution of cultures, which no longer hold similar altruistic values like in Falls Borda's romanticism.

One other problem that PAR methodology encounters is the fact that it does not often offer tangible results, it only offers concepts methods points of view and strategies which take time to achieve tangible results. Today the continuous depreciation of resources due to socio economic global influences has seen a rise in poverty, lack of employment, poor education ill health, and environmental degradation which have often interacted to make sustainable improvements in the lives of millions of people in developing countries extraordinarily difficult. (Chambers 1997) In such conditions of extreme poverty participation can only become attractive if it has quick material gains. Further the empowerment concept focusing on transformation to reverse power structures, needs time patience and commitment. Qualities that have run out in community situations, where scarcity of resources is perverse This situation has led to resource competition and the disintegration of community altruism and assumed values leading to a proliferation of conflicts within and across community boundaries a phenomenon widely observed today.

While The PAR process aims to empower communities to engage in critical self reflection in order to gain capacity to challenge oppressive structures which hinder their self aspirations and fulfilment, some oppressive structures may be of a cultural communal nature that are so ingrained and difficult to challenge. Further several oppressive structures are beyond community spaces for instance some may be emanating from national levels while others may exist as a result of global interrelations.

One of the basic problems with PAR is that the approach in most cases does not move beyond the local space. The inability of PAR to challenge oppressive social structures beyond the community levels renders it only capable of responding to social political or economic problems of very secondary importance. It only 'fosters chattering, frantic activism, and as such it is inevitably bound to fall into the hands of the highest bidder on the power market. Accordingly It can never serve freedom self discovery or creative action'(Rahnema 1990.) Though this is not gospel truth as this study sets to find out.

Indeed an examination of many participatory actions portray participation as often focusing on using consultations to relive symptoms of oppression such as inadequate material well being rather than focusing on the structural causes of deprivation. In this way the process fails to initiate countervailing power is against the global mega forces. This is compounded by the fact that most often community lowers have no capacity and skills to tackle power inequalities beyond community levels. In order to do this the people need to acquire knowledge, information and skills. However the strategy of conferring this knowledge to communities further perpetuates class differences as facilitators become the depositories of knowledge and an asymmetrical relationship emerges between the facilitators and communities thus hindering effective participation.

4.4 Conclusion

PAR entails the application of social transformation strategies which demands the implementation of active intervention that will enable those at the bottom of community power structures to participate effectively in decision making on issues that affect their destinies and to be able to direct their destinies. PAR purports to work towards this end. While PAR assumes that communities are homogeneous, the fact is that communities are stratified along class gender and cultural divisions hence the difficulty in achieving full participation as this analysis illuminates. The difficulties that PAR experiences emanate from power relations. This is because power relationships reproduce themselves regardless of how participatory or democratic a setting is.

Subsequently the question of power is at the core of all social relationships. Power influences knowledge formation and transmission processes. It determines which and whose knowledge counts, and can consequently inhibit the potentiality of peoples especially the less powerful within groups to participate in decision making on issues that affect their destinies. Nevertheless despite the sombre picture that this chapter paints of PAR , the following chapter will endeavour to reclaim PAR by exploring alternatives that can be implemented to reconfigure power relations to positive levels that can work towards enhancing the PAR methodology which is a viable concept for rural development.

5.0 Reclaiming PAR

5.1 Introduction

Is PAR needed today in the society as much as it appeared to us twenty years back? Yes indeed. Despite the shortfalls that this study has illuminated Falls Borda notes that perhaps today there are more arguments in favour of PAR today than there was in the 1970s. He explains that the world is still in a plethora of confusion and conflict as when PAR was born. For in several countries class oppression is the norm where large sections of the population are deprived of productive assets, a phenomenon that has turned people into dependent beings which has consequently led to material suffering, human indignity, loss of identity, self determination, culture and the ability to assert oneself. (Falls Borda 1991)

This is indeed perpetuated by globalisation and the free market concept where the norm is survival for the fittest, 'every woman/man for her/himself and God for us all' In this contemporary socio economic environment market utility and logic reigns supreme. In the race for maximisation of individual utility competition is the norm. Where the market determines the social economic political environment in which where the weak and the disadvantaged have no place and are continually trodden on, oppressed and marginalised by the market structures¹⁷. Further the degeneration of political democracy has perpetuated this condition which is portrayed in periodical balloting which always end up electing persons from the privileged class to rule over the underprivileged hence the continual perpetuation of class oppression. (Ibid).

Whereas PAR gives us an opportunity to address the welfare of the underprivileged through enabling them to respond to their practical needs it has often overlooked the issue of power relations which has grave implications on knowledge creation and consequently effective participation as analysed in the previous chapters. We cannot over emphasise the significance of PAR in our contemporary world where power relations is constructed on the 'basis of hate, greed intolerance, chauvinism, dogmatism autism and conflict.' In a bid to reconfigure power relations PAR affirms the importance of the other, promotes the respect of difference and diversity, gives room for discreet voices to be heard and recognises the right of fellow human beings to live act and let live. However PAR does not claim to have the Panacea for all of life's ills. As the study has shown there are still lessons to be learnt to improve and enhance the practice of PAR. That's why this chapter will focus on strategies to reconfigure power relations in the PAR process in

¹⁷ Literature and more details on Neo liberal market discourse can be found in' Lensink R 1996

order to enhance the viability of PAR. This section will therefore explore recommendations for power structural and knowledge reconfigurations in order to enhance participation and the PAR process.

5.1 *Power to the people*

In a bid to transform the whole social economic political environment for the benefit of the underprivileged the issue of power relations is core. Chambers states that power on a pinnacle is lonely. Centralised control of more than the minimum is stressful. However in a participatory mode, relationships are more equal with mutual exchanges, learning from each other, enhancing, partnership friendship collegiality, openness and honesty. These are the foundations of peaceful interrelations (Chambers 1997). Participation, which empowers requires a weakening of the magnetic field at various levels with scope for lateral linkages with peers and colleagues, and fellow neighbours (Ibid)

Falls Borda concurs with this when he states that the requirement for leadership among facilitators should be different from the traditional hierarchichal leadership requirement. Facilitators should be able to project a leadership, which has broad potential appeal to participants. In PAR this means that the researcher must be willing to relinquish the unilateral control that the professional researcher has always maintained over the research process (Whyte 1991). This means ‘as uppers to disempower ourselves, controlling only the minimum, handing over the stick, devolving discretion, encouraging and rewarding lowers initiatives, and finding fulfilment and fun in enabling others to express analyse and act on their diverse realities’ Chambers 1997:237)

Herein therefore lies the question of real democracy. Not just the democracy that allows periodical elections that gives freedom for the people to air their opinions on what should be done, but democracy that will facilitate the freedom and opportunity for the people to undertake initiatives and do things themselves. (Rahman 1993) This will however be only successful in a tolerant equitable environment. The problem with PAR is that empowerment has sought to bring about change within the oppressive socio economic political structures that limit peoples initiatives. It is therefore essential that structural changes take place.

5.2 *Structural Changes and participation*

However any systemic structural change entails conflicts of interest. To assume that all members of a geographic location have community interest is a disempowering notion. However not all interests will lead to antagonistic confrontations. Negotiations based on perceived overlapping interests are achievable, with the cognition and acceptance of other divergence. For instance a process of inclusion and empowerment based on gender or other sub grouping is often best if started with the a positive sum total where the compromises leave both parties demonstrably better off. (Morag Humble in Guijt and Shah 1998)

Systemic change in countries where resources are controlled by the elite a distribution process should be initiated. Not only a distribution of resources but distribution of factors of production giving the people individually or collectively control over resources to work with to develop their potentials. However structural changes are of course rather illusionary 'since power over' denotes conflict (Nelson and Wright 1977), It is a contested terrain where those who have power over often have difficulty in relinquishing this power. For after all it offers them privileges. It is nevertheless not in vain to start micro level peoples self development in preparedness for a macro level social change when it takes place. A process which will truly enable and promote peoples' creativity. Rahman Suggest that 'a political leadership which is not involved in peoples self-development now will not be able to promote this after coming into power, because it will not know what it means or how it can be animated' The process, should give way to the development of an 'organic vanguard which is rooted in such popular movements and does not claim to be above and (unaccountable to) the people'. (Rahman 1993:194)

5.3 *Breaking the monopoly of Knowledge*

Structural changes need to go hand in hand with what Falls Borda refers to as ' Breaking the monopoly of Knowledge'¹⁸ in the hands of the elite. For a long time the roles that the intellectuals have taken have kept the ordinary people disadvantaged Vis a Vis the professionals who have remained in a class of their own. Privileged to take a leading role in social transformative work. It is therefore expedient to make deliberate moves to alter the relations of knowledge, so that professional knowledge is put in dialogue with peoples knowledge on an equal footing whereby both can enrich each other. Altering the relationship of knowledge will produce an organic knowledge as part of the evolution of life rather than the synthetic imposition of knowledge based on other realities. (Falls Borda 1991)

¹⁸ Falls Borda 1991 Sub Title.

The interrelatedness of the micro and macro levels is crucial in development strategies since they are explicitly related. Micro and macro levels exist in symbiosis and have no meaning in isolation from each other, problems arise when one or the other level is considered in isolation (Michael Edwards 1993). Why is this so? The complexity of the contemporary world demands a multi-faceted strategy that will incorporate the principles of PAR based on peoples knowledge while at the same time making use of the scientific advances that have been used at macro levels and which are complimentary to peoples knowledge. This is because interventions that are based on short term strategies aimed at augmenting rural social welfare through short lived prescriptions for technical and behavioural change or to expound on the need for greater community self reliance, are illusionary.

Due to the complexity of the socio economic environment, an interdisciplinary approach is needed to respond to the village level problems, which cut across all spheres. For instance some improvements in the welfare of people necessitates the utilisation of technical know-how in which communities have no capacity. To this end close collaboration with technical scientific knowledge is significant

Whereas the PAR strategy expounds on the significance of reversing peoples knowledge over formal scientific know-how, it follows that neither of the two need to take precedence over the other. Some school of thought contend that 'the two paradigms are not alternative to each other but compliment each other' (Paul Richards 1985: 150). While peoples knowledge is significant in development processes 'the transfer of technology approach, including commodity research, on station and in-laboratory basic investigations and so on will always be needed' (Chambers 1994:33). This is underscored by Hettne who states that, development theory or paradigms need to be inclusive rather than exclusive due to the complex interdisciplinary nature of development (Hettne 1990)

However according to PAR the first purpose of any developmental strategy or research is to promote the development of poor and powerless people around the worlds. We must learn to appreciate the value of indigenous knowledge and the importance of popular participation in showing us what is relevant and what is not. in this way we will begin to move from practise based on the philosophy of knowledge to practice based on the philosophy of wisdom.

Some of the greatest challenges are, where rural peoples knowledge and scientific know-how have been found wanting. The joint use of professional outsiders and rural people's knowledge and skills and resources may be the best way forward, for together the two forms of knowledge are able to make advances which nether can achieve alone. For that to happen there has to be power

shifts for there is need for reversal in order for rural people to be able to participate contribute and benefit. The first step is the need for outsiders professionals and bearers of modern scientific knowledge, to step down from their pedestals sit down listen and learn.(Chambers 1977)

Thus reversing traditional attitudes to development means uniting research and practise, action researcher and researched into a single unitary process where the researcher must accept being changed by the results of the research and must be accountable to the subjects of their work. The researcher must be prepared to see the value of their work judged according to its relevance in improving the lives of the people concerned. This does not mean that all relevant research has to be participatory.

Research which analyses similarities and differences over a time and space can be extremely relevant in, but its usefulness will be a function of its ability to change attitudes among the powerful in the direction which will enable the less powerful to think for themselves. In conclusion we need to be humble with respect to our limitations and the limitations of our kind of education and training. We must accept popular participation in showing us what is relevant and what is not so as to move from practise based on knowledge to practise based on wisdom. (Edwards 1993:79). Academic knowledge combined with popular knowledge and wisdom may give us a result a total scientific knowledge of a revolutionary nature (and perhaps a new paradigm) which destroys the previous class monopoly.

5.4 Conclusion

Though PAR found its roots in the disillusionment of the top down development plans of the 1960s, today the significance of PAR as a development strategy is waning. This is because whereas PAR was meant to initiate changes that top bottom development could not tackle only insignificant success have been recorded. This study has highlighted power relations as the main constraint to effective PAR. This is because whereas PAR promises empowerment for the disadvantaged to enable them acquire a critical capacity that they can use to challenge unjust structures, empowerment is a complex process, which is vindicated by several contradictions. Further the study has portrayed how power affects knowledge creation and consequently ineffective participation. An in-depth analysis of this phenomena portrays that power does not necessarily have to have a negative perception. Power can be reconfigured to benefit the whole socio economic political environment for the benefit of the marginalised. In chapter five this study has proposed recommendations that can be put in place in order to enhance PAR which is a process that promise an improvement of the socio economic political welfare of the disadvantaged. The study has shown that it is therefore pertinent that PAR be studied in depth to

illuminate other constraints to this strategy in order to reclaim PAR For indeed the need for PAR is greater today than it ever was before.

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