jobs in the centre of the city, and some have commissioned space to be reserved for them as their households in other areas expand.

Bustees are thus being 'gentrified' as these richer dwellers move in. Meanwhile landlords are illegally extracting higher rents in a variety of hidden ways. Slum upgrading adds momentum to this process, attracting wealthier inhabitants and enabling landlords to charge more and more. The poorest households, and especially those headed by women, who are particularly vulnerable to landlords' coercive techniques, are thus being forced out.

Foster argues that the key to identifying the beneficiaries of urban environmental upgrading lies in understanding existing patterns of land control. By failing to consider these factors and treating slum-dwellers as all the same, it seems that once again development aids the richest while disadvantaging the poorest. These effects could only have been avoided by understanding the complex nature of tenancy and property ownership in Calcutta bustees at the planning stage, rather than assuming that bustees are homogeneous communities, with shared interests.

The negative side effects of slum improvement cannot of course be entirely blamed on bustee upgrading. Given the pressure on urban land, such processes are also likely to occur without physical improvements. Avoiding such negative effects is also difficult, for clearly the legal changes necessary for this are beyond the power of urban development authorities or aid agencies. More recent projects funded by foreign donors have not been permitted by local government to work with the poorest pavement dwellers, because they are regarded as illegal squatters. Here, then, constraints imposed by the recipient government have prevented aid from being as 'poverty-focused' as the donors might have wished.

As we know, unequal access occurs within households, as well as between them. In the next case, we shall see how the construction of gender relations in Bangladesh means that even if projects are specifically aimed at women, they do not necessarily benefit from them.

Case 4. Women's credit groups in Bangladesh: inequality within households[7]

In 1975 the Bangladeshi government introduced a programme of rural women's cooperatives in 19 selected administrative districts controlled by the Integrated Rural Development Programme. These women's cooperatives were village-based and structured on the

model of pre-existing men's peasant committees. Each cooperative was run by a management committee, elected by members. These represented the cooperative at fortnightly training sessions in health, nutrition, family planning, literacy, vegetable gardening, livestock and poultry rearing and food processing, sharing their knowledge with other members back in their village. Their primary focus was, however, the granting of small loans, which in conjunction with the training was supposed to increase members' income-earning capacity.

In a village studied by Rozario (1992) these loans seemed to be the main reason why women joined the cooperatives. At an interest rate of 12.5 per cent, a woman could apply for 500 taka[8] if she had at least 50 taka worth of shares. Since the interest rates charged by private moneylenders are extortionate in Bangladesh (sometimes running at 100 per cent), and banks are unlikely to give credit to small landowners and the landless, obtaining these loans was obviously highly desirable.

Rozario's research indicates that loans intended to be used by women for their own income generation were either going towards joint household expenses, or being coopted by men. Loans taken out by the poorest women were often spent on basic household items, such as food, clothing and medicine. These women, however, were the ones most likely to invest their loans in growing vegetables, or poultry raising. In contrast, wealthier women told Rozario that they did not know how their husbands spent the loans, which they had passed directly to them. They simply signed the forms to collect the loan. Since so many loans were not repaid, with women claiming that they could not control their husbands' decisions or ability to repay, eventually husbands' signatures were required before a loan was made. Men were thus officially given greater control over women's credit.

Evidence from elsewhere in Bangladesh suggests similar processes are common to credit programmes which give loans to women (Goetz, 1994). Because women and men do not have equal access to resources within households, time and time again loans which are given to women are passed by the recipients to their husbands. Combined with this, because it is women's responsibility to feed and clothe their families, money earmarked for income generation is spent on a household's reproductive needs. Class is clearly an important factor too. Women from richer households, who are more strictly secluded, seem to have the least control over the credit. This may be because ideologies of purdah (female seclusion) prevent

such women from entering markets and other public and male domains. The buying and selling of vegetables or poultry may therefore be seen as 'unrespectable' for them, while for poorer women social prestige is not something they can afford. All women, however, shoulder the burden of repayment if and when their husbands default.

By disregarding the ways in which resources are allocated within Bangladeshi households, the cultural construction of women's work and their access to markets, credit programmes in Bangladesh are likely to be controlled by men, even if they are originally intended for women. A key factor here might be that it is cash, rather than other resources, which is loaned. Cash is traditionally associated with male domains, whereas other commodities (poultry, grain, household goods) are traditionally within the female domain. If project planners had located gender relations and inequality within the specific cultural context of Bangladesh, the results reported by Rozario might therefore have been avoided.

To summarise, anthropological study of development helps generate a range of questions which focus on people's access to resources provided by planned change. These may be answered

Access: Key Questions

What are the most important resources within society?
How is access to resources organised?
Are key resources equally shared, or do some groups have more control than others?
Are there obvious economic differences within communities?

Do some groups have more decision-making power than others?
Are some groups denied a voice?
Are some people incited to speak?
Is access to resources equal within households?
Do some groups have particular interests/needs?

Are there project criteria which constrain some people's access?
Is a certain level of capital necessary ?
Does the project only apply to preconceived categories, e.g. landowners, male farmers or household heads?

Are these factors adequately considered in the development plan/policy?

through the anthropological methods outlined in Chapter 2, or through more participatory methods (see Chapter 5). Conventionally in development practice such questions are posed by 'expert' consultants, but this need not necessarily be the case: local participants, activists, non-governmental workers and so on may all contribute. Most important is that the answers are fed back effectively into planning and policy.

Gathering such information is not of course unproblematic; whether or not the objective 'truth' of sociopolitical relations can ever be reached is a moot point, not only because outsiders tend to find it extremely difficult to find such things out, but also because the 'truth' tends to vary according to the positioning and perspectives of different actors: it is unfixed and variable. We shall return to these problems at the end of this chapter.

Effects

What are the social and cultural effects of development? This question is clearly closely linked to relative access. Rather than focusing on the distribution of benefits, however, it teases out different questions. By asking about the social effects of development, we are forced to consider the often complex social repercussions which may spill over into quite unexpected domains. Such questions are also vital in assessing projects or programmes which planners lacking in anthropological insight may not have orginally considered to have any particular social implications, since these projects were primarily conceived of in technical terms.

Focusing upon social effects also demonstrates the highly complex nature of social change. People are embedded in a range of social, economic and political relationships which affect their access to property and labour, their decision-making power within their communities and households, their position in the division of labour and so on. Although anthropologists may not be able to predict exactly what the social effects of development will be, from what they may already know, and by asking the right questions, they are often far better equipped than most to make informed guesses. While the social effects of development must clearly be investigated during and after projects, through procedures of evaluation and appraisal, such questions also need to be posed at their inception. As we see below, the failure to do this has led to many grave mistakes.

Case 5. The Kariba Dam: the effects of resettlement[9]

Many large-scale projects which are designed to improve national infrastructure, and which are perceived as being solely technical, require the resettlement of large numbers of people. The building of roads, air-strips and dams to generate hydroelectric power provides classic examples. The social implications of these projects are often not fully comprehended until after they are underway, and key questions which might at least have limited the damage done to the groups that are forced to move are not asked. The Kariba Dam is a classic example (see Scudder, 1980).

As Mair points out, when hydroelectric dams are built the displaced population is unlikely to benefit directly, for the electricity is usually intended for the inhabitants of distant cities (Mair, 1984: 110). The hardships caused for those who are forced to move can, however, be reduced if their social, economic and cultural circumstances are considered by administrators. In the Gwembe country (Zambia and Zimbabwe) where the Kariba Dam was built, there was insufficient consideration of these factors, even though many officials were deeply concerned for the people's welfare. In addition, a series of organisational mistakes were made. The worst of these was that although the population was originally allowed to choose where they would relocate, a technical decision was taken to raise the level of the lake, resulting in the flooding of the area proposed for resettlement. This effectively destroyed any goodwill or confidence in the administrators that the relocatees might have had. While some villagers did move to sites they had chosen, at least 6000 were sent to the Lusitu Plateau, 160 kilometres away. Although the government had promised that water would be supplied, not only was the drilling machinery provided inadequate, but the water proved to be undrinkable, so that pipelines eventually had to bring water from the Zambezi River. In the time it took for these to be built, many people suffered from dysentry.

The people were moved to the area by truck. They were not allowed to return to Gwembe country. Since the administrators assumed they had no property, many valuable possessions were left behind or broken. The scheme also totally ignored the local organisation of work. Men were sent ahead to Lusitu to prepare the land and build houses in the very season when they would normally have been earning cash and clearing fields. Women were thus left behind to do all the agricultural work, while their men did tasks in Lusitu which traditionally women would have contributed to. On

top of all this, compensation payments were inappropriate to customary property rights. Household heads were compensated for all the huts in their homestead, even though these were often built and owned by younger male relatives. A fixed sum of compensation was awarded to each individual, including children, but paid to the household head. Most of these shared out the money, but none shared equally; some young men claimed that they had to earn their share from their fathers by working for them first.

Although the problem of water supply in Lusitu was technical, most of the other problems relate directly to issues of an anthropological nature. Had key questions been asked before planning the move

The Effects of Resettlement: Key Questions

What is the nature of local power and hierarchy?
How is difference and inequality structured?
Are particular groups marginalised?
Do some groups monopolise political power and resources?

What is the nature of the household?
How is the household organised?
Who lives where?
How is decision-making power allocated within households?
How do these factors customarily change over time?

How are local property relations organised?
What goods are highly valued?
What access do different social groups or household members have to property or other resources?
What are the usual patterns of inheritance?
How do these factors relate to the household development cycle?

How is work organised?
What are the main tasks done in the community, and during what seasons?
Who does what work?
What is the importance of kinship roles or relations in the allocation of labour?

How suitable is the proposed relocation site, given the above economic, social, and cultural factors?

and the payment of compensation, many of the negative effects might have been avoided.

The list of questions in the box is not of course comprehensive. It is also specific to Gwembe country. In different contexts, other issues may be important. For example, when squatter settlements are cleared, perhaps because a road is planned or simply because they are an 'eyesore', detailed questions must be asked regarding people's relationship to the homes they live in, tenancy arrangements and so on. There must also be safeguards to ensure that opportunists do not claim property which less powerful individuals occupy, or that 'household heads' are not given lump sums which may be withheld from other members. It is vital that these questions are asked at the planning stage, not after the project has already started.

Case 6. The Maasai Housing Project: technological change[10]

Since technology is usually produced, distributed, used and controlled by different groups of people, changes in any of these areas are likely to have knock-on effects on a range of social and economic relations. Different activities also involve varying amounts of power and status, according to each cultural context. Simply because some people produce a certain type goods, for example, it cannot be assumed that they enjoy economic power, for they do not necessarily control its distribution and use. Likewise, people using a technology do not necessarily also control it. What implications does this have for projects involving technological change? The following example demonstrates that technological innovations and training in a housing project in Kenya have had various repercussions on local gender relations. These effects are by no means universal; rather, they depend upon the specific cultural context in which the project is taking place.

A recent report indicates that while some technological innovations in Kenya have had largely positive effects on women, for others the effects have been more mixed (ITDG, 1992). The Maasai Housing Project is a good example. Maasai women traditionally play a central role in the innovation, production, use and control of housing materials, but since the inception of the project their role in innovating new technologies has been reduced. In their place, men are becoming increasingly involved. Ironically, however, women's workload has increased.

The effects of the Maasai Housing Project must be understood in the wider context of Maasai life in Kajiado, Kenya. Although customarily associated with pastoralism, local Maasai have become increasingly settled. Alongside this more sedentary way of life, evidence indicates that women now shoulder greater burdens of work. For example, while men were traditionally responsible for livestock herding, women have now started herding, even though men still buy, sell and control the livestock. Most women work around 15 hours a day; lack of time is thus one of their largest problems. Other factors which prevent a greater share of decision-making power and access to resources for women are their lack of access to training and business opportunities, their underconfidence, the threat of male violence, and their exclusion from decision-making and ownership.

The Maasai Housing Project was introduced to Kajiado District by the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Programme (ASAL) in conjunction with a partner NGO. It started work in 1990, with the identification of eleven women's groups and the construction of a demonstration 'modern', three-roomed house. In 1991 women were invited to a workshop in which they expressed their own preferences regarding shape, size and interior of their ideal houses. The project then supervised the construction of five houses, three for rental and two for private use. A Maasai woman was employed as an extension worker, but the technical specialist and programme managers were men. A 1992 report suggested that women should be more central to the project: training courses should suit their time constraints, and housing designs should encompass their needs.

One problem was that the project's 'improved' houses took longer to build and thus added to women's work burden. While one woman reported that having a modern house gave her more status, most claimed that the greatest benefits were derived from technological improvements, rather than any social or political changes. Although it was hoped that one women's group would rent their house out while running a shop nearby in order to raise the money to provide it with better facilities, the group reported that this was not possible since they did not have the time or the money to run a shop. The house was thus left unoccupied.

Before the changes were introduced women were the main innovators and producers of housing; centrally, they also controlled the finished products. After the project, however, men were increasingly involved in innovation through their participation in training courses and in some aspects of construction (for example, carpentry). While women were still the main producers of housing, men had also started to distribute it. Combined with this, the values and statuses of each activity have also begun to change. Since

modernity is highly valued in Kajiado, the distribution and control of modern houses leads to more status than that of traditional houses. This may be another reason why men are becoming increasingly involved. There is therefore a very real danger that men may increasingly control housing, while women will continue to do the bulk of the work and be the main users of the completed houses. Changes in the gender relations of house production may also therefore lead to to changes in the gender relations of house design and control. Rather than benefiting from the project, women will be disempowered by it.

One way that these negative effects may be avoided is by ensuring that men are paid by women for their labour, thus giving them few rights over the finished product. Likewise, by improving traditional housing designs which are associated with female knowledge, male control of innovation might be reduced. It should also be remembered that the social relations of technology are not only culturally specific, they are also technologically specific. Housing among the Maasai is not an exclusively female domain. This means that men may choose to become involved in housing projects if they perceive that they will benefit from them. In contrast, other technologies are locally constructed as being exclusively female. For example, the production of stoves is seen by the Maasai

Technological Change: Key Questions

How is local knowledge used, produced, distributed and controlled?
Who does what, and how is the work organised?
What is the relationship between these activities and decision-making power and status?

What are the constraints facing women?
How can project activities (training, group meetings and so on) fit most appropriately into women's tight work schedules?

How might the new houses be more appropriately designed?
Could the new designs be less, rather than more, labour-intensive?

What is the relationship between production, distribution and control?
Does the building and distribution of houses automatically lead to their control?
Would paying male house-builders wages reduce the danger that they will control the finished product?

as 'women's work'. Improved stove technology is therefore offered only to women by projects, without apparently discriminating against men. In this case, the new technology saves women time, rather than increasing their workload.

The Maasai Housing Project has not had wholly negative effects on local women. Indeed, great efforts have been made to recognise their productive role in house building and to enable them to participate in the design of new houses. The accompanying questions (see box) might, however, help 'fine tune' it.

Control

As the above case studies indicate, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of local societies if particular groups are not to be marginalised or further disadvantaged through development interventions. It would, however, be misleading to indicate that these issues are resolved solely through top-down planning. Indeed, this replicates dominant development discourses which presuppose that planning and policy-making simply need to be tweaked in particular directions to 'solve' the problems of development. Top-down planning is far from being the only solution. However well thought out development plans are, if they are designed and implemented by outsiders they are in continual danger of being unsustainable in the long term and of contributing to dependency; when funding ends, so does the project.

Unless people can take control of their own resources and agendas, development is thus caught in a vicious circle; by 'providing' for others, projects inherently encourage the dependency of recipients on outside funds and workers. Development discourses must therefore be challenged until they recognise that local people are active agents, and by changing their practices enable them to participate[11] in project planning and implementation. In this section we indicate how development practice prevents people from taking control and how it might be changed from within. As in the rest of this chapter, we are confining our attention to planned change and assuming that, at some level, external donors are involved.

Working with local groups and institutions

Development plans often assume that the implementing agencies of a project or programme will come from outside the local

[...]ween the 'givers' of a [...]elopment workers) and the 'receivers' (local people). Since developers are primarily interested in problems and solutions which are perceived in technological terms, local social structures tend to be seen as at best irrelevant and at worst an 'obstacle'. Indeed, outsiders often fail to recognise the degree to which communities have their own internal forms of organisation, decision-making and lobbying.

Unsurprisingly, however, projects are often most successful when they work through pre-existing social structures and institutions. There may, for example, be pre-existing groups which are working to bring resources or services to their communities. These may take many different forms. For example, as we saw in Chapter 3, Latin American squatter settlements are often carefully planned by inhabitants, with local neighbourhood committees formed to develop the settlement. In other communities the group may have formed for a single purpose: gathering together to raise money for a school, a clinic or a place of worship, for example. Sports clubs are common forms of community-based groups, as are political parties. All of these vary from place to place; their suitablity as implementors or partners for development work will depend on both their particular characteristics and those of the development plan.

Anthropologically-minded advisors have an important role to play in contesting dominant discourses which ignore such groups. By finding out about them, representing their interests to planners, or enabling them to speak for themselves (for example, by arranging meetings or workshops), anthropologists in development can demonstrate a community's or group's potential for participation. Anthropological research and representation can also show that people are not passive 'recipients', but are accustomed to taking matters into their own hands.

Whether or not these groups become the basis for participation in a project is of course dependent upon a range of factors. The most important of these is probably the development agency's commitment to participation. It should also not be assumed that local groups wish to participate. As we shall see in the next chapter, much may depend upon the various meanings of participation being used. What is most important, however, is that such groups are asked what their interests are. They might decide that they need advice, training or extra resources. But they might just as easily wish to be left alone.

If there is a traditional system of communal decision-making, it may be easier and more expedient to use this as a participatory

channel rather than creating new committees or institutions. If these institutions are dominated by a powerful elite, or particular groups are excluded, this may of course create problems, but simply to bypass local power-holders may cause greater difficulties in the long run. The work of Proshika, a Bangladeshi NGO, provides an example. While its projects were ultimately aimed at the local landless, organising them into groups and helping to raise their political consciousness in order to gain greater control of their situation, fieldworkers often found it expedient to gain the trust of local elites and work through existing political structures. Where this was not done in the initial stages, the projects often met with fierce opposition.[12] In other cases existing committees or decision-makers might be linked to a new structure. In contexts where community decision-making is dominated by men, for instance, a separate woman's committee could be set up, feeding into the existing male-dominated one. If women are unused to being on committees or having a political voice, they may need particular support or training. Such projects cannot achieve miracles. Men may continue to dominate and women to have an unequal say in what takes place. But at least an opportunity for them to redefine their political roles has been provided.

Often there are non-governmental organisations already working within an area.[13] Because these are smaller in scale than governmental agencies and are locally based, these often work far more successfully at the grassroots than bilateral aid projects,[14] and are more experienced in participatory development. Increasingly, projects which aim to give beneficiaries greater control are attempting to work through NGOs already involved at the grassroots. Applied anthropologists may be asked to identify which local NGOs have the most participatory methodologies and which might be most able to carry out such work. This involves various ideological and practical problems, which we shall discuss further in Chapters 5 and 6.

The following case study is an example of how project planning can build upon and strengthen pre-existing local groups and institutions in order to enable people to participate more fully in processes of change. As it indicates, development discourses are not homogeneously 'top-down'; they are both highly contested from within and liable to change over time.

Case 7. Labour welfare in tea plantations: enabling control[15]

A project to improve the quality of tea production in South Asia had been funded for several decades by a bilateral donor. Originally the

project had been almost wholly technical, focusing on upgrading the quality of tea plants and productive techniques. While there was a labour welfare component, this concentrated on providing services for labourers within the plantations: improving their housing; providing tube-wells and health services.

By the late 1980s the labour welfare component began to be re-appraised, not least because of ideological changes within the donor agency. Rather than simply providing services for labourers, policy-makers decided that the project should enable them to take greater control of resources; as much as possible, the project should provide a framework for the labourers to run their own project. This was politically highly controversial, for the plantations were owned by private individuals and companies, who wanted their labourers to be as passive as possible.

An anthropological consultant was hired to assess the viability of such plans by researching social structure and organisation among the labourers. What she found were high levels of pre-existing 'indigenous' organisation. Labourers lived in 'lines' of housing, within which foremen were appointed to oversee the maintenance of resources (such as tube-wells) and report problems to the estate management. Locally formed committees took responsibility for other decisions; for instance, those involving internal social affairs. Where resources (such as housing) had been provided by the plantation, there was a tendency to rely on the management of the estates to maintain them. Where labourers had built their own houses, however, they maintained them. Combined with this, in some estates female labourers were involved in managing credit and savings groups, an activity which appeared to have been initiated by the women themselves, rather than any outside agency. They also had their own indigenous healers and birth attendants, as well as the health services provided by the plantations.

Lastly, registered labourers were all members of the national trade union for tea workers. This had a long history of militancy. Local level action – strikes, demonstrations and the garroting of managers – regularly brought production to a halt in some estates. Each plantation therefore included union leaders, who had substantial experience in political organisation, lobbying and action. Many of the most forthright of these were women.

Thus while in some ways they had been forced into a passive role by the non-participatory allocation of services within the project, in other domains labourers were already actively taking control of affairs. Building upon this knowledge, project workers planned a new phase in the labour welfare component of the project. Local committees, based on the pre-existing organisation of the 'lines', would be set up. These would involve equal numbers of women and men; given the activism of some female labourers, it was reasonable to assume that this would not be too difficult. The committees would be based around the management and allocation of a 'social fund', to be provided through the project. It would be up to them how these funds were used. If they wanted to spend them on training, primary education or improved health services, they would decide.

Appropriate organisational structures

People are often excluded from participating in and ultimately controlling planned development because the organisational form it takes is inappropriate. Indeed, bureaucratic planning and administration are in many ways inherently anti-participatory, for they are deeply intolerant of alternative ways of perceiving and organising activities, time and information. Institutional procedures are therefore central ways in which development practices exclude supposed beneficiaries, even if superficially policy aims at 'participation'. These problems are not by definition insurmountable, but most bureaucracies will have to undergo major reorientations if their procedures are to be more open and flexible. Understanding the ways in which people are excluded by organisational structures and procedures means taking a step towards achieving this.

An example of the exclusive nature of planning procedures is the project framework, which some donors now insist upon before providing funds. This involves an organisational chart in which planners specify project objectives, inputs, timings and the criteria they will use to measure successful output.[16] While this is undoubtedly a useful way of clarifying plans, the production of such a framework is also clearly much easier for administrators accustomed to particular ways of thinking and planning, and may require time-consuming training.

Project reports are another way in which administration and decision-making remain 'top-down'. Reports and other forms of documentation tend to be key to the formulation of policy within aid agencies, yet they are also often highly exclusive to anyone from outside the institution. Reports are usually produced in very particular ways (for example, conventions such as listing recommendations at the beginning of the report, summarising information in appendices, keeping the text to a certain length, using particular bureaucratic phrasings and jargon). Those fro

[...] impossible. This [...] projects which involve large-scale [...]ments, such as building. This tends to be planned around a rigid timetable and can usually be implemented relatively quickly. To set up the mechanisms for local participation in planning, however, usually takes far longer. Meanwhile those responsible for building are keen to progress as quickly as possible. These types of contradiction are extremely common, pointing to a larger problem in donor-led development: working with large budgets, which they are anxious to spend, donors and recipient governments are often reluctant to spend time 'fiddling around' with the complexities of setting up local committees and consulting communities about their plans. Instead, projects which absorb funds efficiently and are administratively relatively simple (building roads or dams) are preferred.

The timing of project activities may also be inappropriate. Again, this is the result of not consulting local people first. Meetings, for example, may be held at inconvenient times. Women may not be able to attend meetings or classes held at night. In other contexts women and men may not be able to attend those held in the day because of work demands. Once more these are issues which are best decided by the people involved. Anthropologists working in development should not take these decisions on behalf of beneficiaries, but wherever possible should ensure, at the very least, that plans involve careful consultation with them.

The location of project activities should also be considered, for they might be held in a place from which some people are excluded. In many Muslim societies women do not usually go into public places where there are many men. They may also be unable to travel to nearby towns to be trained, receive credit and so on, both for reasons of modesty and family honour but also because they have domestic responsibilities throughout the day. Each context is of course different, but project activities are usually more accessible when they are decentralised.

Lastly, planners need to consider whether they are making appropriate demands on participants. As we know, men, and especially women, have to meet huge work demands in much of the world, yet this is often ill considered in the plans of outsiders. Projects which do not take these into consideration are therefore unlikely to gain much local support. A good example of this is income-generation

to be left alone.

If there is a traditional system of communal decision-making, it may be easier and more expedient to use this as a participatory

[...]ghly labour-intensive. In the tea plantation project described above, an earlier plan in the labour welfare component of the project had been for income-generation activities for unregistered labourers, who often receive only very small incomes and, as a labour reserve, are not always in full employment. The problem, however, was that the plantations needed to have a continual supply of labour for times of high demand; if the unregistered labourers had an alternative source of income, the plantations would not have been so easily able to demand their work. The proposals were therefore blocked by the management.

Appropriate communication

People are often prevented from taking a more active role in development because it is conducted in cultural codes and languages which are alien to them. As we saw in Chapter 3, recent anthropological analyses of development discourse suggest that by its very nature it excludes people, disregards their knowledge and portrays them as 'ignorant', by upholding Western scientific rationality as the only paradigm for understanding and communication (Hobart, 1993).

While in the majority of cases this scientific rationality may provide solutions, it need not necessarily be the case. Again, the discourse is more heterogeneous and open to change than many commentators suggest. As we shall see in the next chapter, there have already been significant advances in the understanding of what are termed 'indigenous knowledge systems'[17] by developers. Anthropological knowledge has had an important role in promoting such concerns. It can also help to suggest more appropriate ways of getting messages across and enabling people to participate by using their own cultural idioms rather than those imposed from the outside. Again, this is not necessarily because anthropologists in development have 'expert' knowledge of a particular culture, but because they can insist at the planning stage that the advice of local people is sought.

Communication must be both appropriate and effective. The notion of appropriate communication may appear to be obvious, but it is extraordinary how often the local cultural and linguistic context is not considered in project planning. For example, in the early 1990s Katy Gardner sat in on a UNICEF training session for midwives in Orissa in east India, in which they were shown a training video made in the Punjab, several thousand kilometres away. The video was in Punjabi, and used traditional Punjabi

been [...]

implements and methods. Moreover, women sitting at the back of the small room could hardly see the video screen. However, there are many other examples where great efforts have been taken to ensure that developmental messages are appropriate. Literacy materials, for example, as pioneered by Paulo Friere and developed by NGOs throughout the world, take care to teach literacy using culturally appropriate idioms and contexts. We shall discuss functional education further in Chapter 5.

One simple way to communicate effectively is to use pre-existing cultural forms. Community education projects often use traditional forms of entertainment to great effect. Jatra, or traditional travelling theatre in India, for example, has been used by community health projects to get across family planning messages. And in places where there is no, or very limited, electricity, communities may gather together to watch televisions powered by batteries. Again, this may provide a useful forum for showing films on public health, or other forms of community education.

But perhaps most importantly, planners must consider whether the message itself is appropriate. As anthropological analyses indicate, local knowledge is often based on assumptions that are quite different from those of 'rational' developmental knowledge (Pottier, 1993; Hobart, 1993). Training or education which disregards the ways in which people understand the world, and simply assumes that scientific or rational knowledge is accessible and useful, is therefore unlikely to be successful.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Richards argues that farming practices in West Africa can be understood as involving performance skills as well as detailed ecological and technical knowledge. Rather than being learned and 'set', farmers improvise their agricultural skills (P. Richards, 1993). Persuading farmers to adopt new seed varieties which have been developed in laboratory conditions because they are scientifically more advanced, or attempting to 'train' them in practices based on scientific understandings of agriculture, therefore disregards the very nature of such farmers' knowledge and is unlikely to meet with much success. People understand events and ideas on their own terms. As long as development work involves the imposition of ideas and knowledge rather than being a dialogue, people are unlikely to be able to gain greater control of it, or voluntarily participate in it.

Conclusion

As the case studies cited in this chapter show, the more that is known about the dynamics and organisation of societies, at all

levels, the more it is possible to ensure that particular groups are not excluded from or disadvantaged by planned change. Although one does not need to be an academic anthropologist to obtain this information, we suggest that understanding what questions to ask is primarily an anthropological skill. We are not suggesting that the insights and strategies discussed in this chapter should be confined to an elite of international anthropological consultants or 'experts'. Rather than certain individuals being the repositories of such knowledge, it is particular insights and methods which are important, and these are potentially accessible to everybody. Indeed, anthropological perspectives already inform much work being carried out by NGOs, and form the basis of various new research methodologies (such as participatory action research and participatory rural appraisal) which are currently gaining widespread acceptance in some developmental domains. We shall discuss these in the next chapter.

There is also no single way of gaining the sort of knowledge we have been discussing here. While traditional participant observation is certainly a possibility, such in-depth and time-consuming research is often not possible within the context of development work. The use of local consultants is nearly always preferable to hiring expatriates; local participants can also become 'indigenous anthropologists' – setting their own research agendas and answering questions on their own terms. Likewise, locally based NGOs often have extensive knowledge of local culture and social organisation (although this is not always the case).

The ease with which such information can be obtained should not be overestimated, however. Questions can be asked in any number of ways but there are no guarantees that the correct answers will be given, or even that there are 'correct' answers. To a certain extent social realities always depend upon the subjective perspectives of those viewing the situation. Reality is also often highly contested; different interest groups will represent it in different ways (landlords and tenants, for example, are unlikely to agree about what the 'correct' level of rents should be). The ways in which outsiders are perceived may also influence how reality is represented to them. Researchers associated with aid agencies, for instance, may be seen as potential 'providers'. In these contexts it may be actively in people's interest to represent themselves more in terms of 'needs' than of self-sufficiency. In other contexts (for example, where researchers are associated with the government), local people may be extremely reticent to share information about landholdings, income and so forth.

Lastly, while new methodologies such as participatory rural appraisal offer interesting alternatives to more top-down research, the danger is that they may easily be reduced to mechanistic gestures, a series of pre-specified activities which development workers carry out as quickly as possible with little understanding of the rationale behind them, before getting started on the 'real' business of the project. Such dangers are exacerbated when projects are hemmed in by time-frameworks and targets.

There are no easy answers to the problems posed by 'finding out'. The first step towards more effective and empowering forms of planned change is, however, to get the right questions on the agenda. A variety of formal and informal methods can be used to find out the answers, but those involved must also accept that there are few 'objective' social truths, that cultures cannot be reduced to a few bare essentials which can be used to predict a particular result. Human life does not take place in a laboratory, and its study cannot be approached like a science. Rather, developers must understand that the societies with whom they work are highly dynamic, variable and likely to have a range of strong opinions about the directions of change which they wish to see.

Questions and their answers are not of course the same as actual policies and strategies. In Chapter 5 we therefore turn to particular practices within development which seem to offer viable alternatives to the dominant discourse, and which can be directly related to the anthropological insights outlined in this and the previous chapter. Some of these ideas are already current in certain areas of practice. As we shall see, these take us far beyond the conventional concerns of economic growth and 'development'.

5 NEW DIRECTIONS – PRACTICE AND CHANGE

As we saw in Chapter 2, the project of 'applied anthropology', which was begun in the colonial period, was only occasionally successful in its attempts to influence mainstream development practice. However, more recently ideas which have been generated by the anthropology of development (which we discussed in Chapter 3) have combined with the efforts of those anthropologists working critically within development frameworks (Chapter 4) to influence, challenge and subvert the dominant development discourse so that they have begun ultimately to influence actual development practice.

In this chapter we shall argue that the prevailing 'mainstream' discourse of development is far from monolithic. Although structured by relations of power in which particular countries, institutions and groups dominate, development practice and policy are increasingly heterogeneous, and are constantly challenged from more 'radical' positions by people working both within and outside mainstream development institutions. In what follows we shall outline some of these new directions. As we shall suggest, however, while these often generate promising new and alternative approaches to long-standing development perspectives, many also provide only tantalising glimpses into what might be possible rather than fully fledged changes in development thinking and practice. The risks of cooption and dilution within the still powerful logic of the top-down development paradigm remain ever present. Thus, although challenged by alternative perspectives, the extent to which the discourse has so far been significantly transformed is open to question. Indeed, some would argue that essentially nothing has changed. As Escobar puts it: 'Although the discourse has gone through a series of structural changes, the architecture of the

discursive formation laid down in the period 1945–55 has remained unchanged, allowing the discourse to adapt to new conditions' (1995: 42).

To what extent is this in fact the case? In this and the next chapter we hope to indicate that the evidence is mixed: while Escobar's conclusions may be too pessimistic, ideas which start their life as radical alternatives all too often become a neutralised and non-threatening part of the mainstream. Let us start with a policy response to critiques of development which indicate that it does not benefit the poorest sections of society: income generation and the notion of 'targeting'.

Poverty focused aid and 'income generation'

During the mid-1970s the apparent failure of many modernisation policies led to a new emphasis on the importance of 'basic needs' and 'poverty-focused aid'. Expensive attempts to promote industrialisation and cash-cropping had left the poorest groups still unfed, unhoused and uneducated. Chenery et al.'s *Redistribution with Growth* (1974) was a key text in this reassessment, as was Brandt et al.'s *North and South: A Programme for Survival* (1980). Chenery et al.'s work stressed the need to improve distribution of the benefits of development without sacrificing overall growth (see Robertson, 1984: 59). They argued that particular groups, assumed to have more or less homogeneous needs, should be identified as 'target groups': a concept we discuss in the next section.

This shift during the 1970s came at the same time as a growing focus on structural issues of class and gender, which were associated with the anthropological critique of modernisation. Now there was an increasing recognition of the need to mobilise people who had been bypassed by or written out of the development process and to encourage their participation in project planning and implementation. Such ideas brought with them a new attention to issues such as intrahousehold inequality, equitable income distribution, a recognition of the value of indigenous in addition to external or 'expert' knowledge, the importance of local-level organisation and the need to mobilise underprivileged and neglected groups of people to access resources, rights and services.

Some foreign donors began to pay attention to these issues. For example, the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) made the reduction of economic and social inequality a specific goal of its development assistance in 1978. Within the British aid budget an explicit policy decision was taken during the 1980s to make aid

'poverty-focused' and to target women as beneficiaries. Some projects are still basically concerned with the provision of services, but others seek a more active role from their beneficiaries.

Income generation is one example. Here, individuals or groups of poor people are enabled through contact with a government agency or NGO to generate more income for themselves, through credit, marketing advice, skills training or a combination of all three. These strategies for building what is sometimes termed 'micro-entrepreneurship' can provide important new survival routes for the poor, while they are particularly attractive to some development agencies because they fit well with neo-liberal ideas about enterprise culture, markets and privatisation.

Closely linked with the income-generation approach are savings groups, which help people to save for themselves and provide access to credit without interest. The pioneering work of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, which has been supported by foreign donors such as SIDA, is a famous example of this type of project which has now been replicated in many other parts of the world, including the US (Madeley, 1991: 87–97; Holcombe, 1995). The bank has found that by lending relatively small amounts of money to the very poorest rural people (and particularly to women), even at market rates of interest, those taking out loans can identify small-scale investment opportunities – typically rearing farm animals or husking rice for others on a contract basis – and repay their loans on time. By stressing group identity and by building group solidarity among its members, the bank has found it possible to motivate people to repay the loan far more effectively than conventional banks (which in any case normally lend only to richer people) have done. By freeing people from their dependence upon the local moneylenders, who charge enormous levels of interest, the bank may also have a wider development impact. However, as we saw in Chapter 4, there are also problems with the approach.

'Target groups'

In Chapters 3 and 4 we saw how anthropologists have challenged the bland view of many developers that everybody in 'the community' will necessarily benefit from the introduction of new resources or services, by drawing attention to the local power structure and the ability of the better-off to capture benefits. This 'relational' view of social and economic life, which stresses the interdependent but conflictual sets of relations which make up communities, has contributed within development to an increased

awareness of the need to ensure that newly provided resources flow to those who need them most. This change in emphasis is also of course associated with the critique of modernisation theory and 'trickle down' which gathered force throughout the 1970s.

Awareness has grown of the need for specific sections of a population, sometimes known in a rather ominous military metaphor as 'target groups', to be singled out for special attention. In their literature and statements of intent most development agencies these days highlight the particular groups of people whom they wish to assist, often terming them 'the beneficiaries', reflecting worrying assumptions about their passivity in the process. These groups obviously vary contextually. There is considerable difference across communities as to the types of people who fall into such target groups: landless men and women, indigenous minorities, urban squatters, female-headed households or farmers who farm ecologically fragile lands. What holds the targeting idea together is the objective of including people who have been 'left out' of the development process.

There are, however, inherent dangers in this approach, which all too easily feeds back into 'top-down' discourses and reflects the unequal power of those involved. For example, the pitfalls of outsider 'labelling' in which complex realities are forced into simple, easily digestible categories, have been discussed by Wood (1985). The end result may be the further marginalisation of 'targets', along with a reluctance to acknowledge the structural relationships which perpetuate differential access to opportunities. The notion of the target group is closely related to the controlling urge embodied in the idea of 'projectised' development, in which the socioeconomic categories of beneficiaries simply become another variable which can be defined and adjusted by project staff.

A good example of this problem can be found in discussions around the female-headed household, which has become a prominent feature of development discourse in many countries. For example, although female-headed households in Bangladesh are often represented within development agency discourse as having uniform needs, the category is in fact a varied one, cutting across both rich and poor social groups. These households are also sometimes transitory, located within sets of wider social relationships (which crucially affects their access to resources) and geographically scattered, which makes neat 'targeting' by outside agencies impossible (Lewis, 1993).

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

As the limitations of state-sponsored, project-based, top-down development became apparent, the 1980s and the 1990s saw increasing attention focused on private, professional development organisations and the voluntary sector by development agencies. This so-called third sector is now widely seen as containing potentially viable alternatives to conventional approaches to development and relief work.

At one level the changing level of support given to NGOs suggests a significant shift in development practice, for funds are increasingly being channelled to organisations on the outside of the 'mainstream' which often offer radical new approaches to how the work of 'development' is carried out. This, together with the diversity of approaches within the NGO sector, illustrates once more that development discourse is far from homogeneous or rigidly fixed. At the same time, however, some critics argue that rather than enabling NGOs to change the agenda, the increased funding of NGOs by Northern aid agencies has simply brought a potential threat to them under control. Let us examine some of the evidence.

In both North and South, the influence of NGOs is increasing as privatisation agendas reduce the role of the state in the delivery of services. Many development agencies now promote the belief that NGOs have special strengths because of the flexibility derived from the small scale of their operations, the degree of participation of their 'clients' and the replicability of their initiatives. Many donor agencies now direct more and more of their budgets towards NGOs in preference to government agencies. For example, SIDA's disbursements to NGOs increased from 13 per cent of total funds in 1983 to close to 30 per cent in 1994 (Riddell and Bebbington, 1995).

Figures quoted by Edwards and Hulme (1992) indicate that the number of development NGOs registered in the OECD countries has risen from 1600 in 1980 to 2970 in 1993 and that their spending has increased from US$2.8 billion to US$5.8 billion. There have been similar increases in the numbers and scale of NGOs in many Southern countries, where NGOs often constitute a response by alienated middle-class groups within civil society to a weak or resource-poor state's inability to deliver services and resources (Farrington and Lewis, 1993). In Bangladesh, admittedly an extreme example in that national NGOs supported by foreign funds have expanded dramatically to fill gaps in service provision left by the

weak and under-resourced state, larger NGOs such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Proshika are beginning to count their landless group members in terms of millions rather than thousands.

As we have seen, NGOs are believed to be able to allocate resources and services more efficiently and to reach people more effectively than state institutions (Paul, 1991). NGOs themselves have claimed that their comparative advantage is derived from a stronger commitment and motivation, coupled with a better ability to form good-quality relationships with people, compared with government agencies. For example, as Bebbington (1991: 24) points out in the context of agricultural development work, NGOs 'are more willing to ask farmers what they think, to take their farming practices seriously, and consequently to orient technology adaptation and transfer towards real concerns'.

The origins, activities and performance of NGOs have varied dramatically between and within different country contexts, where particular state histories have permitted varying levels of 'space' within which NGOs can exist and work. In countries where a politically repressive regime has prevented local levels of organisation, many NGOs have existed as radical, underground organisations, as in the case of the Philippines under President Ferdinand Marcos (1965–86). Where the state has sought assistance with service delivery or project implementation, frequently with donor agency support, NGOs have often merged seamlessly with mainstream government structures. In communist Albania, the notion of a civil society with its arena for organisation outside the state hardly existed at all and NGOs were unknown.

NGOs themselves are a diverse set of actors, with origins in both North and South. There are important differences in scale and between local, national and international spheres of activity.[1] Some NGOs carry out their own project-based development activities, which can range from the direct provision of services (credit, agricultural inputs, health-care and education) to group formation and consciousness-raising, both of which aim to make people aware of new possibilities for self-determined change. Others do not work directly with beneficiaries but instead fund, train or otherwise support partner organisations at the grassroots. There is also an increasing number of activist NGOs who see their work in terms of lobbying, information exchange or advocacy aimed at changing the wider policy environment. NGOs are becoming important not just in terms of their ability to work directly with people, but also in terms

of their potential contribution to the strengthening of civil society – democracy, legal rights and access to information (Clark, 1990).

NGOs have claimed, with some justification, that they can work more closely with poor people than similar government agencies can (Edwards and Hulme, 1992; Bebbington and Farrington, 1993; Clark, 1990). Critics, however, have drawn attention to the prevalence of a number of 'NGO myths' and show, with some success, that these supposed advantages are in fact largely unsubstantiated (Tendler, 1982). Furthermore, there is a growing radical critique of NGOs which argues that, rather than promoting deep-rooted change, they actually preserve the status quo by setting up a system of patronage based on the flow of development assistance, which undermines and depoliticises local grassroots organisation (Hashemi, 1989; Arellano-Lopez and Petras, 1994; Tvedt, 1995).

Despite these qualifications, many NGOs working directly with the poor have taken what might be described as an 'anthropological approach' to their field activities. Rather than working from the top downwards, many of the more effective NGOs have evolved from local communities and draw their field staff from the areas where they are working. Unlike many government or donor projects, they spend time discussing local interests with different sections of the community in order to build up a picture of the dynamic relationships which exist among different groups and classes. For example, this is the approach of Proshika, the Bangladeshi NGO (Khan et al., 1993; Kramsjo and Wood, 1992). A distinctive NGO organisational style has emerged: field staff are encouraged to spend time with local people and pass information about their needs and interests to the NGO in order to inform and shape future policy; in addition, less rigid boundaries are visible between junior and senior staff. This contrasts with the more rigid, directive roles usually taken by government in development activities, in which officials often subordinate development agendas to the more pressing demands of control and authority (Fowler, 1990).

This responsiveness to local needs can go beyond mere service delivery. In agriculture, NGOs have sometimes been able to undertake client-oriented research which has been based on agendas set by local group members and to promote technologies which meet locally generated needs, especially among the low-income sections of the population which are frequently passed over by formal government agricultural efforts. The use of local institutions and practices as the starting point has often proved a fruitful basis for innovation.[2]

Some NGO work also resembles the old dream of 'advocacy anthropology' in which outsiders try to promote the rights of the communities with which they work either during local conflicts (for example, with local elites) or in the wider state context (such as land rights or the legal rights of women). NGOs find that if they wish to influence the 'big picture', they cannot ignore what the government is doing. At the same time, government agencies increasingly see NGOs as a source of dynamism and innovation and are seeking to draw upon their services, either by forming partnerships or, in less satisfactory cases, by cooption. But in some countries (such as the Philippines and Bangladesh) there are tentative signs that prevailing government administrative culture and procedure are being slowly questioned and reformed.

Just as the role of anthropologists as development participants raises a number of uncomfortable questions, there are similar dilemmas to be faced by those who argue that NGOs constitute an all-purpose solution to the problems of development practice. How accountable are these NGOs to the people whom they claim to represent? How efficient are NGOs in reality, and do they merely perform better than government agencies because they receive proportionately more resources for the tasks which they undertake? Do NGOs simply reproduce patronage relations at the local level by becoming the new purveyors of state resources in the countryside? Are NGOs therefore weakening the state further and perpetuating this weakness by drawing scarce staff and other resources away from it?

What is particularly interesting about NGOs is that many have radical origins and are engaging critically with the prevailing development discourse, occasionally influencing donor and government attitudes and practices along the way. While the work of some NGOs provides fascinating windows into alternative development paradigms, the large numbers of opportunistic or coopted organisations, which also form part of the category 'NGO', serve to remind us that real challenges to the existing order are all too easily neutralised.

'Participation'

Participation is another term which, although derived from radical ideas challenging developmental orthodoxy, is now to be found in the development plans and policy statements of the most mainstream institutions. Again, whether this represents a significant change in the discourse, or the cooption of challenges to it, is open to debate.

Like many of the currently fashionable development 'buzz words', the precise meaning of participation is elusive. Adnan et al. (1992) argue that meanings of participation can be broken down into three broad categories. First, participation can simply refer to a process in which information about a planned project is made available to the public. This may involve listening to local people's views about the plans, a more structured survey, or a formal dialogue regarding project options. This type of participation often only involves community leaders. It also leaves most decision-making power in the hands of the planners.

Second, participation might include project-related activities rather than mere information flows. This might involve using labour from the community, or a longer-term commitment by local groups to maintain services or facilities or even to plan for their future use (for instance, committees set up to manage sanitation facilities in an upgraded slum). Again, the initiative has come from the outside. People are involved, but are not directly in control.

Lastly, there are people's own initiatives. These fall outside the scope of the project agenda; they are therefore, some argue, the only true form of participation, for they are not imposed from the outside. If mobilisation comes from the poorer sections of the community, it also truly empowering. A famous example of this is the Chipko movement in the Himalayas that began in the 1970s, in which women mobilised themselves to protect the trees that were so vital for their economy from commercial loggers (Shiva, 1988).

The idea of participation is drawn from radical roots, but in practice has now become so ever-present in development jargon as to be often virtually without meaning. Many critics of development therefore view participation as a degraded term, which has served only to 'soften' top-downism and has been successfully stripped of its previous radical connotations (Rahnema, 1992). It can allow ideas to be imported into communities and then attributed to them: a token agenda of involvement at one level of the project (usually at the implementation rather than the planning stage) can then be used to legitimise decisions which have already been taken by powerful outsiders. Even when participatory research methods are deployed by development agencies, while people might be able to influence events by providing information or knowledge which may eventually feed into policy or project design, they are not actually taking the key decisions.

Nevertheless, the concept of participation strikes at the heart of previous developmental paradigms by suggesting that development should come from the bottom-up instead of through top-down policies and the agency of the state. Only when the supposed beneficiaries of development interventions participate in the planning and implementation of the projects which are intended to benefit them will they have any real interest in making development projects succeed. Participation is therefore a key prerequisite for sustainability.

Some agencies, such as the UK's Overseas Development Administration, thus now talk of local people as being 'stake-holders' in development, seeing this as a way of forming a stronger basis for their involvement. If people know that they stand to benefit from a particular intervention, the reasoning goes, they will work to ensure that the project suceeds and will contribute ideas for improvement. Not only will this lead to better projects, it will form an important goal of development in the context of the 'good government' aims of many donors, since it strengthens local accountability and democracy (Eyben, 1994).

However, as anthropologists will already be aware, the notion of 'participation' is itself problematic. For a start, it masks differences between people: local heterogeneity is dissolved into vague notions of 'community'. This may disregard important cross-cutting divisions of class, gender and age, which may lead to substantial differences in local views and interests. Notions of effective participation therefore involve having to disentangle conflicting interests within local communities and building support for the interests of particular, identifiable groupings of people. Participation, if it is handled properly, can create an opening for more vulnerable sections of the community to determine the form and outcome of development initiatives which are being undertaken in their name. This is undoubtedly a difficult, time-consuming and complicated process.

In practice, the rhetoric of participation can easily be misused while real power remains in the hands of outsiders:

1. It can legitimise a project by gaining the sanction or formal approval of key people in the community, which then feeds back into project appraisal criteria and helps to make the project a 'success'.
2. 'Participatory discussion' can provide an opportunity for local people to 'understand' what it is that the development agency seeks from them. Certain people can then, in return for the promise of a supply of resources to the community, tell developers what they want to hear.
3. It can open up an opportunity for certain interests within the community to be 'written in' to the project design, or to gain control of its implementation, which tends to skew benefits towards better-off sections of the population.

Just as some government agencies are now seeking to establish greater credibility for their still essentially 'top-down' programmes by enlisting the services of locally based NGOs, participation is often desired by development agencies for the ideological legitimacy it brings. Yet is is also feared for its practical implications. Planners usually do not wish to involve local communities; they have institutional deadlines and a predetermined agenda, which by the time it reaches the community cannot be changed. These contradictions show how easily an objective of participation can feed effortlessly back into existing models of 'top-down' development and become neutralised by the dominant discourse.

Participatory research methodologies

With the increasing acceptance of participation as a desirable goal in development practice have come other important changes in research and project methodologies, particularly within agricultural work. This is closely related to the anthropological perspectives on local knowledge and human agency, outlined in previous chapters, as well as anthropological methodologies. Increasingly, considerable attention is now being paid to changing the ways in which local knowledge and information are elicited, understood and built upon by those engaged in development activities.

The work of Robert Chambers has been extremely influential in this regard, in its attempts to counter excessively formalistic approaches to 'data collection' by development workers and professionals. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and its variants aim to enable rural people to plan and enact solutions to problems by analysing their own knowledge of local conditions, facilitated by outsiders. This approach (Chambers, 1992: 5) has drawn upon insights borrowed from social anthropology, such as:

1. The idea of learning in the field as 'flexible art rather than rigid science'.
2. The need to learn in the field, informally, through conversations and relaxed observation.

3. The importance of the researcher's attitudes, behaviour and rapport with local people.
4. The emic/etic distinction, an anthropological concept drawn from linguistics, which contrasts the 'indigenous' reality of social actors with the observer's perception of that reality.
5. The validity and potential value of indigenous knowledge.

PRA therefore involves training researchers to go to villages and spend time talking to groups of people 'in situ', encouraging them to express local problems and potential solutions in their own terms. Care is taken to represent as many different sets of interests as possible, and the focus is on mutual learning between researcher and informant.

While such ideas are familiar to anthropologists, one has to remember that engineers, economists and agriculturalists receive little or no training in such matters. The research and administrative culture of many development agencies and government departments places scant value on direct communication with their constituencies, in environments where people have usually been seen as the 'objects' rather than the 'subjects' of the development process. PRA has therefore begun to challenge the assumptions of development practitioners trained within bureaucratic, status-conscious and quantitative research-based institutional cultures.

The growth of PRA, and the quite surprising amount of attention it currently receives, provides an opportunity to examine whether anthropology can really be used as a 'quick fix' by development practitioners in this way. If PRA seeks to do more or less what anthropologists do, how realistic is it to attempt to do justice to participant observation in a few days or weeks when anthropologists have usually taken far longer periods of time to try to get beneath the surface of a community?

PRA has become a tool which is now included in many projects, but it can easily be used within existing top-down frameworks if it is misapplied. It can sometimes be used to legitimise certain approaches and ideas and, if it is carried out cynically, can be employed to show support for pre-existing viewpoints. There is a temptation for those utilising PRA less scrupulously to enact what might be termed a 'participatory ritual', either because they are cynical about the whole process in the first place or because it has become just another part of their job. While such people might be sympathetic to the aims of PRA, they may balk at the levels of complexity (and resulting frustration) which arise from taking participation too seriously. For example, villagers can be routinely

Participatory action research[3]

Participatory action research is a loose group of methodologies undertaken by agencies – such as NGOs – in areas of Asia and Africa. It assumes that the main objective of development is the fulfilment of the human urge for creative engagement, and does not therefore focus on poverty alleviation, 'basic needs' or structural change as the immediate goals to be tackled.

In this way, PAR seeks to avoid the dependence which results from many external interventions in communities by stressing the outsider as animator, facilitating the promotion of people's self-development. The influence of the radical Brazilian educator Paulo Freire can be seen in this line of thinking. Typically, catalytic initiatives are brought about by educated outsiders, free of party political allegiances, who encourage groups of people to get together to discuss the reason for their poverty and engage in their own social investigation.

Group building follows, combined with discussion of prioritised actions which can be undertaken to address the principal causes of their poverty. External resources can be provided for support, but are not regarded as a precondition for problem-solving. The aim is to generate a 'progressive action-reflection rhythm' or 'people's praxis'. As the groups form links with other similar groups and encourage new ones, the dependence on the initial external stimulus is then supposed to fall away, though contact may be maintained.

consulted, maps and charts can be drawn, games can be played to reveal local realities, but experts may well go off and implement their project much as planned. Like 'participation', PRA is easily abused in practice.[4]

But even if PRA *is* carried out properly, can workable compromises be reached between the interests of the rich and the poor members of communities through such open discussion? Who speaks and who remains silent in these encounters? If an anthropologist needs at least a year to start understanding how a village community actually works (as anthropological tradition tells us), how can PRA achieve genuine community-based insights in such a short period of time, even if a more participatory methodology than usual is adopted? What are the dangers of 'quick and dirty' anthropology, and can it be justified in certain situations? All these

questions need to be examined further. While PRA in many ways provides an easy target for the critiques of anthropologists, it is probably the case that the methodology is only rarely carried out in the ways and to the lengths which were originally intended.

Some NGOs have developed similar forms of research which are geared towards a more responsive approach to local problems, much of which can be undertaken by people themselves. The concept of 'action research' attempts to combine learning and doing. Proshika, for example, has developed a reflexive research methodology which the NGO terms 'participatory action research' (Wood and Palmer-Jones, 1990: 25):

> While projects are designed between groups and the field staff with as much forethought as possible, new forms of social action obviously generate unforeseen processes and problems, which have to be studied by those involved as part of the social action itself.

A link between research and action has a two-fold purpose. It prevents the emergence of discrete elements within the NGO whose research and evaluatory functions 'constitute judgements' on the work of others. It provides constructive opportunities for the 'subjects' of the research to tie the research agenda to their needs. Action research becomes a process in which research is combined with practical problem-solving, with the participation of those who have identified and need to overcome a problem. This brings us full circle back to Chapter 2: reflexive action research has long been one of the aims of the more radical proponents of 'applied anthropology'. It may be that the NGO context forms one of the most fruitful arenas for work of this kind.

'Empowerment'

The shift in development thought during the 1980s away from the assumptions of top-down change towards alternative development models has, at its root, a conception of empowerment as a form of developmental change brought about by local problem-solving efforts and techniques. Empowerment has been described as being 'nurturing, liberating, even energising to the unaffluent and the unpowerful' (Black, 1991: 21). This concept of empowerment is in part drawn from the ideas of the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, based on the need to stimulate and support people's abilities to understand, question and resist the structural reasons for their poverty through learning, organisation and action (see box on 'Development and literacy'). For many radical development

theorists and practitioners, particularly in the NGO sector, the aim of promoting participation should be empowerment (Carroll, 1992).

> **Development and literacy[5]**
>
> Considerable attention has been given to the issue of literacy in developing countries. In Bangladesh, where the literacy level is around 35 per cent, illiteracy has been correctly identified as one of the country's most pressing development problems. It has been a prevailing myth of development that literacy can be seen as an independent variable in the development process which can be measured by a universal yardstick. Anthropologists and sociologists have shown it is important to recognise that literacy has to be viewed in the context of other variables and should therefore form part of an integrated approach to development.
>
> For example, people use the skill of literacy for their own and perceived interests, which are not always 'development-oriented': in rural Bangladesh, such skills can sometimes be used to further the interests of the literate at the expense of the illiterate. Literacy programmes therefore have to be based on a firm understanding of the uses to which literacy can be put – literacy is an 'ambivalent servant'.
>
> The NGO Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) has developed a functional literacy programme for landless men and women, who organise themselves into groups. Literacy training is combined with organisation support, savings and credit, technical assistance for income-generating activities and the gradual building of self-respect and self-confidence. Literacy is therefore linked to generating local group structures and capacity-building. Basic aspects of health and nutrition are taught alongside literacy.

A useful discussion of empowerment emerges from John Friedmann's analysis of the politics of alternative development. Friedmann develops a theory of poverty which views it not simply as the absence of material or other resources, but as a form of social, political and psychological disempowerment which must be challenged. In this view, whole sections of the population – landless rural workers, subsistence peasants and shanty town inhabitants, for example – have been systematically excluded from participation in the development process. Friedmann (1992: vii) therefore makes empowerment the central aim in his discussion of the politics of 'alternative development':

The empowerment approach, which is fundamental to an alternative development, places the emphasis on autonomy in the decision-making of territorially organized communities, local self-reliance (but not autarky), direct (participatory) democracy, and experiential social learning. Its starting point is the locality, because civil society is most readily mobilized around local issues.

Friedmann sees the need for alternative development models to acknowledge the rights and established needs of citizen households and individuals, which involves a political struggle for empowerment and against structural constraints. For example, the NGO Proshika's work has included group formation in which landless people take action in pursuit of their rights against locally powerful individuals.

The local power structure in countries such as Bangladesh is a crucial barrier to more equitable forms of change: it siphons off externally supplied resources intended for the poor, impedes the rule of law by substituting formal justice by de facto rules of force to settle disputes, and contributes to growing impoverishment by supporting moneylending with exploitative rates of interest (see BRAC, 1979). In one example documented in a recent collection of case studies from Bangladesh, groups of landless people in Gazipur district successfully organised a public boycott of a local landowner who was engaged in stealing public agricultural land by securing false land-title documents. The landowner had no access to public transport or hired labour and suffered public humiliation, and the group members who had lost rightful access to the land won the legal case against him in the courts (Kramsjo and Wood, 1992: 63).

There are of course contradictions within the current discourse of empowerment. Like participation, empowerment has become a frequently degraded term in mainstream development. Rahnema (1992: 123) sees the term simply as providing development discourse with a new form of legitimation and convincing people 'not only that economic and state authorities are the real power, but that they are within everyone's reach, provided everyone is ready to participate fully in the development design'.

In some countries, governments now talk glibly of empowerment of the poor in their development plans, having stripped the term of any real meaning. In other planning documents there is an assumption that empowerment can be achieved simply by providing credit to low-income people. As Korten (1990) notes, it is not really possible for one person to 'empower' another: people can only empower themselves. Korten argues that this requires a process of 'mutual empowerment' in a group setting, often with

outsiders as facilitators. The danger of creating dependent groups, well-versed in the rhetoric of consciousness-raising but remaining essentially unchanged by the experience, has been observed in Bangladesh (Hashemi, 1989).

On a more practical level, outsiders need to think very carefully about their responsibilities in encouraging potentially violent confrontations between vulnerable groups and well-organised and powerful elites backed by the state (Bebbington, 1991). This might be an approach favoured by those who see much of the mainstream or 'alternative' discussions of empowerment within the development discourse as inadequate or compromised. For example, the Naxalite Maoists in India in the 1960s demonstrated, at an extreme level, the futility of such confrontation in terms of securing long-term change in rural areas (Cassen et al., 1978). Many of the rural people were left even more vulnerable to violent reprisal during the repression which followed the uprisings.

Farming systems research

As we have seen, top-down development has tended to apply Western high-technology solutions to problems of poverty while undervaluing or disregarding local forms of knowledge: an area in which anthropologists are often very interested. Local knowledge, it has been argued, is often situated in practice and in real situations (P. Richards, 1993). For example, whereas in Bangladesh small-scale fish-fry traders are encouraged by 'expert' outsiders to transport their fish over long distances using expensive and cumbersome oxygen cylinders and plastic bags, one recent anthropological study found that there was little reason why they could not continue to rely on a far more practical, local low-cost solution developed locally over generations, which uses clay or aluminium cooking pots and involves the oxygenation of the water by hand 'splashing' (Lewis et al., 1993).

The emergence of farming systems research (FSR) in the late 1970s reflected many of these concerns. FSR focuses on the small farm as a basic system for research and development and attempts to bring about the strong involvement of farmers themselves in every stage of the research and development process (Conway, 1986: 18). The farmer's decision-making is treated as being rational rather than guided, as was often supposed, by ignorance or conservatism. The objective is to improve the relevance and appropriateness of research, and this includes the participation of social scientists alongside biological scientists. FSR is also emphatically holistic,

treating decisions and procedures for one crop within the wider farming system and its economic, social and environmental components. FSR therefore draws upon a number of anthropological insights in the way it attempts to minimise outsider ethnocentric assumptions and to understand the complex interconnectedness of social, economic and natural phenomena.

The new emphasis on indigenous knowledge (what might be termed the 'farmer first' approach: Chambers et al., 1989) has also encouraged some organisations to attempt to work with local or 'traditional' institutions instead of creating new ones. Some NGOs have been able to link up with existing people's organisations, with which they can then work in a servicing and advocacy role, strengthening and supporting the development and adaptation of local organisational forms. For example, the Mag-uumad Foundation Inc. (MFI), which works in Cebu in the Philippines, has worked with upland farmers to develop soil and water conservation technologies. Although the approach is relatively labour-intensive in the first few seasons of operation and could therefore be prohibitively costly for farmers, it has been found that work can be undertaken by farmers within the existing framework of *alayon* reciprocal village work groups. This age-old system has now successfully adapted itself to accommodate this newer form of community labouring (Cerna and Miclat-Teves, 1993).

While some NGOs and government agencies have turned FSR into a progressive tool, its terms and concepts have now entered the mainstream, so that it is common to hear many agricultural extension workers and researchers talk of 'farmer participatory research' while retaining essentially top-down approaches. Likewise, there is a tendency for local knowledge to become overly systematised, and reduced to a quasi-scientific schema which ignores its wider epistemological base. Local knowledges cannot always be simply reduced to a blueprint, ready to be inserted into a development plan, especially when they spring from quite different cultural contexts from those of the developers. These problems have been raised in a number of critques of the 'farmer first' movement (in particular, see Scoones and Thompson, 1993; 1994). Like many of the new ideas we have discussed, FSR has found favour in some areas of the development mainstream, but usually in a form which conforms to existing paradigms and practices without challenging the wider assumptions and objectives of development. Whether or not this continues to be the case remains to be seen.

Community development

Anthropologists and sociologists have long argued that life is not divided neatly into compartments and that the workings of a local economy are inseparable from wider social, political and cultural processes. The concept of community development is central to this integrated approach. Without strengthening local communities, and encouraging them to take a more active role in the planning and maintenance of their facilities, the argument goes, strategies for improvement are doomed to fail. Many projects therefore now involve a 'community development' component. One example is recent slum improvement projects in India. Here, slum 'upgrading' (the provision of improved sanitation and housing) is being increasingly integrated with social strategies. Setting up local committees that are responsible for maintaining the improved facilities and planning the future development of their community, the provision of halls or libraries, or the establishment of savings groups to encourage a sense of community are all strategies in recent British projects aimed at integrated slum improvement projects which have a strong community development component.

Community development has a tendency to become largely cosmetic unless it involves the active participation of the community in the planning stages of the project. One very real area of difficulty is that these approaches rest on a notion of 'community' which any anthropologist knows is by definition very shaky ground. Who or what constitutes the community? There are bound to be different sets of interests with a range of different needs, different types of power and varying degrees of visibility. Furthermore, its origins can be traced back to colonial social welfare policies in Africa in the 1940s (Midgley, 1995), and the notion of 'social development' as deployed by development agencies can at times be dangerously close to modernisation-type thought in which communities are judged, by a variety of ill-defined criteria, to be either more or less developed.

Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD)

Debates surrounding empowerment share some of their origins with the recognition of the importance of gender issues in development. As we have seen, during the 1970s and into the 1980s gender relations were increasingly recognised as central in determining

people's access to resources and the ways in which they experience development. In this section, we shall consider how some of these debates have been translated into policy within development agencies.

A major step towards official acceptance of the need to consider more carefully the relationship between development and gender came in the guise of the UN Decade for Women (1975–85). During this period there were important changes in the ways both policy-makers and academics approached gender. Whereas previously both groups had tended to concentrate on 'women' and their domestic reproductive roles, by the mid-1980s policy increasingly emphasised women's employment, income-generation capacities and so on, rather than the provision of welfare services for them. We shall outline these different policy approaches and their relationship to different theoretical positions within development shortly.

The UN Decade marked what appeared at first to be a growing institutional commitment to women's issues, although the rationale behind this varied. Prompted partly by the work of writers such as Boserup, and also as a reflection of the successes of feminism in the North, which had enabled a few women to reach managerial positions within aid agencies and had pushed feminist issues on to the political agenda, many development agencies by the early 1980s had determined to 'do something' for women. For example, in Sweden parliament was subject in the 1970s and 1980s to successful lobbying pressure by Swedish women's organisations for official aid to address specifically women's needs and this became reflected in SIDA's programmes. The United States Agency for International Aid (USAID) also rapidly adopted the new phrase 'women in development', with the establishment of an Office of Women in Development. Although the meanings of WID are far from fixed, USAID seemed to use it in terms of the potential contribution women could make to the development effort, as a so far untapped resource. Many other institutions followed suit, setting up WID offices or, like the British ODA, building a commitment to women into official policy. Indeed, it is now commonplace for government ministries, NGOs and multilateral agencies to pay lip-service (if nothing else) to the aims of WID, and some donors insist on a WID component in project proposals before they consider funding.

The WID approach, however, tends to focus only on women in isolation, rather than the social, cultural and political relations of which they are a part. As feminist anthropologists have frequently pointed out, it is gender and not sex which is at issue. This has led to a shift towards 'gender and development' (GAD) which turns attention away from women as an isolated category to the wider relations of which they are a part. It should, however, be noted that the terms are often used interchangeably, and policies all too frequently focus attention only on women. Indeed, despite the energy and resources directed at gender issues, WID/GAD still frequently remain an 'add-on' to mainstream policy (Moser, 1993: 4).

WID/GAD approaches are far from homogeneous. In her account of WID projects, Caroline Moser outlines five main approaches, each associated with a distinct developmental philosophy (1989: 1799–825). While we must beware of over-schematising affairs (for example, policies and projects often involve a variety of assumptions and approaches), this clearly indicates the range of responses to gender issues within development practice. A 'welfare' type project, for example, is linked to charitable notions of 'doing good' for women and children and involves the top-down provision of services and goods for beneficiaries, without demanding any return on their behalf. While this approach was common in the 1960s and early 1970s, with the growing influence of feminism as the 1970s unfolded, notions of 'equity' increasingly gained sway in some development circles. These aimed at boosting the rights and power of women within developing countries, again usually through top-down changes in governmental policy, state intervention and so on.

Another approach which gained popularity in the 1970s and 1980s is 'anti-poverty', in which poverty is recognised as women's main problem. This was closely allied to the 'basic needs' movement, which had taken off during the 1970s. Solutions include income-generation projects, skill generation and so on. These strategies are often identical to those advocated by the 'efficiency approach', but their underlying philosophy is fundamentally different. Efficiency was central to much developmental philosophy during the 1980s, in line with the dominant political ideologies of the time. Accordingly, women were targets of development projects only because the centrality of their productive contribution was recognised. If projects aimed to improve recipients' well-being, rather than being based in notions of welfare or universal human rights, the underlying philosophy was that this would, in turn, increase their efficiency in the productive process and thus add to capitalist growth.

All of these approaches assume that change is initiated first and foremost from the outside, through donor-led policies and planning. As well as being fundamentally 'top-down', they have also been accused of ethnocentrism. Many of their fiercest critics are

Southern women, who argue that discourses of WID/GAD reflect the preoccupations and assumptions of Western feminists rather than the women they purport to be representing and assisting. Indeed, by homogenising all 'Third World' women (in concepts such as 'female-headed households', or in policies which treat the interests of women in vastly different cultural, economic and political contexts as the same) and treating them as victims in dire need of policies which alter their status, these approaches feed into colonial stereotypes and categories (see, in particular, Mohanty, 1988). Indeed, by treating them as 'victims' of their culture, they negate and undermine the *agency* of Southern women (White, 1992: 15–22).

Another criticism made of WID/GAD approaches is that they make ethnocentric assumptions regarding the content of relations between men and women in different societies, seeing only exploitation, subordination and conflict, whereas the women concerned might put more stress on cooperation and the importance of familial bonds (Barrios de la Chungara, 1983). Lastly, WID/GAD is accused of ignoring the true underlying causes of Southern women's subordination and poverty, which are more to do with colonial and post-colonial exploitation and inequality than the cultural construction of gender within their particular societies (Sen and Grown, 1987). This returns us to the concept of 'empowerment'.

Many of the institutional and policy changes regarding gender and development are to be welcomed. However, they also illustrate the capacity of radical concepts to be neutralised within development discourse. There is still a very great deal of work to be done, and this should not simply extend pre-existing WID/GAD programmes which are themselves often deeply problematic. At worst, the effect of WID/GAD approaches in development has been to transform what are in reality complex and nuanced conceptual tools and insights into overly simplified categories and phrases, which nonetheless are made central to policy (such as 'women-headed households') but effectively stripped of their radical implications.

Furthermore, since the techniques and jargon of many developers is comparatively rigid, with their insistence on frameworks, outputs and so on, the task of translating the work of feminist anthropologists into policy statements or a list of recommendations is far from easy. There is also a danger of gender policies collapsing into a new form of social engineering, whereby the object of the exercise is to 'raise women's status', regardless of the wider cultural context. We shall be exploring these points further in our concluding chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has indicated various ways in which, far from being monolithic, development discourse is heterogeneous, contested and constantly changing. As we have seen, there is considerable evidence that many development practitioners are gradually becoming aware of concepts such as participation and empowerment, are considering participatory methodologies, realising that local knowledge should be valued and taking gender issues more seriously. This shifting awareness is doubtless influenced by wider changes unrelated to anthropology, such as the failure of economic models of development to deliver better living standards to the poor, but is also due in part to the anthropological perspectives detailed in previous chapters.

Such shifts in the awareness of developers have also led to changes in actual policies and practice. Gender training, as practised today by many Northern agencies involving both their own employees and those of recipient organisations, is one example (for a wider discussion, see Kabeer, 1994: 264–305). Another is the increased funding of NGOs by agencies or the commitment (on paper at least) to participatory methodologies.

These changes have not, however, been achieved without a struggle. It is important to remember that just as 'development' does not involve a unitary body of ideas and practices, 'developers' are not a unitary body of people. The discourse is contested by different interest groups and individuals within agencies, as well as between them. A development policy or resulting project may be the result of considerable struggle by different actors to promote what they believe development should involve. For example, while 'WID' objectives may be widely accepted by many agencies in the 1990s (or at least, while many pay lip-service to them), this has often involved many years of lobbying by feminists working to change the patriarchal nature of development discourse. Meanwhile, what 'gender and development' should involve, both practically and theoretically, remains hotly debated.

It would, however, be misleading to give the impression that development discourse in the 1990s is a 'free for all' in which opponents of equal strength contest the policy agenda. The fact remains that some actors – and institutions – are more powerful than others. The new ideas and practices discussed here are also by no means all of equal political weight. Within the discourse, some concepts are dominant and pervasive while others remain subordi-

this often means that more radical ideas become coopted and neutralised, leading to contradictions between official policy and practice. 'Participation', for example, might be heavily emphasised in an agency's planning documents, but hardly take place at all 'on the ground'. Likewise, 'empowerment' is a concept intended to imply an alternative development agenda based on local grassroots action and power, but the term is also increasingly part of the language of governments and of mainstream management theory in the private sector.

Need this always be the case? Is Escobar correct in arguing that the 'architecture of the discursive formation' remains essentially the same? The answers are clearly highly complex, depending both on what arenas of practice and types of relations one is examining, and on what criteria one takes as indicating significant change. For example, do staffing levels within agencies indicate a shift in development practice? Within some agencies, social anthropologists are being increasingly employed as top-level policy advisors, as are feminists committed to WID or GAD. Does this mean that the ideas which such groups embody are being actively taken on board, or are such groups being coopted by more dominant and powerful interests? Likewise, while lobbyists within and outside agencies may be successful in changing official policy (a commitment in agency documents to 'women' or 'poverty alleviation', for example), this is not necessarily the same as changing actual practice.

Another arena one might examine is that of changing relations between NGOs and bilateral or multilateral donors. Increased levels of funding given to some of the more radical NGOs could be evidence that the balance of power within development is indeed changing. However, it could also be a case of 'old wine in new bottles', especially if those running NGOs are members of the most privileged groups who are merely taking over the functions of the state.

To argue effectively for or against Escobar's point one therefore needs to examine what happens 'on the ground', over many years. In whose hands does power remain? As anthropologists will be aware, this is not an easy question to answer; it requires considerably more research and is an area in which anthropologists of development potentially have much to contribute. The outcome of developmental work is also affected by factors outside the control of developers. It is thus too simple always to argue that the 'dominant' development discourse has once again succeeded in neutralising radical alternatives. For example, Southern governments may act to curtail the activities of NGOs funded by Northern

which they are a part. ...
pointed out, it is gender and not sex which is at issue. ...
a shift towards 'gender and development' (GAD) which turns

aid agencies if their work is too threatening to local power relations. Likewise, projects which attempt to increase the status of women may be unintentionally scuppered by inattention to the complexities of local gender relations. This may be the result of misinformation and bad practice, but does not necessarily indicate an international conspiracy of patriarchy.

In this chapter we have therefore suggested that processes are working in several directions at once – both towards and against change. At times and in some ways the dominant discourse and the power relations it involves are maintained; at other times, in other ways, they are challenged and slowly transformed. In the next chapter we examine in more detail the actual processes which take place in the machinery of development both to repress and neutralise challenges and – slowly – to adapt to new ideas and alternatives.