

Participation in Development: The Question, Challenges and Issues. A Symposium Background Paper

Abstract

That full¹ participation is essential for sustainable development, both domestic and overseas, is now widely accepted; but there is little agreement about what it is. Definitions and typologies of full participation run the gamut from community collaboration in pre-determined projects, all the way through to recognising that communities must determine and control their own development projects. All communities, even the least advanced, can encounter obstacles to development such as, among others, difficult physical environments, traditional gender roles, the culture of relationships (that is, hierarchies of power) and organisational inflexibility. Based on a number of interviews and a survey of the literature, this paper examines the meaning of full participation and identifies the principal obstacles to it.

Nine key questions, central to determining the level of commitment to participatory development, have emerged from this paper:

- 1. Is there awareness of and commitment to the centrality of participation in development among grassroots and public organizations?*
- 2. Is there an openness to participation in policy formation and decision making?*
- 3. Is there a focused commitment of resources?*
- 4. Is there capacity building training in the skills of grassroot participation?*
- 5. Is it necessary to increase on-the-job and foundation training in participative skills among voluntary and paid development workers and to foster a high level of expertise in participative training?*
- 6. Are there adequate development tools to enhance participation?*
- 7. Will structures, programmes and project cycles facilitate and reward participation?*
- 8. Are there adequate tools to measure real participation²?*

¹ The term “full” could be replaced by the word “complete” or other word that implies a total commitment to inclusiveness from the inception of the thought or idea.

² The term real participation is a subjective term for achieving full and meaningful involvement as compared to cosmetic involvement.

9. Will structural change facilitate participation?

This paper is intended to provide the framework within which experiences and views may contribute to the process of moving closer to fully participatory and sustainable development.

The Context

This paper was prepared for the symposium entitled "Participatory Development; The Questions, Challenges and Issues" to take place at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, starting at 6 pm on Thursday February 20th, 1997 and concluding at 1.30 pm on February 22nd.

The aims of the paper are to:

- provide an overview of the definitions of participation;
- describe models of participation;
- comment on the issues relating to participation in development pertinent to both domestic (in Ireland) and overseas contexts;
- identify the current challenges to achieving full participatory development.

Written within a three month period, the paper does not set out to offer just one definition of, or the most appropriate typology for, effective participatory development. It simply presents a range of definitions and typologies, and then raises questions, challenges and issues for discussion by the symposiasts.

The author has addressed the issues as they arise in ordinary, peaceful situations. The author chose to exclude Conflicts or natural disasters situations because they would change the context.

The resources and methodology used in preparation of the paper included:

- the development experience of the author;
- the cumulative experience of the working group;

- a series of structured interviews with development workers working either overseas or at home, in partnership organizations, in governmental and non-governmental organizations. Interviews were conducted with trainers in community organizations, members of issue based groups, individuals in organisations addressing substance abuse, unemployment, marginalisation and divided communities.
- Interviews were also conducted with administrators of local and overseas development programmes; group discussions with rural development groups, groups of community workers and community volunteers;
- literature reviews from library searches and material provided by development activists.

The paper is heavily interspersed with references and quotations which might make it more difficult to follow, but readers are asked to accept this limitation in the interests of providing a paper which can be a source of references for those symposiasts who would like to develop the concept of participatory development further. The symposium is expected to result in an action plan for improved practice in future participatory development.

Participation in Development: The Question, Challenges and Issues A Symposium Background Paper³

1. Introduction

The issue of participation, or the lack of it, is, according to Reynolds and Healy (1993, p 5), forcing its way on to national and international agendas. Awareness that participation is a "crucial ingredient in successful development" (De Graaf, 1986, pp 12-14 quoted in Brehony, p 31) is growing. So too, is the awareness, at all levels of development, that sustainability is very closely linked to the full and real participation of beneficiaries in the development process. As a consequence, in many parts of the world, interest in research and development into participatory development approaches is increasing (Thompson, 1995, Platt, 1996). While that interest is welcome, it is narrow and does not adequately address the "integrated-ness" and "holistic-ness" of participatory development. If participation is effectively to under-pin true development for those most in need, then it will have to reflect a global perspective within local action and communal or community processes. The need for this vision and completeness is adequately reflected in the literature.

Reynolds and Healy(1993) quote John Rawls highlighting the need for a just society based on the twin principles of the equality of basic rights and duties and compensation for inequalities in wealth and authority, particularly for the least advantaged members of society. Reynolds and Healy point out that when these principles are applied to the whole of society, they lead to the principle of equal participation where "all have the common status of equal citizens" (Rawls, 1971, p.227).

Rawls is writing about theory; in practice there is no equality. Evidence, both global (see UNDP, any year) and local (see Annual Report of the Combat Poverty Agency, 1995), increasingly shows a widening gap between the contented and the marginalised in an

³ This paper was prepared at a symposium entitled "Participatory Development; The Questions, Challenges and Issues" in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare (now NUI, Maynooth), on Thursday February 20th, 1997

unjust society. Reynolds and Healy, quoting Galbraith (1992), remark that as the contented have now become the majority, the "agendas of the contented" are moving democracies away from aspirations to equality and fraternity and towards short term incentives. These are designed to encourage everyone's involvement in market driven processes that are supposed, eventually, to result in widespread benefit from the effects of trickle down (Reynolds and Healy, 1993). The result is "government that is accommodated not to reality or common need but to the beliefs of the contented" (Galbraith, 1992, p 170).

True development will be communal in nature. The contrast between approaches based on individualism⁴ and collectivism⁵ is discussed in the context of empowerment in Cullen, (1996, pp 94-97). "Power...is not totally individualized and is inextricably linked to a collective process" according to Cullen. He points out that development will, therefore, be "primarily concerned with building collective organizations and evolving structures that are capable of increasing people's capacity to control their lives and handle community problems." He goes on to remark "However the achievement of such outcomes is reliant on the participation of individuals, many of whom, given their economic circumstances, can ill afford extensive involvement in community development on a purely altruistic basis." This is a constraining difficulty for participative community development because " In the long term...community organizations are sustained through activities with a wider collective dimension." Organizations that are not participatory or do not enjoy the support of the wider community are not sustainable in terms of the greater good.

Participation is generally considered a core value in community development (Cullen, 1996 and ADM, 1996b). While community development has for a long time been recognized as a beneficial process, the importance of participation within community development has been inadequately stressed. This is partly due to the lack of a clear

⁴ " the belief that people can succeed on the basis of their own individual efforts" (Cullen 1996, pp94-7)

interpretation of development, and, therefore, of the key constituents of effective development. The need for a new paradigm to address this deficiency, and the new international context, was highlighted by the UNDP in its *Human Development Report*, 1994, (see also OECD, 1994). Among the elements in the UNDP's paradigm we find that it:

- "puts people at the centre of development";
- "regards economic growth as a means and not an end";
- "protects the life opportunities of future generations as well as the present generations".

In making the point that Official Development Cooperation is an instrument for advancing shared objectives, UNDP calls for "A new design of development cooperation" which would lead to "a new era of development co-operation where economic partnership is based on mutual interests, not charity; co-operation not confrontation; equitable sharing of market opportunities, not protectionism; far sighted internationalism, not stubborn nationalism".

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD proposes that this model should provide a conceptual global framework within which the partners in development can work to increase aid effectiveness (OECD, 1994). This interpretation can also be applied locally, but the question is where will this vision come from? Collins notes that "there is a fundamental redefinition occurring in Irish society...a new vision for the future...happening at the fringes of Irish society rather than at it's centre...at the bottom rather than at the top...more likely to be found in community groups rather than in universities; amongst women than amongst men and amongst voluntary groups rather than in state bodies (Reynolds and Healy, 1993, p 103)." Hulme, Uphoff, Fowler and Korten (quoted in Thompson, 1995) refer to the "Third Sector" as the innovator of participatory research and development. Collins (Reynolds and Healy, 1993, p 104) goes on to notes "Third World development approaches have long recognised the centrality of participation not only as a development strategy but as a development objective." On

⁵ "Transformation of personal concerns into common issues which become the focus for group actions" (Cullen, 1996, pp 94-7)

page 111, he remarks "Participation is part of a paradigm shift in development practice and is fundamentally significant to development within a post-industrial era."

A definition of development is integral to the new paradigm and while development itself will not be discussed in this paper, it is necessary to emphasise that participation within development is essential. Eyben (1996, p 1) states that the sustainability of development "depends on aid helping people to act for their own development." Acting "for their own development" implies active participation at a communal rather than at an individual level (see Cullen, 1996, Collins, 1988, and Thompson 1996). Crickley, in the ADM Community Development Forum Report (1996a, p.9), notes that "There is a need to distinguish between sustained economic growth and sustainable economic and social development". She goes on to state "A community development approach will by necessity involve participation and inclusion...capacity building, personal development, adult education, and training programmes."

Referring to Donnison, Cullen (1996, p 85) notes that the growth in community based approaches to development "reflects the failure of 'conventional services' to solve problems in 'conventional ways'" Thompson(1995) notes that large scale state institutions are increasingly emphasising participatory methodologies in development. Thompson cites four reasons for this trend:

- The desire to ensure the survival of development programmes and projects at a time when state organizations are being expected to do more with less. Partnership models are a good means to this end.
- Pressure on state agencies to adopt participatory models has come from national and international donors.
- Recognition of the failure of past research and development methodologies to address the complex "realities of poor people...locally specific, diverse and dynamic" .
- The widely held notion that "most state agencies are centralized, authoritarian, formalistic, inefficient bureaucracies incapable of

We are at a time when it is becoming more widely accepted that participation is essential for sustainable development, particularly for the more disadvantaged and marginalised, but we are also at a time of search, through debate and pilot projects, for a definition and a model of development that will be effective at the local and the global levels.

2. Participation Defined

The importance of participation has been recognized for a long time - Aristotle said that it was essential for the development and fulfillment of the human personality. The centrality of participation as a human right in development was highlighted at the FAO Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in 1979, and in publications such as Crowley (1985) and Nyerere (1973). The importance of participation was strengthened by a number of case studies, like those of Sibanda, Morss and Alzimir (all quoted in Brehony, 1989) and Cernea, 1985. Nelson and Wright (1994) note that a call for participatory development was made at the UN Economic Commission Conference for Africa in "Economic Co-Operation and Transformation" at Arusha, Tanzania, in 1990.

Even though the centrality of participation is widely accepted there is no common understanding of it. Williams (quoted in Nelson and Wright 1994) notes that participation is a warmly persuasive word, while Oakley et al. (1991) note that participation defies any single attempt at definition or interpretation, and Cernea (1985) refers to participation as a "cloud of rhetoric". Turrbayne (in Nelson and Wright, 1994) refers to a case study from Guatemala and notes "Organizations with very different ideologies (military and popular movements) both use the language of participation and empowerment". As such the term participation can be used in a variety of contexts and can imply a variety of meanings.

Brehony (1989) refers to agreement among commentators, such as Oakley (1987) and Cohan and Uphoff (1980), that it is impossible to establish a universal definition of participation. Lee (Community Workers' Cooperative, 1996) states that the definition of participation is unclear. Platt (1996, p 10) points out that "a common understanding of the concept is often assumed" and goes on to say that, in practice, "development actions are often based on differing perceptions of participation...[and on the] level and quality of participation being sought". This clearly can give rise to problems.

Platt's comments are supported by Cullen (1996, p 108) who asserts that fundamental differences exist among those who are most closely associated with advocating participation, "reflecting the varying intentions of its different proponents". Lee (Community Workers' Cooperative, 1996) states that participation is an idealized notion, like parenthood, and that there is a lack of experience of effective participation practice.

The literature gives a series of definitions of participation ranging from "token involvement of people", to, "autonomous decision making by popular organizations at local level" (Brehony, 1989, p 26). According to Martin and Quinney (quoted in Platt, 1996), participation is "to take part" - this is very simplistic and implies that everyone is participating at some level in every action. If we are to understand participation we need to explore beyond "taking part" and look to other commentators who have explored the extent and nature to which people "take part".

Platt (1996) refers to the three types of participation of local communities and individuals as proposed by Astorga. These are:

- physical participation - being present, using one's skills and efforts;
- mental participation - conceptualizing the activity, decision making, organization and management;
- emotional participation - assuming responsibility, power and authority.

"Taking part" must involve all three types, physical, mental and emotional. But as a definition, Astorga's types of participation do not provide us with a means of analysing its quality. Brehony, in his thesis (1989), quoted Castillo who suggests four levels of participation:

- in implementing a project;
- in deciding what a project should be;
- in evaluation;
- in control over long term direction.

By combining these elements it is possible to assess the level of participation in any given activity. Using this ordering Bryant and White (1980, p.15) have developed an equation which suggests that the value of participation may be analysed thus:

$$P=(B \times Pr) - C$$

where participation (P) equals the benefits (B) one hopes to gain by the probability (Pr) that they will actually be achieved, less the cost of achieving them (C). This equation makes possible a cost benefit analysis of participation.

Nelson and Wright (1995) refer to three models giving the extent of people's participation:

- cosmetic participation - we pretend that they are participating in our project;
- co-opting participation - they are incorporated into our project;
- empowering participation - we are incorporated into their project.

Brehony (1989) quotes from Wanyande who identifies three further models:

- collaboration - people are involved only in implementation;
- community development - grassroots participation only after needs, priorities and programmes are developed;
- empowerment - people identify their own needs with no external assistance.

Brehony (1989) also refers to Oakley (1987) who identifies four types of participation similar to those suggested by Wanyande: empowerment, organization, community development and collaboration.

Nelson and Wright (1995) go on to point out that participation can be top down or bottom up, uniform or diverse, simple or complex, static or dynamic, controllable or uncontrollable, predictable or unpredictable. By introducing professionals, controls, bureaucracy and systems, participation can lose its spontaneity, its flexibility and its usefulness. An accurate definition of participation needs to accommodate the complexity inherent in participation and the power relationships that enable or hinder participation. As Chambers says, in Chapter 2 of Nelson and Wright (1994), reversing power is the key to participation, and Brehony (1989) notes that power is central to participation. Cernea (1985, p 10) remarks that "Putting people first in development projects is not just about organizing people but it means empowering them to be social actors rather than passive subjects and take control over the activities that affect their lives."

Any definition of participation must take social factors into account. "People cannot be developed" according to Nyerere (1968),"they can only develop themselves by participation in decisions and co-operative activities which affect their well-being." The Combat Poverty Agency (1995, p 2) bring in the value of power and voice, and define community participation as "being able to have an input into structures in which decisions are made". It is in this way that "Participation gives a voice (op. cit. p 4). " An OECD Report, produced in 1991 and quoted in Nelson and Wright (1994), defines participation as combining effective economic policies, equitable access to basic social and economic services and broader participation in the orientation of government policies and programmes. Nelson and Wright (1994, p 7) refer to a definition, produced in 1991 by GTZ, that participation is "Co-determination and power sharing throughout the programme cycle". Collins (1988) noted that participation has an inherent value in itself by enhancing personal well-being and political power. Martin and Quinnney (quoted in Platt 1996), refer to a definition proposed by Forss in which participation is "a process in which the target group members take an active part in planning and decision making, implementation and evaluation" which leads to a sense of control over resources and responsibility for the future. Faughnan and Kellagher define participation as "taking part in activities in a way designed to influence events whether in areas of policy formulation, implementation or evaluation" (Reynolds and Healy, 1993, p 91).

Definitions of participation range from taking part in projects to self-development through full participation. From the literature we can see that the definition of development itself has also evolved over time as the definition of participation has matured into a more holistic and empowering concept. However, even if we have the right words, do we have the right practice? Chambers, in Nelson and Wright (1995), remarks that development practice lags behind development language. To explore participation as it is defined by practice, this paper now looks at typologies of participation.

3. Typology of Participation

There is a wide range of literature relating to the typology of participation. Some authorities describe the types of participation, whereas others refer to its mechanisms and to the limitations on the implementation of participatory development. The following review summarizes the relevant literature.

Concern Worldwide, in a document guiding the production of project proposals, identifies the following types of participation:

Table 1.; Typology of Participation

Typology	Characteristics of each type
“Passive participation:	Unilateral information sharing in which people are informed of what is to happen.
Consultation:	Although people are consulted problems are still defined and analyzed by outsiders who make all the decisions.
Participation for Material Incentives:	People contribute resources, such as labour, in return for food, cash or other incentive, but have no ownership of the project and no stake in continuing when the incentives end.
Functional Participation:	Participation is encouraged as a means to achieve ends which are often predetermined.
Inter-active Participation:	People participate jointly in the analysis, development of action plans, and monitoring of impact. Participation is inter-active and structured to allow groups to take over decision making and control of the resources, such that they have a stake in maintaining structures and practices.
Self Mobilization:	People take initiatives independently of outside assistance and have control of resources. Agencies may provide support to enable the formation and spread of such groups.

(Source: Concern Worldwide 1995, pp4-5. Adapted for this paper)

Brian Wall, Irish Aid (APSO, 1996) presented a seven category typology of participation which is closely linked to that presented by Concern (see table 2):

Table 2. Typology of Participation

Typology	Characteristics of each type
Passive:	People or communities participate passively as a result of a unilateral directive to do so, without any inter-action or involvement in the decision-making process.
Contributing Information:	Participation is confined to answering questions for surveys and information questionnaires, the results of which are never made available to the contributing community.
Consultative:	People participate by being consulted at workshops, forums etc., where they can express views and opinions, but are still excluded from any decision-making.
Participation for Material Incentives:	Communities participate by providing resources in return for food, kind or cash. When the incentives end people have no interest in continuing activities
Functional:	Communities form groups to meet pre-determined objectives of participation projects and programmes. This involvement may be at the early stages of a project cycle and they may be excluded from major decisions.
Inter-active:	People take control and influence the local decision-making process. They are actively involved in community development and planning. They monitor the implementation of and evaluate the impact of their own projects and programmes. This confers a sense of project ownership.
Self Mobilisation:	Communities plan and execute their own initiatives independent of mobilization from external institutions. The only limitation is the financial resource gap, the development burden and the extent to which donors may accept a "hands off" role.

(Source: APSO, 1996. Adapted for this paper)

CARE presents a typology of five levels of participation, again ranging from passive to active:

Table 3.; Typology of Participation

Typology	Characteristics of each type
Passive Participation:	The community has no decision making role and is asked , or forced, to participate.
Non Participatory Participation:	There is a minimum level of involvement, with mandatory instructions, planned in advance from above.
Negotiated Participation:	Mutual dependency is recognized, most activities are shared, based on joint contracts.
Spontaneous Participation:	There are voluntary contributions by people and self sustainable activities with minimal external inputs.
Active Participation:	The community voluntarily partners with the outsiders and is actively involved in decision making.

(Source: CARE, 1994. Adapted for this paper)

Pretty(1995) presents a seven level typology of participation:

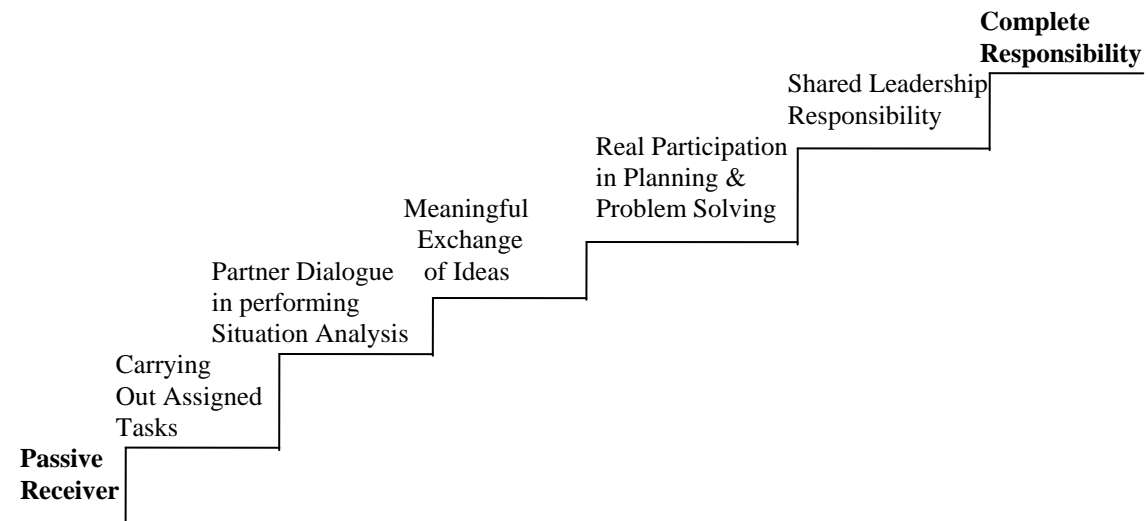
Table 4.; Typology of Participation

Typology	Characteristics of each type
Manipulative participation:	Participation is a pretence with people's representatives on official boards but who are unelected and have no power.
Passive participation:	People participate by being told what has been decided and has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management who do not listen to people's responses. The information offered belongs only to external professionals.
Participation by Consultation:	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes and so control analysis. This process does not concede any share in decision making and professionals are under no obligation to adopt people's views.
Participation for Material incentives:	People participate by contributing resources, e.g. labour, in return for food , cash or other material incentives.
Functional Participation:	People's participation is seen by external agents as a means of achieving project goals, especially reductions in costs. People may form groups to meet pre-determined objectives. This participation may be inter-active and may involve shared decision making, but tends to arise only after major decisions have been made by external agents. Local people may only be co-opted to serve external goals.
Interactive participation:	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and the formation, or strengthening, of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just as a means of achieving project goals. The process involves inter-disciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of structured and systematic learning processes. As groups take control over local decisions and determine how local resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures and practices.
Self Mobilization:	People participate by taking initiatives, independently of external institutions, to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for the resources and technical advice that they need, but retain control over how the resources are used.

(Source: Pretty, 1995. Adapted for this paper).

In 1989, Norad described participation as a series of different levels from passivity to complete responsibility. This was subsequently described in a diagram by Platt (1996):

Figure 1; Levels of Participation



Adapted From Platt(1996)

In summary, the Concern Worldwide typology describes participation as ranging from providing information and permitting limited consultation through to participation for different outcomes, and to self-mobilization (table 1). Wall describes similar types of participation, describing them as running from passive to self-mobilisation (table 2). CARE's typology refers to passive participation, but also describes negotiated, spontaneous and active participation (table 3). Pretty presents a typology that introduces the concept of manipulative participation as a stage before passive participation (table 4) and then describes six other types of participation concluding in self mobilization as in tables 1 and 2. Norad (Fig. 1) presents the types of participation as steps leading from passive participation to taking complete responsibility. Participation, in this typology, ranges from passivity and completing assigned tasks (co-option) to a process of dialogue and exchange. It presents participation as an ongoing and dialogic model and the steps lead to "real" participation as a result of dialogue and exchange. They also lead to shared

responsibility and hence the typology addresses control and responsibility. Clearly Norad, in this typology, presents optimum participation as taking complete responsibility.

Cullen (1996, pp 116-18, and table 5) builds on the previous typologies (tables 1-4 and figure 1) and presents a four types of community participation, all identified from Irish based, community-development funded projects. Cullen's typology is in keeping with the ethos of partnership and participation within the partnership development model⁶. An Taoiseach⁷, John Bruton, in his address opening the EU Anti-Poverty Programme in April, 1995, described this ethos as "You have got to, to some degree at least, remove the control features in your thinking...[and] apply a different approach...[that] allows people to master their own destiny, make their own mistakes and learn from them" (OECD, 1996, Annex 1, p 95). Cullen (1996) distils four types of participation from the grounded experience of partnership programmes that seek to address social exclusion through a "more flexible, decentralized and participative" approach: he identifies learning participation, end-users/consumer participation, advocates and mediators consumer participation, and structures participation. In this, he captures the wider integrated-ness and whole-ness of participation. The previous typologies (tables 1-4 and figure 1) are part of the wider learning, consumer and structures-participation typology.

⁶ The implementation of the Global Grant (1992-5) programme involved a model of local development that was relatively new in Ireland and Europe and was piloted in the Third EU Anti-poverty programme(1989-4) and the area based initiative of the PESP(1991-3). This model had the four core principles of “ ... Partnership, participation, planning and multi-dimensionality ...” (ADM, 1996b, p.VI)

⁷ The term for prime minister in The Government of the Republic of Ireland

Table 5; Typology of Participation

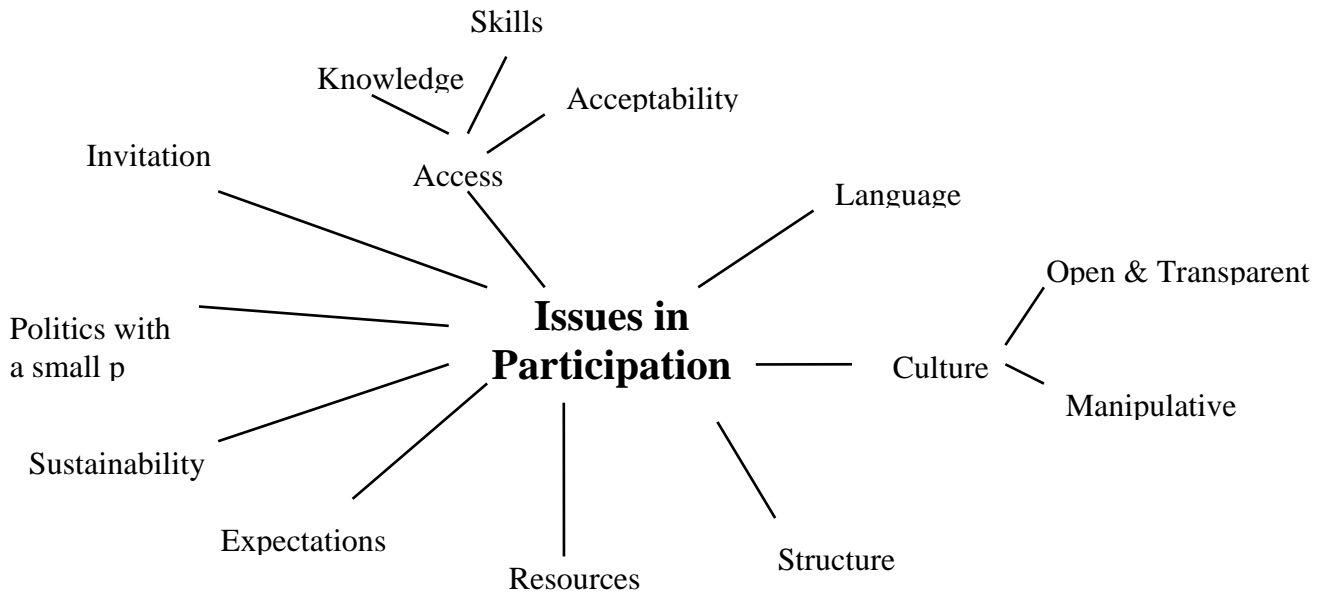
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Participation: 	<p>Disadvantaged groups are perceived as being unable fully to participate without first acquiring the techniques (knowledge and skills) and gaining the capacity (confidence and collective spirit) for doing so.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-users/Consumer Participation: 	<p>This form of participation exists where those who are direct beneficiaries have ongoing opportunities to participate in deciding the aims, objectives, policies and methods of working.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocates & Mediators Consumer Participation: 	<p>Various groups and organizations are involved in advocacy and mediating roles in the community.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structures Participation: 	<p>This approach advocates the founding of new community structures to mediate between the external agencies and the community.</p>

(Source; Cullen 1996. Adapted for this paper)

There is a natural crossover and inter-relatedness between the four forms of participation as described by Cullen. In some projects all four are evident whereas in others there is a significant absence of any of them, that is, minimum participation.

4. Conclusions from Selected Interviews

As an integral part of the preparation of this paper, the author undertook a series of interviews with professionals and volunteers active in development work and experiencing, in one form or another, participation or exclusion. These were conducted on the clear understanding that no comments would be made about individual projects or situations. Interviewees were drawn from both local and overseas development work, but were all, at the time, living either in the Republic or in Northern Ireland. The outcome of the interviews is portrayed diagrammatically:



Most interviewees raised the issue of invitation, by which they meant the question of who initiates and conceives the development programme and its projects. In the interviewees' experience there are few situations where those who are to participate make the initial invitation. Normally the developing agent has assumed that a particular response to the situation of a given community is called for, even if such a response is only to be a rapid rural appraisal or a community resource audit. Some communities are becoming tired of audits.

Several interviewees raised the issue of access. Access is important because great skill and knowledge are required if trust, which is at the heart of participation, is to be gained. Acceptability is another issue. Development workers are often outsiders who do not understand the culture and may lack the language of the people among whom they are working. This is obviously true where overseas development is at issue, but it also applies in domestic development where the development workers' understanding of the local culture can also be inadequate. Many cultures that seem to be open and transparent are, in fact, manipulative. It is also the case that agents of development seeking to introduce openness and transparency, may actually be manipulative. It is even common to find the agents of development being manipulated by the communities with which they work.

Institutional and societal structures are a major issue and each interviewee told stories of happy progress until some structure barred the way. They concluded that in all situations some structure or another will restrict participation. They suggested that participatory methodology should concentrate more on facilitating structures to interact with people rather than the other way round.

Interviewees all agreed that the long-term aim in all development is sustainability, but questioned many of the assumptions commonly made about how it is to be achieved. They suggested that participation and sustainability are very closely linked, some of them maintaining that if there was full and real participation, then there would be sustainability. They also remarked that the effects of structures and the expectations of agencies and individuals in the development cycle differ to a greater or lesser degree. These result in different views about who should invite the agencies of development, about who should participate in the process, about who should control the resources of development and about who should determine the outcomes.

5. Commentary on Implementation

The foregoing discussion on definitions and models of participation assumes that people and organizations want participation, but this is not necessarily the case. Faughnan and Kellagher (Reynolds and Healy, 1993 p 94) note that "The issue of participation did not appear to be a central one either in terms of policy or practice except in a small number of organizations...26% of the organizations were quite explicit that the issue was either not relevant to them or that no thought or attention had been directed to it." This is a major concern when there is adequate evidence that systems that do not facilitate participation "seriously damage peoples lives" and as a result people become "demoralized and disaffected" (Thompson, 1996). However, we must realize that participation is linked to power relationships, historical experiences and cultural norms. Oakley et al. (1991, p.4) note that "Centuries of domination and subversion will not disappear overnight because we have discovered the concept of participation." Illich (1969) remarks that "Underdevelopment is...also a state of mind" and Freire (1972) highlights the culture of silence, "No voice, no access, no participation." Exclusion can happen in many ways and as a result people are prevented from participating. The sources of exclusion may be physical, economic, cultural, gender, bureaucratic, etc. An Taoiseach (in his 1995 address) said that those who have power, including administrators, must "be willing to give up some power...[so that others in need] can exercise some power".

Challenge

An awareness of, and a commitment to, the centrality of participation in development among grassroots and public organizations is needed.

There is a commitment to participation in an increasing number of organisations. For example the focus of the Irish Aid Strategy Plan, (DFA, 1993, p7), and the model of partnership evolving in local development situations, recognize that renewed efforts and imaginative approaches are needed within the concept of sustainable development. Thompson (1995, p 1522) notes that today the question for many public sector institutions is not "why to apply participatory research and development approaches, but how to go about it". Cullen (1996, p 109) points out that "while in poverty programmes the maximum participation of the disadvantaged and marginalised" is expected, "there has...been an absence of spelling out exactly...how these expectations are to be achieved."

Rhetoric is not adequately matched by the development of methods and skills to facilitate participation. Nelson and Wright (1995, table 3) point out that twenty-nine activist participatory research methods have been developed since the 1970s and that there are examples of success in participatory extension, research, natural resource management, and rural appraisal among rural communities and farmers in particular. While Chambers (1994) states that activist participatory research methods have three principles in common:

"That poor people are creative and capable...[and] can and should do much of their own investigation analysis and planning".

"That outsiders have roles as conveners, catalysts and facilitators".

"That the weak and marginalised can and should be empowered".

more work is needed to consolidate the acceptability of participative models. Chambers identifies five problems in participatory development work that must be addressed:

- development projects miss the poor;
- development projects rush development, thus not allowing the necessary time for projects to grow;
- projects are built on a self sustaining myth because people tell development workers what they think the workers want to hear;
- routine and the rules limit flexibility;
- participation may be cosmetic.

Jennings (1995, p 24) says that "the project based approach has placed significant constraints on participatory, grassroots approaches to development." She argues for a programme approach.

This argument is largely accepted but, again, the skills, the tools and the facilities necessary for a programme approach to be adopted are, as yet, in the early stages of development.

Much of the work on participatory methods is focused on skills of research, consultation, participative management, monitoring and evaluation. The issue of participatory dialogue, discourse and negotiation is only now emerging as an important component of participatory development. As discussed above, the aim in participatory development is for the people to take full responsibility, to control their developing environment and, preferably, to control the invitation for development assistance. However, even the process of empowerment is flawed by paternalism. Nelson and Wright (1992), in their introduction, quote Rowlands: "How can empowerment be initiated by those who have power over others." It is necessary to develop, in development workers and administrators, participatory skills in dialogue, discourse and listening. Writers such as Freire (1972a), Habbermass (1989) and Giddens (1994)⁸ are developing dialogic models. Instruments such as development contracts, tri-partite models of partnerships, and mutually beneficial contacts are beginning to open a greater range of options for dialogue. There are guiding principles such as Amirs Contact Hypothesis (O'Dwyer, 1996) that guide dialogic participative development that is locally specific and locally appropriate as advised in Brehony (1989). According to Thompson (1996), it is through their participation that people will get a voice.

<i>Challenge</i>
Adequate development tools to enhance participation and improved capacity building skills in participation are needed by development workers.

ADM (1995) notes that for equality and full participation there must be equality of knowledge. In this discussion we are concluding that increasing levels of skill are required by development workers for participatory development. Opportunities for

⁸ Freire, P, in "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" refers to dialogue.

Habbermass, J., in "The New Conservatism" refers to communicative action & the ideal speech situation.

Giddens, A., in "Beyond Left and Right" refer to dialogic democracy.

training in participative methodologies at all levels of education are lacking. Participative methodologies are highlighted in community development training, in development studies and in development education training. Skills such as listening, communication, facilitation, cultural sensitivity etc., are provided for students of all levels. There are also increasing levels of in-service training to enhance participation skills. It should also be noted that significant learning has taken place (ADM, 1996b). Despite all this, training in these matters for students of technical subjects (both as undergraduates and mature students) is inadequate and what there is of it is inadequately grounded in practice. Thompson (1995, p 1523) states that "The term training...refers to the creation of interactive learning environments and continuous learning opportunities rather than simple classroom based teaching and instruction...implementing organisation becomes a learning organisation".

Challenge

On-the-job and foundation training in participative skills among voluntary and paid development workers must be increased so as to foster a high level of expertise in participative training.

As a consequence of the need for higher levels of skills there is a need for greater resourcing of participative development. This should not be interpreted simply as a call for more. Rather it is a call for a re-direction of resources to a more sustainable model in an informed, expert and strategic way. The time is opportune because in Ireland we now have a White Paper on foreign policy (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996) for which participation during it's compilation was sought and which does include many of the key terms of participative development. Similarly domestic development agencies are open to re-designing local development models to enhance participation. The outcome of the

Local Development Planning Seminar of ADM (1995) clearly stated that the "participation of the most marginalised groups needs to be resourced" and that " capacity building should form a central component of every plan...[through] a rolling process...with capacity building...concurrent with actions (p 36)." Local development planning has made significant steps towards multi-annual funding of local development programmes. Irish Aid is also expected to implement multi-annually funded programmes in the near future. The call for resources must also address time since, according to ADM (1996a, p 73) "It is important to acknowledge that capacity building activities will take time".

Challenge

Multi-annual programmes with realistic programme objectives and time for capacity building of local partners are essential to enable participatory development. Such programmes require focused commitments of resources.

Structural change is one, if not the key, issue in fostering participative development. Brehony(1989) notes that people are reluctant to participate because of past experiences, long histories of marginalisation, structural obstacles, and one way communication-centralised planning. (See also Howard and Baker, 1984). Participants themselves may then become barriers to participatory development due to their individual and cumulative experience of exclusion and marginalisation. Development programmes are becoming more conscious of the need to address exclusion, but may not fully understand the deep-seated reluctance of those who have experienced exclusion over a long period.

Agency structures, public, private and community, are very significant barriers to participation. In interviews, in the course of the preparation of this paper, the most frequently quoted constraint on participation was structural control. It is significant that in all types of development agencies, leadership, at the highest levels, is encouraging

participation. But the process is not simple because of the complexity of structures. Thompson (1995, pp 1522-3) notes that "Public agencies soon encounter the thorny problem of how to build internal capacity in participatory process driven approaches without fundamentally changing their cumbersome bureaucratic systems and risk averse management systems. Eventually the contradiction will force the agencies either to abandon their newly adopted methodologies (sometimes while continuing to use the associated rhetoric) or to begin the long arduous task of re-orientating their institutional policies, procedures and norms".

Confidence in the capacity of structures to deal with the change that may result from participatory approaches is also lacking. Oakley et al. (1991) suggest structures such as governments may prefer participation only in project implementation because earlier participation would raise expectations. That is true in a situation where the structures control the process and people are its objects. "Transforming a bureaucracy demands changes to an organization's working rules in order to allow it's staff to experiment, make and learn from mistakes, and respond more creatively to changing situations and new opportunities"(Thompson, 1995, p. 1523).

<i>Challenge</i>
A great deal of work remains to be done in building the internal capacity of development organisations and bureaucratic structures to facilitate development and to have the confidence to allow people to control their own development, responsibly and accountability. The issue of structural change that will facilitate participation must be addressed.

An Taoiseach (in his 1995 address) urges administrators and politicians not to treat people like things. The organizational procedures, "financial management practices, reporting systems, and

supervisory methods must be re-orientated if its role is to be transformed from that of primary implementator, to that of enabler (Thompson, 1995, p.1523)."

However, the way a community sees its needs is not necessarily the way a supporting agency will interpret them. As Cullen (1996, p 86) says " the label 'Community' in an institutional initiative does not necessarily mean that the initiator's approach to community development is the same as that of the community organizations who are often promoting the funding of such initiatives." Gosling and Edwards (in Pratt, 1996) maintain that for real participation, there must be a commitment to the principle of participation at all levels. It is necessary to focus on collective action, according to Thompson (1996), and to adopt a twin track approach (ADM, 1996a). That is action by established structures and capacity building to involve others.

Ireland does not present a good example of participative structures. "A problem exists in relation to the relatively centralized nature of Irish administrative systems. Although most of the statutory agencies have some regional administrative structures ...many decisions and issues still have to be referred up the line to the central level (ADM, 1996b, p 86)." This has implications for the development model as bureaucratic re-orientation may be required because "organizations tend to replicate in their environment the same attitudes, values and social relations that they exhibit internally" (Uphoff, 1992). This can be demonstrated clearly in the functions development workers are required to complete as compared to the functions they identify as important in facilitating development. O'Dwyer (1996) found that development workers overseas described working with people as their most important function, but reported that they were spending most of their time in management and administration. In Ireland, this author surveyed the functions of local development workers and found a similar miss-match between what they perceived as important and what they actually did. They reported, in the course of structured interviews, that organisational requirements, administration, reporting and similar tasks within very limited project time-frames took a significant amount of their time. They indicated that they would prefer to spend that time working with people. However, it was noted that local development workers in smaller projects, in non governmental organizations and in innovative partnership structures were more satisfied with their ability to spend time working with people.

<i>Challenge</i>
Structures, programmes and project cycles that facilitate and reward participation are needed.

According to Reynolds and Healy (1993, p 10) "Any exclusion of people from debate on issues that affect them is suspect...leaves those responsible... open to charges concerning the arbitrary use of power". Madelely (1991, p 2) remarks that "In reality many of the poorest are effectively disenfranchised...no vote, no organization, no leadership." The lack of adequate debate in relation to participation has left a policy deficit. The rhetoric remains, the programmes try to achieve greater participation, the policy lags behind. For example, the 1975 British Government White paper, Overseas Development; The changing emphasis of British Aid Policies: more help for the poorest, "failed to herald any major shift and was short lived" (Madelely, 1991, p 5). At present there is a valuable white paper on Ireland's foreign policy (Challenges and Opportunities Abroad, DFA, 1996). However, local development in Ireland seriously lacks a definitive policy. There is a tremendous wealth of experience in programmes and projects in both the governmental and non-governmental sectors and a large volume of reports gives recommendations. There is also a substantial number of experienced and articulate people who could inform policy development. Unfortunately, there is a chasm between the pilot models of good practice and the policy to mainstream them.

<i>Challenge</i>
Openness to participation in policy formation

and decision making is needed.

In the preparation of this paper it became apparent that, just as there are wide variations in the definitions of participation and in its various models and types, so there is also a lack of tools and indices to evaluate it. For example ADM (1996b, p xii) suggests that "Groups/partnerships have been most successful where they have abstained from becoming primary direct delivery agents". Others suggest that participation should be measured by the individual uptake of services offered (Cullen, 1996, p 110). Collins (1988) refers, in his study in the Mid West region of Ireland, to two broad organizational types: Member Centered Groups and Client Centered Groups. The member-centered groups are more reciprocally participative as members are involved in the exchange. Client centered groups are, according to Collins (p 110), more closely related to the alienated activity rather than non-alienated activity (Toffler, 1981) and "having" rather than "being" (Fromm, 1976, p 94). How do we evaluate these differing structures?

Challenge

Adequate tools for measuring real participation are needed.

5. Questions, Challenges and Issues

Faughnan and Kellagher (Reynolds and Healy, 1993, p 94) reported the following ranges of difficulties for voluntary and community organizations in promoting participation: from a lack of interest and motivation to limitations "endemic to particular populations", from scarcity of financial resources to a lack of appropriate staff skills. Collins (CMR, 1993, p 104) notes three problems in realizing participation:

- who is in control;
- the attractiveness of the return for investment in the development process;
- the lack of the necessary resources to sustain an organization.

Cloward and Pivan (1978) conclude that the radical tendencies of organizations of the poor are dissipated in the compromise with élites for organizational funding.

What are the questions, challenges and issues in participatory development? Figure 2 depicts the programme cycle composed of project cycles⁹. The project cycle is composed of the conception of the project, its planning and implementation and the monitoring and evaluation of it. Attached to it are nine questions evolved from this paper central to determining the level of commitment to participatory development:

- 1) Is there awareness of and commitment to the centrality of participation in development among grassroots and public organizations?
- 2) Is there an openness to participation in policy formation and decision making?
- 3) Is there a focused commitment of resources?
- 4) Is there capacity building training in the skills of grassroots participation?
- 5) Is there a need to increase the emphasis on-the-job and foundation training in

⁹ The author acknowledges that there is not complete agreement among development workers that the project cycle is the most appropriate model to depict development. It can be argued that development does not always follow the project cycle and that the project cycle limits capacity to deal with the diversity and complexity of development. The author proposes that the project cycle is the most commonly used model to describe development and is in

participative skills among voluntary and paid development workers and to foster a high level of expertise in participative training?

- 6) Are there adequate development tools to enhance participation?
- 7) Will structures, programmes and project cycles facilitate and reward participation?
- 8) Are there adequate tools to measure real participation?
- 9) Will structural change facilitate participation?

Each question is related to a stage in the project cycle and therefore to the programme planning cycle. As the stages are sequential and interdependent this is a challenge to the commitment to the process of participatory development. As noted in the text there is evidence of commitment to participatory development in some aspects of the development cycle. In this paper it is emerging that the commitment to a whole and integrated participatory development model must be complete.

everyday use by local and overseas development agencies. Therefore the author proposes that it is realistic to present the challenges, questions and issues within the project cycle for the purposes of this paper.

Figure 2.

Key questions on Participatory Development Related to the Programme Development Cycle

1. Is there awareness and commitment on the centrality of participation in development among grassroots and public organisations ?

2. Is there a focused commitment of resources

Programme Development Cycle

Conceiving of

9. Will structural change facilitate

3. Will structures, programmes and project cycles facilitate and reward

8. Is there openness to participation in policy formation and decision making?

Project Development Cycle

Planning

Project Development Cycle

Monitoring & Evaluation

7. Are there adequate tools to measure real participation?

4. Are there capacity building skills for participation?

Implementation

6. Is there adequate development tools to enhance participation?

5. Is there is need to increase the emphasis on-the-job and foundation training in participative skills among voluntary and paid development workers and to foster a high level of expertise in participative training?

6. Conclusion

This paper summarises the most commonly cited and experienced definitions and typologies of participation. The aim is to give the reader an overview that will enable the debate about the most appropriate model for enhancing participatory development to progress. In many debates participants get bogged down in definitions, or their discussions do not engage because their interpretations differ.

No conclusions about the most appropriate definition or typology for participation are attempted in the paper, but the reader should find that the evolution of both the definitions and the typologies brings us to a common stage in understanding participatory development. It is from that stage that we should move in our deliberations in the symposium.

The paper raises nine key challenges, questions and issues relating to participatory development. These emerged from the literature reviewed and were confirmed by a series of interviews with development agents, both salaried and voluntary. These findings suggest nine key questions, and also indicate that progress will not be made towards sustainable development until the barriers to participation are removed.

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Participation in Development: The Question, Challenges and Issues A Symposium Background Paper

Prepared for the Symposium held from 20-22 February 1997 at St Patrick's College,
Maynooth, Co Kildare.

Prepared, by Michael Kenny¹⁰

The Symposium is organised by a working group is made up of individuals who are concerned about capacity to enhance participatory development in Ireland and overseas. The group consist: Center for Adult and Community Education, St. Patrick's College; Combat Poverty Agency; Concern Worldwide; 80:20; ETC Ireland and UK; Oxfam Ireland and Trocaire.

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06 February 1997

RE; Symposium on “Participation in Development: The Question, Challenges and Issues”.

Dear Symposiast,

Thank you for your booking. I enclose the background paper that will be presented at the symposium. The paper seeks to give an overview of the definitions and typologies of participation. Even though I will make a brief presentation of the paper and there will be a response from a guest, the paper will be taken as read. This will enable you, the symposiast, to enter into the symposium process immediately. I will be sending out a more detailed time table next week.

I also enclose a list of B+B's and Guest-houses/hotels, a train/bus time table where relevant and a receipt for deposit/payment, unless your application form requested that the receipt be sent to a person responsible. The remainder, where relevant, is payable at registration (6 to 6.30pm on Thursday).

Any queries call 01-7083757 or fax 01-6289370.

Best wishes,

Michael Kenny on behalf of the working group.