

RHETORIC AND REALITY

**A Qualitative Study of the Use of Participation and empowerment in a
Development Project. The Case of LWF Cambodia Program**

Master's Dissertation in Sociology

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PREFACE

The writing of this dissertation has been a long and at times frustrating process, but finally I have reached the point where it is time to write the preface.

Although the writing of the dissertation, with all the choices and decisions it involves, at times has been a lonely process, many people have contributed in some way or another. First of all I want to thank the staff and management of LWF Cambodia Program, who made it possible for me to use LWF Cambodia Program as a case and who did their very best to accommodate my wishes and needs. Likewise I owe great thanks to the villagers in Trapaing Pring and Ro Peak, who taught me about life in their villages, and spent time talking to me and patiently answering all my questions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CDO	Community Development Officer
CDW	Community Development Worker
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
DWS	Department for World Service
GVAM	Gwembe Valley Agricultural Mission
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
LDI	Local Development Institutions
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
LWS	Lutheran World Service
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organisation
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Project
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDRD	Provincial Department of Rural Development
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PMS	Planning and Monitoring System
PPD	Purpose Path and Direction
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSP	Participatory Strategic Planning
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RWSP	Rural Water Supply Project
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VDC	Village Development Committee
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WWII	World War II

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

“Development” and “development aid” are topics that are discussed a lot, both in the media, within national and international politics and organisations, among academics, and among “ordinary” people. Continuously a lot is written about these topics, and the contributors are many and diverse. Although the angles from which one can approach these issues are numerous, some general trends can be identified, and the last couple of decades there have been noticeable changes within the “development industry”.

One of the changes has to do with *quantity*, as the industry in itself has grown. Mike Hobart (1993) describes the size of the development industry as dwarfing in scale many multinational industries or the Mafia. Some groups of actors have also experienced an increase in their importance within the industry. This is particularly the case for different Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Farrington and Bebbington, with Wellard and Lewis, describe the position of NGOs within the development industry in these words: “After several decades in the wings of development practice and debate, non-governmental organizations – NGOs – have quickly moved to centre stage. The explosion of interest in them has come from different quarters: from academic researchers, development activists, multi- and bilateral donor agencies, and not least from society itself” (Farrington et al, 1993: 1). The increasing importance of NGOs within development aid has been so noticeable, that the 1980s were even called “the NGO decade” in development aid (Tvedt, 1998).

The changing importance of certain actors within the development industry is thought to be one of the reasons for the *qualitative* changes that have been taking place the last few decades as well. Again and again it has been claimed, and even proved, that development aid has not been working according to the plan. Some academics have even claimed that so-called development has made the situation worse for the people it was supposed to help (see for example Huitzer, 1997). Hence the strategy has been adjusted and even radically changed. Some of the concepts that have come forward as popular within the new, revised strategy of

development and development aid are “bottom-up”, “participation” and “empowerment”. They are often used together, and the latter two are thought to describe a strategy for development aid with a *bottom-up relationship* between the giver of aid and the beneficiary. At the end of the day the changes mainly have to do with new divisions of power within the relationship between the different parties that are involved in a development project.

As Craig and Mayo (1995: 7) note:

Progressive NGOs have been characterized as providing alternative approaches to the failures of the development industry and of paternalistic top-down state initiatives and services – alternatives based upon the participation and empowerment of the poor and the poorest, women as well as men, working from the grassroots, in small-scale, innovative, committees, cost-effective and environmentally sustainable ways.

These qualitative changes within the development industry are often referred to as the main characteristic of development around the 1990s. However, although the rhetoric has changed considerably during the last decades, particularly concerning the way development projects are described, there are scholars who claim that these changes have taken place to a much lesser extent in *practice* than in *theory* (see for example Chambers, 1995; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Dudley, 1993). Popular concepts within the “new” ideology, such as participation and empowerment, are by some scholars talked about as buzzwords with little real content: they are used by “everyone” and about “everything” within the development industry. It is claimed that in reality little has changed in the way development aid is put into practice. This claim has captured my interest, and the assertion that there is a gap between theory and practice within contemporary development aid, will be the focus of this dissertation.

1.2. MY APPROACH TO THE TOPIC

I have chosen to study a Development NGO that represents some typical features of contemporary development aid. This NGO is called Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service (LWF/DWS), and among the many development projects around the world in which LWF/DWS is involved, I have decided to focus on their involvement in Cambodia; LWF Cambodia Program. The decision to do a case study, and to choose LWF Cambodia Program as a case, will be more thoroughly discussed in chapter four, Methodological Considerations. However, Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service is in some respects a typical Development NGO: It is international, Christian, has programmes and

projects in many countries around the world, and it uses concepts such as “participation” and “empowerment” to describe what it is doing. These characteristics can be used to describe a great number of development NGOs, although there are also many for which one or more of the characteristics would not be suitable at all. However, as we will learn throughout the dissertation, the ideology of LWF Cambodia Program has gone through changes that stand out pretty much as a parallel to the changes in the development industry as a whole.

My contribution to the discussion of the claimed gap between theory and practice within international development aid, is therefore a study of LWF Cambodia Program. I will mainly focus on how participation and empowerment are used to implement the ideology the NGO claims to support. As there are different stakeholder involved in the projects, with diverse backgrounds and maybe also different ways of “perceiving the world”, I am also interested in how these different stakeholders influence the way participation and empowerment is practiced, and how they perceive what is going on.

1.2.1. Research Problems and Research Questions

The claim that there is a gap between theory and practice within development aid, raises some questions. The first question one may ask is how the assumed gap manifests itself. What exactly are the differences between theory and practice? And then a natural follow up-question might be *why*? Why are there differences between theory and practice, if this is the case? Hence, the overall research problems that I have decided to focus on, are the following:

How is the “new” ideology put into practice?

Is participation and empowerment used in a manner that makes it possible to describe the actual relationship between development workers and local people in terms of a bottom-up relationship, which is the assumption within the “new” ideology of development? Or can it be described in terms of a top-down relationship, which is assumed to be a characteristic of the “old” ideology? Or are none of these alternatives appropriate as a description of the relationship in practice? The second research problem follows up the discussions of the first:

If there is not coherence between theory and practice, why is that so?

It is often easy to make claims regarding some sort of failure or success, and somehow describe it. *Explaining* the failure or success is more complicated, however, and may include many different facets. If there are signs that indicate that there is a gap between theory and practice within LWF Cambodia Program, I will look for explanations both in the theoretical descriptions, the descriptions given by the different stakeholders in the project, and in the social, political and cultural context.

It will be necessary to discuss what is meant by the “new” ideology, to make clear what expectations it is common to have when evaluating the practice of a development project. As a lot of the controversy is centred around the use of a few concepts - mainly “participation” and “empowerment” - that are thought to encompass the principal features of the “new” ideology, it is also necessary to focus on the meaning of these concepts. From this follows some research questions, which are used as tools in the process of discussing the problems presented above.

- *What is assumed to be the characteristics and goals of contemporary development aid?*
- *What do “participation” and “empowerment” mean, according to theory?*
- *How are “participation” and “empowerment” understood and practiced within LWF Cambodia Program?*
- *How do the different stakeholders understand and describe the project goals and the way these goals can be reached?*
- *How do the different stakeholders describe the relationship between LWF staff and local people?*

An important part of the analysis has to do with being conscious about any divergence between the different stakeholders regarding values and understandings, manifested in concrete goals and choice of means to reach these goals. The process of implementation is of major interest, as are the explanations for why one solution has been chosen instead of another. The way the different stakeholders describe the relationship between themselves and the other parties in the project, is also of major interest.

The fact that so many different variables may be involved in answering the “why” question, points to the uniqueness of any single situation, and any single development project. It is also

an intention of this research, however, to look for more general answers, maybe even based in the uniqueness itself. One may for example question to what extent the same policy and ideology is applicable to the development industry as a whole. From this follows a more theoretical dilemma, to the answer of which this dissertation can hopefully contribute: *Based on the claim that there is a gap between theory and practice within contemporary development, are “participation” and “empowerment” fruitful and adequate concepts to use in a description of contemporary development aid?*

I will come back to this question towards the end of the dissertation, when the above research problems and research questions have been thoroughly discussed. Hopefully these discussions will make me able to say something about what happens within LWF Cambodia Program, and why this happens. Based on these answers, I hope to be able to say something about the use of participation and empowerment on a more general basis as well.

1.3. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The intention of this first chapter, *chapter 1*, is to give the reader an introduction to the topic, and to present the research problems and the research questions that are the focus of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 gives a short presentation of the NGO and the development program that is used as a case for the research. As the cultural, historical and social context in which the project takes place is important both for the understanding of the project and for the implementation of the project, I also give a short introduction to Cambodia in this chapter.

Chapter 3 gives a presentation of the assumed changes that have taken place in the understanding of development and the practice of development. An understanding of the assumed changes, and the oppositions between the “old” and the “new” ideology of development is the basis for this dissertation. As we will see, the changes that have taken place the last decades, are even described as a change of *paradigms*, which indicates that the changes are major.

Chapter 4 presents discussions regarding the meaning and understanding of “participation” and “empowerment”, and other related concepts. These concepts are thought to describe the “new” development paradigm. There is a special focus on the various ways in which the concepts may be interpreted, and on inherently problematic aspects of the concepts

themselves. An intention of these discussions, is to discover features of the concepts that may be part of an explanation for why it is claimed that there is a gap between theory and practice within development aid. The chapter also includes a short presentation on some previous research done on the topic.

Chapter 5 gives an introduction to the methodological choices I have made in relation to this research project, and also presents different aspects of the fieldwork itself. Some more general methodological issues, that are relevant for this research project, are discussed as well.

Chapter 6 presents the changes of strategy and ideology that LWF Cambodia Program has gone through, with a special focus on how they currently present their own goals and strategies. It is mainly a presentation of the theoretical part of the project.

Chapter 7 has a focus on how development is understood within LWF Cambodia Program: by international staff, local staff and people living in the project villages. The understanding of development is seen as the base for any further engagement with development related activities, as an understanding of development says something both about goals and means of the process. Hence a main focus in this chapter will be whether there are any noticeable differences between the various stakeholders when it comes to how they understand development.

Chapter 8 presents an analysis of how “participation” and “empowerment” is practiced within LWF Cambodia Program, based mainly on written material and interviews. Related issues like for example opinions on knowledge and power, are discussed as well, to help enlighten the way “participation” and “empowerment” is practiced. The opinions and understandings of different stakeholders in the project are presented and discussed.

Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter of the dissertation. The lines are drawn between the different chapters, and based on what has been observed and discussed throughout the dissertation, some final conclusions will be presented regarding the understanding and practicing of participation and empowerment within LWF Cambodia Program. I will also consider to what extent the findings in this study can contribute to a more general discussion about the fruitfulness of “participation” and “empowerment”.

2. THE CONTEXT AND THE CASE

Before I proceed to the theoretical framework of the study, in chapter three and four, I will give a short introduction to the context and the case. The first implies a short introduction mainly to the social and historical context in which the project I am going to study is implemented: Cambodia. The latter implies a short description of Lutheran World Federation and LWF Cambodia Program, to give the reader some knowledge of the case that I am going to study.

2.1. CAMBODIA

2.1.1. Some key facts

Cambodia is situated at the Indochinese Peninsula in Southeast Asia, sharing borders with Vietnam, Laos and Thailand¹. According to a 1998 census the total population counted 11.626.520 people, of which only 12.0 % live in urban areas. Slightly less than a million live in the capital, Phnom Penh. Hence the vast majority of the population live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their income, of which the main crop is rice.

In the UNDP Human Development Report, 2000, Cambodia ranks 136th out of 174 countries (UNDP Cambodia Homepage). Average life expectancy is 56.2 years, and about 45 percent of the population are less than 15 years old, while only about 3 % are more than 64 years old. The infant mortality rate is 106 per 1000, which is believed to be the highest in the world (Otmár, 2001). The total adult literacy rate is 67.3%, according to the 1998 census. 95% of the population is ethnic Khmer, and about 90% are Buddhists (LWF Cambodia Program Homepage), making Cambodia a very homogenous society compared to many other countries around the world.

¹ A map is included as appendix 1.

According to Øverland (1998) harmony, order and hierarchy, and social integration are often referred to as the prime values of Khmer culture. She also notes that open conflict and confrontations between people is traditionally frowned on.

2.2.2. Historical Background

Once the mightiest kingdom in Southeast Asia, during the Angkorian period from around AD 900 till 1431 (Chandler, 1996), Cambodia has lately been identified with civil war, genocide and poverty, rather than with its mighty past and the national pride Angkor Wat.

After numerous invasions and occupations by Thai and Vietnamese forces in the first half of the 19th century, the French established a protectorate over Cambodia in 1863. The era as a French colony, and a part of French Indochina, lasted until Cambodia gained its independence at the end of 1953 (Chandler, 1996). Independence did not imply peace and stability, however. During the 1960s internal conflicts were major, and attempts were made to try to stay out of the Vietnam War. However, as Northern Vietnamese forces started to cross the Cambodian border, establish camps on Cambodian soil, and to receive arms and supplies through Cambodia, they were drawn into the war, and at the beginning of the 1970s the Americans heavily bombed the Cambodian countryside. At the same time fighting between different political branches within Cambodia continued.

In April 1975 the Cambodian Communists marched into the capital, Phnom Penh, took control over the country, and declared “Year Zero”. The new regime was known as Democratic Kampuchea (DK), or more popularly “Khmer Rouge”, and the leader was later known as Pol Pot. They intended to put an end to a lot of things: money, markets, formal education, Buddhism, books, private property, certain clothing styles and freedom of movement. Family-life and individualism also was to be put an end to, and these transformations were initiated by ordering everyone out of the cities and towns (Chandler, 1996). During the first week after Khmer Rouge took control over Phnom Penh, more than two million people were forced into the countryside. Under severe conditions people were forced to grow food, and to do other physical work. Intellectuals (or those assumed to be intellectuals) were systematically persecuted and in many cases killed. The numbers differ, but according to Chandler (1996: 212) “it is conservatively estimated that between April 1975 and January 1979, over one million people – or one person in seven – died of a direct result of

DK policies and actions.” Many were killed, others died as the result of overwork, hunger, and neglect and mistreating of sick people. No disagreement with the leaders of the Khmer Rouge was allowed, and even suspicion of any kind of opposition would lead to questioning, torture and execution.

In December 1978 Vietnamese forces started a major offensive against Democratic Kampuchea, and in January 1979 Pol Pot and other Khmer Rouge leaders fled from Phnom Penh. A government supported by Vietnam was put in place, and throughout the 1980s the Vietnamese maintained a close relationship with the new Cambodian government. The Khmer Rouge still existed, however, and under the leadership of Pol Pot they were fighting a guerrilla war against the Cambodian government until Pol Pot died in 1998, maintaining control over parts of the country until the very end. The civil war was accompanied by international isolation, and a result of the cold war was that a coalition in which Khmer Rouge had an important role, was recognized as a government in exile by the UN in 1982 (Chandler, 1996). Not until 1990 was this recognition questioned by the USA and its allies.

In 1992 the UN established a United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), but according to Chandler (1996) the UN arrived too late and moved too slowly to gain the necessary respect from the Cambodian factions. The task of disarming the different factions of the internal conflict, was not successful. Nevertheless, national elections were held in July 1993, and are by Chandler (1996) described as the freest, fairest, and most secret ballots since the colonial era. The results, however, were only partly accepted. Poverty continued, as did corruption, and opposition members and journalists were once again harassed. In 1997 political power struggles resulted in one out of two Prime Ministers having to flee into temporarily exile overseas. In 1998 a new election was held, but it was dominated by violence and accusations of vote-buying (Otmar, 2001). Nevertheless, after the election a coalition government was formed, and the conditions have to a great extent stabilised.

In February 2002 Elections for Commune Councils were held for the first time in Cambodia. According to a UNDP report on the elections, the campaign was largely free of violence, and the election itself was credible. 17 killings or suspicious deaths were reported in the months preceding the election, but as the report notes “some violence towards candidates over a 13-month period was perhaps unavoidable” (UNDP, 2002). This sentence gives a good description of the political situation in Cambodia the last decades, as 17 killings or suspicious

deaths during the preparations for an election is perceived as unavoidable by international observers. Compared to previous election campaigns this is a very low number, and it needs to be considered that Cambodia was internationally isolated until quite recently, and that in parts of the country the fighting between the Khmer Rouge and the National Army continued until 1998.

2.2. LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition. It was founded as far back as in 1947, and today it has 133 member churches in 73 countries around the world. LWF represents over 60.5 million of the world's 64.3 million Lutherans (LWF Homepage), and its headquarter is located in Geneva, Switzerland. LWF acts on behalf of its member churches in different areas of common interest. It is divided into different departments that handle issues such as humanitarian assistance, mission and development, and theology. The department of interest in relation to this dissertation is the one handling humanitarian assistance: Department for World Service (DWS). It is a non-profit Christian humanitarian organisation, which serves as the international relief, rehabilitation and development agency of the Lutheran World Federation, and operates programmes in more than 31 countries. In the DWS field programs there are more than 50 expatriate staff from 24 nations working alongside 5500 national staff. The focus of the LWF Department for World Service is “meeting the needs of all people, irrespective of race, sex, creed, nationality or political conviction” (LWF Homepage).

In the Strategic Plan of LWF/DWS, the Vision Statement of the organisation is presented as “People of the world living in just societies in peace and dignity, united in diversity and empowered to achieve their universal rights to basic needs and quality of life”. This is in other words what DWS is striving to achieve through their work, and the three core values in this process are “justice”, “participation” and “accountability” (Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service, 2001: 6).

LWF/DWS has many partners, and the so-called “related agencies” of the Lutheran churches are especially close, as they – together with the member churches – are involved in among other things planning and policy decisions (this is for example the role of Norwegian Church

Aid). Among the partners one also counts different ecumenical partners, humanitarian partners, several UN agencies involved in humanitarian response, and governments around the world (LWF Homepage).

2.2.1. LWF Cambodia Program

One of the countries in which LWF/DWS operates, is Cambodia. This country program has in Cambodia been known as Lutheran World Service (LWS) Cambodia Program but the formal nomination is now Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Cambodia Program.

LWF/DWS has been continually involved in Cambodia since Vietnamese-led forces overthrew the Khmer Rouge government in 1979. They are one out of only ten NGOs that has maintained continually active in development work in the country during all the years that have followed, despite periods of unrest, civil war and international isolation (LWF Cambodia Program, 2000). The assistance has during these years primarily been directed towards the agriculture, water supply sectors and a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in the town Battambang in the Northwestern part of the country, but also contributing toward the priority reconstruction needs (LWF Cambodia Program Homepage). This has mainly been done through central government support.

In 1995 the program started to shift its focus from this central government support to more “grass-root” level activities, in the shape of community development in rural areas (LWF Cambodia Program, 1995), and geographically based Integrated Rural Development Projects (IRDPs) were formed. Demining and Resettlement Projects were also established, in areas where people returned to land that had been freed from Khmer Rouge occupation, but these have later been absorbed into the IRDPs. The support for the VTC in Battambang also continued, and the Rural Water Supply Project (RWSP) continued to function primarily as a support unit for the IRDPs and also for other organisations. The cooperation with Government departments at all levels is still of great importance, and LWF Cambodia Program has signed a so-called “Memoranda of Understanding” with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002c).

There are now five IRDPs that operate in the provinces of Battambang, Kompong Chhnang, Kompong Speu, Kandal and Takeo (the latter two together constitute IRDP Kandal/Takeo, while Kompong Speu Province is divided into two separate IRDPs in the districts of Oral and Phnom Sruoch), and target a combined population of 85.291 people (LWF Cambodia Program Homepage). I did most of my fieldwork in two project villages in Kompong Chhnang Province.

Each project has a separate management structure, headed by a *Project* Coordinator, who is responsible to the *Program* Coordinator in the capital Phnom Penh. The Program Coordinator has the overall responsibility for the implementation of program activities, while the overall responsibility for both program and administration lies with the LWF/DWS Country Representative (LWF Cambodia Program Homepage).

In the 1993 Annual Report it is said that “a significant aspect of the structure of the LWF/WS program in Cambodia is the large number of expatriate staff – from administrative and financial personnel to specific technical professionals” (page 4). This is explained by the lack of people with education and technical skills in Cambodia, a situation that is due to the systematic persecution and killing of this group of people during the Khmer Rouge Regime from 1975 to 1979. This is however an aspect that has changed considerably during the last few years, as there in 2001 were only 4 expatriates remaining, out of a staff counting 250 people (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002b). The remaining 246 are Cambodian nationals. The number of expatriates has decreased rapidly from 12 to 4 since the present Country Representative took over the job in 1998 (information from Country representative, e-mail 23 April 2002). The rest of the positions have been localised and there are at the moment concrete plans regarding the localisation of the remaining four positions held by expatriates as well, with the last being the position of Representative being localised as Executive Director in 2010. This is part of a plan involving the transformation from International Field Program of the Geneva-based LWF/DWS to an autonomous Cambodian NGO (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002d).

Before returning to the study of LWF Cambodia Program, I will in chapter three and four present the theoretical background for the study.

3. DEVELOPMENT

3.1. INTRODUCING DEVELOPMENT

The word “development” is today part of the common language, and is used in all kinds of circumstances. You can talk about for example the development of the story of a book or a film, the development of a relationship, the development of a game of chess, or the economic, social or political development of a society or a nation. The word implies a change of some kind.

The kind of development that has relevance for this dissertation has to do with changing the social, political and economic situation of a society or nation at macro level, and the everyday situation of people inhabiting the society at micro level. Used for referring to this kind of change, development often implies a movement from something negative, or at least not particularly good, to something better. In these cases *development* is conceived as more or less the same as *improvement*. Often the transition is from a situation conceived as *undeveloped*, or *underdeveloped*, to developed. This makes it seem like a very positive word, hence “development” usually seems to be regarded as something positive, and it sounds like a good idea to develop. But are the content and the meaning of the concept as straightforward as it may often seem like? Development has been and is still a matter of controversy and debate, and there are a great number of different interpretations of the concept, as will be discussed throughout this chapter.

Rutger-Jan Schoen begins his article “Fitting Projects to People or People to Projects?” by stating that “development is change”, and continues his introduction by saying that “every development intervention will implicitly or explicitly have far reaching consequences on the way people live, work, eat or raise their children” (Schoen, 1996: 249). This is not particularly controversial, and I am tempted to think that anyone concerned with the content of the concept of development would agree so far. The disagreement begins when questions like “what kind of change?” or “who are the agents of this change?” are raised.

In the following I will show how these questions are answered by different scholars, and how they – based on these answers – define development. I will begin by giving a short presentation of how the concept of development itself has evolved throughout history². I will then introduce the reader to two of the major opposing paradigms³ of development, which will constitute the background for the discussions and considerations raised throughout the dissertation.

3.2. PRE-WWII UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT

Gustavo Esteva (1992) gives an introduction to the concept of development by discussing different understandings of the concept in a historical perspective. Before anyone started to use this word to describe any kind of social change, it was used to explain the natural growth of plants and animals: the development or evolution of living beings. “Development” and “evolution” were in many cases used more or less as synonyms. Used in this way, the term described “the process through which organisms achieved their genetic potential” (Esteva, 1992: 8). The biological metaphor was transferred to the social sphere in the last part of the 18th century, as the German word “Entwicklung” was starting to be used to describe the gradual process of social change. The transformation of some political situations was described almost as natural processes, and at the same time “development evolved from a conception of transformation that moves towards the *appropriate* form of being to a conception of transformation that moves towards an *ever more perfect* form” (Esteva, 1992: 8). A few decades into the 19th Century the human subject started to get a more central role, as the human being was seen as the author of his own development. The concept became the central category of among others Marx’s work, where the unfolding of the historical process has the same necessary character as natural laws (Esteva, 1992: 9).

With the help of the metaphor of development, history was during the 19th century reformulated in Western terms according to Esteva. The industrial mode of production, which was actually nothing more than one, among many, forms of social life, became the definition of the terminal stage of a unilinear way of social evolution. People of different cultures were, as Esteva describes it, robbed of the opportunity to define the forms of their social life.

² Mainly following the presentation given by Gustavo Esteva (1992).

³ Robert Chambers (1997: 189) defines a paradigm as “a coherent and mutually supporting pattern of concepts, values, methods and behaviour, amenable to wide application.”

Development became a matter of *copying*, not inventing and creating, as had been the case as long as the concept was only used for describing the process of change taking place in the West.

The view that the West was the focus of development at this time, is confirmed by David Hulme and Mark M. Turner (1990), who also affirm that words like change, progress and development are not new within the social sciences. They have been of frequent use since the 19th century, but up until the Second World War they were mainly used for describing the situation and the transformation in Europe and the United States (Hulme and Turner, 1990: 9). The rest of the world was mainly regarded as the territory of the social anthropologists, studying primitive and exotic people and cultures.

When it comes to the Western countries' interest in the rest of the world around the turn to the 20th century, it is not possible completely to avoid looking at colonialism. According to Esteva (1992), the way the Western colonialists used the word "development" changed when the British government in the 1930s decided that in addition to the economic development of the colonies, the colonial power should also be responsible for the welfare of the natives in the colonies, guaranteeing them a minimum level of nutrition, health and education. This was called a "dual mandate", but soon the well-being part of this mandate was absorbed into the concept of development, and again it was the responsibility of *developing* the colonies which was the issue, only with a broader understanding of what development implied.

3.3. POST-WWII UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT

Esteva describes another important change to the meaning and use of the concept of development at the end of World War II. The United States had a unique position in the world, and according to Esteva they needed to make this position explicit to the rest of the world, and consolidate the hegemony. This need introduced "the era of development", when President Truman in a speech in 1979 made it clear that the progress and prosperity of the United States had to be beneficial also to the underdeveloped areas of the world (Esteva, 1992: 6). This was a new way of using of the word "underdeveloped", and it changed the meaning of development. The new way of understanding development was immediately accepted universally, and since Truman held that speech, a substantial part of the people

inhabiting the world has been regarded as *underdeveloped*. They were compared with the USA, and soon with other Western countries as well, and were found to lag behind. Development, then, is the process these people have to go through to escape this inferior condition called underdevelopment. As Arturo Escobar describes it: “One of the many changes that occurred in the early post-World War II period was the “discovery” of mass poverty in Asia, Africa, and Latin America” (Escobar, 2002 [1995]: 79).

Hulme and Turner describe another matter that influenced the use of and the importance of the concept of development after World War II. In the post-war years the colonies began to achieve independence, and the cold war led to a struggle between the two sides for achieving allies from this part of the world as well. Hence development of the “underdeveloped” countries became an important task for the main protagonists in the cold war, as a means to influence world politics.

After WWII development was regarded as equivalent to growth in the income per person in economically underdeveloped areas. Slowly the expression “social development” was introduced in UN reports, but very vague and mostly as a counterpart for “economic development”. Not until 1962 was the integration of both aspects of development recommended by people within the UN, but still after that it was difficult to reach an international consensus around any new definition of the concept of development (Esteva, 1992: 13). *Modernisation* through economic development continued to be the dominating goal at least until the 1970s.

Jan Servaes (1996) describes a challenge to the modernisation approach evolving from around the mid-60s, which was dominated by Latin American social scientists. This perspective has been called “the dependency perspective”, and it was dealing with dependency and underdevelopment. Where the modernisation approach stresses internal reasons for underdevelopment, and claims that the internal problems can be remedied by external technological aid, the dependency theories stress external factors as the reasons for underdevelopment. One of their main assumptions is that “...development in the centre implies underdevelopment in the periphery” (Servaes, 1996: 32). Hence it is those areas of the world that are considered developed, that cause underdevelopment in other parts of the world. The inability of these two approaches to development, however, to provide any clear answers to the “development problem”, opened up for new theories a couple of decades ago.

Hulme and Turner (1990) describe a redefinition of development from the 1970s onwards, as it became clear that other elements than economics had to be included in the development concept, due to the realisation that the so-called developing countries were not modernising. Social scientists now redefined development “in terms of progress towards a complex of welfare goals” (Hulme and Turner, 1990: 5), and these goals were specified for example as a provision of basic needs, creation of full employment, and reduction of inequality. “Basic needs” have also been defined in various ways, however, and according to Hulme and Turner the definition depends on the personal values of different people, which again depend on their positioning in time and space. This realisation led to yet another major change in the understanding of development: In 1978 the experts of Unesco promoted the thesis of *endogenous development*, which reject the necessity, possibility or suitability of mechanically imitating industrial societies. Initiatives have to come out of the different cultures and their different systems of values. This concept of development won great acceptance, and has constituted the foundation of a dominating view within great parts of the “development industry” since its appearance.

3.4. DIFFERENT PARADIGMS

The understandings of development have, as we can see above, changed considerably since modern ideas of development were introduced after WWII. The first decades were dominated by the want to modernise poor third world countries by copying Western models. The main focus was on economic development. The last two or three decades, however, have been characterised by a want to distance oneself from these former theories of development, saying that there are various ways of developing, not only one model that everyone has to copy. Each country has to find its own way, and it is the people inhabiting the “developing countries” who themselves should be in charge of their own development process. The differences between alternative theories are so noticeable, that many scholars talk about different paradigms of development. Most scholars separate between two paradigms of development: the one dominating during the 1950s and 60s, usually called “Modernisation Paradigm”; and the one coming up as a challenge to the modernising attempts during the 1970s and 80s, becoming the dominating paradigm from the 1990s onwards, called for example “multiplicity paradigm” (Servaes, 1996; Flynn-Thapalia, 1996) or “paradigm of people” (Chambers, 1997). Following Servaes and Flynn-Thapalia I will refer to the currently dominating paradigm of

development as the “Multiplicity Paradigm”, as I consider this to be a name that covers the main features of the paradigm.

According to Servaes the multiplicity paradigm builds on the assumption that “there is no universal path to development, and that development must be conceived as an integral, multi-dimensional and dialectic process which can differ from one country to another. In other words, *every nation must find its own strategy*” (Servaes, 1996: 32, my emphasis). This paradigm also argues that people cannot be developed, they can only develop themselves. This description seems to equal Unescos description of “endogenous development” (above).

3.4.1. The Modernisation Paradigm

“In the 1950s and 1960s thinking and action on development were dominated by the modernisation approach”, Hulme and Turner (1990:34) assert. Development was all about economics, and the models used by the economists working with development, were derived from the experience of Western countries. Other social scientists were included in the work, but it was all mainly under leadership of the United States, and a tremendous part of the development work was about keeping the Third World countries free of communism. It all terminates in a perspective where all that is western is good and desirable, and westernisation becomes synonymous with modernisation. Societies were looked at as either traditional or modern, out of which modern was desirable. It was assumed that the problem of underdevelopment, or “backwardness”, could be solved by transferring Western economic and political systems to countries in the Third World. “They assumed that the difference was one of degree, rather than kind” (Servaes, 1996: 31).

Hulme and Turner (1990: 35-38) describe the modernisation theory as one adopting the dichotomies created by social scientists such as Durkheim (separating between mechanical and organic solidarity), Tönnies (separating between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*) and Weber (separating between traditional and rational authority), although these theorists were less enthusiastic about the transformations than were the modernisation theorists. The modernisation theorists also combined the dichotomy of traditional and modern with an evolutionary perspective of societal development. This kind of perspective previously described the history of Western societies, but was now used by modernisation theorists to

explain how Third World countries were going to go through the same transition as the West had already done.

Robert Chambers (1997) describes this paradigm as one centred on things. It is a paradigm most of all characterised by top-down blueprints, and an emphasis on expert knowledge and standardisation. Top-down, centrally planned targets make development projects controllable and predictable, and within this paradigm that is considered important. Absolute measurements are often used as part of the planning and to control the results. “[C]alls for better co-ordination, better integration, better planning and better transfer of technology” are according to Chambers (1997: 189) also important components of the modernisation paradigm (or “top-down blueprint paradigm” as Chambers also calls it). Transfer of technology is also considered a very important part of development within this paradigm. “[T]he technology is uniform: mass-produced as a standard package, a single variety of a tree or a crop, a standard practice to be applied everywhere, or a mass-produced piece of hardware” (Chambers, 1997: 67). The roles ascribed to outsiders in development projects within this paradigm, is that of teacher, trainer, supervisor and service provider, according to Chambers, while the role of the local farmer, for example, is to hear messages, act on precepts, and adopt, adapt or reject the package they are offered (Chambers, 1997: 202).

3.4.2. The Multiplicity Paradigm

The more and more dominating paradigm of development since the mid-80s, the multiplicity paradigm, places an emphasis on the importance of the active involvement of local people in directing their own development. As one scholar explains it, “a cornerstone of the multiplicity model is its emphasis on participatory decision making, with the community identifying problems as well as formulating and realizing appropriate solutions” (Flynn-Thapalia, 1996: 152). A common denominator for development theorists and practitioners belonging within this paradigm, is their use of certain concepts that are closely connected to the paradigm, and which express distance to the modernisation paradigm. These concepts are among others “participation”, “empowerment”, “partnership” and “bottom-up”. I will discuss the understanding of these concepts in the next chapter.

Robert Chambers (1995: 32) describes the change in dominating trends as a shift “from a professional paradigm centred on things to one centred on people”. These two paradigms may be compared to the modernisation paradigm and the multiplicity paradigm. In the first paradigm the development professionals play an important role: engineers, economists, agriculturists etc are in charge of development projects, telling people how they could change things, or - as is often the case - doing it themselves. The kind of knowledge that these professionals possess is highly valued. In the second paradigm, local knowledge to a greater extent becomes acknowledged and valued, and many of the former professionals are replaced by social scientists or social workers who spend their time trying to help local people create their own solutions to problems they confront. The table below shows some of the major changes that this shift of paradigm involves for a development project, according to Chambers. It is worth noting, however, that he indicates that these changes have taken place more in theory than in practice⁴.

Table 1. Two paradigms: things and people (Chambers, 1995: 32)

Point of departure and reference	Things	People
Mode	Blueprint	Process
Keyword	Planning	Participation
Goals	Pre-set. Closed	Evolving, open
Decision-making	Centralized	Decentralized
Analytical assumptions	Reductionist	Systems, holistic
Methods, Rules	Standardized Universal	Diverse Local
Technology	Fixed package (table d'hôte)	Varied basket (a la carte)
Professionals' interactions with clients	Motivating Controlling	Enabling Empowering
Clients seen as	Beneficiaries	Actors, partners
Force flow	Supply-push	Demand-pull
Outputs	Uniform Infrastructure	Diverse Capabilities
Planning and action	Top-down	Bottom-up

⁴ This claim is made by other scholars than Chambers as well, as I will come back to in the next chapter.

I will not go into detail with all the changes illustrated in the table, but it is worth noticing that the changes are major. In some cases the contrast between “the paradigm of things” and “the paradigm of people” is that of completely opposite strategy. The prominent paradigm during the modernisation period was dominated by a faith in a blueprint for development, pre-set universal goals, and the professionals being in control of the planning. In short: a *top-down* process. The people centred paradigm, which has now taken over the dominating position, according to Chambers, is characterised by the belief that development is an open process where the different stakeholders participate. It is diverse and local, and the role of the professionals is one of enabling and empowering their local partners. It is a *bottom-up* process.

According to Robert Chambers, “the objective of development is well-being for all” (1997: 9). He explains that well-being should be understood as an experience of good quality of life. This understanding opens up for individual definitions of what well-being is, in contrast to those defining the objective of development as wealth. In his description of a proper – according to him – understanding of development, he further argues that “decentralization, democracy, diversity and dynamism combine. Multiple local and individual realities are recognized, accepted, enhanced and celebrated. Truth, trust, and diversity link. Baskets of choice replace packages of practices” (Chambers, 1997: 188). This understanding of development emphasises diverse options and actions, and “[w]hat is local, and what is different, is valued” (Chambers, 1997: 189). According to Chambers development is - as mentioned above - a bottom-up learning process, and decentralisation, democracy, diversity and dynamism are important aspects of this way of understanding development.

Development projects and “outsiders” working in a development project, has its role. But the project and the people employed by the project should be responsible only for minimal rules and controls, according to Chambers, thereby permitting behaviour which is complex and locally diverse. The role of development professionals within this paradigm is limited to that of facilitating, listening and empowering⁵. These people will therefore not be able to control the process of development and its outcome.

Another well acknowledged scholar within development theory, Michael Edwards (1999), comments Wolfgang Sachs’ claim that “the idea of development stands [today] like a ruin in

⁵ The concept of “empowerment” will be discussed in the following chapter.

the intellectual landscape” (Sachs, 1992: 1) by claiming that it is not the idea of progress, or development per se, that lies in ruins, “but standardised notions of what it means, how to achieve it, and whether it represents an unstoppable forward march” (Edwards, 1999: 19). Through this claim, Edwards points to the sharp contrasts between the two paradigms of development. Development is about means, not ends, he says, and instead of a model there is a path. The key of this path is dialogue, and when disagreements arise along the path, solutions are negotiated, not imposed. Michael Edwards (1999: 4) understands development as “the reduction of material want and the enhancement of people’s ability to live a life they consider good across the broadest range possible in a population”. The latter claim resembles Chambers’ claim that the goal of development is well-being for all, explained above. Edwards (1999) is of the opinion that the way development has often been defined, as a universal linear transition from tradition to modernity, is ignorant of history and incapable of producing the wanted results.

There is no such thing as a universally accepted definition of the good life (still less how to get there), but people everywhere aspire to have more as well as to be more – to be free from poverty and violence and the servitude these bring in their wake; (...) and to be the subjects of their own destiny rather than objects of the intentions of others. (Edwards, 1999: 4)

Hence, one of the main differences between the modernisation paradigm and the multiplicity paradigm seems to be that according to the modernisation paradigm there is a model for how development should happen, and what the goals are, whereas the multiplicity paradigm claims that development should be directed by local people, according to *their* perceptions of what a good life is, and how they can improve their own situation. There is not one specific explanation of development, but rather many different possibilities, dependent on culture and tradition, according to scholars belonging within the multiplicity paradigm.

3.5. SUMMING UP

As seen throughout this chapter, development obviously means different things to different people. The understandings can, however, be organised according to different epochs in time, and according to characteristics of the definitions. Some scholars even talk about different paradigms of development, the most important ones being the modernisation paradigm and the multiplicity paradigm. During the 50s and 60s the modernisation paradigm was

dominating, then there was a transition period with different competing theories, before the multiplicity paradigm became the dominating view sometime during the 80s or 90s. It is important to emphasise that although different paradigms dominate in different decades, this does not mean that as one paradigm arises, the old one disappears. This is not the case. The old and the new paradigms exist parallel to each other, only with the new taking over a dominant position within the different components that constitute the development industry, meaning that it becomes pretty much the overall accepted norm.

However, according to Servaes, modernisation is still popular both within major development agencies and within Northern and Southern power elites (Servaes, 1996). As I will return to in the next chapter, several scholars claim that there is a gap between theory and practice in development, implying that the multiplicity paradigm has taken over only the rhetoric, while the modernisation paradigm continues to dominate practice.

The next chapter will focus on concepts used within the multiplicity paradigm, that are thought to represent some of the main features of the paradigm. These features are for example the idea that local people should be in charge of their own development, and that the relationship between givers and receivers of development aid within this paradigm should be bottom-up, in contrast to the top-down relationships within the modernisation paradigm.

One may say that a characteristic of the multiplicity paradigm is that development is seen as a response to a *felt need for something*, while a characteristic of the modernisation paradigm is that development is seen as the response to a perceived *lack of something*.

LWF Cambodia Program tend to describe their projects in the terms of the multiplicity paradigm. I therefore find it worthwhile to look deeper into the discussions around the meaning of some central concepts, before I proceed to an analysis of the use of these, based on my own study of LWF Cambodia Program.

4. FROM TOP-DOWN TO BOTTOM-UP?

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Development aid is based on the premises that some people help other people develop in some way or another, but this can be done in various ways. At field level, development aid is often organised through development projects, as is the case with LWF Cambodia Program.

As the dominating opinions regarding definitions of development and goals for development have been changing, so have the principles regarding what kind of development *aid* should be given, and how. As discussed in the previous chapter, different definitions of development include different understandings of decision-making, influence and control in development projects. The differences between the modernisation paradigm and the multiplicity paradigm in respect to this are major.

In this chapter I will focus on concepts that are regarded important within the multiplicity paradigm, and that are seen as describing important features of this paradigm of development. According to Michael D. Woost “everyone, from village farmers to international donors, has [in the 1990s] begun to speak the language of ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’” (Woost, 1997: 229). The fact that the concepts are of such extensive use, highlights the importance of analysing the meaning ascribed to them by the different users. As we saw in the previous chapter, many different meanings can be ascribed to one single concept. Although I have decided to focus on the two concepts of participation and empowerment, I will also briefly have a look at concepts explicitly describing the relationship between givers and receivers of aid, such as “partnership”. A reason for this is mainly that “partnership” is a concept which frequently appears in the same sentences as “participation” and “empowerment”: one rarely sees one of them without seeing the others as well. To be able to compare different kinds of relationships, I will also briefly comment the concept that in retrospect is used to describe the modernisation paradigm: “paternalism”. As the modernisation and the multiplicity paradigms are assumed to be opposed, so is the concept of paternalism to those of participation, empowerment and partnership.

Participation, empowerment and partnership have throughout the latter decades been of such extensive use in policies, plans and reports of development projects, that they may be regarded as “buzzwords”. Alan Fowler (1997) says the following about some of the most popular concepts within development towards the end of the 1990s:

On a ranking of over-loaded and abused concepts in the development lexicon, ‘partnership’ probably ranks second to ‘participation’, with ‘empowerment’ a close third. These terms are appropriated by agencies and turned into institution-specific instruments, often totally distorting their original meaning, undermining their value and usefulness. It is vitally necessary for healthy relationships to clarify what a development organisation understands by the term it uses.

(Alan Fowler, 1997: note 19 page 272)

My analysis will focus on how “participation” and “empowerment” are used and interpreted within the LWF Cambodia Program, and to what degree they describe the bottom-up, endogenous approach to development that is emphasised within the multiplicity paradigm. First, however I will proceed to a theoretical discussion of what the concepts mean.

4.2. PARTICIPATION

“It could be argued that, in terms of thinking and practice about development, we are currently in the age of “participation”” (Oakley, 1991: vii). According to Oakley (1991) it would be a very serious, even reactionary, thing to do to propose a development strategy that is not participatory. Development research, planning, implementation and evaluation – all the stages in the development process – have been changed in accordance with the ideal of participation, and new strategies have emerged which include some kind of participatory element. From being what Eric Dudley calls a “rallying cry of the radicals” (Dudley, 1993: 7) a few decades ago, the presence of some kind of participation can now be said to be pretty much obligatory in all policy documents and project proposals from the international donors and implementing agencies.

But although participation has become one of the “buzzwords” of development during the last decades, it is still a concept with many alternative interpretations and definitions. This can be the case even within one organisation. According to Terry D. Bergdall (1993: 4), “it can even be argued that there are nearly as many different approaches to participation as there are rural development programmes”.

The concept has very positive connotations, however, and it does not exist many likewise positive opposing terms. But as Nici Nelson and Susan Wright (1995: 2) writes, “it can be attached to very different sets of relations, often seemingly by its ‘warmness’ distracting close attention from the nature of those relations”. The word automatically has a positive ring to it, and it is often taken for granted that the relations described by this word are of good nature and therefore not necessary to critically evaluate any further. Nelson and Wright adds that one problem attached to the use of the concept may be that people will assume that they understand each other when they use the same word, and therefore not contest implicit ideological differences.

Important questions related to the use of participation in a development project often remain unasked. According to John Brohman (1996) these questions include asking who participates, what they participate in, how they participate, and for what reasons they participate. Some of these questions will be discussed below.

4.2.1. Different levels of participation

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, as referred to by Rahnema (1992: 116), participation is “the action or fact of partaking, having or forming part of”. This is a very general definition, and there is usually no doubt that the intended beneficiaries of a development project take part in the project. The question is in what way they take part or *participate*, and this partaking has been discussed and changed a lot through the years. One division is between participation as a means and participation as an end, a distinction that I will explain more thoroughly below.

In a World Bank publication from 1994, referred to in Nelson and Wright (1995: 5), participation is defined as “a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them.”⁶ Situations where primary stakeholders were only involved as passive recipients, informants or labourers, were not included. “Stakeholders” were in the same publication explained as “parties who either affect or are affected by the Bank’s actions and policies”, the primary stakeholders being the

⁶ Nelson and Wright (1995: 5) also note that at the beginning of the 1990s only a very small number of World Bank projects had any participatory element, although the Bank included this concept in its policies and gave detailed definitions of it.

poor and marginalized (World Bank, 1994: 1-2, referred to in Nelson and Wright, 1995: 5). In an addendum to the World Bank report a distinction was made between transformative and instrumental participation, and the goal of participation was explained as reaching and engaging primary stakeholders in transformational ways. “Getting communities to decide on their own priorities was called transformative; getting people to buy into a donor’s project was instrumental” (Nelson and Wright, 1995: 5). Following the above definition, participation should be understood as the active, transformative involvement in a project by the poor people affected. According to Pretty and Scoones (1995: 160) “effective participation implies involvement not only in information collection, but in analysis, decision-making and implementation – implying devolution of the power to decide”. This seems to be the opinion of Nelson and Wright (1995: 1) as well, as they claim that one of the basic assumptions related to participation is that “‘participation’, if it is to be more than a palliative, involves shifts in power”.

Peter Oakley (1991) also stresses that participatory development presuppose that the so-called beneficiaries move from being *objects* to becoming *subjects* of development projects.

Participatory development must be consciously based on people, their needs, their analysis of issues and their decisions. It also implies an implicit faith that people, whatever the condition of their poverty and oppression, can progressively transform their environment with the help of, but not dominated by, external agents.

(Oakley 1991; 161)

Poor rural people should not any longer be the objects of deliveries of knowledge and resources from outside, as they have been within previous development paradigms, Oakley claims.

Samuel Paul (1987, referred to in Lane, 1995) separates between four different levels of participation. The first level refers to a process of *information sharing*, and is characterised by a process where the implementing agency informs the intended beneficiaries about the project. It is a top-down process, with information and control in the hands of the implementing agency. The second level of participation is called *consultation*. At this level the information flow goes both ways, and local knowledge is utilized as a result of *feedback* from local people on issues concerning the project. The control is nevertheless still in the hands of the implementing agency, and it is still a top-down process. The third level of participation is *decision-making*, and the intended beneficiaries have at this level gained some

control over the process, which is becoming more bottom-up. The fourth level is about *initiating action*, and as both information and control flows are to a great extent going from the beneficiaries to the agency, this may be called a bottom-up process. Proposals are community-based, not assigned by outside agencies, and in this last level of participation local people have moved from being objects, to being subjects of the development process. The donor agency still retains some degree of control, however.

Alan Fowler (2000) differentiates between different levels of participation in a similar way as Samuel Paul does. The different levels of participation can be described as a continuum, as in the figure below.

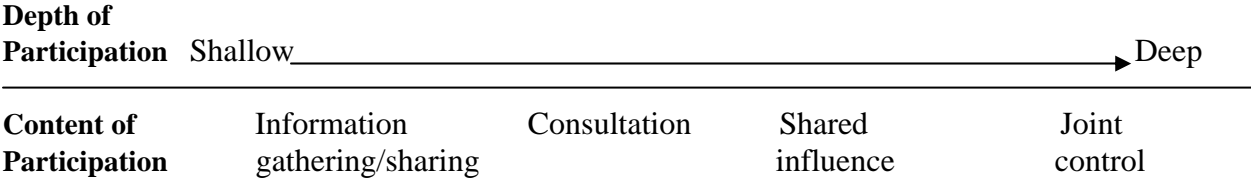


Figure 1. Depth of Participation as a Continuum (Fowler 2000: 23).

Fowler emphasises that shared influence in a development project not is enough to make it bottom-up. As long as the ultimate power still rests with an outsider, the local people will not experience and deal with the responsibility that is needed to be independent. Hence, the sustainability of a development project depends on “reaching a point of joint control over interventions from which the NGDO can begin a stage of withdrawal”, Fowler (2000: 22) claims. There is a need for a high degree of stakeholders’ influence on decision-making (depth), in combination with the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders (breadth), already from the early stages of the process (timing), according to Fowler. These three perspectives on participation, *depth*, *breadth* and *timing*, are all claimed to be essential to ensure the quality of participation.

It is worth noting that the World Bank definition of participation, referred to above, does not include situations where local people are only involved as receivers or givers of information. Hence the lowest levels of participation mentioned by Fowler and Paul, are obviously not considered sufficiently participatory to be included in the definition. This indicates that

important actors in the development industry will not talk about participation unless the participation is of a “deep” level: this is considered to be “real” participation.

4.2.2. Participation as a means or as an end in itself

As mentioned above, one distinction that can be made between different understandings of participation and different purposes of participation, is between that of participation as a *means* and of participation as an *end in itself*. According to Nici Nelson and Susan Wright (1995: 1) the first would look at development as a *means* “to accomplish the aims of a project more efficiently, effectively or cheaply”, while the latter understanding implies that participation itself is the *end* of the development process, “where the community or group sets up a process to control its own development”.

Jacqueline Lane (1995) describes ‘participation as a means’ as a way of improving project effectiveness through the use of local information. Participation is in this case seen as an input into development projects, and the achievement of predetermined targets is regarded more important than participation per se. This kind of participation may have very noticeable positive effects when it comes to project success (according to the predetermined goals for the project) and can produce quick results. ‘Participation as an end in itself’ is when participation “increases self-esteem, confidence, and the individuals’ sense of power. It may also be seen as a basic human need, in which case we would be concerned with participation as an ongoing process” (Lane, 1995: 183). According to Lane it is in the long-term absolutely necessary to have a broad conception of participation, and see it as an end in itself, as “the only way to ensure that individuals have the power to attack the root causes of underdevelopment is to enable them to influence all decisions, at all levels, that affect their lives” (Lane, 1995: 191).

According to Sylvie I. Cohen

*Participation as a means implies that participation, as a way of harnessing community resources, is expected to help achieve some pre-determined goals and objectives. Here, the **results of participation** are more important than the **act of participation** itself, in that the emphasis is placed on achieving the goals and targets, such as the improvement of health or family planning service delivery systems or the protection of the environment. In this perspective, local mobilization might evaporate when the task is completed or when targets are achieved. In that respect, participation as a means might be seen as a relatively more passive form of participation. Participation as an end implies that the **process of people’s involvement** is seen as strengthening the capacities*

of the poor and the underserved to intervene more directly in development initiatives. In this perspective, there may be no pre-determined objectives or direction.
(Cohen, 1996: 231-232, emphasis in original)

An approach that looks at participation as an end in itself, would stress the empowerment of people to take active control in their own lives and changes that occur in relation to it (Oakley and Marsden, 1984: 66-7, according to Hussein, 1995: 172). One may say that this kind of participation is seen as an exercise of *empowering* poor people, as one can see also from the way both Lane and Cohen define participation an end in itself, cited above. The concepts are therefore intrinsically interrelated. I will discuss the meaning of the concept of “empowerment” below.

Robert Chambers (1995) makes a distinction between three ways of using participation. The first way of using it is as a cosmetic label, “to make whatever is proposed appear good” (Chambers, 1995: 30). The intention of this would be to get goodwill and funding from donor agencies and governments, by describing a project as participatory in plans, policies and reports. The reality, however, may be a traditional top-down approach. The other two ways of using participation is as a co-opting practice, where “‘they’ (local people) participate in ‘our’ project” (Chambers, 1995: 30), or as an empowering process through which local people do their own analysis and make their own decisions, and “‘we’ participate in ‘their’ project, not ‘they’ in ‘ours’” (Ibid.). The first resembles participation as a means: one may say that participation is used ad hoc in this case, as there is a possibility that the participation will end once the targets are achieved. The latter - participation as an empowering process - resembles participation as an end in itself. In this case participation can be seen as a process that goes on over time, often without any predetermined objectives made by development professionals. This is according to Chambers the kind of participation that is reflected within the paradigm of people.

Hence, when the concept of participation is used as part of the policy of a development NGO or a bilateral agency that claim to adhere to the multiplicity paradigm, or “paradigm of people” as Chambers calls it, it would implicitly mean participation not only as a means but also as *an end in itself*. The use of the concept of participation is then often accompanied by concepts like “bottom-up” and “empowerment”. This is in accordance with the emphasis on a bottom-up approach and the view that any development should be based on local knowledge and the felt needs of the local people. However, according to Chambers (1995: 30) “the reality

of development practice lags behind the language”. It is being claimed by several authors that most of the participatory approaches used in development around the turn to, and into, the 1990s were “participation as means” (see for example Dudley, 1993; Lane, 1995; Nelson and Wright, 1995 and Oakley, 1991). According to Oakley (1991: 8) the dominant interpretation of participation in development projects in the Third World is the one that explains participation as different kinds of local contribution to predetermined programmes or projects, meaning that the control and the direction of the project is still not in the hands of the local people. As Eric Dudley comments: “Community participation may have won the war of words but, beyond the rhetoric, its success is less evident” (Dudley, 1993: 7).

4.3. EMPOWERMENT

As mentioned above, there is a claim that participation is to a great extent about shifts of power, and when describing the kind of participation that is labelled “participation as an end in itself”, one of the reasons given for the importance of this kind of participation is that it is *empowering*. However, as is the case with participation, empowerment is also a concept that is often used in project documents of a development project without any further explanation as to what it really means, or how to achieve it. The meaning of the concept seems to be taken for granted by many practitioners of development, and there never seems to be any doubt that it is used to describe a very positive process and relationship. However, as seen in the cases of participation and development, different meanings may be ascribed to one concept. As will be presented below, the concept of empowerment also entails some paradoxes that are very rarely discussed by the practitioners using the concept.

4.3.1. A Shift of Power

Robert Chambers (1995) describes the shift to a strategy of development that includes empowerment, as having to do with local people achieving the needed power to be in charge of their own development, and this also involves a change in the roles of the previously dominant development workers (NGO staff for example):

From planning, issuing orders, transferring technology, and supervising, they shift to convening, facilitating, searching for what people need, and supporting. From being teachers they become facilitators of learning. They seek out the poorer and weaker, bring them together and enable them to conduct their own appraisal and analysis, and

take their own action. The dominant uppers 'hand over the stick', sit down, listen and themselves learn.

(Chambers, 1995: 34)

This explanation suggests a shift of power from project staff to villagers. Through a process of empowerment, where the role of the project staff is to listen, support, facilitate and enable, poor people themselves are supposed to be in charge of the project, make their own plans, and put these plans into action.

Theories that see empowerment as a shift of power, an increase in someone's power and so on, raise questions of what meanings of "power" these empowerment theories rest on. Craig and Mayo (1995) separate between three different definitions of power. First, one can look at power in society as a variable sum, like for example Talcott Parsons did. This perspective conceives the total amount of power in society as variable, not fixed, and power can therefore increase in society as a whole. This also means that an "empowerment" of some unprivileged people in society does not mean a decrease in the power of already powerful people.

Power can also be conceptualised in zero-sum terms, making empowerment more problematic. A fixed amount of power in society means that an increase in the power of some people leads to a decrease of the power of other people. This coherence is likely to lead to resistance to empowerment of the poor by the powerful. A third perspective on power is the Marxist perspective. According to this perspective political power in a capitalist society cannot be separated from economic power. This means that the possibilities for empowerment of relatively powerless people are very limited under capitalism. People can be "empowered", but only to participate more effectively within already set limits and within restricted areas of the society. Mayo and Craig also mention the interest of Marxists in the power of ideas, and how existing frameworks of economic and political power come to be seen as legitimate and non-contestable in a capitalist society. How to understand and challenge this hegemony becomes a central topic in Marxist theories for social change.

As he describes the resistance to empowerment, Robert Chambers seems to perceive power as zero-sum: "Participation as an empowering process implies loss of central control and proliferation of local diversity. The powerful are threatened with loss of power" (Chambers, 1995: 33). This makes the empowerment process difficult. Max Weber (1971 [1922]) defines power as the possibility of one person or group of people to realise their own will in social

life, although another person or group of people might resist it. This kind of power is usually seen as zero-sum, and when someone who has previously been powerless starts gaining power, the powerful will usually resist it, as their own power becomes threatened. Jo Rowlands (1996), however, also mentions that some people may have a “power to” stimulate activity in others and make other people realise their capabilities. This kind of power is not zero-sum, and people who possess this kind of power, would not have any reason to resist empowerment of poor people. Quite the opposite, they could use their “power to” as facilitators of the process, as is the case for many development workers. Empowerment in itself is not about gaining power to dominate others, Rowlands asserts. According to her, empowerment has to do with an understanding of power as *power to*, not *power over*.

However, as some people gain power to influence their own situation, others may lose the power they previously had over these people. The field workers and their employers must be willing to hand over decision-making power and power over economic resources to local people. As people in a village start to organise themselves in groups and make their own decisions, local authorities, for example a village chief, may start to worry due to the likelihood that he will lose some of the power he previously had over the villagers. If the empowerment process is successful, local people will eventually start not only to change their situation at micro level, but also to ask questions regarding why they are poor, which implies a process at macro level. As poor people start to understand the root causes of their situation, and start to do something about it, this may have radical implications. Not least for the people who possess the economic and political power in the village, district, country or even outside the scope of the national state. As Norman Uphoff notes “neither central nor local elites are likely to be enamored with the outcome of empowerment” (Uphoff, 1991: 504).

Hence, one should not underestimate the consequences a shift of power might have locally, nationally and even globally. This is exactly the point for those who have a genuine want to reduce inequality and poverty. But as poor people gain power to influence their situation, others may lose the power they previously had, and everybody is not ready to give up this power. Hence, although empowerment is about gaining power *to*, not *power over*, as Rowlands claims, the implications are that some other people will lose their *power over*. Power is to a great extent zero-sum, and this makes many powerful people sceptical to an empowerment of the poor.

4.3.2. Different Understandings of Empowerment

Scholars separate between different kinds of empowerment, just as they separate between different understandings of development and of participation.

Peter Oakley (1991) separates between empowerment understood as “the development of skills and abilities to enable rural people⁷ to manage better, have a say in or negotiate with existing development delivery systems”, and empowerment understood as “essentially concerned with enabling rural people to decide upon and to take the actions which they believe are essential to their development” (Oakley, 1991: 9). According to Oakley it differs what people implicitly mean when they use the term, but these two understandings are common. The two understandings are also essentially different. The first has to do with villagers getting the skills and abilities that they need to be actors within an existing system where different kinds of help is provided by outside actors. Villagers learn to attract the attention of these, negotiate with them and eventually receive assistance from them. These outsiders can be governmental institutions, local or international NGOs or other sources of assistance. The second understanding goes further in defining empowerment as the development of independence of external assistance, built on local people’s self-reliance and ability to deal with their own problems. According to this understanding, empowerment does not only have to do with being able to negotiate with outsiders or already existing institutions, but also to be able to define problems, find solutions to these, and do something about it themselves. This may also happen through cooperation with outside agencies or governmental institution, but for example in a way that attempts to influence and change these, or to “use” them in a way chosen by local people, not only to act within the already set frames. This seems to a great extent to be what Robert Chambers defines as empowerment as well⁸, as he describes the role of local people as active and as controlling the development process, while the role of outsiders is more secondary and that of facilitating the process, not directing it.

⁷ In recent literature within development theory, it is often “rural” people, and “rural” development that is in focus, and “rural” is often part of definitions of development concepts and processes. There are quite obvious reasons for this: in most Third World countries, the vast majority of the poor live in rural areas. In many countries this is the case for more than 80 percent of the total population, and an even higher percentage of the *poor* part of the population. In Cambodia 88 percent of a total population of about eleven and a half million people (1999) live in rural areas (Otmar, 2001: 131). Previously there was generally a strong bias of development efforts towards industry and urban areas at the expense of agriculture and rural areas. The “alternative” development strategies make an effort to change this, and this is the reason for the focus on rural people and their development.

⁸ See the previous chapter of this dissertation.

A similar idea is put forward by P. Cassey Garba (2000), as she makes a distinction between static and dynamic empowerment. The former has to do with the capacity to participate in making decisions that directly or indirectly affect one's own life, and to influence these decisions. It has to do with having an effective voice, and this voice can be *given* to people who do not have one. This understanding of empowerment is likely to lead to *exogenous* empowerment strategies, built on the premise that people can be empowered by other people, coming from outside. It implies a top-down approach.

The latter concept, dynamic empowerment, regards empowerment as a *process* of developing the capacity of individuals "to participate effectively in making and implementing decisions that directly or indirectly affect them" (Garba, 2000: 168). This process takes time, and empowerment according to this understanding, is not something you can give to people. An option, however, is to help create conditions that increase people's chances of empowering themselves. This understanding of empowerment is likely to lead to *endogenous* empowerment strategies, implying a bottom-up approach.

According to Garba "the dynamic concept is more likely to lead to effective empowerment strategies because its perception of empowerment and disempowerment as the consequences of social processes, is more realistic [than the quick fix solution of the static concept]" (Garba, 2000: 168). Garba also notes that it is an important condition for empowerment that people become "aware of the current situation of disempowerment and of options for empowerment (...). It is easy to accept a situation if one is either not aware of it or of better options" (Garba, 2000: 170). Consequently, consciousness raising is seen as an important part of endogenous empowerment.

Alan Fowler (1997) argues that there are two dimensions to the fostering of empowerment; a psycho-social dimension and a relational dimension. The first concerns the way poor or marginalized people look at themselves. For people to be able to alter their situation, they have to get confidence in themselves, and believe that they are worth something and that their situation can be improved. As I will return to below, Paulo Freire (1993 [1970]) describes *conscientisation* as a way this sort of change can be fostered. The second dimension has to do with an individual's ability and willingness to influence power structures, with the aim of increasing the resources and choices that are available to them.

4.3.3. Social, Political and Psychological Empowerment

John Friedmann is another scholar known for his theories regarding “alternative development”, and “empowerment” in particular. He separates between three kinds of power, which equals three kinds of empowerment: social, political and psychological (Friedmann 1992). The first has to do with access to “certain ‘bases’ of household production, such as information, knowledge and skills, participation in social organizations, and financial resources” (Friedmann, 1992: 33). The second has to do with access to “the process by which decisions, particularly those that affect their own future, are made” (ibid.). In addition to the power to vote it includes the power of voice and of collective action. The third, psychological power, is by Friedmann described as “an individual sense of potency” (ibid.). He adds that psychological power often is a result of successful action in the political and social domains, although an increased sense of personal potency may also lead to an increase in political and social power. According to Friedmann an alternative development seeks an empowerment of people within all three areas, and it tends to follow a certain sequence: “Political empowerment would seem to require a *prior* process of social empowerment through which effective participation in politics becomes possible” (Friedmann, 1992: 34, original emphasis). Friedmann also mentions a common discrepancy between different understandings of empowerment. For some people it stands for social mobilisation around people’s major concerns, such as property rights, cost of living, or peace. Other people understand empowerment as a change in people’s state of mind. For Friedmann, however, social, political and psychological empowerment form an interconnected triad.

4.3.4. The Role of Outsiders in an Empowerment Process

The concept of empowerment brings forward the idea that “some can act on others to give them power or enable them to realise their own potential” (Nelson and Wright, 1995: 7). This is particularly true when the concept is used in the context of a development project, where someone from outside comes to help local people in one way or another. To help empower people is often one of the claimed intentions of these outsiders. However, as noted by Garba (2000), empowerment can be exogenous or endogenous, a topic that needs some further discussion.

According to Jo Rowlands (1996), empowerment has to do with bringing people who have been outside the decision-making process, into it. Empowerment, she continues, also has to do with the *process* where people start realising their own abilities and rights to act and to have influence. It has to do with understanding the situation that you are in, again a view very similar to Freires theories regarding conscientisation, and also very similar to what Garba describes as dynamic, endogenous empowerment.

McWirther (1991, quoted by Rowlands, 1996: 103) defines empowerment as

*The **process** by which people, organisations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community.*

A distinction is being made between “the situation of empowerment”, where all these conditions are met, and “an empowering situation”, where one or more of the conditions is in place. Understanding your situation is however an essential part of empowerment.

Empowerment is a process where the goal is for people to be able to do something about unjust inequalities and the effects of these. As empowerment refers to formerly powerless groups gaining understanding, control and influence over their own situation, the role of outsiders in this process has to be limited: the process of empowerment “cannot be imposed by outsiders” (Rowlands, 1996: 105). An outside professional may have the role of helper or facilitator, but cannot expect to control the outcomes of the empowerment process, according to Rowlands: “[T]rue power cannot be bestowed: it comes from within. Any notion of empowerment being given by one group or another hides an attempt to keep control” (Taliaferro, 1991, referred to by Rowlands, 1996: 103). If someone has the power to “empower” others, this can be understood as a sign of superiority over those in need of empowerment. Rahman (1995) mentions a similar problem, as he claims that dependence of popular initiatives on continuous support from an NGO, give the outsiders power over the people that can be abused. Also, the feeling of self-reliance will probably not be genuine if people are aware of that the knowledge they rely on has been given to them by outsiders, and that these outsiders still have knowledge that local people do not have. This may lead to a feeling of dependence and inferiority compared to NGO staff, although people gain some power for example to confront local governments on some issues that they could not do

before. This is a very similar description to the one Garba (2000) gives of exogenous empowerment, which according to her would not have much effect in the long run.

In a *real* empowerment process, according to Jo Rowlands, any kind of “power over” that outside professionals, for example NGO field staff, have in relation to people they work with is likely to be challenged, as empowerment is claimed to be about gaining power to resist and challenge “power over”. Hence, in an empowerment process NGO staff cannot expect to control the outcomes. The whole idea behind empowerment is that people shall be able to and get confidence enough to come up with their own ideas, and challenge for example the ideas of NGO staff. “Real empowerment may take unanticipated directions”, Rowlands reminds us (1996: 103).

Rowlands argues that a programme that builds on the demands and wishes of the people who participate in it is *a step towards* empowerment. However, the demands and wishes of people are often forwarded according to people’s assumptions regarding their own abilities and rights, which may depend on internalised oppression or social context. Hence, although there is a high level of local participation, in that local people to a great extent decide activities and priorities in a project, there may still be a great need for a more fundamental empowerment process. It is important that NGO staff are conscious of their roles and behaviour, if they are to contribute to people’s empowerment. According to Rowlands most professionals are trained to work in ways that disempower people, by telling people what to do and think. To change this role into one of facilitator of an empowerment process is not an easy task.

4.3.5. Paulo Freire: Conscientisation

In the Publisher’s foreword to the last edition (1993) of Freire’s “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, it is claimed that the methodology of Freire has helped to *empower* impoverished and illiterate people around the world. Freire’s theories of the conscientisation of poor people is one of the ideas on which more recent theories of empowerment is built.

Paulo Freire is concerned with how poor, unprivileged people can get out of the situation they are in. His opinion is that people first have to get aware of the situation they live in, and the mechanisms that produce it, and based on this assumption he develops his “pedagogy of the

oppressed”.⁹ A main component of his pedagogy is the process which he has termed “conscientisation”.¹⁰ This concept refers to “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradiction, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Translators note, Freire, 1993 [1970]: 17, note 1).

According to Freire development is dependent on people being “beings for themselves”, and this consciousness is achieved through conscientisation. “For development to occur it is necessary: a) that there be a movement of search and creativity having its seat of decision in the searcher; b) that this movement occur not only in space, but in the existential time of the conscious searcher” (Freire, 1993 [1970]: 142). Freire claims that the transformation occurring in a seed, when it grows and becomes a plant, is not development. The same is the case for the transformation of an animal, he argues. These kinds of transformation are decided by the species to which they belong, and happen in a time which does not belong to them. Time belongs to humankind, according to Freire. “...while all development is transformation, not all transformation is development” (Freire, 1993 [1970]: 142). Here a parallel can be drawn to Estevas description of early understandings of development, referred to in the previous chapter.

The process of conscientisation, through which the oppressed become “beings for themselves”, is dependent on a sort of education. The oppressed have to get some help from outside, to be able to free themselves from the oppression they live under. The oppressed have also often made the consciousness of the oppressors into their own, Freire claims, as the duality between the two parties is internalised. To achieve freedom, people have to get aware of the inhumanity of this duality, and that it has to be superseded. Freedom must be conquered, however, and cannot be given as a gift, according to Freire. The giving of freedom as a gift, would only confirm the differences between the oppressed and the oppressors. This is very similar to the claims of Jo Rowlands, referred to above. To be able to give a gift such as freedom to someone else would be a self-contradiction, as the giver through this task confirms his superiority over the receiver. The suppression and dependency would still be there, although its form may change into a less visible kind. Based on this assumption, Freire

⁹ Freire uses the terms “oppressed” and “oppressors” as a dichotomy. The way I understand his theories, “the oppressed” could also be called for example “the poor” or “the unprivileged”, while “the oppressors” could also be called “the powerful”, “the privileged” or “the elite”. Hence, when Freire talks about the oppressed versus the oppressors, I do not see any problem in understanding it as “the poor” versus “the powerful” or “the privileged”.

¹⁰ In the English translations of his works the original Portuguese word “conscientização” is used. I have however chosen to use the English translation of the word: “conscientisation”.

separates between two kinds of education: the 'banking' concept of education and the problem-posing education.

He describes the 'banking' concept of education as a situation where the teacher, instead of communicating, issues communiqués and makes deposits. The students in their turn receive, memorize and repeat. Knowledge is treated as a gift given by those who consider themselves knowledgeable to those whom they consider to know nothing. Education must begin, Freire argues, with *overcoming* the teacher-student contradiction. Both should be teachers and students simultaneously. This does not happen within the 'banking' concept. In problem-posing education, however, "no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognisable objects which in banking education are "owned" by the teacher" (Freire, 1993 [1970]: 61). Problem-posing education "strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (Freire, 1993 [1970]: 62). *Dialogue* is a key word, and problem-posing education makes critical thinkers out of the students. As we will see below, however, even Freire sees the need for outsiders in this process, as there will be a need for someone who can guide people in their process of conscientisation.

Trust in the people, Freire claims, is essential to be able to help the people. This may be a problem for some members of the class of oppressors who start to support the oppressed in their fight for freedom. They have an important role, but sometimes they do not manage to leave their prejudices behind, and bring with them a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know. These thoughts may initially be supported by the people's internalised consciousness: "They call themselves ignorant and say the 'professor' is the one who has knowledge and to whom they should listen" (Freire, 1993 [1970]: 45). However, if this way of thinking is not overcome, freedom from oppression will not be reached, according to Freire. Therefore *dialogue*, based on critical thinking, is so essential for the process of conscientisation, where the oppressed come to perceive reality differently, and for the "revolution" that follows, in which people liberate themselves from oppression.

Freire describes the role of the "revolutionary leaders" as well. These have a strong commitment to the oppressed, and to freedom as well, and will help people help themselves through the above mentioned methods. Freire says the following about the role of the revolutionary leaders: "Neither invasion by the leaders of the people's world view nor mere

adaptation by the leaders to the (often naïve) aspirations of the people is acceptable” (Freire, 1993 [1970]: 163). And “leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people – they manipulate them” (Freire, 1993 [1970]: 159).

If the aspirations of the people are limited to wanting a raise in income, the leaders can make one of two mistakes, Freire claims. They can a) accept this and limit their struggle to promoting this single want, or they can b) ignore this aspiration of the people and substitute it with something more far-reaching, which is still not an aspiration of the people. Both would be mistakes according to Freire, and the answer is a synthesis between the two options. They have to fully support the people’s want for increased income, but at the same time make the meaning of this want into a problem. By doing this, they will make the real historical situation of which the claim for higher income is one dimension, into a problem, and it will be clear that a demand for higher income alone cannot be a final solution. Through this kind of dialogue, people will get a broader understanding of the situation and the problems they have, and they will themselves be able to think of ways of solving the problems, Freire claims.

There may be a fine line between different roles that an outsider may assume, although the roles are often treated as opposites. To organise and encourage people, or to manipulate them, as Freire mentions, can be very different things, but these roles can also be difficult to separate. This is the topic of the next part of this chapter.

4.4. LEADERS OR ANIMATORS?

Colleen Flynn-Thapalia (1996) discusses the different roles field workers of a development project may have. The definitions of the role of the development field worker have changed as old models of development have been discredited, and new ones have emerged. The concept of leadership in development is closely associated with top-down approaches, hence not a popular concept within the development industry today. This kind of relationship can also be described through the concept of “paternalism” or “patronage”, which I will return to below. A more popular concept these days is “partnership”. This concept is frequently used together with participation and empowerment, describing local people in a development project as influential and active in their own development process. The role of for example NGO staff

within this relationship could be that of animator. I will come back to the concept of partnership below, after introducing the two alternative roles of leader or animator.

“Like the technician, the animator is a specialist, but his specialty is the relationships between people” (Meister, 1984: 129, quoted by Flynn-Thapalia, 1996: 152). The animator is supposed to stimulate poor and disadvantaged groups of people to begin moving towards self-reliance. This is done through the development of “a critical awareness of the social forces that have produced their poverty” (Flynn-Thapalia, 1996: 152), and building confidence among the poor people regarding their abilities to bring about positive changes. Hence the task of the animator consists of stimulating reflection and action. This description resembles Paulo Freire’s theory of conscientisation which is described above, and previous descriptions of endogenous empowerment. It is also important that the animator sees the relationship with the community as an equal partnership, not as a subject-object relationship, just as Freire emphasises the importance of overcoming the teacher-student contradiction.

Leadership can be defined as a “process of inducing others to take action toward a common goal” (Locke, 1991: 2, quoted in Flynn-Thapalia, 1996: 153). The leader persuades the “followers” to “join in a course of action and carrying out the agreed plan” (Flynn-Thapalia, 1996: 153). Hence the intention of the leaders is to convince other people to buy into their vision. Flynn-Thapalia, however, focuses on “transformational leadership”, which according to her differs from other kinds of leadership in that it concentrates on persuasion by vision rather than by reward. Once people have accepted the vision of the transformational leader, they can use their own creativity to implement it. Dialogue between the leader and the “followers” is important, and the leader inspires the others. But it is at the end of the day the leader who takes initiatives, and who “knows best”. As Flynn-Thapalia (1996: 156) notes, “both leaders and animators are concerned with establishing a vision, but differ about whose vision is implemented”. The animator tries to encourage the community to establish its own vision: “an animator *must* refrain from imposing a vision on the community members” (Thapalia, 1996: 156, emphasis in original).

4.4.1. Partnership

According to The Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief (Eade and Williams, 1995), international NGOs often like to describe the relationship they have with organisations, groups or societies they support, as a ‘partnership’.

Alan Fowler (1997) writes that the notion of “partnership” between Northern and Southern NGOs¹¹ was first used in the 1970s, expressing an ideological aspiration of international solidarity. The term has however, Fowler claims, been used to describe all kinds of relationships since then, eroding the usefulness of the term. Alan Fowler describes an authentic partnership as “mutually enabling, interdependent interaction with shared intentions” (Fowler, 1997: 107). He also claims that the way ahead has to be partnerships based on a mature understanding of solidarity, not partnerships based on contracts. A spirit of mutual trust between primary stakeholders and NGOs, he claims, is a lot more valuable than letters of agreement. An advantage when intending to form an authentic partnership, is that the NGOs have a similar, recognised position and function in society. Two NGOs cannot be identical, but there should be a certain organisational similarity to ground the partnership on, such as similar constituency, similar beliefs, values and culture, shared understandings of the cause of problems and how societies can be changed, etc. Past experiences makes this evident, according to Fowler: “Again and again, Southern NGDOs observe that there is seldom an ethos of mutuality and reciprocity within Northern NGDOs – differences in resources almost inevitably lead to donor-recipient, parent-child ground rules” (Fowler, 1997: 108-111). He adds that a balance in resources will not be enough, if there are other serious disparities. And it is not only the Southern NGOs that need to improve: “Northern NGDOs must acknowledge what they get out of the South and East because “to give without expecting anything in return becomes [another] means of expressing superiority”” (Fowler, 1997: 111, quoting Community Development Resource Association, Cape Town, 1996: 19).

Sylvia Borren supports the above descriptions of a partnership: “It is in the interaction between the various autonomous actors (stakeholders) that partnership and co-operation

¹¹ Literature about partnerships is often focusing on the relationship between two NGOs, for example an international NGO and a local NGO. However, in practice the nomination is often used to describe a relationship between other kinds of stakeholders as well, and it seems reasonable to assume that the conditions that have to be met to make a partnership between two NGOs successful, apply to a relationship between other kinds of “partners” as well.

develop. This partnership is based on common values, shared analysis, and the energy needed to find sustainable solutions” (Borren, 2001: 174). The quality of the relationship is dependent on the donor being committed to the principle that the local group or organisation - or community - that they support, is an autonomous actor, primarily responsible for its own emancipation. This involves responsibility for analysis, strategies and ways of working. Borren mentions as a problem those cases where the donor agency controls the money and at the same time has a consultative and advisory role. In these cases “it may be difficult for the partner to take their advice simply as advice, and not as conditions which have to be met in order to qualify for the grant” (Borren, 2001: 176). Borren claims that when this is the case, it may be difficult for the recipient to develop his or her own strategy.

Concluding this section, one may say that a partnership in general is considered an appropriate and fair way of collaborating, as the partners are assumed to be equal. However, there are also great demands regarding what may be called a genuine partnership. In the case of development aid it is difficult to establish a partnership according to the above criteria. The money flow will inescapably go from the North to the South, giving the northern organisation a superior position. This imbalance should be overcome by stressing other qualities of the southern partners, hence making them able to decide their own future, and making them as important in the partnership as the northern partner. However, there are some doubts as to whether it is possible to establish an equal partnership between a northern NGO and a southern NGO, or local community, as long as the money comes from the northern organisation. Some scholars are of the opinion that this kind of relationship is inescapably paternalistic.

4.4.2. Paternalism

The worst that may be said of a development agency is that it is paternalistic. All agencies, even religious, service, and charity groups, consider themselves of the “new wave” and say that they are not patronizing like the rest. But changing rhetoric is one thing; changing behaviour patterns, particularly institutional and bureaucratic ones, is quite another.

(Black, 1991: 160)

The concepts “paternalism” and “patronage” are used to describe a relationship with a top-down decision-making structure. Those making the decisions have a feeling of superiority

compared with the other party of the relationship. In the Collin Cobuild English Language Dictionary “*paternalism*” is explained as “an attitude which is shown by a government or other authority that makes all the decisions for the people for whom it is responsible, thus taking away personal responsibility” (1987: 1053). In The Oxford Student’s Dictionary “*patronage*” is explained as “the act of treating a person as if one is more important or superior” (1988: 459). This is equivalent to acting in a *patronizing* way, according to the same dictionary.

According to Robert Chambers (1983), paternalism is when outsiders’ knowledge is assumed to be more valid than rural people’s knowledge for achieving what the poor people want – or need or lack, affirming the explanations given in dictionaries. It seems obvious that paternalism is a concept with negative connotations. It can, however, be difficult to know when an approach within development is paternalistic, as the balance might be very difficult. Terje Tvedt (1995) argues that NGOs should discuss what sort of paternalism is legal, and what sort of paternalism is illegal. There is a thin line between ‘care’ and ‘oppression’, he claims, and also between ‘advising’ and ‘govern’. It is his opinion that this line needs to be discussed.

There are many cases of outsiders wanting to help poor people, and saying that their approach is either participatory or a partnership, but in fact their attitude is paternalistic. Chambers describes this kind of situation like this:

But outsiders think they know best. Some will say that the rural poor do not know what is in their interests; or that with greater awareness (which is liable to mean by agreeing with the outsider) they would have other priorities; or that they should confront their powerlessness by organising against their rich exploiters; or that they should be encouraged to have longer time horizons; or that they must be enabled to see what they would want if they knew what they really wanted.

(Chambers, 1983: 145)

Chambers is of the opinion that no matter how much the rhetoric changes to “participation”, “empowerment”, and the like, there will still be some element of *paternalism* in development aid: “At the end of the day there is still an outsider seeking to change things. (...) A stronger person wants to change things for a person who is weaker” (Chambers, 1983: 141). Paternalism can however to a great extent be overcome through respect for the poor and what they want, Chambers asserts.

4.5. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Before summarizing this chapter, I will briefly point to some previous studies that are focusing on the role of the field workers, and on how the concepts “participation” and “empowerment” are used in development projects. Numerous studies have been done within this area of research, approaching the topic from many different angles. I have chosen to present Colleen Flynn-Thapalia’s considerations regarding the role of the field workers in community development projects in Nepal, Michael D. Woost’s study of how development and participation is understood within a development project in Sri Lanka, and Karim Hussein’s study of participation in a development project in Zambia. The latter two have been chosen mainly because they are quite typical examples of studies of the relationship between theory and practice in development projects. The first study presented has a slightly different approach to the topic, as it is based on how development workers themselves describe their role. Flynn-Thapalia has some interesting remarks, in my opinion, which is the reason why I decided to present her research as well.

When performing my own analysis, based on my fieldwork in Cambodia, I can compare my findings with those of previous studies in other parts of the world, and hopefully be able to draw some further conclusions based on these comparisons.

4.5.1. Colleen Flynn-Thapalia: Transformational Leadership

Previously in this chapter Colleen Flynn-Thapalia is referred to as a scholar concerned with the different roles of leader and animator, which are among those used to describe the role of NGO field staff working with community development. She has herself done some research on the topic, as a supplement and follow-up of observations she made while serving as a Program Officer of the UN Volunteers in Nepal (Flynn-Thapalia, 1996). It is her opinion that it “may be useful to look at both animator and leadership models to help articulate the role of the community development field worker in the overall development process” (Flynn-Thapalia, 1996: 150-151). She describes transformational leadership as different from the traditional conception of leadership, in that it focuses on persuasion by vision rather than by reward. She also shows how personal characteristics of successful leaders and animators listed by scholars tend to be almost identical (Flynn-Thapalia, 1996: 154-155). She notes that field

workers are often greeted with the question “What are you going to do for us?” when they meet the local people, and explaining and describing participation to these people is often among the most difficult tasks of a field worker. This shows that local people often expect the outsider field workers to assume some kind of leadership position in their village. They are assumed to have something concrete to offer, for example money, technology or specific plans and ideas. Flynn-Thapalia’s study, which includes field workers’ own discussions and interpretations of their role, also shows that “field workers see a place for leadership in their work, whether they describe it in those terms or not” (Flynn-Thapalia, 1996: 159).

Hence, her conclusion is that no matter how much the concept of leadership seems to be thought of as negatively loaded, and old fashion, when used to describe the role of field workers, leaders are exactly what they are – and should be. Not any kind of leader, however: Flynn-Thapalia (1996: 159) describes “true transformational leaders” as the most successful field workers in development projects, and these leaders believe in a participatory process.

4.5.2. Michael D. Woost: “The ‘Village Logic’ of Development”

Michael D. Woost (1997) has studied the way the government, different NGOs and poor villagers in Sri Lanka understand and use the concept of development in general and concepts thought to describe an alternative sort of development - community, participation and empowerment – in particular. He first shows how the notion of participation has been incorporated into a market-led strategy for development, then shifts the focus from government and NGOs to the “village logic” of development, which I will describe here.

According to Woost, Sri Lankan villagers know that they are living in a time of great changes in Sri Lanka, and “development” is spoken of everywhere. Poor, rural people even use the English word “participation”. As Woost notes, “everyone, from village farmers to international donors, has begun to speak the language of ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’” (Woost, 1997: 229). However, through his studies he finds that although the participatory rhetoric is of very extensive use in Sri Lanka, little is offered in the way of alternative development. In short, what Woost points out, is that when the villagers are asked what development means, and what it means to be developed, “nearly everyone responded by noting characteristics usually associated with upward class mobility” (Woost, 1997: 246). The

villagers generally seemed to see development as a class-oriented project, according to Woost, and development was characterised by the acquisition of more material goods such as a car or a motorbike, a big house, televisions etc. Being developed seemed to be the same as being wealthy, having a lot of money. According to Woost

Development was understood to be a process in which outsiders brought wealth and improvement to a settlement or to individual families from outside the village boundaries. In general development was something that someone powerful and wealthy brought to you or gave you access to. It was not usually thought to be a process over which poor villagers themselves felt they had any control.

(Woost, 1997: 247)

Woost concludes that the villagers saw development as a very unpredictable process, which might or might not happen one day, depending on their luck. People were in general quite pessimistic, and took one day at the time, while they were struggling for their daily survival and hoping that one day some kind, wealthy outsider would bring development to their village. To these people the notion of participation, which is being incorporated into development processes, only means that “one participates in whatever development activity the well-placed patron decides to bring into your community or household”, Woost claims (1997: 249).

Michael D. Woost concludes that the concept of ‘participation’, although extensively used, has lost its alternative potential: “The poor can participate in development, but only in so far as they do not attempt to change the rules of the game. In short, we are still riding in a top-down vehicle of development whose wheels are greased with a vocabulary of bottom-up discourse” (Woost, 1997: 249).

4.5.3. Karim Hussein: Paradoxes of Participation

Karim Hussein (1995) has studied a fisheries project at the shore of Lake Karibia in Zambia, where the population is mainly constituted by Tonga people. This rural development project involves an NGO, The Gwembe Valley Agricultural Mission (GVAM), “which, it was claimed, was following a grassroots bottom-up approach to development” (Hussein, 1995: 170). According to Hussein, GVAM stresses beneficiary participation in all stages of the development process, including initiating and planning activities, as well as contributing resources and knowledge. In GVAM’s project literature they are also claimed to follow an

approach that stresses the empowerment of people with the aim that people will take active control in their own lives. However, according to Hussein this is not quite what it ends up like in practice: GVAM has held the initiative in all important areas such as decision-making, planning, institution formation and implementation from the beginning. The overall approach to development was also decided by GVAM, including the priorities of the project. According to Hussein, the control GVAM had over financial resources, gave them control over vital aspects of decision-making, and “Tonga participation was limited to implementation” (Hussein, 1995: 174). It was up to GVAM to decide when local people were ready to control the project themselves, and in the meantime GVAM also controlled project monitoring and evaluation. Carefully selected Tonga households were involved, Hussein asserts, but all under the control and management of outsiders.

The organisation of local people in co-operatives was also an initiative of GVAM, and this led to the feeling among people that the co-operatives belonged to GVAM, not to the people themselves (Hussein, 1995: 177). According to Hussein this way of organising the people fails to empower them, and he describes the approach to empowerment as gradualist and paternalistic. Hence one of Hussein’s assertions is that

(...) the non-governmental organization went beyond its stated role of catalyst. It took the initiative in designing an overall development strategy. It pursued a directive rather than ‘dialogical’ approach to conscientizing the rural poor. (...) This was likely to limit the intended beneficiaries’ future participation to a means rather than as an end in itself.

(Hussein, 1995: 178)

Hussein notes that the kind of functional participation found here might be preferable to continued poverty, if that is the alternative. However, “in this case, non-governmental organizations *should be honest and modify their ideologies* accordingly” (Hussein, 1995: 176, my emphasis). This may be difficult, though, due to the NGOs’ dependence on donors and their expectations. There may also be an educating element in the use of the “participation” rhetoric, which the organisation will not let go of although it cannot live up to the rhetoric in practice. In Hussein’s opinion, both these explanations play a role in the case of GVAM.

Hussein also notes that “many rural people do not actually want to participate more comprehensively in development projects. In this case they may be satisfied by an outside organization involving them only in the functional ways described here” (Hussein, 1995: 179). This kind of participation will not promote participation as an end in itself, however,

although it may result in profits and improved living standards. According to Hussein the actions of the NGOs show that the usefulness of participation is often considered limited, at least in the early stages of the project. From this he concludes that “what is called participation can in fact be very close to a ‘blueprint’ approach to establishing a development activity. (...) The gradualist approach to participation is not consistent with the empowering participatory ideology adopted by many non-governmental organizations” (Hussein, 1995: 179).

The final conclusion Hussein reaches is that the approach of GVAM is not necessarily wrong per se, but it is important to be aware of and deal with the problematic paradoxes in, and limits to, a participatory approach to development. A central point related to this, is the control a non-governmental organisation has over funds. It is also important, Hussein reminds us, to be aware of the fact that local people sometimes prefer functional participation.

4.6. SUMMING UP

Development aid is a complicated enterprise. Aid is about helping others, and the controversy is centred on the questions regarding how this help is to be given, and what the aim of the aid is. In the previous chapter I presented different understandings of the concept of development, with a special focus on the assumed shift from the modernisation paradigm to the multiplicity paradigm. As we have seen, these are presented by scholars as representing very different ideologies and ideas, and my intention in this dissertation is to look closer at how certain concepts belonging within the multiplicity paradigm are used, and to what extent they describe the overall ideology directing the multiplicity paradigm: bottom-up, endogenous development. In this chapter the concepts in focus, and some of the discussions around them, have been presented. These concepts are “participation” and “empowerment”, accompanied also by a brief discussion of the meaning of the concept of “partnership”, which very often is mentioned in the same breath as the former two. The concept of “paternalism” is also presented, mainly to give an idea of what participation, empowerment and partnership claim *not* to describe.

As highlighted throughout this chapter, a main argument made by several scholars, is that development within the Multiplicity Paradigm requires a *shift of power* compared to

development within the Modernisation Paradigm. This shift of power is thought to be realised through the practice of participation and empowerment.

As we saw in chapter one, one of my research problems is concerned with how the “new” ideology – the multiplicity paradigm – is put into practice. This question is asked due to a claim that there often is a gap between theory and practice. The confusion regarding the meaning of the concepts assumed to describe the multiplicity paradigm, indicates that these concepts may be used without describing the bottom-up, endogenous development process that is expected: one concept may be used to describe a broad range of situations and relationships, often without specifying exactly what is meant.

My second research problem investigates *why* there is a gap between theory and practice, if that is the case. The confusion regarding the meaning of the concepts gives one explanation, but there are probably many other aspects that can be added to the list, based on information about the specific development project.

In the analysis, which will follow after a presentation of methodological considerations regarding the study, I will compare the way LWF Cambodia Program uses the concepts in question, with the theory presented thus far. I will not focus only on the presentation given by LWF and their staff, but also on the opinions local people express regarding among other things understandings of development, and their relationship with LWF staff. The latter is used to analyse the power distribution in the relationship, to see whether the structure can be described as bottom-up, which is one of the characteristics of the multiplicity paradigm.

5. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will shift the focus from theoretical considerations and previous research, to my own empirical study of the issues in question. Throughout the chapter I will present the methods that I decided to use, and reasons for choosing them. I will also describe the research process, with the problems and difficulties that I encountered during fieldwork, and then discuss to what extent the data may be claimed to be representative and suitable for generalizations. Finally I will discuss the reliability and validity of the study¹².

5.2. CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY

Through this study I am interested in getting an impression of how different people involved in a development project describe their own roles and the roles of other stakeholders, and how they interpret the relationship between themselves and the other stakeholders in the project. This information does, the way I see it, indicate in what way the concepts “participation” and “empowerment” are understood and applied, and whether the project can be described as bottom-up or top-down, or something in between. I am interested in people’s own interpretations and explanations, as my opinion is that this gives the most complete picture of a very complex situation. I want to learn about the thoughts and meanings that lie behind certain understandings of roles and relationships, and of the situation as a whole, not only the manifestations these understandings get.

¹² Representativity, reliability and validity are all concepts that are traditionally associated mainly with quantitative research traditions. As we will see throughout this chapter, I have decided to use qualitative methods in my study, but still find it accurate to discuss the issues of representativity, reliability and validity. The reason for this is that more and more social scientists (see for example Silverman, 2001; Mikkelsen, 1995) now claim these discussions to be important for qualitative research as well, although with a slightly different understanding of the concepts compared to how they are used within quantitative research traditions. It is important to note that it makes little sense comparing quantitative and qualitative research according to the same criteria of representativity, reliability and validity. The criteria of the two major research traditions are different, just as the reasons for using one or the other are. Hence, representativity, reliability and validity are used with a new understanding of their content, compared to how they are traditionally understood.

Due to the interest I had in getting this kind of “deep” understanding of a certain topic, I decided that qualitative methods would serve the purpose of my research much better than quantitative methods. Qualitative approaches are known to be more concerned with understanding, and individual experiences, than quantitative studies, where a common intention is to make generalisations based on a large material, and express the results through statistics. As David Silverman (2001: 32) explains: “The methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a ‘deeper’ understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data”. Silverman further claims that “qualitative research’s greatest strength is its ability to analyse what actually happens in naturally occurring settings” (Silverman, 2001: 259).

My decision to use qualitative methods was not due to a lack of interest and belief in quantitative research methods, but simply a result of the general impression that qualitative methods would serve my research interests better than quantitative. As Silverman (2001) says, qualitative and quantitative research methods are not competitors. It is rather a question of division of labour. The suitability of one or the other depends on what you are studying, what questions you are asking, and what kind of answers you are looking for.

Pål Repstad (1993) mentions another distinguishing feature of qualitative research, which I find important: the different phases of the qualitative research process often overlap, and take place parallel to each other. Narrowing down the research problems take place at the same time as the collecting of new data, and at the same time as one does the analysis. This is quite different from a quantitative research process, where one usually has to develop precise research problems before one gets started.

As I embarked on this research project, I had only very limited knowledge of the field I was going to study, beyond the information that I had received from various representatives of the media (TV, newspapers, magazines etc.). I found the field interesting and fascinating in all its complexity, but it was difficult to narrow down the focus at this point. A result of this was that I did not have precise research problems as I started to do the fieldwork. Due to this, I was definitely dependent on the flexibility of a qualitative approach. Although this could be frustrating at times, and I often wished I knew exactly what I was looking for, I now see the advantages of this approach. The exploring aspect of the approach opens up for a possibility of capturing more of the complexity of the topic you are studying, than with a more rigid

quantitative approach. Information and situations that I did not think of as important initially, proved to be both interesting and useful, both in the process of narrowing down the topic, and as data used in the final analysis.

I used different kinds of qualitative techniques during the research process: document analysis, observation, informal conversations and interviews. In the chapters focusing on the analysis, data gathered through these different methods are mixed, although definitely with an overweight of document analysis and extracts from interviews. The data generated through observation and informal conversations mainly served the purpose of getting to know the field better, and was hence most of all a preparation and background material for further development of research problems, and the analysis of other data. I will describe my use of these different methods in more detail below. First, however, I will discuss my choice of case, and some of the limitations to my access to the field.

5.3. THE CASE

When utilising qualitative methods, the sample has to be of a size that allows you to take advantage of the methods used: getting close to those studied, and getting a more subjective and complete understanding of the situation, than a quantitative approach would usually allow. It is therefore common to choose to study only one or a few cases. Robert K. Yin explains that “the distinctive need for case studies [arise] out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2003: 2). He also claims that it is common to do a case study when the research questions take the shape of “how” or “why” questions. I decided to study only one case, LWF Cambodia Program. This decision was made to a great extent due to the constraints on time and money set by the fact that this was a research project for a university dissertation.

“When researchers speak of a ‘case’ rather than a circumstance, instance or event, they invest the study of a particular social setting with some sense of generality [...] A ‘case’ implies a family; it alleges that the particular is a case of something else” (Walton, 1992: 121f, quoted in Andersen, 1997: 61). Finding a “good” case might not be an easy task, however. David Silverman (2001) describes purposive and theoretical sampling as methods for choosing what to study:

Purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested. However, this does not provide a simple approval to any case we happen to choose. Rather, purposive sampling demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are interested in, and choose our samples carefully on this basis.

(Silverman, 2001: 250)

He adds that sampling in qualitative research should be *theoretically grounded*. If the purpose behind “purposive sampling” is theoretically defined, you can call it “*theoretical sampling*”:

Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position...and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample...which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation.

(Mason, 1996: 93-4, quoted in Silverman, 2001: 252)

Hence, some sampling choices are simply more meaningful and sensible than others, although one cannot claim them to be statistically representative of the whole population of cases. As my research problem was not clear when I started to prepare the fieldwork, I did not have a great amount of criterias that the case would have to fulfill to suit my research problems. Hence my choice of case may have influenced the development of my research problems as well as the other way around. However, I did have *some* criteria: I wanted to study a development project where an international NGO was involved and I wanted it to be a rural development project. As I had already decided to focus, in some way or another, on current trends in development aid, I also wanted the project that I chose as my case to be “trendy”, meaning that I wanted to study a project that according to the rhetoric used, belonged within the multiplicity paradigm. All these criteria imply a certain degree of “typicality” among current development projects. Hence my choice of case was to a great extent theoretically grounded: I wanted to study the use and meaning of trendy rhetoric in development aid, and therefore decided to study a development project that appeared to be an exponent of the rhetoric in question. The case I have chosen is not statistically representative of all other cases within the “family”, but it represents some characteristics that are thought of as typical, and can therefore to a certain extent be said to represent the “family” of cases. I will return to a discussion of representability and generalizability in a separate section below.

5.4. ACCESS TO THE FIELD

Formally there were no major problems connected with getting access to the field. Initially I contacted Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) to inquire regarding the possibility to use one of their projects in Laos as a case for my study. They were positive, but due to some practical problems¹³, it was suggested that it might be better to choose a project in one of the other countries in the area instead. NCA helped me establish contact with one of their partner organisations working in the area: Lutheran World Federation. Through e-mail contact with LWF's country representative in Cambodia, it was decided that LWF Cambodia Program would be my case.

The country representative was very interested and helpful, and definitely did his best to enable me to do research on LWF Cambodia Program. He also said explicitly that they were interested in research on their work, done by an outsider, and that hopefully they could learn something from it. He was no doubt a door opener for me, as accept from him meant accept from the program. In the first e-mail that I received from the country representative of LWF in Cambodia, after I contacted him, he wrote that "we are happy to accommodate your needs and will gladly open our project to you. We hope we can learn from your learnings I am sure" (e-mail June 7th 2001). In a later e-mail, that I received just a few days before my arrival in Phnom Penh, he said the following: "We look forward to your arrival and will lend any assistance to your work that we can" (e-mail October 26th 2001). These extracts give an impression of the openness I was met with as an independent researcher.

More practically my access to the field was very dependent on local LWF staff. After I had chosen which of the IRDP projects to focus on, and which villages within the project to do my fieldwork in¹⁴, there were some practical difficulties. Nobody in the village spoke English, and I did not speak any Khmer except a few words and phrases. Hence I needed someone who could translate for me as I spoke with villagers. In Phnom Penh it may have been possible to find an independent interpreter, but in Kampong Chhnang the attempts I made were

¹³ According to NCA's country representative in Laos (e-mail February 13th 2001 from M. Volden, NCA's regional coordinator for Asia), Lao authorities do not give research permits to foreign students. Besides, the language problems would have been major, as people in the project area do not even speak the official national language, Lao. Hence two translators would have been necessary: one translating from the local language to Lao, and another translating from Lao to English.

¹⁴ The project and the villages were mainly chosen due to accessibility and safety criteria, as well as a need for there to be some English speaking staff.

unsuccessful. Hence I was dependent on LWF staff to interpret for me. I was also dependent on the 4WD vehicles of LWF, and the drivers of LWF, to get from Kampong Chhnang Town to the villages¹⁵. The result was that I could only get to the villages when some English speaking LWF staff could accompany me. This was definitely a constraint, as there were different reasons why this was not possible sometimes. The staff did not work during weekends or other holidays, and to this was added one week of staff retreat when no staff remained in the project area. At one occasion there was also some days when all staff were occupied with PRA¹⁶ somewhere else in the province. Towards the end of my stay different deadlines for yearly reporting also approached, and the work burden on senior staff in the project (who spoke English) was large. The result was that there was less time left to spend in the villages than I had initially thought there would be.

5.5. METHODS APPLIED FOR GENERATION OF DATA

5.5.1. Document analysis

Analysis of different project documents and reports was done mainly prior to and after the fieldwork itself. Prior to the fieldwork I read project documents and reports to get knowledge of the project that I was going to study. However, a major part of the analysis is also based on certain project documents and reports. I take these reports and documents, listed below, to represent the official view of LWF regarding intention, policy and strategy of the Cambodia Program. Some of these documents also include the planning and analysis of specific activities in the projects, and descriptions of situations. In cases where the opinions of small groups within LWF are referred to in these documents, they will be referred to as such in my use of them as well.

¹⁵ I stayed in a guest house in Kampong Chhnang Town, close to the office of LWF. It took between one and one and a half hour to drive from Kampong Chhnang Town to the villages, Trapaing Pring and Ro Peak. The two villages are along the same clay road, first Ro Peak, and about three kilometres further down the road Trapaing Pring. They share one primary school, situated between the villages, and belong to the same pagoda. During the weeks I spent in Kampong Chhnang, I usually went to the villages for a few hours every day (Monday-Friday), depending on when someone from LWF could bring me there, and translate for me.

¹⁶ According to Robert Chambers, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a “participatory [approach] to learning and action” (Chambers, 1997: 102). PRA has since the beginning of the 1990s been used by development NGOs when they get involved in a local community, and a development project is under planning. Local people are involved in processes of assessment and planning, through methods and techniques belonging within the PRA umbrella. According to Chambers, it is important that outsiders do not dominate and lecture. The role of the outsiders in PRA is to “share methods which local people can use for their own appraisal, analysis, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation. Outsiders do not impose their reality; they encourage and enable local people to express their own” (Chambers, 1997: 103).

When using documents as a source of data, it is important to be conscious regarding what the intention behind the document was. As Silverman (2001: 122) notes, one has to “analyse how they work to achieve particular effects – to identify the elements used and the functions they play”. A document may have been written to serve a certain purpose, and the content may have been formed according to this purpose. As Atkinson and Coffey (1997, referred to in Silverman, 2001) note, this does not have to do with honesty or accuracy, but rather with different levels of representation. Holme and Solvang (1996 [1986]) separate between normative and cognitive documentary sources. Normative sources are evaluating, and expressing certain values, while cognitive sources are descriptive. According to Holme and Solvang no source is only one or the other, but many documents are dominated by either normative or cognitive statements. This is the case also for many of the documents that I use in my study.

In the case of this study, some documents are meant mainly as internal documents, others as yearly reports from the program to partners, donors and others who might be interested. The form and content of the documents are in my opinion shaped according to this. In this study it is of particular interest to see how the program represents itself to outsiders or different stakeholders, and if this representation differs from internal discussions, planning and reporting. Both kinds of documents are therefore of interest in this research project.

All documents used and referred to throughout this dissertation are listed in the bibliography. I will however mention some of the most important documents here:

- Annual Reports from different years: Glossy paper, pictures, feature stories and short descriptions and reports from program activities, meant to inform outsiders about the program.
- Annual Monitoring Reports from different years: Detailed descriptions of the different projects, listing all targets and achievements for the last year. Meant for those with particular interest in the program, as it is very detailed and formal.
- Planning and Monitoring System (PMS) Documents. Planning documents, covering a period of 3-4 years. For example the periods 1996-1998 and 1999-2002. Mainly internal, or for those with special interests in the program, such as donors and other partners. Detailed and formal documenting of background data, goals, objectives and activities.

- Reports from workshops, internal planning processes etc. Mainly internal documents, but available for partners and others with particular interest in the program. Some of them also available via the homepage of LWF Cambodia Program.
 - o Our Purpose, Path and Direction. Perspective, Strategy and Plans (2003-2008)¹⁷. 2001
 - o Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation. Training Workshop. 2001.
 - o Localization Workshop. 2002.

These documents are intended to serve various purposes, and as I want to get an as complete as possible picture of the project, I find it appropriate to use them all as sources of data for the analysis – although some are referred to more than others.

5.5.2. Observation

Participant observation was also a method I used for generating my research data, although in practice these data were mainly used by me as a way to get to know the field and the people that I was studying, hence helping me narrowing down the topic for the research. I conducted participant observation in different settings, and among different groups of people, but most importantly I was an observer in the two villages where I did the fieldwork.

I first went to one of the villages with the project coordinator of LWF, to be introduced. As Pål Repstad (1993: 38) mentions, it is common for a participant observer to be introduced to the field by a contact person, often someone with a certain authority¹⁸. The project coordinator informed me about some facts regarding the project while we drove out to the village (how long it had lasted, the size of the village, which achievements they had had, which problems they faced etc¹⁹). In the village she introduced me to the members of the village development committee (VDC), and to other people who gathered in the public meeting place in the village. Then, together with these other people, she guided me around the village to give me an impression of the geography of it, and also to show me specific achievements of the project: home gardens, hand pumps for water, newly planted trees, a

¹⁷ In the text referred to as “PPD Document”.

¹⁸ As mentioned before, the Country Representative was my “door opener”, and the one who introduced me at program level.

¹⁹ According to the perspective of LWF, obviously.

reading shelter, a new road etc. I was also introduced to what I was told was the poorest family in the village, apparently to give me an impression of local problems and needs.

Later, when I returned to this village (Trapeang Pring) and the other village (Ro Peak), I came together with the interpreter and usually also a driver (the latter usually kept a certain distance). I did not do much “pure” observation, but rather engaged in informal conversations with villagers as part of the observation. I choose to call it conversations, not interviews, as they were not prepared at all, and they happened spontaneously, although it often resembled interviews due to the fact that I usually was the one asking questions. I did not have a list of questions for these conversations, though, and did not record them, as I did with the interviews. To be able to remember information I received, I sometimes took notes during the conversations, however, which also may have made the conversation similar to an interview.²⁰

Observation in the villages, and talking to people, was mainly done to serve the purpose of getting to know the field, and to let people in the villages get to know me. Through these informal talks with people I got an impression of life in the village and of the people living there. I got to know about the situation in the village, how people made a living, changes the last few years, problems people were facing, how far it was to the market, how many children went to school and how many didn't, how much a new buffalo would cost etc. In quite a few cases I responded to things people said by giving information about myself. This could be the case for example when they talked about the size of their family, whether they were married or unmarried etc. People also asked me direct questions about my family, about Norway and other things they wondered about, which I answered. In some cases we started talking directly about the project as well, and their opinions and aspirations regarding the changes that were taking place in the village.

Sometimes I talked with only one person at the time, but usually there were two or more local people taking part in a conversation (often members of the same family). In addition to this, there were often a few people sitting and standing around, listening to the conversation without taking active part in it. Most conversations were started on my initiative (or the initiative of the interpreter, who asked people if we could speak with them as we walked

²⁰ At one occasion, as I was sitting outside the house of the VDC leader, talking to him and his wife, he also brought a note book, and wrote down some information about me and about Norway

through the village). This request was always accepted, as long as people were not very busy, and they usually invited us to sit down under or next to their house²¹. At a few occasions local people took the initiative, and came over to me and invited me to come to their house and speak with them. This was mainly the case for a few elder people, who had heard about me and were curious regarding who I was and what I was doing there.

I spent some time observing and speaking informally with people in each village, before I started to interview people. Considerably more time was spent on this in the first village (Trapeang Pring), though, than in the second (Ro Peak). Many things, at least regarding the background data, are similar in the two villages, and my need to get to know the field was to a great extent covered already as I started to shift my focus from the first village to the second. The time spent on observation and informal conversations was also limited due to lack of time, and that I always needed to be accompanied by an interpreter, who actually had a lot of other work to do. People in the villages were also busy, and did not always have the time to sit down and chat.

At one occasion I also joined a meeting at the pagoda. The meeting was organised by LWF and the Village Development Committees in the nearby villages, and was held in the occasion of the celebration of the Human Rights day, focusing on human rights in general and aids/HIV in particular. I also joined the project coordinator as she went to spend two days in a remote area in the province, which was going to be included in the project. The rest of the project staff spent one week in these villages, doing PRA, and together with the project coordinator I visited all the villages, and met the staff as they were mapping the situation in the villages together with local people.

A totally different setting for participant observation was a country strategic outline workshop that LWF Cambodia Program arranged. Participating were all senior staff of the program, a representative for DWS in Geneva, representatives from different international donor partners (other NGOs), and representatives from one of the Cambodian governmental departments with which LWF cooperates. The workshop lasted for three days, and I was invited by the country representative to take part as an observer. This gave me an impression of how

²¹ Most houses are built on piles, with a “platform” to sit on situated under the house.

strategies were developed within the organisation, and how expectations from all the different stakeholders have to be dealt with in this process.

The participant observation, and the information I received through the use of this method, was documented through my field notes. During some conversations I took notes, but usually I sat down in the afternoon, when I was back at my guesthouse, and did my best to write down everything according to my memory. One exception was the workshop I attended. All participants had paper and pencil in front of them, and it was no problem taking notes whenever I felt like it.

5.5.3. Interviews

The analysis is to a great extent based on data generated through semi-structured interviews with LWF staff and villagers. The interviews differed from the conversations described in the section on observation, mainly in that I used an interview guide; a list of questions and topics that I wanted to get through during the interview. The questions were not asked in the same order in every interview, however, and sometimes the respondent gave me information on the topics I was interested in, without me asking direct questions.

I started to formulate interview guides before leaving for Cambodia, and had lists of questions and topics covering a wide field, including one interview guide for each group of people that I intended to interview: villagers, local staff and expatriate staff. I found it difficult to make the interview guides at that time, because the field was unknown to me, and the research problems were not specified. Already after my first visit to a Cambodian village, I realised that I had wasted a lot of time struggling with the interview guides. I reformulated them, and they were reformulated quite a few more times during the fieldwork, until I ended up with a hand written page of questions and topics that I used during most of the interviews. Some questions were removed or added, though, according to which group of people I was interviewing, as can be seen from the two alternative interview guides presented in appendix 2. These final interview guides were thoroughly revised versions of my original drafts, and a lot shorter and less detailed than they had been initially. The process of changing the interview guides was a part of the process I went through as I started to get to know the field better, and started to narrow down the topic under study, until I finally ended up with the

research problems that are presented in chapter one and throughout the dissertation. In the end I had only one basic interview guide, just adding and removing some questions depending on what group of people I was interviewing. Moreover, after I had conducted a few interviews, and knew to a greater extent what kind of information I was interested in, I did not look much at the interview guide during the interview. However, at some occasions it helped showing it to the interpreter to make it easier for him to understand a question, and I always looked through it before we ended an interview to make sure all the topics were covered, and all the questions answered throughout the interview.

All the interviews were recorded on minidisk, with two exceptions: during one interview I ran out of batteries for the minidisk almost immediately, and had to take notes instead, and one interview was done via e-mail. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and direct quotations are used in the text.

Villagers

Every interview in the villages was started in a similar way, by asking about biographical data like age, marital status etc. Then I asked some questions regarding the particular life situation of the respondent and his or her family: which animals they had, what they did grow in their fields and gardens, if the children in the family went to school, if the life of their family had changed in any way since the cooperation with LWF started etc. After these initial questions, which gave me an impression of the person I was interviewing and his or her life situation, and which also helped “warming up” the respondent and establishing rapport between us, I started to ask questions about the project and project activities, how they would explain development, and about the respondent’s personal opinions regarding things that had to do with project activities and the cooperation with LWF. This way of building up the interview with reference to different kinds of questions, seemed to work according to the intention. Most respondents seemed a bit nervous to begin with, and maybe a bit anxious regarding what this was all about. The first questions were easy to answer, as they were about factual things, and as the respondents were telling me about their life situation and their family, most of them became more talkative, and the transition to questions regarding personal opinions and thoughts usually resulted quite easy. Some of the respondents had problems understanding why I asked them some of the questions (for example regarding the division of roles in the project), as there were in their opinion no doubt other more knowledgeable people in the village who would be able to give me a better answer. When I explained that I only wanted

their personal opinion and impression, not general information, they were usually happy to give it to me.

I wanted to do individual interviews with all the respondents, but in the villages this proved to be difficult in some cases. The interviews were usually performed either sitting on a “platform” with a straw mat on it under the house of the respondent (which was usually built on piles), or on a similar “platform” situated close to the house. The area around the house is by definition private ground, but it was soon obvious to me that anything happening in this area is a public event where anyone may take part; family members, neighbours or simply other people living in the village. In some cases several people gathered around us, or sat down with us. They either listened to the interview or took part in it by offering their opinions on some questions, or they discussed something with the initial respondent before giving an answer that they seemed to agree on. Intervention on my part, like telling people to leave because it was a private conversation, would be highly inappropriate, and not polite at all, the way I saw it. Hence I simply accepted the fact that some interviews ended up being focus group interviews instead of individual interviews.

LWF Staff

Interviews with LWF staff were usually started with factual information as well, but in these cases the questions were mainly focused around education and former work experience. Then the topic changed to questions regarding why the respondent had applied for work in LWF, and what he or she thought of the job. Then I usually proceeded to questions regarding understanding of development, and thoughts and opinions regarding the program/project and the cooperation with local people. The succession of questions varied slightly, as the respondents sometimes said things that made it natural to follow up with a question which was originally further down on the list. This is an advantage of semi-structured interviews: they are flexible, and the conversation between interviewer and interviewee gets more unstrained as one may follow up information given by the interviewee, instead of interrupting and changing the topic all the time due to a strict sequence of questions.

Two of the interviews with Khmer LWF staff were done in the IRDP office, and one in the home of the interviewee. One interview with an expatriate staff was done at the main office in Phnom Penh, the other was done via e-mail, the reason for which I will explain below.

5.6. RESPONDENTS

Villagers

The choice of respondents in the villages was to a great extent casual. As Steinar Kvale (1996) comments, “interview subjects are [often] not selected at random, but by other criteria, such as typicality or extremeness, or simply by *accessibility*” (Kvale, 1996: 233, my emphasis). The latter option gives the best description of my selection of respondents in the villages, although it was also done according to certain criteria. I wanted to interview members of the VDC and non-members of the VDC, men and women, and people of different age. The intention behind this was to get a sample that represented different groups of people, and different degrees of involvement in the project and in the cooperation with LWF. As I started the fieldwork, I was a bit uncertain regarding how many respondents I needed, as I lacked direct knowledge of the field, but I hoped to interview around ten people in the villages.

My fieldwork was unfortunately done during the most busy time of the year in rural Cambodia. I was there during the dry period, which made it easier to get to the rural areas, but right after I arrived in the country, the rice harvest began. Everybody, children and old people included, took part in the harvest. Hence most people were usually out in the fields during daytime, which was the time of the day I spent in the villages. The VDC leader in Trapaing Pring was very enthusiastic regarding the project and the cooperation with LWF, and did his best to help find respondents at some occasions. This may have created a bias however, as he would probably contact people that he knew were interested in and involved in project activities. Some bias would probably be there anyway, though, as people who were not interested in the cooperation with LWF would probably not spend their valuable time talking to me²². This may to some extent have influenced the information I got from villagers as well, as they would probably want to talk about the project and the cooperation with LWF in what they perceived a positive way. This may be either because they were actually among the villagers who were happy about the project, or simply because they wanted to please LWF and nurture a good relationship. It is difficult for me to control this possible bias, and it is therefore in my opinion important to be conscious and explicit about it.

²² I made an effort explaining that I did not work for LWF, but to some extent many people probably thought of me as a representative of LWF anyway, as I was there in the company of LWF staff, and arrived in 4WD vehicles with LWF's logo all over the car. Moreover, outsiders visiting the villages, especially foreigners, usually came on behalf of some development agency.

At many occasions the interpreter and I simply walked around the village until we found someone who was for some reason at home, and who agreed to spend some time on being interviewed. Those asked were usually positive, although sometimes we had to wait for a while, while they finished some work. It proved difficult to make appointments with people in advance, as they did not know whether they had time to be interviewed the next day or the next week, and I never knew when – if at all – I would be able to come to the village the next day or a specific day the next week, as I was dependent on the staff that accompanied me. The result was that I took things as they came, and as I arrived in the village I started walking around looking for a suitable respondent. This way I managed to include more or less the groups that I wanted to include in the sample.

I ended up with 6 interviews in Trapeang Pring, and only 2 in Ro Peak. I was intending to do more interviews in Ro Peak, but realised that at this point my interpreter (the one who spoke best English) was very busy with other work, and had no time left to accompany me to the field any more. Hence I had to leave it there. An overview of the different interviews can be found in the appendix.

LWF staff

Interviews with LWF staff was slightly more planned than interviews with villagers. I had planned to interview staff at different levels, expatriate and Khmer. At project level I decided to interview three people; the project coordinator, one out of two community development officers (CDO), and one out of 17 community development workers (CDW). They represent different levels in the project hierarchy, but are all Cambodian nationals. I did individual interviews with each respondent, two of them at the LWF office in Kampong Chhnang Town, and the last in the respondent's home.

I also interviewed two of the expatriates working at the main office in Phnom Penh. One of them comes from another country in the area, the other, the country representative, is American. The interview with the country representative had to be done via e-mail. I had planned to interview him towards the end of my stay in Cambodia, but when we got that far I discovered that he was on holiday. I decided to interview the program coordinator instead, but he was absent due to family matters. Hence the result was that I had to interview the country representative via e-mail after I got back to Norway, and he was back in office. This was clearly not the optimal solution, but as things were, it was the only. He answered my

questions, but briefer than if it had been a face-to-face situation, and I did not have the same opportunity to follow up what he said as if it had been a face-to-face situation. His answers also seem more formal than would probably have been the case if they had been oral and spontaneous, hence the content may be somewhat different.

5.7. LANGUAGE

Language was definitely an obstacle in my interaction with villagers, and as mentioned above, I was totally dependent on interpreters. It was up to the project coordinator to decide who would accompany me to the villages, and translate for me. A problem related to this, was that she either over-estimated the English skills of some staff, or under-estimated the skills needed to translate well. Three different people (all male) had their go as interpreters during the interviews in the villages, and no doubt did their very best, but only the last, “Phon Sotin”, spoke well enough English to translate without major difficulties both in understanding my questions and translating the answers.

Hence, before “Phon Sotin” took over the task as interpreter, the language problems were major. One interview could last for two hours, out of which one was spent trying to explain my questions to the interpreter or trying to solve misunderstandings. There were cases when I asked a question, and the interpreter seemed to understand and translated it into Khmer. Then an answer was given, and as it was translated into English I immediately knew that the interpreter had not understood my question at all, and had asked a totally different question than I had. This led to long explanations, and attempts to reformulate questions. In some cases this worked, while in others I had to leave it there and proceed to a new question or topic. There were also many cases when the respondent gave a long explanation, or a long answer to a specific question, but when it was translated into English all that was left was obviously a very short version of what he or she had said. This may have been either due to the fact that the interpreter did not know the English words, or that he considered a lot of what had been said as irrelevant. Or, in some cases, the answer was simply too long for him to remember all the details that had been mentioned. As things were, there was not much else for me to do, than to trust the judgement of my interpreter, and hope that he had actually translated the essence of what had been said in Khmer. Another problem related to using an interpreter, is that I could not be sure of exactly *how* questions had been asked in Khmer, for example if the

interpreter had sometimes translated question in a way that made them leading, or made open questions into yes/no questions. These are problems that I will return to in the section considering the reliability and validity of the study.

When I use quotes from interviews with villagers in the text, these will not be direct quotations of the respondents, but of the *translation* of what the respondents actually said. Therefore the quotes will often be in third person, as the translators usually used third person when translating (“he” or “she” instead of “I”).

The staff that I interviewed all spoke some English, and were interviewed without using an interpreter. This was an advantage because I know exactly what their answers were, and I can quote the respondents directly. As there was direct communication between me and the respondents, I also had full control related to *how* questions were asked. However, some of the staff spoke very limited English, and at some occasions some of them had difficulties both understanding my questions and saying what they wanted to say due to a lack of vocabulary.

5.8. GENERALIZABILITY AND REPRESENTATIVITY OF THE CASE

Concerning generalizability of qualitative research, Jennifer Mason (1996: 6, quoted in Silverman, 2001: 249) claims that “I do not think qualitative researchers should be satisfied with producing explanations which are idiosyncratic or particular to the limited empirical parameters of their study (...) Qualitative research should [therefore] produce explanations which are generalizable in some way, or which have a wider resonance.”

One method suggested by Hammersley (1992, referred to by Silverman, 2001), through which one may attempt to generalize from the analysis of one single case, is “obtaining information about relevant aspects of the population of cases and comparing our case to them” (Silverman, 2001: 250). This method can, Silverman explains, at its simplest involve reading about other related studies, and comparing your own case to them. This method does not say much about the representativity of the sample, but may give a firmer basis to generalizations, as it can demonstrate similarities and differences across a number of settings. This is one method I have used, as I have – both before and after the field work – read about different kinds of development projects, different kinds of actors within the development industry, and also

about other empirical studies on development projects. I try my best to be explicit throughout the text regarding similarities and differences between my case and the rest of the “population of cases”. It is important to underline that I am aware of the great variation of actors within the development industry, and of the many fundamentally different development projects these are involved in. One of the similarities, however, consists in almost all of them using the same jargon, which includes concepts like “bottom-up”, “participation”, “empowerment” and “partnership”. It is exactly these processes I try to understand.

Representativity in qualitative studies is different from representativity in quantitative studies, where it is achieved by studying “a representative subsection of a precisely defined population” (Arber, 1993: 38, quoted in Silverman, 2001: 248). This kind of sample makes it possible to generalize from your sample to the whole population, and if population characteristics are known, the representativity of the sample can be checked. Qualitative sampling procedures are different from quantitative, and the data is often derived from just one or a few cases, like in my study, which are usually not statistically representative of the whole population of cases. Kvale (1996: 233) notes that “the findings of the self-selected sample cannot (...) be statistically generalized to the population at large”. As shown above, though, there are other ways of obtaining generalizability in qualitative research.

As is usually the case for qualitative studies, I cannot claim my case to be representative of the whole population of cases from which it was selected. Nor does the study give information regarding the distribution of a phenomenon; hence it cannot form a base for statistical generalizations. That is not my intention either. However, following the above descriptions of purposive and theoretical sampling, I will claim that the case I have chosen for my study is both an interesting and reasonable choice. Based on this, it is possible to make some *theoretical* or *analytical generalizations* related to the findings. According to Kvale (1996: 233) “*analytical generalization* involves a reasoned judgement about the extent to which the findings from one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation”. As Pål Repstad claims:

A case study may be used to throw critical light on existing theory. If general theory cannot be used to throw light on what happens in the field, or the empirical data point in a different direction than could be expected according to theory, there is reason to question established theory and concepts.

(1993: 16, my translation)

5.9. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity is important in any research, qualitative and quantitative. As Silverman notes: “Unless you can convince your audience(s) that the procedures you used did ensure that your methods were reliable and that your conclusions were valid, there is little point in aiming to conclude a research study” (Silverman, 2001: 254).

Reliability “refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer at different occasions” (Hammersley, 1992: 67, quoted in Silverman, 2001: 33). Another way of explaining reliability is to say that “reliability is the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research” (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 20, quoted in Mikkelsen, 1995: 208). In qualitative studies readers are usually provided with only brief extracts of data. Field notes or extended transcripts are rarely available, and the reader is therefore not able to make their own interpretations of the perspective of the people who have been studied. Due to this, “For reliability to be calculated, it is incumbent on the scientific investigator to *document his or her procedure*” (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 72, quoted in Silverman, 2001: 34. My emphasis). That is exactly one of the intentions of this chapter.

According to Silverman (2001) high reliability in qualitative research is associated with low-inference descriptions. For example direct quotations of what people say should be used, not only the researcher’s “reconstructions of the general sense of what a person said, which would allow researchers’ personal perspectives to influence the reporting” (Seale, 199: 148, quoted in Silverman, 2001: 227).

I have tried hard to reduce the risk of problems with reliability in this study: I recorded all the interviews on minidisk, and transcribed them. As the transcripts, and my field notes, are not available to the reader, it is to a great extent necessary to trust my interpretations and descriptions. However, in the analysis I use direct quotations from the interviews, to let the reader know what I base my analysis on. I have had to make a choice between many different quotations, but as far as possible I inform the reader whether the quote represents something typical or something atypical in the data. I also include contradicting claims. The analysis is also based on documents, to which the reader can easier get access. This, together with a

detailed description of the fieldwork, to a great extent helps ensure the reliability of the data, although the reliability can, to some extent, always be questioned in qualitative research.

“By *validity*, I mean truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers” (Hammersley, 1990: 57, quoted in Silverman, 2001: 232. My emphasis). According to Silverman one may sometimes doubt the validity of an explanation because the researcher has made no attempt to deal with contrary cases. The reader may wonder “whether the researcher has selected only those fragments of data which support his argument” (Silverman, 2001: 35). A reader may feel more confident with an analysis where deviant cases are cited and explained. Moreover, still according to Silverman (2001: 233), “the issue of validity is appropriate whatever one’s theoretical orientation or use of quantitative or qualitative data”.

Some standard criteria of assessing validity include (according to Silverman, 2001: 233):

- The impact of the researcher on the setting
- The values of the researcher
- The truth status of a respondent’s account.

Pål Repstad (1993) mentions some similar points related to the validity of the data: the researcher should always ask him or herself among other things whether there has been a research effect, whether the way questions have been asked has influenced the answers, and whether the respondent has any reason to hold back information, to exaggerate something or to distort the truth. All these questions have to be thought thoroughly through in relation to my research. The fact that I am a young, European female may have influenced the way villagers acted, and the things they said²³. The fact that I am European, and what it brings with it of associations to richness, education etc, could have been a problem, as they may be seen as signs of authority. Foreigners are also often associated with development agency employees, as there are not many other foreigners who come to these remote areas. However,

²³ One young girl that I interviewed (interview 6) initially seemed very shy, and afraid of answering any questions. Her mother was sitting close by, however, and was everything but shy. She explained her daughter’s behaviour like this (in the words of the interpreter): “Say that the daughter never seen like you... The daughter always stay at home, so difficult to see people like you”. On a question from the interpreter, the respondent herself also admitted that she was scared of us (me and the interpreter). However, as the interview went along, she seemed to relax more, and openly answer my questions – sometimes in a dialogue with her mother. In other situations, especially with elder people, it almost seemed to be an advantage that I was a foreigner. I seemed to be a bit of an attraction, and some people seemed quite eager to talk to me, and to answer any question I asked.

that I am young and female, and clearly let people know that I was there to learn *from* them, may have made me seem like less of an authority than I otherwise may have due to my geographical origin. However, I must also consider the fact that it may have influenced the information given to me, that I was in the company of LWF staff.

As mentioned above, as I used an interpreter, I could not control exactly how the questions were asked in the interviews with villagers, and do not know to what extent questions may have been leading. All these matters may have had some influence on the information I received from villagers, although I cannot say for sure if they did or not. However, I also used different interpreters, with different levels of knowledge of English. They probably asked questions in different ways, but still I can see general trends in what my informants answered. In many instances I also tried to touch the same topic through different questions throughout the interview, to be able to discover any lack of coherence in the answers. If something was not clear, I followed up the answers to make sure what the respondent really meant. This seemed to work according to the intention, the way I see it.

The fact that the interpreters were LWF staff could have made people say more favourable things about LWF than they otherwise would. It is hard to say whether this happened, but as people also told me about some problems in the cooperation, I did not get the impression that this was a major problem. Anyway, this is a question one may ask in any kind of conversation between two people, and it is pretty much impossible – also in daily life - to guarantee that people are not telling a modified version of the truth, depending on whom they speak with. This cannot be totally controlled, but it is important to be conscious about it. The same is the case with the other problems mentioned above. These are problems that one often has to live with in this kind of research, and it is important to be aware of these possible influences on the data, although they are difficult to control.

Pål Repstad (1993: 77) mentions a possibility for checking the validity of the data. He suggests comparing one's own project with other similar empirical research projects. According to him "particularly in the case of qualitative case studies, such comparative discussions where one includes other research projects, give a better base for deciding how valid the findings in one's own project are" (1993: 77, my translation). This has been done throughout my study, to the extent similar studies have been available.

5.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The importance of “informed consent” is stressed in all guidelines of ethical procedures for research (Silverman, 2001: 271). This has to do with letting the people you study know what you are doing research on, and how the data may be used.

As an introduction to each interview I gave a short presentation of myself as a university student studying the relationship between local people and a development NGO in a development project. To villagers I explained (through an interpreter) that I was interested in knowing about the project in their village, their thoughts regarding development and the project in particular, and about their cooperation with LWF. I explained that I wanted to use the information I received in a “report” I was writing in relation to my university studies, and asked if it was ok for them to be interviewed about this topic, with the explained purpose. Everybody consented. LWF staff were told something similar: I wanted to know about their job in LWF, their thoughts regarding development and this program/project (depending on them being program staff or project staff) in particular, and their opinions regarding the cooperation between LWF staff and local people. Most of the staff, both at program level and at project level, had already been informed about the purpose of my stay however, either by their superiors, their colleagues or through informal conversations with me. Those asked, consented to being interviewed.

In the analysis I will not mention the name of any of the respondents. Instead I have given them all fictitious names by which they will be referred to in the text²⁴. Hence, they will be anonymous. However, some respondents cannot be totally anonymized due to their position, and mentioning their position is definitely relevant the way I see it, as it may influence their opinions and also say something about the influence they themselves have over other people and the project. This is the case with some of the LWF staff, and a few people in the villages as well, who have a position that only one person has. I do not consider this a major problem, however, as I am not interested in the individuals per se, and the information they give is not very sensitive or personal. As the respondents gave their consent to being interviewed, they also consented to being referred to in the analysis of my dissertation, knowing that they could not be completely anonymized. In the villages the interviews were usually not done in a

²⁴ An overview of the respondents, including “names” and some characteristics, is given in the appendix.

private setting either, and the information given was therefore obviously not looked at as private and sensitive by the interviewees themselves.

5.11. SUMMING UP

The flexibility that the qualitative approach allows, has been important throughout the research process described in this chapter. I had some theoretical assumptions before I went to Cambodia, but still had a long way to go when it came to narrowing down the topic and developing research problems. This was done along the way, as I started to get to know the field. This is a possibility a researcher has when using qualitative research methods.

Throughout this chapter I have introduced the reader to my choice of methodology and research methods, my choice of case, the way respondents were chosen, and the problems I encountered during the fieldwork. I have also discussed the representativity of the case, and possibilities to generalize the findings of a qualitative case study. Then followed some considerations regarding the reliability and the validity of the data, before the chapter was concluded with some comments regarding research ethics.

The main intention of this chapter has been to give the reader knowledge of how choices were made, how the research project developed, and which problems I encountered during the process and how these were dealt with. Particularly in qualitative research, it is important to give the reader access to this kind of information, as it helps reducing problems with reliability and validity.

6. LWF CAMBODIA PROGRAM: GOALS AND STRATEGIES

6.1. INTRODUCTION

As seen throughout the previous chapters, many scholars claim that there is a gap between theory and practice when it comes to the support of different strategies and theories of development. In particular there is a tendency to support the ideas of the multiplicity paradigm in theory, while the ideas and strategies of the modernisation paradigm live on in practice. This may be due to different reasons. Concepts that intend to give an impression of adherence to the multiplicity paradigm, such as participation and empowerment, may for example be used as cosmetic labels, more or less intentionally. The gap may also be due to different interpretations of the concepts. As seen in chapter four, not all kinds of participation and empowerment indicate a bottom-up relationship between givers and receivers of aid in a project. The concepts have very positive connotations, however, and the meaning is often taken for granted without any further analysis. This means that the interpretation can vary from development project to development project, but outsiders reading project documents and reports may often take the meaning of participation and empowerment for granted, in a positive way.

As the first part of the analysis of LWF Cambodia Program, I will in this chapter look at how the program/project has developed through time according to project documents, and how the current goals and strategies are presented in the same documents.

6.2. CHANGING APPROACHES THROUGH THE YEARS

The change of country strategy that took place from 1995, as described in chapter two, was a direct follow-up of an external evaluation of the Country Program in February 1994. The conclusion of the evaluation team was that the strategy had to change considerably, and this led, as already mentioned in chapter two, to a shift from support to Central Government and involvement in different “mini-projects” to a more “grass-roots” focused approach through

which they could reach out directly to more people in the field. The external evaluation team recommended, among many other things, that within capacity building emphasis should be shifted from national to provincial and local levels, and that greater emphasis should be placed on social factors and the felt needs of the local population (LWF Cambodia Program, 1994b). The recommendations led to great changes in the Cambodia Program, including the establishment of Integrated Rural Development Projects:

The program can be decentralized and can become operational at the grass root level, right in the villages with the communities, where the actual rehabilitation and sustainable development are required. (...) The suggested approach is of integrated rural development, whereby the initiative and participation of the rural population is imperative to the success of the program. This means there should be a transition from the sectoral approach of today to a more multi-sectoral one, whereby each sector compliments the other.

(Ibid; Annex F, no page number)

This change was made possible also because of important changes in the political situation in Cambodia in 1993, as described in the chapter two. As a result of the change of strategy, the implementation of four IRDPs began in 1996 “on village and commune level in cooperation and participation with the target groups, the rural poor” (LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 20).

The IRDPs

aim at achieving sustainable rural development through the facilitation of technical and financial support to local communities in the areas of most need. The projects will assist communities to organize themselves into local development institutions to enable them to identify their own needs and to plan and implement activities. The assistance will be in the field of agriculture, income generation, rural water supply and sanitation, education, health, environment and landmine awareness/clearance.

(“Program Summary”, LWF Cambodia Program Homepage)

The vulnerable groups that are the major target groups of the IRDPs, are specified as households headed by women, landless households, returnees, internally displaced persons and people disabled by landmines/UXOs (LWF Cambodia Program Homepage). However, it was mentioned already in the Country Program Strategy for 1995-98 that “...one cannot work with the poor people alone. One must also include people that are less poor. One could call those demonstration farmers. A community approach should be followed, rather than target individuals” (LWF Cambodia Program, 1994b. No page number).

The change of focus of the LWF Cambodia Program seems to be part of a general shift of strategy in the external assistance given to Cambodia. Around 1995 international donors in

general, not only LWF, decided to go from emergency relief (a so-called reconstruction rehabilitation phase) to a more sustainable development approach (Kao Kim Hourn, 2000). These changes in strategy were also, when seen in the light of the above presentations of different theories of development, and the ideas and values that characterise the multiplicity paradigm, very much in accordance with the shift of trends and strategies within the international development industry during the 1990s.

6.3. PRACTICAL APPROACH OF THE IRDPS

When working in the villages, LWF works within an officially recognised framework called Village Development Committee (VDC). This is an elected group of village residents, and is the foundation of the Cambodian government's rural development structure (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002b). The establishment of these committees is part of a program funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Development committees are elected at the village, sub-district, district, and provincial levels. The lowest levels are supposed to come up with ideas on behalf of their communities, and province- and district-level committees are provided funding to allocate to worthy projects among these ideas. A certain percentage of the committee-members at all levels shall be women, ensuring female participation in the decision-making process (Judy L. Ledgerwood, 2000). At the time of writing, Ledgerwood however seemed to doubt the actual success of the Development Committees, saying that it was a strong likelihood that they would come to mirror the established patron-client relations that dominate Khmer political life, and that local-level officials are unlikely to give up their exclusive authority. This can be seen in relation to what was said in chapter four of this dissertation, about the unwillingness of some people to give up their "power over". The Village Development Committees are non the less the local framework through which LWF works. Some villages have already elected their VDCs before LWF becomes involved; if not, LWF helps local authorities and the villagers organising a democratic election to establish a VDC (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002b). Then, when development related activities are being implemented in the village, a great part of the contact between LWF staff and villagers run through the VDC.

Another key element of the LWF approach is the Community Development Worker (CDW), who is an LWF staff member who lives and works in project areas. The CDWs are

Cambodian nationals, often with rural background, and usually each CDW is responsible for two or three villages in an area, living from Monday to Friday in one of these. As the communities get more self-reliant, and prove to be able to manage the development process on their own, the number of CDWs in an area is gradually reduced (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002b). In the foreword of the 1999 Annual Report the Representative writes, "...this year's report salutes the Community Development Workers (CDWs). Living and working right in the target villages uniquely positions them for the daily, person to person contact that is the backbone of our Integrated Rural Development approach to community development" (LWF Cambodia Program, 2000: 1).

6.4. CURRENT DESCRIPTIONS OF STRATEGY AND POLICY

The new strategy has been consolidated, and I will in the following give some examples of how LWF Cambodia Program, and their policy, is currently described in various documents and reports.

Among the project documents that I base my analysis on, is "Our Purpose, Path and Direction (2003-2008)" (PPD), which is part of a process of Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) conducted between August and December 2001. LWF staff of all levels participated in this process, as well as representatives from some of the donor partners and others with whom LWF cooperates. This process aimed at redeveloping the programme's vision, mission, strategies, goals and objectives, and to analyse and plan changes in all elements of the program (past, present and future perspectives). The PPD document is a result of this process.

According to a description in this document, "LWS Cambodia has adopted an area-oriented, integrated rural development approach which is focusing on the participation and empowerment of poor communities and their poorest and vulnerable members to reach long-term sustainable development" (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 57). Participation of the poorest is to be ensured in all stages of the project cycle, and the poorest and vulnerable should be "[*empowered*] to articulate and fulfil their rights through active *participation* in VDCs and LDIs²⁵" (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 57, my emphasis).

²⁵ Local Development Institutions.

The importance of these concepts, at least in theory, is underlined in the explanation of the choice of strategy for the process resulting in the PPD document:

The choice of the Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) or the Participatory Perspective Building (PPB) process by members of the LWF/DWS Cambodia Program evolved from a belief in and an understanding of the needs, importance and practice thereof of “Participation, Partnership and Empowerment”.

(LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 6)

The process is in itself supposed to be empowering for the participants. It is also mentioned that the process is based on some value-based assumptions. Among others “participation is a value”, “trust in and genuine respect for people’s knowledge, experience and perceptions (listening and learning always come before any intervention)”, and “all stakeholders perform as main actors and “subjects” rather than “objects” of their own development thought and practice” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 12).

According to the Annual Report from 2001, the strategy LWF practices is “direct, community-based rural development” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002b: 2), and

A community-based approach means that communities themselves are involved in every stage of their development, not only by contributing to the effort but directing it as well. LWS is not satisfied by merely doing things for people, or giving things to people – participation of the people in rebuilding their community is necessary for the community to strengthen itself.

(LWF Cambodia Program, 2002b: 3)

This certainly seems to be a description of a bottom-up approach: LWF is involved in the community as a giver of aid, but it is the community itself that *directs* their own development process, during all stages of the process. This view is confirmed by a report from a workshop about participatory monitoring and evaluation in 2001, where it is stated that “people must handle and control the development process through the whole project cycle” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2001b: 19). In several occasions it is also claimed that goals and means are agreed about depending on the felt needs of villagers. In the PPD Document the approach is described as “People-centred: Focus on poorest people and their needs rather than on components. Result and impact oriented rather than activity based” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 57).

The claim that LWF Cambodia Program focuses on “poorest people and their needs rather than on components”, confirms my above assumptions. These two alternative focuses seem to equal Robert Chambers’ division between a paradigm of people and a paradigm of things, which again equals the multiplicity paradigm and the modernisation paradigm. Hence this quote indicates that LWF Cambodia Program belongs within the multiplicity paradigm of development, and distances itself from the ideals of the modernisation paradigm. Another quote supports this understanding of the approach: “when helping communities to develop, the process is as important as the product. LWS moves the villages towards self-sufficiency so they will be able to function as a community and take care of their needs independently” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2001a: 1). The following quote confirms the above interpretations:

At the village level, villagers are participating from the planning stages of the project, through meetings with village leaders, VDCs and households, and through Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs), baseline surveys and needs assessments. The villagers are encouraged to organize themselves into LDIs to assess/prioritise their needs, plan activities and implement them.
(LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 99)

The overall goal of the IRDPs is to assist rural communities, in particular vulnerable groups, to become self-sufficient and economically independent through sustainable rural development. This way LWF Cambodia Program wants to contribute to an improvement of the living standard of the people in Cambodia (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002b), and as seen above “participation” and “empowerment” are described as important components of the process.

6.5. SUMMING UP

Kao Kim Hourn gives some recommendations to organisations working with development in Cambodia in his article “Cambodia and the International Community: The Road Ahead”. In this article Kao Kim Hourn claims that

Beneficiaries must be involved from the very beginning, and there should be a long-term plan that would allow the funding organization eventually to phase out its involvement. More organizations must be willing to hand over responsibility to local groups and people and allow them to make mistakes and learn.
(Kao Kim Hourn, 2000: 5)

This can surely be interpreted as a call for the NGOs involved in Cambodia to follow the ideas and values of the multiplicity paradigm of development, and to distance themselves from the ideas and values of the modernisation paradigm. LWF Cambodia Program seems to be in accordance with the recommendations given, when one looks at how they present themselves and the strategy and policy of the programme. Also, as mentioned in chapter two, the number of expatriate staff within LWF Cambodia Program has been reduced during the last few years, and the organisation is, according to the plan, going to be localised as an autonomous Cambodian NGO within some years.

LWF Cambodia Program seems to have followed international trends of development, as their approach has changed from Central Government support to a more “grass-roots” focused approach. According to the documents referred to above, the focus has changed from predetermined sectoral approaches to a focus on the felt needs of the local population, within a multi-sectoral approach. The emphasis has been directed towards initiative, control and participation of local people in the projects. Currently empowerment is also being emphasised, as a process, and with independence and people’s ability to take care of their own needs as a goal.

According to the above quotes from various documents and reports, LWF Cambodia Program seems to describes itself as belonging within the multiplicity paradigm, emphasising local people’s right to choose their own path of development, and the role of outsiders as secondary to the role of local people, marking a distance to old, paternalistic modernisation theories.

The above descriptions are quite general, however, and do not say how this is to be done in practice. During the further analysis I will have a closer look at particular situations and operationalisations, and at descriptions and interpretations of the project given by project staff and villagers. My intention is to see whether they fit with the impression given by the documents referred to in this chapter.

7. INTERPRETATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

7.1. INTRODUCTION

There is no explicit definition of “development” in any of the documents or reports that I have studied. An understanding of what development is, is however somehow implicit in project policies and planning, as these are necessarily dependent on what perception one has of what development is or should be. Different understandings of development indicate emphasis on different areas, such as for example the distinction between emphasis on people or things. Different understandings of development also indicate different structures of influence and decision-making.

The goals and strategy presented in LWF Cambodia Program’s presentation of itself in various documents and reports, strongly indicates that it belongs within the ideology of the multiplicity paradigm. However, as there is no explicit definition of development, I will look at how the different people involved in the project define the concept and the process of change that it involves. These different people involve representatives of expatriate staff, local staff and villagers.

According to one of the expatriate staff, “Maria,” it is necessary to “*have a common goal, a common vision and mission*” for different people like LWF staff and villagers to cooperate well. “*There must be only one goal otherwise it will be conflict*”, she claims. This is also mentioned as a criterion for genuine partnerships in chapter four.

In the PPD document from 2002, which is also referred to in the previous chapter, it is claimed that during the period covered by the 1996-98 Planning and Monitoring System (PMS)²⁶, a trend was that there was a lack of self reliance and a lack of understanding of the development concept among grassroots organisations, while the trend during the 1999-2002

²⁶ The Lutheran World Federation Planning and Monitoring System (PMS) Document for the Cambodia Program functions as the strategic operational plan for the years covered by the document. The PMS Document that will be given most attention here, deals with the period from 1999 to 2002, hence covering the period in 2001/2002 when I conducted my fieldwork in Cambodia.

PMS was more understanding of the development concept, although still a limited self reliance (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: annexes; 8). It is also claimed that there has been some change in the roles of LWF staff, as both local people and staff now have a better understanding of development (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: annexes; 14-15). It is also argued, regarding grassroots organisations, that more and stronger LDIs than before are now involved in development work, “and they better understand development concepts” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 19).

On this background, I am interested in finding out how different people involved in the project define development. It could also be interesting to find out what is meant by “better understanding of the development concept”. I intend to look into these issues throughout this chapter, starting with a presentation of development as understood by LWF staff.

7.2. DEFINING DEVELOPMENT IN THE PROJECT

7.2.1. LWF Staff

According to the American Country Representative, “Peter”, development is

the empowerment of people so as to enable them to choose their own path and manage their own resources. Providing options for people to make positive change in their lives. It is not only economic growth, but is socio cultural as well.

This may be said to be a definition “by the book”, emphasising that development is about people becoming able to decide themselves what kind of changes they need in their lives, and then do something about it themselves as well. He also says explicitly that development is about socio cultural changes as well, not only economic. Hence this definition of development seems to belong within the multiplicity paradigm of development.

However, as development is defined more or less as being the same as empowerment, the understanding of development depends to a great extent on how one defines empowerment. As he does not say anything about that²⁷, the meaning of empowerment seems to be taken for granted, as is often the case. Empowerment is, as mentioned in chapter four, assumed to

²⁷ As the interview was done via e-mail, I did not have the same possibility to follow up this kind of answers as I would if it was done face to face.

describe a positive process, where previously powerless people to a greater extent gain the power to influence their own lives. How this happens, and which role outsiders have in this process, is seldom discussed, however. In the next chapter I will return to an analysis of how the empowerment-process is carried out in practice in this project. At this point I only note that the definition of development given by the Country Representative seems to fit in with the ideas of the multiplicity paradigm of development. He also adds that “*Development means change, a shift in power and access to power and resources*”. Because of this there will always be winners and losers in development, he claims.

Other LWF staff have definitions of development that are less influenced by professional jargon, and less theoretical. One of the other expatriates working in LWF Cambodia Program, “Maria”, has the following to say about the meaning of development:

Well, for me development is...is like making something, or doing something...hmm...in a person, in myself, in a community, for change. For a better change.

Before that change can happen, however, she explains that one has to prepare, think through the challenges that are to come, and prepare oneself for change. Her understanding of development obviously includes a change of thinking. This is how she describes the development process in the interview on December 26th 2001:

So we do development with the people, by the people, for the people. So it is like...I am thinking of how can I make these people think that...I want them to improve their life, but they have to do it. We have to do it together. And not only for themselves, but for everybody. Yes. So I want to develop their thinking first, of what is really development. (...) So I...for me to get what I really want in the community as a develop community, is for the people to become mature and understand what is really development.

According to this understanding, development has to do with people understanding things that they did not understand before, being able to reflect on their situation, and then act to improve their own life. It seems to be important that people change their situation themselves, others cannot do it for them, only help them gain a new understanding of things. Her definition is also concerned with people, following the ideal of the multiplicity paradigm. Parallels can also be drawn to Paulo Freire’s ideas regarding conscientization, described in chapter four.

The project coordinator, “Chan Kanika”, explains that development is change for the better. She mentions the acquisition of new knowledge as one part of development:

I know that development it mean that change for the better...activity, something like this. (...) It is like example, so for example people they plant rice, without compost pit. So right now we change the attitude to use the compost pit with the rice field. And the development it change the...the livelihood of the poor people not enough food to be enough food. Something like this, yes, to be better.

The Community Development Officer (CDO), “Phon Sotin”, has a rather similar explanation, describing development as a long process:

We can say development is a long process. Cannot finish tomorrow, or after tomorrow. And also development we can also...I would like to explain to you that train the people how to live by themselves.

He explains that if people for example want to eat fish, you train them so that they learn how to get fish. That is development, he says. The solution is not to *give* people fish. I interpret what he says as meaning that the goal is self-sufficiency, and avoidance of continued dependence on outsiders. The process of development includes some kind of training of people, so that they learn new skills that can help them improve their livelihood.

On a question about whether development may have any negative effects he says

I think that development always positive. I could say that because if we talking about development, it mean that want to improve. The bad to better, the bad thing to good thing. But the problem is the person who is responsible that sometimes, we can say...have not enough capacity, to work on that. So that is the problem.

Hence, according to “Phon Sotin”, development is always a good thing, although it may be a problem for the development process that the people working with development sometimes do not have enough knowledge.

7.2.2. Villagers

The most common answer among villagers, when asked what development is, is that development means to increase the living standard. They mention different things that for them are signs of an improved living standard, such as better roads, better school, health centre, enough food, and that the village is clean. Many respondents are mainly concerned with infrastructure as indicators of development.

A 22 years old girl in Ro Peak, “Srey Poch” explains development in the following way: “Development to her it means to develop the village.”²⁸ When asked, she has problems explaining it in any more detail, but after some further questions she says that “It mean that the village has road, and around the house compound is clean. And also have the school for the children.”

Another respondent, “Dim Sim”, answers that development is to increase the living standard in the community:

Like rice field and construct everything in the village. Like road, like something like that.

She continues explaining her understanding of development by listing up those things that she wants the village to have, and these are school, clean water and a health centre.

A 42 years old man in Trapaing Pring, “Kay Chhum”, has a very similar answer, as he also explains development as “increase living standard”. An increased living standard would lead to less poor people, he claims. “Kay Chhum” laughingly admits that he only knows a little about development, but adds on a later question about the aims of development, that

the top of development all the people in the village are rich. (...) Mean that everything in the village, like the good...good health. And the good food for eat. And everything.

Some of the villagers compare their village with other places they have been to, or, if they have not been to any other places, with places or things they know about from for example TV or magazines. Some of them have very specific hopes and plans for their village related to these comparisons, such as “Nim Sour”, a man who joined an interview in Ro Peak:

Say that he used to go to Kampong Chhnang City. (...) And say that he is surprised, because there the people look clean. And also have nice roads. Yes. And the children have good health, say that. So he thinks that compared with his village, he wants to be like that village also. Have the nice roads.

The VDC member that I interviewed in Ro Peak, a 28 years old man called “Tep Sokhalay”, sees it differently, however: “Say that he cannot compare with Kampong Chhnang city, because it is a city. So our village – the village – cannot do like that. But he want to be improved.” He explains development as “development it mean to develop the village,

²⁸ As mentioned in chapter five, the answers given by villagers are usually quoted in third person, due to the use of an interpreter.

especially isolated areas". He gives examples like road construction, better communication, health centre and school.

The importance of help from outsiders, in this case LWF, to achieve increased living standard, is unquestionable according to the respondents. Everybody claims that the villages', and their personal (or their family's) living standard has improved after LWF got involved in their development. Everybody also agrees that the same changes could not have happened without the help from LWF. As a 39 years old man in Trapaing Pring, "Min Siphat", explains:

Before he know only rice field. But now he has the...grow the vegetables and everything. (...) When LWS come here LWS provide idea – good idea to the family. He know about vegetable growing, after finish the rice field. (...) In the village have the training on aids, human rights, vegetable growing, livestock, health. In the health have the cleaning around house compound.

"Min Siphat" has been taught how to make a compost pit, and use the compost as fertilizer, and explains what a useful knowledge that is. He also has many aspirations for the future:

And he have the plan suggest to LWS that provide the open well or hand pump. If LWS provide material, he have the labour. (...) He say that can not without LWS. Because he want LWS to lead in village. (...) First he wants seeds and technicals on agriculture. And then he wants the health centre in this village. He want to LWS provide the school. Secondary school. (...) He say that LWS provide idea. And material also. To develop human in the village. And then the villager can living standard themselves.

All respondents have similar answers, explaining how their situation has changed due to new knowledge and material provided by LWF. Transfer of knowledge and resources from outside seems to be of enormous importance according to the villagers. This bears a certain similarity to the findings of Michael D. Woost in his study of development projects in Sri Lanka, referred to in chapter four. His claim is that villagers mainly think of development as the acquisition of more material goods, and that the new wealth is thought of as brought there by outsiders. As "Kay Chhum" in Trapaing Pring explains:

He said that before no roads. (...) But now have the road. And then the children cannot go to school, but now go to school. And have to know about...the environment. (...) And know about the health in the family and all the village.

He also mentions NFE classes, learning to make compost, and learning about vegetable growing; "and then LWS provide seed to them". He also wants a latrine, more seeds, an open well, a health centre, good road and a new school.

Transfer of knowledge and material resources from outsiders to a great extent seems to be equated with development. Those who mainly emphasise the infrastructure, mention the material they get as the most important contribution of LWF in the village. As “Tep Sokhalay”, who is a member of the VDC in Ro Peak, says:

Before LWS started working here, he has some idea, like initiative idea, wanted to development in the village. But the problem the resource. Say that is the really need, the material that LWS support.

There are some differences between members of the VDC, and non-members of the VDC. Members of the VDC tend to a greater extent to mention that it will take time to achieve what they want, and that things have to be done step by step. Hence development is a process, according to them. Some of them also mention that development has to do with organising people in the village to cooperate and work together for the things they want to achieve. Non-members of the VDC tend to only mention increased living standard and/or the things they want to achieve, without mentioning how this is to be done. An exception is a 21 years old girl in Trapaing Pring, “Meach Sophoin”, who has just graduated from a Non Formal Education (NFE) class: “*organise the people to repair the road*” is one of the things she mentions as an explanation of her understanding of development. “Meach Sophoin” also mentions the gaining of new knowledge, and that a part of development is that people change their habits, and help each other:

*Say that also development she have...she get some knowledge about vegetable planting also. And this village previously face big problem with the water. So when LWS started working here, this village have pump. Yes. So avoid the problem with the water. (...)
Say that need to change the...need to improve, or need to develop, standard of living.
And then also need to change the behaviour, or habit we can say.*

A plausible explanation for her opinions, as they differ slightly from those of most other people in the village, seems to be that she has learnt about these issues in the NFE classes.

The VDC members also recognize that people in the village have different opinions regarding development²⁹. As “Tep Sokhalay” says:

Say that some people understand that development is a long process. And agree. But some people say that development is not to train the people to do...to do something. It is

²⁹ It is worth mentioning that in general the members of the VDC seemed to be the people in the village considered to have high education, and sometimes administrative experience as well. The VDC leader in Trapaing Pring has for example been village leader before, and has also been member of the pagoda committee. When I ask people who are not members of the VDC whether they would like to be members, a common answer is that they have to little education, and do not feel qualified.

to provide. (...) To get some gift, get something. And immediately. (...) And some people say that 'eh, they don't believe'. Stay at home, keep quiet.

One of the VDC members in Trapaing Pring, “Saveros Pou”, mentions something similar:

Say that he recognise about that problem...about the mobilise people to join some, any kind, of activity. Especially the poor people. The poor need something that...example he want to do now, so he want to get some benefit now. (...) And also when he ask them to join some any kind of activity, or meeting, say that have something to give him or no. If no, hopeless.

This indicates that there are widely diverging opinions within the villages. For example some people were not interested in learning about vegetable planting, “Saveros Pou” explains. New knowledge was not interesting for them, they wanted the seeds or the vegetables, so that they could get the benefits immediately. However, in Trapaing Pring this is not a big problem anymore, he claims, as the attitude has changed. In Ro Peak, on the other hand, the attitude of many people is still that they want the benefits immediately; they prefer getting finished products instead of spending their time going to trainings and meetings. Again there is a striking similarity to the findings of Michael D. Woost, as one of his conclusions is that development is understood as the acquisition of material goods, brought to the village by outsiders. The process aspect of development, emphasised for example in definitions of empowerment, is not included at all. This indicates that many villagers look at development as an exogenous project, where outsiders bring them goods associated with a higher living standard. Definitely indicating a focus on things, not on people.

The Community Development Worker, “Ban Toawn”, describes his impression of the villagers’ attitudes to the cooperation with LWS, and their aspirations for future development in these words:

And the people in the village, they are happy with LWS work. The development in their village. Because they say that the LWS is important for them. (...) And they say that if they have the LWS, they get the lot of money.

He laughs as he says that people think they will get a lot of money through the cooperation with LWS, indicating that this is an unrealistic thought.

7.3. MODERNISATION PARADIGM OR MULTIPLICITY PARADIGM?

Above I have presented the different understandings of development given by people involved in the project, from the expatriate Country Representative of LWF to local people living in the project villages. There is obviously not one agreed definition of development that everybody shares. The way I see it there are differences between expatriate staff and local staff, and between these and local people. Obviously there are also differences within the villages, although the villagers that I interviewed had quite similar explanations of what development is (with the exception of a minor difference between VDC-members and non VDC-members).

In chapter three we saw that the modernisation paradigm and the multiplicity paradigm represent very different ideas and values when it comes to defining development. In the words of Georgia Kaufmann I will repeat some of the characteristics:

Words such as ‘empowering’, ‘enabling’, ‘choice’ and ‘sustainability’ reflect the dominant paradigm operating in development in the early 1990s and would not have been dominant ten or fifteen years ago.(...) This discourse contrasts strikingly with the reference to standards of living, measures of economic performance and wealth more often used by the civil servants in general and economists in particular. The different discourses are not trivial. The choice of words reflects not only different ideological positions, but also different goals.

(Kaufmann, 1997: 117)

Kaufmann’s division into different paradigms seems to be compatible with the multiplicity paradigm and the modernisation paradigm discussed in chapter three. When the different definitions of development that I have discussed above are compared with the characteristics of the paradigms that she mentions, I will argue that the definitions of the expatriate staff fit in with the first paradigm, and the definitions of the villagers fit in with the latter, while the definitions of local staff could be situated somewhere in between.

The two expatriates give general, more or less theoretical definitions of development, clearly belonging within the multiplicity paradigm. The emphasis, although expressed in very different ways by the two, is that local people themselves should be made able to improve their own lives in the way they feel is appropriate. This is made possible through empowerment, according to the country representative, or through a change of thinking and understanding, according to the other expatriate. As seen in chapter four, empowerment is

often defined as having to do with developing an understanding of the situation that one lives in, and based on that understanding, starting to change the situation. Hence, if this is the way empowerment is understood in this case, they seem to be referring to the same kind of process. The focus of development is on *people*.

The local staff have more practical definitions of development, as they mention the learning of new skills as a part of the development process, and give concrete examples of such skills. They are also concerned with positive changes in the lives of poor people, and that people themselves have to be active in improving their lives, as are the expatriate staff. However, according to the project coordinator and the CDO that I interviewed, people need to get new knowledge to be able to have an active role in their own development, hence the transfer of knowledge from outsiders seems to play an important part in development. Although they do not use those words, they seem to value some kind of participation, and some kind of empowerment, which is an important part of the multiplicity paradigm. Nevertheless, the process they describe seems to be highly dependent on outsiders and their “expert” knowledge, hence empowerment seems to be regarded as static and exogenous rather than dynamic and endogenous. Training local people to do certain things or to do things in certain ways, seems to be regarded an important part of the process. I take this to mean that outsiders are thought to have an important role in a development project, and hence to a great extent control the project. The shift of power that is described as an important part of the transition from the modernisation paradigm to the multiplicity paradigm, and which is also mentioned by the Country Representative, seems to be lacking, although some of the elements of the multiplicity paradigm are present as well.

Villagers seem to define development according to their own, personal experiences of it. They have very practical definitions, and many examples of what kind of changes development involves. “Increased living standard” is the most common definition of development among villagers, and they give examples of what they mean by increased living standard by referring to what they have already achieved due to development, and what they want to or expect to achieve in the future. As do the local LWF staff, some of the villagers as well mention the acquirement of new knowledge as an important part of development. By this they seem to mean transfer of knowledge from outsiders to villagers. However, most important to many of them seems to be the resources, in money and different material, which LWF contributes with in the construction of infrastructure. Infrastructure, such as roads, schools, health centres etc is

according to the villagers a very important part of developing. They are signs of development, and necessary for further development, hence for them it is an important part of development when someone helps them constructing these things. Development of human resources is mentioned as a result of transfer of knowledge and as a result of them getting more schools. That may lead to more independence in the future, but for the time being the importance of transfer of knowledge and resources from LWF seems to be very important for development, according to the villagers that I interviewed. The focus is to a great extent on *things*, and outsiders are of tremendous importance.

According to those interviewed, there are also people in the villages, particularly the poorest of the poorest, who are not interested in new knowledge at all, or in working with LWF, and plan and implement activities in cooperation with them as a way of improving their lives. If LWF wants to give them something that they need, that is fine, but they do obviously not believe in a change of practices and a cooperation with LWF as a means of making positive impact on their lives. This indicates that there are different degrees of focus on things among villagers. Those who include transfer of knowledge in their definition of development, in addition to material goods, seem to be considered to know more about development than those who are not interested in this knowledge.

The general impression, based on how villagers describe development, is that the importance of outsiders is invaluable both due to their role as experts and due their possibility to transfer material resources. These characteristics are typical for the modernisation paradigm.

7.4. THE “CORRECT” UNDERSTANDING OF DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, it is claimed in LWF Cambodia Program documents that both staff and local people are gaining a better understanding of development than they previously had. *Who* is it then who defines when there is a lack of understanding and when there is sufficient understanding? As seen above there are different definitions of development within the project. According to the ideals of the multiplicity paradigm, there are many paths that lead to development, and development should be defined and executed by those developing themselves. If there is agreement around the claim that development means different things to different people (Hulme and Turner, 1990), I find it difficult to understand

the claim that there “was a lack of understanding of the development concept”. One specific understanding of development seems to be defined as correct, and through the interviews with staff and villagers I found support for this assumption.

Several of the villagers gave the impression that LWF staff teach them what development is. One example is this claim made by “Son Siveth”, the VDC leader in Trapaing Pring:

LWS staff have the opinion about development. No problem. He follow by the staff.

The concept of development seems to be seen as including a particular process of change, which the villagers had never thought of before. For example “Kay Chhum” told me that he had never thought of or heard of development before staff from LWF came to the village³⁰:

R: Everything like the LWS or expert come here, or learn about...learning.

I: They learn from them?

R: Yes, he must be learn from the staff or...

I: About what development is?

R: Yes, what about development.

I: Ok. Did he ever think about development before LWS came to the village?

R: No.

It is important to note that this answer does not necessarily mean that he had never thought about changing things before, but obviously LWF staff has taught him a completely new way of doing it. He adds the following information: “...before LWS come, no change here. (...) Because no man to provide idea or know about the development rural”. When asked whether he thinks that different people may have different opinions about what development is, he says no. LWF staff or other “experts” coming to the village teach local people about development, and therefore everybody has the same opinion, according to him. As seen previously in this chapter, there are however other people in the village (VDC members) who are concerned about the problem that some villagers have other opinions regarding what development is. As “Saveros Pou” says:

But the problem is a little bit difficult to convince the villager to understand about the concept...the real concept of development.

³⁰ When whole sequences from an interview are cited, like in this case, I refer to my own questions and comments with an “I”, short for “interviewer”. The respondent’s answers and explanations are referred to with an “R”, short for respondent. In all interviews with villagers an interpreter is used, and what is referred to as the respondent’s answer is therefore the interpreter’s translation of what the respondent says in Khmer.

People learn about what development is through trainings and meetings, or through NFE class, which is the case for “Meach Sophoin”:

I: Does she think that there can be different opinions about what development means?

R: Say that because she is ex NFE student, her friend in the same group have the same idea. That development is to be change – our village is to be better, to be clean. And develop the people, and change their habits.

I: Yes. They have learned the same things?

R: Yes, yes.

I: But does she think that people who have not been to NFE class have other opinions, or...?

R: Say that no.

(....)

R: Say that after joining the NFE class she know well about the concept of development. But before joining the class, she doesn't understand about development.

This impression is confirmed by LWF staff. One of the expatriates, “Maria”, told me that there may be different opinions about development and hence of how priorities should be made in the work in the communities. For example she mentions that there may be difficulties in a project because “*they are not so mature enough in development. What they know, is that they need food to eat. (...) Different perspectives of what we want to do. They only think of a day, but we are thinking of a year for them!*” She seems to be convinced that there is a correct understanding of development: “*So I...for me to get what I really want in the community as a develop community, is for the people to become mature and understand what is really development.*”

The CDW that I interviewed had similar opinions, but was talking mainly about the relationship between field staff and senior staff, rather than villagers and staff. On a question regarding whether he thinks everybody has the same opinion of what development is, he says the following:

R: No. Different idea.

I: Different ideas?

R: Yes, the staff of LWS, the staff that work in the main office is...they have knowledge. Than the staff in the projects.

I: Ok. So you think that they have more knowledge, so they have some different ideas about what development is?

R: Yes. Yes, yes.

I: And...how do they cooperate with the staff with less knowledge?

R: It is good cooperation. Because the staff working at the main office they always to teach the staff in the project.

I: Ok. They have trainings?

R: Yes, training.

According to this information given by the CDW, the relationship between program staff and project staff seems to be similar to the relationship between local staff and villagers: One group has superior knowledge which should be transferred to the other group through trainings, with one shared understanding as the goal.

When functioning as a translator in a conversation that I had with a villager, one of the two CDOs, “Pach Chhoeun”, commented it when a villager said that his priority for development in the village was increased living standard, to be able to read and write, and to have enough food. According to “Pach Chhoeun” this is a typical answer. People think about the practical, close things, they do not think a long time ahead, or think about *how* something can be done about the living standard etc. They do not do any planning, and there is no operationalisation of “increased living standard”. To quote him: “*People do not know what they want.*” Hence there is obviously a perception of local people as not understanding what development is, while LWF staff - at least senior staff - do.

A parallel may be drawn to Robert Chambers’ claim that “some will say that the rural poor (...) must be enabled to see what they would want if they knew what they really wanted” (Chambers, 1983: 145, also quoted in chapter four). The shift of power has to a great extent not taken place, as the outsiders still seem to think that they know best. As noted in chapter three and four, the outcome of a development process which is in accordance with the values and ideas of the multiplicity paradigm, cannot be controlled by development professionals. In the case of LWF Cambodia Program, project staff still seem to have concrete ideas regarding what development is, and regarding how local people should understand development.

7.5. SUMMING UP

It is quite obvious that there is a gap between the understanding LWF staff (particularly the expatriates) has of development, and the way villagers understand the processes of change that are referred to as development. The expatriates have general and theoretical definitions of development, while the closer one gets to the field, the more practical the definitions get. The first seem to belong to the multiplicity paradigm, while the latter seem to belong to the modernisation paradigm. The transfer of knowledge and resources mentioned by villagers, and to some extent by local staff as well, is not included in the definitions of the expatriate staff at all. At the same time, there seems to be agreement around the idea that there is a “correct” understanding of development. The “correct” understanding has to be transferred from program staff to project staff, and from project staff to villagers. This indicates that the *shift of power* spoken of as an indicator of a transition from the Modernisation Paradigm to the Multiplicity Paradigm, has to a great extent not taken place.

Different understandings of what development is and should be, may lead to different understandings of the roles of the different parties in the co-operation as well. This chapter and the previous one have mainly been concerned with the theoretical part of the project; first how the project is described in theory, and then how opinions of what development is seem to differ. We have already gotten the impression that things are not necessarily what they may seem like according to project documents and reports referred to in the previous chapter. In the following chapter I will among other things focus on how LWF staff and villagers perceive their co-operation and their roles in the development process, among other things according to the practicing of “participation” and “empowerment”. I will then compare the descriptions of practice with the presentation LWF Cambodia Program gives of itself, its strategies and its goals. As seen in the previous chapter, the latter fitted very well into a multiplicity paradigm of development.

8. THE PRACTICE OF PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

8.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at different aspects of the relationship between LWF staff and villagers, expressed through documents, interviews and other conversations, plus my own observations. The focus will mainly be on how participation and empowerment are interpreted (understood and practiced) in the project. I will also look at related issues that can illuminate the way these concepts are used, and perceptions of the relationship between LWF and local people in general. The latter will be approached through an analysis of who takes initiatives, and who decides - directly or indirectly - what to do and how to do it. The overall focus of the analysis is to what extent the use of the concepts “participation” and “empowerment” in theory, describes a project that in practice belongs within the multiplicity paradigm.

As is evident from chapter six, the importance of participation and empowerment in LWF Cambodia Program is emphasised in the program’s presentation of itself in various documents and reports. The question sought answered throughout this chapter, is to what extent theory is in conformity with practice.

8.2. PARTICIPATION

There is an expressed emphasis on local people’s participation within LWF Cambodia Program, at least in theory. Participation is emphasised in documents and reports, and by all people that I spoke with who are somehow involved in the project. Looking back to chapter four, however, we are reminded that participation can be understood in various ways. As seen in chapter four it is for example common to separate between different levels of participation, and not all the different levels are included in definitions of “genuine participation”.

In theory the level of participation within LWF Cambodia Program seems to be high, and by some of the respondents participation is even described as one of the characteristics of LWF.

One of the CDOs in Kompong Chhnang, “Phon Sotin”, explains to me how LWF is different from other NGOs:

Especially about the participatory approach. Yes. Other...many NGO they come, and then provide. Without any, we can say...have no...any condition example. (...) Yes, that they give. Give, free. But LWS no. Need to contribution the farmer.

This difference from other organisations is mentioned by “Saveros Pou”, one of the VDC members in Trapaing Pring, as well:

Say that for development say that need to contribute by villager, because he has some experience. Like many organisation come, and then give without any kind of condition. So example – he put one example about the bridge – this one destroy early, because have no contribution from the villager.

It is worth noting that they both refer to local people’s participation as “contribution”, and I will return to this below.

8.2.1. Different Levels of participation?

The Country Representative seems to have a perception of local participation as being on a high level:

*We may initiate contact, but we don’t go into any village, commune, district, province or country without an invitation to start working there. We try our best to listen to the people very closely and to **let them choose their own development path**. Then we try to facilitate their efforts to develop. (My emphasis)*

Local people seem to be assumed to be in charge of the development process, while the role of LWF staff is to listen to the people, and then try to facilitate. This describes a high level of local participation. Looking back to chapter four, we remember that Samuel Paul separates between four levels of participation, of which the highest is “initiating action”, and the second highest is “decision-making”. The intention of letting people “choose their own development path” indicates the highest level of participation, and this description gives an impression of LWF staff being participators in local people’s projects, not the other way around. This is in accordance with the descriptions of the multiplicity paradigm in chapter three, and also with for example Robert Chambers’ and Peter Oakley’s descriptions of participatory development in chapter four.

The importance of participation within LWF Cambodia Program is confirmed by the Cambodian project coordinator in IRDP Kampong Chhnang, “Chan Kanika”. According to her, development and participation cannot really be separated:

If we talking about development we should think about the participatory approach also. If we do development we should be people participate with us. Yes. For example if we build one building that the people don't like, they don't use also.

She explains this further in these words: “*If we want provide something, so it should be...should be requested, should be need priority of them. And then they can participate with us, yes.*” This indicates a will to “listen to the people”, but at the same time the last sentence needs to be commented, as it indirectly expresses an opinion on the ownership of the project. The claim that “they can participate with us” gives the impression that the project really belongs to LWF, but they let local people participate. This does *not* indicate a high level of participation, although *some kind of* participation is emphasised. For example any idea obviously has to be presented to local people first, and agreed on.

“Maria”, one of the expatriates, explained the planning process to me:

Well it was done participatively, from the grassroots. Taking inputs from the grassroots, because when we do strategy planning, defining our mission, our vision and goals, and objectives, first we try to get information from the people in the communities through our field workers. And those...those inputs were brought by our people to the main office. Then we discuss and we decide what should be our mission. What will be our goals for the community. So indirectly the people are talking. Giving us their inputs about the goals, through our staff, through us. And then these goals are then submitted and shared with Lutheran in Geneva.

If we compare what she says here with the different levels of participation mentioned in chapter three, she seems to describe a process of consultation, where LWF has the final decision-making power. Once again one may get the impression that local people are participating in a project that really “belongs” to LWF, and information from local people is treated as inputs into the planning process of LWF. According to Samuel Paul and Alan Fowler (chapter four) this is not a particularly high level of participation.

Local people in the two villages also emphasise the importance of participation in the development efforts. When I asked “Kay Chhum” how development should be done, he answered that “...*must be participant, and respect the and follow up the plan of the VDC.*” As

“Saveros Pou” explains, it is also important not only that local people participate, but that all the different groups of people in a village participate (*breadth*, as Alan Fowler (2000) calls it):

And also he accept that...he agree that development need to contribute from different level of the villagers. Yes. If no, hopeless.

Hence participation seems to be important, and in theory even on a high level. However, as more practical situations are described, the level of participation seems to decrease. Villagers should participate, but they should also respect and follow up the plan of the VDC, a little group in the village that participates closely with LWF staff. This indicates a more passive kind of participation for the majority of the villagers, than is assumed in theory.

The villagers explain that they participate in meetings that are held in the village, and that in the meetings they decide what to do to develop their village in the future. Decisions are usually made through voting. During the meeting they can also come up with suggestions regarding things that they want to do in the village. “Meach Sophoin” explains it like this:

For decision making the...the...the commune leader, no sorry; the village leader and the villager come together and they make the decision.

She describes her own participation in these words:

Say that she always join the meeting, and join some training also, but most of the time keep quiet, because have no...have no...we can say... She agree, so she has no idea.

She explains that this is similar to her experience as an NFE student:

R: “She says that during the NFE class when the teacher train her, so she think that she agree. So have no objection. And also in the meeting, when the VDC or the village leader raise some plan, or raise some idea, she agrees. Because she thinks that it is fair.”

I: Yes. And do most people usually agree?

R: Yes.

According to “Meach Sophoin”, it seems as if villagers are usually informed about issues by village authorities or representatives of LWF. The intention may be different, for example to raise issues for further discussion among villagers, but the way I interpret the information I get through interviews, the respect for authorities or people in some higher position seems to be important. I will return to this below, in a separate section on knowledge and power. Consensus also seems to be highly valued, and due to these factors, there does not seem to be much discussion in practice. Villagers tend to be passively informed about issues in many

cases, and then say that they agree because they do not want to oppose people in a higher position. This consensus may also mean that there is agreement, and that when LWF staff or for example the VDC suggests something, the rest of the villagers *do* agree. However, as I will come back to below, there are things that indicate that there is dissent and scepticism that is not expressed loudly.

Hence, although it is claimed that the villagers make the decisions, in reality it seems as if they are often just informed about different issues by the village leader, the VDC or LWF staff, and officially agree with what they are told. As they have no objections, they just vote to confirm that they agree, and this is the way they participate in decision-making. The participation seems rather passive, although it seems to be highly valued by villagers, who mainly answer direct questions regarding participation and decision-making like “Min Siphat” from Trapaing Pring does: “*Up to the villager. Decide by the meeting.*”

The interpretation that villagers are often just informed about different issues in meetings, and then through voting confirm that they agree, is underlined by another claim made by the same respondent:

Before have inform from LWS...eh, from CDW to the VDC. VDC have the initiative, and inform also to the villager. And follow up also. Yes.

The emphasis on participation expressed by the majority of the villagers, may thus simply mean that they should participate in any activity suggested by LWF staff or the VDC. If we look back to chapter four, and to the section where some previous research is presented, we see that these findings correspond with the conclusions of Michael D. Woost (1997). The initiatives seem to come from LWF or in some cases from the VDC.

8.2.2. Local Contribution

It is very common that the word “contribution” is used instead of “participation”. This is the case for example when I ask “Meach Sophoin” in what ways people cooperate with LWF:

R: Say that many things that the people, she can say that the contribution from the villager. Like school construction, one part of the material is a local material. Local resources we can say, no?

I: Yes.

R: Also the people contribute road construction. When finish the road, so give the villager...the villager have task to maintain the road.

I: Yes.

R: And also when LWS provide hand pump, so the villager have some work like provide sand, provide labour. This is the kind of contribution.

Local staff seem to regard this kind of participation as very important as well. For example is this the answer I get when I ask the project coordinator whether everybody agrees about the goals etc.:

Yes. They agree. They agree about our goal, our objective, and contribution. Yes, contribution – for example like school construction. (...) They contribute the labour, they contribute the local resources. Like the sand or gravel or stone, something like this.

Local *contribution*, which seems to be used as a synonym to participation, is valued in the form of labour and local resources, not decision-making and initiative-taking. Another remark that has to be made to this quote, has again to do with ownership of the project. From what the project coordinator says, I understand that she is talking about “LWF’s goal”, “LWF’s objective” and hence “local people’s contribution as a means to reach these goals”. Again local people seem to be taking part in LWF’s project, although it is also emphasised that local people agree, and want the same things as are suggested by LWF.

8.2.3. Consciousness about different levels of participation

Having now discussed how participation is understood by some of the stakeholders, I will in the following look at how participation is described in more detail in documents and reports.

The role of IRDP staff is in the current PMS Document described as initially helping people organise themselves, train them to prioritise their needs, and guide them in the planning and managing of a response to their needs. The beneficiaries, it is stated, are required to contribute with unskilled labour and local resources. After a while, when they have gained more practical experience and knowledge, the beneficiaries are also expected to take over project responsibilities. Hence LWF seems to have a very active role in the initial phases of a project, guiding and teaching local people about the development process. Local people themselves seem to be more passive, as they receive training and guidance from LWF staff, and

contribute with labour and local resources. When it is assumed that they have appropriated sufficient experience and knowledge about this kind of activities, they may take over further responsibilities:

Working through staff based in project villages, LWS teaches people how to become involved – and eventually take control of – a range of development activities. By providing training, support and knowledge, LWS gives people the skills to begin development activities and access further opportunities.

(LWF Cambodia Program, 2001a: 1)

According to this quote, LWF is obviously aware of the limited level of participation that local people have during the initial phases of a project. The point seems to be that people will be able to participate more and more, and the way this is achieved is by teaching local people about development activities. There seems to be an understanding of local people having to be “lifted up” to a certain level by LWF staff, before they can participate genuinely. They are not assumed to be able to participate fully based on the knowledge, background and capabilities that they already possess. This also indicates that the goals and the project activities are on a level that presupposes knowledge that local people do not have, thereby making the role of the outsider a very important one. Based on these assumptions, it is worth asking who it is who takes the initiative and decides the goals and activities of the project. This issue will be discussed below.

In the report from a workshop for LWF staff about Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) in July 2001, a diagram shows the increasing amount of participation from a project starts until villagers are ready to take over nearly all project activities themselves. The diagram is reproduced below, and shows how the participation of villagers is anticipated to increase as the projects continue.

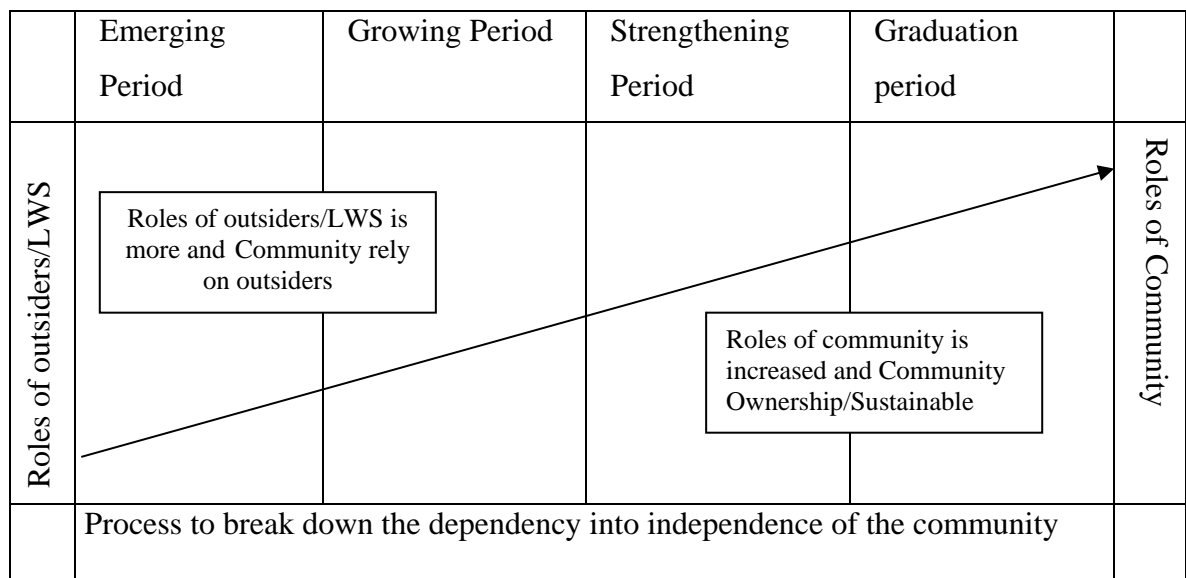


Figure 2. Increasing Amount of Participation (LWF Cambodia Program, 2001b: 9).

This figure indicates that each project is supposed to go through a process where the level of participation increases. In the beginning the level of participation is relatively low, and outsiders have an important role. Throughout the time the project exists, participation is expected to reach higher levels, and the communities themselves are expected to take over roles and responsibilities that were to begin with in the hands of outsiders. Hence it seems as if only the last part of the project is supposed to have a level of local participation that can be compared to level four according to Samuel Paul (“initiating action”) or Alan Fowler (“joint control”). Obviously the project is seen as evolving from top-down to bottom-up throughout the process. This is the plan, but whether the amount of “genuine” participation increases in practice, is another question. Trapaing Pring is for example a village that is assumed to be successful, and where the project has lasted for a while. Still, as seen above, participation seems to be rather passive, although it is important to note that villagers in general seem to be pleased with what is going on.

In “Our Purpose, Path and Direction (2003-2008)”, it is claimed that program planning is done by utilizing PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) tools and techniques, and “with participation from people, based on needs of their community” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 70). It is however also noted that staff skills are in some cases limited, and that “[in planning] there is still little participatory/bottom up efforts with and from the community, where senior staff and Project Staff are more active” (ibid.). It is mentioned that more

participatory contribution from the people requires qualified staff with knowledge of different community development tools and techniques, such as for example PRA and RRA. It is also noted that although the planning process has moved towards more grassroots participation and decentralised decision-making the last years, some improvements are still needed to achieve a program/project planning process which is “structured as a participatory and bottom-up approach, which will allow people’s involvement starting from the level of the grassroots (ibid.). Hence, although it is claimed at some instances that local people participate in all stages of a project, and direct it as well, this claim is modified at other instances. There seems to be a certain inconsistency in the descriptions of local participation.

8.3. PROJECT GOALS

The debate regarding different kinds of participation is closely related to the understanding and definition of goals within a project. First of all it is a question of who defines the goals. Is it local people or outsiders? Above we have seen that it is considered important that any activity is based on the felt needs of local people. Some quotes indicate that these needs are learned about by LWF through *consultation* rather than local people analysing their own situation to find out the needs and react upon them. There seems to be a tendency that LWF formulate goals based on the information they have gathered through consultation. These goals are presented to villagers, and agreed about. Although initiative and formulation of goals is usually done by LWF, one cannot claim that it is a total top-down process, as local people have the possibility to object any suggestion and come up with some on their own (although they rarely do according to my respondents).

According to one of the expatriates, “Maria”, there may be cases where LWF staff and villagers do not agree about the goals:

(...) if the people will not accept that goal it is because they have different priorities, and then...then we have to think of ways how to meet their priorities that will go to, still will go to the same goal that we want to attain. (...) If our priorities, priority one, their priorities are priority two. Just a matter of communicating that, explaining to them that maybe your priority two will be our priority one...Because like this and like that.

According to this explanation it seems likely to think that LWF is not willing to give up their own goals, just because local people do not agree. The solution is to find other ways to make

people agree with the goal decided by the organisation, at the same time as they try to meet the wishes of the local people. There seems to be a certain degree of “we know best” attitude. According to this interpretation, participation seems to be used as a means to reach an end. At least there is no doubt that there are predefined goals in the project, others than the participation per se, and LWF seems to be interested in maintaining a certain control over the outcomes of the project (with the best intentions, probably). However, there is also an emphasis on different kinds of participation as leading to ownership, more initiative and thereby sustainability. As discussed above, it is assumed that the level of participation will change over time, as the initial participation will give people the knowledge and confidence that they are assumed to need to take over further project responsibilities. This indicates that participation also is valued as an end in itself. However, it may also mean that the knowledge that LWF assumes local people to need, is the goal of the participation, not participation per se. My argument is that both these understandings of participation are to some extent present in the project, although the latter seems to be valued more in theory, and as a future goal, than in practice.

As we saw in chapter four, Sylvie I. Cohen claims that in those cases where participation is treated as an end in itself, there is no need for pre-determined goals and objectives other than participation per se. This is obviously not the case for LWF Cambodia Program, as their planning documents show a significant degree of pre-formulated, specific goals and objectives for the projects. The overall goals seem to be decided by LWF, and the project activities, that local people take part in deciding, have to be fitted into the frames of the overall goals and the different components that these are broken into. Hence there may be suggestions from villagers that are not accepted by LWF, although it should also be noted that the overall goals of LWF are quite general. As “Maria” explains:

R: Maybe when we look at our priorities, in our strategy plan, there is a time that we are trying to see if what the people likes really is set in our priorities during the plan. During the planning. Because if it is not here, we have to explain to the people that the limitations are these, the limitations are these...and hopefully the community can understand.

I: Yes. So there can be different opinions?

R: Yes there can be different opinions. Because there are different leaders, different understanding of what development is.

Once again it is indicated that although local people have an important role in deciding activities and priorities within the project, it is LWF who has the final word. They are obviously not willing to support *any* local development initiative. As seen in the previous chapter, what local people want is often material goods brought there by LWF. This implies a dilemma for LWF, because if one of their ideals and strategies is local participation and empowerment, they have to try to get local people away from this kind of “modernisation” way of thinking. Still, as they do that, this is also a way to express a top-down, “we know best”-attitude. This may be said to be a bit of a paradox.

The main goal of the projects is by “Peter” described as “*Graduation from dependency and dis-empowerment to empowerment and self-reliance through the realization of their rights and potentials as individuals and a community.*” This is a very “politically correct”, but also very general goal, which does not say how this is to be achieved. However, through the PMS Document one gets an impression of how LWF wants to work to reach this goal: the strategy is in general concerned with motivating villagers to do certain things or to change their practices in certain ways, and to train or encourage villagers within different fields (LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 164, and throughout the whole PMS document).

Different kinds of trainings are a major part of the strategy of the IRDPs, and a great number of planned trainings for different groups of people within the villages are listed for the PMS period (LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 102-104). What dominates the planning document, however, is the presentation of goals and objectives for the projects, 11 in total, each with their respective “quantitative indicators” and “results oriented indicators”. The overall goal is said to be to assist rural communities, particularly vulnerable groups, and help them become self-sufficient and economically independent. The objectives are 1) “increased community self-reliance”, 2) “increased and improved community access”, 3) “Improved sustainable farming productivity”, 4) “Arable land availability for poor and landless families increased”, 5) “increased income of vulnerable and poor households to meet their basic needs”, 6) “increased access to and use of basic health services and infrastructure”, 7) “Increased access to and use of potable water (including water and sanitation)”, 8) “Increased and improved primary school education”, 9) “Increased literacy and development oriented education”, 10) “damaging effects on environment reduced through increased people’s awareness and actions”, 11) “Promote local community disaster preparedness” (LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 54-55). The activities connected to the different objectives mostly have to do with

motivating and training villagers in relation to different activities, or to provide, construct or establish something. The results of these activities are then measured through quantitative indicators, showing for example the number of people or groups of people reached or practicing new knowledge, and expectations for following years.

There are very specific predefined goals and expectations: for example “6300 poor households with land will benefit from agricultural training and it is expected that they will set up vegetable gardens, diversify and intensify their farming and increase their animal production in order to achieve food security” and “85300 people will benefit from new and rehabilitated water supply sources” (LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 96). The results oriented indicators are more concerned with changes of behaviour and attitude than of counting exact numbers. For example an increase in farmers having sufficient food for the year, or a positive change in people’s perceptions on the environment.

Many of these goals are obviously not originating from the villagers themselves. It is worth noting that there is a difference between participating in deciding what the problems are, for example through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and participating also in finding the best remedies for these problems. One problem may have different answers, and the different stakeholders may not always agree about what the best answer is. As an example of participation as a means, Sylvie I. Cohen (1996) mentions a focus on the achievement of goals and targets such as for example the improvement of health or protection of the environment. The concrete goals and objectives of LWF Cambodia Program, although they include a wide range of different topics and activities, indicate that participation may be used mainly as a *means* to reach these goals.

However, in the PPD document from 2001 it is indicated that the planning process has changed during the years covered by the PMS.

The planning process has moved increasingly towards grassroots participation and decentralized decision-making. There has been a move from specific project-oriented objectives to results-oriented indicators that emphasize impact in the community rather than implementation guidelines for development workers.
(LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 30)

Although it is claimed that the projects have moved away from emphasis on specific objectives, “components, specific objectives and activities” are listed over several pages in the document. Among the activities, the activity “training” still occurs frequently. In the strategies to deal with different problems, it is also said that LWF will *promote* different activities. In several cases the importance of encouraging villagers to participate in different activities seems important. This indicates that the activities are not an initiative of the villagers themselves. Hence, LWF still seems to have an important role in directing the projects.

8.4. INFLUENCE AND DECISION-MAKING

During the interviews very different opinions regarding who has influence and who should have influence, arise. For example “Phon Sotin”, one of the CDOs says “...*like our organisation the plan make by the villager. Bottom-up, we can say*”, while one of the respondents in Trapaing Pring, “Kay Chhum”, says that he “*cannot without LWS. Because he want LWS to lead in village*”. When asked directly, as we will see from some of the quotes that follow, people mainly say either that it is up to the villagers themselves to make all decisions and to direct the project, or that all stakeholders come together and make the decisions together. The latter is the case for example for “Srey Poch”, a 22 years old girl from Ro Peak:

I: And who is it who decides what they are going to do in the village?

R: Say that from two...from both side. Our organisation and the villagers.

I: Ok. So they decide it together?

R: Yes, together. (...) Say that conducted the meeting, and then to decide – to make a decision. And then make, say that cooperate together.

However, in the next sentence many of the respondents claim that they will follow the decisions of for example LWF staff, or in some other way say that LWF has a lot of influence over what to do and how to do it in the project. This is always considered to be positive.

As in other quotes discussed above, “Peter” presents the cooperation between LWF staff and villagers as to a great extent bottom-up. I asked him whether villagers and LWF staff may sometimes represent different goals and priorities, and got the following answer:

Yes, we do not always have the same priorities, but we can always agree on some common priorities. We dialogue and build trust and we find ways to work together. We want to work with them not do for them. Some would prefer the latter. (...) It is our aim to provide an atmosphere that allows individuals to take charge to the largest degree possible of their own development.

Again a very “politically correct” answer from the Country Representative. His claim that the structure of the projects is to a great extent bottom-up, as I interpret it as, is confirmed by several other respondents. This is the case for example for “Ban Toawn”, the CDW, who says that “*the development happen...from the people...you know?*” and “Min Siphat”, from Trapaing Pring, who claims that it is “*Up to the villager. Decide by the meeting.*” Later “Min Siphat” says the following when I ask him what the role of LWF is:

He say that LWS provide idea. (...) And material also. To develop human in the village. And then the village can living standard themselves.

To me this seems to mean that LWF provides ideas and material, while the villagers themselves conduct the practical work – through the *contribution* that is described previously. Hence the answers – even those given by one person – point in very different directions. As we will see more examples of below, some of the villagers express an attitude of trust (and admiration or respect) towards LWF staff, which indicates that they would rarely loudly question something LWF staff say. This attitude may give LWF staff a lot of power and influence. For example “Meach Sophoin”, from Trapaing Pring, says that

When the staff tells some, or agree to make something – to do something, she agree, no problem.

A similar answer is given by “Min Siphat”, who previously said that decision-making was up to the villagers:

Yes he say that he will support and participate to the priorities of LWS approve.

He also says that

When LWS come here LWS provide idea – good idea to the family. He know about the vegetable growing after finish the rice field.

There seems to be a high degree of consensus, as it is emphasised by most respondents that everybody always agrees about everything. As “Son Siveth”, the VDC-leader in Trapaing Pring explains, when I ask him whether the villagers always agree with LWF staff:

R: Yes. All the project of staff, everyone agree every time.

I: Ok. So there are no different ideas about what is most important, or... They always agree?

R: Yes. Because he said that agree with development. Because he knows the policy of LWS. (...) LWF staff have the opinion about development. No problem. He follow by the staff.

People in the village generally express a willingness to support any suggestion made by LWF staff, or other people with higher status. For those who are not themselves members of the VDC, the VDC also seems to constitute one such “higher status group”. The VDC seems to have an important role in the development process in the villages. When I ask both members and non-members of the VDC what qualities a VDC member should have, or what qualities they actually have, the answers are similar. Education is important, and several of the VDC members had administrative experience and a certain status in the village also before they were elected members of the VDC. I am also told that it is important that people know and trust their VDC candidate. When I ask those villagers who are *not* members of the VDC whether they would have liked to be members, a typical answer is that they have too little education and knowledge to be members of the VDC. People emphasise the need to respect and listen to the VDC, and this gives the VDC a certain power to influence the local development process. The VDC also has a close co-operation with LWF staff, and are offered special trainings about issues that are considered important for their work. As the project co-ordinator in IRDP Kampong Chhnang explains:

So about the VDC we organise the bimonthly meeting. For every two months. And so the VDC come, and we provide training to them about our goal, our objective, and about...the...the need priority, or something like this. Yes? And so they...sometimes they ask questions, direct questions to us, we explain them. They make sure about our objective, that we come into the village, what kind that we would...we need from the people. And first we have to talk about the participatory first. Yes, participatory process first, with them. Yes. If they agree, ok, we work all together. And the VDC can...VDC and later the local authority can explain to the people. Yes. They can lead the people to make closely with us. Yes. (...) So we provide all kind of training, like the proposal, like the work plan, and request something, yes. So one year after, easy. We let them do, and we only advice and share ideas, like this.

The CDW also offers some information about the cooperation between LWF and the VDCs: “[Sometimes] after we choose the VDC, we see they don’t agree!” I ask him what he does when the VDC members do not agree with LWF:

I...I tell him about the goal of LWS, the objective of LWS. Yes. And the goal. (...) And I try explain everything again and again. After I try to explain the people please come to

meeting with...yes. And tell him about the goal, the objective of LWS. (...) I go to tell him you must do like this, I not to works...I tell him. And I train him to do. (...) But now VDC in the village they understand all. All the component of LWS, yes, and they work the plan for themselves to do for 2002, 2003, yes...

The VDC members are obviously taught about the goals and objectives of LWF, and about how to put the development process into practice. They seem to be expected to agree with what they are told. If not, the training has to continue before the cooperation can precede. Hence it seems as if the VDC will represent the ideas and goals of LWF in the village, in close cooperation with the CDW. Robert Chambers (see chapter four) separates between three different understandings of participation. One of them is participation as a co-opting practice, where “they”, local people, participate in “our” project. This seems to be very similar to what is explained above, both by the Project Coordinator and by the CDW.

The VDC seems to be paid great respect in the villages, and people say that they have to follow up the initiatives and ideas of the VDC. As “Kay Chhum” explains:

Yes the more people must be respect to the VDC. If VDC have the initiative and inform to the villager, villagers must be participant in this idea.

I ask him whether there are sometimes disagreements regarding what to do and how to do it:

All the leader in the village, like VDC, like village leader and like staff LWS, and villager must be agree all the initiative.

And people always agree, he explains, because “*they believe on the VDC.*”

The content of these quotes reflect a division of power within a Cambodian village, which existed long before LWF arrived there. The fact that most people respect and listen to people with certain characteristics or with a certain position in the village, and that they usually do not oppose them, was not brought there by LWF. The division of power, respect for more powerful people, and striving for consensus, is not something LWF can easily do anything about, either. Instead LWF staff tend to be looked at as knowledgeable and powerful people that one should respect, whether they like it or not. What they could do, however, to reduce their own elevated position, is to focus on the things local people can teach them, and to ask local people questions instead of lecturing them. This is one of the main focuses of Paulo Freire as well, as he separates between the ‘banking’ concept of education and problem-posing education.

The Project Coordinator in IRDP Kampong Chhnang also seems to be conscious of the fact that local people respect LWF staff to such an extent that they are sometimes afraid of speaking to them. She mentions the importance of wearing simple clothing when LWF staff are in the villages, to make the differences between “them” and “us” as little as possible. She also mentions that LWF staff may have things to learn from local people as well, (although without specifying it): “And so we come in the village we have to learn from the people also.” Hence there seems to be some attempts to deal with the way local people perceive LWF staff, although comments from local people themselves indicate that there is still a gap between these groups of people.

8.5. EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is also an important part of the strategy of LWF Cambodia Program. This became evident throughout the description of the current policy and strategy of the Program in chapter six. As seen in chapter four, there is also a close relation between participation and empowerment, and these two concepts often appear in pairs. Empowerment is thought to be closely related particularly to the kind of participation called “participation as an end in itself”, where participation per se is valued as something that fosters self-reliance and initiative, and hence development.

In this part of the analysis I will mainly look at how empowerment is referred to in the PMS Document and the PPD Document, and how the empowerment process is planned to be put into practice. This will give an impression of what understanding LWF has of empowerment.

8.5.1. Empowerment According to the Planning and Monitoring System 1999-2002

The following quote describes the main focus of the program during the years covered by the PMS:

*This PMS document covers a four-year period from 1999-2002 and focuses on integrated rural development with emphasis placed to sustainable community development and **empowerment**.*

(LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 57, my emphasis)

According to this quote, empowerment was obviously considered important at the time the PMS was written. In spite of this claimed emphasis on empowerment, the concept is not mentioned in the overall goal for the IRDPs, nor in any of the 11 objectives listed for the IRDPs (LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 54-55). It is claimed in the overall goal statement that LWF will help rural communities, particularly vulnerable groups, becoming self-sufficient and economically independent. Nothing is said regarding empowerment, although these goals could be connected with an empowerment strategy. An idea of empowerment may be implicit in this goal, as a means to achieve them, but is not explicitly mentioned or explained. Empowerment is not mentioned under the headline “IRDPs activities table and targets” either. In the program strategy it is mentioned that LWF will promote “creation of capacity of local organizations”, and “people being able to sustain their own development” (LWF Cambodia Program, 1998: 76), goals which are typically related to an empowerment process according to definitions of empowerment discussed in chapter four. Nevertheless, empowerment is not explicitly mentioned as a way of reaching these goals.

Hence, throughout the document there is no explanation of what empowerment means, or how to achieve it. As it is mentioned at one occasion that empowerment will be emphasised during the four-year period covered by the PMS, this absence may indicate a lack of understanding of the concept within LWF at the time the document was written. This gives an impression of empowerment being used mainly as a buzzword that somehow needs to be included in the strategy.

8.5.2. Empowerment according to the “Purpose, Path and Direction” document

In the document called “Our Purpose, Plan and Direction”, documenting a process of participatory strategic planning taking place the second half of 2001, it is mentioned that empowerment of the community has been gradually emphasised during the second PMS (1999-2002), and compared with the PMS Document the concept of “empowerment” is of frequent use in this more recent document.

The overall goals of LWF Cambodia Program are described in the following way:

*LWF/WS will **empower** rural communities, particularly the vulnerable groups such as landless, households headed by women, IDPs, returnees and other poor households to achieve equitable and sustainable development through holistic, integrated and*

participatory organizing, capacity building, planning, implementation monitoring, evaluation, advocacy and networking that is people-centered and results-oriented.
(LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 53, my emphasis)

The main goal seems to be to empower people so that they can achieve equitable and sustainable development, and the empowerment will be done through holistic, integrated and participatory projects. Below follows a quote that specifies some of the concrete achievements and abilities that LWF expect local people to get through empowerment:

The consolidated mission of the Cambodia Program is described as

*LWF/WS Cambodia program will **empower** poor and vulnerable individuals, groups and communities in rural areas, to improve their community organization, address human rights concerns, ensure adequate food security, through production and income, protect and manage their environment and to network and advocate with Government and NGOs for improved infrastructure, health and education services in order to live in peace, dignity and harmony in a more democratic and just society and achieve a higher quality of living through effective participation in holistic and sustainable development.*
(LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 51, my emphasis)

Both the overall goals and the mission statement ascertain that LWF will empower poor, rural people. The verb “empower” is here used to describe what the subject (LWF) will do for the object (poor rural people). This is contrary to Peter Oakley’s description of participatory development processes (of which empowerment is a part or a result) referred to in chapter four, where he claims that a presupposition is that the so-called beneficiaries move from being objects to becoming subjects of development projects. According to other scholars, such as for example Chambers and Rowlands, also referred to in chapter four, the same is the case for empowerment. In chapter six, in another quote from the PPD document, it is claimed that “all stakeholders perform as main actors and “subjects” rather than “objects” of their own development thought and practice” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 12). However, according to how the empowerment process is described in more detail, LWF staff seem to give themselves a more important role in the empowerment process than an outsider “should have”. Rowlands (1996) clearly states that real empowerment has to come from within, it cannot be given by one group to another. That would only confirm the first group’s superiority compared to the other, according to her. Paulo Freire is of a similar opinion, as he claims that freedom has to be conquered, it cannot be given as a gift.

With these considerations in mind, I will continue to look at how LWF describes the empowerment process within the program. The consolidated mission was developed by different working groups formulating separate mission statements for the various components that LWF works with. “Empowerment” is mentioned in nearly all suggestions. The way the concept of empowerment is used in these mission statements, gives an idea of the understanding of the concept, although an explicit definition is lacking in the document. These are some examples of the mission statements: the mission for community development: “Empowerment of vulnerable individuals, groups and communities, through participatory methods, to improve their general life skills, strengthen their community organization and leadership (...);” mission for rural infrastructure: “The empowerment of rural communities to improve their living standards through advocacy for the improvement of rural roads, (...);” mission for food security: “To work together with the vulnerable rural poor, through facilitation of access to agriculture physical inputs and to empower them with appropriate and sustainable knowledge that respects and builds on indigenous knowledge, skills and practices (...);” mission for income generation: “Empower the rural poor to increase their family income, (...);” mission for education: “Empowerment of people to gain access to quality education through facilitating, coordinating, collaborating, motivating, mobilizing, and supporting rural community together with education stakeholders, (...)” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 51-52).

The concept of empowerment is obviously not understood as a process of conscientisation, where people start questioning the reality they live in, and little by little start changing things. In these cases empowerment seems to be understood as a process through which people get very *specific* knowledges, abilities and possibilities, which can be identified in advance. For example being empowered to strengthen the community organisations, empowerment of people to become able to advocate for better roads, empower people to increase their income, empower them to get access to better education, or simply to empower people with appropriate knowledge. Hence empowerment is in this case treated as a means to reach specific, pre-defined ends, and the way I interpret it, empowerment seems to be understood as an *exogenous* process, not an *endogenous* one.

There are similar examples of how the concept of empowerment is applied in the part of the document presenting the different components of the IRDPs. For each component of the IRDPs a separate strategy is outlined. Empowerment is mentioned as part of the strategy for

several of the components: One can “empower people to use appropriate tools from PRA and others through all stages of the development cycles”, and people should be empowered “to use PM&E methods” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 58). LWF will also “empower community to solve human rights problems on community levels and, if not possible, to advocate for their rights” (ibid.). LWF “will educate people about their land rights and empower them to address land abuses” (ibid.), and “empower communities for community Forestry management” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 60). It is also mentioned as a goal for the projects to “empower communities to build and manage their own small infrastructure projects either on their own or through projects with Social Fund, Embassy Small Project Funds, MRD/PDRD, Public Works Department, other NGOs etc” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 81).

The above descriptions do not have much resemblance to Jo Rowlands’ claims, referred to in chapter four, that NGO staff cannot control the outcomes of an empowerment process. The empowerment described by LWF, has very specific goals and expected outcomes.

8.5.3. Current Understanding of Empowerment

The above examples from the Purpose, Path and Direction Document, indicate an understanding of empowerment as something that may be given to somebody from someone else. Another similar example of how the concept of empowerment is used, is found in the description of criteria used in the graduation process of villages. One criterion is whether the community is strong on advocacy/networks or not. One of the indicators used to measure this criterion is “the communities being acceptably empowered about human rights” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2001b: 34-35). The degree of this empowerment is measured according to how many people have attended trainings about human rights, and to what extent the knowledge gained is used to take action when abuses/exploitations occur.

The descriptions of what people will achieve through empowerment are very specific. This indicates that empowerment is understood as the learning of specific knowledges and skills that can be identified in advance, and which will have results that can also be identified in advance. In most of the examples above I will argue that “empower” could be replaced with “teach”. Again we see the tendency to assume that LWF can empower local people, contrary

to the definitions of “genuine” empowerment given in chapter four. According to those definitions, it seems like a paradox to claim an ability to empower someone else, as that act in itself would confirm the power the “giver” has over the “receiver”. Although villagers through new knowledge and a feeling of being able to cope with problems may get more power confronted with for example local authorities, a new dependency and feeling of inferiority may emerge. Namely in relation to NGO staff.

Nevertheless, it seems quite obvious that LWF does not consider it problematic to assume the role of somebody empowering someone else. Their understanding of empowerment hence points towards what Freire calls the ‘banking’ concept of education, as new knowledge seems to be transferred to villagers from LWF staff or other outsiders. It is also very similar to what P. Cassey Garba (2000) describes as static empowerment (see chapter four). The importance of empowerment seems to have grown throughout the four-year period covered by the PMS, but the understanding of empowerment is still very different from the one described as preferable in chapter four of this dissertation.

8.6. KNOWLEDGE

Previously in this chapter we saw that local people tend to trust and respect LWF staff to such an extent that they accept their ideas and suggestions without objections. This seems to have to do with their valuing of consensus, and unwillingness to create conflicts, but it is also likely that it has to do with a respect for authorities. Authority seems to be connected with formal education, and the belief that this background leads to possession of knowledge that is more valuable than the one villagers with no or little formal education have. One of the respondents from Trapaing Pring, “Min Siphath”, is of the opinion that

in the village must be need the background staff high to lead in the village. (...) In the future the staff have the high background can lead and decision-making and solve everything in the village if have the problem.

I am explained that in the village there is low literacy, meaning that there is no capacity. Hence they need help from outside. Both “Min Siphath” and “Kam Sot”, the female respondent in the same interview, prefer that people come from the outside to help them, because people in the village respect them then. This is because people in the village are often illiterates themselves, they explain. The opinion that LWF staff possess knowledge that make them able

to define problems and find solutions for local people, is shared by “Kay Chhum”, also from Trapaing Pring:

Yes the villager not capacity building and not education. You know that staff LWS has high background and sometime they can lead and facilitate everything if have the problem in the village.

He says that villagers, the VDC and LWF staff have to do everything together, and they always agree:

You cannot think high background or low background. No problem. Because he think that the background high must be good idea than. And good facilitator. (...) Yes he say that we can learn from the staff LWS. Yes. From the...they do.

I ask “Son Siveth”, the VDC-leader in Trapaing Pring, whether differences in background etc is an advantage or a problem:

R: He...no problem about the background of the LWS staff. He know like that the background is high. Can facilitate and can lead, and can train to the villager. And can solve, mean facilitate on some problem in this village. Because he know like that this village have a lot illiteracy.

I: Yes...so the different backgrounds is no problem?

R: No problem, yes. Because he want to learn from high background.

He adds that “...because staff LWS working here because villager no capacity building. And then LWS staff can educate and provide capacity building and can learn each other from each other, yes.”

Similar opinions are expressed by all the villagers, in one way or another. As “Tep Sokhalay”, VDC-member in Ro Peak says:

From his side say that the people who come from outside should be higher background than the villager here. Because they come to advice, they come to solve the way.

Some of the LWF staff expressed similar opinions of the relationship between LWF staff and local people, indicating that they themselves have more knowledge of development than villagers have. One of the Community Development Officers in IRDP Kampong Chhnang, “Pach Chhoeun”, told me in an informal conversation³¹ that there are different reasons why he likes his job. It pays ok and it is not very demanding he says. He describes his job as

³¹ Private conversation, November 21st 2001.

travelling around to the different villages, talking to people, and never really being asked very difficult questions. He tells me that he and his colleagues know a lot more about rural development than people in the villages, and they are therefore always one step ahead of the local people. People do not think in a very complicated way, and are very happy when they come up with ideas that LWF staff has known all the time. For this reason the staff are usually not asked any difficult questions by the villagers. They can just explain things, “Pach Chhoeun” explains, and people will accept it because they know that the staff has knowledge. He has now been to many different villages, and knows how things work, so he does not often get surprises. In his opinion it was much more work being a teacher, as he was before, as the students could sometimes ask him questions that he had problems answering, and some times he would have to look it up. People in the villages accept what he tell them more immediately, he explains, and are therefore not so demanding to work with, at least once the VDC starts to understand about development and the planning it involves.

The CDW made some comments regarding difficulties in the relationship between villagers and staff, which indicate that there is definitely a certain gap between LWF staff and local people:

R: The people before they not cooperation because of the knowledge of the staff of LWS and him. The people is poor knowledge. So...the staff of LWS is the...they have the knowledge. (...) So people...the people they, they do not speak with LWS.

I: No. Were they afraid?

R: Yes. They are afraid then.

I: Because there are people coming from town...with nice clothes and...?

R: Decide...yes. And after the LWS staff stay, you know? Stay in the village, one or two or three months, they came. (...)To speak with the staff.

“Srey Poch”, who lives in Ro Peak, confirms this:

Say that little bit difficult understand each other. Because the people come from outside like LWS staff have high level. So the people here are low level we can say. (...) Say that from the beginning, when LWS staff came, so she look like other people, so they were scared to go close with the LWS staff.

People with formal education are obviously looked up to, and considered to have the necessary and appropriate knowledge to be in charge of development. This does not fit in well with the claim that “LWS will recognize indigenous knowledge of farmers and facilitate them

to exchange their knowledge” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 59). Hardly anyone – villagers or LWF staff - even mentions that there is any local knowledge at all. They simply say that the local capacity and education is low, and that they want to learn from people with more education.

As noted earlier in the chapter, the respect for authority and assumed knowledge does not only manifest itself in the relationship between villagers and LWF staff, but also in the relationship between VDC members and other villagers. As “Kay Chhum” says when I ask whether he would have liked to be a member of the VDC:

Yes he want to...to apply the candidate. But he know his capacity building not enough. (...) Because the education low.

There seems to be a hierarchy between these groups. The VDC members mention the knowledge and education of LWF staff, and how important their contribution therefore is for development in their village. Other people in the village tend to mention this as well, but emphasise even more the necessity to respect and listen to the VDC, and to follow up the decisions and suggestions that the VDC comes up with. The *shift of power* that is emphasised in the transition from a modernisation approach to development to a multiplicity approach to development, seems to be absent.

8.8. UNDERSTANDING OF PARTNERSHIP

The concept of “partnership” is not mentioned throughout the interviews by anyone except the country representative. When he is asked how a co-operation between such different stakeholders as LWF staff at all levels and villagers can work, he answers that the reason is “*mutuality of purpose, dignified partnerships built on trust and respect, and good will.*”

According to other sources than the interviews, however, LWF seems to think of itself as part of a partnership when engaged in development projects in Cambodia. It is claimed that in general “attitudes are changing from donor-recipient relations towards development partnerships with shared responsibilities” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 31). The changing political and social context in Cambodia has lead to a transition from relief needs towards more needs for rehabilitation and capacity building, it is claimed. Hence LWF can

put an emphasis on facilitation rather than service provision. This change is assumed to make real partnerships at all levels of society possible.

“Partners/Partnerships” is the heading of one section of the PPD Document. The quality of a partnership depends among other things on close cooperation and coordination, sharing of information and experiences, and sharing of responsibility, it is stated. One should communicate and interact from a position of equality, and also mutually shoulder both risk and responsibility, to make a partnership work (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 67). This sounds very similar to how partnerships are described in chapter four of this dissertation.

Partners at village level are presented as among others VDCs, School construction committees, village leaders, monks, landless people, women, poor disabled people, youth illiterate, poor children, flood or drought victims and IDPs and refugees (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: 67). Partners at commune, district, provincial, national and international level are also listed up.

These descriptions of LWF’s “partners” raise some questions. I will argue that these groups of people are difficult to imagine as equal partners with LWF, due to for example their position as weak groups in the society, and a lack of organisation, while LWF has a formal organisational hierarchy, and controls the financial resources in the projects. Based on comments made earlier in this chapter, it is worth asking how an equal partnership is possible in an environment where both staff and villagers seem to be of the opinion that the staff is superior in knowledge, and hence are the ones who have something to offer in the “partnership”. This is not explained or questioned in any of the documents, or by any of the respondents. Nor is the practical possibility to form a genuine partnership with the groups of people mentioned above.

8.9. RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

As part of the Participatory Strategic Planning process in 2001, groups of workshop participants (LWF staff) got together to articulate manifestations of different problems within the various sectors LWF works with, the causes of the problems, and work out a mission statement for each sector. Due to some of the problems mentioned, it is evident that the

cooperation between LWF staff and villagers is not always easy and straightforward, and that they do not always agree about what the best remedies for local problems may be (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a).

Lack of agricultural technology is explained with “people too resistant to change practices” (LWF Cambodia Program, 2002a: Annexes, 27), lack of irrigation systems is among other things explained with “lack of involvement from people” (ibid.), lack of animal husbandry services is among other things explained with “people too resistant to animal vaccination and too slow to change animal raising methods” (ibid: 28). Similar reasons for different problems are mentioned elsewhere in the document. A lot of different reasons for the food shortage problem are mentioned, and among these are “resistance to better technology” (ibid: 45). Regarding illiteracy, which is highest among women/girls, it is claimed that “tradition does not allow girls to learn more”, parents prioritise the education of their sons instead of their daughters, or parents “prioritise money over education”, and prefer their children to work, not to go to school. One of the reasons given for domestic violence, is “traditional pressure”, and reasons for gender discrimination of women and abuse of power are “traditional custom” and “client/patron system” (ibid: 47-49).

The above quotes indicate that LWF has very clear perceptions of what the situation should be like, and opinions regarding things that should change, that are probably not originating from local people themselves. When people are resistant to do something, it indicates that many initiatives do not originate from the villagers themselves. On the contrary: It indicates LWF initiatives and ideas not shared by villagers: a top-down structure.

LWF seems to have identified problems that may not have been considered problems by villagers. By the latter group these practices may have been looked at as “natural”. Or as it is described in the document: traditions. I do not mean to say that LWF is necessarily wrong when they want to intervene and change certain practices. This is a discussion on its own that I will not go deeper into here. What I want to point to, however, is that in many cases there seems to be no doubt that LWF defines the problems and try their best to influence the direction of development. They seem to have clear opinions regarding what development is, that are sometimes not shared by villagers.

Some of these things were more or less directly mentioned in interviews and conversations as well. For example one of the CDOs, “Pach Chhoeun”, told me³² that sometimes his job could be a bit difficult, because people in the villages were not used to plan things ahead. This could make it difficult to cooperate with them. People are used to live in the moment, he said. He also mentioned as a problem that people tend to learn about things, say that they agree, but then do nothing about it. According to “Pach Chhoeun” people are not willing to change their old habits, although they say that they understand why they should change them. Sometimes they only partly put into practice their new knowledges, due either to a lack of time, a lack of understanding or a lack of willingness to change. In any case they usually say that they understand and agree. What he says once again reflects people’s respect for authorities, as they do not openly oppose what they are told. Consensus is officially maintained, although in practice people do not always do what they say they will do.

The claim that people usually say that they agree, probably points to the public meetings, where people vote to decide goals and strategies for the project. As mentioned before, this is usually done by agreeing with the suggestions raised by LWF staff or the VDC. Due to the claims made above, the fact that people through their vote indicate that they agree, does not necessarily mean that they *genuinely* agree with the proposed suggestions for change.

”Saverous Pou”, one of the VDC-members in Trapaing Pring, mentions different understandings of development as a reason for why some people in the village are resistant to take part in the development process:

And also say that a little bit difficult to convince them because the poor people, for example if ask them to make the road, say that the road can fill...can...example now he is hungry... (...) And say that also other obstacle when he conduct the meeting to construct the school, some people say that oh! I don’t believe them.

Hence he indicates that there are quite a few people in the villages that are not interested in what LWF calls development. They want to receive “gifts” that can help them immediately, and are therefore not interested in participating in various activities that occupy their time without giving immediate benefits. The resistance is also mentioned by “Maria”, one of the expatriates working for LWF Cambodia Program. She explains the following:

³² Private conversation November 21st 2001.

They have priorities in life also. And...well, luckily, if you can get them easily to go on with your ideas, then it is ok. But there are people who are difficult to bend – their ideas. Towards your ideas.

I ask her what happens in those cases, and she says that for the development worker it is important to be patient:

They are...they are non educated. And they are not very aware of what is development. So if you know it well, better than them, so you yourself have to adjust. (...) And it is not possible for...for...to do all your plans. But maybe you can do it later, but you have to do other strategies.

This shows a willingness to accept that local people sometimes think differently, and an acceptance of the fact that although LWF has ideals and visions, all of them cannot be put into practice. That would mean forcing it through, against the wishes of those people they intend to help. At the same time this quote also shows a perception of local people as non-educated, indicating that due to their lack of education one cannot expect them to understand what development is, or how development should happen.

8.10. SUMMING UP

Most noticeable of all, throughout this chapter, is the lack of consistency in what people say and also in what is expressed throughout various documents. There seems to be an emphasis on participation both by LWF staff and by villagers. The question in relation to this, is *what kind of participation* they refer to.

The participation seems to be manifested mainly through different kinds of contribution of labour and local resources. Local people also participate in meetings in the villages, where they vote to decide any further development activities. Their descriptions of these events, however, indicate that most suggestions and ideas come from LWF staff, or in some cases from VDC members. Villagers usually vote to confirm these suggestions, although it is mentioned by LWF staff, that people tend to say that they agree, but in practice many of them do not want to change their habits or make an effort to take part in the activities. LWF seems to have a vision of increased participation throughout the project, ending in a bottom-up relationship where local people are in charge of their own development. I find it hard,

however, to find any evidence for this kind of shift of power, although particularly the project in Trapaing Pring is described as a success story, and it has been going on for a while.

Empowerment seems to be mainly of the exogenous kind, where LWF “empowers” local people according to specific goals and visions regarding what kind of knowledge local people need. This knowledge is then attempted passed on from LWF staff to villagers, in what seems to be some kind of teacher-student relationship.

Villagers tend to emphasise their admiration for the knowledge that LWF staff have, and their belief that LWF staff know best. They also tend to emphasise that they themselves, many of them being illiterates, lack any knowledge about development. The imbalance of power seems obvious, and is also partly confirmed by claims made by LWF staff, indicating that villagers have little knowledge and understanding of development issues. This has to be taught to them by LWF staff.

Villagers and LWF staff have some kind of cooperation, and villagers are consulted, and seem to agree with suggestions regarding activities and planning. They also seem to have a certain feeling of ownership, and of being in control, although this is combined with a feeling of inferiority and admiration towards LWF staff. There are some serious attempts, but the shift of power that is one of the main features of the multiplicity paradigm, still seems to be lacking. There also still seems to be a certain amount of “we know best” attitude expressed by LWF staff. However, it is important to be aware of the possibility that local people might prefer this kind of relationship. Maybe they prefer receiving help, both in the shape of ideas and knowledge, and in the shape of material resources, from outsiders. This is one of the issues I will come back to in the concluding chapter that follows.

9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

9.1. SUMMARIZING

9.1.1. The Point of Departure

A concept can be interpreted and understood in various ways. There are quite clear assumptions regarding what the currently dominating ideas of *development* involve, however. Current theories of development describe an *endogenous, bottom-up* development process. These ideas and ideologies, and practical approaches to development evolving from them, are usually described through the use of concepts like “participation” and “empowerment”.

In my first research problem I asked how the “new” ideology – the multiplicity paradigm – is put into practice within LWF Cambodia Program. As one of the main assumptions of the multiplicity paradigm is that the relationship between development workers and local people has changed from a top-down relationship to a bottom-up relationship, I was particularly interested in looking at how participation and empowerment are used to achieve this shift of power. The second research problem is based on the assumption that there is a gap between theory and practice, and asks why this gap exists.

9.1.2. LWF Cambodia Program: A Gap Between Theory and Practice?

Even in theory we see that a description involving participation and empowerment may encompass various things, depending on the understanding of the concepts. There are different levels of participation, and not all of them are described as bottom-up relationships. The understanding is usually taken for granted, however, and not made explicit. The same is the case for empowerment, which can also be interpreted both as a top-down and as a bottom-up process. Hence it often remains unclear what kind of participation and empowerment one is referring to, although it is usually assumed that the concepts involve something positive, and that they describe the endogenous, bottom-up development that is the ideal within contemporary development.

The above seems to be the case for LWF Cambodia Program as well. The presentation of the program is quite typical for contemporary development projects. When analysing the project in more detail, however, observing and talking to people, and analysing reports and planning document, there is obvious dissent. Already when it comes to the understanding of development, which necessarily is the base for any further process of development, there are different opinions. There is no obvious or open disagreement or confrontations, but certainly very different perspectives on development, with both the *modernisation paradigm* and the *multiplicity paradigm* clearly represented in definitions of development within the project. The focus on material improvements, and on the contributions of LWF in relation to this, indicates that the modernisation paradigm in practice still has a strong position within the project. Particularly the villagers, and also many of the local staff, mention these aspects, while the expatriate staff seem to be more concerned with expressing an ideology than with the actual practice.

Participation is, the way I interpret it, mainly treated as a means to an end, although attempts are also made to treat it as an end in itself. Still there seems to be little understanding of what the latter implies, as most goals seem to be decided by LWF, and most initiatives come from LWF. There seems to be an assumption that local people have to be lectured and taught about development issues and methods, before they can be left with responsibility for the project. I will argue that the reason for this may be that the project activities are on a level that presupposes knowledge that local people do not have, instead of starting on a level that they master from the beginning. The latter would make development an even more time demanding process than it is today, but would probably be the only way “genuine participation” could be practiced from the beginning.

As discussed in chapter four, it is usually assumed that participation treated as an end in itself fosters *empowerment*. The intention is that people should be able to control their own situation and their own development. Outsiders cannot control the outcomes of these empowerment processes, as that would mean that people have not been truly empowered. LWF Cambodia Program obviously has a different understanding of empowerment, similar to the static, top-down empowerment described by P. Cassey Garba (2000), presented in chapter four. This type of empowerment has the shape of a teacher-student relationship, and specific expected outcomes are described by LWF. Hence the understanding of empowerment is very different from the definitions of “genuine empowerment”. In chapter four I also referred to Jo

Rowlands (1996), who claims that most development professionals have problems changing their own role from one of telling people what to do and think, into one of facilitator of an empowerment process. This also seems to be the case for LWF staff.

Compared with the presentation of the project that is revealed in documents, there are aspects that indicate that there is a gap between theory and practice, although some efforts are made to change the latter. However, these attempts seem to be made in a rather top-down manner, by lecturing people. The *teacher-student contradiction* that Freire was so conscious of, and sceptical to, seems to be an important part of the project. This seems to contribute to maintaining the view that the outsiders have knowledge and should lead the project, while local people do not have knowledge, and need to be led. This view is not in accordance with the claim that local people handle and control the development process through the whole project cycle.

The conclusion of the analysis of LWF Cambodia Program, is most importantly that the *shift of power* that is claimed to be essential for the practicing of genuine participation and empowerment, to a great extent seems to be missing. The teacher-student contradiction is obvious in many situations described in the previous chapters, and the belief that LWF staff have knowledge while local people are ignorant, seems to be dominating both among LWF staff and villagers. As LWF staff continue to teach local people, and thereby maintain the teacher-student contradiction, this view is upheld in stead of being changed. As Flynn-Thapalia (1996) reveals in her study, referred to in chapter four, the role of NGO staff seems to be at least as much that of *leader* as that of *animator*.

Hence the impression one gets from the descriptions of policy and ideology, which include concept like participation and empowerment as an important part of it, gives a rather different impression than the study of what happens in *practice*. According to my study there certainly seems to be a gap between theory and practice within LWF Cambodia Program.

9.1.3. Some Tentative Explanations

A question that needs to be asked, is whether local people would be interested in having more responsibility, and if they would like LWF staff to have a less active role. Local people that I

encounter seem to be happy about the project, and the cooperation with LWF. Although they say that LWF have to teach them about development, and that they need LWF to help them and lead them, on a general basis they seem to have a high degree of feeling of ownership and influence within the project. Jo Rowlands (1996) claims that the demands and wishes of people are often forwarded according to people's assumptions regarding their own abilities and rights, which may depend on internalised oppression or social context. This kind of internalised assumptions regarding abilities and possibilities is mentioned by Paulo Freire (1993 [1970]) as well, and this explanation may also be valid for my respondents. Overcoming such internalised assumptions would probably require a time demanding process of conscientization or empowerment.

It is mentioned that the villagers who are most sceptical to the project, are those who obviously believe that LWF has moved too far away from the modernisation paradigm. Some people prefer to receive "gifts", they do not want to participate much themselves. In relation to this, the life situation of the villagers has to be considered. They are poor and work hard simply to survive. In the villages where I did my fieldwork, as in most other parts of rural Cambodia, there is a lack of food some months every year. A great number of people simply cannot afford to spend their time on activities that will not give immediate benefits. As one of the respondents mentions, people are hungry, and building roads or participating in meetings does not fill their stomachs.

The history of Cambodia also has to be taken into consideration. Most people are not used to taking initiatives. For years they have been punished for doing that, and have learned to remain passive. Hence it is – for many Cambodians – a new situation when they are suddenly supposed to take initiatives, come up with ideas, and make their own arrangements for developing their community.

Some issues may have been handled differently in the project, but other aspects would be hard to change. Hence on a general basis it might not even be possible to put genuine participation and empowerment into practice. The process of "conscientisation" would probably have to go on for a long time before any material achievements could be seen. But would local people be interested then? As Karem Hussein argues in his study of GVAM's development project in

Zambia³³, some kind of functional participation may be preferable to continued poverty, if other alternatives are difficult to put into practice. This seems to be applicable to LWF Cambodia Program as well. However, in these cases an NGO could be realistic and honest, and modify the ideologies accordingly. And most importantly they should specify what kind of participation and empowerment they refer to. There may be various explanations for the continuing use of the concepts although it cannot be followed up in practice. Hussein mentions expectations from donors and others, and the educating effect the use may have within a project. These explanations may be valid for LWF Cambodia Program as well, together with social and historical aspects.

9.2. ARE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT FRUITFUL AND ADEQUATE CONCEPTS?

Based on my case study of LWF Cambodia Program, which in many respects bears a strong resemblance to previous research made on development projects, I find it reasonable to doubt the fruitfulness of using “participation” and “empowerment” in *descriptions* of development projects. It may give a good impression of the project, but one may ask to what extent the strategy is realisable in practice when this is not what local people want. Or when what local people want is pretty much what the development workers have, and the latter are therefore greatly admired and looked up to. The shift of power that is described as essential for the practice of participation and empowerment seems very difficult in some cases. I have mentioned previously that it may be considered a problem that the development NGO and its employees control the money. The fact that they may leave the area at some point, when they have reached their goals or if things get difficult, while local people have to stay, does not make it any easier. They can hardly be regarded as equals, no matter how much rhetoric like participation, empowerment, partnerships and bottom-up is used.

Nevertheless, the ideology that lies behind the concepts is still highly important, and concepts like participation and empowerment may definitely have an essential role. What I question is the realism in the assumption that the ideals may be put into practice. My argument is that participation and empowerment should rather be treated as *ideal types*, and something one can

³³ Referred to in chapter four.

strive towards, but maybe without ever being able to fully reach them. Where used, it should also be specified what exactly is meant, to avoid confusion regarding the understanding of the concepts. Likewise, I will argue that a development project should rather be described as *striving towards* participation and empowerment, than as *participatory* and *empowering*. When the latter is done, one can hardly avoid the claims that there is a gap between theory and practice.

This being said, my impression is that the projects within LWF Cambodia Program probably are good example of development projects striving towards the ideals. A majority of the local people seems to be very pleased with what goes on, and even have a feeling of ownership and influence. Still, compared with definitions of genuine participation and empowerment the theory does not match the reality.

My final conclusion regarding the fruitfulness and adequacy of the use of participation and empowerment, is that the concepts are certainly fruitful and adequate, but not the way they are used today. The concepts should rather be used to describe an *ideal* than attempting to describe reality with a following discovery of a gap between this description and the actual reality. This change of use is dependent on a change of attitude within the whole development industry. As things are today, it is expected that a development project should be described in terms of participation and empowerment, and an NGO that does not follow up these expectations risk losing its support and funding. This attitude probably has to be discussed and revised before any individual NGO can change the way it uses the concepts. Nevertheless, the NGOs have, together with academics, politicians and others a responsibility for taking part in this discussion.

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MAP OF CAMBODIA



INTERVIEW GUIDE

VILLAGERS

1. Name, age, family.
2. Has your life/situation changed in any way since the start of the project until now?
3. What is development? What are the goals of development?
4. Is there any model/ideal for how things should be?
5. Is development only good, or are there any negative effects also?
6. Do you compare the situation here with other places you know/have heard about?
7. Did you think about development before? Are your thoughts different now?
8. Why is there a project here?
9. How do you feel about getting help from people from outside for developing?
10. Why do you/people in the village cooperate with LWF?
11. How did it start? Whose initiative was it?
12. Could development take place here without the help from LWF?
13. What do you hope will be the results of the project for you and your family?
14. Is everyone in the village interested in the project?
15. Has people's attitude towards the project been the same all the time?
16. What are the goals of the project?
17. Who decides the goals, and how?
18. What are your priorities?
19. Do people sometimes disagree about what is most important, or about how to do things? If yes: who disagrees, and what happens?
20. What do LWF staff do in the project?
21. What do the VDC-members do?
22. What do other people do?
23. In what ways do people from the village cooperate with LWF? In what ways do you participate in this cooperation?

24. What can you personally gain from participating?
25. Would you like to be a member of the VDC/ why did you want to be a member of the VDC?
26. Is there any benefit in being a VDC member?
27. If you are a member of the VDC: has your participation changed the way other people in the village look at you/admire you/respect you?
28. What kind of contact is there between villagers and LWF staff?
29. Do villagers and LWF staff always agree about everything?
30. Are there big differences between villagers and LWF staff (background, ways of thinking etc)? If yes: In what ways?
31. Are differences between groups of people good, bad or not important for the cooperation?
32. Do you think that there are different opinions about what development is, and about the ideal for development? (For example between LWF staff and local people).
33. Who benefits from the project (villagers, different levels of LWF staff)?
34. What do you know about LWF? Please tell me about LWF.
35. Is it important at all that it is a Lutheran organisation? Or that it is international?
36. Is LWF different from other NGOs, in your opinion?

LWF STAFF

1. What is your job?
2. How long have you been working for LWF?
3. What is your background (educational and professional)?
4. Why do you want to work for LWF/in a development NGO?
5. Is it a difficult job?
6. What is development? What are the goals of development?
7. Is there any model/ideal for how things should be?
8. Is development only good, or are there any negative effects also?
9. Who are the agents of development?
10. Why is there a project here/Why does LWF work here?
11. How does a project begin? Whose initiative is it?
12. Could development take place here without the help from LWF?
13. Is everyone in the village interested in the project?
14. Has people's attitude towards the project been the same all the time?
15. What are the goals of the project?
16. Who decides the goals, and how?
17. What are the priorities in the project?
18. Do people sometimes disagree about what is most important, or about how to do things? If yes: who disagrees, and what happens?
19. What do LWF staff do in the project?
20. What do the VDC-members do?
21. What do other people do?
22. How do villagers participate in the project?
23. What kind of contact is there between villagers/VDC members and LWF staff?
24. Do villagers and LWF staff always agree about everything?
25. Are there big differences between villagers and LWF staff (background, ways of thinking etc)? If yes: In what ways?
26. Are differences between groups of people good, bad or not important for the cooperation?
27. Do you think that there are different opinions about what development is, and about the ideal for development? (For example between LWF staff and local people).

28. Who benefits from the project (villagers, different levels of LWF staff)?
29. Please tell me about LWF.
30. Is it important at all that it is a Lutheran organisation? Or that it is international?
31. Is LWF different from other NGOs, in your opinion?

THE INTERVIEWS

The respondents are all given fictitious names, as an attempt to make them as anonymous as possible. As I find it relevant to mention some of their characteristics, and their positions, it will nevertheless still be possible to recognize some of them. This is discussed in the chapter called “Methodological Considerations”, under the headline “Ethical Considerations”. Some of the translators are given fictitious names as well, as some of them are both translators and respondents.

TRAPAING PRING VILLAGE

133 families live in the village, all together 714 people (information from the VDC leader). The project was started in 1998, and had been going on for three years when I was there. During these years a lot has changed, and the things the VDC leader mentions the first time I speak to him, are these: they have a new and better road, a new school, they have started growing new kinds of vegetables, people and animals get vaccines, they know more about different health issues, they have new wells/water pumps and do not any longer have to go far away to get water from the river.

The cooperation with the village leader, who is the representative of the local government in the village, is good and close. The village leader cannot be a member of the VDC, but he has to approve all suggestions from the VDC before they do anything more about it. As the cooperation is good in Trapaing Pring, this does not seem to be a problem, and he always supports the suggestions. According to Chou Bovan, who is responsible for administration and logistics in IRDP Kompong Chhnang, this makes it easier to make people in the village take part in what is happening, as they respect the authority of the village leader, and listen to what he says.

Interview 1

The respondent is a 39 years old woman named “Kam Sot”. She has 6 children aged 1 to 15, 3 boys and 3 girls. She is not a member of the VDC.

During the interview a neighbour arrives and sits down with us. He is a 39 years old man called “Min Siphath”. He has 5 children, and he is not a member of the VDC either. After he arrived, the interview turned more into a group interview, where the respondents sometimes discussed things before or while answering, but where he without doubt dominated. The original respondent kept quiet a lot of the time, and let the other answer.

The translator was one of the people who work at the project office, Chou Bovan. Although doing his very best, he does not speak very much English, hence the language problems were considerable. November 22nd 2001.

Interview 2

The respondent is a 42 years old man named “Kay Chhum”. He has five children aged six to eighteen. He is not a member of the VDC.

The translator was Chou Bovan. November 22nd 2001.

Interview 3

The respondent is 65 years old, and his name is “Son Siveth”. He is the leader of the local VDC, and has been village leader before. He has also been a monk for a while when he was younger, and therefore has some education. In addition to being the leader of the VDC now, he is also the leader of the pagoda. He has five children aged 10 to 21, two girls and three boys.

Translator: Chou Bovan. November 23rd 2001.

Interview 4

The respondent is a 48 years old woman, and her name is “It Kaen”. She has 5 children, aged seven to twenty. She is a member of the VDC, and responsible for education (different areas of responsibility are divided between the committee members).

Translator : “Ban Toawn” plus a young English teacher from Kompong Chhnang Town. They both spoke very little English, and the translation was problematic. Many misunderstandings and limited communication. December 13th 2001.

Interview 5

The respondent is called “Saveros Pou”, and is 70 years old. He is a member of the VDC and is the assistant leader. He has been a member of the pagoda committee as well.

He talks a lot, also without direct questions being asked, and the translator often has to interrupt him to be able to translate. After the interview he says something about being sorry if he didn’t help me very much, and the translator explains that he means to say that he is very sorry if something he has said has been impolite in some way.

Translator: “Phon Sotin”. He speaks relatively good English, and the translation is definitely the best so far. December 20th 2001.

Interview 6

The respondent is a 21 years old girl called “Meach Sophoin”. She is single and lives with her parents. She has two sisters and three brothers. She is not a member of the VDC, but has been in the NFE class arranged in Trapaing Pring, and among other things learned to read and write. She is quite shy, especially in the beginning, and seems afraid of not giving the correct answers. Her mother sits next to us during the interview, and joins in with some comments now and then, but without dominating at all. The mother does not seem reserved at all, and explains her daughter’s shyness by saying that she has never seen anyone like me (meaning a foreigner/a white person) before.

Translator: “Phon Sotin”. December 20th 2001.

RO PEAK VILLAGE

79 families, 352 people, live in the village according to the CDW. It is located about 3 kilometres from Trapaing Pring, along a clay road in the direction of the main road. The new primary school is situated between the two villages, and is shared by them. They also share a pagoda.

As in Trapaing Pring the project was started in 1999. During the interview with the CDW he tells me that the project in Ro Peak is very different from the one in Trapaing Pring, as the first does not work very well. The cooperation with the village leader is not good, according to him because nearly every time the VDC wants to do something, the village leader is against it. On a direct question he says that he thinks it is because the village leader is afraid of losing his power. He also says that he thinks it would be a good idea to choose a new VDC in Ro Peak, because the one that they have does not work very well.

Interview 7

The respondent is a girl aged 22 whose name is “Srey Poch”. She is single and lives with her parents. She has four sisters and four brothers. She is not a member of the VDC.

Already from the start of the interview several people gather around us, and it tends to be more like a group interview than an individual interview. People discuss the questions, and it differs who answers. The people present are both men and women, and they all take part in the discussions and responses. One of the people who join the interview, is a man who is about forty years old, not member of the VDC, and his name is “Nim Sour”. After a while most people leave, and the respondent remains to answer the questions alone. However, in the middle of a sequence some other girls arrive, and the respondent tells us that she has to go to a meeting in the pagoda with them, so she cannot finish the interview.

Translator: “Phon Sotin”. December 21st 2001.

Interview 8

The respondent is a man named “Tep Sokhalay”. He is 28 years old, married, and has two small children. He is a member of the VDC in the village, as he was asked to replace one of the original members who did not perform his duties. He has some education, and this is a reason why people wanted him to become a VDC member. He is a referent at meetings, and is responsible for other “secretary” tasks as well, such as writing different proposals. In addition to this, he also has a responsibility for mobilising people in the village to implement different activities. He is thinking about withdrawing from the VDC, however, as he thinks it is too much hard work.

Translator: “Phon Sotin”. December 21st 2001.

LWF STAFF, IRDP KOMPONG CHHNANG

Interview 10

“Chan Kanika” is Project Coordinator in IRDP Kompong Chhnang. She has management responsibilities for the project, and is responsible for contact and coordination with the main program office in Phnom Penh. She has been working for LWF since 1995, first as a training officer, then as an assistant project coordinator in IRDP Battambang, and then, since May 2000, she has been in her present job. Originally she was a teacher at secondary school, then she worked for a while for the government as a counterpart for some international NGOs, and then she applied for work in LWF. She lives in Phnom Penh, but spends Monday till Friday in Kompong Chhnang.

The interview took place at her office in Kompong Chhnang, January 2nd 2002.

Interview 11

“Phon Sotin” is one out of two Community Development Officers in IRDP Kompong Chhnang. He started working for LWF in 1995, as an agriculturist, and since 1999 he has been working as a CDO. Part of his job is to supervise the CDWs, and report to the Project Coordinator. He also cooperates with the other CDO to make periodic written reports. He is also responsible for trainings on rural development; training of CDWs, and also assisting the CDWs in training the VDC. Sometimes he is in contact with other agencies or government staff in relation to trainings. Each week he usually spends three out of five days in the field. The project has activities in 33 villages, and the responsibility for these villages is divided between the two CDOs. He was studying abroad to be an agriculturist during the 1980s. He has been working in the Department of Agriculture before, but did not feel that he was given the chance to use his knowledge there. He lives in Phnom Penh, but spends Monday till Friday in Kompong Chhnang.

When doing the interviews, we are at the LWF office in Kompong Chhnang Town, and the only place inside where we could sit down, is the office of the Project Coordinator. She is

most of the time sitting at her desk at the other side of the room while the interview takes place, and as she is his boss, this may influence some of his answers.

January 2nd 2002.

Interview 12

“Ban Toawn” is one of the Community Development Workers in IRDP Kompong Chhnang, and is responsible for Trapaing Pring Village and Ro Peak Village. He is 28 years old, and has been working for LWF for four years at that time I interview him. He is from one of the other provinces in Cambodia, and started working for LWF in his home province. Then, in 2001, he started working in Kompong Chhnang. He had been living in his brother’s house in Phnom Penh for a while, working, but then his mother suggested he applied for a job for LWF. He has been going to high school, and he says that his job is not very difficult. The job is no problem, as he was used to work a lot harder during the time he was living with his brother in Phnom Penh.

The interview took place in his home in one of the other provinces of Cambodia, January 6th 2002.

LWF STAFF, EXPATRIATES, PHNOM PENH

Interview 9

“Maria” is the finance manager in LWF Cambodia Program, and had been in this job for almost a year at the time of the interview. She is from one of the other Southeast Asian countries, from a very poor family according to herself. However, she managed to work her way up, and has a university degree in business administration. She has been working for the ministry of human settlement in her home country for five years, working with community development, and then she moved to Cambodia. In Cambodia she first worked in the administration of a business school for a while, then she got a job in another international Development NGO for a few years, before she was employed by LWF. She speaks Cambodian, and says that she wants to stay in Cambodia, as it has become her new homeland.

The interview was done in her office at the LWF main office in Phnom Penh, December 26th 2001.

Interview 13

“Peter” comes from the USA, and is the Country Representative of LWF Cambodia Program. He has had this job since November 1998. He is responsible for the overall management of the program, and represents LWF in Southeast Asia. He has a long list of different development related jobs on his CV, in different parts of the world, and mainly with the Peace Corps.

For various reasons the interview could not be done before I had to leave Cambodia, and it was therefore done via e-mail in April 2002.