

**PARTICIPATION AND DIALOGUE IN DEVELOPMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

### Participation and dialogue in Development

“Participation” is a frequently articulated requirement within the context of community development. Yet despite this, the concept of participation is neither comprehensively theorised, nor entirely unproblematic. The theoretical paucity surrounding participation is particularly marked within accounts of its interactional and relational dynamics. This thesis is accordingly concerned with theorising the interactional and relational features of participation in, and for, development. To this end a small development intervention, constituted as an agricultural co-operative within a rural area of South Africa, is examined.

In this inquiry the phenomenon of participation is viewed through the lens of dialogical-activity. This enables explication of the “joint activity” directed towards participatory development, within the focal research setting. The overarching theoretical framework for this thesis is conferred by Activity theory. Orientated towards examining the collective and artefactually mediated nature of human action, Activity theory is foregrounded in Y. Engeström’s (1989; 1999b) analytic schema of the Activity System. This Activity System framework is expanded by the inclusion of communicative and semiotic elements; an inclusion effected by reference to R. Engeström’s theory of communicative action (1995, 1999), which in turn, draws on theoretical precepts gleaned from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. The resultant fusing of dialogue and activity therefore serves to extend Activity theoretical insights.

The results of this research are based on data collected from a multitude of sources within the focal participatory development research setting, including internal project documentation, interview transcripts and field notes. The dialogical Bakhtin-derived analytic categories of *speech genre*, *voice* and *social language* were drawn on in order to examine this textual data, and to explicate the interactional and relational features of participatory development. Analysis of these served to reveal the polyphony of (speech genre constituted) voices, wherein the phenomenon of participation is disparately accentuated. The results chapter moreover discusses the substantial mismatches and discontinuities in the referential object invoked by the various roleplayers, within the focal research context. This thesis considers the sources of these discontinuities and tensions, including how they point to historically constituted contradictions

within participatory development. It furthermore briefly examines the opportunities and affordances these offer up for expansive new forms of activity. Finally, in re-examining participation and development, the complex, and sometimes antithetic relationship that exists between these two concepts and their associated social practices, are considered.

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## NOTE ON AUTHORSHIP

Two issues pertaining to theorists cited in this research require advance clarification.

The first is the existence of two authors who share the same surname: Yryö and Ritva Engeström. Following APA format, they are distinguished by the use of their first initial.

The second relates to Bakhtin's alleged authorship of several texts published under the names of other individuals. This is a source of heated controversy within Bakhtinian circles, and one certainly not bereft of irony - considering much of Bakhtin's work was profoundly concerned with texeological and authorial questions. Several commentators (Clark and Holquist, 1986; Titunik, 1984) ascribe Bakhtin's authorship to texts published under the names of V.N Voloshinov and P.N Medvedev, suggesting this was a form of "ventriloquation" for his politically unpalatable writings. Others disagree (Morson 1986; Shepherd, 1998), arguing that insufficient evidence of Bakhtin's authorship exists. This was a question of no small consequence, considering Voloshinov and Medvedev were actual individuals, with Medvedev deported and "illegally repressed" (i.e. executed) during Stalin's purges (Carroll, 1983, p.72). The entire episode imparts a certain ironic gravitas to Roland Barthes' oft-cited interpretative injunction concerning "the death of the author". However, some resolution to this question of authorship can be found in Morris' (1994) suggestion that we take "Bakhtin" as synecdoche for a collaborative circle; a circle marked by much dialogical exchange. So despite the palimpsest of Bakhtin's pen in the disputed texts, the traditional authorial distinctions are here retained.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The central concern of this research is the concept of “participation” within participatory development. Traditionally development has been conceptualised in largely quantitative and material terms, however in the last three decades development has come to imply qualitative social transformation and been marked by the requirement that it be “participatory”. Yet despite the wide currency of “participation” within contemporary socio-political discourse, the participation concept is neither well theorised nor entirely free of pragmatic difficulties. The theoretical paucity surrounding participation is particularly marked in accounts of its interactional and relational dynamics. Accordingly, this research takes as its focus the task of explicating the dialogical and relational dynamics of participation both in, and for, development. This is simultaneously an empirical and theoretical task. This task is accomplished by, firstly, developing a dialogical-activity theoretical lens and then, secondly, proceeding to empirically examine the workings of participation through this lens - within a specific participatory development initiative.

In this endeavour, the sequence of inquiry is as follows:

In Chapter Two the situational context of this research project is outlined. The context of the focal participatory development setting is sketched in terms of its geographical and socio-historical specificity. This setting is then contextualised against the backdrop of the contemporary South African development terrain and the practice of ‘development’ quite broadly. Subsequent to this Chapter Three seeks to delineate and clarify the relationship between the respective concepts of development and participation. Furthermore, several of the difficulties associated with the concept of participation are considered, such as the analytic elusiveness and inconsistent usage that is frequently attendant to this term.

In Chapter Four the dialogical-activity perspective is developed in detail. An Activity theoretical perspective, which serves to sociogenetically and psychosocially explicate human consciousness and behaviour is developed. Within this perspective meaningful human activity is viewed as artefactually mediated and therefore, ultimately, socially constituted. This overarching Activity theory framework is expanded through the inclusion of semiotic and communicative



elements, following the work of R. Engeström (1995, 1999) who, in turn, draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogue. The resultant analytic framework consequently draws together utterance and action, dialogue and activity, illocution and context. In the present research project this framework is used to examine the interactional and relational microdynamics of participation and theorise the phenomenon of participation in, and for, development.

Distinct epistemological, methodological and axiological implications flow from analysing and conceptualising human action in dialogical-activity terms. Chapter Five considers these by providing an account of, and methodological rationale for, the dialogical-activity method utilised in this inquiry. This chapter furthermore seeks to locate the present study in terms of broader epistemic and valuational questions.

Chapter Six, in turn, comprises the results section. This chapter scrutinises a wide range of data gleaned from the focal research setting including interview transcripts, field notes and internal project documentation. These are examined in terms of the core Bakhtin-derived theoretical precepts of "voice" and "speech genre", orientated towards the referential-object "social language" of participatory development. These elements can helpfully be elaborated on as follows. "Speech genres" are ready-made, socially defined ways of packaging speech that often exist below the speaker's level of conscious awareness and provide the discursive parameters on what the speaker can intelligibly say. "Voice" or voicedness is, in turn, constituted from various speech genres and represent the point, in the focal research setting, where individual subjectivity and intentionality becomes manifest. Finally the referential "Social language" is the discursive topic (and therefore the 'activity') to which the entire Activity system is orientated.

The above analysis serves to reveal the polyphony of speech genre constituted voices, wherein the phenomenon of participation undergoes disparate accentuation. There are, moreover, marked mismatches and discontinuities in the referential object invoked by the various roleplayers. This research considers the sources of these discontinuities and tensions, including the manner in which they highlight historically constituted contradictions within participatory development.

The discussion of Chapter Seven concludes by re-examining participatory development. As the boundary between interpretation and discussion is an often porous one within qualitative inquiry, this final chapter expands and elaborates on the contradictions identified in the preceding chapter. It furthermore examines several of the tensions that inhere within participatory development, as well as the complex (and at times antithetic) relationship that potentially exists between these two concepts. This final chapter concludes by suggesting how participation might be better enabled in these contexts, as well as avenues for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO: THE SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

*"The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living"* (Marx, as cited in Blunden, 1980, p.86)

### 2.1 The participatory development setting

This research is concerned with notions of participation and development, concepts expanded on in Chapter Three. Examination of these concepts is, however, aided by a brief contextualisation of the focal research setting, which is done immediately below. The specificity of the focal research setting will be reiterated in the interpretative analysis in Chapter Six.

This research was undertaken in an agricultural development project located in a rural region of a former bantustan<sup>1</sup> (or homeland) in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The former bantustans are home to many of South Africa's eighteen million poor<sup>2</sup> and economically marginalized people (who constitute approximately 45% of South Africa's population). Historically the geographical area of the focal research setting saw intermittent armed conflict between settlers of Dutch and German origin and the indigenous populace. In the nineteenth-century it was part of a volatile frontier between the expanding British Cape Colony and the agri-pastoralist Xhosa speaking peoples. In common with much of rural South Africa, nineteenth century colonial conquest made way for legally enshrined land dispossession and forced removals. This resulted in the increased proletarianisation and de-agrarianisation of the rural peasantry (Bundy, 1979), and the rise of migratory labour practices. Significantly, black Africans who qualified, made up a small but influential segment of the Cape Parliament's electorate, prior to their twentieth century disenfranchisement. The interwar years (1919-1939) were marked by assorted "betterment" initiatives in these areas, including the focal research setting.

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<sup>1</sup> Bantustan: An Afrikaans term for the now defunct, nominally independent ethnic enclaves set up under the institutionalised racial segregation of Apartheid.

<sup>2</sup> Poor means living beneath the absolute poverty threshold, defined in 2000 figures as an income below R353 per month. Exhibiting poverty that is extremely unevenly distributed, South Africa's Gini coefficient (which measures disparities in income distribution) ranks it as the third most unequal country in the world (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2000).

These initiatives ostensibly sought to rationalise inefficient “native agriculture” (Beinart, 1982) and demarcate land use zones, but far more notably, curbed population migration to urban areas.

Following the political ascendancy of the National Party in 1948, and the increasing codification and institutionalisation of nascent apartheid’s racial segregation, these ‘native reserves’ acquired new prominence as the envisaged bantustans or homelands. The second half of the twentieth century saw attempts at improving ‘native’ agriculture wane as the bantustans increasingly assumed their role as dumping grounds for surplus and displaced black South Africans. Bantustan betterment schemes “lost almost entirely any aspect of improvement or rationalization of land use and became instead principally instruments of coercion” (Unterhalter, cited in Ferguson, 1990, p.262).

Not entirely dissimilar to current day development interventions, betterment was seldom universally embraced by its recipients. Indeed, endeavours in its name have provoked some of the most bloody and significant incidents of rural resistance in South African history (Ferguson, 1990). It was against this historical background, and the establishment of a nominally independent homeland state, that the vast political transformations leading to South Africa’s first democratic election of 1994 took place. These transformations saw oppressive homeland administrations crumble and the Bantustans reincorporated into larger South Africa.

The political transformations of the 1990s irrevocably changed the development terrain. ‘Development’ was firmly placed on the post-apartheid political agenda by the state’s adoption of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The new state’s embrace of an explicit developmental agenda (alongside the dissipation of foreign donor funding), and the inability of many civil society organisations to reorientate themselves from an anti-apartheid to developmental agenda, saw the decline of an erstwhile strong Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) and Community Based Organisation (CBO) sector (Macazoma, 1993). However the RDP, with its explicit developmental agenda, was born into a difficult historical juncture. Firstly, by the 1990s many of the orthodoxies that had informed development initiatives in the past had waned. The United Nations Human Development Programme (2000) describes how,

South Africa marched the final steps of its liberation struggle in an era marked by the collapse or decay of the three main development models that held sway for the most of the century. These were the Soviet model (associated with 'real existing socialist' states), the welfarist model (that at times characterised North America, the United Kingdom and Western Europe) and the developmentalist model (expressed in a variety of experiments in Africa, Asia and Latin America) (p.xi).

Secondly, the RDP ill-accorded with the mounting forces of transnational production, market deregulation and globalisation. Consequently the RDP was eclipsed in 1996 by the adoption of a market friendly, supply-side macro-economic Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy (UNDP, 2000; Van der Waal, 2000). GEAR saw the advent of an increasingly austere state fiscal policy orientated toward engendering a market-driven industrial export economy. Its proponents arguing that this economic growth would (ultimately) feed social redress and development. GEAR effectively served to arrest the heady Keynesian enthusiasm of the RDP, and temper populist macroeconomic impulses within the new democratic state.

Despite this reshaping of the development terrain, development and its familiar rejoinder of participation remain firmly on the South African socio-political agenda. Indeed it is virtually impossible to engage with development in current-day South Africa without affirming "participation", if only in the realm of rhetoric. White (1993) notes, "the euphoric word participation has become a part of development jargon. Now, no respectable development project can be proposed without using this 'in' word" (p.16). Hence all contemporary development is, in a sense, participatory development. The specificity of the focal research setting, and its attendant 'participation', are considered in what follows.

The historical context of the focal agricultural-based community development project has already been broadly indicated. The focal research project was located in one particular village, in a geographical area consisting of a series of scattered rural hamlets. Dwellings in the district are generally small and many are constructed of mud or corrugated iron, rather than bricks and mortar. Apart from being electrified, the entire area is relatively underserved; the main arterial road is untarred and treacherous in the wet; there is no reticulated sewage and very few communal taps. Furthermore, like much of the Eastern

Cape, the geographical area of the focal research setting suffers from periodic drought and is poorly suited to intensive or rain fed agriculture. In addition (and in common with much of rural South Africa), communal tenure systems have not successfully competed with commercial farming, leaving the majority of people without access to productive agricultural resources. Management of communal ranges is poor, and fences extremely dilapidated. All of this has seen the relatively impoverished inhabitants of the focal community come to rely on a range of activities, other than agriculture, for their economic livelihood. These include, employment in the civil service (a very small number of teachers and clerks), assorted migratory labour practices, remittances from urban relatives, various government social welfare grants, erratic informal trading and, most significantly, waged labour at the local university.

The focal community's economic fortunes had to a large extent, become interwoven with the vicissitudes of the local university. In the early 1980s the local university employed a relatively large blue-collar labour force at low wages, as part of the homeland regime's poverty alleviation attempts. A decade later increased labour market regulation and rapid unionisation saw workers wages rise to unsustainable levels at an overstaffed university with declining student numbers. The resultant restructuring of the institution saw wide-scale retrenchments of blue-collar employees, considerable numbers of whom were resident in the focal village. These events lent increased impetus to the university's attempts to access donor funding in order to support rural development initiatives within the surrounding communities. The focal development initiative was a product of these efforts.

The development project within which this research was undertaken has a firm agricultural focus. It consists of a number of components, or sub-projects including, irrigated vegetable plots and (planned) poultry and piggery production facilities. In order to be participatory it is legally constituted as an agricultural co-operative, and has approximately forty (signed up) members. The project is facilitated by a university-based agriculture research unit and (as with many South African development initiatives) is funded by a foreign funder, in this case a foreign educational development NGO. Although the project was mooted for several years, it is only over the last two years that it has proved agriculturally productive. This project furnishes the setting within which to

examine the nature of participation in relation to the complex theoretical, social, practical and moral endeavour of development.



## CHAPTER THREE: PARTICIPATION AND DEVELOPMENT

*"[Human development requires] a rapid process of redress, social reconciliation, nation building, economic growth and human development alongside the sustainable utilization of natural resources"* (United Nations Development Programme, 2000, p.23)

### 3.1 Participation and development

In this section the concept of development is considered, before the relationship between participation and development is expanded on in detail. Finally, the difficulties inherent in these notions are discussed.

Ferguson (1990) argues that the expansive and pervasive concept of "development" occupies a central place in our world, much akin to that of "civilization" in the nineteenth century or "God" in the twelfth. This ubiquity sometimes renders critical appraisal of the 'development' concept difficult. The notion of development can, in terms of its historical antecedents, be traced to eighteenth and nineteenth century theories of progressive social change, penned within the nascent disciplines of economics and sociology. Tracts by Saint-Simon, Adam Smith and Karl Marx exemplify the genre, wherein development was conceptualised in largely material terms (Hadjor, 1993). This understanding endured into the twentieth century, along with "the ethnocentric assumption that the progressive evolution of society was not necessarily applicable to the non-Western world" (Hadjor, 1993, p.98). An assumption dispelled by latter-day social and political transformations, such as incremental steps towards decolonialization and calls for Third World political and economic advance.

The notion of 'participation', widely used within contemporary socio-political discourse and community development is a somewhat newer concept, although it too is not without precedent. Defined very broadly, nineteenth century Britain exacted 'participation' from its colonial subaltern, primarily through the enlisting of local elites to collect taxes, in order to fund colonial administrations (Roodt, 2001). However it was in the period following World War Two, with the advent of Modernization theory as the prevailing development orthodoxy, that participation came to be reconsidered.

Modernization theory was the notion that the Third World ought to emulate - following the title of an influential text - the "Stages of economic growth" (Rostow, as cited in Hadjor, 1993), the capitalist West had undergone. This model postulated that the rural poor would participate in development as its benefits 'trickled down', hypothetically from the urban elite. Within this model the traditional or 'backward' sectors of society have little choice in the nature and scope of their 'participation' in national development.

Modernization theory met with the rebuttal of the Dependency theorists, who argued that the Third World could not be studied in isolation from the historical context of colonial domination (Mehmet, 1995; Rodney, 1988). These neo-Marxist inclined theorists maintained that First World development and industrialization were built on Third World underdevelopment and exploitation. They viewed development rather circumspectly, arguing that the global capitalism that drives it can hardly be regarded as a progressive social force. Dependency theorists maintain a firm focus on the material and economic realm, suggesting (with some validity) that development serves to: promote imperial capitalism, incorporate new territories into capitalist relations, mollify the populace against radical social change, bribe local elites and mystify actual power relationships (Ferguson, 1990; Heyer, Roberts & Williams, 1981). While the ideological and definitional contestation surrounding development is quite beyond the scope of this project to adjudicate, it suffices to suggest that this contestation serves as a backdrop for the ascendancy of the participatory development ethos.

From the 1970s an enlarged conception of 'development' attained exigency as the concept was again redefined. This was the "people-centred" notion of development (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977; Dag Hammerskjold Foundation, 1977; Korten, 1990; Santhanam, Sastry & Vijayakumar, 1982), an approach marked by the ideals of democratisation, participation (Korten, 1990; Bhattacharyya, 1995 and Oakley, 1991), "putting the last first" (Chambers, 1985, p.26) and social transformation (Hadjor, 1993). Within the people-centred approach participation and socially transformative action are vaunted as key components of development. Participation within the people centred development perspective has several additional characteristics. It is marked by participatory forms of decision-making (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977), building of capacity for empowerment (Swift & Levin, 1987) and an acknowledgement of focal

communities' local knowledge (Gilbert & Van Vlaenderen, 1995). Hence within the people centred development perspective 'development' becomes a form of societal transformation; a part of the ongoing collective effort to raise standards of living, fight poverty and alleviate global want. Development is "no longer a movement in history, but an activity, a social program, a war on poverty on a global scale" (Ferguson, 1990, p.15). In contrast with the Dependency theorists, the proponents of participatory development accept development's fundamental beneficence as a given and are disinclined to elide development with narrowly material and economic issues - the macro political and economic issues which have traditionally dominated development theory.

Theorists of the people-centred development persuasion (cf. Cernea, 2000; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997, Coetzee, 2001), therefore provide useful "microperspectives" (Graaff, 2001, p.6) on development theory. In its goal of scrutinizing the dialogical and relational dynamics of participation, this inquiry aligns itself quite explicitly with these microperspectives - microperspectives that serve to perspicaciously extend macroperspectives on development.

### **3.2 The elusiveness of participation**

Despite regular rhetorical affirmation of 'participation' and its centrality to contemporary accounts of development, the concept is marked by several conceptual aporia and much heterogeneity and turbidity (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980; Rajakutty, 1991; Kelly and Van Vlaenderen, 1995, 1996). Reviewing the concept, Kelly and Van Vlaenderen, (1995) catalogue a bewildering range of usages of 'participation'. It is variously: the capacity for influencing decision making, a direct share in decision making, the ability to take initiative in developing one's society or being in a position to benefit from a development project. The elusiveness of participation is exacerbated by the wide dissemination of the term, which has served to further blunt its explanatory power.

### **3.3 Levels of participation**

Boyce (2001) offers a topology wherein he enumerates three levels of participation, namely the individual, interpersonal and structural. The individual level examines participation at a micro individual-subject level. It



focuses on psychological characteristics, such as motivation, personal benefit (Wandersman, 1987) and individual empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995; see also 1990). Conventionally, empowerment denotes a sense of self-mastery, self-efficacy and personal control (Zimmerman, 1990). However, empowerment is a broad concept with both phenomenological and social-structural aspects, aspects furthermore accorded different emphasis by various authors (Boyce, 2001; Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 1995).

While a subjective sense of self-efficacy is a prerequisite for empowerment, it is in itself insufficient condition for it - because empowerment also includes social and structural elements. Empowerment embraces a group's political, economic, intellectual and technical ability to exercise social, political and legal influence (Mathur, 1986). In terms of Boyce's (2001) three tiered topology, this macro-structural level (with its focus on the overarching socio-political process and determinants of participation) stands opposed to the individual level of analysis.

Finally, in the critical space between the micro-individual and macro-structural levels of analysis, participation can be theorised in interpersonal and relational terms (Zimmerman, 1995). This meso-level of analysis is a key focus of the present inquiry.

Much of the participation literature is marked by a distinct theoretical paucity. It is characterized by a narrow, pragmatically orientated 'how-to' focus, wherein scant attention is devoted to the conceptual underpinnings of participation (Rahnema, 1990; White, 1993). This is particularly pronounced at the relational, interactional level of analysis. The communicative and relational dynamics of participation therefore remain under-theorised in terms of the interaction between, and affordances for, different modes of participation (White, 1993; Kelly & Van Vlaenderen, 1996, Van Vlaenderen, 1998). Kelly and Van Vlaenderen (1996) succinctly state some of the difficulties,

There is a lack of literature dealing with how participatory relationships are formed and sustained between parties who are grossly different in terms of access to skills, resources, education, political power and the sense that their own individual efforts can make a difference (Kelly and Van Vlaenderen, 1996, p.1236).

### 3.4 Participation: means and end

Boyce's (2001) levels (viz. individual, relational and structural) of participation, can be understood relative to the dynamic tension that exists in the relationship between participation and development. Oakley (1991) delineates a continuum where at one extreme the diverse notion of participation is represented as a 'means' of development, while at the other participation is an 'end' of development. The 'means' pole sees participatory concessions appended to externally devised and managed development interventions. In this, the most nominal use of the term, participation becomes simply a strategy or instrumental means towards larger and weightier development goals. Participation is here used in a manner analogous to that of 'contribution'; participation entails "the voluntary donation of people's resources to a common good or goal" (Boyce, 2001, p. 1552). Still at the means pole, but even more minimally, participation simply becomes a rhetorical stratagem - whereby participatory concessions and discourse are tacked onto intrinsically unparticipatory initiatives. This represents a widespread, if not the dominant, use of the moniker 'participation' (Gardener & Lewis, 1996; Nelson & Wright, 1995). In the South African context, Roodt (2001) describes many of the former Bantustans' 'participatory development' interventions to have been of this variety. Van der Waal (2000) wryly notes that even the RDP occasionally drew on this narrow, instrumental conception of participation.

At the farthest extreme from the 'means' pole on Oakley's (1991) continuum is participation as 'end'. This radical form of participation is characterised by, "...organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements who have hitherto been excluded from such control" (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994). This view of participation sees it as "a transformational end", a lauded object in itself (Boyce, 2001, p. 1552). Participation is here understood as a way of overcoming the alienation of marginal communities from the exercise of power, in order to improve the conditions of existence within these communities (Kelly and Van Vlaenderen, 1996). In this formulation participation is vaunted as a strategy for attaining efficiency, equity, social cohesiveness and sustainability within development initiatives (Midgeley, Hall & Narine as cited in Boyce 2001; Oakley, 1991; Korten, 1990). This incarnation of participation sees it bound up with notions of social transformation and the (earlier discussed)

notion of empowerment. This “transformational” (Boyce, 2001), or “end” (Oakley, 1995; Oakley, 1991) view of participation furthermore embraces a critical socio-political awareness or, in Brazilian liberation pedagogue Paulo Freire’s (1970) parlance, “conscientization”. In this inquiry transformational-end participation provides a lens through which to view and explore the relational and interactional dynamics of participation.

Three decades after they were first penned, Paulo Freire’s deliberations on participation remain extremely influential within development and rich with heuristic potential. Straddling both poles of Oakley’s (1991) means-end continuum, Freire suggests participation ought to be regarded as both the means and *teleos* of the development. Freire’s ideas are indebted to a range of intellectual antecedents and draw on a common trope for participation, that of ‘dialogue’. Most significant among the influences on Freire is Buber’s (1958) notion of dialogical “I and Thou” exchange, whereby the dialogue of participation is characterised by intersubjectively constituted mutuality, respect and openness. This stands in stark contradistinction to “I-it” monological relationships. To Freire (1970, 1988) the dialogue of participation therefore entails far more than simple illocutionary exchange, it has distinct axiological overtones.

Freire (1970) moreover connects participation to action. He argues that participation ought to be marked by “action and reflection in dialectical relationship” (Peters & Lankshear, 1994, p.178). In his embrace of reflexive, socially transformative action Freire’s ideas bear the imprint of Marx’s human praxis, wherein activity serves as the generator of consciousness. For, “There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world” (Freire, 1970, p.68). The empowerment attendant to participation, accordingly, stems from social processes and is related to specific activities, rather than simply being a diffuse, intrapsychic state.

Finally joint activity within transformation-end participatory development implies a revised role for the implementing agents or facilitators of development. The influential “Manila Declaration on People’s Participation and Sustainable Development” (cf. Korten, 1990) emphatically states, “development assistance must be responsive to the people. In authentic development an assisting agency is a participant in a development process that is community

derived, community led and community owned" (p.219). Thereby underscoring the need for community control and ownership of development interventions.

To conclude then, this exploratory research seeks to theorise the interactional and relational micro-dynamics of participation, in and for development. However participation is a multifarious, elusive and often ill-defined concept. The literature on participation tends to be relatively prescriptive and even idealistic; it ruminates on how participation should work, rather than how it does work. The relational dynamics of participation are consequently poorly theorised. In order to investigate this question, participation is tautly operationalised, in this inquiry, in 'transformational end' terms. This conceptualisation of the participation concept is the touchstone against which situated action towards participation is gauged, within the focal research setting. In the present inquiry this conceptualisation is economically described by the phrase participatory development<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> While the term "participatory development" sometimes has a narrower set of resonances, denoting a specific theoretical position and set of techniques, this phrase is preferred for the sake of brevity.



## CHAPTER FOUR: THE DIALOGICAL-ACTIVITY FRAMEWORK

*"It is no longer sufficient to focus on singular, relatively isolated activity systems. Activity theory needs to develop tools for analyzing and transforming networks of culturally heterogeneous activities through dialogue and debate" (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999, p.7).*

*"No speaker is, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.67)*

In the preceding chapter the question of participation was located relative to development. This chapter now considers participatory development as dialogical activity. Hence a dialogical-activity framework, which fuses dialogical and Activity theory, is proposed as the theoretical basis for analysis of interactional and relational dynamics of participation. In the present chapter the tenets of Activity theory are discussed, following which Y. Engeström's (1993; 1999a) analytic schema of the Activity system is explicated. R. Engeström (1995; 1999) expands the Activity system analytic schema through the inclusion of semiotic and communicative elements, specifically the theoretical precepts of voice, social language and speech genre, which are in turn derived from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. The resultant fusing of dialogue and Activity theory, strikes a rapprochement between communication and action, thereby heuristically extending activity-theoretical insights. This dialogical-activity framework is used to examine the activity of participation between roleplayers, within the focal development setting.

### 4.1 The 'in-betweenness' of Activity

The concept of activity was accorded special prominence within the Soviet psychological tradition, and systematically considered by theorists such as Luria (1979), Leont'ev (1978) and most notably Vygotsky (1978, 1981). Activity ("*tâgikiet*", from German) has dual inflections within the Soviet tradition; activity is both an object of analysis and a principle of explanation. While Activity theory is founded on Soviet sociohistorical or cultural-historical psychology (Cole 1995; Kozulin, 1986; Wertsch, 1980; 1990) dating from the first decades of the twentieth century, its intellectual antecedents embrace a German high philosophical tradition (viz. Kant, Hegel) and Marxism.

The ascendancy of Activity theory within the West has, until the recent past, been curtailed by a combination of language, epistemological and ideological barriers. Burman (1994) furthermore notes that readings of Activity theory in the West have often been relatively conservative, applying Activity theory in a developmental rather than development sense, thereby treating it as little more than an educational technology, suited to dyadic and small group work. However Activity theory insights are not the exclusive preserve of developmental psychology, or rather, not a developmental psychology as traditionally conceived of.<sup>4</sup> Hence diverse and incipient attempts have been made to apply Activity theory insights within a range of alternative interpretative arenas, including: community development (Gilbert, 1989; Van Vlaenderen, 1998), industry (Y. Engeström, 1999a), historiography (Wertsch, 1997, 1998) and public health settings (R. Engeström, 1999). This study is therefore part of a general move towards applying activity theoretical insights to uncharted institutional and organisational domains, in this case, the context of community development.

Activity theorists embrace *activity* as the explanatory nexus of human behaviour, viewing human behaviour analysable as a product of socially meaningful activity. In this inquiry Activity theory enables us to investigate the social activity of participatory development, thereby providing a nuanced focus on the individual acting subject within his or her context. Vygotsky trains the analytic lens on "object-orientated action mediated by cultural tools and signs" (1978 p.40), rather than hypothesized entities such as human consciousness. According to Vygotsky activity provides the interface between individual and world, the study of which served to steer a middle course between a Pavlovian reflexological psychology on one hand, and a introspective-mentalistic, continental tradition on the other (Kozulin, 1986). These traditions are two halves of the same duality: the first seeks to study behaviour without mind, the second mind without behaviour. Furthermore, a focus on activity serves to transcend the dichotomy between the individual subject and the objective social conditions. This critical antimony continues to bedevil the human sciences. It is, as Wertsch (1985, pp.58-59) memorably describes it "a curious party game that certain groups in western society are apt

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<sup>4</sup> While theories of human development are often simultaneously theories of social development, *developmental* is often taken in Psychology to denote ontogenesis and *development* phylogenesis.

to indulge in over and over again”, wherein one group presents the individual, the other group society, as the human sciences’ interpretative nexus.

A Vygotskian metapsychology furthermore avoids the epistemological tautology inherent in appealing to consciousness, in order to theorise consciousness (Kozulin, 1986). In addition, it reverses the traditional directionality of psychological explanation. Human activity is not analysed in terms of increasingly reduced and disaggregated constitutive process, rooted in fixed context-free principles. Instead, smaller-scale activities are theorised by explaining them within the broader context of activity (Shotter, 1989), Vygotsky’s conceptual progenitors can be traced to Hegel and Marx, as Marx declares in his criticism of Feurbach, “The chief defect of hitherto existing materialism... is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*” (Marx and Engels, as cited in Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p.3). Therefore poised between an empirical endeavour and cultural-hermeneutic enterprise, Vygotsky’s is an ‘in-between’ psychology (Shotter, 1989). The exegesis of which is here ordered in terms of three thematic strands. The first strand is Vygotsky’s reliance on genetic or developmental analysis, the second his claim that higher mental functions are rooted in social life, the third, his assertion that human psychological functioning requires attention to the mediatory functions of tools and signs (Wertsch, 1990).

The first theme flows from Vygotsky’s (1981) insistence on genetic<sup>5</sup> or historical analysis. It privileges analysis of that which is dynamic, over the static. This is required in order to avoid being misled by “fossilized” phenotypical phenomena. Cole’s (1995) inclusive, if inelegant, moniker of “socio-historical-cultural psychology” foregrounds the fundamental historicity which marked Leont’ev, Luria and Vygotsky’s sociocultural project. Undergoing several tribulations during Activity theory’s critical reception in the West, the notion of historicity serves to illuminate the workings of culturally mediated behaviour. A focus on several temporal (or ‘genetic’) domains is required because, “any psychological phenomenon emerges from interaction of processes occurring at all the [temporal] levels of the human life

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<sup>5</sup> Genetic, derived from the Latin *genus* connotes “origins” rather than “genetics”, in activity theory parlance.

system: phylogeny, cultural history, ontogeny, and microgenesis" (Cole, 1995, pp.191-192).

The second theme concerns the relationship between socio-cultural context and individual, the critical interstice within which intramental development occurs.

Vygotsky proposed that human mental functioning comprises the *internalisation* of social activity, wherein the external realm becomes internally reinscribed, migrating from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal. Vygotsky's general genetic law of cultural development is thus,

Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition... (1981, p.163).

As a product of "socially-distributed consciousness" the intrapsychological plane retains its quasi-social nature (Bruner, as cited in Wertsch, 1990, p.118). The extent of this socialness is to some extent bound up with the question of semiotic mediation - a critical concern of the third theme discussed below. Accordingly, Leont'ev maintained fundamental transformations are attendant to internalisation, for "[internalisation] is not the transferral of an external activity to a pre-existing, internal plane of consciousness: it is the process in which this plane is formed" (as cited in Shotter, 1989, p.198). In other words, beyond the 'lower mental functions', the entire content and structure of the intramental plane is constituted in the process of internalisation.

The third theme of Vygotsky's work concerns the importance of semiotic mediation. The search for the genesis of human's higher mental functions saw Vygotsky postulate these to be mediated by what he termed auxiliary stimuli, which "transfers the psychology operation to higher and qualitatively new forms and permits the humans, by aid of extrinsic stimuli, *to control their behaviour from the outside*" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.40).

Human consciousness is constituted through interaction with the 'prostheses' or catalysts of socially located activity (Shotter, 1989). Consciousness is mediated by culturally defined psychological tools and signs. The former are social and "externally" orientated, the later psychological and "internally"



directed. It is important to note that these do not simply facilitate activity that would otherwise unfold; they fundamentally shape and define it (Wertsch, 1990). Hence prevailing (and necessarily) socio-cultural symbolic and communicative systems, such as language or numerical systems, offer powerful affordances for human activity. Human consciousness is continually created and recreated in the context of activity. Activity is embedded in, and constituted through, semiotic and sign systems. Thus as Vygotsky (1978) explains,

All the higher psychic functions are mediated processes, and signs are the basic means used to master and direct them. The mediating sign is incorporated in their structure as an indispensable, indeed the central part of the total process (p.56).

Of the three themes delineated above, Wertsch (1990) argues for the analytical primacy and innovativeness of the third - semiotic mediation. The Activity theoretical notion of semiotic mediation is fecund with analytic potential and, later in this chapter, is expanded with reference to Bakhtinian notions of dialogicity. Therefore locating semiotic and communicative elements in activity theoretical terms is an endeavour compatible with the contemporary "communicative turn" (see Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Billig, 1987). It allows examination of the microdynamics of roleplayers' interaction and participation within the context of development. But these notions and concern with communication and semiotic mediation will be held in abeyance for now and revisited after Y. Engeström's concept of the Activity System has been explained.

## **4.2 Systemic activity**

Y. Engeström (1987) expounds on "second generation" Activity theory through his analytic schema of the Activity system, which builds on the activity-theoretical triad of subject, object and mediational means as the unit of culturally mediated action. The system focus avoids the traditional reduction of complex historically aggregated and objectified experience to superficial, unidimensional action. Collective human action is not understood as the sum of individual actions, but is rather connected to collective practices, communities, institutions and histories. The utility of Y. Engeström's approach is that in linking the intrapsychological plane of mental functioning to the broader

cultural and institutional matrix, it allows for a focus on the complex institutional milieu in which activity occurs - in this particular case the context of participatory development.

Leont'ev's (1978) account of activity, action and operation (Kozulin, 1986) provides an important conceptual buttress for the Activity systems theory. The core components of Leont'ev's three tiered model, to which these components are directed ("Directing factor") and its corresponding "Subject" may be represented as follows:

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Directing factor</i>	<i>Subject</i>
Activity	Object / motive	Collective
Action	Goal	Individual or group
Operation	Instrumental conditions	Non-conscious

Table 1. Leont'ev's (1978) three-tiered structure of activity.

Leont'ev described collectivity and object-orientatedness as the fundamental characteristics of human activity. His model is demonstrable by reference to his well-known example of the "primitive hunt" (1978). The motive of the *activity*, resides in its very object: the hunted animals that will provide food and skins for the hunters. Activity is therefore an "object-driven complex of goal-orientated actions" (R. Engeström, 1999, p.198). Within the hypothetical hunting party, a single individual might be tasked with driving the animals towards the hunters. Viewed narrowly this individual *action*, and its goal of frightening a herd of animals appears senseless, if not altogether counterproductive. Yet conceptualised as a broader (collective), object-directed *activity*, it comes intelligibly into focus. Activities are products of aggregated actions, which are artefactually mediated and individually enacted (Y. Engeström, 1999a). Finally, *operations* are the typified, routinised and iterative sets of responses, which occur often, even below the level of conscious awareness. Leont'ev illustrates operations, by means of another example. He

contrasts the deliberate action-oriented gear changes of a novice driver with the fluid operations of an experienced motorist, where “ [for] the consciousness of the [experienced] driver, shifting gears in normal circumstances is as if it did not exist” (Leont’ev, 1978, p.66).

The Activity system approach facilitates the drawing of a heuristically beneficial distinction between individual actions and collective activity. This is done in a manner, which circumvents many of the difficulties conventionally associated with cleaving individual goals apart from collective action and (pertinently in the case of community development) theorising the irrational or non-rational aspects of human behaviour. Reflecting on the relationship between individual and collective activity Y. Engeström explains, “in complex activities with fragmented division of labor, the participants themselves have great difficulties in constructing a connection between the goals of their individual actions and the object and motive of collective activity” (1999c, p.173). Engeström’s topology is therefore particularly well attuned to the study of complex organisational and institutional contexts.

Figure 1, which follows, represents the Activity system analytic schema. The system is “a productive process where the subject is connected to the object with culturally constituted (tools, signs) mediational means” (Y. Engeström, 1999b, p.35). The activity theoretical triad of objects, subjects and mediational means, which is of analytic pre-eminence in the current inquiry, is therefore augmented by the inclusion of a “Community” and the “Division of labour”.

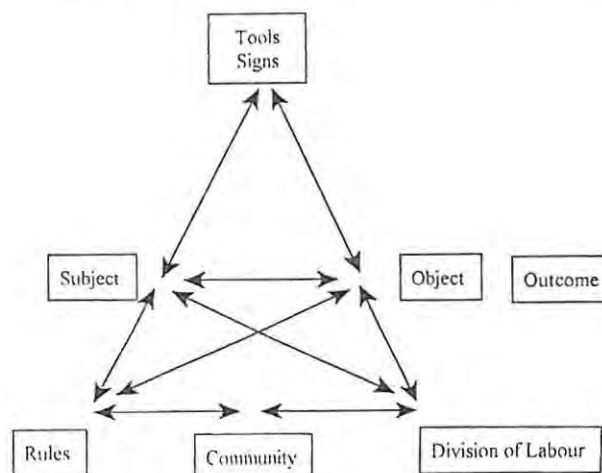


Figure 1. A diagrammatic representation of Y. Engeström’s (1987, 1993, 1999b) Activity System.

The elements within an Activity system are expanded on as follows: the *subject* is the person or subgroup whose “agency is chosen as the point of view in the analysis” (Y. Engeström, 1993, p.67); the *Object* is the task or problem at hand, the “raw material” or “problem space” in (or at) which the activity is directed (Y. Engeström, 1993, p.67); the *Community* represents the multiple individuals surrounding the same general object; while the *Division of labour* involves both the horizontal division of tasks between peers, and a vertical axis of power and authority. The tools represent the artefacts used to effect action and *Rules*, finally, represent a portmanteau of both implicit norms and codified regulations. Rules are formulated against the entire history of past practice, for, “human beings not only use instruments, they also continuously renew and develop them, whether consciously or not. They not only obey rules, they also mold and reformulate them” (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999, p.14).

The Activity system hence provides an integrated account of the actions, subjects (i.e. participants) and mediational means (the prevailing material and procedural artefacts) all directed toward an object (viz. community development). However Y. Engeström cautions that activity systems are discontinuous and in constant flux, “Besides accumulation and incremental change, there are crises, upheaval, and qualitative transformations” (1993, p.68). The instability, internal fissures and contradictions within Activity systems occur at a number of levels, most notably in relation to the object of the activity. Among these contradictions are those that potentially inhere between the (collective) object of the activity and the instruments or artefacts used to achieve it. A second potential contradiction exists between the object and participant’s division of labour.

If the collective and artefactually mediated nature of human activity is an axiom of the activity theoretic approach, the precise nature of this activity warrants consideration. What, it might reasonably be asked, constitutes activity? For instance, Y. Engeström persuasively argues that within Activity theory there exists a critical dichotomy between “Instrumental tool-mediated production versus expressive sign-mediated communication” (1999b, p.23). Within this dynamic tension, he charges that the contemporary elevation of the semiotic comes at the expense of, “ideas of historicity, object-orientatedness, and the collective nature of human activity” (Y. Engeström, 1999c, p.168). Yet Y. Engeström elides the distinction between object-orientated and semiotically-



mediated activity somewhat by describing communication as “an integral part of all object-related activity” (Y. Engeström, 1999b, p.23). It is this issue, concerning the place of communication and semiotic elements within the activity-theoretical orientation, which warrants further discussion. This is done in the section that follows, and resolution to the impasse between object-orientatedness and the semiotic is sought (and attained) by recourse to R. Engeström’s (1995, 1999) Bakhtinian-derived notion of dialogicity.

### 4.3 Signs and dialogue as activity

R. Engeström (1995, 1999) expands the Activity theory analytic schema through the inclusion of semiotic and communicative elements. The inclusion of these serves to ameliorate several of the communicative lacunae within Activity theory (Leiman, 1999, Wells, 1999) and confers an expanded unit of analysis<sup>6</sup>. R. Engeström’s incorporation of semiotic and communicative elements is effected by reference to the insights of Mikhail Bakhtin. Termed a *translinguistics*, Bakhtin’s work embodies “a systematic questioning and inverting of the basic premises and arguments of traditional linguistic theory” (Stewart, 1983, p.265). His “anti-linguistics” is implacably opposed to viewing signs as acontextual, ahistorical and possessing of innate meaning (Stewart, 1983). Bakhtin’s view of speech (and meaning) is instead concerned with the intertextuality, inter-animation and dialogicity which mark all language. Bakhtin’s critique of Saussurean structuralism (through his criticism of Formalist poetics) saw a revolutionary concern with actualised, contextual communicative acts, acts for which conventional linguistic analysis proved inadequate. Hence in his eschewal of structuralism Bakhtin sought the systematisation and stability required in order to study communication activity in the dynamic, living varieties of actual dialogical language use.

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<sup>6</sup> The place of semiotic elements in Activity theory was a foundational debate between Vygotsky and the Karkhovites (Cole, 1995; 1996; Kozulin, 1986; Zinchenko, 1995).

At this point notions of dialogue and dialogicity need to be clarified. Following Bakhtin, dialogue is “both the natural state of being in language as such and a valorized category of certain discourses” (Hirschkop & Shepherd, 1989, p.674).

In the second part of this definition (“valorized category of certain discourses”), dialogue is a quotidian, prosaic term for illocutionary exchange. But dialogue also has the former, theoretically-framed (“natural state of being in language”) Bakhtinian inflection. This definition denotes the fundamental intertextuality and reciprocal exchange that undergirds all language, meaning and subjectivity. Hence, *dialogue* (second definition) is a quotidian and prosaic synonym for conversation; *dialogicism* (first definition) is an intrinsic feature of language and life. Consequently while the antithesis of everyday “dialogue” (second definition) is monologue, dialogicism (first definition) has no contradistinctive “monologue”, because all communication stems from a complex matrix of language content, speech genre, speaker intention and audience reception. Or, as Morson (1986) reminds us, the only sense in which words are ever the sole possession of a single speaker, is physiologically.

Bakhtin’s dialogical (in the first definition sense) insights therefore enable theorisation of communicative activity. Embracing the semantic context of activity, meaning is jointly constructed in a complex interplay of roleplayers’ mediational means (knowledge, procedures, physical artefacts, linguistic resources), situational and institutional factors (R. Engeström, 1999). Within this dialogical Bakhtinian-inspired revision of Activity theory, communicative action is the lens through which human activity is examined. Therefore communicative acts are vaunted not for the insights they confer into the consciousness of the (supposedly) individual sovereign subject, but are instead significant forms of social action *per se*.

These ideas, concerning the performativity and instrumentality of language, are neatly illustratable by reference to Wittgenstein’s (1953) notion of language games. As language is intelligible only in its socio-discursive context, language games constitute new and (to some extent) incommensurate “form[s] of life”. Communicative exchange no longer simply maps activity; it becomes a significant form of activity. The sign and the semiotic realm are therefore simultaneously, “an instrument, and an instrument for other instruments, due to its potentials and resources for sense making” (R. Engeström, 1999, p.35). The activity-theoretical notion of communicative activity as an integral part of

object-orientated activity is strikingly similar to Wittgensteinian notions of the instrumental and performative power of language. These “language games” usher forth distinct, language-based potentialities and practices (Durrheim, 1997; Shotter, 1993b) bridging the word and dialogue, to action.

Shotter (1992, 1993a, 1993b) extends these instrumental, anti-foundational reconceptualisations of communication by drawing on an assortment of theorists (viz. Wittgenstein, Voloshinov, Vygotsky and Bakhtin). In his dialogical or relational paradigm he emphasizes the “rhetorical-responsive” rather than “representational-referential” functions of communicative activities (Shotter, 1992). So communicative activities become “not just one of our activities in the world... on the contrary, for us they are foundational; we have our lives in them; they provide the living basis or foundation, so to speak, for everything we do” (Shotter, 1992, p.10). Therefore appropriating communicative action in order to theorise action (or “situated action”) sees the focus on languages’ performative and instrumental functions and entails a decisive moving beyond appeals to intersubjective reality. This leads us to examine the semantic context of human action in the critical interstice of the “intra-interactional context” (R. Engeström, 1995, p.193). This emphasis on the semantic context of action allows for a transcending of the microsociological separation of the subject who “interacts rather than acts” (R. Engeström, 1995, p.196). Therefore while this research is concerned with communicative elements, it does not limit itself to these. It examines not just talk, but talk related to action; including talk as action and the action attendant to talk. Finally, while the dialogical foci might appear comparable to a contemporary emphasis on pragmatics or discourse, there is far less inclination to separate out speech from social or individual activity. Meaning construction within Activity theory does not fall exclusively within the ambit of signs and words, it is rather more expansively linked to an array of artefacts, tools, techniques and technologies (R. Engeström, 1995).

#### **4.4 An enlarged topology of activity**

To reiterate at this point, Y. Engeström’s activity theoretic analytic schema of the Activity system was sketched in some detail. It was then augmented by the inclusion of the dialogical Bakhtinian-derived theoretical precepts; this inclusion enabled the incorporation of semiotic and communicative elements

into Activity theory, and facilitated the construction of a dialogic-activity framework (R. Engeström, 1995; 1999). Within this theoretical topology, the *activity* of participatory development is accomplished as a “referential potentiality” through the local *actions* of roleplayers, carried out via their *operations* (R. Engeström, 1995, p.198). The synergies between these Bakhtinian precepts and Leont’ev’s three tier structure, previously discussed, is reflected in the table below (Table 2) and elaborated on in what follows.

<i>Leont’ev</i>	<i>Bakhtin</i>	<i>Concept definition</i>
Activity	Social Languages	Social context of meaning (referentially semantic content)
Actions	Voices	Subjectivity of the speaker
Operations	Speech Genres	Typical forms of utterance

Table 2. Conceptual schema showing the similarities between various levels of activity (cf. Leont’ev) and speech (cf. Bakhtin), adapted from R. Engeström (1995, 1999).

#### 4.4.1 Social languages and the referential object

Social languages, described by Bakhtin as specific to particular social groupings include,

social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day (Bakhtin, as cited in Wertsch, 1985, p.58).

Speakers inevitably and necessarily invoke a particular social language in producing utterances. The methodological significance of demarcating social languages is the manner in which it allowed Bakhtin to study everyday linguistic expression (Saussurean *parole*) whereas linguists traditionally concerned themselves with abstracted linguistic structures (viz. *langue*) (Wertsch, 1985; 1998). Bakhtin’s rejection of a narrow Saussurean focus on hypothesised, abstract *langue* rather than actualised, quotidian *parole* enabled



him to establish patterns and order in that which was conventionally regarded as chaotic and fundamentally beyond study, namely utterances.

Bakhtin therefore steers a middle course between what he termed abstract objectivism and individual subjectivism. Abstract objectivism offers up a conception of linguistic terms as de-animated and reified. Chains of fragmented, finished monological utterances that have been extricated from their origins, thereby losing the processual, dynamic and creative aspects of language use. This approach is better suited to the study of moribund and alien languages (Bakhtin cited the example of Latin), for “European linguistic thought was formed and matured over concern with the cadavers of written language; almost all its basic categories, its basic approaches and techniques were worked out in the process of reviving these cadavers” (Voloshinov<sup>7</sup>, 1973, p.71). Alternatively, individual subjectivism is oblivious to the socially determined aspects of language use, it accounts for language as a product of the individual psyche (Emerson, 1997). The tension between abstract objectivism and individual subjectivism is remarkably similar to Vygotsky’s description of the schism between idealist and behaviourist psychologies (Emerson, 1986).

A speaker’s utterances are directed both to an interlocutor (or presumed interlocutor), and “topic”, “content”, “life”, or “referential object”. The referential object within the activity system is the “‘content’ in the sense of the possibilities of human action” (R. Engeström, 1995, p.197), the inclusion of which overcomes the narrow dualism of (Saussurean) speaker and hearer. For meaning is the expression of the product of the social interaction of three participants: the speaker (author), the listener (reader) and the topic (the who or what) of speech (the hero) (Voloshinov, as cited in Durrheim, 1997, p.749). In this present inquiry, the prime object of referentiality (the ‘topic’) is the activity of participatory-orientated development. Within R. Engeström’s (1995) analytic schema, Leont’ev’s level of “activity” corresponds with Bakhtinian social language. Social languages are therefore intertwined with the objects of referentiality. They serve to objectify the world, allowing it to be enacted and acted upon through a referentiality that is dialogically and locally accomplished (R. Engeström, 1999).

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<sup>7</sup> The relationship between Voloshinov and Bakhtin is discussed in the “Note on authorship”.

Finally, social languages are distinguishable from the “traditional linguistic entities” of national languages (Bakhtin, 1981, p.430), although these to a large extent interanimate each other. An example of which would be the use of a bureaucratic English patois in the largely Xhosa speaking focal development setting. This affords speakers proficient in English increased authority for speaking, over those who are not.

#### 4.4.2 Voices and subjectivity

Bakhtin privileges the communication entity of utterance (*vyskazyvanie*) as his unit of analysis. In designating the utterance as his analytic unit, Bakhtin recognised the limitations of traditional linguistic entities such as ‘word’, ‘speech’ or ‘sentence’ neatly located in a system of Saussurean ‘language’ (Bakhtin, 1984)<sup>8</sup>. Effected within a dense matrix of social languages and speech genres, communicative action operates through ‘voices’. Voices or voicedness are always articulated from a perspective or point of view, which for Bakhtin is more a process than location (Wertsch, 1985). This indexicality prevails as, “it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that a speaker gets his words!” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293). Voice, corresponds with the level of “actions” within Y. Engeström’s analytic schema.

R. Engeström’s dialogical-activity method offers that, “Voice depicts the speaker’s subjective perspective, through which her perception of the world is accomplished” (1999, p.38). However the place of subjectivity within Bakhtin’s *oeuvre* is far from certain, because if inner life is dialogically forged, claims for a realm *a priori* to dialogue become untenable. Carried to its logical conclusion dialogicity suggests we share neither beliefs nor perceptions with other members of our social group, but rather “a set of shared semiotic procedures or ethnomethods (cf. Garfinkel), ways of making sense - and a certain set of

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<sup>8</sup> Wertsch (1990) incisively notes the indistinction between speech and language to be so pervasive among Activity theory’s Western readership, it is reflected in the (mis)translated title of Vygotsky’s seminal “Thought and Language”.

*ordered* forms of communication, or speech genres” (Shotter, 1993a, p.48). Even though communicative acts cannot be regarded as representational referential vessels for the transmission of underlying intelligibility, intelligibility speaks not through human subjects entirely bereft of agency. Bakhtin as ethicist and ‘existential philologist” elaborated on the relational, responsive aspects of utterance and voice by noting that “we have no alibi in existence” (Bakhtin, as cited in Hicks, 2000, p.228). This voicedness, which comes to artefactually mediate human agency is intimately bound up with context and responds to the wor(l)ds “addressivity”. For “each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.91).

The notion of voice and addressivity implicitly invokes an addressee, one to whom the utterance is directed. The addressee might be socially, spatially and temporally removed,

The addressee can be an immediate participant interlocutor in an everyday dialogue, a differentiated collective of specialists in some particular area of cultural communication, a more or less differentiated public, ethnic group, contemporaries, like-minded people, opponents and enemies, a subordinate, a superior, someone who is lower, higher, familiar, foreign, and so forth. And it can also be an indefinite, unconcretized other (Bakhtin, 1986, p.53).

An almost infinite range of responses - affirming, quoting, summarizing, parodying, slighting or even disregarding - therefore constitutes “responsivity” to the addressee. As these are primarily responses to the utterances of the preceding illocutionary subjects, they cannot be regarded as markers of a stable bedrock of underlying beliefs and attitudes. Instead they are strategically tailored to the “speaker’s assessment of the exigencies of the immediate discursive situation” (Wells, 1999, p.105).

Neither static nor stable utterances and voicedness are characterized by a fundamental unfinishedness or unfinalizability (*nezavershemyi*) (Hirschkop, 1986, p.98). They acquire multifarious inflections as they are voiced and revoiced in various contexts. Responsivity can furthermore be anticipatory, in the formulation of an argument that pre-empts or circumvents the discourse of another. In addition this process can take place internally - through “inner speech” or speech for oneself, which following Vygotsky (1978), is nothing less

than thought (Cheyne and Tarulli, 1999). The final elements in this topology of communicative activity are operations, which are analogous to Bakhtinian speech genres.

#### **4.4.3 Speech genres and operations**

While social languages are typically marked by the social strata of their speakers, speech genres are distinguished by illocutionary context and frequently characterised by conspicuous elements such as dialect or vocabulary (Wertsch, 1985). Speech genres correspond with, “particular contacts between the *meanings* of words and actual concrete reality under certain typical conditions” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.87). However, social languages and speech genres are often intertwined; the speakers of a given social stratum tend to utilise certain speech genres. Within the dialogical-activity analytic schema, Leont’ev’s “operations” correspond with Bakhtinian “speech genres”.

Even seemingly creative and individual illocutionary acts take place within the parameters of a speech genre; they impart “a ready-made way of packeting speech” (Wertsch, 1991, p.61). The constitutive element of voices never stands free of at least one speech genre, for the individual speaking voice appropriates, populates and “ventriloquates” (Bakhtin, 1981) socially defined patterns or genres for speaking. Speech genres confer the broad parameters on what the speaking subject can intelligibly say. As the act of saying is always, to some extent, through another’s voice the diversity of speech genres creates a condition of heteroglossia. This “varied speechedness” is a condition of everyday life, and indeed consciousness and subjectivity (Sampson, 1993, p.119). Hence speech genres offer, not simply ways of speaking but also ways of seeing, knowing and understanding. Different genres, then, place us in somewhat different worlds, or at least provide different accentings for experiencing our world, including our selves and others (Sampson, 1993, p.119).



## CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

*"The search for method becomes one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding the uniquely human forms of psychological activity. In this case, the method is simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tool and the result of the study"* (Vygotsky, 1978, p.65).

### 5.1. Activity: theory-method

The preceding conceptual overview chapters are suffused with concerns that might conventionally be regarded as methodological. The Activity System analytic schema (Y. Engeström, 1993, 1999b), was enlarged with the inclusion of R. Engeström's (1995, 1999) Bakhtinian-derived dialogical insights, and saw theoretical concerns inextricably intertwined with methodological ones. This intertwining stems from the prominence accorded to (and alternative resonances of) 'methodology' within the Soviet tradition *vis a vis* Western Psychology. Following Marx's revolutionary notion of practical-critical activity, 'methodology' is not a simple question of technique or method; rather it denotes concerns that are fundamentally epistemological in nature (Kozulin, 1986). Debate concomitantly envelops the question of how Activity theory is to be conceptualised. For example was its leading proponent, Lev Vygotsky, a psychologist working within the discipline's dominant paradigm? Or was he rather a metapsychological "revolutionary methodologist" (Newman & Holzman, 1993), redefining the dominant psychological paradigm and rebuilding the conceptual basis for the human sciences? Within Vygotsky's theorising of the conceptual foundation for activity, the hoary theory and method distinction collapses, and theory-method emerges:

Vygotsky's dialectical method means that, strictly, he does not so much have a theory as a theory-method, a mode of study in which one's theories, if they are to have any currency at all, must be embedded in the particular sociohistorical context of the day (Shotter, 1989, p.193).

The present chapter recounts the methodological steps undertaken in this inquiry, in order to explicate the interactional and relational micro-dynamics of participation, within the social practice of development (see Chapter Four). It seeks to answer the research question of: What are the interactional and



relational and dynamics amongst stakeholders in a participatory project, and what does this reveal of the social-psychological features of participatory development?

However, if the primacy of 'methodological' concerns within the activity theoretical orientation is acknowledged, merely recounting a sequence of methodological steps is inadequate. Instead, this chapter addresses an expanded set of concerns: describing the hybrid dialogical-activity methodology and succinctly locating it within key epistemological and methodological debates. This culminates in discussion of the dialogical-activity method as paradigmatically straddling contextualistic (cf. Henwood and Pigeon, 1994) and constructionist approaches. The four methodological premises, which have shaped this inquiry, are subsequently indicated. These include notions of, i) activity as the unit of analysis, and discussion of the prominence accorded to ii) contradictions and dislocations, iii), historicity, and iv) "synchronic" (or multimethod) perspectives in activity systemic inquiry. After foregrounding these methodological postulates the sequence of data gathering, and analysis steps are described, following which validity and reliability are examined. This chapter concludes by considering the role of the researcher and the axiological (or valuational) basis for this enquiry.

## **5.2. Method, methodology, metatheory**

The quantitative-qualitative dichotomy is an often-cited distinction within the human sciences. This particular inquiry is qualitative through its commitment to contextual understanding of the emergent "participation" phenomenon, the centrality of the researcher in the interpretative process and the relative flexibility of the research strategy employed. It may be contrasted with a quantitative approach, which would typically be orientated toward theory or hypothesis confirmation, marked by greater degrees of structuredness and committed to fixed-measurement derived 'objectivity'. Yet despite its prominence in methodological debates, the qualitative-quantitative rubric contains within it substantial limitations, not least of which is the lack of intrinsic alignment between 'method' and 'methodology'; i.e. between the specific techniques and inherent epistemological standpoint of any given inquiry. Harding (1987), noting the very limitations of the term "method", advocates an analytically fertile disaggregation of "method" into firstly

epistemology, secondly, methodology (viz. a theoretically informed analytic approach to the research problem) and thirdly, method (the specific techniques used). Similarly, several prominent qualitative research theorists (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hammersley, 1998, Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994) state a preference for viewing the technical and methodological aspects of qualitative approaches as secondary to broader epistemological and paradigmatic concerns.

Henwood (1998) and Henwood & Pidgeon (1994) offer a topology, which facilitates this foregrounding of epistemological concerns, by cleaving the seemingly homogenous entity of qualitative inquiry into three broad stands. Qualitative research becomes epistemologically grounded in “empiricism”, “contextualism” or “constructivism”. The current inquiry is located relative to these; it is expanded on below.

Ostensibly paradoxical, the first strand within qualitative research is that of *empiricism*. Empiricism is not the exclusive preserve of quantitative approaches because qualitative and quantitative research typically each contain elements of the other (Bryman, 1984, 1988). Within qualitative inquiry, the empiricistic strand is warranted by reference to the “standard analogues of the criteria of reliability and validity” (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994, p.229). It presumes the independent existence of, and is informed by the methodological search for, stable and valid representations. Self styled “soft-nosed logical positivists” Miles and Huberman’s Data display model (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994) would be an example of this.

The second strand within qualitative research proffered by Henwood and Pidgeon (1994) is broadly *contextualistic*. Concerned with generativity and grounding, justificatory appeals are directed to the intersubjective realm, with meaning a product of the exchange between researcher and researched.

The final strand within qualitative research is *constructivism*, which embodies a contemporaneous concern with the material-discursive constitutive (viz. “constructive”) effects of language (see Henwood, 1998). It is helpful to note that this nomenclature is neither uncontested nor immutable, for example many would replace “constructivism” with “constructionism”<sup>9</sup>, while in the previously

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<sup>9</sup> While Henwood and Pidgeon (1994; see also Henwood, 1998) write of *constructivism* it is, to a large extent, synonymous with *constructionism*. Several express a preference for the term *constructionism* (Gergen, 1994; Potter, 1996); with

indicated strand, interpretivism could function as a synonym for “contextualism”.

This study’s activity-dialogical method, which examines the relational and interactional dynamics of participation, straddles the contextualistic and constructivistic (viz. constructionistic) strands delineated above. Activity theory is built up out of an epistemological commitment to realism, and the notion of reflecting participants’ actions and the naturalistic context of the focal community development setting (viz. contextualism) - albeit within the tightly circumscribed Activity system analytic schema. However, the communicative aspects of the dialogical-activity theoretical frame better accord with a constructionist (or constructivist) idiom. Therefore dialogicity, as it is operationalised within R. Engeström’s analytic topology (1995, 1999), embodies distinctly constructionist elements, such as an attentiveness to the constitutive and performative aspects of semiotic and language systems<sup>10</sup>. Although beyond the scope of this project to consider in detail, there exists an overarching “epistemological tension” (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994, p.232) between realism (with its commitment to isomorphically reflecting context), and constructionism (which seeks to show how context is constituted). The dialogical-activity methodology negotiates this epistemological impasse by examining the constitutive effects of language (a distinctly constructionist proposition) while maintaining a keen (contextualistic) focus on the actions and material artefacts used in the socially meaningful activity.

### 5.3 Methodological principles

Following its intertwining of method-theory, Activity theory bestows not a particular method but rather a methodological approach. Y. Engeström (1993) argues,

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Gergen (1985), suggesting “constructivism” could potentially be confused with an artistic movement of the same name. Others (cf. Woolgar, 1988) counsel that similar limitations inhere within “constructionism”. Within this research constructionism is the preferred moniker.

<sup>10</sup> The affinities between a constructionist epistemological orientation and Bakhtin’s dialogical insights, have been suggested by several theorists including Eagleton (1982); Emerson (1997); Hermans and Kempen (1993); Hirschkop (1986); Pechey (1989) and Richardson, Rogers and McCarroll (1998).

Activity theory is not a specific theory of a particular domain, offering ready-made techniques and procedures. It is a general, cross-disciplinary approach, offering conceptual tools and methodological principles, which have to be concretized according to the specific nature of the object under scrutiny (p.87).

Having located this inquiry in broad epistemological terms, the four dialogical-activity methodological axioms that inform it are here recounted. Subsequently to this, the specific analytic steps followed in this research are discussed.

### **5.3.1 Activity as the unit of analysis**

Activity is the core analytic unit for it provides an interpretative prism through which to examine the reciprocally determining interactions toward 'participation' between roleplayers, within the development setting. Its characteristics are here reiterated. Firstly activity is demarcated by object-orientations and collectivity. In contrast to individual actions, which are finite, bounded and marked by a regularity of their object, activity tends to be heterogeneous and dynamic (Virkkunen & Kuutti, 2000). Activity is a veritable horizon of potentiality. Secondly, activity (in this case the activity of participatory development) is manifest and consequently understood through qualitative changes that occur at system level, rather than as the aggregation of individual actions. While attention is devoted to individual actions, these actions are heuristically located in a broader, systemic context. This principle found pragmatic expression in the sampling strategy employed in this research. The entire activity system, rather than an individual or an inviolably defined group, constituted the study's sample. Hence a variety of "theoretical sampling" was used, and additional material sought until the point of (theoretical) saturation was reached (Rennie, 1989). This approach saw the inclusion of documentary and observation material derived from a range of sources (catalogued in the section which follows). In addition snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994), orientated towards optimising the full range of data collected, was used. For example, when, through exchange with research participants, it became clear that additional participants and texts were required, these were obtained. Similarly, a year into the research process, it became apparent that community land claims were of significance hence appropriate archival material was accessed.



### **5.3.2 The place of contradictions and dislocations**

The analytic importance of dislocations and contradictions within the Activity system has already been suggested. These are “the driving force behind disturbances, innovation, and change in the activity system” (Y. Engeström, 1993, p.98). Contradictions potentially inhere within Activity system elements, between elements, between competing Activity systems and finally within a single Activity system over time (Virkkunen & Kuutti, 2000). This research remained quite explicitly attuned to the question of contradictions. These contradictions surfaced most notably in the diverse, and somewhat incommensurate, voices and social languages drawn on by the subjects in the focal research setting, as they participate in the social practice of development.

### **5.3.3 Historicity and the diachronic aspects of activity**

Most significant forms of social activity have a clear temporal dimension; they are built up of layers of historically accumulated artefacts, rules and divisions of labour which evolve over extended periods of sociohistorical time (Cole, Engeström and Vasquez, 1997). The Activity system analytic schema is keenly attuned to the question of historicity, or what Gutierrez and Stone (1999) term the diachronic (transtemporal) dimensions of activity. Many significant social activities (of which development interventions are a good example) are relatively institutionalised and temporally enduring. Indeed, within the focal research setting, interactions between some groupings of subject-participants can be retrospectively traced over several decades. With the activity system, undergoing continual internal transformations and reconstructions, the notion of historicity demands that analytic attention be devoted to the temporal dynamics of the Activity system. This is in contrast to much psychology, which is ahistorical and unreflexive to diachronic issues. The unit of analysis moreover remains the sociohistorical constitution of activity. For, “If the unit is the individual... history is reduced to ontogeny or biography. If the unit is culture or society, history becomes very general or endlessly complex” (Y. Engeström, 1999b, p.26). Historicity is therefore incorporated into Activity systemic analysis by locating and explicating practice in historical terms. In the present inquiry this is done through attention to the situated practice of participatory orientated development, including a focus on the evolution of this practice over time and consideration of the social relations and institutions that (temporally)



preceded it. Diachronic study was further facilitated by the researcher's sustained involvement in the project and appropriate archival analysis.

#### **5.3.4 Synchronic, multi-method analysis**

Gutierrez (1999) notes that "Social settings are not discretely circumscribed phenomena but instead occur as a part of laminated, overlapped, and interwoven social phenomena that occur in the moment and across time and space" (p.151).

Therefore a "syncretic" framework that combines diachronic elements (the across time elements, discussed above) and synchronic (across space) aspects of activity is proposed (Gutierrez and Stone, 1999). While historically etched changes are the subject of the diachronic foci, synchronic study examines social practices *in situ* within the Activity system, typically within smaller temporal 'slices'. Synchronic investigation of the phenomena in question, viewed perspectively through a number of sources, enables analytic apprehension of both its stable and emergent characteristics. This, in many respects, is akin to the notion of multimethod, multiperspective triangulation within research (Mathison, 1988).

This twin-pronged diachronic and synchronic approach leads to a framework that enables detailed examination of ongoing construction of the social practice of participatory development. It is represented by means of the elongated spiral in Figure 2, as is a synchronic slice, corresponding to a distinct episode.

## The social practice of participatory development

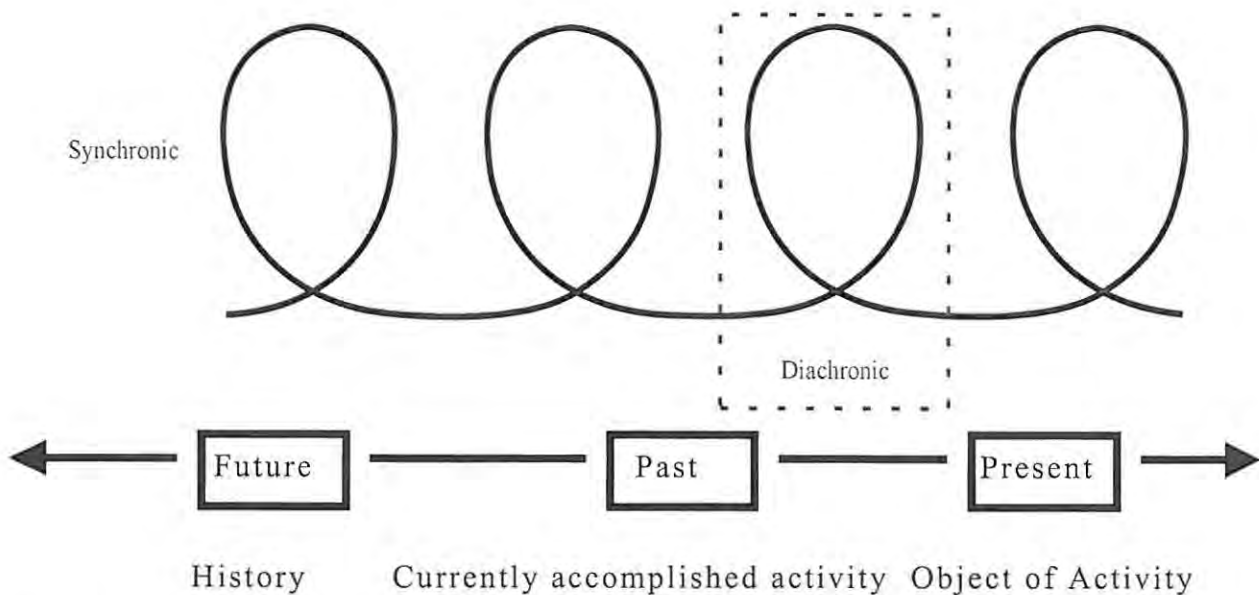


Figure 2. The temporal dimensions of activity, adapted from Gutierrez & Stone (1999).

### 5.4 Methodological steps

The methodological steps utilised in this study are described as follows:

#### 5.4.1 Conceptual development

The research question was formulated after identifying several conceptual aporia, related to participation within development settings, in the literature. The salience of this topic was underscored by the researcher's involvement in development settings (the role of the researcher is considered in more detail in the final section of this chapter). Concurrent with a review of the participation literature, was the development of the dialogical-activity conceptual framework, as recounted in Chapter Four. This process of research question refinement continued well into the data analysis phase, and developed in parallel with the refinement of the methodology and theoretical sections.

#### 5.4.2 Data collection

After negotiating access to an appropriate research setting, data was collected over an extended period of approximately 18 months. Access to this setting was verbally negotiated with a senior member (the director) of the facilitators' institution, initially as part of a larger project. Whilst the possibility of sharing data and collaborating on future projects (particularly on the broader question of participation) was mooted at the outset, subsequent internal changes within the facilitators' institution mitigated against this kind of collaboration.

The researcher's intermittent visits to the research setting followed a model of ethnographic immersion (Putney, Green, Dixon, Duran and Yeager, 1999). The objective was not only to scrutinize the social action of participatory development, but also to examine the conditions under which it occurs. The researcher attended to, and sought to catalogue, the interactional and relational dynamics between stakeholders through systematic dialogical-activity analysis. (The specific steps of this analysis, through examination of the *speech genres*, *voices* and *social languages*, are enumerated in section 5.4.3 below). While the co-op members were not deceived, the researcher's presence was described in vague terms – he wanted to see “how people work with each other on the project”. They were told that the researcher was conducting his own research - with the facilitators' endorsement. To this end the synchronically gathered data (Gutierrez and Stone, 1999; Gutierrez, Baquendano-Lopez & Tejeda, 1999) was collected in three main forms. These are summarized below:

<i>Data collection activities</i>	<i>Data collected from/with whom</i>	<i>Nature of data units</i>
23 site visits (including attending 17 co-op meetings)	Co-op members, Co-op board	Field notes from largely unstructured observations and informal discussions
7 interviews	Co-op members and project facilitators	Interview transcripts
Multiple items (in excess of 8 distinct accessions) of documentary data	Various sources including: the project, local press archives, Land Claims Commission	Maps, Land Claims Commission research reports, local histories, meeting minutes, press reports

Table 3. Overview of number, type and sources of data collected.

i) Twenty-three visits to the project site were undertaken, in most cases (seventeen) to attend either co-op general membership or governing board meetings. The balance of six visits entailed the researcher visiting the project or attending significant non-meeting events, such as the official project launch and a training workshop. In all cases *unstructured observations* were conducted and detailed field notes generated. Although the researcher sought to understand and document the relational and interactional dynamics within the setting, this could not be done without observing (and often enquiring after) the pragmatic technical and material progress being made in the project. The researcher sought to understand the implicit rules and tools used, as well as the general dynamics under girding the various roleplayers' exchanges. The researcher was therefore constantly mindful of the elements of the Activity System analytic schema, and remained attuned to the contradictions and mismatches within the focal research setting.

ii) Seven *interviews* were undertaken with co-operative members, facilitators and the funders' representative, usually during the above indicated site visits. These ranged in duration from relatively brief (under twenty minutes) to



extensive exchanges recounting the history of the community (over two hours long). These interviews with roleplayers were largely conducted *in situ*, for example two of the facilitators were interviewed in their offices at the university, and on one occasion a facilitator was interviewed in a more public place – a quiet restaurant. Co-op members were interviewed in the fields, in the school-classroom meeting venue (after meetings) or, alternatively in their homes. Interviews with the various roleplayers were with two exceptions (where a translator was used) conducted in English.

The variety of interviews utilised ranged from semi-structured “stimulated recall interviews” (R. Engeström, 1999) used to clarify specific points raised in meetings, to the unstructured interviews conducted with elderly informants in order to obtain a history of the community. Apart from these, the interviewing format often followed entailed asking the respondent to recount the activities of the co-op since the researcher’s last site visit. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to pose specific questions concerning the interactions and interpersonal dynamics both between, and within, various groups of stakeholders. In these instances the general interviewing procedure was one where the initial questioning was verification orientated and focused on tangible material elements. This would then shift to consider more elusive, yet analytically significant, interactional aspects such as, for instance, how co-op members addressed each other and engaged with day-to-day co-op tasks.

iii) *Archival and documentary analysis* was undertaken and a wide variety of material accessed. These varied from (translated) copies of co-op meeting minutes, project documentation, maps, planning documentation (such as programmes and schedules), press articles, assorted historical texts and even the application for land restitution lodged with the regional office of the Land Claims Commission. This is consistent with Putney et al.’s (1999) Activity theoretic reworking of the ethnographic method, which underscores the necessity of examining “the history of intertextual and intercontextual relationships within a social group” (p.90)

At this point the issue of translation bears mentioning. Much of the illocutionary exchange within meetings and the co-operative’s documentation was in Xhosa, a language of which the researcher has only a rudimentary understanding. Translators and retrospectively conducted interviews



(particularly after periods of rapid, difficult to follow verbal exchange) were used to render more of the vernacular comprehensible to the researcher. A proficient (post-graduate student) first-language Xhosa-speaking translator assisted the researcher with textual material. Phrases that were difficult, ambiguous or had multiple meanings were discussed with an additional Xhosa-speaker and on several occasions a dictionary of Xhosa idioms was consulted.

While this never entirely solved the vexing issue of translation, and much potentially rich 'discourse' for the analysis was lost, discourse constitutes only part of the analytic material. It must be borne in mind that discourse stands alongside an agglomeration of other sources, actions and material artefacts. Furthermore, to be deterred by these linguistic difficulties would be to neglect this setting, and therefore this important topic.

#### **5.4.3 Data interpretation**

The process of data analysis can helpfully be described in three steps. The first step involved the formulation and extraction of *speech genres*. This was accomplished through an inductive and discursively grounded synchronic analysis of texts (such as field notes, interview transcripts, archival material). This process included a refining of nascent speech genre categories and their reapplication to the data, in a manner similar to coding and category building within Grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Charmaz, 1990)<sup>11</sup>. If qualitative data analysis techniques are conceptualised along a continuum, ranging from quasi-statistical to increasingly interpretative and generative varieties (Crabtree & Miller, 1992), Grounded theory tends toward the latter pole. This grounded analysis was strengthened through confirming both that utterances had been optimally placed in speech genre categories and reviewing the veracity of the actual categories. In addition, the subject-speakers of these speech genres were indicated. Pseudonyms were accorded to the speakers at this stage in order to ensure their anonymity.

The second step in the process of data interpretation entailed delineating the *voices* (which are analogous to "action") within the situated practice of

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<sup>11</sup> Within Grounded theory, there is considerable debate as to the degree of induction involved; a question which again invokes the epistemological tension between contextualism and constructionism (See Rennie, 1998).

participatory development. Voices are purposive and under the control of the research participant's individual agency. But while voices emanate from speakers within the focal research setting, they are only intelligible in relation to the literature. Voices are therefore simultaneously theoretical and grounded. They intercede between theory and data, and represent "a two-way bridge between general theory and specific practice" (R. Engeström, 1999, p. 36).

The final data interpretation step entailed explicating the Activity system's referential *social language*. This was done through a process of locating voices, and their speakers, relative to the referential-object social language of participatory development. The multifariously voiced social languages within the focal research setting, ultimately mark what Y. Engeström terms "expansion" or "learning by expansion" (1999b, p.35) of the Activity System's activity. This final level of analysis was facilitated by reference to the development literature, and culminated in consideration of the manifold tensions surrounding participatory development.

### **5.5 Reliability, validity and generalization**

Questions of validity, reliability and generalizability are key sources of debate within qualitative research, and between qualitative researchers and its detractors. A compelling argument can be made for the distinctiveness of qualitative research to stem less from its emphasis on naturalistic inquiry and contextual interpretation, than its critical reworking of reliability and validity. Furthermore, the debate surrounding reliability and validity frequently serves as a lightning rod for several other controversies, many of which pertain to the foundational question of how knowledge is legitimated.

Several commentators have reframed what Kvale wryly terms the "holy trinity" (1996, p.229) of validity, reliability and generalizability, and considered alternate warranting criteria for research (Lather, 1993; see also Cherryholmes, 1988; Kvale, 1992). Reliability (which relates to the consistency of the research findings) cannot escape revision, particularly if we accept constructionist notions of the heterogeneity of knowledge and resultant shift towards notions of contextuality (Kvale, 1996). Lincoln and Guba (1996) recast the quasi-statistical positivistic canons of reliability and validity by invoking quotidian, naturalistic criteria of trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and

confirmability. While others subordinate the reverence traditionally accorded to disengagement and detachment altogether, suggesting other criteria by which to judge research, these include emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of care, political praxis, the proliferation of multivoiced texts and dialogue with subjects (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.10). These critical reworkings of the "Validity of the validity question" (Kvale, 1996, p.251), lead to an erosion of "criteriology" (Schwandt, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1996, p.179), the very notion of regulative norms for warranting representations generated in (and as) research.

While the current dialogical-activity inquiry does not jettison notions of reliability and validity altogether, it is inspired by Lather's (1993) post-structural (re)articulation of validity as a "fertile obsession", which leads towards a "validity of transgression that runs counter to the standard validity of correspondence: a nonreferential validity" (p.677). In this endeavour a positivistic quest for certainty and controlling for the effects of the researcher bias, is eclipsed by a more nuanced conception of "defensible knowledge claims" (Kvale, 1996, p.240). Validity in this revision simultaneously acquires technical and valuational dimensions. Kvale (1996) helpfully identifies three varieties of validity.

Firstly validity pertains to *quality of craftsmanship* (Kvale, 1996). It is a core concern related to the internal rigor of the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting. Far more than the verification of the final research product, verification permeates the ethos and practice of the entire research process. In the context of the current research project this was attained through: extended and receptive involvement in the research context, a reflexive recording of impressions throughout the research process, integrating data with theory at various levels of abstraction, tracking new or unexpected data, ruling out spurious relationships and finally actively seeking disconfirmatory data to falsify (in a Popperian sense) the inchoate analysis (Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This is consonant with Gutierrez and Stone's (1999) notion of a syncretic "goodness of fit" in the combining of theoretical and methodological tools. Alternatively, it is comparable to the notion of multiple-perspective, multiple-method triangulation.

The second variety of validity is *communicative validity* (Kvale, 1996). With method no longer a warrant for truth, research findings are validated

communicatively, through dialogue with other parties. These reciprocal exchanges occur at a number of levels. At several junctures within this inquiry validation of the meanings garnered through intersubjective exchange (such as interviews) was sought from the local speakers themselves. This is a procedure quite consistent with “contextualist” or interpretivist inquiry (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994, Henwood, 1998). Communicative validity cannot however be sought exclusively through appeals to research participants’ indexicality. Instead it requires endorsement in other “communities of validation” (Kvale, 1996, p.217). These range from a general public “commonsense” validation, to theoretical validation by the academic community. By way of illustration, in this research an experienced research supervisor provided strategic inputs. Furthermore when disseminated via publication, this research will be subject to yet another tier of profession validation.

Finally, validation can be attained in relation to action, through what Kvale (1996) terms *pragmatic validation*. This is the question of how research findings, and the research process, instigate transformative change. It is a concern that accords with an activity theoretic emphasis on praxis, thereby transcending the dichotomy between basic and applied research. The converse of the theoretical process of internalisation is “externalisation”; it is the process whereby individual actions expansively lead to the formation of qualitatively new modes of joint activity (Y. Engeström, 1989, 1993). For ultimately sound research is a form of practical activity, it is a form of praxis.

## **5.6 Reflexivity, the researcher and ethics.**

The preceding discussion sought to shift validity from a technical question to an axiological or ethical one. Validity becomes a form of ethical relationship, for “The *way* in which we know is most assuredly tied up with both *what* we know and our *relationships with our research participants*” (Lincoln & Guba, 1996, p.182). It might also be added that reflexivity concerns how we come to understand ourselves in the research context. This final section of the methodology chapter explicitly considers the position of the researcher, researcher reflexivity and some of the axiological implications thereof.

Within qualitative research (and this dialogical-activity inquiry is no exception) the researcher is not an objective, authoritative, neutral observer who stands



apart from the research context. Instead, the researcher is the principal instrument through which inquiry is conducted. This role demands the exercise of critical self-reflexivity (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Putney et al., 1999), a requirement made all the more salient by the manner in which the researcher was (to a large extent) immersed in the research setting. The nature of this immersion ranged from the mundane (transporting co-op members in my vehicle), to the more substantive furnishing of advice and even imparting some measure of alteriority. An example of the latter would be the manner in which my questioning served to re-animate the tacit land dispossession issue, the history of which was beyond the awareness of many co-op members.

It is furthermore, neither possible to escape nor desirable to ignore, the researcher's historically inscribed position within the research setting. This positionality is constituted in the South African context by the intersecting factors of race, class, and gender. Although not reducible to a narrow identity politics, the researcher's structurally embedded position of privilege in relation to a context that is overwhelmingly poor, rural and black African unavoidably coloured our interactions. Particularly in the initial phases co-op members, and even myself as researcher, experienced the researcher role as contradictory. Much of this centred on the question of reciprocity: for what was I as researcher able to offer the co-op in terms of knowledge or resources? For despite being associated with an educational institution, I was unversed in technical or agricultural matters. This saw me (with my acquiescence) positioned as someone knowledgeable on matters administrative and organisational - an outside expert on "procedures". The requirements of reflexivity demanded that I, as researcher, remain attuned to these dynamics throughout the course of the research.

A critical self reflexivity furthermore does not require that we merely become aware of how we affect the research context, we need to reflexively examine how our selves are situationally created - multiple "selves in research" (Denzin & Lincoln 1998; see also Richardson, 1994). Fine (1998) similarly asserts the need to "rework the hyphens" in the self-other relationship, for we need to "probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations" (p.135). For the researcher's self is therefore not simply ushered forth into the context, it is dynamically inscribed and (re)created.



The notion of reflexivity is in many respects analogous to Bakhtin's notion of moral answerability. While various accentuations on Bakhtin's work have been suggested, Bakhtin in his philological existentialism, stands also as ethicist. However Activity theory as means of social-scientific inquiry is often unreflexive to these valuational or axiological questions. But Hicks (2000) asserts the axiological dimensions of dialogicity by arguing,

All meaningful human activity occurs in and through systems of discourse and action. At the same time, dialogue entails attunement to particular others in ways tied to morally imbued ends. Dialogue is embedded in the histories of particular relationships and their individuated forms of response (p. 279).

For the words we use in the social practice of development and by which we co-constitute community are entangled, they bear the valuation traces of other practices and communities. This concern with ethical and moral answerability unavoidably inflects the prevailing development endeavour. With development ultimately being a profoundly moral endeavour, dialogicity encourages us to take cognisance of the ethical basis for inquiry, to our ethical and moral answerability, to the particularity of our responsivity to others and to systems of discourse and social action.

## CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS

The focal participatory development setting is understood and analysed as an Activity system, within this chapter. As previously delineated (Chapter 4), an aggregation of speech genres make up the voices of the focal research setting. Speech genres confer the rule-like illocutionary packages used by speakers, and which *speak through* the speakers. These speech genres are subsequently verbalised in the voices of speakers. Voices are, in turn, orientated towards the Activity system's referential social language. They are where individual agency becomes manifest within the Activity system (albeit within the referential limits of the social language). The referential object of the focal research settings (i.e. the activity to which the Activity system is directed) is the social language of participatory development. Figure 3 below, graphically represents this system.

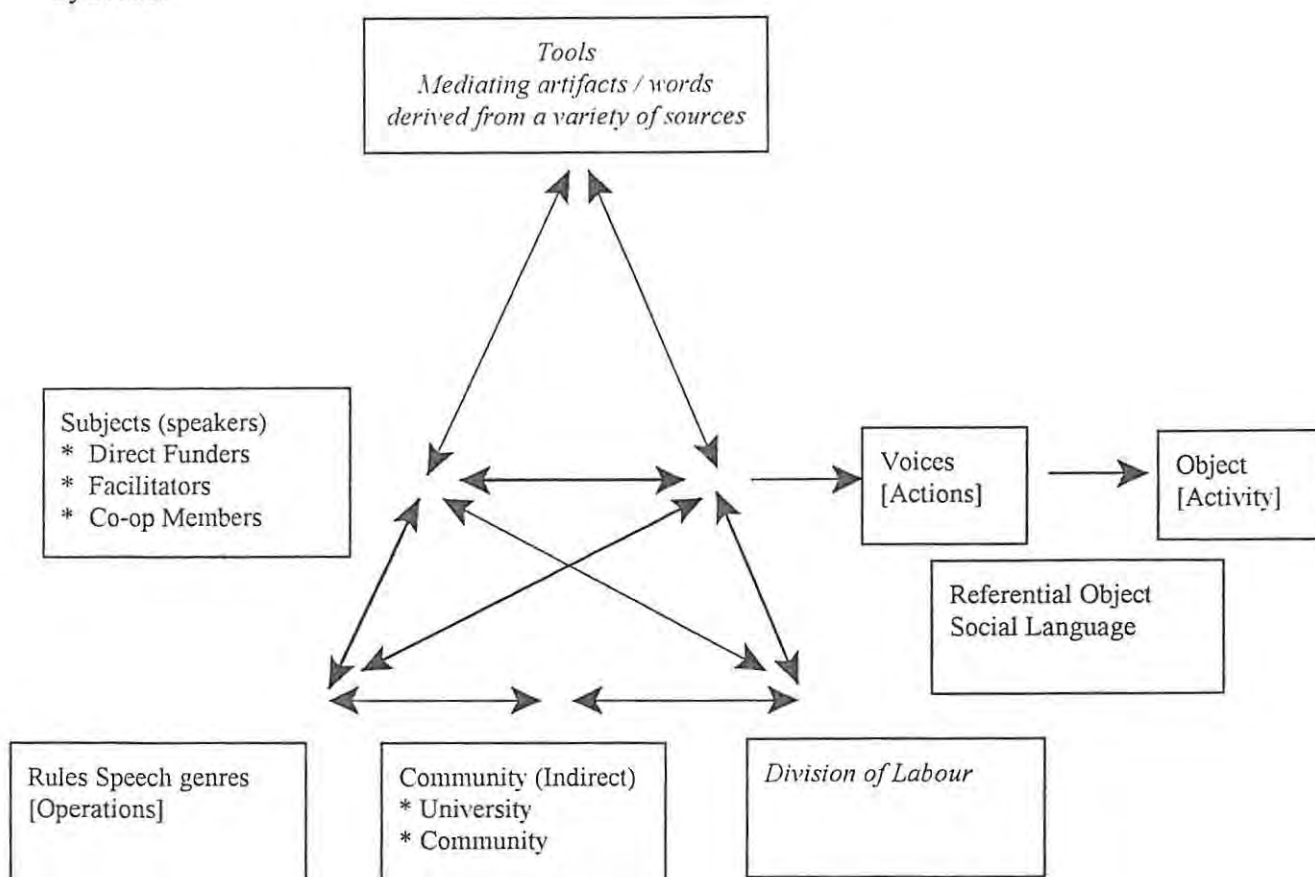


Figure 3. The dialogical-activity reworking of the Activity system analytic framework, in the focal research setting. (Adapted from R. Engeström, 1995).

The research setting of the participatory development project consists of an agricultural co-operative, within which three groupings of Subjects are clearly discernable. These are, firstly, the forty *co-op members* resident in the focal geographical area who have formally joined the co-operative. The second are the university-based *facilitators* tasked with implementing the project. They consist of an interdisciplinary group of approximately ten individuals, based primarily in the university's agricultural faculty. The third group of Subjects, are the *funders*, in this case the foreign and distant NGO financing the project. The Community are the groupings of individuals (or in the dialogical activity method, speakers) who are not immediately involved in the setting, yet who are influenced by and influence it. The centrality of the funders to the activity sees them designated as "Subjects" rather than "Community", despite their remoteness from the focal Activity system. The Activity system also sees the inclusion of other elements (which are less germane to the current analysis – indicated by italics in Figure 3), such as the Tools and the Division of labour. While these elements are implicitly present, they fall outside the purview of the present inquiry and are therefore not included in the current analysis. Mediating artefact "Tools" in the present analysis would be the illocutionary acts within the Activity system. The Division of labour entails the distribution of these acts between groupings of speaking subjects.

The speech genres, voices and social languages contained in the focal development setting are discussed below.

### **6.1. Speech genres as operations**

The Bakhtinian notion of the speech genre corresponds, within R. Engeström's (1995, 1999) topology, with Leont'ev's "operations". Speech genres are the rule-like, conventionalised, iterative and largely automatic ways of packaging speech within the Activity system. Functioning as mediatory tools for action, speech genres are frequently "detached from referentiality instantiated by the local speaker" (R. Engeström, 1995, p.202). Speakers are therefore not necessarily aware of the formal properties of the speech genres they invoke.

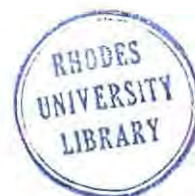
An examination of speech genres constitutes the first step in the analytic sequence of this study. These speech genres, inductively derived through a grounded analysis of the data, are here discussed and illustrated with

appropriate examples. While this selection of speech genres cannot be regarded as exhaustive, they do represent some of the most prominent variants within the focal Activity system. For the purpose of this explication the speech genres here reviewed are described as relatively discreet and autonomous units. However in the spoken communication of everyday life, speech genres are often intermingled.

#### 6.1.1. The speech genre of the *Idealised non-present*

The speech genre of the *Idealised non-present* is predominantly articulated by co-op members, and encapsulates references to an idealised past or optimistically described future, which is implicitly contrasted with the temporal present. The distinguishing characteristic of this speech genre is not, however, its past or future orientatedness, but rather the hyperbolic and exaggerated nature of these references. In this speech genre the past becomes an idealised idyllic pastoral existence, while the future is portrayed in correspondingly sanguine terms. The speech genre of the *Idealised non-present*, is manifest in a number of illocutions, including:

- Co-op member Xolisa's statement, about how "We used to plough here and sell [produce] to the church people [missionaries], we used to work this land".
- An elderly co-op member's recollections of the past, how a single man with draft animals could work "six morgan by himself", and vivid descriptions of the fertility of the local soils that could "feed the nation".
- The facilitator's relatively dispassionate, future-orientated references to "sustainability", "project sustainability" and "sustainable livelihoods".
- Several references by co-op members, within the course of meetings, to the "children" and "future generations". These included:
  - Co-op member Moreba's statement that "[the elders] might die tomorrow, but our children will take the project forward".
  - An unidentified co-op member's view that, "this project must stand, it must not die for generations and generations".





This speech genre coalesces around several practices and artefacts, including the vegetable garden established at the local primary school. Co-op member Coko explained that “starting with the kleintjies [young ones]”, would serve to entice youth into agriculture, thereby ensuring the continuation of the co-op.

### 6.1.2 The speech genre of *Suffering and pleading*

The speech genre of *Suffering and pleading* is distinguished by assertions that its (largely co-member) speakers are suffering from material deprivation and poverty. Intertwined with requests for material resources, this speech genre is often articulated in a deferential or obsequious register (i.e. pleading). Within this speech genre the deficit is primarily portrayed as a material one. The need for additional knowledge and skills receives accentuation in the speech genre of *Education and training* discussed later (see 6.1.10). The speech genre of *Suffering and pleading* is discernable in the following instances:

- The facilitators’ various technical references to the community as the “poorest of the poor” and “poverty alleviation”.
- Pleading requests directed to the facilitators and funders such as;
  - Co-op member Tami’s claim that “we are suffering”, and “peoples’ stomachs are empty”.
  - Co-op member Sakumzi’s assertion that “our children go to sleep hungry”.
- Ubiquitous requests for “small change”, “two rand” or “two bob” voiced by members of the broader community, and directed at visitors.

The pleading component of the speech genre of *Suffering and pleading* was vividly illustrated when the researcher accompanied a small group of co-op members to a nearby sawmill. The goal of the trip was to obtain a quote and negotiate the construction of a storage shed and chicken battery with the entrepreneurial sawmill owner. Despite a sufficiently large sum of money having been allocated to the project for these sheds, the verbal exchange with the sawmill owner was conducted within the rubric of pleading and begging. Statements such as “We beg of you *tata* van Rensberg”, alongside explicit illocutions of “we are suffering”.



The manner in which the above exchange was subsequently represented in meeting minutes is of interest. The researcher was referred to in the minutes as follows: "*Uthe uMr Koli uvan Rensberg uqale wasikolisa wathi uxakekile kodwa uNeves wamcenga*". (Translated as: Mr Koli [co-op board member] said Van Rensberg [sawmill owner] started saying that he was busy and was non-cooperative / difficult, then Neves begged him). However I, the researcher, did no such begging. Rather "begging" is the highly conventionalised and routinised manner by which co-op members articulate requests within the activity system.

Begging and pleading is also evident in the opportunistic requests directed to potential benefactors, such as,

- Early meeting minutes include the somewhat implausible requirement that each co-op member must bring "two funders to the project", along with the condition that "the government can be a funder". Apart from revealing co-op members' (then) extremely limited knowledge of the development funding terrain, this illocution suggests a fundamental idealism about the numbers and variety of benefactors potentially available to the co-op.
- When co-op members' called on a nearby agricultural college in order to procure a tractor they heard of a group of visiting Norwegian development specialists. Subsequent to which, in the next co-op meeting, inviting the Norwegians to visit the co-op in order to secure additional funding, was strongly mooted.
- The project launch also provided an opportunity to approach additional benefactors. These included approximately thirty educational institutions and commercial institutions (including agricultural supply companies, educational institutions, local hardware stores, Coca-Cola and South African Breweries) all of which were invited to the official launch. Significantly, each of these stakeholders blurred into a potential benefactor when their invitation included a request for donations towards the launch .

### 6.1.3 The speech genre of *Demotivation*

The speech genre of *Demotivation* is evident both in the illocutions of facilitators, and co-operative members. It centres on the threat of (and attempts to avoid) “demotivation”. Significantly, “demotivation” is the exact term used by both facilitators and co-operative members. Bakhtin’s (1986) distinction between the primary speech genres of everyday communication and secondary speech genres that “arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.67) is particularly helpful here. The psychologised parlance of “demotivation” is a secondary speech genre, which has steadily migrated towards everyday (primary) use. The following are examples of this speech genre.

- Demotivation and its binary opposite of enthusiasm are recurrently referred to in the course of co-op meetings. Co-op board chairperson Manzani, for instance, spoke of how opening the bank account “keeps us warm and gives us hope”.
- An early project minute records that the co-op chairperson needs to “speak to the youth to make them motivated”. In this formulation demotivation is viewed as amenable to the power of oratory.
- A facilitating fieldworker explains after the first year’s cultivation, “what is fundamental in such projects is getting people to really understand what the project is all about, to realise what their responsibilities are, and to get them committed and focussed”.
- In light of the threat of demotivation the facilitators accede to the cultivation of maize, despite it being ill suited to the local climate and economically unfeasible due to the paucity of its yields. This is done in order for, in the words of a fieldworker, “people to get something in the ground and not become demotivated”.

The speech genre of *Demotivation* also coalesced around tangible material artefacts and resources, such as the tractor.

- Tractor use was justified as necessary in order to ensure that both co-op members and the broader community do not, according to the facilitators' agronomist, get "demotivated and lose interest".
- One of the facilitating fieldworkers also spoke of mechanized traction as serving to "keep up project momentum".

The official launch was an event specifically held to counter demotivation. The funders and various prominent dignitaries attended the launch. It included the slaughtering and cooking of several sheep and over four hours of conviviality including: speeches, prayers, hymns, musical performances, agricultural demonstrations, drum majorettes and a small float procession. The rather grandiose launch cost approximately five times the value of the first growing season's total output. Yet it was viewed as warrantable through its ability to counter community "demotivation". As the director of the facilitators' institution explained, in response to the researcher questioning on the seeming extravagance of the launch, "we couldn't afford not to have it".

#### **6.1.4 The speech genre of *Antipathy and distrust towards outsiders***

The speech genre of *Antipathy and distrust towards outsiders* voiced exclusively by co-op members, sees antipathy, suspicion and mistrust directed to those outside of the co-op. Quite specifically those who might potentially lay claim to resources or consume co-op gains. In this formulation, outsiders are sharply distinguishable from potential benefactors. This distinction, between outsiders and potential benefactors, is furthermore racialised - a phenomenon that is intelligible when considering the correspondence between race and socio-economic class in South Africa. Summarized briefly, 'White' people are often perceived to be holders of resources and therefore potential benefactors. Whereas several groupings of 'Black' people, be they from neighbouring states, a regional metropolitan centre or even local residents (who enquire after the project), elicit suspicion. The following are examples of this speech genre.

- When board member Sandile was questioned about the project by village residents aligned with the local civic organisation he rebutted their inquiry.

- The villagers were subsequently dubbed the “little knowledge people”.
- The villagers apparently “wanted to take the project as theirs”.
- In a co-operative meeting these villagers were dubbed “*yinchuka*”, figuratively the wild dogs or wolves (i.e. those that are greedy or devour).
- When it was reported at a co-op meeting that a group of people from a distant city enquired after the project, extreme consternation and agitation was apparent. This announcement was greeted with cries of derision and hoots of “*yoh, yoh!*”.
- Finally, when selling surplus mielies (corn) in the local town, the traders from other African states were, in the words of co-op member Zikho, the “*makwerekwere* [crickets, insects] who come and make business”.

#### 6.1.5 The speech genre of *Rights*

Complex and multifarious, the speech genre of *Rights* is articulated almost exclusively by co-op members. The rights claimed or asserted within this speech genre shift between worker rights, co-op member rights, traditional authority rights and land dispossess rights. Two permutations of this rights speech genre are here illustrated, worker rights and land dispossess rights.

- Worker rights were manifest in the poor attendance at (and the subsequent cancellation of), a scheduled co-op meeting due to the fact that “today is a Cosatu [trade union] strike”, according to the Co-op chairperson.
- Worker rights were asserted when, in a meeting, co-op members discussed the minimum legally mandated duration of tea breaks and rest-periods workers are entitled to. In much the same way the notion of toiling in the fields on a Saturday was rejected. According to co-op board member Ngwala, “workers are not supposed to work over weekends”.



In terms of land dispossessing rights, the focal community has a land restitution claim pending with the statutory Land Claims Commission against the facilitators' institution. Although facilitators and co-operative members refuted suggestions that the project serves as *quid pro quo* for land historically seceded to the university, there is much to suggest that this is the case. This speech genre is evident in the following extracts,

- The project, in the words of an unidentified co-op member, started off as a "house divided". The same co-op member reported, "this project divided the people of the village, the others they said no, we sell out the land... but we take the project in the rightfully way [i.e. good faith]".
- A facilitating fieldworker explains how these moral claims are usually tacit and difficult to explore,  
Fieldworker: [Referring to the community claims] They [the community] don't say it clearly.  
Researcher: Well how do they say it then?  
Fieldworker: They say "the university must have an impact on our lives".
- A facilitator concedes (to the suggestion that the project is in exchange for dropping the land claims);  
"Ja, I wouldn't rule it out, I wouldn't, because that community has the biggest land claim on [facilitators institution] as well, there is a lot to it [i.e. the land claims]".

The tacit, yet turbid, nature of this speech genre is evident in a tribal-authority drafted memorandum, drafted in response to the preliminary investigative report of the Land Claims Commission. This elaborate and polyvocal document states, "[the facilitators' institution] is our university and we love it, it has produced competent African leaders. We are very proud of that. It is the people's university, we therefore cannot allow a situation where uncivilized forces would destabilise it. But, the university must be fair and honest towards us, particularly after all the sacrifices and sufferings we have endured as a tribe, it must give us the piece of land back. We want to reconstruct and redevelop..."

- Co-op member Sakumzi, in much the same way, asserts, “the university must help us develop in the way of the present government”.
- Co-op and community members frequently assert the necessity of the land, co-op member Simpiwe indicates in an aside during a meeting: “...but what I know, I need, you know this Neves, that land, you can’t live without the land”.
- Co-op member Jerry elsewhere articulates: “Land is a very important thing, you can’t stay in the sky, you can’t do anything in the sky you do everything on land”.
- However, the land is often used as a marker in more generalized requests for resources. For as Simpiwe (overlapping to some extent with the speech genre of *Suffering and pleading* of section 6.1.2), expounds, “So the land is the main source of the human being. To the land, if (the university) agrees to go in the land with share system, that will be better [in response to how this will work]...we haven’t got money to live, you know that. We are really people who are in the poverty system. There is no money to us, there is no capital to us... But to advise us, the university - they’re got ideas and ways of getting funds, funders [from] anywhere. And these things can be driven by the funders.”

#### 6.1.6 The speech genre of *Harmony*

This, the speech genre of *Harmony*, explicitly affirms that all is harmonious within the project, and consequently sees much value accorded to unanimity, consonance and agreement within the Activity system. Although predominantly evident in co-op members’ speech, it is also present in facilitators’ illocutions. This speech genre is manifest in the following examples.

- Co-op chairperson Manzini asserts at a meeting, with the facilitators present, “We are harmoniously working together we have not encountered any problem other than it is at a tender stage”.
- The facilitators’ animal traction specialist voices the requirement that “people need to work together as one”.

- An (unidentified) co-op member reiterates at a co-op meeting “we are all going forward together”.
- In a meeting with the funder’s representative present, the Co-op chairperson states:  
“we want you and the [funder’s organisation] to rest assure that there is a good relationship between the committee and [the facilitators’ institution]. Members work together as brother and sister... for the best, to uplift the people in the community, we cannot do this without your strong assistance”.

### 6.1.7 The speech genre of *Unanimous intentions*

The speech genre of *Unanimous intentions* embodies the unstated rule that uncontested intentions function as (and have all the force of) *de jura* rules. It is evident in co-op members, and to a lesser extent, facilitators’ speech. This speech genre is embodied in the following extracts.

- The bank account was for a period of almost twelve months spoken of as open, before the requisite deposit was obtained in order to actually open it.
- The water pipeline was (illegally) tapped by co-op members because the requisite water rights certificate had not yet been granted. Co-op members simply acted and spoke as though it had.
- Unanimous intentions influence decisions making. The co-op chairperson recounted how the decision to allocate project members to sub-projects was taken:  
“you know, for us, almost all the board members are born and bred here, you know, and they live here, they know almost all the families who live in this village. So that gave us no difficulty in making our choices.”
- The leases signed with landowners also serve to illustrate the place of unstated intentions. In an episode repeated on several occasions, the chairperson, in a meeting, reiterates the co-op’s authority over that land (in response to references to the “landowners”):

“...we are no longer concerned about the owners of the land, you know, we are talking about the project land. Because the entire area is governed by the board and no longer the owners and it will be the board who will decide what to give this portion and that portion and so on”.

Despite this assertion, the leases with landowners had (at the time of writing) not been signed. Yet even in the absence of valid leases, co-op control was resolutely asserted over the land.

- The leases with landowners have, in fact, not yet been drafted by the facilitators. This notwithstanding an earlier assertion by one of the facilitator’s fieldworkers that

“...the use of certain kinds of land tenure is textbook stuff these days, you know, even if you don’t know the place, you just have to get a legally binding document”<sup>12</sup>.

In fact, after the co-op’s first operational year, the task of drafting and signing the leases disappears even from the facilitator’s agenda.

#### **6.1.8 The speech genre of the *Superaddressee***

Within Bakhtin’s account of dialogue, the superaddressee is a third person or agent (animate or disincarnate), whose presence in dialogue is implicitly assumed. It is a third person authority or reference figure who’s absolute and responsive understanding is assumed, “either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time” (Bakhtin, as cited in Cheyne and Tarulli, 1999, p.14).

The speech genre of the *Superaddressee*, with its appeals to a theological superaddressee, is verbalised exclusively within co-op members’ discourse. The following are examples of this speech genre:

- Theological superaddressees were invoked in numerous references to “God”, such as “God’s rain”, “God’s way” and “God’s son”.
- The appeals to the theological superaddressee include:

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<sup>12</sup> This casts into focus contradictions within the facilitators’ actions. Because of a history of tenurial insecurity, landowners in the former Bantustans are reluctant to sign leases for any extended period of time - lest they lose claims to the land (R. Kingwill, 2001, personal communication).



- The prayers recited and hymns sung at the beginning and conclusion of every co-op meeting.
- The names of the individuals who led the prayers were scrupulously recorded in the meeting minutes.
- Other references to God included co-op member Mtutuzeli's assertion in a co-op meeting: "So that God, if this project, in eyes of God is a true project and it is a thing that can help my society".

#### **6.1.9 The speech genre of *Technical appropriateness***

The speech genre of *Technical appropriateness* is discernable in both the facilitators' and co-op members' communicative acts - although these various groups of subjects accentuated it in different ways. This speech genre pertains to the technical procedures and technological artefacts used within the Activity system, and enunciates the need for pragmatically suitable artefacts or technologies to be used within the project. While the issue of appropriate technology surrounds virtually all of the material artefacts brought to the activity system, it stands most markedly in relation to the issue of animal versus mechanical traction. This speech genre is evident in a number of episodes, including the following:

- The facilitators' fieldworker asserts: "Ideally, small farmers should use traction animals".
- When it was revealed in a project meeting that the co-op had secured the use of a tractor for the second growth season, on very favourable terms (having only to pay for fuel), the facilitators' animal traction specialist diplomatically noted this is a "good bargain". But he tempered his endorsement by speculating that in the long term, when co-op members "pay for the tractor out of their own pocket that's when they will feel it". In other words, when tractor use becomes economically unsustainable, co-op members will return to animal traction.
- Co-op members' preference was for a tractor, but draft animals were persuasively "sold" to them. Co-op member Solomon explains, "Well it

is the idea that came to us, you know, and it was sold by them [the facilitators] to us”.

- Despite their stated gratitude for the draft animals, co-op members continue to procure a tractor. Co-op member Sakumzi explains, “...that does not mean that, we undermine the animal traction process, it is a good thing to have that. But we must have them assisting the tractor”.
- Co-op members continually rearticulated tractor use. They extolled the merits of mechanized traction on a number of occasions,
  - Such as Sizwe’s statement that “a tractor is the strongest way of ploughing”.
  - As well as Sandile’s assessment that “you might not have anything else, but to have a tractor is to have a very important thing”.
- Co-op members repeatedly asked the researcher to look for a good “second-hand tractor” in Grahamstown.
- Co-op member Sticks enquires of a visitor (on hearing she works in the tyre industry) if she can donate tractor tyres. Tractor use even inscribes itself on material artefacts created by the project. When erecting the upright posts for a storage shed an opening, sufficiently large for a tractor, is left between the poles.

The speech genre of *Technical appropriateness* was also articulated in relation to other material artefacts. Co-op members were unable to operate the petrol operated water pump supplied by the facilitators because, in the words of Joseph “it [the pump] was just dropped off”. It was only after two weeks that the facilitators provided further instruction. Subsequent to this the cost of fuel proved prohibitive, and co-op members returned to using an illicit connection earlier made to a water pipeline.

#### **6.1.10 The speech genre of *Education and training***

The speech genre of *Education and training* entails references to education or instruction within the Activity system. While it is manifest, to varying degrees, in the illocutions of all subjects, it is particularly discernable in the facilitators’

and funders' references to the training of co-op members. This speech genre is evident in the following examples:

- This speech genre was articulated in an address at the official launch, where a funders' representative spoke approvingly of the educational imperative and expressed her desire to "see this thing called animal traction" demonstrated.
- Hence Tembani, an elderly co-op member, asserted that he was "too old" to do a bookkeeping course (this despite the fact he is comparatively well educated and has organised several of the co-op's purchases). He explained his reservation about the course as stemming from the fact that he "wanted to grow mielies" and not sit and "count them".
- The educational imperative saw the funders initially reluctant to finance a fieldworker post; they suggested this task ought to be undertaken by a post-graduate student as part of his or her degree. The director of the facilitators' institution reported it was only after, "we really fought" (for the post), and that the scale of the facilitation work required was indicated, that the funders capitulated, and made additional monies available.

#### **6.1.11 The speech genre of *Adherence to meeting procedure***

Within the focal research setting much emphasis was placed on conducting co-op meetings in a procedural manner. A large amount of illocutionary exchange was of a procedural variety and meeting procedures were often keenly debated. The speech genre of *Adherence to meeting procedure* consequently privileges adherence to generic meeting procedures, and is manifest in the illocutions of both co-op members and facilitators. The following are examples of this speech genre.

- The Co-op chairperson advanced profuse apologies when, due to the secretary's absence, the minutes and attendance register were not available. Furthermore, co-op members at several points explicitly sought endorsement of meeting procedures from the researcher or facilitators. Co-op members inquired:

- Whether, according to the chairperson, “we [co-op members] are going straight with this thing”.
- If the “procedures are correct and right”.
- Co-op board members’ apologies for missing a meeting were rejected, unless in writing. Yet somewhat in contradiction to this, the facilitators’ fieldworker on several occasions expressed exasperation at co-op members “lack of a writing culture” and “incomplete” meeting minutes.
- Adherence to meeting procedures requires knowledge of procedures; therefore, familiarity with the constitution was privileged within the Activity system. An early minute of a meeting recalls how the project secretary read the constitution out aloud, paragraph by paragraph, in order that everybody “know it well”.
- Similarly the facilitators endorse scrupulous adherence to the constitution as a guarantee for democracy. The facilitating fieldworker explained, “people [must] get to clearly understand the constitution from the first page to the last, so that they can have the confidence to challenge anything that is not going according to the constitution.”

However the primacy of meeting procedures was sometimes challenged. After the closure of a meeting where co-op members received forms to indicate their preference for inclusion into one of three sub-projects (vegetable plots, piggery, poultry), there was a raucous proliferation of discourse. Several co-op members were dissatisfied at the prospect of not getting their indicated choice. Co-op member, Mekani, angrily stated he had “*bila esoma*” (had already sweated i.e. had already worked) and could not be told “*indlu imi ngeembambo*” - that the project (idiomatically, the house) is full to capacity. Mekani declared that the constitution is not always right.

## 6.2 Voices as actions

Within R. Engeström’s analytic topology “voices” are commensurate with Leont’evian “actions”. Voices are built up of speech genres, the most prominent examples of which were discussed in Section 6.1. “Voices” represent the level at which the speakers intentionality and agency becomes manifest in



the Activity system, albeit within the limits of the speaker's community and referential object (R. Engeström, 1995). Therefore voices are irreducible to the goals of individual subjects, but reveal the referential potentialities (topics or "objects") of the Activity system. In the case of the focal Activity system, the referential object is that of participatory development (discussed in Section 6.3).

R. Engeström indicates the need for a method that "integrates situated features of dialogue with the cultural-historical process of meaning construction" (1999, p.39). This task requires voices to be understood relative to theoretical accounts of participation-as-end (Kelly & Van Vlaenderen, 1996; see also Oakley, 1985; 1991) or "transformational" (Boyce, 2001) development. The voices of the focal research setting were formulated through thematic analysis of the (already identified) speech genres. This was done while asking the following questions of the data: Who is speaking? What speech genres are enacted? What effects are speakers seeking to perform with these illocutionary acts? And most notably: What effects do these illocutionary acts actually accomplish? While the speech genres of the focal research setting were derived in a grounded and inductive manner with relatively little recourse to theoretical material, the voices were formulated in conjunction with a review of the participatory development literature. Voices were therefore explicated and extricated in a recursive interplay between data and theory.

Within the present interpretative framework, participatory development is viewed as a historically produced social practice. Four core voices, which mark the social practice of participatory development in the focal research project, are defined below. These voices represent dimensions along which the referential object of participatory development is historically and theoretically produced, they include the voices of *Authority and democracy*, *Science and technology*, *Morality and historical redress* and finally *Self-reliance and temporal continuity*.

These voices also embody tensions within the historically constituted referential object of participatory development. Each of these voices exists on a continuum, between two extremes, those that *build or enable participation*, versus those that come to *mitigate against or erode participation*. There is, within participatory development, a dynamic interplay between these opposing

poles. Moreover this continuum heuristically assists in representing the contradictions and continuities within the given participatory development Activity system.

How these voices function, by whom they are used, the speech genres that constitute them and the extent to which they predominate within the focal research setting, are discussed in the account below.

### 6.2.1 The voice of *Authority and democracy*

The voice of *Authority and democracy* encapsulates the issue of power and authority within participatory development. It is concerned with the exercise of authority and decision-making within the focal development intervention, including the significant requirement for democratic governance.

Central to the people-centred development perspective are the ideals of social justice, societal transformation, and democracy discussed in Chapter Three (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977; Boren, 1992; Korten, 1990; Graff, 2001; Rahnema, 1990). The people-centred perspective on development therefore has clear valuational dimensions. As democratic governance implies participation, participation and democracy are mutually reinforcing concepts. A transformational-end orientated conceptualisation of participation sees it become of equal, if not greater, importance than the material outcomes achieved within development interventions. In fact, the requirement for democracy is so ubiquitous within development settings it is voiced even within initiatives that do not explicitly claim the mantel of people-centred development. The voice of *Authority and democracy* is enacted between the poles illustrated in Figure 4 below.

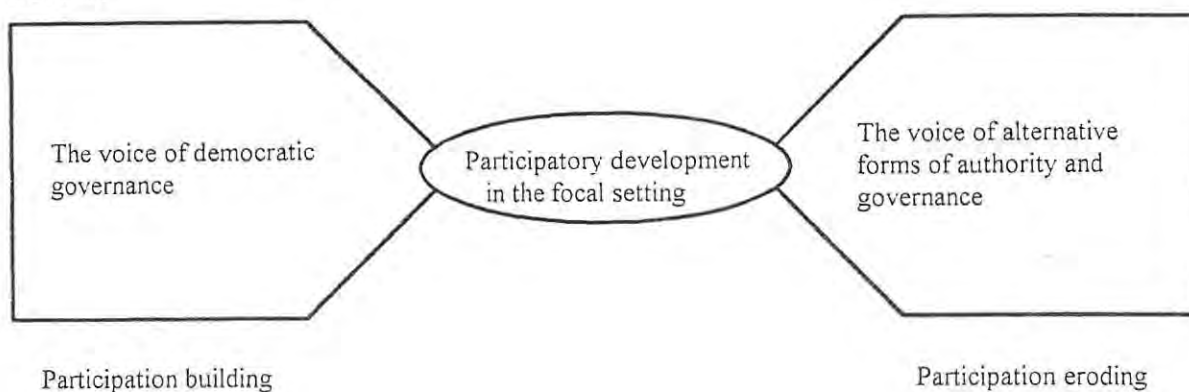


Figure 4. The voice of *Authority and democracy* within the focal setting.

The participation-enabling pole (left) represents democratic forms of governance, marked by an egalitarian distribution of decision-making, and decision-making opportunities. The participation-eroding pole (right) represents episodes where democratic decision-making is either disregarded altogether, or becomes a thin veneer, disguising more autocratic forms of power. The intervening space represents the zone where subjects' use of the voice of *Authority and democracy* is enacted.

At this point it is beneficial to examine precisely what is meant by democracy, in order to reflexively ground the researcher's understanding of democracy. In this study the yardstick of democracy, and criterion against which subjects' use of the voice of *Authority and democracy* is judged, is that of formal, Western-style, democratic governance. This definition privileges a particular (although widespread) conception of democracy, that of formal, consultative and egalitarian decision-making. The diversity and expansiveness of the term democracy, and its relationship to other traditions of governance and authority such as gerontocracy, patriarchy or unelected hereditary leadership is not here considered. Systematic study of the precise nature of these "local" forms of governance is beyond the scope of this research. Therefore for the purposes of this inquiry (and current interpretation) the conventional definition of formal democracy is drawn on.

All three groups of subjects (or roleplayers) within the present Activity system seek to legitimate their voicedness, and lay claim to authority for their speaking. As an abstract value, articulated and affirmed in the realm of rhetoric, the need for consultative democracy is therefore recurrently emphasised by all subject-participants within the Activity system. Of the speech genres thus far discussed, this voice is constituted most notably by those of *Adherence to meeting procedure* (6.1.11), *Unanimous intentions* (6.1.7) and *Harmony* (6.1.6). This voice is also, to a lesser extent, comprised of the speech genres of *Antipathy and distrust towards outsiders* (6.1.4) and *Rights* (6.1.5). How various subject-participants constitute and deploy the voice of *Authority and democracy* is examined in what follows.

### **The funders' voice of Authority and democracy**

The funders affirm collectivity and democratic decision making quite generally. This is evident both in project documentation and their representative's

illocutions at the official launch. Yet the funders are spatially and organisationally removed from the setting. They are too distant to engage with the situated actions of the development project or its attendant day-to-day decision-making. It is instead the facilitator and co-op member subjects who grapple with the social activity of development, and whose verbalisations of this voice are amongst the most distinct.

### **The facilitators' voice of Authority and democracy**

The facilitators privilege democracy as an abstract value, but in many respects view its attainment as a largely technical and procedural matter. This is evident in their illocution of the speech genre of *Adherence to meeting procedure* (6.1.11), whereby democracy becomes assured through formal, procedural adherence. Notwithstanding this, the facilitators at several points dispense with the fora of consultative democratic decision making, usually in order to advance technical or agricultural progress within the project. Democracy therefore becomes subordinated to more pragmatic considerations, and the facilitators' voice of *Authority and democracy* veers toward the participation-eroding pole. Under these circumstances the authority or legitimation drawn on by the facilitators typically derive from a narrow band of sources; often extending from their scientific and technical expertise (evident, for example, in the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness* (6.1.9) and *Education and training* (6.1.10)).

### **The co-op members' voice of Authority and democracy**

Co-op members similarly affirm the principle of democratic decision-making and verbalise the speech genre of *Adherence to meeting procedures* (6.1.11), but at several junctures disregard it. They often do this with recourse to the speech genre of *Unanimous intentions* (6.1.7). Adherence to meeting procedures, in addition, requires knowledge of highly conventionalised meeting procedures. This requirement, and the manner in which meetings oscillate between Xhosa and English (the latter is a language not all co-op members are proficient in), serves to preclude many members from fuller involvement in co-op decision making.

In their often rigid adherence to democratic procedures co-op members' utterances, paradoxically, incline towards the participation-eroding pole, which mitigates against more functional forms of democracy. Hence the letter of



democracy elides the spirit of democracy. In these cases democratic governance is displaced by other claims to authority. These alternative claims most frequently derive from co-op members' alignment with, or positions as: the local land owning elite, the elderly, the educated, male, or the "*inkosi*" (tribal authority members or representatives). Typically co-op members' authority (and ability to speak over the voice of democratic governance) increases exponentially, the greater the number of the above factors they are able to draw on. The displacement of democracy within the voice of *Authority and democracy* therefore does not create a vacuum; it is replaced by other forms of (and claims to) authority.

The dissent and contestation, which emerges in response to autocratic decision making, is diffused and silenced by the speech genres of *unanimous consensus* (6.1.6) and *harmony* (6.1.7). These closely related speech genres are primarily evident in co-op members' illocutions. The latter speech genres' assertion of the harmony that exists between co-op members' serves to undercut any potential dissent and contestation, within the Activity system. The former, the speech genre of *Unanimous consensus*, sees collective intentions acquire all the influence of a rule. An example of this would be the co-op chairperson's assertion of co-op board control over land, despite the absence of leases (see 6.1.6). His verbalisations cannot be ascribed to ignorance or unfamiliarity with matters bureaucratic, as he is a school principal and presumably well acquainted with basic contractual procedures. He was instead articulating the unstated, unbreached consensus that prevails rule-like within the focal research setting.

In summation then, the voice of *Authority and democracy* shifts in practice between the participation building and participation eroding poles. Multiple elements within this voice serve to negate and erode democratic practice. However the dissent and contestation, which emerge in response to this, is frequently muted and masked within the Activity system. The intermittent failure of democratic practice ultimately serves to draw the focal activity system away from the participation-enabling pole.

### 6.2.2 The voice of *Science and technology*

The voice of Science and technology incorporates attempts to access, create and use technological artefacts. It also encapsulates within it appeals to technical and scientific rationality.

The multifaceted social practice of development, utilises a wide array of technological artefacts. “Technology” encapsulates all material artefacts that systematically mediate between human action and the material world. At its most expansive this definition includes the procedures and process-orientated artefacts used to organize, control and orchestrate the collective actions of individuals. Cropping plans, attendance registers and schedules of various kinds would be examples of these. Technological artefacts, especially elaborate artefacts such as the project’s petrol driven water pump are, in addition, products of complex social practices (engineering and industrial production), refined over extended periods of socio-historical time. The voice of *Science and technology* is represented in Figure 5.



Figure 5. The voice of *Science and technology* within the focal setting.

The participation-enabling (left) pole represents the use of forms of technology and associated practices that are congruent with subjects’ capacities and enable attainment of the Activity system’s object. Conversely, the participation-eroding pole (right) represents the use of technological artefacts and practices that are uncondusive to project viability or ill accord with users’ capacities, thereby blunting action towards the attainment of the Activity system’s object. It is important to note that the focus is on how adequately and appropriately the artefacts used (and introduced) contribute to situated practice, rather than

whether or not particular artefacts are used. In other words, this voice is not gauged relative to (the researcher's) preconceived repertoire of technological or technical artefacts.

As the speech genres that constitute the voice of Science and technology undergo disparate accentuation, subject-participants within the Activity system verbalise this voice in highly divergent ways. This is evident in the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness* (6.1.9). Furthermore the ability to speak through (or use) the voice of *Science and technology*, is to a some extent contingent on subjects' scientific and technical capacity. This capacity is, in turn, often related to formal training, education and access to appropriate artefacts. Hence when this voice is undergirded by formal education it incorporates the speech genre of *Education and training* (6.1.10).

#### **The funders' voice of Science and technology**

Although it has its origins in the illocutions of the facilitators, the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness* (6.1.9) receives the firm endorsement of the funders. It is sufficiently congruent with the funders' prominently articulated speech genre of *Education and training* (6.1.10). As education is the *raison être* of the funding organisation, their (relatively sparse) illocutions verbalise the need for education and training. This speech genre is of paramount importance in understanding the referential social language (see Section 6.3). Suffice to suggest that these two speech genres enable the distant funders to abstractly affirm the notion of sustainable technological practice.

#### **The facilitators' voice of Science and technology**

Axiomatic to the facilitators' conception of science and technology is the notion of appropriateness; this is largely embodied in the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness* (6.1.9). The facilitators, in common with many development practitioners, check their prescriptions and inclination towards infinite technological complexity and advance by stressing the need for suitable forms of technology.

The facilitators' concern with technological appropriateness can be historically located within the practice of development. Scientific advancement was a key theme of Modernization theory (Hadjor, 1993), which culminated in the 'Green Revolution' of the 1960s. This led to the introduction of technological

innovations such as new farming techniques, fertilizers, hybridised seed and mechanization in many Third World agrarian settings (Elliot, 1994, p.71). However the resultant agricultural gains were frequently wrought at the expense of the environment, local food security, indigenous land tenure, regional trade deficits and social stability (Hadjor, 1993). The failure of the Green Revolution therefore stands as a reminder of the necessity for appropriate technology, and witnesses the notion of appropriateness accorded much emphasis in contemporary development interventions. Accordingly, in the context of the focal research setting, the facilitators advocate the use of animal traction. Yet despite this concern with appropriateness, the facilitators occasionally misjudge the capacity of the beneficiaries: for example in the case of the water pump, they overestimate co-op members' technical and financial capacities.

The facilitators also privileged an educational imperative within the project. This is evident in their uttering of the speech genre of *Education and training* (6.1.10), and where the facilitators organised several training sessions for co-op members. However, as already has been suggested (see 6.1.10), these efforts are sometimes of limited utility - this lack of practicability sees the voice of *Education and training* deflected toward the participation-eroding pole.

### **The co-op members' voice of Science and technology**

Within this voice, the place of technological artefacts becomes keenly contested, with certain artefacts and innovations selectively embraced by the co-op. In relation to the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness* (6.1.9), co-op members persistently articulate the need for a tractor and proceed to procure one. In terms of the historical lineage of this practice, tractors were provided in this area as part of the homeland government's agricultural extensions services. In pragmatic terms mechanized traction is indispensable, for it serves to ensure the continuation of a project marked by relatively low levels of community participation and an elderly demographic profile. The use of animal traction would therefore seriously imperil the continuation of the project. Paradoxically then, appropriateness is not always appropriate. Yet the facilitators do not explicitly acknowledge or address this. They simply acquiesce to the use of mechanized traction; occasionally describing it as a catalyst temporarily used to initiate the project. Contrastingly co-op members give an altogether different accentuation to the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness*, viewing the return to animal traction as technologically



regressive rather than appropriate. The voice of *Science and technology* therefore oscillates between the participation building and participation eroding poles under the influence of the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness*. Adjudicating animal traction as either participation building or eroding cannot be done independently of consideration of the referential object, or *telos*, of the Activity system. It cannot be judged apart from the social language of development (see section 6.3).

Furthermore the notion of appropriateness is not the exclusive preserve of the facilitators, because several episodes exist where co-op subjects fabricated and devised appropriate innovations and artefacts. These technological practices are typically more localised and of lesser technical complexity than those of the facilitators, yet they are equally important in terms of their power to instrumentally advance progress towards attainment of the Activity systems object. Examples of these include the improvised illicit water connection and a makeshift wire fastener on the plough. The facilitators' lack of a monopoly on technical appropriateness is further demonstrated in their use of the speech genre of *Education and training*. On several occasions the facilitators misjudge what will be of utility to co-op members. This results in the voice of *Science and technology* drawing away from the participation-enabling pole and the projects viability becoming incrementally eroded.

By way of synopsis then, any polarity of participation-enabling, technologically adept facilitators and technically inept co-op members is inaccurate and unhelpful. Instead, a dynamic shifting occurs between these poles of participation on the continuum of the voice of *Science and technology*.

### **6.2.3 The voice of *Morality and historical redress***

The voice of *Morality and historical redress* incorporates the valuational dimensions of the development intervention, and the moral claims verbalised within it. In the context of the focal research setting this relates both to the moral claims of the beneficiaries and the moral "answerability" (or alternatively, reticence) of the facilitators.

Some of the axiological dimensions undergirding particularly the people centred development approach have already been suggested and participatory

development's distinct set of valuation, ideological and political commitments described (cf. Freire, 1970; Rahnema, 1990, Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). The contradiction here identified is that, despite development being a profoundly moral endeavour, these valuational issues frequently remain relatively implicit and obscured. Consequently, the voice of *Morality and historical redress* is often barely audible.

Furthermore, the moral claims articulated within the voice of *Morality and historical redress*, might seem limited to the focal development intervention. These may appear to be anomalies peculiar to this context and absent from others - for development's beneficiaries seldom seem to make any moral claim against those dispensing it. It is however argued that this may be a consequence of the fact that the micro-discursive "intra-interactional context" (Y. Engeström, 1995) of development is seldom scrutinized. So these relational and interactional phenomena go unexamined and this voice unheard; but it may well be far more pervasive than is generally recognized. In figure 6 below, the voice of *Morality and historical redress* is represented between the participation enabling and eroding poles:

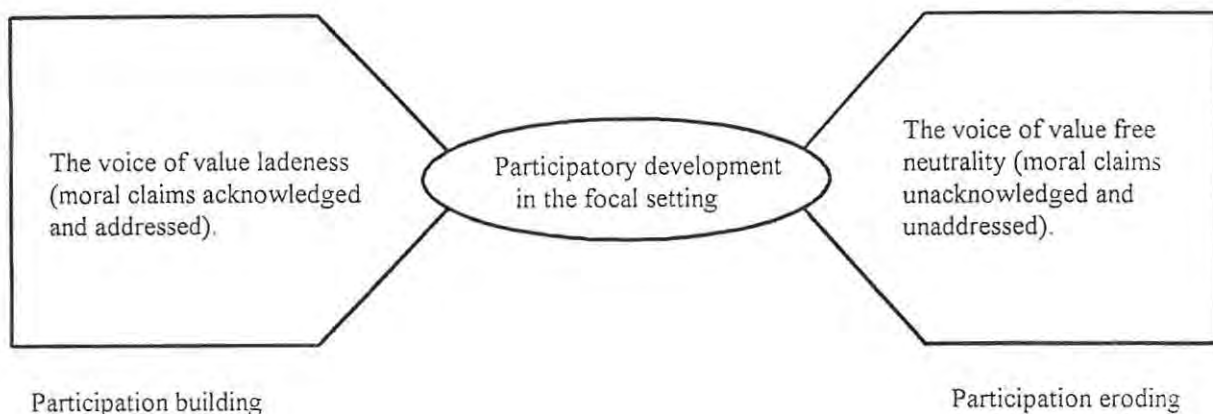


Figure 6. The voice of *Morality and historical redress* within the focal setting.

Subjects' voices are articulated in the space between the two indicated poles. The participation-enabling pole (left) sees development treated as a value-laden enterprise, hence these moral claims are acknowledged. The participation-eroding pole (right) meanwhile sees development treated as a neutral, value-free undertaking. Towards this pole these potentially corrosive claims remain unvoiced and unacknowledged within the Activity system.

### **The funders' voice of Morality and historical redress**

The funders' distance from the research context results in their verbalisations within the voice of *Morality and historical redress* being relatively indistinct. The valuational basis for their involvement is largely unelaborated on, beyond their claims to be supporting development through education, and their mission statement's generic claims to "develop human capacity".

### **The co-op members' voice of Morality and historical redress**

The voice of *Morality and historical redress* is primarily articulated by co-op members and serves to highlight the unacknowledged valuational dimensions of the focal development intervention. The voice of *Morality and historical redress* is constituted from the speech genres of the *Idealised non-present* (6.1.1) and *Suffering and pleading* (6.1.2), but most pre-eminently, the speech genre of *Rights* (6.1.5).

The speech genres of the *idealised non-present* (6.1.1) and *suffering and pleading* (6.1.2), serve to position co-op members as deserving and feasible recipients of development. The speech genre of the *Idealised non-present* accomplishes this by indicating the precedent for agricultural production within the community, thereby positioning its speakers as viable recipients of agrarian development. These illocutions emerge in a project that has taken several years to initiate, is marked by limited community involvement and has relatively modest gains to show for its first operational year. Similarly, the pervasive speech genre of *Suffering and pleading*, quite apart from the pragmatic veracity of its verbalisations (the extent of poverty in the community), serves to distinguish its speakers as deserving recipients of resources and development. Prominent within the focal setting, the speech genre of *Suffering and pleading's* diffuse and generalized claims for resources draw the voice of *Morality and historical redress* toward the participation eroding pole. This occurs largely because of the manner in which this voice is unacknowledged.

The speech genre of *Rights* serves to buttress community and co-operative member claims to resources from the facilitators' institution. As suggested in the preceding section (6.1.5), the moral claims voiced through this speech genre are made in relation to a number of contexts. In the focal research setting these include the claims of those historically subject to displacement, land dispossession and "betterment" (see Chapter Two), although the moral claims

voiced by the subjects of development interventions might potentially, and even more expansively, flow from subjects' appeals to universal morality and position as human beings in need. Yet, in some instances, the speech genre of *Rights* potentially draws the voice of *Morality and historical redress* toward the non-participatory pole. This tendency is evident in the assertion of worker rights in a non-remunerative, voluntary project located in an area with high levels of unemployment.

### **The facilitators' voice of Morality and historical redress**

The facilitators' response to the speech genre of *Rights*, and its relationship to the voice of *Morality and historical redress* is here considered. Responding to the co-op members' claims with a mute silence does not render the facilitators absent from illocutionary exchange, for a silent illocutionary subject remains an illocutionary subject. This notion, and how we might conceptualise the tacit and unstated nature of the voice of *Morality and historical redress*, can helpfully be considered with reference to Bakhtin's concept of hidden dialogicity. A concept he elucidated as follows,

Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker. We sense that this is a conversation, although only one person is speaking, and it is a conversation of the most intense kind... (Bakhtin, as cited in Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999, p.8).

A similar intense, silent conversation takes place among the subjects of the focal research setting; between the tentatively voiced claims of the co-op members and the reticence of the facilitators. Co-op members' appeals to the voice of *Morality and historical redress* are met and "addressed" by the relative silence of the facilitators, even if this is a reply that the facilitators themselves only dimly apprehend. Moreover the facilitators' reticence is a product of their structural position as the implementing agents within the larger institutional context of a university. The implicit nature of this voice, alongside its frequent intractability, results in these claims remaining unanswered and unaddressed. This is particularly true of settings where development is simply reduced to a technical enterprise. The voice of *Morality*



*and historical redress* is likely to remain even more marginal in settings where the subjects do not have access to an institutionalised arena of articulation - such as that provided by the Land Claims Commission within the focal research setting.

To summarize then, particular moral or rights claims and the manner in which these remain unacknowledged within the focal research setting, sees the voice of *Morality and historical redress* asymmetrically vocalised by co-op members.

It furthermore sees the voice of *Morality and historical redress* incline toward the participation-eroding pole, thereby mitigating against participatory social action.

#### 6.2.4 The voice of *Self-reliance and continuity*

The voice of *Self-reliance and continuity* consists of the distinct but related requirements for self-reliance and continuity, attributes frequently sought within participatory development contexts. In these contexts there is often a stated need to ensure, firstly, that incipient relationships of dependency are tempered and secondly, that these interventions are relatively enduring and viable. Within the participatory development literature, participation is often articulated as a way of engendering project sustainability (Boeren, 1992; Genganje & Setty, 1991; Oakley, 1985). The voice of *Self-reliance and continuity* is represented in figure 7 below:

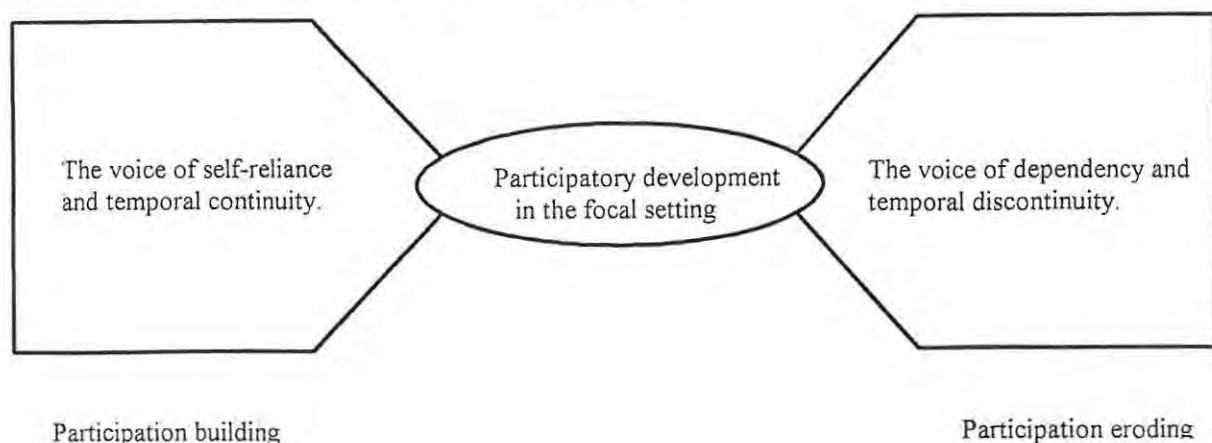


Figure 7. The voice of *Self-reliance and continuity* within the focal setting.

The participation-enabling pole (left) represents the exercise of self-reliance and actions that contribute to temporal continuity. The participation-mitigating

pole (right) is marked by relationships of dependency (particularly on the part of development's beneficiaries) as well as relatively short term or unsustained gains. The voice of *Self-reliance and temporal continuity* is influenced by the speech genres of *Demotivation* (6.1.3), *Suffering and pleading* (6.1.2) and the *Superaddressee* (6.1.8). These are discussed below.

### **The funders' voice of Self-reliance and continuity**

The distant funders vocalize support for the notion of self-reliance and temporal continuity. Viewing the development project through their educational lens, they suggest that education and training will contribute to project continuity and sustainability.

### **The facilitators' voice of Self-reliance and continuity**

The speech genre of *Demotivation* is of paramount importance when considering the voice of *Self-reliance and continuity*. This speech genre functions in an either retrospectively justificatory or, alternatively, anticipatory manner. It accounts for poor levels of co-op member morale or seeks to legitimate certain courses of action, in order to avoid further depressing co-op member morale. It is of such influence, that several significant changes in situated practice have been effected to avoid "demotivation". For example, despite the unsuitability of maize and inappropriateness of mechanized traction (from the perspective of disembodied facilitator rationality) the facilitators accede to these. It is important to note that the pragmatic defensibility of tractors or maize cultivation is of less interest here than the manner in which the facilitators incrementally consent to these, in order to avoid the spectre of "demotivation".

In terms of its instrumental functions the speech genre of *Demotivation* serves to depoliticise the focal development intervention. This speech genre, for example, neutralizes the issue of poor youth involvement in the project, by describing it in affective, intrapersonal terms. The dearth of youth involvement is ascribed to a lack of enthusiasm and individual's demotivation, rather than being viewed as a form of strategic resistance on the part of the youth. The verbalised threat of demotivation also necessarily raises questions surrounding co-op member 'ownership' of the initiative, and sees the voice of *Self-reliance and continuity* deflected to the participation-eroding pole of the continuum. This also serves to call into question the referential object of the Activity system. After all, we might ask if insufficient or waning motivation for the

project exists, at what point would it become unwarrantable and consequently abandoned? These foundational questions are explored in the final section of this chapter (Section 6.3), which is concerned with the referential object of the Activity system.

### **The co-op members' voice of Self-reliance and continuity**

Co-op members' illocutions reproduce the speech genre of *Demotivation* outlined above, as well as the speech genre of *Suffering and pleading* (6.1.2) within the voice of *Self-reliance and continuity*. The latter speech genre entails co-op members' recurrent appeals to the beneficence of potential benefactors. The success and viability of the focal project thereby becomes less dependent on the actions (and agency) of the co-op member subjects', than the beneficence of the assorted benefactors they attempt to access. Therefore this beseeching speech genre subtly, but perniciously, detaches the products of co-op members' actions from their sense of individual agency. This persistently articulated speech genre serves to drive situated practice within the focal Activity system toward the participation-eroding pole of dependency and unviability.

Although primarily verbalised by co-op members, the facilitators at several junctures perpetuate the speech genre of *Suffering and pleading*, which draws situated activity towards the participation-eroding pole. The facilitators therefore share complicity in the distancing of co-op members from their agency. This is succinctly demonstrated in the facilitator's press release penned on the occasion of the official launch. Reproduced almost verbatim in a local daily newspaper under the headline "[funder's institution] hands over farming co-op to villagers", it begs the question how can a co-operative be "handed over"? What existence does the co-op have independently of its members? This micro-discursive formulation distances co-op members from their collective actions, and makes attainment of the Activity system's object contingent on factors seemingly far removed from the agency of its subjects.

The co-op members' speech genre of the *Superaddressee* has similar effects. The recurrent appeals to a distant theological superaddressee serving to sever co-op members from their agency. Although religiosity is not inherently irreconcilable with a sense of agency, the persistence and depth of this speech genre draws the voice of *Self-reliance and continuity* to a position inimical to participation, within the focal research setting.

### 6.3 The referential-object social language of development

Within R. Engeström's (1995, 1999) extension of the Activity system analytic schema, the "activity" level is comparable with the Bakhtinian theoretical precept of the "social language". Social languages reveal the referential potentialities of the Activity system, depicting the "object" to which the system is directed. R. Engeström (1999) argues that understanding the referential social language requires examination of two interrelated contexts. The first is the context of theoretical accounts of object-related activity - in other words "the purpose of [social] language use" (R. Engeström, 1999, p.40), as communicated in the development literature. The second is the terrain of actual language use: the contextual setting wherein participatory-development is accomplished. Interpretation of the Activity system's social language therefore requires examination of both theory and data. While the referential object invoked by the subjects is discussed in the present chapter, several of its situational and historical antecedents are examined in the following chapter (Chapter Seven).

Within the focal Activity system the referential object is not simply the stable reality of agricultural production. It is instead the expansive and complex situated activity of 'participatory development'. This object is difficult to articulate because it is diffuse, enacted in the interactional realm and relatively "independent of any materially existing forms" (R. Engeström, 1999, p.40). In other words, the social practice of development cannot be conflated with the presence of specific material artefacts or repertoires of physical acts. By way of illustration, preparatory organisational work marked the first two years of the focal development intervention. In this time it produced no tangible agricultural outputs - material analysis of this period would therefore show up little in the way of significant progress.

The referential social language extends from a complex matrix of disparately accentuated voices, assembled in turn from a plethora of speech genres. The social language of the Activity system is heterogeneous - it is traversed by mismatches and contradictions. Contradictions furthermore become magnified as one progresses across the analytic sequence of speech genres, voices and social languages. These disparities are attributable to the subjects' divergent social contexts and historically constituted experiences. The various subject-



roleplayers of the Activity system consequently forge as their object of referentiality relatively divergent activities: activities which are diverse, and to some extent, incommensurate. The limited commonality within the referential object means that the focal development intervention - viewed from the perspective of situated activity - recedes and fragments. It becomes a series of projects: a funders' project, a facilitators' project and co-op members' project. The multifarious referential object social languages articulated by subjects are now systematically considered.

### **The funders' referential object**

The funding organisation has a firm educational orientation, congruent with this the funders' act, or move, towards the referential object of an agricultural development project with a substantial educative component. This object or activity draws heavily on the voice of *Science and technology*, in this case constituted primarily by the speech genre of *Education and training*. However there was a specific contradiction identified in the speech genre of *Education and training* (and therefore the voice of *Science and technology*). The rationale for education and training is that it would enable co-op members to better participate in the activity of participatory development. However, the lack of practicability sometimes associated with these education and training inputs, mitigates against co-op member participation in the educative interventions (quite specifically), and the broader participatory development project (more generally). Therefore the educational imperative, which is central to the funders' referential social language of development, is not free of contradictions.

### **The facilitators' referential object**

The facilitators rearticulate and affirm the educational imperative contained in the speech genre of *Education and training*, yet drive toward a slightly different referential object. Seeking to effect agrarian development and local food security, they draw on the voice of *Science and technology* placing great accent on the use of appropriate technological artefacts (as articulated by the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness*). The facilitators consequently invoke as their referential object a subsistence agriculture development project, with a firm appropriate technology focus.

The concept of appropriate technology is deeply ingrained in the facilitators' referential object. It is so entrenched in part because it effectively predates the project. The minutes of a 1997 meeting, held between community representatives and the then university registrar concerning community land claims, foretells the nature of the university's subsequent involvement in the community. It documents, "The university is presently undertaking research on the use of oxen to cultivate land: the most economic way of cultivating. The research findings will benefit rural communities". Appropriate technology therefore becomes axiomatic to the activity enacted, and acted toward, by the facilitators within the Activity system. This is congruent with the facilitators' regular vocalization of the voice of *Science and technology*, and largely technical orientation toward the project.

The facilitators' overarching technical orientation colours even how they conceptualise elements such as governance and authority within the project. Their articulation of the voice of *Authority and democracy* encapsulate within it the speech genre of *Adherence to meeting procedure*. The desired democratic governance therefore becomes a technical issue, assured through scrupulous procedural adherence.

### **The co-op members' referential object**

Embracing the social languages already discussed, co-op members act towards a referential object of even greater complexity and polyvalence. Co-op members assent to the educational imperative vocalised within the facilitators' and funders' voice of *Science and technology*, albeit to a measured way. Furthermore, while they do not reject the subsistence / food security rural development foci of the facilitators, co-op members' referential object also encapsulates within it a commercial object.

The discordant, and at times even incompatible, nature of these subsistence and commercial objects within the social language of development is particularly evident in the disjunctures and contradictions surrounding several material artefacts. Examples of this include artefacts such as the resource intensive launch and mechanized traction. References to mechanized traction are contained within the speech genre of *Technical appropriateness* and manifest in the voice of *Science and technology*. However, if the project embraces a subsistence agriculture object, the presence of mechanized traction is

problematic, for the scale of cultivation makes mechanized traction economically untenable. Continued use of mechanized traction is at odds with subsistence agriculture and subsequently uncondusive to project sustainability.

The converse (the commercial object) is equally problematic, particularly in relation to the resource-intensive official launch. If the referential object of the focal development intervention embraces a commercial object then the costly launch was imprudent, if not altogether unjustified. Therefore, in terms of situated practice, the evidence suggests that co-op members vacillate between these two distinct objects.

However the complex referential social language invoked by co-op members does not simply comprise of opposing subsistence and commercial agriculture objects - it has additional dimensions. The social language invoked by co-op members is, for instance, significantly shaped by the voice of *Morality and historical redress*. Vocalised almost exclusively by the co-op members, this voice foregrounds the valuational basis of their referential object. As earlier indicated this voice encapsulates within it the speech genres of the *Idealised non-present, Suffering and pleading* and *Rights*.

Finally, the voice of *Self-reliance and continuity* is verbalised by co-op members within the focal Activity system. It contains a number of the above mentioned speech genres along with the speech genre of *Demotivation*. The prevalence of co-op member demotivation and attempts to avoid it have already been discussed; including the manner in which the voice of *Self-reliance and continuity* calls into question the basic sustainability of the focal development project, particularly in its inclination towards the participation eroding pole. Therefore the voices thus far enumerated all feed into the social language invoked by co-op members, endowing it with much distinctiveness and complexity.

### **The nature of the referential object social language(s)**

To recapitulate, this discussion of the referential object social language of development comes at the culmination of a sequential analysis of the speech genres and voices within the focal research setting. The speech genres and voices that constitute various subjects' referential object social languages were

catalogued and described as relatively discrete and autonomous units. However these social languages are, in practice, both fluid and interlinked.

The inter-animated and intertwined quality of these social languages invoked within the focal research context is lucidly illustrated in the following lengthy extract. Gleaned from an interview that was conducted with a co-op member, this episode sees the researcher attempt to evade the co-op member's (indicated by Member) indirect, yet tenacious request for resources. While this exchange was precipitated by a visit, undertaken several weeks earlier, by an overseas visitor and myself, it is still extremely revealing.

Member: ...I recall, if you can, you had a lady here with you once upon a time - from where?

Researcher: Which? Xoliswa, that one, Xoliswa Mzeni, and there was that other lady from overseas?

Member: Yes that lady from overseas!

Researcher: From Portugal?

Member: That lady from Portugal, wouldn't they help us find...

Researcher: She's far away now...

Member: Why, where is she?

Researcher: She's back in Portugal, [thinks] ja, she's back in Portugal.

Member: Well there's people in Portugal, there's farmers in Portugal, you can also do a plan for us.

Researcher: ...difficult to access them.

Member: Mmm?

Researcher: It's difficult to access them Simpiwe, Portugal is half way around the world.

Member: Where?

Researcher: It's half way around the world, on the other side of the world.

Member: Eh, Portugal? Eh, money can help, money can cross from there to t his side.

Researcher: Money can cross, you're right...

Member: But help can be done, and food can cross there, from their place...

Researcher: I suppose so, ja [uncertain].

Member: The outsiders they can get the fresh food from our project.

Researcher: It won't be fresh by the time it gets there.

Member: How long does it take there?



Researcher: Ah, it's far away.

Member: I would go across the, it wouldn't go across the sea, it will across the air.

Researcher: Ja, but the air [freight] is expensive

Member: Air is expensive but the air is a short ride.

Researcher: It's a short ride, I think it's about 16 hours in the air.

Member: To reach there, 16 hours is not even 24 hours a day - that's not a day!

Researcher: Aeroplane is not like kwela, kwela [informal minibus taxi], aeroplane is expensive.

Member: Yes, but for the people who can do, who have done something very important for you, you can do all the means for one trip of them to let them have the proper fresh things from another country. To the other that would be a very wonderful thing to the others.

Researcher: I'm still not sure, I'm still not sure about the air option. But maybe... [reluctant tone]

This exchange demonstrates a fluid shifting between various objects namely income generation, poverty relief and a generic "development". Its multitude of polyphonically articulated objects reaches a crescendo with;

...but for the people who can do, who have done something very important for you, you can do all the means for one trip of them to let them have the proper fresh things from another country. To the other that would be a very wonderful thing to the others.

While predominantly evident in co-op members' referential object, it does suggest the diversity and polyvocality that marks all the referential object social language(s) within the focal research setting.

In conclusion several of the contradictions within subject's and between subject's referential object social languages were discussed. These contradictions are however not simply an idiosyncrasy of the focal context, they are historically produced within the Activity system. The historical constitution of the social practice of participatory development, and nature of participation quite broadly, is considered in Chapter Seven.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: RE-EXAMINING PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT**

### **7.1 Re-examining participatory development**

The purpose of this inquiry was to explicate the dialogical, interactional, “intra-interactional” (R. Engeström, 1995) dynamics of participatory development. In order to accomplish this, the theoretical relationship between the notions of participation and development was considered at the outset of this study (Chapter Two and Three) and a “transformation end” conceptualisation of participatory development embraced (cf. Boyce, 2001; Freire, 1970; Kelly and Van Vlaenderen, 1996). The phenomenon of participation was then examined via the dialogical-activity method and presented in the Results chapter (Chapter Six) in the form of the voices, constituted by speech genres, directed toward the referential-object social language of development. What these research findings reveal of participation in relation to development is discussed in the present chapter, as are the implications of this for the social practice of participation.

This chapter commences by firstly examining historically constituted contradictions within development. Secondly, several of the contextually located tensions within participation are considered, as are the sources of these tensions. Thirdly, the implications of these findings for participatory development are discussed.

### **7.2 Historically constituted contradictions within development**

Development, and more specifically rural development, is a complex endeavour and one traversed by numerous historically inscribed contradictions. These contradictions are evident in divergences between the social languages invoked by the subject-roleplayers within the focal Activity system. The limited commonality between these social languages (see Section 6.3), points to the basic expansiveness of development.

Many of the historically constituted contradictions within development have deeper theoretical origins. In terms of its conceptual antecedents, rural development has been heavily influenced by Modernization theory, which emphasised transformations towards a modern industrial capitalist economy. According to a still-influential definition, rural development is “concerned with

the modernization and monetization of rural society and with its transition from traditional isolation to integration in the national economy" (World Bank, as cited in Ferguson, 1990; see also World Bank, 1992). Since the advent of the people-centred approach to development in the 1970s this perspective on rural development has been expanded to include notions of human capacity building, empowerment and the like. But despite its assimilation of participatory ideals, much rural development remains aligned to the notion of effecting the transition of hypothesised aboriginal agrarian economies into modern (trans)national economic relations (Ferguson, 1990).

In the context of the focal research setting, the theoretical contradiction, and glaring historical irony, is that this former Bantustan was subject to commoditisation, monetisation and its rural subaltern incorporated into capitalistic relations over a century ago (Beinart, 1982; Ferguson, 1990). This colonial (and later apartheid) legacy spawned present day landlessness, inequality, poverty and the estrangement from self-sufficiency. A conceptual paradox hence exists in suggesting that these problems can simply be ameliorated with a development-induced transition of the (largely hypothetical) traditional economy into the modern capitalistic world. For as the neo-Marxist Dependency theorists admonish - development is the problem rather than solution. As was suggested in Chapter Three this, the contestation surrounding development, is unamenable to easy resolution.

Moreover the manner in which the referential object is historically constituted is a frequently neglected consideration within development. For example in the focal development initiative there is little evidence of the facilitators' understanding the historical antecedents of their actions. Unreflexive to the complex and historically sedimented past, they come to dwell in the ahistorical present. Consequently when the past intrudes into the Activity system, for example when co-op members articulate land dispossess rights within the voice of *Morality and historical redress*, the facilitators are impotent to deal with these.

In light of the above, several searching questions can be posed of the referential object of development. Questions such as whether, against the backdrop of increased commodified and globalised agriculture, engendering local agriculture is at all a feasible objective. Particularly within the focal research setting,

where a combination of factors already suggested: unviable forms of communal tenure, a poverty-induced lack of capital, community conflict, unfavourable climatic factors and a dearth of youth involvement, all mitigate against it. At the very least the focal intervention's model of large scale and (unofficially) mechanized, nascent-commercial agriculture may require revision. Although these questions are beyond the ambit of this inquiry to contemplate, an alternative model might, for example, be smaller market gardens surrounding the residential dwellings, with greater and more equitable community participation.

### **7.3 Contextually located contradictions within participation**

In the previous section the historically inscribed contradictions surrounding the referential object of development were considered. The heterogeneity of development comes to influence the phenomenon of participation because the contradictions, tensions and divergent objects of development serve to exacerbate the contradictions inherent in participation. This section examines several of the general contradictions within participation.

The first contextually located contradiction within participation is the manner in which participatory rhetoric and the outward trappings of participatory practice are appropriated by the more powerful groupings of subjects within the focal Activity system. The notion of participation is so pervasive that participatory rhetoric prevails even within settings where scant abeyance is paid to democratic decision-making and little more than a semblance of democratic procedure followed. Participatory rituals and rhetoric are thus assimilated into the prevailing patterns of power, and used in ways that are fundamentally inimical to participation. This tendency is evident in the facilitators' and funders' technically orientated focus (contained within the speech genres of *Technical appropriateness* and *Education and training*), which constitute the voice of *Science and technology*. Within this voice several practices and artefacts (eg. animal traction, meeting procedures) are imposed on co-op member subjects. This imposition is, in turn, met with varying degrees of co-op member acquiescence, subversion and resistance.

The hegemonic appropriation of ostensibly 'participatory' action is not limited to the actions of the facilitators, for relationships between the co-op member



subjects can hardly be deemed egalitarian. For instance, claims to non-democratic authority and rigid adherence to meeting procedures are exercised by specific groupings of co-op member subjects through their appeals to the voice of *Authority and democracy*. These illocutions serve to disqualify other co-op member subjects from fuller participation in the focal research setting. Moreover, the internal dissent and discord that potentially emerge in response to this are neutralised by illocutions built up out of the speech genres of *Harmony* and, to a lesser extent, *Unanimous intentions*. All of which suggests that the participatory ideal is not immune from the rigid social hierarchies and myriad forms of institutionalised exclusion often evident within development contexts (Oakley, 1991).

While the concept of participation frequently (and implicitly) assumes a symmetrically distributed capacity for participation, the platitudinous bears stating: development contexts are development contexts precisely because they are marked by an asymmetrically distributed capacity for participation. So pervasive and entrenched are the patterns of hegemonic power within development contexts, that the pragmatic difficulties in attaining participation often defy all attempts to nullify them. These factors endure even when power differentials are minimized and attempts are made to create a symmetrical capacity for participation. For instance Kelly and Van Vlaenderen (1995) cite Ellsworth and Schrijvers: Ellsworth (as cited in Kelly & Van Vlaenderen, 1995) documents the pervasiveness of marginalisation, even in interventions specifically designed to overcome this marginalisation. While Schrijvers (as cited in Kelly & Van Vlaenderen, 1995) remains altogether pessimistic as to whether participatory exchange can be fostered in contexts with marked power differentials.

The second contextually located contradiction flows from the first. It is the tendency for both participation-building and participation-eroding (or anti-participatory) practices to remain tacit and unexplicated by subject-roleplayers within development settings - a tendency that reveals the substantial weight of these impulses. Therefore, despite the stated requirement for participation, subjects within the focal Activity system often remain unreflexive to its workings or the impediments on it. The tacit and unspoken nature of participation eroding impulses is congruent with Freire's description of the (suitably termed) anti-dialogical characteristics of development contexts in his

seminal "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970). These "anti-dialogical" characteristics detract from the dialogue of participation, and spawn settings characterised by the psychological conquest, divide-and-rule, and the cultural invasion of the oppressed (Freire, 1988).

#### **7.4 Sources of tensions in participation**

The preceding section examined several contextually located contradictions, which traverse participation. This section considers, in detail, the sources of these contradictions and tensions.

The first potential source of contradiction are the plethora of different mediatory tools brought to the Activity system by its various subject-participants. Within the focal research setting several of the rule-like speech genres voiced by particular groups of subjects have been identified. Examples of these would be the speech genres of *Demotivation*, *Superaddressee* and *Antipathy and distrust towards outsiders* vocalised almost exclusively by co-op members, or the speech genre of *Technological appropriateness* predominantly articulated in the discourse of the facilitators. As speech genres are products of particular contexts, experiences and social practices (e.g. formal education, technical training or traditional tribal authority), these contexts that constitute what Lave & Wenger (1991) would term a community of practice. Divergent communities of practice are therefore bound up with speech genres that are neither uniform, nor symmetrically distributed amongst the various subject participants. Consequently, divergent voices and incommensurate referential-object social languages are invoked within the focal research setting.

The second potential source of contradiction follows from the first. It is the fact that there is little sustained examination or even recognition of the limited commonality between the various subject participants' referential object social languages. Hence in the focal research setting the novel forms of joint activity, or new communities of practice, that do emerge are seldom explicitly acknowledged (See Gilbert, 1997). This absence of explication both contributes to, and is a manifestation of, the heterogeneous and expansive nature of the participation concept. For as was suggested in Chapter Three, the expansive notion of participation can be conceptualised at various levels (viz. personal, interpersonal, structural) (cf. Boyce, 2001) or along the continuum of means and

end (cf. Oakley, 1991). Therefore treating participation as a unitary entity simply serves to obscure the fundamental complexity and turbidity of the participation concept.

### 7.5 The failure of participation

Several of the contradictions and tensions that inhere within participation have been examined, and the origins of these suggested. This section now considers the notion of the failure of participation. Ferguson (1990) describes failure as an ineffable part of development rationality, and argues that development interventions generate important instrumental effects, even in their (ostensive) failure. Ferguson's analysis is indebted to Foucault's (1979) genealogy of the prison, wherein Foucault deliberates on how, despite penology's recurrent failures and the problem of recidivism, prisons endure,

For a century and a half the prison has always been offered its own remedy: the reactivation of the penitentiary techniques as the only means of overcoming their perpetual failure; the realization of the corrective project as the only method of overcoming the impossibility of implementing it. (Foucault, 1979, p.268)

In Ferguson's Foucaultian analysis of development in Lesotho, development leads to the expansion of depoliticised bureaucratic state power, even though this outcome was unintended by its proponents. This furthermore resonates with the manner in which participation serves to depoliticise and desocialise development initiatives. This tendency is exemplified, within the focal research setting, by the marginalisation of co-op members' land dispossessing claims (within the voice of *Morality and historical redress*). Not only is the notion of participatory development extremely pervasive and self-evident, it is extremely persistent and tenacious. In fact, so tenacious and indefatigable is the concept that its sporadic failure serves only to reactivate, reinvigorate and re-animate it. These failures strengthen the requirement for more comprehensive, more genuine or more people-centred 'participation'.

In common with many development interventions, both the beneficiaries and facilitators within the focal research setting have a structurally embedded interest in the perpetuation of the project. This makes them disinclined to consider the limitations of the project. The corollary of which is that there is

little consideration of what it would mean for the focal participatory development initiative to fail. In other words, while the expectation of immediate success within the focal research setting would be unreasonable, the conditions under which the focal development intervention might hypothetically fail are not at all clear. By means of illustration, the persistent use of (from the facilitators' perspective) "inappropriate" mechanized traction, and the (technically indefensible) cultivation of maize are highly discrepant in terms of the facilitators' referential object. Yet the facilitators consistently consent to these, largely in order to perpetuate the project.

## **7.6 Reconsidering participation and development**

While several of the tensions and difficulties inherent in participation have been foregrounded, this section considers the more fundamental relationship between participation and development. It heuristically inquires: what are the limits of participation? Much of the participation literature argues for the primacy of participation (Korten, 1990; Oakley, 1991), and suggests participatory action leads to project sustainability (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). However, a cogent argument can be made for participation serving to obfuscate questions surrounding the basic viability of development interventions. There certainly is evidence (as seen in the focal research setting) that the participatory concept can serve to perpetuate less-than-optimal development interventions.

A critical tension within participatory development, therefore, is that the requirement for participation will come to displace the pragmatic material outcomes of development. This cleaving of participation and development is furthermore encouraged by the notion of transformational-end participation, particularly in its exaltation of participation *over* development. Ideally, the requirement for participation ought to be balanced by attunement to the question of the basic viability of the development intervention, as well as clearer explication of the object or anticipated outcomes of development. Participation otherwise runs the risk of becoming the *reductio ad absurdum* of development.

## **7.7 Participation and praxis**

The analytic task set in this research was to conceptualise the relational and intra-interactional (R. Engeström, 1995) dynamics of participatory development.



This was done in the results section. In the current chapter several of the disjunctures, complexities and contradictions attendant to participatory development, which are evident in the focal intervention, were summarized. There is furthermore much within the focal development intervention to call its long-term viability into question, and to suggest that, when viewed in terms of participation, this is a weak project. Yet this interpretation needs to be balanced by another because these elements simultaneously provide evidence of innovation. For, as Y. Engeström (1993) counsels, "Innovations do not necessarily differ much from disturbances or breakdowns" (p.83), they lead to expansive cycles of learning. These are the precursors of new practices and activity for, "As the disruptions and contradictions of the activity become more demanding, internalization increasingly takes the form of critical self-reflection – and externalization, a search for solutions increases." (Y. Engeström, 1987, p.34). So while there is, in the focal development intervention, evidence of disjuncture and breakdown, there is also the potential for technical innovation, novel practices and expansive new forms of activity. In the context of the focal research setting this could be supported through a process of facilitating communication and joint action between the subject roleplayers, in order to make explicit the divergent mediatory artefacts, practices and referential object social languages they each bring to the Activity system.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION**

This final chapter summarises the research findings before reflecting on the strengths (both empirical and methodological) of the current inquiry. It culminates in contemplation of the needs and possibilities for further research.

The task of this study was to explicate the relational and interactional dynamics of participatory development. Traditionally participation has been understood in either macro-social structural, or alternately, intra-individual psychological terms. Hence there is limited theorisation of the intermediate “intra-interactional” (R. Engeström; 1995, 1999) context of participatory development.

The research question was therefore formulated in response to this poverty of theory, and the various conceptual aporia that surround accounts of the interactional and relational dynamics of participation (Chapter Three). The first significant outcome of this research and one that bespeaks its utility is that it examined an important, yet largely neglected topic.

### **8.1 Reconsidering participatory development**

The participatory phenomenon was investigated by means of the dialogical-activity method indicated in Chapter Six, a method that enabled delineation of the speech genre constituted voices, directed towards the referential-object social language of participatory development. This revealed several of the complex relational dynamics that characterise participatory development. It was found that, quite consistent with its depiction in the literature, participation is a diverse and variously accentuated phenomenon. It was argued that there is much evidence in the focal setting that the practice of participation is unable to transcend or escape the currents of hegemonic power and authority. Furthermore, the subject roleplayers within participatory development are often unreflexive to the manner in which participatory action is assimilated into these prevailing patterns of power. This unreflexiveness and inattentiveness to the exercise of power, in turn serves to limit opportunities for transformational-end participation. There was also ample evidence, within the focal research setting, to suggest the disquiet, and even resistance, provoked by the marginalisation of participatory activity is frequently diffused, silenced and neutralised. It was also suggested that these challenges to participation are exacerbated by the

divergent, and even incompatible, referential social languages of participatory development articulated by the various subject-participants.

Chapter Seven moved away from the contextual specificity of the focal research setting and discussed the results in relation to the complex endeavour of participatory development. This chapter sought to delineate and re-examine the complex and potentially contradictory relationship which exists between participation and development; including the tenaciousness of participation and manner in which an unlimited or unexplicated "participation" can serve to diminish and detract from outcomes of development. The current inquiry focussed largely on the problematics and difficulties inherent in participation, but it is important to foreground that there was also evidence (in the focal research setting) of innovation and opportunities for the expansion of activity. These opportunities are manifest in innovative practices, novel tools and emergent solutions - which collectively represent the buds and shoots of new social practices.

In summary then, these findings suggest the value of this research resides in its investigation of an important but frequently neglected topic. However it is at this point useful to foreground that this inquiry was also distinguished by methodological innovation.

## **8.2 Methodological innovation**

This inquiry was, in methodological terms, relatively eclectic. Textual data for the dialogical-activity analysis was collected through ethnographic immersion, interviews and documentary analysis. However the centrality of 'methodology' to the Soviet psychological tradition was indicated at the outset of Chapter Five, and culminated in contemplation of the primacy of 'theory-method' to an Activity theory perspective. In this formulation 'methodology' embraces concerns that are fundamentally epistemological in nature. Accordingly, the dialogical-activity method operationalised in Chapter Five served to bridge Activity theory to language, and struck an epistemological rapprochement between interpretivism and constructionism. It is proposed that this study's reworking and reapplication of Activity theory - through its inclusion of dialogical and discursive elements - is one of its most noteworthy features.

It is further suggested that the value of this research needs to be appraised by considering not only its empirical findings, but by also examining the possibilities for future research it generates. Specifically, the new tools, processes and methods for future inquiry it confers. Dialogical-activity analysis is one such tool - a tool that imparts new vistas for further research and new horizons of interpretative possibility.

### **8.3 Future research**

Within the focal participatory development setting a need therefore exists to not only identify tensions and contradictions, but also to recognise innovations. These innovations need to be amplified and expanded on in order to support expansive new forms of activity. This process of identifying and supporting these innovations ought to be the focus of future research.

The current inquiry stressed specific aspects of the Activity theory analytic schema, but did not examine elements such as the "Tools" and "Division of labour". These elements ought be incorporated into future research that would seek to unearth new opportunities and tools for participatory development. Future research endeavours would examine novel tools (both cognitive and procedural), which support expansive new forms of activity, and thereby provide new insights into participation.

It is therefore necessary to both strengthen and expand the insights gleaned in the current inquiry through the examination of additional, uncharted participatory development settings. Future research ought to re-examine the question of praxis afresh, considering both the implications of practice, and new practices, in order to extend the insights of the research already undertaken.

### **8.4 Coda**

This dialogical-activity inquiry represents a nascent attempt to reveal the relational and interactional dynamics of participatory development. Clearer understanding of some of the relational dynamics attendant to participation will better enable the process of reciprocal communication and joint action, particularly between focal communities and change agents. For, the ineluctable tension within participatory development is redolent of Freud's (1928/1964)



description of psychoanalysis, pedagogy and politics as the impossible professions. “Impossible” because these endeavours paradoxically require the change agent (or development worker) bestow autonomy and independence on the beneficiaries of their professional activities. In this spirit, the present research project is ‘impossible’, and aims to support these kinds of efforts. Hence this generative research resists closure and its findings remain provisional – they represent the beginning, rather than end, of dialogue about participatory development.

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