

Working Paper

August 2009

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Community Participation in Biodiversity Protection: An Enhanced Analytical Framework for Practitioners

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Acknowledgements:

This paper is part of an AFD research programme on “Global Public Goods and Local Practices”, involving case studies in Latin America and Asia. The author is grateful to the Centre for the Study of Global Governance, based at the London School of Economics (LSE), for its continuous support. He also wishes to thank Dr. Anthony Hall, of the LSE Social Policy Department, for his helpful comments and insights.

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Publications Director: Jean-Michel SEVERINO

Editorial Director: Robert PECCOUD

ISSN: 1954 - 3131

Copyright: 3rd quarter, 2009

Layout: Anne-Elizabeth COLOMBIER

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Abstract

This paper presents an enhanced analytical framework to project designers and evaluators for reinforcing their analysis of initiatives based on “community participation”—with a special focus on projects involving biodiversity protection. The paper tries to compensate for the typical lack of historical and power-structure analysis in standard reviews of participatory projects. The concepts presented here can be referred to by practitioners at various stages of the project cycle to strengthen their understanding of what they are actually “doing” or “aiming to do”, with and to local communities. The framework presented first provides a set of

typologies for foreseeing and assessing the many forms that participatory processes can take. It then turns to “social capital”, a key notion on which participatory projects are largely built, but which is rarely closely analysed. Third, comes the complex question of “power”, and how to approach it when looking at the many local impacts of participatory projects. Finally, a case is made for adopting a broader temporal perspective, by looking at the dynamic, historical interaction between humans and nature at the local level; in the design and evaluation of current participatory projects, much can be learned from past environmental crises.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to help project designers and evaluators deepen their analysis of participatory programmes, especially those focused on biodiversity protection. The paper offers an enhanced conceptual framework, and a number of analytical grids, that may be of use in designing evaluation methodologies—a process that is best undertaken at the very early stages of project design. The framework provided here is not meant to replace more typical ones, but only to complement or supplement them. Thus, it leaves out key aspects that a full-fledged project evaluation should cover—such as a strict assessment of environmental effectiveness.

First, we concentrate on the participatory processes themselves and provide typologies that help analyse their “quality” in some depth. Second, we suggest giving greater

importance to the *a priori* and *ex post* assessment of “social capital”, which is rarely touched on, or is evaluated (if at all) in a rather unhistorical context. Third, we present an analytical grid meant to shed light on the many intended and unintended effects of participatory projects on existing power structures. Power phenomena are rarely dealt with in project evaluations, and even more rarely comprehensively captured, given the difficulty of conceptualising “power” in its various forms. Fourth and finally, we argue in favour of an historical assessment of human interaction with nature in the context of biodiversity projects, to better see how local society and the environment have been responding over time to dynamic pressures from one another—a process that can usefully inform both design and evaluation.

1. Assessing Community Participation

It is rare to find in standard evaluations of participatory projects a real discussion of the actual participatory processes. These are usually quickly and perfunctorily described and assessed, often on the basis of quantitative indicators, such as the number of stakeholders meeting, or public outreach sessions. Nevertheless, the analysis of participation can, and should, go deeper, towards an understanding of its “quality”. This type of evaluative research can certainly be very costly and may seem unnecessary, especially if the participatory project is deemed rather successful in its environmental objectives. Why should donors then bother to spend time and money on assessing the degree and quality of “participation”, if the desired results are already being achieved?

The first reason is that participatory projects are more costly than non-participatory ones, so it is important to assess the justification and value-added for the participation, and

thus the ways in which participation can impact the outcomes. A second reason is that a key rationale for participation in environmental management is that it supposedly increases the long-term sustainability of managerial institutions, allowing for dynamic changes and new stakeholders to be integrated and dealt with more smoothly and efficiently. Consequently, any sound assessment of sustainability cannot do without a deep understanding of the resilience and quality of the participatory processes.

Types of community participation can be categorised in terms of: why participation is promoted (as a means or an end); who participates (narrow or broad sections of the community); who initiates the project; when participation occurs (from identification to evaluation); how active the participation is (passive or active); what the role of the State is; and what is the mix of incentives, disincentives and constraints that participation faces.

1.1 Goals: participation as a means or as an end?

Participation carries an inherent ambiguity, in biodiversity protection as in many other areas. It can be viewed as an end in itself, or as a means to achieve some other result, be it economic or environmental. It can be used as an instrument, or valued as something intrinsically worthy that maintains its pre-eminent value regardless of the outcome.

These two outlooks carry very different implications, and thus should be dealt with head on by evaluators. When participation is conceived of in instrumental terms, social relations may be under-analysed, left untouched or modified only to the extent that they impede a given goal. Conversely, the view of participation as an end advocates

for transformation in power relations, both within the community and with external agents, be they international donors, NGOs or public authorities. Participation then implies an emancipatory project that aims to correct unequal power relations.

Goulet (1989), for instance, sees participation as essentially about “non-elite participation”, as opposed to “elites”, such as public officials, development experts or even local community leaders. Communities are not homogenous social constructs: they include weaker or marginalised groups, based on age, gender, ethnicity, capabilities, education, livelihoods, assets and so on. Participation as an end

guarantees the “non-instrumental treatment of powerless people by bringing them dignity as beings of worth, independent of their productivity, utility, or importance” to some externally defined goals (Goulet, 1989: 171).

Some observers, like Oakley (1989), suggest that large bureaucracies (public authorities, international donors or even NGOs) have a built-in tendency to deal with participation as a means, given organisational pressures to deliver on over-riding, pre-existing goals—goals that are rarely defined in terms of promoting political participation. The balance they strike between participation as an end rather than a means varies, depending on the institutional culture, traditions and/or pressure from external lobbies.

Drawing on Pinto da Silva (2002), one can identify five different objectives that donors or public authorities can pursue when promoting participatory environmental projects. These five goals can be arranged as shown in Figure 1.

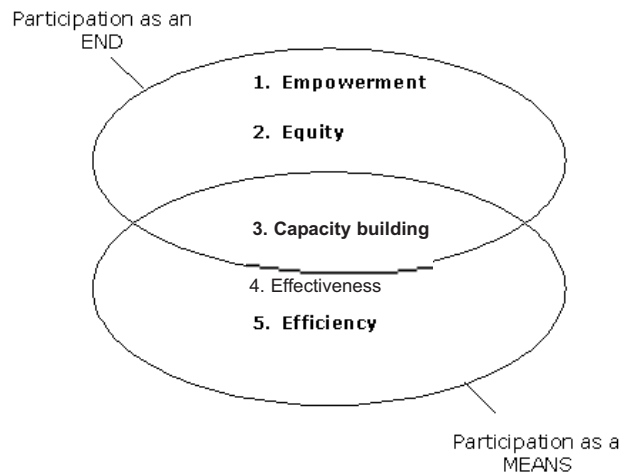
First is “empowerment”, the objective closest to the concept of participation as an end in itself. Empowerment is the redistribution of power to those who are excluded from it. It is inherently political and often hailed as the goal of “real participation”. The second potential objective, still close to “participation as an end”, is “increased equity” in terms of access to resources by marginalised groups, such as women or the elderly. Both the objectives of “empowerment” and “greater equity” call for avoiding existing power structures that may be recreated in the environmental projects, as well as the hijacking of the projects by the local elite.

Right at the frontier of participation as an end rather than a means is the objective of “capacity building”. This involves an individual, as well as a collective, learning process, whereby the community develops new skills and institutions that strengthen its autonomy and ability to manage itself. It is generally agreed that sustainability strongly depends on local capacities that remain long after outside support has ceased.

Finally, there are goals based on a strictly instrumental view of participation. First, is the objective of “increased effectiveness”, which participation may facilitate by incorporating local knowledge and institutions that are better adapted to deal with local realities and expectations. Second, although participatory approaches are typically more time-consuming, a goal of “increased efficiency” may be sought through participation, whereby participation helps to avoid costly errors, as well as provide a way to share the cost of inputs. Contributions by the community, in cash or in-kind, are often seen by donors as proof of serious commitment.

The evaluation of participatory programmes requires prior reflection about the extent to which the initial project design viewed participation as an instrument, or as an end in itself—as well as a study of the implementation process to see whether this view is being consistently applied. The designation of participation as a means rather than an end also entails specific deontological considerations that will be touched on in Section 3 of this paper.

Figure 1 – The goals of community participation in environmental projects



1.2 Inclusiveness: who participates?

The second range of issues one should consider when evaluating community participation is “who actually participated”. The answer may seem straightforward: the community! But what does this mean? The apparently simple notion of “community” is far from being so.

As Agrawal (2001) explains, the word “community” has moved in and out fashion within social theory. Those who view “modernisation” negatively have tended to look at “community” positively—and conversely.¹ Tonnies’ famous formulation of *Gemeinschaft* vs *Gesellschaft* (community vs society) gave “community” the meaning of an “organic whole” that provides positive social ties, functions and identities to its members. This romantic view of “communities”, based on a disenchanted view of “modernity”, partly accounts for the attraction the concept still holds among environmentalists. In biodiversity programmes, a “community” is often conceived of as an organic social entity, bound by a cultural identity, social norms, a delineated territorial space and a common interest in local environmental resources.

However, the coherence, internal harmony and homogeneity of such “communities” are often and largely overestimated. Each community is more likely to be “a community of

communities”, themselves patterned into sub-groups with varying or contradictory interests, status, political affiliations, assets, sometimes religions, etc. Due to the diversity within each community, the social preferences of a community may be inconsistent and may lead to conflict (Steelman and Ascher, 1997).

Moreover, communities also include individuals with self-centered strategies. People do not necessarily experience a shared feeling of “community” as a result of sharing the same institutional and natural environment. Individuals may (and often do) see one another as a threat to their livelihoods (McCay and Jentoft, 1998: 23), even within low-income social groups, such as poor fishers in the Caribbean. This fact has been increasingly acknowledged in recent times within environmentalist circles (Agrawal and Gibson, 2001).

1. Social philosophers, such as Marx, Spencer and the early Durkheim, see “modernisation” as freeing humanity from the coercive world of traditions, from the tyranny of custom, long-standing social structures and rural life—all elements that the word “community” typically encapsulates. On the other hand, writers such as Tonnies, the later Durkheim or Dewey, see “progress” as a destructive dynamic impacting social ties, the sense of selfhood and belonging (Agrawal, 1999).

Social stratification is everywhere, and various forms of capital are not evenly distributed, even within rather coherent interest groups. Strong variations in involvement may appear, depending on the social capital of each individual. Specific sub-groups, such as fishers or landowners, may themselves be analysed in terms of their own elite or non-elite components. Special attention to disadvantaged groups can be paid, such as the poor, the migrants, the youth, the women, etc. Agarwal (2001), for instance, measured participation by forestry groups in India and Nepal, depending on whether they included or excluded women.

Based on this understanding of what a community is, one can analyse the inclusiveness of “community participation” (CP) along two different axes: 1) the first axis reflects the range (wide vs narrow) of community sub-groups that are significantly involved in the project; 2) the second looks across sub-groups to whether participation is directed toward their elite, their non-elite, or is socially mixed. The first axis assesses the diversity of sub-groups involved in the project; the other measures the extent to which participation includes or excludes non-elite people across sub-groups.

Table 1 thus shows various possible configurations of inclusiveness. They range from Case 1 (a wide and socially mixed CP, the most inclusive configuration) to Case 6 (narrow and elite-centered CP, the least inclusive). Let us stress that the targeting of marginal groups, a popular

approach with international donors, can be a double-edged sword. For instance, a participatory project in marine management focusing only on the poorer fishers is surely non-elite centered, but it may not be very inclusive either, if other groups with a stake in the process are left out.

Furthermore, in the study of inclusiveness, it is not enough to look at the single local community. There is also a need to assess the “stakeholder inclusiveness” of the project, and possibly compare this with “community inclusiveness”. A detailed analysis of all stakeholders and affected parties is the necessary first step in both the preparation and evaluation of any participatory project (Hampton, 1999). This leads to a mapping of all the potentially affected or influential parties, some of which are located beyond the local community—including public authorities (local, regional or central), various non-local civil society organisations (such as domestic or international NGOs), economic actors of all kinds (identifiable businesses, consumers), etc.

To map stakeholder groups, two questions need to be answered for each group identified: 1) does the group have high or low stakes/interest in the participatory project at hand? 2) does the group potentially have high or low influence on the project? Stakes and influence are the two defining criteria for being a stakeholder. Once this work is done, one can again wonder whether the various groups are included and are being given a voice in the participatory project.

Table 1 - Six configurations of community inclusiveness

Range of sub-groups involved \ Participation within sub-groups	Wide	Narrow
	Socially mixed	1. Wide CP and socially mixed
Non-elite centered	2. Wide CP targeting on non-elites	5. Narrow CP targeting on non-elites
Elite centered	3. Wide CP but elite-centered	6. Narrow CP and elite-centered

1.3 Origins: who initiates, designs and supports?

Participatory projects can also be classified based on their “originating agents”, as suggested by Goulet (1989). This approach becomes even more useful if the agents are subdivided into the following three categories: Initiators, Supporters and Designers.

- *Initiators* are the “originating agents”, who had the initial impulse for change and the idea for creating some kind of community project. They are usually stakeholders who were not satisfied with the *status quo*. Their initial idea is not necessarily the one that will eventually be selected and implemented, but without their initiating move, nothing would have happened.

- *Supporters* are actors that join initiators at an early stage and support their desire for change through networks and political, technical or financial resources. They have, nonetheless, their own views and motivations.

- *Designers* are individuals, groups or organisations that play a role in designing, in some detail, the project to be implemented. They are often drawn from among Initiators and Supporters, but they can also come from further away, as in the case of foreign experts called on to help design the participatory project. The point here is to identify who—if anyone—had the most influence on project design.

Such an analysis of “originating agents” is arguably a critical step in any rigorous evaluation. Furthermore, the results of this analysis should allow for the participatory program, as a whole, to be classified into one of four categories: participation from “within”;² from “above”; from “outside” the community;³ or from “balanced sources”. The challenge is to see if, and what type of, agents tend to dominate.

(1) Participation originating from within. These are cases in which the Initiators, Supporters and Designers are largely drawn from the local community. The latter mobilises itself of its own accord to deal with a given issue or to oppose a policy. Especially in times of emergency or crisis,

new networks of solidarity can emerge, or old ones be reactivated. Such networks may compensate for basic public services no longer being provided by the public authorities, such as garbage collection (as in Argentina after 2001), basic education or street policing. Such home-grown, bottom-up initiatives are often praised in the development literature (e.g. Easterly, 2006, Chapter 10). Self-initiated mobilisation may nevertheless be facilitated by an enabling framework of support provided by the government or NGOs. However, this type of participation may not challenge the existing distribution of wealth and power within the community, and “participation from within” may also be led throughout by local elites.

(2) Participation originating from above. In this configuration, Initiators, Supporters and Designers are largely drawn from central authorities. Participatory projects at a local level are often decided and designed from “above”, by the State or by political parties who want to reshape the provision of certain public services. This was the case, for instance, in Brazil when the federal government under President Lula fostered participatory reforms, such as municipal health or water councils. The Indian state of Kerala is also famous for having implemented a strong form of decentralisation, with the direct involvement of rural communities. Central governments are in a good position to shape (or veto) such new governance arrangements. They have in their hands the legislative instruments to originate the legal and policy frameworks. They can also support the participatory projects with training, enforcement systems, economic incentives, expertise, etc.

2. Goulet (1989) labels this category as “participation from below” — as compared to “elites” that are located “above”. However, we prefer to label it “participation from within”, to underscore that the originating agents are part of the community itself.

3. Here, we draw upon the typology of Goulet (1989) but partly change its form and meaning.

(3) Participation originating from the outside. These are cases in which the mix of Initiators, Supporters and Designers shows a predominance of “external agents”, such as non-local NGOs, foreign experts, international organisations, etc. In participatory projects, outside actors, whether domestic or international, are supposed to impose their views on all stakeholders. In principle, they are meant to simply facilitate the inclusion of all affected parties in the process and remain strict catalysts. Theoretically, they should also leave the stage when stakeholders create their own processes.

Most observers, however, acknowledge that this ideal view often remains theoretical. First, participatory principles (starting with “decentralisation”) are increasingly being imposed by foreign donor governments on the recipient countries, through conditions linked to financial support for development or environmental policies (Smoke, 2003). In this case, outside influences take on the mask of State-led “participation from above”. But external influence can be even more direct, as is the case in Latin America, where international NGOs and foundations often take a lead in initiating local projects and implementing them on the ground. Although their “agents of change” (such as field

workers or community organisers) are selected from within local communities, such foreign NGOs deeply impact local participatory processes through their “expert knowledge”, skills and financial support.

(4) Participation originating from balanced sources. Most participatory projects tend to be initiated by a mix of “internal”, “external” and “above” agents, acting either as Initiators, Supporters or Designers—but projects can still be classified into one of the three preceding categories based on the type of actors that tend to dominate. However, in some (rare) cases, the initial influences on project design can be rather balanced among the various actors.

It is not easy to say what type of originating agent comes closest to the participatory ideal. Much depends on what follows origination, and how participation works later on. All four types of origination—from within, above or the outside—run the risk of creating or reinforcing dominant structures within local communities. Community leaders, just as people from “above” or “the outside”, may well use the rhetoric of non-elite participation to amass even more power (Crocker, 2007).

1.4 Participation in what, and when?

Another important way to assess participatory projects is to consider where, and when, groups insert themselves into the participatory processes. Drawing on Goulet (1989), seven potential entry points can be identified.

(a) Need-assessment and initial diagnosis. This is when opinions about problems, wishes for improvements and potential goals are expressed.

(b) Listing and formulation of possible solutions. This is when debates about possible plans take place.

(c) Selection of a course of action. Planning ends and key decisions are made at this stage.

(d) Preparing for implementation. This can take the form of social mobilisation (raising awareness, establishing community organisations, etc.) or training (formal or informal) to enhance communication, maintenance or accounting skills.

(e) Implementation. Community members may engage in management activities; contribute with cash, labour or materials to construction, operation, maintenance or monitoring; pay membership or service fees to local organisations.

(f) Evaluation and on-going correction. This is about contributing to the appraisal of work during the imple-

mentation itself, as well as identifying evolving needs and possible improvements.

- (g) Envisioning the future.** This refers to an ongoing process in which the future can be discussed and envisioned—when the merits of further action and change can be considered.

In the global discourse on participation (see Charnoz, 2009), it is generally said that participation should start as early as possible, both for ethical reasons (letting people express

their preferences) and instrumental reasons (such as overall effectiveness—see, for instance, Hampton, 1999 or Petrova, *et al.*, 2002). Goulet (1989) shares this wise view and suggests that “upstream” participation is critical in producing better outcomes with respect to social justice. Nevertheless, Crocker (2007) points out that the entry point does not automatically determine the quality of participation: in each of these seven participatory channels, a variety of ways and modes of participation are possible, some more active and influential than others. They are reviewed below.

1.5 Intensity: how active is participation?

How passive or active participation actually is—in any given channel—is a critical concern in the literature on environmental management (e.g. Hall, 1997). Although difficult to assess, it should be an important focus for evaluators. The degree of “passivity” or “pro-activity” of the various members and sub-groups depends on formal and informal everyday practices (such as the running of various institutions) that are not easy to observe and analyse. The devil (of elite or external influence) may lie in the details of social interaction—in board meetings, for instance. Concrete habits and social practices affect the ability of certain community members to stand up to competing influences and modify the path of ongoing developments. A close study of the concrete functioning of institutions (rulemaking, stakeholder meetings, lines of responsibility, division of labour, etc.) is a key aspect of this analysis. In particular, who sets the agenda, and how this agenda omits certain possibilities, issues or decisions are some of the central questions.

Building on the work of authors, such as Goulet (1989), Gaventa (1998), Pretty (1995), Agarwal (2001), Drydyk (2005) and Crocker (2007), we identify six levels of “participatory intensity” applicable to any of the above-mentioned “channels” of participation. The further down the list, the more intensive the participation.⁴

- (i) Nominal participation.** In this scenario, group members are formally part of the decision-making mechanisms, but they do not attend meetings. This may be because they are unable to come (as is the case with remote and

difficult environments); or they can also be unwilling to do so – if they are, for instance, harassed, unwelcome or do not feel at ease with the people they are supposed to meet with. The culture of a community sub-group may also be such that people have trouble interacting with any formal organisation.

- (ii) Passive participation.** Here, group members attend the decision-making meetings, but passively listen to reports about decisions that others have already made. Typically, various types of “elites” tell group members what is to be done, who at best ask questions. This can be due to power relations, threats of retaliations or lack of vision or technical skills on the part of the non-elite members. Passive participation occurs, for instance, when public agencies come into a community to provide information about something that is going to happen, or has already occurred.

- (iii) Consultative participation.** Group members participate by giving information and their opinions (“input”, “preferences” and even “proposals”). They neither deliberate among themselves nor make decisions. It is others who are the “deciders”, and while they may listen, they have no obligation to do so. This happens, for instance, when outside environmental

4. There are in the literature typologies that may seem more comprehensive since they offer more categories, such as “petitionary participation” and “implementing participation” (Goulet, 1989) or “independent participation” (Pretty, 1995). However, these further categories do not exactly focus on “participation intensity” as we define it, and their insights are covered in other parts of the analytical framework presented here.

organisations collect local information (desires, opinions, and the needs of the people) and a ready-made proposal is then put forward.

(iv) Bargaining participation. Group members bargain with others leading the decision-making process, using whatever power they have. Self-interest primarily motivates each side. Influence on the final “deal” depends on what each party is willing to give up, and what concessions they are able to obtain.

Some losses may be accepted now, if future gains are anticipated. The greater the power of one group, the less influence the others have on the outcome.

(v) Deliberative participation. Here, contrary to the preceding situation, bargainers are more like partners than adversaries. Group members are involved in a consensus-seeking process in which stakeholders review proposals and forge agreements that a majority of them can accept.

1.6 What role for the State?

The involvement of community stakeholders in environmental-management projects rarely means that the State leaves the picture. Evaluators should try to provide the clearest possible representation of what is happening with this key actor in cases of “community participation”. There is a range of possible governance arrangements in which the balance of power between central authorities and the community varies. The notion of “co-management” precisely captures this diversity. Drawing on ICLARM & IFM (1998) and Leikam, *et al.* (2004), Figure 2 displays a continuum of options. On the lower end, the State holds all the decision-making power, while community members are just meant to comply (top-down model). On the upper end, all decisions and responsibilities are in the hands of community members (bottom-up model). Between these extremes is the space of “co-management” proper. Community participation is maximal in the “bottom-up” model, but it is also nevertheless central to various forms of “co-management”.

(i) Delegated co-management means that authority (decisions, implementation and enforcement) is

entrusted to local stakeholders, while the state is simply kept informed.

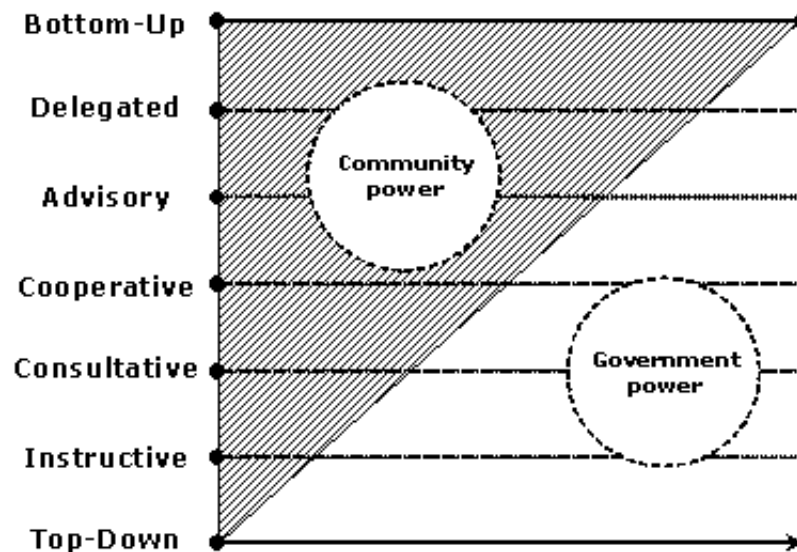
(ii) Advisory co-management. In this model, the state plays an advisory role, while community members are entrusted with the primary responsibilities.

(iv) Cooperative co-management is when the government and the community cooperate as equal partners. It is thus often described as the “purest” form of co-management. Rules regarding deliberation, voting and monitoring are then often institutionalised.

(iv) Consultative management entails the creation of a structure through which the government can consult with community members, such as an advisory board, but the government makes the final decisions.

(v) Instructive co-management. In this type of arrangement, close to the top-down model, a dialogue exists between central authorities and community stakeholders, but it is very limited and mostly takes the form of the government informing the stakeholders.

Figure 2 – Range of co-management models



Source: Inspired by Sen & Neilson (1996).

Co-management is often related to larger, national processes of “decentralisation” meant to move power away from a central locus to one that is closer to those affected by the decisions. Decentralisation does not necessarily involve local communities; instead, some power can be given to a “lower” type of public authority, such as a state within a federation, a regional body, or municipal councils. Co-management projects have nevertheless often flourished as parts of larger administrative reforms.

During the past two decades, decentralisation has been strongly promoted in developing countries—be it by domestic political parties, civil society organisations or international ones and bilateral donors. Usually, it is still a relatively new process for many South countries, which are still experimenting with it. Central bureaucracies often slow down the process, in spite of political will or rhetoric. Legal, technical and financial capacities take a long time to be put into practice, and are often half-implemented. This strongly complicates the challenges faced by communities, since they are often entrusted with new responsibilities, but without the adequate means to carry them out.

Such unreliable procedures put even more pressure on

local stakeholders to get themselves organised. They have to unite, compromise among themselves, and convey clear messages to the central authorities. The additional presence of non-domestic actors, such as international NGOs, organisations or bilateral donors, adds another layer of complication. Two types of skills are thus critical for communities.

First is the ability to form strategic alliances and partnerships among stakeholders. Trust, reciprocity, common rules, norms and sanctions all contribute to effective alliances, as well as well-defined membership, objectives, leadership and roles for all parties. Alliances can further be reinforced (through complementarities) or challenged (through differences) by political allegiances, such as urban/rural, international/local or expert/non-expert divides.

The second important set of skills within the community, for co-management to work, is the capacity to manage conflict. Decentralisation of authority over natural resources often results in increased tension between local stakeholders (Ribot, 2002). These tensions can take many forms, from holding back information to refusing to abide by a previously agreed upon management plan. Conflicts are not entirely negative, however: they may first hinder collaboration,

but eventually they may result, if skilfully managed, in new and improved agreements.

Co-management structures are supposed to allow for mediation mechanisms and recourse options that promote dialogue and negotiation. A process of “conflict management” ideally involves: addressing disagreements

before hostility appears; acknowledging the perspectives of the various stakeholders; exploring a multiplicity of options and selecting one everyone (or most) can live with; compensating negatively affected parties; and understanding the underlying causes in order to avoid future, or recurring conflicts (IRDC, 2003; Borrini-Feyerabend, *et al.*, 2000).

1.7 Constraints and incentives

The seventh type of issue that evaluators should look at when exploring participatory processes is the set of constraints and disincentives that tend to hinder participation. Widespread passivity by community members is often observed; the reasons why specific individuals or groups join participatory projects, and others refuse, are an important area for research. A safe starting point for inquiry is the notion that people respond to incentives.

1.7.1 Individual costs and their distribution

The list of potential disincentives for “bothering to participate” in specific projects is long. Poorer people, for instance, usually fear having reduced access to natural resources. While the immediate costs of creating new environmental regulations are obvious to individuals, the benefits are much less apparent: for a given individual(s), they may take a long time to appear, or never materialise, although they may be very real for the local or international community—through the provision of reinforced environmental services, for instance.

In any case, protecting biodiversity rarely solves the problems of everyday life, such as feeding the family. Hence, there is reluctance to give credit or support, in any way, to what is perceived as not beneficial. When the participatory project does bring about some direct, short-term and visible benefit to individuals, the perception of an unfair distribution of work or benefits can also block involvement by community members. People do seem to have a preference for social fairness, especially when they feel that relative inequalities may increase, to their detriment. Issues about equality can lead well beyond a lack of participation, from riots and boycotts to open conflicts.

1.7.2 Incentives and compensations

Gauging the effectiveness of incentives is another dimension of evaluation. There are many reasons people may be willing to participate: an expectation of short or long-term benefits, individually or collectively; direct remuneration in cash, kind or business contracts; motivation to work together based on a feeling of community and collective purpose; social, religious or traditional obligations for mutual help and action. But these reasons are usually not enough for certain groups of people who feel they would be losing out. Consequently, participatory projects often try to compensate the most affected groups one way or another. This can take the form of direct cash or in-kind payments, such as to older fishers asked to stop using traditional techniques but not in a position to train for new ones. Another way of assisting affected people is to identify alternative activities that make sustainable use of the environment, or at least do not rely as heavily on it (Leikam, *et al.*, 2004). “Economic Demonstration Projects” (EDPs) is the usual term for such endeavours. They are meant to give community members a chance to regain lost income, including the learning of new skills, and tilt the local economy towards more environmentally sustainable practices.

Nevertheless, although it may promise a good living, not all people within a community are necessarily interested in participating in a given project (Barzetti, 1993). Working with visitors in ecotourism, for instance, does not appeal to everyone. Setting up a few EDPs is thus generally not enough to satisfy everybody: such projects seldom solve all the problems linked to lost rights to natural resources that affect a range of people. What is more, EDPs may also alter the local culture (bringing tourists into sacred woods) or family structures

(new projects often changing the primary income generator), and this may spur even more suspicion. Targeted and smaller projects for specific families (or set of families) are also sometimes developed; for instance, through a fund whereby they can seek a grant or a loan to start a new activity. Finally, community projects with broader reach may be undertaken to increase the provision of public services; for instance, the building of roads, improving schools or strengthening the supply of freshwater (Gurung, 1995).

1.7.3 Attitudes of external facilitators

Experts, technicians and project coordinators sent by public authorities or foreign donors to “facilitate and support” participatory processes are external to the community, and their behaviours can critically impact local dynamics. They can prove extremely useful, but some of their attitudes may also de-motivate locals. Inappropriate actions or talk can leave community members feeling not understood or lacking ownership over what is happening.

Treating people with respect, listening to them and being willing to learn from them are critical components of a smooth interaction between community members and such external “facilitators”. This is largely recognised, for instance, in the field of emergency health programs: “Fieldworkers who expect members of the affected community to be grateful for their presence, without recognising and empathising with them as people, may satisfy their own egos but will have little other positive effect” (Harvey, *et al.*, 2002, Chap. 12.1). Conversely, however, “if people are treated as being helpless they are more likely to act as if they are” (*ibid*), with little or no active engagement. External agents must strike a delicate balance between empathy and detachment—a balance that is difficult to assess *ex post* by evaluators, even through interviews that attempt to reconstruct an image of the past.

1.7.4 Social structures and capital

The community’s own social structures and capital can also introduce important constraints and disincentives to participation. Gendered norms are a classic example. Agarwal (2001), for instance, identifies factors underpinning the exclusion of women from community forestry groups in India and Nepal. They include: gender segregation in public spaces; female domestic duties leaving little time for other commitments; behavioural norms of self-effacement, shyness and soft speech; men’s traditional control of community life; as well as women’s lack of personal property.

An individualistic society, in which there is little, if any, sense of community, may be a hindrance to participation, while a community that is too hierarchically integrated may prove active, but with little shared agency and the limited inclusion of lower-level stakeholders. Another aspect of social capital is the history and practice of collective action within the community. Sandersen (1999), for instance, stresses that many Caribbean fisher communities are poorly organised beyond the household level. Kinship ties are strong, but experiences in collective organisation are few and far between. Fishers and their families do not have a history of associations, or of engaging with institutions. In other words, they have no legacy of collective action to build on when presented with participatory channels. Moreover, such communities can be highly politicised and divided. Such is the case of the Caribbean island St. Lucia, where even small communities are often deeply divided into partisans of the St. Lucia Labour Party (SLP) and those of the United Workers Party (UWP): a political understanding of participatory initiatives is often the result, with people refusing to join because they “refuse to help the party in power”.

1.8 Checklist

Table 2 - Assessing community participation: dimensions, issues and questions

Dimensions and central questions		Main forms	Related definitions and issues
GOAL	Possible goals of participation along the "means/end spectrum":	1. Empowerment 2. Equity 3. Capacity building 4. Effectiveness 5. Efficiency	"Goals" = the formal objectives of the participatory project as observed in theory (e.g. project documents) and practice (implementation). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation as an end = emancipatory project to correct for unequal social relations; transformation in power relations. • Participation as a means = instrumental treatment of people to achieve specific goals. • Empowerment = redistribution of power to those who are excluded from it. • Equity = greater access to resources on the part of marginalised groups. • Capacity building = individual and collective learning processes, skills, institutions. Participation for increased effectiveness—through local knowledge and capacities. Participation for efficiency—to avoid costly errors and share the costs
Participation as a means or as end?		End  Mean	
INCLUSIVENESS	Possible configurations along two different axes:	1. Diversity of community sub-groups involved in the scheme (wide vs narrow inclusion) 2. The focus of participation within sub-groups (non-elite centered, socially mixed or elite centered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Inclusiveness" = what specific groups or individuals are significantly involved. • Need for an analysis of the community and its sub-groups. How they are socially differentiated (status, political, affiliations, assets, interests, etc.) Assessing cohesion vs fragmentation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for an analysis of stakeholders—according to their high/low level of stakes and high/low level of influence within the participatory scheme. • Comparing community inclusiveness vs stakeholder inclusiveness.
Who Participates?			
CHANNELS	Possible channels (upstream vs downstream participation):	1. Initial diagnosis 2. Listing of potential solutions 3. Selection of a course of action 4. Preparation of implementation 5. Implementation 6. Evaluation and on-going correction 7. Envisioning the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Channels" = entry-points for participation. At what level does participation occur and when? • Initial diagnosis: who expressed opinions, wishes and desired goals? • Listing of solutions: who participated in the debates about possible plans? • Selection a course of action: who made the key decisions and plans? • Preparing for implementation: who participated in social mobilisation and training? • Implementation: who participated in key institutions? Who contributed to costs, construction, operation, maintenance, and the monitoring of the various endeavours? • Evaluation: who has a role in on-going appraisal and the identification of evolving needs? • Envisioning the future: where is the space in which future changes can be discussed, and who is present?
Participation in what, and when?			

<p>INTENSITY</p> <p>How active is the participation?</p>	<p>Possible intensity levels (from inactive to active participation):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nominal participation 2. Passive participation 3. Consultative participation 4. Bargaining participation 5. Deliberative participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Intensity" = degree of active participation and the agency of actors involved. ● Analysis of the everyday and practical functioning of participatory mechanisms (e.g. agenda sitting; social interactions during meetings expressing various forms of power, including institutional or structural power). ● Nominal: formal membership with no attendance at meetings. ● Passive: people attend meetings but listen passively. ● Consultative: people give information and opinions but have no decision-making power. ● Bargaining participation: self-interested deal-seekers; power relations weigh on outcomes. ● Deliberative participation: collective partnership in search of consensus.
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<p>ROLE OF THE ROLE</p> <p>What is the role of the State participatory project?</p>	<p>Possible involvement of the State in participatory projects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delegated co-management 2. Advisory co-management 3. Cooperative co-management 4. Consultative co-management 5. Instructive co-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delegated co-management: decisions, implementation and enforcement responsibilities entrusted to local stakeholders; the State is merely kept informed. ● Advisory: State has an advisory role and community members the core responsibilities. ● Cooperative: the government and the community cooperate as equal partners. ● Instructive: limited dialogue between State and community, mainly for information ● Analysis of decentralisation: discrepancy between local means and responsibilities; community's capacity to form strategic alliances and manage conflicts.
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<p>CONSTRAINTS AND INCENTIVES</p> <p>Why "bother" to participate?</p>	<p>Possible range of constraints:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual costs and their distribution 2. Incentives and compensations 3. Attitude of external actors 4. Social structures and capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hypothesis: people may respond to incentives and to strong cultural elements. ● Possible incentives: expected short or long-term, individual or collective benefits; business contacts; community feeling; traditional obligations for mutual help. ● Disincentives; discrepancy between immediate cost and slow-to-materialise benefits; perception of an unfair distribution of advantages ; social norms such as individualism, loyalties, politicisation; history of collective action. ● Compensation of most affected groups: cash or in-kind payments; "Economic Demonstration Projects" (EDPs)—but generally not enough to satisfy everybody. ● External facilitators (e.g. experts, technicians, project coordinators, etc.) can easily damage local trust in the participatory projects.
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2. Considering Social Capital: Dynamics and Inertias

Participatory projects are largely defined in the professional literature by their expected, and hoped for, impact on “social capital”. Terms such as “participation”, “social capital” or “community engagement” are thus often used interchangeably in project documents. Indeed, participatory projects ask communities to make use of their “social capital” to organise themselves, and they are also meant to further develop this form of collective asset.

Paradoxically, however, few evaluations of participatory environmental projects try to analyze social capital in real

terms, and assess how it evolves over time. In this section, we briefly review the concept of “social capital”, and how it can be integrated into the qualitative analysis of participatory projects. We notably argue that all-too-often, social capital is studied—if at all—in a static fashion. Here, just as for the dynamic interactions between humans and nature, history needs to be brought back into the picture to facilitate a long-term perspective. Indeed, the way societies respond to participatory mechanisms can be vastly illuminated by the history, dynamics and inertia of their social capital.

2.1 Dimensions and ambiguities of social capital

“Social capital” is one of those concepts that seems relatively easy to perceive in daily life but which is difficult to conceptualise and measure rigorously. Broadly speaking, it refers to social interactions and their by-products, such as trust, reciprocity, exchanges, common rules, norms, networks, groups, etc. A lot of the academic research on social capital has argued that collective bonds are beneficial for society as a whole: when people share trust, interactions are supposed to be easier and more efficient. Social capital is thus generally said to reduce transaction costs, facilitate information-sharing, decision-making, collective action, etc. This, in turn, is supposed to lead to higher returns on individual or collective efforts.

Hawe (2007) points out that it has become widely accepted that the strengthening of social capital will improve the lot of the poorest segments of society. An alternative view, however, is that social capital should be seen primarily as the resources people get from their social networks. This view helps us to see how social capital drives inequalities. Members of the elite can access more (information, assistance, advice, connections, etc.) and further benefit themselves. In that sense, social capital is the means by

which social inequalities are perpetuated—an understanding famously put forward by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1980).

Thus, there should be no automatic positiveness or cheering associated with social capital. As Beekman (2008) recalls, two types of social capital are often distinguished: bridging social capital connects different groups of people, while bonding social capital strengthens ties within a given community. The latter type tends to benefit members of a social network, while those outside the network are excluded—which may increase social differences.

More recently, a third category has been suggested: linking social capital (Woolcock, 1999). This refers to ties with people in positions of authority, such as representatives of public institutions (e.g. police, political parties) and private institutions (e.g. banks). While “bridging” social capital is essentially horizontal (connecting people of roughly equal social standing), “linking” social capital is more vertical, connecting people to key political resources and economic institutions, across power differentials.

While there is no automatic connection between social capital and inequality, the same holds true for the impact of social capital on free-riding behaviour. In some circumstances, social capital may stimulate such behaviour and hold back progress within a given social network. In large parts of sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, members of extended families can rely on each other any time, but this also discourages them from being more economically successful, since all benefits have to be shared. Conversely, in other circumstances or cultural contexts, dense social networks make free-riding difficult because people know each other and interact on the basis of reciprocity of efforts. In such contexts, it may be more difficult to be corrupt (since everybody knows everybody else), compared with individualistic societies, as Putnam (2000) has argued.

The literature on social capital is vast and has taken many paths. Bringing together varying approaches, Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2002) have developed a useful framework, which we present here and later rely on. It offers a coherent view of apparently parallel views of social capital, capturing the richness of social capital via a multifaceted research programme. In these two authors' view, social capital can be analysed along three dimensions: its scope; its forms; and its channels of impact.

1) **The scope of social capital is its primary dimension.**

This can first be analysed at a micro level—an approach often associated with Robert Putnam (1993). He defined social capital as the features of social organisation, such as networks of individuals or households, and the associated norms and values that create externalities for the community as a whole. Putnam first saw these externalities as being of a positive nature, but he has since acknowledged that negative externalities may also result, as is exemplified by the Italian Mafia.

Second, James Coleman (1990) offered a meso level analysis of social capital, pointing to relations among groups rather than individuals. This definition expands the concept to include vertical, as well as horizontal, associations and behaviour within, and among, other entities. Vertical associations are characterised by hierarchical relationships and unequal power distribution among members.

A third way to define the scope of social capital is to study the social and political macro environment shaping social structure and norms. This includes the political regime, the rule of law, the court system, civil and political liberties, etc. Such a focus on institutions draws on the work of Olson (1982) and North (1990), who have argued that such institutions have a critical impact on development dynamics. In a nutshell, micro social capital focuses on individuals within groups; meso social capital on inter-group relations; and macro social capital on the larger socio-political environment.

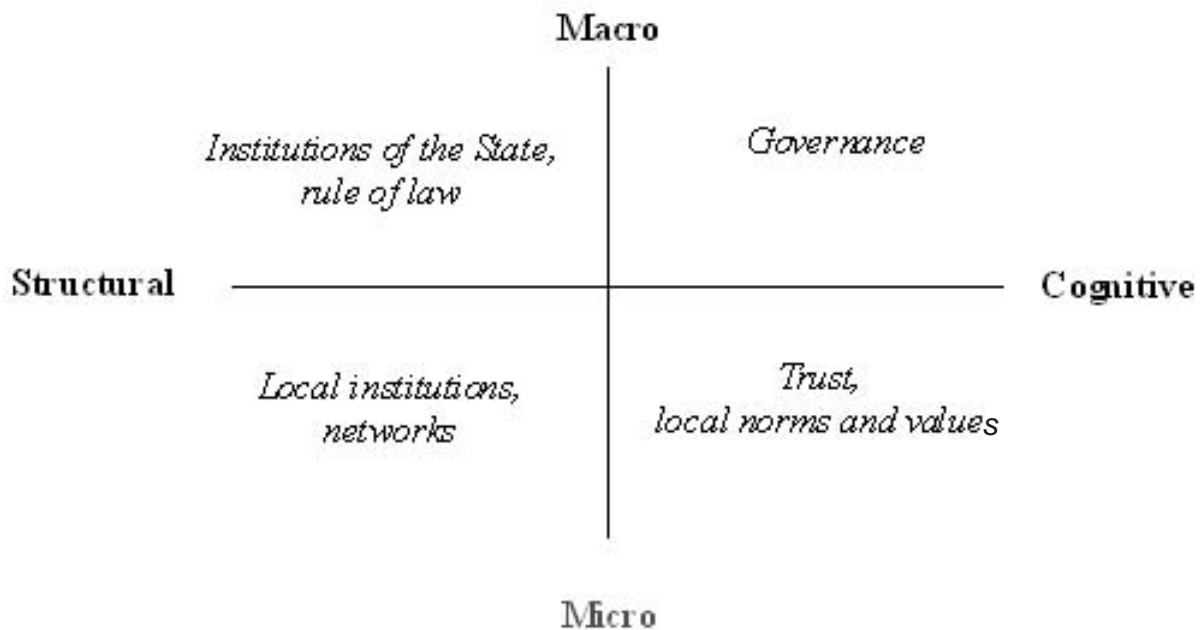
2) **The second dimension of social capital is its form.**

Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2002) suggest distinguishing between structural and cognitive forms. Structural social capital takes the form of observable constructs, such as established roles, rules, procedures, networks, organisations, etc. As such, it is relatively objective and easily identifiable. On the other hand, cognitive social capital refers to shared mental norms, values, trust, attitudes or beliefs. It is more subjective and intangible. These two forms of social capital can work hand-in-hand, in the same direction, but do not necessarily do so. Cooperation among people can be based on interpersonal cognitive bonds that may not be reflected in a formal arrangement. Similarly, the existence of formal associations does not necessarily attest to strong personal connections among members. In the case of participatory projects, a formal organisation may not automatically reflect existing cognitive bonds.

3) **The channels of impact comprise the third dimension of social capital,**

as identified by Grootaert and van Bastelaer. Typical benefits from social capital include better information-sharing, improved collective action and decision-making, and often, a reduction in opportunistic behaviour. Participation by individuals in dense social networks increases the availability of information and lowers its cost. Mutual trust makes it easier for groups to reach collective decisions and implement collective action. These various types of “benefits”, however, do not mean that society as a whole is necessarily benefiting, or that social inequalities are being reduced. Such benefits may accrue to a limited number of individuals or closed groups.

Figure 3 - Forms of social capital



Source: Grootaert and van Bostelaer (2002).

2.2 Researching social capital *in situ*

Assessing the social capital of a given community, group or even of an individual is no easy task, even through extended fieldwork. It can be attempted through direct inquiry, with the aid of specific questionnaires. Along this line, Grootaert, *et al.* (2004) have developed a general framework for questionnaires based on six sets of questions covering a host of issues. We present them here. Sections 1 and 2 focus on structural social capital; Sections 3 and 4 on cognitive social capital; and Sections 5 and 6 on the outcomes.

1) **Groups and networks.** This category is the most commonly associated with social capital. Questions here can focus on the nature and extent of an individual's participation in various types of social organisation and informal networks, as well as the range of contributions that the individual gives and receives from them. They can also focus on the diversity of a given group's membership, how its leadership is selected, and how involvement has changed over time. This work can entail counting associations and their members, and measuring various aspects of membership (e.g. internal heterogeneity) and institutional functioning (e.g. the extent of democratic

decision-making). In the case of networks, which are less formal, the key information is the scope of the network and the internal diversity of membership.

- 2) **Trust and solidarity.** This category seeks information on trust toward neighbours, colleagues, community organisations, service providers or even strangers, such as foreign "experts". Measuring trust requires asking respondents about their expectations and experiences with behaviours that require trust. Questions may relate, for instance, to the extent to which people have received, or would receive, assistance from members of their community or network in case of various emergencies. Questions can also target concerns over free-riding behaviour.
- 3) **Collective action and cooperation.** This category explores whether, and how, community members have worked with others in their community on joint projects, or in response to a crisis. It may also consider the consequences of violating community expectations regarding participation. The extent to which collective action occurs may be used as an indicator of underlying

social cohesion—at least to the extent that the cooperation is not imposed by an external force, such as central public authorities.

- 4) **Information and communication.** This category of questions can explore the ways and means by which community members receive information, communicate their feelings and opinions, or discuss and debate them with one another.
- 5) **Social cohesion and inclusion.** As we have seen, “communities” are not single and coherent entities, but rather are characterised by various forms of division and difference that can lead to conflict. Questions in this category seek to identify the nature and extent of these

differences, the mechanisms by which they are managed, and which groups are excluded from public services or participatory endeavours. Questions on everyday social interaction can also be considered here, to the extent that they manifest the degree of social cohesion.

- 6) **Empowerment and political action.** Based on the standard definition, individuals are “empowered” to the extent that they have a measure of control over institutions and processes directly affecting their well-being. Questions in this section can explore people’s sense of happiness, personal impact and capacity to influence both local events and broader political outcomes.

2.3 History, dynamics and inertias of social capital

In the analysis and evaluation of participatory projects, assessing the current level of social capital is of little use in itself, since this does not help observe, illuminate or predict change. It is thus essential to adopt a dynamic, rather than a static, view of social capital. This requires inquiring first into the social and political history of the community in question. A serious look at past political conflicts, collective learning processes (regardless of whether they succeeded or failed) helps us draw a history-informed picture of the participatory project’s social framework.

To be sure, an historical legacy does not automatically predict social reactions. Nonetheless, it provides insight into how a society functions, and how it may react to institutional innovations and external interventions. The history and habits of the collective action of various groups shed light on what “participation” may be transformed into. In the context of the Caribbean, for instance, Sandersen (1999) stresses that fisher communities are poorly organised beyond the household level. Their experience of collective organisation is limited, and they have neither a history of association nor of engagement with local institutions. They are thus thoroughly unprepared to successfully take part in participatory projects.

Beyond an analysis of the historical legacy, taking a dynamic view of social capital also requires information on how people perceive change, after the participatory project has been implemented. Social capital can accumulate or decrease. Whether, and how, this process can be modified by donor interventions and policies is central to evaluating participatory endeavours. External agents may facilitate the creation of social capital, but their presence can also induce disturbances and dependencies in the community.

It is surely not easy for external agents to contribute to the process of building social capital. Providing external resources to groups or organisations may have mixed effects on internal social capital, although it can help to build external linkages with a range of useful actors. Strengthening social capital through participatory projects requires triggering a process of social reorganisation that should ideally be self-sustaining. However, ignition may not activate an endogenous process: community members may eventually revert to old habits or social networks, either to take advantage of the project or to opt out—leaving proponents and full-time staff dedicated to the project with the choice of letting the process die, or

sustaining it more and more artificially, so as not to lose face in front of donors or to simply maintain their jobs.

Should the participatory project develop well and happily, in a deeply participatory way, the level of “bridging” social capital may increase in the given community, thus enabling more collective action. This is, of course, the ideal situation. However, things may not go as smoothly, and the participatory project may entail small to massive frustrations. As Arnstein (1969, p. 216) put it: “Participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the *status quo*”. In such cases, “participation” does not seem to contribute to social capital formation, but rather to its destruction.

However, this self-evident analysis may turn out to be short-sighted. Failed participation may in fact contribute to “emancipation” or “empowerment”, depending on the social reaction to frustrations. Local discontent and tension may lead to new social and political developments that, in the long run, can renew local social capital. In other words, the way that participatory projects reach their formally stated goals of increased self-management may not be through the designed consensus and expected institutional forms. Social reorganisation may not be triggered by a successful participatory project, but by a failed one.

Reacting to frustration and felt injustices, local community members or groups may mobilise themselves for re-defined objectives, claim increased “ownership” of externally driven initiatives, try to re-capture or quit them, or develop their parallel endeavours away from initial participatory mechanisms. Such mechanisms, through their limitations or failures may stimulate social dissatisfaction, de-legitimise traditional elites, entail a “redistribution of cards” to the benefit of new actors, etc. Thus, social frustrations triggered by unsatisfactory initiatives may be the key channel through which participation eventually delivers what it was supposed to deliver (more rapidly and in consensual fashion): namely, more autonomous and self-organised stakeholders.

This comes close to political action, which in some instances, may be considered the best possible result of participatory endeavours. Away from the phenomenon of “de-politicisation”, which arguably is a built-in tendency of many participatory projects that are led by external experts, a “frustrating participation” may lead to a local “re-politicisation” – and thus to renewed participation from within, less elite-centered situations, or at least the creation of new elites that challenge established ones. However, this all depends on the response of the community members to their own frustrations.

Response strategies

Drawing on well-known concepts developed by Albert O. Hirschman (1970), the “Exit, Voice and Loyalty” framework can prove useful in the study of “response strategies”, and the various political outcomes of frustrating participatory projects. Hirschman defined three essential options in the context of declining organisations or collective actions. Members of a private firm, a local association, an entire nation, or any other collective endeavour have three possible responses when they feel that quality or benefits are decreasing. They can: 1) “exit”, that is, withdraw from the organisation; 2) “voice”, try to revamp the relationship through strategies including communication of complaints and proposals for change; 3) or they can “loyally stay in”, in the name of higher principles, such as a common identity, unity of the community, etc.

Exit is a rather typical option within market relations, whereby buyers and sellers are free to constantly start or end business relations. Exit need not be physical, but can be mental or emotional. In certain circumstances, people may not be able to physically exit the organisation but may still want to “exit the system”: they thus reduce their participation to the minimum. Voice, on the other hand, is of a more political nature, since it challenges the *status quo* and can be openly confrontational.

Frustrations may lead to more political “participation”, if community members choose Voice as the response strategy. However, marginalised people are likely to choose Exit or Loyalty given their typical lack of self-confidence and objective means for influencing the course of action. If

Voice is chosen, the end result may differ markedly from what was expected by international donors promoting “participation”, but there would be little ground for them to complain: the dynamics of people voicing their interests and mobilising themselves to reach self-defined goals can only be approved of in the global participatory discourse. This, in turn, may indicate the limit of this discourse’s use within the field of biodiversity protection, since communities may choose not to put the environment first, once politically moved and self-reliant.

In the end, the strongest emancipatory effects of participation may not reveal themselves in the same way the “participatory narrative” is traditionally depicted and expected to work. It may not be through institutional and project involvement that new social forces and actors emerge and that fresh social capital is built. In practice, one often observes a capitulation of the initial participatory mechanism sponsored by local elites or the central State, no matter what precautions are taken. If this “participation” can be emancipatory nevertheless, it is through the gap that exists between expectations and actual functioning. If this view is correct, then donors need a longer time-span to evaluate participatory projects, one that takes into account the specific rhythm of social developments and political movements.

The end-result of a frustrating participation can be partly anticipated, or at least better studied, by taking into account the culture and history of the various groups at stake. A lot of what participatory projects change in the community eventually depends on the inertia of social and political habits—as well as on the presence of specific individuals who are able to act as new leaders. The choice of Exit, Voice or Loyalty is likely to reflect long-standing political trends and social relations. In some instances, a history of social struggle may stimulate Voice, while a history of

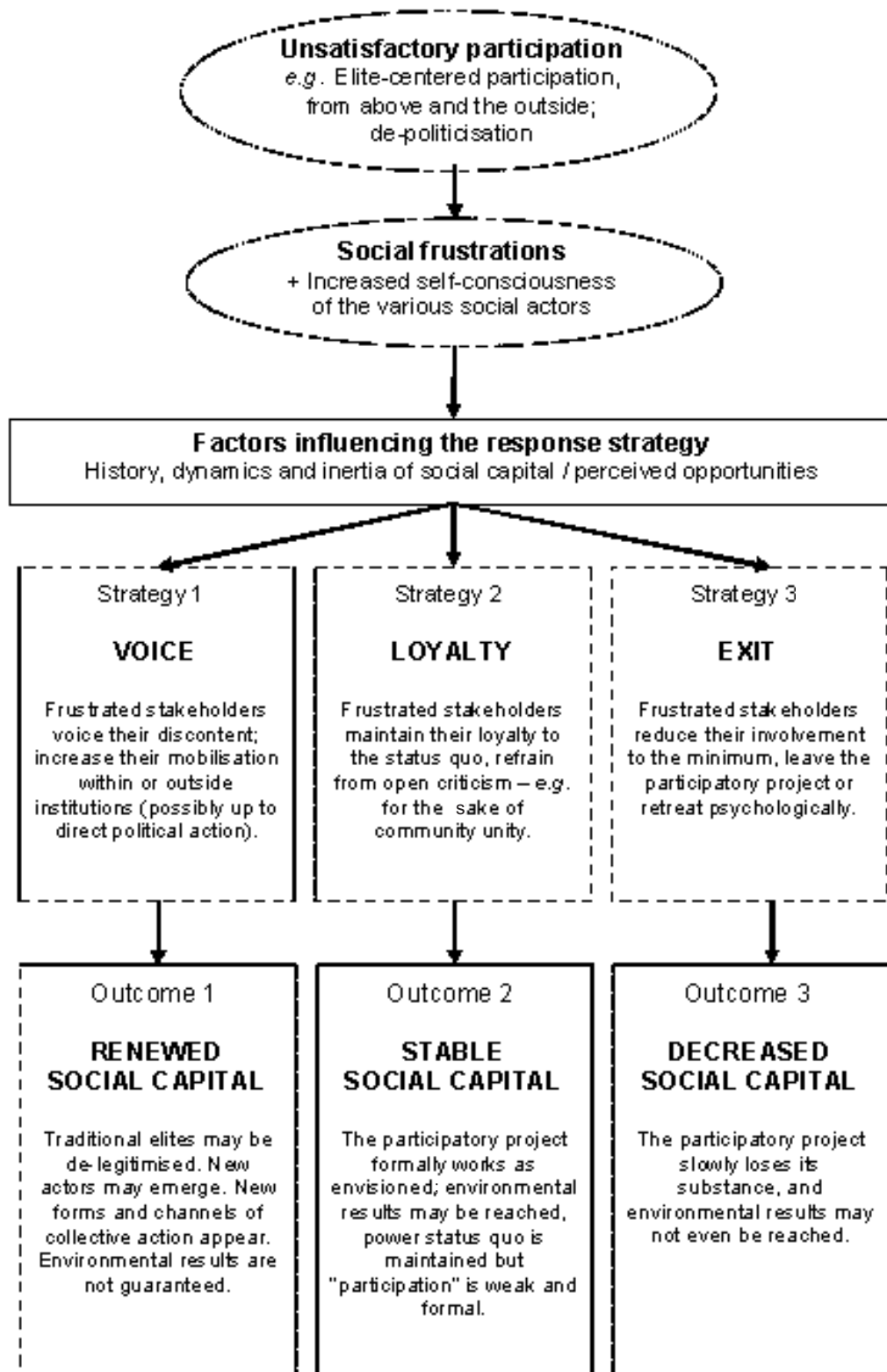
customary elite paternalism may foster Loyalty or a search for a psychological Exit. Figure 4 synthesises these various possible dynamics.

Political outcomes

The next step in studying the dynamics of social frustration is an outright analysis of political outcomes. Such analysis should certainly be given more prominence in the evaluation of participatory projects than is currently the case. Toward this, Williams (2004) offers a set of questions for studying changes in political learning, networks and representation that should be kept in mind when evaluating participatory projects.

- 1) **Political learning.** The problem here is to identify the extent to which participatory programmes contribute to the processes of political learning among non-elite community members. An increased awareness of formal rights can provide a fresh basis for struggle. Similarly, an increased awareness of the local “rules of the game” may sharpen non-elite strategies, allies and ambitions.
- 2) **Political networks.** The question is to know the degree to which participatory projects reshape political networks. It is often the reshaping of linkages beyond the local that determine success or failure for non-elite participants.
- 3) **Political representations.** The issue here is to assess how participatory mechanisms affect patterns of political representation, the language of political claims and competition. Repressive or exclusionary political norms, as well as traditional leadership, may be challenged.

Figure 4 - Participation and the dynamics of discontent



3. Researching Power-Structure Effects

Beyond the participatory processes and institutions themselves, evaluators must look at their own impact on local power structures and outcomes. This is traditionally done through the analysis of environmental and economic effectiveness (or efficiency) that is usually core to the project's explicit goals. This perspective is undeniably central. Nevertheless, it stops short of saying anything about what happens to the social structures in terms of power relations. This is disturbing because participatory projects are supposed to bring added value in terms of effectiveness, through the reworking of social relations, a costly endeavour that requires analysis and evaluation. Moreover, participatory projects usually involve (implicit or explicit) claims of introducing more fairness into a given society and modifying undue power structures—a range of claims that also needs to be assessed. Finally, it should be a matter of deontological principle that project designers know more precisely how they are affecting the societies they work with—although perfect knowledge is of course an elusive quest.

Analysing changes in power structures is no easy task. In the study of power relations, access to data is extremely difficult given the frequently subtle nature of social interactions. There is, also, a fundamental conceptual challenge: power comes in various forms and expressions that cannot be captured by a single formulation. Most commonly, the social science literature describes “power” in terms of an actor A directly controlling an actor B. Concentrating just on this form, however, creates blind spots and black holes in the analysis.

Addressing this problem in a landmark work, Lukes (1975) defines “three dimensions of power”. The first defines power as being expressed in observable relationships, such as verbal or physical fights between antagonists. The second dimension of power is the influence of intentions themselves in power relations. This perspective criticises one-dimensional power views for failing to see the degree to which power can imperceptibly constrain observable power contests. In its third dimension, power proves even more “insidious”: actors' own interests are shaped by power structures; they are secretly pushed into abiding by the will of others, while presuming to serve their own interests. Accordingly, Lukes defines “subjective interests” as those that “are consciously articulated and observable”, whereas “objective interests” (or “real interests”) are the goals and desires that actors “would want and prefer, when they able to make the choice” (Lukes, 1975, p.34).

From these remarks, it is clear that power requires a comprehensive analysis that goes far beyond immediately observable relations. It is especially the case when trying to assess the power effects of participatory projects. Drawing on Lukes and Foucault, Barnett and Duvall (2005) provide a coherent grid that pulls together complementary conceptions of power. The typology they built is based on a comprehensive definition of power as “the production of effects that shape the actions or conditions of existence of actors” (p.18). Based on this understanding, they identify four forms of power relations: compulsory, institutional, structural and productive ones. Each may call for a specific type of analysis when assessing participatory projects.

3.1 Compulsory power

The first type of power, “compulsory power”, refers to relations in which an actor directly shapes the situation or the actions of another actor. Typical definitions of power fall under this concept. For Dahl (1957, p. 202), for instance, power can be defined as “the ability of A to get B to do what B otherwise would not do”. Dahl’s concept has several central characteristics. First, there is intentionality: A wants B to alter its actions in a particular direction. Second, there is a conflict of desires: A and B want different outcomes, and B loses. Third, A is successful because it has the material and ideological resources that lead B to modify its actions. Here, at the core of power analysis, lies the identification of resources that are controlled and intentionally deployed by actor A. Barnett and Duval argue, however, that “compulsory power” does not need to be necessarily connected to intentionality. Compulsory power is present whenever the actions of A control the actions or situation of B, even if unintentionally. As Bachrach and Baratz (1962) argue, power still exists, even when those who dominate are not

conscious of how their actions produce unintended effects. Compulsory power is not limited to material resources, and it can also involve symbolic and normative resources. NGOs, for instance, sometimes manage to mobilise normative resources to force states to alter their policies through a strategy of public shaming. As for international organisations, they are often able to use their authority (moral, technical, expert-led or delegated from other actors) as a resource for compelling other actors to adopt certain policies. In development aid, for instance, compulsory power may take the form of “policy conditionalities” such as the conditional release of international funds, or the influence of “technical expertise”, often foreign, that shape initiatives in particular ways. Thus, analysing compulsory power calls for identifying the range of practices and technologies that make one actor able to directly control the conditions influencing the behaviour of another actor—and the ways the participatory project draws on these practices.

3.2 Institutional power

While “compulsory power” refers to the direct control of one actor by another, “institutional power” means the control of an actor by another in indirect ways. This is done through formal and informal institutions that mediate the interaction between the two. In “institutional power”, actor A frames the conditions of existence and the actions of actor B through the rules and procedures of given institutions. While compulsory power rests on resources owned and deployed by A, institutional power does not rest on A “owning” the institution that shapes the behaviour of B. Rare are the institutions entirely dominated by a single actor. Still, the ability to use a given institution is unevenly distributed among actors. Institutions established to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes create (absolute or relative) “winners” and “losers”, and institutional power relations can be inferred from there. In institutional power, the presence of mediating “institutions” highlights the fact that A and B are socially separated from one another; they are only indirectly related. This distance can be spatial: central authorities located in a faraway

capital city may constrain local communities through various institutions. But distance can also be temporal, or even generational; institutions established at one point in time can have ongoing expected or unintended effects later on. Long-standing institutions may embody frozen configurations of interests, privileges and bias that continue to impact the situation and choices of actors. In this type of analysis, power is no longer a matter of A’s direct effect on B, but a matter of extended and diffuse relations through institutions.

Also of relevance to institutional power are the various forms of material dependence among spatially or socially distant actors: market forces, systems of exchange and inter-dependences create relationships that can limit available choices, especially for the weaker actors. More specifically, one important form of institutional power fostered by biodiversity projects may be an increased dependence by socially weak groups on external markets. What new

stakeholders, whether distinctly identifiable (e.g. a given company) or more anonymous and faceless (e.g. a type of industry or consumers), have gained practical influence over the local context? Through what mediating mechanisms

(e.g. market prices, commercial intermediaries, investment funds) is this taking place? How have inflows of capital, goods, managerial techniques, norms and standards evolved over time, and to the greater benefit of whom?

3.3 Structural power

In the two preceding forms of power, “compulsory” and “institutional”, power refers to the actions of pre-defined and pre-constituted actors toward one another. The identities of A and B are not at stake, or even discussed. They are pre-supposed as stable and independent from one another. In these conceptions, power is almost an attribute that an actor owns and that he may use to shape the actions or the situation of others. The focus is placed on interactions and on who governs whom, based on material, ideational and institutional resources.

However, another take on power is possible, namely a focus on relations based on constitution (i.e. related to identities) as opposed to interaction. Relations of constitution shed light on how actors are defined and formed as social beings, in relation to one another, with their respective identities, capacities, interests and goals. The focus is less on who governs but rather on who is defined as governing. The analysis of “constitution” involves examining the creation of particular kinds of actors and avoiding the viewpoint that these actors are predetermined *ex ante*. As Wendt (1998, p.105) puts it: “Constitutive theories (...) account for the properties of things by reference to the structures in virtue of which they exist”. Because these social relations can generate different social settings and self-understandings, they have a real impact on an actor’s ability to shape his/her existence. Constitutive processes are not themselves controlled by specific actors, but they tend to be structurally beneficial to some. Constitutive forms of power come in two forms: structural power (that we explore below) and productive power (see next section).

“Structural power” refers to “structural positions”, “social structures and categories” deeply entrenched in society, whereby A exists as such, given its relation to B. Classic examples include “masters vs slaves” in slave societies,

“capital vs labour” in capitalist societies or “landowner vs agricultural employees” in paternalistic rural societies. Such structural roles contain functional differentiations that generate varying privileges, subjectivities and interests for the perpetrators of these roles (Wendt and Duvall, 1989).

Structural power typically underlies hierarchical and binary relations of domination that work to the advantage of those structurally empowered, and to the disadvantage of the socially weak. Its analysis can follow at least two paths. First, social structures allocate different capacities and advantages to different positions: capital-labour and master-slave relations are obvious producers of unequal privileges. Second, not only does the social structure comprise actors, but it also shapes their self-understanding and “subjective interests”. This sometimes makes the under-privileged willing to accept their role in the existing order, contrary to their “objective interests” (Benton, 1981). This is, for instance, the case in paternalist communities, in which the lower social class is “fed and protected” by the upper one. Structural power can thus prevent some actors from recognising their own domination. This helps to reproduce, rather than resist, the *status quo*. In this way, structural power operates, even when there are no instances of A exercising control over B. Barnett and Duval appropriately quote Lukes (1975) on this point: “Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances shaping their perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things?” (p.24). Marxist analysis typically relies on arguments that come close to this understanding of structural power. Extrapolating from the Italian social philosopher Gramsci, the authors Gill and Law (1989) argue that while power exists in coercive and institutional arrangements, the “relations of production” in global capitalism determine the capacities and the resources of the

actors, and shape the ideology through which they interpret their own fate, interests and desires.

The capitalist and consumerist ideology is seen as “hegemonic” in the sense that it serves the “objective interests” of the higher social classes—at the direct expense of the “objective interests” of the world’s producing classes. This view has also been applied at the level of entire nations, by

world-systems theorists (e.g. Wallerstein, 1996). These authors argue that the global structures of production generate particular kinds of states, such as core, semi-peripheral and peripheral ones. Positions in this system generate varying sets of interests, capacities and constraints. Meanwhile, countries in subordinate positions often end up adopting ideological concepts that paradoxically uphold their own domination.

3.4 Productive power

“Productive power”, like “structural power”, focuses on the processes that create the identities and interests of actors. However, while “structural power” emphasises long-standing, binary social structures and categories, “productive power” looks at other configurations, such as newer categories in the making, or those not necessarily constituted in binary or hierarchical terms. Productive power is concerned with re-defining the legitimate body of values, knowledge and social categories.

“While “structural power” is re-productive of long-standing categories and divisions, of positions of domination and subordination, “productive power” is more focused on producing new, or non-dual, norms and identities. These “productive categories” may constrain both the elite and non-elite alike. They need not mirror social hierarchies: they may challenge them and inspire new social forces. Analysing productive power requires focusing on how diffuse and contingent social discourses can produce new kinds of subjects, meanings and categories, terms of action to shape what is taken for granted in everyday life or politics.

Productive power works through discourse and systems of knowledge, through which meaning is produced, fixed, experienced and transformed (Macdonell, 1986). “Discourses” are understood here not as dialogues among actors, or in terms of Habermas’ notion of “communicative action”. Instead, discourses refer to how everyday interactions define the legitimate body of values and knowledge that serve as a reference. Productive power then looks at how things are defined as “the (im)possible,

the (im)probable, the natural, the normal [or] what counts as a problem” (Hayward, 2000, p. 35).

In the field of International Relations, productive power has been heavily studied. There have been discussions, for instance, about classificatory concepts, such as “civilized”, “rogue”, “unstable”, “Western” or “democratic” states. The theme of the “other”—how it is defined and linked to permissible and desirable policies—has also been studied (Neumann and Welsh, 1991). As for the global discourse on Human Rights, it has constructed a world populated by human rights “victims”, “monitors”, “violators” or “prosecutors”. In international humanitarian law, the definition of “civilian” and “combatant” bears consequences for those in the field—the former deserving help, the latter being legitimate targets for the armed forces. As for the Development discourse, it has been analysed as a form of knowledge/power regime (e.g. Ferguson, 1990; Crush, 1995).

By redefining what are considered to be legitimate values, categories and knowledge, the exercise of productive power via global discourse can strengthen new, or re-emerging, categories and actors. Boli and Thomas (1999) argue, for example, that there is a predominant set of principles that increasingly determines the legitimacy of actors in the realm of world politics, their identities, purposes and capacities. In their view, global democratic and rational-legal principles are reinforcing the voices of NGOs, especially international ones. In local contexts, foreign donors and experts, domestic or international NGOs may see their influence increasing following the diffusion of a given global discourse. Emerging actors, however, can

either challenge or reinforce long-standing, local power structures: thus, productive and structural power effects can either work hand-in-hand, or against one another.

Studying the productive power effects of participatory projects calls for paying special attention to how these projects:

1) contribute to commodification processes; 2) render certain political choices apparently “technical”; 3) foster self-regulation and internalised constraints; 4) produce pro- or anti-traditional effects.

3.4.1 Commodification processes

An important structural classification within any society is the one distinguishing things that can be sold—and thus able to exist as “goods” and “services”—from those that cannot be sold, be it because they are considered “sacred”, “natural” or lie outside economic interaction, due to traditional, familial or ethical reasons. Biodiversity projects can impact these classifications and redefine their scopes. Changes in key dividing lines can have important social, economic or cultural consequences. The notion of “commodification”⁵ precisely describes the process by which things that did not have an economic value are now assigned a value, and hence become tradable. Through “commodification”, market values replace other social values, and more relationships turn into commercial ones.⁶

Marx (1867) has famously analysed and criticised processes of commodification, pointing to the phenomenon of “commodity fetishism”. This refers to both a belief and a process. The belief is that value lies in commodities, rather than in the human labour they embody: in the capitalist mode of production and consumption, objects are “de-humanised” and seen as mere objects with an intrinsic value. As for the process of commodity fetishism, it obscures and hides social relationships. The worker only sees his relation to the object he produces, since he/she is separated from the people who use it. Similarly, the consumer only sees his/her relation to the object (he/she) uses, unaware of the people who produced it. Commodity fetishism ensures that neither side is fully conscious of the social and political positions it occupies.

Commodification does not apply only to physical things. Skills or knowledge can also be commodified and marketed, as is the case, for instance, with women’s traditional skills in Central America, through the development of tourism (Ferguson, 2008). It can also happen to a political idea, like a call for social change that becomes incarnated in logos that are themselves marketed, turning a political message into a simple fashion.⁷ Commodification is generally criticised on the grounds that certain things should not be for sale, or treated as if they are tradable. One should not underestimate, however, the progressive and emancipatory dimension of commodification. In households, for instance, women can free themselves more easily from domestic work when their labour becomes partly commodified. Also, in the context of environmental policy, when no social norm protects natural resources, attributing them an economic value can foster their conservation and recognition: commodification is actually central to the notion of “environmental services” that is gaining recognition in global environmental politics.

3.4.2 Anti-political effects

Drawing on the Development-related work of Ferguson (1990), one can define the “anti-political effects” of global discourse as the transformation of contested political issues into technical ones, so that the power of “experts” and specialised authorities is significantly increased, and debates become considerably restricted or constrained. Nearly all global discourses actually occur simultaneously with a parallel discourse on the need for modernisation and the rationalisation of human societies, which has the potential to legitimise even more “expertise”. The question

5. Commodification must be distinguished from “commoditisation”. The latter is a neologism that appeared in the early 1990s. It refers to the process by which goods that used to be perceived by consumers as distinguishable (brand or uniqueness) simply become commodities, with little or no value difference between brands or versions. Consumers can benefit from commoditisation, since increased competition usually leads to lower prices. Producers often suffer, since the value of the brand decreases.

6. Slavery is an extreme case of commodification, whereby humans themselves become a tradable commodity.

7. An example of such “cultural commodification” is provided by Hooks (1992): the colours of the Zimbabwean African Liberation Army (red, black and green). For people of African descent, these colours represent the bloodshed of Africans (red), the African people (black) and stolen African lands (green). These colours are now marketed worldwide on all types of apparel or shoes; they no longer carry the message of resistance, and may even be seen as a sign of political powerlessness.

is, therefore, whether the use of this “modern knowledge” obscures, rather than sheds light on, other social or political issues that would require political debate and societal choices. The “expertise” that comes from various global discourses may indeed frame discussions in specific ways, within externally set parameters, that leave out contested issues and implicitly reinforce certain power positions.

Anti-politics and de-politicisation can also have positive effects that should not be overlooked when analysing global discourses and their implementation. An inflow of external expertise can move blocked situations forward and relieve complex local tensions. When stakeholders’ interests are directly and irremediably opposed, with little hope of a “zero-sum game”, technical discourses can provide a useful perspective, bringing a third position to a confrontation that is otherwise going nowhere. In the field of international security, for instance, this can happen in conflict-prevention projects, in which NGOs, working with certain global discourses, are able to reinstate dialogue through the deployment of new expertise and ideas. Nevertheless, looking at anti-politics requires making a judgment as to whether legitimate options were suppressed from the discussion, and the extent to which technical expertise acted as a “neutral” third contributor—something that some critics say is never possible.

3.4.3 Self-regulation for pre-defined results

Certain forms of knowledge can result in individuals governing themselves in specific ways. Discourses can become internalised and frame subjectivities and behaviours, even as individuals feel autonomous and subjectively free. To describe this power phenomenon, Foucault introduced the concept of “neo-liberal governmentality”⁸—a situation in which power is de-centered so that subjects can play an active role in their own governance. The production of knowledge and the “normalisation of conduct” stimulate the development of “auto-regulated” and “self-correcting selves”.

The concept of “governmentality” was coined by Foucault to refer to governmental structures that are not limited to State politics and policies, but also include a range of social-

control techniques and forms of knowledge that bridge the gap between the macro and micro levels of power. “Governmentality” indicates procedures, protocols, practices, idioms, rules and routines through which lives are governed, managed and regulated “at a distance”. It presents a vision of power that is faceless and decentralised (headless), but which still has an overall unity. This coherence is specifically referred to as a “discourse” with systematic effects. Although Foucault applies “governmentality” to various power regimes and historical periods, he uses the term in particular to refer to “neo-liberal governmentality”. This characterises regimes that espouse democratic and market principles; the limitation of State action; and the entrustment of individuals with self-regulating duties and functions, as well as the dissemination of risks and responsibilities.

Participatory projects often manifest this ideal of self-regulation and neo-liberal governmentality: people are expected to “freely behave better”. However, the implementation of such projects may suggest a certain degree of schizophrenia, since they are vibrantly pledging to promote unconstrained autonomy, while simultaneously proposing expected and pre-defined goals and results (perhaps this phenomenon can even be monitored with quantified indicators). There is here an intrinsic contradiction between the stated goals of enhanced self-regulation and the attainment of standard norms—a tension that is core to neo-liberal governmentality and that may characterise many biodiversity projects.

3.4.4 Anti-traditional vs pro-traditional effects

Participatory projects can also have productive power effects on cultures and traditions, through the reworking of social categories. Projects can manifest widely varying perspectives and impacts, ranging from pro- to anti-traditional ones. They may also have a single, but schizophrenic, outlook that is intrinsically contradictory: on the one hand, biodiversity projects are often supposed to respect, or even be based on, long-standing local traditional and cultural elements; on the other hand, they just as often harbour built-in notions that certain long-standing social

8. See Foucault (1991), the 1977-1978 lectures at the College de France.

relations or practices need to be modified. Thus, there is a need to analyse both the pro- and anti-traditional effects of project implementation; that is, how local traditions are

impacted, modified or reinforced. To do this, one should look especially at the following three dimensions: traditional political authority; local knowledge; and economic structures.

3.5 Local-global power formations

Across the four forms of power that may appear in the implementation of participatory projects, a pattern can develop, whereby the exercise of power becomes more collective than before—although not necessarily more socially inclusive. In this regard, it is particularly interesting to look at what happens with the local and non-local actors—and thus question this distinction. Modern participatory biodiversity projects can cause power positions, authority and influence to be intimately shared by interdependent domestic and non-domestic actors, within a local-global nexus. To study this precisely, Callaghy, *et al.* (2001) worked out the notion of “trans-boundary formation” that Duffy (2004) calls “global formations”. Here, we suggest calling them “local-global power formations” to highlight that the power is shared by both local and global actors.

A “local-global power formation” is a set of structures, processes and events produced at the intersection of the global and the local, by a range of actors from various horizons. It includes what is conventionally called “intervention” (by external donors or NGOs, for instance) as well as the global, national, and local networks and institutions impacting the local situation, along the lines of a global discourse. As Callaghy, *et al.* (2001, p.4) explain, the research questions related to this concept include: How do State and non-State, local and external forces interact to produce order and authority? What kinds of actors and strategies are involved? How stable and extensive are various forms of order and authority? How do different

types of orders, authority and spaces of interaction relate to each other?

In analysing sub-Saharan Africa, Callaghy, *et al.* (2001) argue, for instance, that local-global power formations play a major role in creating, transforming and destroying forms of order and authority. One example of this “trans-boundary production of order” is the proliferation of networks that create global-local links through humanitarian interventions, international economic processes, military incursions and development work. There is a proliferation of sites of authority, moving away from a State-based model, to one in which authority is held by various international actors. In this context, local authorities rely on external forces to produce order and rule. They share their national territories with global organisations, ranging from NGOs, transnational corporations, international organisations, etc. This change in the location of authority is also supported by the “technicalisation of problems”, which legitimises increased governance from outside the country or continent. The notion of “local-global power formation” helps place the focus on the relocation of power. As Callaghy, *et al.* (2001) hope: “the notion has the potential of capturing the rich empirical manifestations of ‘global local’ intersections without having to make sweeping pronouncements about globalisation or unsubstantiated generalisations” (Preface, p.10).

Table 3 synthesises the previous discussion on forms of power and on local-global power formations. It provides definitions and important research questions.

Table 3 - Researching power effects

Forms of power	Definition	Elements to research
1. Compulsory Power	Direct control of an actor A over an actor B, by the use of material and ideational resources, in order to produce constraints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Who is and who is B? ● Material, ideological and normative resources that produce incentives or constraints. ● Intended and unintended power effects. ● Resistance of B is based on what resources?
2.. Institutional Power	Indirect control of A over B, through the mediation of formal or informal institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mediating institutions between A and B (notably organisation and markets). ● Ability of various actors to use the institutions. ● Winners and losers of the institutional processes. Agenda-setting processes, biases and omissions. Social, spatial or temporal distances between actors. ● Analysis of A/B dependences (e.g. through dependence on external markets).
3. Structural Power	Privileged positions given to certain actors through (long-standing) binary social categories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hierarchical/binary positions and structural categories, relations of domination. ● Functional advantages, capacities, self-understanding. ● Whose objective interests are supported by these categories ? Nations, social classes, industries? ● Hegemonic ideologies working in the "objective interests" of the upper class. ● Subjective interests of the lower class underpinning their domination. ● Discourses keeping out certain stakeholders.
4. Productive Power	Privileged positions given to certain actors through new and emerging discourses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Re-definition through discourses of the legitimate body of values and knowledge, of what is taken for granted. ● Emergence of non-binary/new social categories. ● Commodification processes. ● Anti-political effects (e.g. suppression of legitimate options through "expertise"). ● Self-regulation for pre-defined results. ● Pro-/anti-traditional effects (on political, knowledge and economic structures).
5. Local-Global Power Formations	Structures, processes and events produced at the local/global intersection, by a range of actors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Networks and sites of authority. ● Trans-boundary production of order: power-sharing between domestic and non-domestic actors; increased governance from outside.

4. Integrating Human and Natural History

The dynamics and equilibria between human societies and their natural environment (known as “socio-ecological systems”) constitute a valuable perspective that should be integrated into the evaluation of the rationale, functioning and sustainability of participatory environ-

mental projects. Not only can project designers and evaluators learn a lot from analysing long-standing local trends and historical ruptures, but participatory projects are in themselves meant to modify the course of this local history, and this in itself calls for special attention.

4.1 Broadening the time analysis of sustainability

As a matter of fact, discussions of human-environmental interaction often lack a long-term, temporal dimension. This is the case for many professional discourses on the global environment, as well as on local conditions, in which the past is generally the object of little inquiry and merely referred to as background, providing a general context for present conditions and trends. Time analysis can rely on different time-scales, such as decades, centuries, or even millennia. Simple, deterministic relationships between environmental stress and social change are inadequate. Extreme drought, for instance, triggered both social collapse and ingenious water-management via irrigation.

In international environmental aid and interventions, project designs and evaluations often lack a deep analysis of the long-term, dynamic interaction between humans and nature, and a discussion on what can be learned or anticipated from it. A fuller understanding would require knowledge of the evolution of technology, population expansions, cultural habits, climate, diseases, warfare, changing human attitudes and responses to environmental changes over time.

Some rare new and complex interdisciplinary research programmes based on qualitative and quantitative data

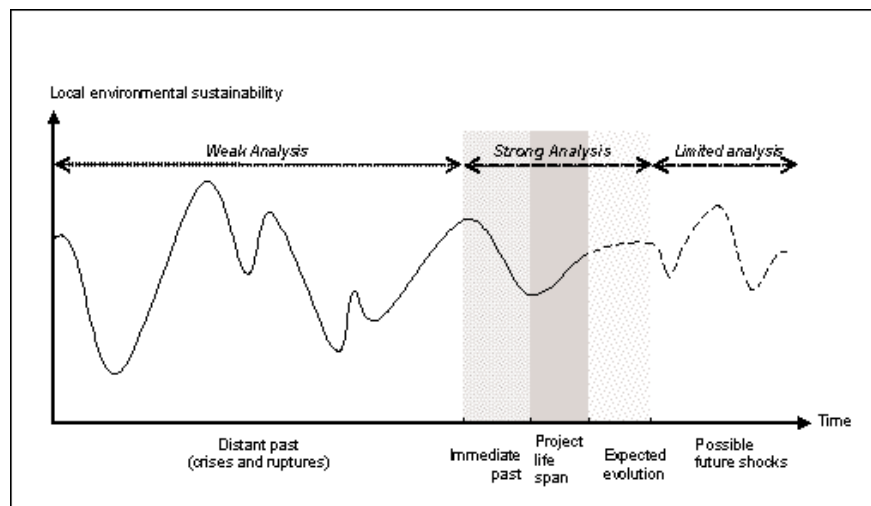
try to clarify historical trends and interrelations between humans and nature on a global scale (e.g. Costanza, *et al.* 2007). Their aim is to eventually use the past in more sophisticated ways than as a base for making simple projections about future conditions. By better knowing the rates and direction of past trajectories in key processes (such as land cover, soil erosion, and flooding) and by observing how thresholds have been transgressed, and deducing patterns of environmental variability and human responses, such programmes hope to assess the vulnerability of modern landscapes and ecosystems to future human activities. They also work with historical data as a means for testing projections and scenarios. Numerical models are now attempting to capture non-linear behaviour, such as “adaptive cycles” and “tipping points”. This type of research demands the sophisticated and creative testing of models against a wide range of data, from historical narratives to quantitative time series.

Even though progress may be limited by lack of money, staff and (often) local data, the historical analysis of participatory environmental projects can provide a more systematic look at the past. Beyond a description of the present situation in contrast with past conditions, such an approach could include an analysis of local past crises,

turning points and human responses, with a recognition of their successes and failures. Figure 5 points to the fact that the distant past and its many lessons are generally left out

of the analysis, design and evaluation of participatory projects. Meanwhile, potential future shocks are sometimes hinted at, but rarely systematically explored.

Figure 5 - Typical time analysis of participatory environmental projects



Source : The author

4.2 Participation that aims for homeostasis

In the participatory ideal, a new institutional space is created, whereby evolving tensions can be dealt with and tamed dynamically, over time, as they change form. As new stakeholders and challenges emerge, this space of negotiated coordination is meant to allow the continuous reworking of forces toward new and more sustainable equilibria. A “good” participatory project should thus be able to reform itself as it develops over time, via an on-going process of adapting to fresh realities. One may be tempted to say that the aim of participatory environmental projects is thus to: try and root out “tragedy” from history, and reinforce agency and choice in the interaction between humans and nature, by allowing stakeholders to negotiate solutions based on the application of historical perspective. Environmental history teaches us that equilibria, if any, are fragile, with often few self-correcting forces to bring them back to stability, should a key parameter be disturbed—such as human density, technology, annual rainfall or new market conditions. Participatory mechanisms are thus meant to facilitate a process of homeostasis, towards environmental sustainability.

The American physiologist Walter Cannon coined the term “homeostasis” in 1932, as he was astonished by “the wisdom of the body”, capable of guaranteeing the control of a large number of internal physiological equilibria. “Homeostasis” comes from two Greek words meaning “to remain the same”. Since then, the concept of homeostasis has had a central position in the field of cybernetics. As de Rosnay (1997) explains, homeostasis is one of the remarkable properties of highly complex open systems.

A homeostatic system (such as an industrial firm, a large organisation or a cell) is an open system that maintains its structure and functions through a multiplicity of dynamic equilibria that are controlled by interdependent regulatory mechanisms. Such a system reacts to changes in the environment, or to random disturbances, through a series of modifications of equal size and opposite direction to those that created the disturbance. The goal of these modifications is to maintain the many internal balances that enable the system to exist. Ecological, biological, and social systems

can be homeostatic, if they manage to compensate for changes with every means at their disposal, in order to re-establish internal equilibrium. If the system does not succeed in re-establishing its equilibria, it enters into another mode of behaviour, one with constraints often more severe than the previous ones. This mode can lead to the destruction of the system, if the disturbances persist.

Within this framework, participation is meant to increase the homeostatic properties of interactions between humans and nature. As de Rosnay argues, for a complex socio-

environmental system to endure is not enough. The system must adapt to modifications in the environment and evolve—otherwise outside forces can disorganise and destroy it. Thus, the concept of homeostasis can include the concept of change; things must change to enable stability. The study of a participatory project, understood as a homeostatic system, calls for an analysis of the various forces and actors that are part of the internal and external environment, the history of their interactions, and of the crises they faced—both those they overcame and failed to overcome.

4.3 Historical crises and revolutions

Few researchers have attempted to develop a comprehensive view of interactions between humans and nature over the long run. Notably, two bodies of work deserve mention here, putting forward a useful set of factors and concepts. The first work is that of Mazoyer and Roudart (1997), who offer a general theory of agrarian systems from the Neolithic to the present time. The second is the framework developed by Jared Diamond in his analysis of human societies facing environmental challenges. Both point to the need for looking at moments of environmental crisis, and the human response they triggered.

Mazoyer and Roudart (1997) offer an important contribution to the analysis of agricultural history and long-term economic, social and environmental development. They suggest that agriculture, as practiced throughout the world at different periods, can be viewed as a patchwork of varying local forms that can be classified into a limited number of systems, each occupying a specific position in space and time. They put forward the concept of “agrarian system”, as a tool for understanding the complexity of each of these forms. The concept calls for an analysis of the organisation and functions of the ecosystem and of the social system of production, in their various sub-systems and respective functions, along with their interrelations.

As Griffon (2008) points out in his book review, Mazoyer and Roudart describe the evolution of social structures and

technologies as a succession of crises, and the discovery of solutions to overcome them. Crises may arise from ecological constraints, from overexploitation of natural resources, or from social conflicts over the allocation of resources. From this general understanding, the authors analyse the various phases of agricultural history as a series of challenges, which often led to a deep crisis that was eventually overcome by technological advances and social reorganisation—producing a new series of challenges.

The first major crisis described was the result of excessive predation by nomadic, hunter–gatherer societies. The Neolithic revolution is seen as the outcome of a long process that transformed societies of predators into sedentary societies of farmers exploiting limited territories, using new tools, and domesticating animals for production. The authors link the evolution of hydraulic agricultural systems in the Nile to the simultaneous rise of empires, and they present the Inca Empire as an example of a complex society that first used mountain slopes extensively for agriculture.

A lot of attention is also given to Europe. In the European Middle Ages, the need for more production caused by a dramatic increase in population led to the invention of improved ploughs, the diffusion of which was made possible by the emergence of the iron-and-steel industry, by commercial growth and the birth of capitalism. Population

growth and overexploitation of the soil nevertheless led to the collapse of the system, accompanied by Malthusian shortages and recurrent famines. Then, a new technology appeared—recycling nutrients through the use of manure—that did not require fallowing and increased the fodder productivity of livestock, thus permitting higher yields and denser occupation of the land.

Mechanization was the next step. By the middle of the 19th century, modern means of transportation made it possible to supply fertilizers in large quantities, and to ship commodities produced by European colonies in temperate regions. Surpluses, and the resulting low prices, again plunged European agriculture into crisis. A new agricultural revolution occurred during the 20th century, with the widespread use of chemical fertilisers, the selection of high-yielding crop and animal varieties, the simplification of specialised cultivated ecosystems, and high-performance machines that made animal power unnecessary.

4.4 Historical choices and social values

While Mazoyer and Roudart put a lot of emphasis on technological ruptures, Jared Diamond emphasises the choices and values of societies and their varying resulting responses in the face of sometimes similar environmental challenges. In his well-known book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, Diamond (2005) examines a range of past civilisations and societies, to identify why they collapsed or survived. He considers what contemporary societies can learn from these societal collapses. “Collapse”, in Diamond’s vocabulary, can refer to complete extinction (Pitcairn Island), population crash (Easter Island), resettlement (Vikings), civil war (Rwanda) or anarchy (Somalia, Haiti). As in his previous work, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (Diamond, 1999), he argues against ethnocentric explanations, and focuses instead on ecological factors.

Diamond tries to build a unified theory about why societies fail or succeed. He identifies five factors that contribute to collapse: climate change; hostile neighbours; trade partners (that is, alternative sources for essential goods);

Griffon further explains that, using the same historical concepts, Mazoyer and Roudart propose a new explanation for the general crisis of agriculture and economy in developing countries. In their view, this crisis mainly results from the enormous gap between the low-productivity of agricultural producers in poor countries and that of the more competitive producers in industrial countries. This asymmetry in the ability to compete contributes to peasant ruin and the low price of labour in developing countries. And since agriculture remains a major economic sector, the asymmetry leads to what today is the world’s main poverty trap, along with stagnation in world demand.

A similar type of analysis could be applied to the study of participatory environmental projects, tracing back moments of crisis and revolution, emphasising the positiveness of the large-scale, complete reorganisation that may be required for a new sustainable development path to be found.

environmental problems; and, finally, a society’s response to its environmental problems. The first four factors may prove significant in each society’s demise, Diamond claims, but the fifth is always significant. Diamond then identifies what he terms the 12 most serious environmental problems facing past and future societies, problems that have often led to the collapse of major civilisations in the past: 1) the loss of habitat and ecosystem services; 2) overfishing; 3) loss of biodiversity; 4) soil erosion and degradation; 5) energy limits; 6) freshwater limits; 7) photosynthetic capacity limits; 8) toxic chemicals; 9) alien species introduction; 10) climate change; 11) population growth; and 12) human consumption levels.

Diamond’s key argument is that a society’s response to environmental problems is completely within its control, which is not always true for the other factors. In other words, as his subtitle puts it, a society can “choose to fail”. Diamond elucidates how societies can mistreat their environment (without even realising it in some cases) and refuse to adapt to its changes. In one of his most famous

case studies, he pays particular attention to the Norse settlements in Greenland, which vanished as the climate got colder, while the surrounding Inuit culture thrived. He also analyses the collapse of the Maya, Anasazi and Easter Island civilizations, among others.

Historical viewpoints can be called on when analysing par-

ticipatory environmental projects. In some instances, a given society may just not be willing to negotiate certain of its key social norms, even if they endanger its very survival. In this context, participation may introduce more flexibility by redefining some of these norms, or turn them around through the mediation of compensating mechanisms—but with no guarantee of success.



Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to provide project designers, managers and evaluators with a range of concepts they can use to deepen their understanding of the “participatory” projects they may be working on, especially in the field of biodiversity protection. This enhanced analytical framework offers tools that allow for:

better appraisal of the quality and depth of “participation”; the various types of power-structure effects, including the often-observed relocation of power; and the role and impact of “social capital” within a community, as well as the dynamics of that community’s historical interaction with nature.

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