Bridging Diversity
Participatory Learning for Responsive Development

LAWRENCE F. SALMEN AND EILEEN KANE
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and
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Foreword

People are the ultimate architects of their own development. If people care to build a better society, they will. And people will care when they feel they have a share in the society in which they live. This sense of ownership and participation is what lies at the heart of the social component of sustainability. For more than two decades, the World Bank has worked to better understand the social dimension of development so that people might become more fully empowered to fashion their own development. It is the central tenet of this book that effectively listening to the people who are the intended beneficiaries of development policies and programs is essential to any lasting improvement. By listening we can appreciate peoples’ values and perspectives, which can then become the foundation for programs sustained by what the people see as in their own interest.

The participatory research described in this book buttresses the core principles of social development as practiced at the Bank. Systematic listening to the key actors, or stakeholders, of a society allows policy-makers to draw on all perspectives so that change becomes inclusive. Qualitative and quantitative research techniques applied in rigorous fashion can establish commonalities in viewpoint that become the cornerstones of cohesive policies. Taking iterative soundings of people’s perspectives, through such methods as beneficiary assessment and report cards, is a demonstrated means of obtaining feedback and hence providing for a more accountable society.

The authors of this book, Lawrence Salmen and Eileen Kane, articulate the major approaches to social research now in use at the Bank and show how many of the often-obstructive dichotomies, such as objective and subjective or qualitative and quantitative, may be helpfully bridged. This discussion contributes to our understanding of how social research may guide the development community in ways that are true to people’s core beliefs so that people gain the power to make change their own.

Ian Johnson
Vice President, Sustainable Development
Preface

Two messages dominate this book. First, development practitioners need guidance and support in pursuing research on the people who are affected—the stakeholders—by their policies and programs. Second, the case for understanding people on their own terms such that they may become the subjects of their own development need no longer be made, only strengthened. The development community, particularly as represented by the World Bank, the focal institution of this book, has come a long way in the last 20 years in incorporating social issues into its thinking. In the early 1980s words like “listening,” “participation,” “qualitative,” or “perception” were not important parts of the vocabulary at the Bank. Now, while they may be used quite differently by different persons, they are in use. The challenge addressed here is how to sort out the many approaches to social research in such a way that the understanding needed to act effectively in pursuit of the Bank’s goals of poverty reduction may be gained.

One of the central tenets of World Bank operations today is the need to learn about and build upon stakeholders’ and beneficiaries’ insights, needs, cultures, social organizations, resources, and active participation. The information-gathering component of this process is an important element. What special approaches are available for getting this information, particularly from beneficiaries and other affected populations? This book documents a number of diverse experiences, projects, and policies in which effective listening to key stakeholders did bring about changes desired by them while making projects more effective and policy more responsive. At the same time, this study discovered that potential users in the Bank and other development organizations are only vaguely familiar with many of the approaches being used in the Bank, and indeed are not even aware of some of them. What is each used for? Can they be made more effective? What help do Bank staff, particularly managers, need to use these, and where can they get help?

The kind of social research discussed here is participatory, directly involving the people who are its subjects. In the Bank, this research has taken on many forms, or approaches: social analysis, including Beneficiary Assessment (BA), Social Assessment (SA), and Systematic Client Consultation (SCC); Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), including
Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA); Policy and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA); SARAR (Self-esteem, Associative strength, Resourcefulness, Action planning, and Responsibility); Report Cards; and even workshops. Managers are seen to particularly value validity, representativeness, and applicability to their concerns. The participatory research approaches being used are shown to address these issues in varying manners, yet their distinctive, particular traits are often not well understood by the managers who are to be their primary users.

Reasons underlying the continuing confusion regarding social, especially participatory, research are discussed here in relation to a series of divisive dichotomies, some of which are earmarked in the introduction that follows as ripe for being bridged. Key among these are: objective versus subjective, perception versus reality, qualitative versus quantitative, prescriptive versus responsive, and micro versus macro. Attention is given to what is considered scientific, and to epistemology, or how we know what we know, and how that affects the methods of inquiry we choose to gain knowledge. How we learn is shown to determine what we learn. Naturalistic, qualitative research can thus be seen to enhance validity, especially important in the more sensitive aspects of development such as sexual behavior for HIV/AIDS prevention, gender issues, or empowerment.

This book suggests that current approaches to getting information on and from beneficiaries, while effective in sensitizing managers and policy makers to the perspectives of those they are trying to reach with development programs, could be more technically robust and more responsive to beneficiaries by “building bridges” between dimensions of research that are often thought to be mutually exclusive or even dichotomous. We apply this thinking to many diverse approaches but concentrate on one, Beneficiary Assessment. We ask not only how it can meet current needs, but new needs as well, by becoming participatory and community-action oriented. We also suggest that the various approaches should be integrated or “nested” within a larger plan for getting information, so as to complement and support each other, rather than being seen as competing paradigms.

One matter of concern addressed here is the audience for what is learned. A number of the social research approaches are shown to provide valuable information to managers during the design of programs and valuable feedback during their implementation but are less geared to enhancing the learning of intended beneficiaries about their own development process. With regard to this issue, the book shows how one principal learning approach, BA, which was designed primarily for managers, can be inverted so as to serve also as a learning tool for a community’s own self-advancement in the form of action research.
More generally, the case is made for fortifying the professional working in international development with a basic understanding of social and participatory research through training, advisory services, and resources of both time and funds. Development organizations should routinely ask, in concept and appraisal documents, what the people for whom an activity is being designed think about it and what is the source of this knowledge. The quality of social research itself should be subjected to monitoring and evaluation so as to instill rigor and excellence. Databases of all social research should be created and maintained so as to inform the practitioner. In-country, participatory researchers should be encouraged to network and their institutional homes, nongovernmental organizations, consulting firms, and universities should be provided support to encourage the institutionalization of this kind of research expertise for use on issues beyond any one particular project or policy application.

What was once a pioneering, much-questioned gambit in development work—open-ended, participatory, experiential learning using qualitative research techniques to better understand people on their own terms in relation to planned or ongoing change—has now been shown to be cost effective in all sectors and regions. The relevance of this work to the development enterprise may be compared to the importance of marketing and consumer research to a private sector corporation. Given this significance, the reason for the absence of this kind of participatory inquiry is simply the absence of a competitive market system for the poor; they take what is provided, or they leave it. Yet, for this very reason, it is imperative that the development community reach out to gain the understanding of what is valued by the people undergoing development. Consonance between new technologies and the values and culture of the people to whom the technologies are being introduced is a precondition for lasting development. Integrated learning, bridging such polarities as subjective-objective, action-research, and micro-macro, as described in this book, can bring about such consonance.

Throughout this work, illustrations are provided of the useful lessons learned when intended beneficiaries were carefully listened to regarding projects, programs, and policies that affected their lives. Examples show how agricultural extension in Senegal has helped some but not other farmers, why girls in Pakistan and Turkey did not attend school, and how people in Niger reacted to messages they received concerning HIV/AIDS prevention. All of this learning and more came from systematic listening translated into quantified qualitative information geared to managers and policy makers. These cases are examples of learning that have been increasingly supported by the Bank over the last 20 years. While this kind of inquiry can and should be directed to communities of
the poor to the extent possible, it has changed the orientation of programs and policies, benefitting millions of people. The complementary, not competitive, use of the diverse participatory research approaches mentioned here, together with support for development practitioners, will help integrated learning become a major cornerstone for responsive and sustainable development.
Contributors

Lawrence Salmen formerly was a Lead Social Development Specialist and presently is a Consultant in the Social Development Department of the World Bank. Prior to joining the Bank, he was Director of Research and Evaluation at the Inter-American Foundation and Vice President of the Foundation for Cooperative Housing. At the Bank, he has been the architect of the Beneficiary Assessment and Participatory Poverty Assessment approaches to learning for project and policy work, respectively.

Eileen Kane is an anthropologist who has published widely in the field of social science methodology. She developed some of the earliest applications of participatory research to World Bank education projects, and has trained staff of many international development agencies in the application of participatory research across a variety of sectors. Prior to this, she established the first Department of Anthropology in Ireland.
Acknowledgments

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# List of Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>Appreciative Inquiry</td>
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<td>BA</td>
<td>Beneficiary Assessment</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Community Action Plan</td>
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<td>CAS</td>
<td>Country Assistance Strategy</td>
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<td>CCD</td>
<td>Comprehensive Country Development</td>
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<td>CDD</td>
<td>Community Driven Development</td>
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<td>CDF</td>
<td>Comprehensive Development Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Citizen Report Card</td>
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<td>CSA</td>
<td>Country Social Analysis</td>
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<td>CSC</td>
<td>Community Score Card</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organization</td>
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<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome</td>
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<td>LSMS</td>
<td>Living Standards Measurement Survey</td>
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<td>NEAP</td>
<td>National Environment Action Plan</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>nongovernmental organization</td>
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<td>OED</td>
<td>Operations Evaluation Department (of the World Bank)</td>
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<td>PAD</td>
<td>Project Appraisal Document</td>
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<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCD</td>
<td>Project Concept Document or Project Completion Document</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCN</td>
<td>Project Concept Note</td>
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<td>PLA</td>
<td>Participatory Learning and Action</td>
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<td>PME</td>
<td>Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>PPA</td>
<td>Participatory Poverty Assessment</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>PSIA</td>
<td>Policy and Social Impact Analysis</td>
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<td>RRA</td>
<td>Rapid Rural Appraisal</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>Social Assessment</td>
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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>SARAR</td>
<td>Self-esteem, Associative strength, Resourcefulness, Action planning, and Responsibility</td>
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<td>SCC</td>
<td>Systematic Client Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDV</td>
<td>Social Development Department (of the World Bank)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRP</td>
<td>Social Recovery Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPPAP</td>
<td>Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZOPP</td>
<td>Objectives-Oriented Project Planning</td>
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Introduction

In the province of Baluchistan, in Pakistan, few girls were staying in school. A World Bank–supported project sought to increase girls’ attendance. To better understand the causes of the low attendance rates, a survey using “qualitative” techniques was conducted among a representative sample of parents. Key findings from this survey were that (a) the parent-teacher associations were not felt to be functional and (b) parents did not want to send their girls to be taught by men from other parts of the country. Building on these findings, the project improved the parent-teacher associations and trained local women to take the place of the unknown men as teachers. In two years time, school attendance rates for girls in Baluchistan more than tripled.

A Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) recently completed in Niger changed the course of that country’s development policies. Following the prescription for poverty reduction used throughout the world, Bank and national planners and economists placed health and education as the top priorities for a development plan that was focused on rural areas. During the PPA, close to 4,000 persons were interviewed, again—as in Baluchistan—using qualitative approaches. Listening to their concerns revealed that their first priority was food security and that development was perceived to have taken place only in the countryside, not in the urban areas. The revised Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) now gives priority to food security and directs attention to the needs of urban as well as rural areas.

The Zambia Social Recovery Project (SRP) has conducted at least five Beneficiary Assessments (BAs), or quantified qualitative soundings of peoples’ perceptions, over the last nine years to garner feedback on its social funds from the communities they intended to benefit. These BAs have focused on participation, implementation, empowerment, and sustainability. In a recent interview, the director of this SRP commented on the value of this grounded learning: “As a program implementer, I would say to [former Bank president] James Wolfensohn or anyone who speaks highly of the Zambia SRP that it would not be nearly as successful if it had not used the lessons from the BA. Indeed, I wonder whether we would have been successful at all without it.”

All these development vignettes have one feature in common: effective listening to key stakeholders so that development decisions incorporate
and build on the values of the people. In this way, development becomes sus-
tained because it is integrated with the culture of the people for whom it is
intended. People change their behaviors and improve their lives because
they see the change as meaningful and consonant with what they hold
important. We learn what people value because we listen to them respect-
fully and invite their candid views. All of this may strike the reader as
common sense. Yet, in the world of international development, common
sense is often not really common at all.

This book reflects a common-sense, innovative way of thinking and work-
ing by bridging lines, divisions, and dichotomies that will be critical in
future development efforts. In recent decades we have moved from
institution-driven, econocentric, single-sector development approaches to
participatory involvement, holistic analysis, inclusive perspectives, multi-
sectoral approaches, and integrated projects. Achieving this new kind of
development requires new kinds of information, and more than that, new
understandings of the concerns and values of all of the participants.

Bridging is a way to achieve those understandings—it shows how man-
agers and other development practitioners can look beyond existing polar-
ized positions, approaches, disciplines, and philosophies to integrate what
we know now about producing development knowledge, sharing it, and
translating it into action. For managers in development, this can help to
combine institutional best practice with their own reliable experience to
create unique expertise.

While these bridges are dealt with in greater depth in chapter 4, in the
process of exploring “divisive dichotomies,” they are briefly described here:

*The Subjective-Objective Dichotomy*

For reasons explored later in the book, the development community has
considered “objective” truth to be far more reliable and important than
whatever might be seen as “subjective” truth. Reality is hence viewed as
fixed and external to people rather than as shaped by human perception.
This bias toward a particular conception of objectivity disregards the value
of seeing the world as it is seen by others or, more fundamentally, of rec-
ognizing the importance of experience as a basic source of learning for
humankind. Effective learning must objectively capture the meaning a
person attaches to key elements of her or his own development. The focus
of our attention is on the human being as subject with all the meanings that
person ascribes to the surrounding world. The way we learn from that
person must be objective, in the sense of unbiased, so as to be credible; this
objectivity is acquired by the involvement of third-party learners and by
the triangulation that comes from the use of multiple research techniques,
interviewers, and locales.
The Qualitative-Quantitative Dichotomy

In the opening paragraph, the word qualitative appears in quotation marks. In the strictest sense, qualitative and quantitative refer to the form in which data are presented—words or numbers. However, in recent usage, the words have come to refer to the types of techniques that are most likely to produce these kinds of data. The qualitative, much like the subjective above, has received short shrift from the development community. Numbers are the underpinnings of most policy decisionmaking; their mere presence appears to confer a kind of validity. Qualitative data, in contrast, appears to provide only an ambiguous, unreliable, “fuzzy” way of depicting reality. If qualitative learning is seen to “fundamentally depend on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms” (Kirk and Miller 1989), then it may be understood as a way to build trust between the interviewer and the interviewee and hence increase the validity of response. Qualitative research may be conducted with representative samples of people such that percentages and frequencies of response may be drawn. In this way, the qualitative is quantified and the numbers have a validity they often lack when based on more superficial research techniques.

The Action-Research Dichotomy

Given that development is about change, one would think that research would be based on action, that experiential learning would be important. Yet, despite a small body of work, much of the learning of the Bank and other development agencies is based on concepts and abstractions, while much of the Bank’s actual development activity in the field is supported by little systematic learning. Fewer than 10 percent of all Bank projects, for instance, are subjected to systematic, ongoing evaluation during implementation. Many of the “lessons learned” and “good practices” as found, for example, on the Bank’s Web site, are based on Project Appraisal Documents, which are prepared at the beginning of a project, rather than drawing from actual project outcomes. The need for praxis, drawing learning and action together such that each builds on the other, is clear.

The Micro-Macro Dichotomy

Development work appears to be increasingly polarized between the micro, or community, and the macro, or national, policy perspectives. Thus, many see communities as ends unto themselves: “Just give the people the resources, they will know what to do, how to develop themselves.” Conversely, within the same development bureaucracies lie persons who feel that development
is policy driven, determined by “getting the prices right” and other measures decided at the top of the government pyramid. Once more, the need is to learn such that the micro relates to the macro, that local knowledge becomes a key ingredient of policy, that the bridge between local and national becomes effective in improving lives lived locally and societies viewed nationally.

The Beneficiary–Policymaker Dichotomy

The final bridge is the least explored by the learning reported in this book but, ultimately, the most important. The listening approaches given prominence here, Beneficiary Assessment and Participatory Poverty Assessment, were designed to bring the reality of the intended beneficiary of a project or policy to the attention of managers and policymakers. The sensitization of decisionmakers that has been brought about by this work is significant and has value. Still, the seat of development learning must include those undergoing development. This is the final challenge. While continuing to recognize the importance of bridging the worlds of intended beneficiary and external decisionmaker, we need to increasingly direct learning so that it enhances the capacity of people to decide for themselves how to best pursue their own development.

The Purpose of This Book

This book shows how learning for international development approaches these bridgings. Looking at Bank–supported learning conducted for project, sector, and policy work, mainly through BAs and PPAs, which closely follow the precept of listening to the stakeholder, we shall see how integrated approaches enlighten the subjective objectively, blend the qualitative with the quantitative, draw on experience, and relate local knowledge to decisionmaking outside the community. Such integration fosters responsive development that is meaningful to the people for whom it is intended, and hence is sustainable.

The touchstone word for the social research espoused in this book is “listening.” To listen well is to bridge between self and other, to empathize with that other, and, in a developmental context, to begin to see a future possibility for that other. This listening stance presupposes two essential truths: first, that development does call for effective understanding between divergent groups and, second, that this understanding comes from an open, non-judgmental posture with few preconceived concepts. When one of the book’s authors was beginning his stay in Guayaquil, Ecuador, he received a visit from a social science colleague at the World Bank who asked him “what are your hypotheses as you begin your field work here?” The response was that there were no hypotheses; relevant truths would emerge from the reality beginning to be observed. The open-ended qualitative research tools
employed in the inquiry in Guayaquil were designed to register the reality of those living there, knowing that much of what was to be learned could not be hypothesized in advance in a questionnaire. As William F. Whyte put it in his classic, *Street Corner Society* (1993),

> As I sat and listened, I learned the answers to questions that I would not even have had the sense to ask if I had been getting my information solely on an interviewing basis.

Or, as Mamane Bozari, an eminent researcher from Niger put it recently, “the beauty of this kind of research is that it so often leads to discovery.”

While much of what follows may appear critical of the World Bank’s social development efforts, particularly regarding social research and analysis, it is to be stressed that the Bank has only officially embarked on social development as a separate theme of development within the last eight years. The Bank’s social development staff is now facing its own crossroads and is openly examining its past and present policies and actions to see how it can support the mandate to reduce poverty and promote comprehensive development. The 2005 Bank paper on participation and the Bank’s engagement with civil society found a large and significant difference in the levels of success between projects conducted without civic engagement and those that included some element of participation. It also made it abundantly clear that pressures and trends toward inclusion of beneficiaries’ voices would only be increasing and that the Bank was eager to strengthen its capabilities to make participation a matter of grace and ease for its staff and partners across the board.

At present, a jumble of different approaches and tools beset any manager looking for a tried and cost-effective way to incorporate meaningful participation into project design and evaluation. This book sorts out that jumble and, it is hoped, provides a clarifying voice to the ongoing inquiry, in the Bank and elsewhere, on how learning and listening can make for responsive and sustainable development.

**Notes**

1. See page 3 for a discussion of why we qualify this term.
3. Issues and Options for Improving Engagement Between the World Bank and Civil Society Organizations (World Bank 2005a) reads, in part, “The benefits of engaging CSOs [civil society organizations] are supported by a number of Bank studies over the past decade, and by an expanding body of anecdotal and case study experience. . . . First, the 1994 final report of the Bank’s Participatory Development Learning Group, endorsed by the Board of Directors, concluded that, ‘There is significant evidence that participation can in many circumstances improve the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of projects, and strengthen ownership and
commitment of government and stakeholders. Then in 1998, OED concluded in its review *Non-governmental Organizations in World Bank Supported Projects* that a majority of projects studied showed potential for success because their preparation and early implementation were highly participatory. In the 1999 DEC policy research report *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn’t and Why*, the authors found in one study that government agencies that actively sought to encourage involvement of beneficiaries achieved a 62 percent success rate in their projects, while those that did not achieved just a 10 percent success rate. . . . An OED study of participatory processes in Bank-assisted projects completed in 2001 concluded that participation of primary and secondary stakeholders . . . increased significantly during the mid-1990s, and the resulting benefits have been significant. . . .”

4. The *Issues and Options* work (World Bank 2005a) reports “dissatisfaction among Bank staff, governments, and CSOs alike with the quality of engagement and outcomes” and continues, “many Bank staff have expressed need for clearer policy and procedural guidance, as well as institutional support for, engaging with CSOs.”
As the World Bank task team leader starts her long flight from Washington to Accra, perhaps she reflects on how much the concept of development has changed over the past 25 years, and what the changes mean for how she does her work. It has been a long time since anyone in development could work only with governments and technical experts to create and implement plans for a country or sector. Now she knows that social and cultural factors often carry as much or more weight than economic ones. Local stakeholders’ concerns and insights are valued, indeed are often critical, in planning and carrying out development programs. Her work and that of her country government partners must include those stakeholders’ views now that international development agencies, governments, and civil society organizations are clear that stakeholders have rights and roles in development, and that their involvement is critical, both technically and morally.

This recognition is recent: if the Washington-Accra journey is likened to the Bank’s timeline since 1944, our task team leader will be flying over London when the Bank hired its first social scientist. She will be over Madrid when the concept of Beneficiary Assessment is developed; and she will be nearing Bamako when Participatory Poverty Assessments are introduced into World Bank work.

The newness of these and other approaches for getting information on stakeholders and beneficiaries creates both challenges and opportunities for the World Bank and other development agencies. The social dimension of development is considered one of the major underpinnings in the Comprehensive Development Framework; stakeholder involvement in the form of community-driven development, people-centered approaches, and local participation have become central tenets in World Bank operations. In practice, however, these concepts could be faring better. Research has demonstrated the positive impact of stakeholder, beneficiary, and participatory approaches; comments by managers and others illustrate the practical benefits of these approaches;\(^1\) and calls on the part of the president of the World Bank and its Board\(^2\) recognize the value of stakeholder voices, particularly those of the poor.\(^3\)

It is now time to put these approaches to use widely and effectively in World Bank projects. “Participation in Development Assistance,” a Bank
examination of participation in Bank–assisted activities and Country Assistance Strategies from 1994 through 1998 raised a number of issues about quality, benefits, costs, and constraints (World Bank 2001c), as did an earlier study (Monico and Mahony 1998) on the integration of participation into the Project Concept Document, the identification stage of Bank project work. This book argues that “bridges” between the many participatory approaches, and also between differing idea systems, can make development learning more flexible and practical, and that the lack of such bridges polarizes development practitioners. This book also argues that participatory approaches are not used more widely because the necessary “space” has not been created for them—in project documents; in resources such as time, budget, and skills; in support systems and incentives; and in the manager’s understanding. How can the manager get better beneficiary and stakeholder information?4

Focus: Stakeholders in Development Learning

Development is consequential to many stakeholders. This study focuses on three groups of stakeholders:

- **Beneficiaries and affected populations**—communities, groups, or other categories of people whose views, priorities, and insights are critical to development success and who have an interest or share in the development outcome.
- **Managers in development organizations and ministries** who need good information about the affected groups.
- **The social sciences**, which are generally the original (although sometimes overlooked) sources for the information-getting methods. The social science community as a whole has a stake in rigorous application of theories and methods to ensure that research into development results does not unduly lessen the legitimacy of the field.

**Beneficiaries and Affected Populations Informing Development Processes**

Beneficiaries and affected populations can participate in development in many ways, for example, by providing information through needs assessment, identification of options, collaboration in design, and mobilization and implementation of activities; monitoring and evaluation of projects; and general enhancement of their own power to direct their futures. This book focuses on one facet of beneficiary participation, the consultation and information-getting process, and on the task team leader or manager as a key implementer of organizational mandates to draw on stakeholder insights and potential. Managers can use the information they get from beneficiary and
affected populations to prepare Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers; create more meaningful Country Assistance Strategies; improve economic and sector work; identify, prepare, implement, and evaluate projects; and influence policy. Examples of these applications are shown throughout this book.

**Getting Information to Managers**

There are many approaches to information-getting in the world of development today—in the World Bank, for example, at least a dozen currently available mechanisms are intended to support the manager: household surveys; Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA); Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA); Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA); Beneficiary Assessment (BA); Social Assessment; Systematic Client Consultation (SCC); Report Cards; Self-esteem, Associative strength, Resourcefulness, Action planning, and Responsibility (SARAR); Institutional Assessment; Risk Management Analysis; and Policy and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA), among others. How can the manager choose among them? Who can help? What will the manager learn in the end? How can insights gained from this information be drawn on to improve not only sector and project work, as participatory approaches have proven they can, but also policy? Is there a way to include local capacity development so that communities and groups can continue to build on the processes and move forward? If one idea has emerged clearly from this study, it is that many managers are overwhelmed by the process of social analysis.

I have to get this social assessment done as part of my project. The more I go into it, the more confused I get. When I look for help in the Bank from people who are supposed to be able to provide it, I get completely conflicting advice.

I’ve reached the point where I want to hand the whole thing over to someone else to design it, supervise it, and make sure I get what I need. But I don’t even know where to start. (Manager)

Because the Bank is committed to the process of getting this information, managers need to carry the process out; and because many managers recognize this process as helpful, it is worth reflecting on how to help them implement it.

**The Social Sciences**

All the information-getting approaches discussed in this book are heavily based on social science research techniques and their underlying paradigms. However, for a variety of reasons, social science soundness in development work is often compromised, and the value of the resulting information, and the decisionmaking on which it is based, diminished. As
a result of this compromise, some of the discourse has become isolated, reductionist, self-evident, and platitudinous. The validity of some of the work itself is dubious. Vague claims may be made for impacts.

This study draws on recent developments in the social sciences and on examinations of actual project and sector work to assess some of these issues and some of the debates hovering over beneficiary-related approaches to getting information. It explains the most common approaches, examines their purposes, uses some selected case studies to review their use, and makes some suggestions about how to use them more effectively. Finally, the book tries to show how to integrate various information-getting approaches to take advantage of their strengths, and, using Beneficiary Assessment as a foundation example, to suggest a model for “integrated learning for development.”

The Reasons This Book Focuses on Beneficiary Assessment

Why BA? Many valuable approaches, both inside and outside the Bank, can be used for drawing on the insights of stakeholders in development. Each has a unique role to play, as the discussion will show. BA is specifically designed to get information from beneficiaries in a form that managers can use. It has been the Bank’s most longstanding, generally applicable, and frequently used qualitative approach, and has been applied to a wide variety of sectors and issues, including education, health, environment, agriculture, social funds, energy, transportation, and social capital.

The majority of managers who have used it have reported that it has been useful and cost effective in project and sector work, in the creation of baseline indicators, and on sector policy (Amelga 1994; Owen and Van Domelen 1998; Salmen 1998b). When the Board of the World Bank mandated that participation be mainstreamed in Bank operations, the first Project Completion Documents finalized the following year were equally divided in their assessment mechanisms between BAs and various forms of participatory assessment. A recent review of Bank lessons on the role and effectiveness of development assistance (Goldin, Rogers, and Stern 2002, pp. 50–51) showed that the Bank’s social sector projects are achieving “large, measurable improvements in human development indicators” and notes that the Bank’s broad perspective, including an increasing emphasis on client ownership and the use of BAs in project design and supervision, has made an important contribution to this progress.

BA draws on a simple core of conventional, tested social science research methods, so it is amenable to scrutiny for social science soundness, but it can also be integrated with the newer participatory approaches. Indeed, the combination of BA and participatory approaches is the foundation of the now widely used Participatory Poverty Assessments. Its techniques are well known to good social science researchers both North and South and,
when appropriate, the newer participatory techniques benefit by being inte-
grated into this core approach.

BA reflects both qualitative and quantitative philosophical traditions
and uses systematic sampling to provide representative information. It
usually draws on the work of local professionally trained researchers, but
can actively involve stakeholders when appropriate. The results are quan-
tified and aggregated; as Owen and Van Domelen note, “highly descriptive,
anecdotal evidence does not readily translate into policy recommenda-

BA has proven less expensive than some other participatory approaches.
For example, four BAs in Zambia, lasting a total of nearly 11 months over a
period of six years, cost about US$260,000. Finally, while some of the more
recent participatory approaches have been the subject of increasingly seri-
ous criticism on a variety of moral and practical grounds, BA’s scope is simple
and transparent, focused as it is within particular research parameters.

In the interest of full disclosure, most of the Bank experience of one of
the authors has been in BA. He began to invent the methodology before he
came to the Bank, is the person most responsible for its development and
use in the Bank, has written extensively on BA, and is known for his work
on BA. Following the advice that one should write about what one knows,
it is only natural that this book would focus on BA. That is not to imply that
BA is the preferred approach. Different approaches are better for different
tasks. However, all participatory approaches can be improved by paying
closer attention to managers’ needs, the requirements of Bank instruments,
and application to policy, and by drawing on some of the strengths of the
newer participatory approaches, particularly those that emphasize help-
ing local stakeholders to build their own capacity to get action-oriented
information.

About the Book

This study is a cooperative effort, drawing on many years of experience and
new developments in research thinking. Originally its purpose was quite
straightforward: to examine how to enrich BA by drawing lessons from its his-
tory and applications, and by exploring recent thinking about combining
methods, research philosophies, and the greater involvement of participants
in practical and valid ways. Other special-purpose approaches currently
being used in the Bank were also scheduled to be examined to see if they,
along with BA, could be integrated more effectively into various phases of
Bank work, to complement and support each other, and in particular, to see
whether they as a group could have a greater impact on policy. We intended
to look at the approaches and to interview managers to see how they could
be helped to use them more effectively. We hoped that what we learned might
be useful to managers both inside and outside the Bank.
In preparing this study, we interviewed 43 managers in the Bank, both at headquarters and in resident missions. We also interviewed Bank social scientists; non-Bank researchers who have used the various approaches in Bank work; staff of other agencies, including local NGOs; and ministry officials. About 15 of the managers were chosen because they had participated in one of the kinds of approaches we describe in the boxes in this book; another 10 were selected because they were most likely to be able to make informed comments on the approaches and their applications. It was at this point that we realized that we had unwittingly used a purposive form of “extreme case” sampling—that is, if many in both groups were unfamiliar with, confused by, or lacked the time to carry out the processes, how must others be faring? Fifteen more managers were then interviewed because they had the interest and time to participate. We also examined a wide range of Bank social analyses that used the approaches discussed in this book, Bank documents on participation, and professional literature on the approaches and on issues related to participation.

What was found, however, in interviewing over 40 managers and looking at a variety of Bank studies, project documents, and other literature, was some much larger issues had to be looked at first. Most managers interviewed were not familiar with the distinctions among the many approaches now being used in the Bank, and indeed many of them had not heard of some of the approaches at all. Most do know the terms “Beneficiary Assessment,” and another major Bank approach, “Social Assessment,” but mainly as interchangeable generic terms used to cover almost any kind of “social” inquiry, no matter how cursory or vague. While most appreciate the value of beneficiary input into Bank work, they still have some reservations about beneficiary research, mainly because they see it being largely “qualitative,” which many equate with impressionistic, vague, and unmanageable data.

So the focus changed to how the book might help managers by providing more theoretical and practical information on the various participatory research approaches, by suggesting where they might be most useful, how to improve on them, and where to get more help.

This book, therefore, covers these issues:

- What are the participatory research approaches currently used in the Bank?
- Why have some dimensions of these approaches polarized users?
- Can integrating some of these dimensions strengthen the various approaches?
- Using BA as a core example, how can this integration be shown to work in practical situations?
- Where in Bank work can each of these approaches best be used?
- What help should managers be getting? From whom?
Chapter 2 describes approximately a dozen different participatory learning approaches, most of which are used in the Bank. This information is consolidated in a summary table that compares 13 dimensions or characteristics for nine of these approaches. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of managers’ responses to, and recent Bank experience in using, the various learning approaches. Chapter 3 examines the link between research and policy including when research should be participatory and how research can affect policy. Chapter 4 explores nine of the “dichotomies” or dualisms described in the introduction in an effort to bridge existing divides in the hope of developing a more integrated approach to development learning. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary table that compares 10 of the learning approaches on seven of the dichotomies. Chapter 5 directly addresses concerns of managers. It provides numerous practical tips on how to improve learning by integrating concepts from various approaches, and uses BA as an example of how this might be done. Chapter 6 offers a wide range of recommendations for how participatory development learning can be enhanced, including a more enabling environment, support for managers, improving the quality and impact of participatory learning approaches, and supporting the development of a community of skilled researchers.

Although the book is written with the manager in mind, it is likely to appeal to a variety of audiences. Anyone interested in participatory development learning should benefit, so most development professionals might find it useful. Nonetheless, different readers may be interested in different chapters. Those who want to know about various approaches to participatory development learning, especially the differences between them, will want to read chapter 2. Readers who are interested in the gap between research and policy, and how to close that gap, are directed to chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 are for those who care about the divisions between different approaches, and how to bridge them. Chapter 4 is likely to appeal to those with a more academic bent, while chapter 5 will appeal to those with more practical interests. Those most interested in BA should read chapter 5. Senior managers and knowledge managers are likely to be interested in chapter 6. It is not necessary to read the entire book to benefit from it, as the various chapters can stand alone, but many readers may profit from this material being brought into a single volume.

Notes


5. For reading convenience, we use “beneficiaries” here, but much of what is said in this report is applicable to getting information about other stakeholders—other affected populations, the public sector, civil society, business, NGOs, local institutions, and so forth.

6. Except when referring specifically to Bank work, the more generic “manager” is used in this study, rather than the Bank’s “task team leader,” because much of what is contained here should also be useful to managers outside the Bank.

7. A study of strategies to increase girls’ participation in education is one example. In 1996, one of the authors looked at 2,500 articles on girls’ education and found that 250 claimed to show the impact of a particular strategy. In fact, only 32 actually provided enough information to allow the particular claim to be assessed. A more recent review (Kane and Maiga-Toure 2002) shows little change.

8. Monico and Mahony 1998. Today, it is more difficult to say that any one approach is more common, because some of the terms, such as beneficiary assessment and social assessment, have passed into generic use. For example, in some publications, “social assessment” and “social analysis” are used interchangeably, whereas in others, such as the Project Appraisal Document guidelines, social analysis is the class name, making social assessment a subset.
2
Participatory Approaches for Learning, Policy, and Action

The rise of participatory development in the Bank and other development agencies mirrors similar stakeholder approaches in the larger world—for example, the growth of industrial democracy in Scandinavia, the United States, and Japan, and the development and application of more participatory approaches in human resources management.1 This chapter traces the development of participatory approaches inside and outside the Bank, describes the most common participatory learning approaches, and discusses managers’ responses and recent Bank experience using the various approaches.

Investment in infrastructure projects in the Bank’s early years meant that the expertise of engineers was paramount. Later, as it became clear that economic development was critical to the Bank’s work, internal guidelines stressed the economic, technical, financial, and institutional facets of development, and macroeconomists held sway. Few guidelines made any mention at all of social issues, and when such issues were considered important, microeconomists, rather than sociologists or anthropologists, were likely to carry out the analysis. By the mid-1970s, however, the Bank, along with other development agencies, was experiencing setbacks arising from the failure to understand and to take into account social and cultural issues. Kottak, in his 1985 analysis of 68 Bank projects designed mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, not only identified a range of problems associated with social underdesign but also showed that projects suffering such problems achieved significantly lower rates of return than those that took sociocultural factors into account (Kottak 1985). Managers needed strategies for learning about and incorporating these factors. How did one get that information? At about the same time, new thinking was emerging in academia and among experienced field practitioners about what constituted valid knowledge, the ways in which knowledge was being produced, and who had it—experts, local people, or both.

In the Bank, some of the early topics to benefit from these insights included involuntary displacement and resettlement, and issues relating to indigenous populations (Cernea 1988, 1995). By 1982, specific operational guidelines had been developed for working on these two issues (World Bank 1980, 1982). The process was extended to other issues and imported into Bank
procedures in 1984, when new sociological guidelines were introduced into the project appraisal process. Staff were now expected to take into account, among other factors, the sociocultural characteristics of affected populations, the needs of the beneficiaries and the fit and cultural acceptability of the proposed project, and the strategy for involving beneficiaries in the project’s implementation and operation. An examination of project documents from this era shows that with some exceptions this expectation was ignored or dealt with cursorily, despite Kottak’s 1985 study.

This neglect of the social, and the historical primacy of engineers and macroeconomists in the Bank, left a legacy that resurfaced constantly: stakeholders were important, but what kinds of information about stakeholders were valid? Some managers still questioned the validity of so-called soft and subjective information; were daunted by the sometimes unmanageable nature of the data which could approximate a full-blown anthropological study; felt a lack of confidence in their own abilities to commission the necessary research reliably, quickly, and economically; worried about loss of control of “their” projects; and felt the burden of additional work without the kind of support they needed. Over time, many but not all of these issues were addressed, but not satisfactorily for all managers. The fact that the sociological guidelines from the Bank’s 1984 operational manual statement, mentioned in the previous paragraph, were omitted in the Bank’s 1994 project appraisal (operational policy) guidelines (Cernea and Kudat 1997) might suggest that they were either considered unimportant enough to be easily overlooked, or so well established in practice that their implementation had become a matter of course.²

Evolving Approaches to Learning from Stakeholders

In the early 1980s, new cases were being made for the value of learning from local insights. Lawrence Salmen, drawing on his work in 1981–82 conducting participant-observer evaluations of Bank–supported urban development projects in La Paz, Bolivia, and Guayaquil, Ecuador, showed that social and cultural information and stakeholder knowledge could be collected in ways that were usable to managers, and could be tied into project and sector work. The result, *Listen to the People* (Salmen 1987), laid the groundwork for “Beneficiary Assessment” (Salmen 1995a). Michael Cernea, the Bank’s first-hired social scientist, in his introduction to *Putting People First* (1985, 1991) argued for the need to recognize the social and cultural variables that form the social dimension of development that underlies and affects all activities, including attempts at development. Social Assessment was one of the outcomes of this thinking.

Outside the Bank, Robert Chambers and his colleagues, both North and South, were synthesizing a new transformative ideology and exploring innovative methodological combinations and facilitation processes. These
were intended, among other things, to assist in “reversing” a number of dichotomies in development, putting “them” before “us,” “South” before “North,” “poor” before “rich,” “periphery” before “core,” and so forth (Chambers 1983, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1997). The result was Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and later, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).3

Since the mid-1980s a number of factors have created a much stronger foundation for the principle of social development4:

- a more holistic view of development that includes the social and cultural, as reflected, for example, in the Bank’s Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF);
- a recognition that a variety of stakeholders in civil society have a role to play;
- a more aggressive exploration and a more accessible presentation of the philosophy of knowledge, particularly in the field of education, with the work of people such as Guba and Lincoln (1985), Patton (1990), and others, which has also influenced other sectors;
- the strengthening of qualitative research and the ability to analyze it;
- the development of new approaches, including participatory approaches, and what might be called “designer” toolkits, each aimed at a particular issue.

In the Bank, special structures and learning groups5 supported by increased numbers of social scientists were created. Today, although the exact figure is debated, about 130 noneconomist social scientists work in various areas of the Bank: 12 within a central Social Development Department (SDV), part of the Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Vice Presidency; others placed regionally; and others working on various aspects of analysis, research, and evaluation throughout the Bank, particularly in Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM). There are a number of conflicting pressures, with non-social scientists filling Social Development Department positions as they open and a general graying of the ranks, but a growing interest in the social component of development remains. Interest from the top echelons of leadership has had a major impact. In 1995, for example, President James Wolfensohn’s first annual meeting address, “New Directions and New Partnerships,” laid the groundwork for a Social Development Task Force, whose report, Social Development and Results on the Ground (World Bank 1999), looked at ways of incorporating Social Assessment into Country Assistance Strategies and lending instruments. The late 1990s was also a time when the Voices of the Poor (Narayan, Chambers, and others 2000; Narayan, Patel, and others 2000; Narayan and Petesch 2002) work was carried out. While much of this work was drawn from extant participatory poverty assessments, it raised the level of awareness and increased appreciation for the value of listening to development’s intended beneficiaries—the poor—as had not been done prior to that time.6
Today, the Bank’s position on the importance of local stakeholders and beneficiaries is clearly reflected in the fact that many of its mechanisms and responses to development issues are community oriented, such as Community Driven Development, Social Funds, Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs), Citizen Report Cards, and the importance of social capital. Taking stakeholder and beneficiary involvement into account is mandated in a range of Bank documents, from Comprehensive Country Development documents to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) to Country Assistance Strategies (CAS), to economic and sector work, and the cycle of project documents. The Operational Manual published in 2004 contains a brief section on participation and references. This section is an invaluable resource for managers, expertly outlining the definitions, guidelines, challenges, stages, examples, and tools of participation in policy espoused by the World Bank in its Good Practice Note for Development Policy Lending (World Bank 2004d).

In part, this shift toward beneficiaries and participation is purely pragmatic: decentralization, inability to distribute funds equitably, and failure to scale up good programs have meant that more attention has been paid to what communities and local stakeholders can do. Whatever the reasons, “survey slavery” as Robert Chambers once called it—seeing participants as objects—is declining as the major tool for getting social and cultural information on beneficiaries, and interesting participatory research approaches are becoming popular. The intellectual and ideological climate has evolved, not only in the Bank but also in most development-oriented institutions. The most likely Bank users, task team leaders, many of whom a decade ago might have been wary of the words “participation” and “culture” are now seeing it in a new light. As one manager said,

There is more consciousness of community involvement and the delegation and devolution of power today. It is not really happening or being implemented properly, but there is general agreement and no overt opposition to it. Ten years ago it was absolutely not a consideration for most managers. . . . (Manager, WBIVP)

What Participatory Learning Approaches Are Available to Managers in the Bank Today?

Managers who work in the field of development do not need to be told that fads abound. No sooner do they learn new acronyms, new strategies, and new solutions than all those change. This is as true for participatory learning approaches as for any other sphere of organizational endeavor:

The distinctions among [information-getting methods in the Bank] are not clear—people are confused by the methodologies. So we put an RFP
[request for proposals] out, and go with what makes the most sense and who’s available at the time. Sometimes it’s a consultant or consulting group, sometimes it’s someone in the Bank who is “cheap.” Then we more or less take what we get. If a manager doesn’t know much about what to expect from research, that’s a problem. (Project Manager)

Vogues change, champions of one approach or another come and go, but one thing remains constant: good development requires good information, and good information depends on good research.

What is good research? Some swear by focus groups. Others think a survey is the only “scientific” way to get information. Others argue that unless a research approach is participatory it imposes answers on local people. Still others say that with a participatory approach, local people may feel empowered but the needed good information will not result. Some say grassroots information is fine at the local level, but international development agencies need to operate at the national level, so what good is it to study at the community level? Others say that without study at the local level, national policy and planning can become removed from reality.

These arguments can be polarizing, with one group claiming that participatory research techniques cannot mix with the old conventional standbys, such as surveys. Another group might say that while qualitative research methods, such as interviews and observation, are fine for getting some human interest anecdotes or perceptual or subjective data to liven up a report, quantitative research is really needed.

There is good reason for this confusion. The real world is complex, and getting useful knowledge about it is a sophisticated process. If there were a single best way to get information, everyone would be using it by now. There is not. Many people working in development learn just one or at most a few approaches—how to do a simple survey, perhaps, and how to run a focus group. Often, the results of these are poor and cannot really be used for planning, so the manager bases his or her decisions on a gut feeling, instead. People feel more secure because a survey or focus group, no matter how useless, was carried out, and that fact can be stated in a project document.

Today, Bank staff are not restricted to one technique, or even to one toolkit of techniques. They can draw upon a wide variety of approaches for getting stakeholder views. “New” approaches with new names, acronyms, toolkits, manuals, workshops, mini-empires, specialist consultants, and so on, have proliferated since the mid-1990s. People who are not actively involved with all of them on a regular basis may wonder about this abundance: are these really new? Is each different from the others?

One of the earliest instruments was the questionnaire survey—generally household surveys, such as the Living Standards Measurement Survey. Such surveys are often seen by managers as the benchmark against which the results obtained from other approaches are measured—for example, in
the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP), conflicting results between quantitative surveys and the UPPAP brought into question the UPPAP finding that poverty was increasing, causing a delay until it became clear that the two forms of research were addressing different dimensions of the problem.

Quantitative surveys show distributions of individuals in categories—how many child-headed households contain children suffering from malnutrition, for example. Knowing these distributions, their associations with other variables, and the fact that they can be used as baselines and for plotting trends is critical, and the survey is often the best way to get such information.

However, there are many other kinds of information for which a survey is not particularly useful, such as for discovering cultural patterns or customs. One does not need to question 250,000 people, for example, to know what constitutes acceptable food for humans in a particular society. A survey is also not the best instrument when the need is to understand integrated phenomena such as processes, dynamics, and structure—understanding the mystique of policymaking and how policy is actually made by government, for instance. Case studies, interviews, observation, and focus groups would provide far better insights into the difference between how policies are supposed to work and how they actually operate. Finally, while quantitative surveys allow for easy aggregation and for ready comparisons across regions, countries, and nations, they do so by using questions based on imposed categorizations, to the detriment of local meaning, participation, depth, and context. Although steps can be taken to ameliorate these blind spots, they represent a universal problem in research explored in chapter 5.

Surveys, of course, are only one tool, although perhaps the most familiar and comfortable in the manager’s research repertoire because they produce data in numerical form. As one manager said, “When I came to the Bank, someone advised me to put at least one number in every paragraph I write.” Once a manager decides to use a survey, the process is usually left to experts in survey design and administration. Instead of such a hands-off approach, this book focuses on those multi-method approaches that complement quantitative surveys, all of which are the bases of what the Bank calls “social analysis” and many of which fall under the rubric “participatory.” Participation has multiple dimensions. Participation by whom? For what? At what point in the work? How? To what end? For purposes of this summary, we use “participation” as the World Bank’s Participation Learning Group defined it in The World Bank and Participation (1994f, p. i): “a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them.” Using this definition, all the approaches discussed here can be, to some degree, participatory, although it is important to note that no information-getting approach is in itself inherently
participatory, and each can be misused to create a participatory façade. Further, in actual practice, no approach discussed here meets all of the elements in the definition.

Other than being participatory, another feature that the approaches under discussion have in common is that each is based on well-known techniques drawn from the various social sciences. Each is subject to the ordinary canons of social science soundness. Each draws from the same theoretical or philosophical background. For the most part, these techniques are variations of the relatively unstructured open-ended interview, and unlike quantitative surveys, are almost invariably aimed at getting shared group information. What makes them new is that each tends to represent an assemblage of techniques aimed at a particular audience, for a particular end. The Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) family and Beneficiary Assessment (BA), for example, are collections of existing tools adapted to certain conditions such as a desire to involve respondents more actively, or to tailor the results more carefully to managers’ needs. Thus, “participatory monitoring and evaluation” does not differ from “participatory poverty assessment” except in its purpose. The techniques they draw from are virtually the same. What does distinguish them from some traditional social science applications is their common underlying assumptions about the roles of the observer and participants, and the ends to which the results should be put. While this philosophy is sometimes seen more in the breach than in the observance, it is critical to an understanding of the foundations of stakeholder and beneficiary approaches.

The list of approaches includes Beneficiary Assessment; the Participatory Learning and Action family, including Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Rural Appraisal, and Participatory Poverty Assessment; Policy and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA); Social Assessment (SA); Systematic Client Consultation (SCC); Self-esteem, Associative strength, Resourcefulness, Action planning and Responsibility (SARAR); Objectives-Oriented Project Planning (ZOPP); Appreciative Inquiry (AI); and many others, some of which, as will be seen, are simply variant applications of PLA.

Each addresses at least one critical aspect of Bank work. PPA and PSIA are focused on policy—the first primarily for policy formulation and the second for policy analysis. Each of the participatory approaches has a special focus—an issue, such as poverty; a component of the project cycle, such as Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME); or a necessary feature of development, such as empowerment. Most of the approaches oriented toward getting information draw heavily on so-called qualitative methods, discussed in chapter 3. BA and SA are closer to traditional sociological and anthropological research than most of the others.

Some of these approaches were developed outside the Bank and are widely known and used in the larger development community, for
example, RRA, PRA, PLA, AI, and ZOPP. Others arose within the Bank but have been used outside it, BA and PPA, for example. Some, such as SA, are particular to the Bank, although other organizations would recognize their broad aim of looking at the social and cultural factors that influence development. In the academic social science community, however, knowledge of even RRA, PRA, and PLA is still restricted. For example, articles on participatory research, many of the methods of which have been drawn from anthropology, are still uncommon in most anthropological journals. Some in academia welcome these approaches simply as special-purpose collections of standard social science techniques, but in other cases, antagonisms have arisen. Social science in academe rarely promotes social engagement and change and resists the kind of disciplinary blurring that approaches such as PLA are based upon. Also, some observers see them as unmoored from the theoretical underpinnings of the disciplines from which they are drawn, and hence, unscientific. Yet, because these approaches can test hypotheses by looking at actual outcomes, they are in a sense more scientifically sound than academic theory that remains untested (Greenwood and Levin 1998).

Within the Bank, three points in particular are interesting. The first is that many people other than social scientists are not aware of many of these approaches and their acronyms, their various uses, and whether they apply to their work. The second is that the terms are often used by Bank staff generically to cover any kind of inquiry related to social factors in development. This is particularly true in the case of BA and SA. The third is that the word “participatory” may be used even when the most cursory survey of views is taken. One result is that although various Bank evaluations and “reviews” of specific approaches have been carried out, definitions of the approach are often vague and applications inadequately described, such that it is not always clear what approaches are being covered. (However, for some examples of reviews, see Robb’s 1999/2002 review of PPAs [Robb 2002], and Narayan’s A Review of World Bank Participatory Poverty Assessments [World Bank 1999].)

The discussion of how to integrate and improve research approaches begins with a brief description of those most commonly used in the Bank and elsewhere. The term “Social Analysis” is often used as an inclusive term in the Bank to refer to most of the approaches discussed here. Table 2.1 summarizes and compares their key characteristics.

Social Analysis

Social analysis is used in World Bank project, program, and policy work to address opportunities, constraints, and risks to development that arise from the social context. The Bank has developed standards and procedures for diagnosis, implementation, support, and evaluation that integrate attention
to issues such as social diversity and gender, participation, and local institutions.

The key instruments used for social analysis are project-level SA; PSIA of reforms and policy-based lending; and Country Social Analysis (CSA). These instruments have evolved from a relatively narrow focus on risk mitigation and social safeguards in the 1980s and early 1990s to broader, more comprehensive approaches that integrate risk analysis with quality enhancement and better access to development opportunities for all groups, contributing to the social development goals of social inclusion, accountable institutions, and cohesive societies.

The Bank performs social analysis to determine the suitability of policies and programs proposed for Bank financing. Economic growth is more likely to reduce poverty when development is equitable and sustainable, involving measures that strengthen inclusion, empowerment, and security outcomes. Social analysis enables the Bank to assess whether a proposed program or operation is likely to meet its social development objectives and to recommend measures to help meet them. Social analysis at the project level seeks to enlighten the development process by conducting in-depth inquiry along the lines of six “entry points”: social diversity and gender, institutions, rules and behavior, stakeholders, participation, and social risk. The major value of social analysis is its contribution to a project’s design and to its development impact (World Bank 2003a).

**Beneficiary Assessment**

Beneficiary Assessment is a tool of social analysis. Inasmuch as this book uses BA both as an example of good practice and as a demonstration of how a research method can be made more participatory, particular attention is given to this approach. When it was introduced in 1987, BA (then called participant-observer evaluation) was a novel approach in development research. (See box 2.1.) “Listening to people” by living with them over a period of time was more closely associated with traditional anthropological research than either the conventional economic research of development agencies or the relatively rapid PRA approaches that were also being pioneered in the 1980s.

BA is, in fact, drawn from anthropological and sociological approaches, but also from consumer market and evaluation research—its aim is to improve client service by providing good information about “client” values and needs to the front-line service provider, usually the Bank task team leader or in-country manager. It is specifically designed for managers, and helps them to look at development issues from the point of view of beneficiaries and other stakeholders to get better information for all stages of project work, sector work, and policy formulation.
Box 2.1 How Beneficiary Assessment Began

BA had its genesis in the first development work of the co-author of this book, Lawrence Salmen, in 1966, when he lived among displaced residents of squatter settlements in Rio de Janeiro to assess their satisfaction with their new low-cost housing far from the city center. Although the inquiry began with a questionnaire, it soon became clear that these relocated persons were far more comfortable and candid when addressing the issues surrounding their new homes informally, where they could become the subject of a conversation, rather than objects of inquiry in a pre-worded questionnaire. Several years later, while living in a cortico, or tenement slum, in Rio, Salmen learned that a primary advantage of this kind of habitation over the favelas, or squatter settlements, was the comparative respectability of the street address, which made it easier to get a job. This generic finding was revealed more forcefully through participant observation than it could have been through questionnaires or one-on-one interviewing. The utility of focus groups was demonstrated best by research done among the Aymara-speaking indigenous population of Bolivia, where people felt inhibited from discussing issues individually but opened up in groups of peers.

Complementing these technical discoveries were issues relating to utility and credibility. Project managers at the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) found evaluations of little relevance to their work. Evaluations were felt to be too academic—trying to measure impact using indicators such as infant mortality that changed little over the life of a project, with weak causal links to project interventions—and too judgmental. The emphasis in qualitative evaluation on what the intended beneficiary felt to be important, in his or her own words, regarding issues related to the achievement of project objectives, was considered germane to development work by these managers and resonated with them. World Bank project managers, steeped in economics, often agreed with the IAF critics regarding the overly academic nature of social analysis but nevertheless demanded that quantification be added so that findings could be considered significant. Thus, the technique of conversational interviewing is applied to representative population groups for the needed quantification; focus groups and participant observation are directed to issues of concern to intended beneficiaries and managers; and the whole analytic exercise is geared practically to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of development activity.
BA can be used to look at systems and processes contextually: its methods are based on the assumption that interlinked social and cultural systems shape human behavior, which in turn shape those systems in a continuous, dynamic, and holistic process. It uses careful sampling processes to provide representative, aggregated information and draws on academically recognized techniques—participant observation, which is used to explore conversational interviews (a naturalistic form of semi-structured interview); focus groups that are often facilitated through participatory stimuli to group discussion; secondary source reviews; and institutional analysis, surveys, and PRA techniques as appropriate. In this sense it differs from the typical member of the PLA family described later in that it seeks not only group information but individual variation, and it looks at processes and change, rather than simply at the outcomes of group discussions.

BA also differs from the other approaches to be described in that, while participating communities get feedback on the results of their input, the role of the researcher is to act as an “honest broker” between the community and the manager, consulting the community and translating its priorities and perceptions in ways that managers can use, rather than acting as a facilitator of local action. In that sense, it is more transparently extractive and is sometimes seen as representing the lower end of a participatory continuum (the Bank’s PovertyNet Web page describes it thus). However, as the Bank uses them, most of the approaches discussed in this book are also basically consultative, as will be seen when the PLA family is discussed. Unlike the PLAs, which emphasize attitude over technique, techniques do matter in BA—it requires trained professional researchers who understand, or at least can follow, research design. Finally, while listening is based on respect for the insights that beneficiaries can offer, it is not intended to be transformative at the level of the individual practitioner, as PLA is.

The following steps are involved in a BA:

- **Familiarization.** Technical specialists are selected to guide the BA project. Important problem areas are identified and reviewed using available information including interviews with key stakeholders such as donors, government, and local people. A guide for semi-structured interviews is developed to cover key themes.

- **Study design and methods selection.** Target populations are identified. An appropriate representative sampling framework is devised, and the issues to be explored (according to the objectives of the project) are clearly delineated. A research group and team leader should also be designated. BA work commonly includes conversational interviews with representative samples of stakeholder groups, focus group discussions, participant observation, and institutional analysis.

- **Selection and orientation of local interviewers.** The research group helps select and train local men and women who are fluent in local languages,
good listeners, and skilled in recall and writing. The study team, including local interviewers, practices descriptive and accurate writing, note taking, awareness of and separation from preconceived notions, and data analysis.

- **Preparation of the BA report.** The BA report includes recommendations that incorporate assessment findings into project design or sector work. The report should be reviewed by the interviewees to cross-check for accuracy.9

Some of these stages are explored further in chapter 5, which looks at how BA might evolve to take advantage of recent thinking in development and in research methodologies.

Although it is difficult to put a typical time requirement on any of the approaches mentioned in this book, BAs usually require more time than do the members of the PLA family, such as PRA activities, because they generally involve participant observation and more emphasis on individual interviews of representative samples, rather than on group activities, such as community mapping, matrices, and so forth. BAs may take anywhere from three to six months; costs generally range from $40,000 to $60,000.

**Systematic Client Consultation**

SCC, an approach used by the Africa Region of the World Bank, is an iterative communication process among Bank staff, stakeholders, and beneficiaries to ensure that projects and policies are demand driven. It consists of 10 steps, usually intended to cover the life of a project, which, in summary, present a plan for information needs in light of the country strategy; the sector and the project itself; the research design, including the periodicity necessary for tracking and iterative learning; the local research institution responsible for supervising the research; the critical target groups, including decisionmakers and officials; and the dissemination and action plan, in which programs are adjusted and results fed to appropriate policymakers; and follow-up with clients to assess the impact and effectiveness of changes. SCC draws on BA, RRA, PRA, and farming systems research, among others, to create a systematic process of communication between policymakers and service providers on the one hand, and on the other, people and groups affected by programs and projects to create demand-driven development.

Unlike most of the other approaches described in this book, few publications have attempted to outline SCC since it emerged in the mid-1990s, and few managers in the Africa Region now seem to be familiar with it (World Bank 1994e). The Zambia Social Recovery Project studies, described by most of those involved as “Beneficiary Assessment,” are described in the *World Bank Participation Sourcebook* (1996b) as an example of SCC, and the
iterative nature of the studies do reflect SCC’s aim of providing a process for continuous communication. To a nervous manager seeking guidance through the maze of approaches, this might be confusing, but SCC could serve as an organized way to meet information needs throughout the life of a project.

Social Assessments (Including Country Social Analysis)

Basically an anthropological approach to the practicalities of development, Social Assessment was developed by Bank staff to meet the operational requirements of the Bank in project design and economic and sector work. It is a broad process for analyzing the social processes and factors—gender, ethnicity, institutional capacity, and so on—that are involved in development impacts and results. Its aim is to establish a broad framework for participation and identify priority areas for social analysis. The objectives of SA are to “(a) identify key stakeholders and establish the appropriate framework for their participation, (b) ensure that project objectives and incentives are appropriate and acceptable to beneficiaries, (c) assess social impacts and risks, and (d) minimize or mitigate adverse impacts” (World Bank 1996b, p. 184). McPhail and Jacobs (1995, p. 2) add another: “develop the capacity to enable participation.” However, they also pointed out at that time that the participatory component can fall short: “SA designers generally allot too much time to data collection and too little time to analysis of findings and stakeholder discussions of the results and their implications” (McPhail and Jacobs 1995, p. 2).

SA is used with borrowers, beneficiaries, directly affected groups, and other stakeholders. In project work, it covers assessment, design, and implementation, and is used to “assess the social issues . . . and identify the principal social actors; design the social provisions needed in the project package, and formulate the social strategy for participatory implementation” (Cernea and Kudat 1997, p. 9). SA is intended as a broader brush approach covering the social processes and factors that affect development in a particular situation. SAs vary widely in their application and methodology, but Cernea and Kudat have outlined some average costs that range between $30,000 and $50,000 (1997, p. 16).

SA even more, perhaps, than BA, has suffered from confusion arising as a result of the term being used generically. Thus, it was often not clear in Bank documents whether the term was intended to subsume, or perhaps build upon, all forms of social analysis, including BA and SCC, as a set of training slides—“Introduction to Social Assessment, Social Policy and Resettlement Division” (World Bank 1996a)—suggests, or whether it was subsumed by “social analysis” as a reading of Francis and Jacobs (1999) might suggest. Another problem is that although there are some excellent social assessments (see, for example, the studies in Cernea and Kudat 1997, or on World Bank Web pages), some “social assessments” done in Bank work fall
short of minimum standards for social research. This has been true of other forms of social analysis. Yet another issue is that because the process was seen to be so comprehensive, intended to be applicable to so many Bank operations, and so open-ended, it might seem more correct to describe it as an integrated framework of general principles about the need for good identification and participation of stakeholders, proper design, rigorous research, iterative learning, operational relevance to Bank work, and sharing of results. Francis and Jacobs, in arguing for clear guidance on when social analysis is required in Bank work say that in part, “[i]t will depend on agreement among practitioners on minimum standards as to what constitutes a social assessment” (1999, p. 349).

As a result, it is difficult to evaluate the quality and impact of SAs. According to Francis and Jacobs (1999), “perhaps the only systematic attempt to date in the Bank to determine the impact of social assessment on project design is a review of a sample of 100 projects approved during 1997 by the Bank’s Quality Assurance Group.” This review concluded that

Social aspects were treated adequately in only about half the cases. The team concluded that despite previously expressed concerns, little visible progress has been made in integrating Social Assessments in Bank projects. Although the review disclosed a number of outstanding cases in which good Social Assessment had a significant impact on project design, the overall judgment is that the present use of Social Assessment is haphazard. . . . Even when Social Assessments are carried out, the results are often not satisfactorily reflected in project design or even documented in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) or Special Administrative Region (SAR). (World Bank 1999, p. 350)

Since the late 1990s, the Bank has refined its definition of SA and placed responsibility for its execution clearly with the borrower. SA is now defined as “the instrument the Borrower uses to analyze social issues and solicit stakeholder views for the design of Bank-supported projects” (World Bank 2003a, p. 57). SA may also be done during project implementation, providing feedback during each phase of the project. Social Assessment “enables the Borrower to examine the project’s sustainability and to take actions to enhance it” (World Bank 2003a, p. viii). During project appraisal, the Bank conducts a social analysis reviewing the SA carried out by the borrower to ensure that the proposed project is likely to meet its social development objectives.

To engage in upstream social analysis, the Bank has in recent years developed Country Social Analysis (CSA), a framework for conducting macro-level social analysis. The CSA framework examines the socioeconomic, politico-institutional, and cultural context at a macro level, to help the Bank and borrower countries design policies, programs, and projects with greater impact on social development, complementing the policy level attention to economic growth and efficiency with attention to considerations of equity.
and inclusion. While still in a pilot phase, the expected benefits from this macro-level analysis include better informed policies and programs as well as more consistent, better quality projects with reduced transaction costs and simpler preparation processes. So far, CSAs have been conducted in Paraguay and Costa Rica; CSA is being piloted in Ecuador, Kenya, Republic of Yemen, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Bolivia, and Tajikistan.

The PLA Family

Despite the minefield of acronyms in the discussion that follows, the manager can take comfort in that several of them—Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Participatory Poverty Assessment, and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation—are basically the same, methodologically. Some group them all under one heading, Participatory Learning and Action, although others use PLA more specifically as a replacement term for PRA, because the terms “rural” and “appraisal” are thought to be too restrictive.

The principles underlying PRA and the techniques associated with it are to be found in all PLA approaches, although the purpose for which the approach is used may be different. All the members of the family have the following beliefs and practices in common:

- All the people involved in a situation have insights and perspectives to contribute.
- Stakeholders can participate in the process of producing useful information.
- The role of the researcher in relation to the other participants is that of a learner, not a teacher or sensitizer.
- The techniques are primarily aids to group discussion, and are visually accessible to literate and illiterate people alike.
- The resulting research should be tied to action: the role of the practitioner is to co-facilitate action, in partnership with the community or group.
- Those who might ordinarily be excluded in the development and research process—the poor, nonparticipants, minorities, women, and so forth—are deliberately sought out and involved.
- The user’s attitude and behavior are more important than the methodology. In the case of some practitioners, this leads to a rather theological approach, which we discuss later in the book.

Some of the members of the PLA family are explored here.

Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal. Participatory Rural Appraisal is an evolving approach that started in the 1980s. It is a set of behaviors, attitudes, and methods that are intended to help people, particularly the disadvantaged, to determine their own agendas for change,
identify the issues, assess possible solutions, and act on their decisions. It evolved from Rapid Rural Appraisal, which was developed in the 1970s and is still being used.

Both RRA and PRA share the same collection of methods or techniques—the conceptual difference between them lies in who determines the agenda, who carries it out, and who makes decisions about what to do with the findings. PRA is participatory: local people participate in the production of information, and perhaps even carry out research themselves. RRA is extractive—that is, outsiders, perhaps with some local people or “insiders” on the team, determine the major issues; carry out the research, drawing heavily on local insider insights; and analyze the results, which are often used for some external purpose, such as improving an existing organizational program or project. However, despite the very considerable rhetoric associated with this field, many practitioners have long recognized that RRA and PRA form a continuum of participation, the “pure” PRA end of which is a worthy but ultimately unattainable ideal when used by development organizations and perhaps even by communities themselves. According to the Bank’s PovertyNet Web page,

The participatory approach is very much action oriented. The stakeholders themselves are responsible for collecting and analyzing the information, and for generating recommendations for change. The role of an outside evaluator is to facilitate and support this learning process.

The fact is, however, that the sponsoring agency almost invariably determines the sector or agenda for study. Literal PRAs, in which community members design and conduct their own assessments, exist only in theory, unless the project is specifically community-based and the process is a longer-term investment than most development organizations are now prepared to make.

The 30 or more methods used in RRA and PRA are drawn largely from conventional social science research—semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and observation—and most are visual aids to group discussion, for example, pie charts, matrices, Venn diagrams, seasonal calendars, maps, and many other techniques that allow the discourse to be recorded in a form that is visible to all, including illiterate people. (The names of techniques in the PLA family are, in fact, the names of their recording forms.) Often the results look like the results one would get by aggregating conventional data: for example, many matrices and seasonal calendars are, in effect, bar graphs. The relative speed of most PRA exercises is compensated for by an emphasis on triangulation—mixed teams of insiders and outsiders, men and women, young and old, from varied disciplines; multiple sources and perspectives; multiple techniques; and a rigorous effort to avoid bias, particularly the kind of bias that arises from consulting only the powerful and more accessible.
For many practitioners, however, the importance of PRA and its closer relatives is not the methods. PRA’s transformative origins lie in the work of activists such as Paulo Freire. If used as intended, PRA is a political activity designed to empower the poor and powerless. Thus, PRA is not only a technique, but “a philosophy and a way of life which stresses self-critical awareness and commitment to the poor, weak and vulnerable” (Chambers 1997, p. 104). This highlighting of personal transformation and corresponding lack of emphasis on methods has created both strengths and weaknesses for PRA. From a social science perspective, one of the most notable of these weaknesses has been a misconception among some enthusiasts that goodwill and the ability to facilitate a few of the more popular techniques are all that is required to do good PRA. Conversely, the very appeal of PRA’s methods is seen by some as a source of danger: “While PRA as a process stresses equity and empowerment, its attractive methods can easily be dislocated from the methodological framework and put to serve vested interests within and beyond the ‘community’” (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995, p. 1671).

PRA has been used extensively by major donors, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the local community level. Results from multiple communities have been aggregated to reflect regional and national issues. Kane, for example, used regional sampling to select communities in lowland Eritrea and aggregated the results of 21 community PRAs to get a picture of girls’ education (1996). deBrun (2000b) used a variety of qualitative computer software data analysis programs to analyze the results of research in several hundred communities in a government-sponsored project on women and poverty in Ireland. Participatory appraisal methodologies have benefited many projects supported by the Bank; its Global Environment Facility used them in 1998 in the Panama Biodiversity Conservation in the Darien Region Project, for which five local NGOs conducted PRAs focusing on the needs of two affected indigenous groups. “The results of the appraisals helped the project in designing a co-management plan within disputed lands, setting up micro credit schemes, and identifying the tribal leaders as representatives to the project’s steering committee” (World Bank 2001b, p. 2).

**Participatory Poverty Assessment**

PPAs grew out of BA and PRA. They are “second-generation” participatory approaches (Norton and others 2001), drawing on the perspectives of the poor to improve poverty analysis, diagnosis, and policy formulation rather than simply to get information and support project, sector, or community action. PPAs therefore differ from the other approaches mentioned thus far in that they may be built in as part of the policy process within a low-income country’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and can contribute directly to its Poverty Reduction Strategy—a nationally owned framework of policies for
reducing poverty, empowering the poor, and building partnerships between government and civil society to support the initiatives. While early poverty assessments were largely quantitative in nature, sometimes containing PPAs as somewhat alien ingredients, the Bank’s CDF, created in 1999, emphasizes a more holistic approach, and at the local level, PPAs have often been particularly useful in meeting that standard.

The major methodological difference between PPAs and their progenitors, BA and PRA, is that in theory PPAs attempt to draw on the strengths of both—PRA’s wide range of participatory tools and BA’s depth. For example, the Madagascar PPA, which was the first full-fledged PPA to be completed (in 1993), contained 2,600 conversational interviews. PPAs differ from BA in that they are not aimed at managers’ specific information needs, and unlike other approaches, they focus specifically on poverty (see box 2.2). However, in practice, some PPAs have lost the depth of BA by omitting

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**Box 2.2 The Niger PPA**

In late 2001 and early 2002, conversational interviews were conducted with roughly 4,000 people, about half in focus groups, the other half individually, representing rural and urban population groups from every region of the country, to learn what poverty meant to these people, how they saw themselves getting out of it, and how they assessed the policies of government and other institutions aimed at reducing poverty. This PPA was conducted by a local consulting firm, CNESS-Bozari, and carried out under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister. Results were fed into the PRSP and the Bank’s CAS.

Findings from the PPA included (a) the top priority accorded food security; (b) the dearth of perceived development activities in urban areas; (c) a paradox regarding agriculture, which was seen as the riskiest economic activity by 80 percent of the people interviewed due to declining rain fed crop yields and few commercial outlets to market garden products and yet also viewed as offering opportunity due in large part to the government’s recent Special Program creating small dikes and other measures for promoting flood recession agriculture; and (d) a low priority accorded education (seventh) due not only to a need for more and better infrastructure but for learning more closely tied to employment and revenue generation.

Government poverty reduction plans now stress food security, include urban development, strengthen the Special Program in agriculture, and consider ways to make education more relevant to the needs of the country’s poor majority. The government of Niger, with support from the World Bank, is conducting a follow-up to the PPA in 2005.
participant observation and conversational interviewing, relying almost entirely on the group-based PRA techniques, or by drawing heavily on a quasi-survey approach. Good PPAs, such as those carried out in Zambia and Uganda, incorporate both.

PPAs have been used both inside and outside the Bank. As of 2001, over 60 PPAs have been carried out with Bank support, and an equal number by other organizations (Robb 2002). A PPA covering 60,000 people has been presented in the three-volume series, *Voices of the Poor* (Narayan, Chambers, and others 2000; Narayan, Patel, and others 2000; Narayan and Petesch 2002). The definition of whether that work and some other Bank exercises actually constitute PPAs is the subject of some debate: McGee and Brock, commenting on the fact that *Voices of the Poor*, for example, is based entirely on questionnaires, note that other PPA practitioners would not consider this to be participatory (McGee and Brock 2001). However, as discussed elsewhere in this book, even when open-ended, conversational listening techniques are used in PPAs, some critics question the degree to which this represents true participation.

Bank PPAs differ considerably in length, cost, depth, and quality, and can range from one week to many months. In Zambia, the entire process, from design and training to research and policy conclusions, was accomplished in four months (Holland and Blackburn 1998). In contrast, Uganda’s PPA (UPPAP), also widely described as one of the most successful, took nearly two years (Yates 2000). As of May 2000, over 565,000 British pounds (about US$877,000 at May 2000 exchange rate) had been spent on planning and carrying out a national PPA of communities in nine of the country’s 45 districts, and in the period May 2000 through April 2001 an additional approximately 330,000 pounds (about US$512,000) was spent on follow-up findings and activities undertaken to sustain the process (Yates 2000).

*Poverty and Social Impact Analysis*

One of the worries of those concerned with the outcomes of participatory approaches is that while they have had effects on project and sector work, their impact on policy has been minimal. The World Bank’s PSIA looks at policy. Often performed during preparation of national PRSPs, although it may be conducted afterward to help inform Bank operations, PSIA focuses on macroeconomic, structural, and sectoral reforms. PSIA is increasingly integrated as an approach in poverty assessments and other core economic and sector work such as Country Economic Memoranda and Public Expenditure Reviews. PSIA is also conducted as a stand-alone analysis in connection with sectoral programmatic operations. Today, PSIA is reflected in more than half the new Poverty Reduction Support Credits and the demand for PSIA work is not likely to diminish in the future. The new operational policy OP 8.60 requires program documents for development policy support operations to
specify which policies may have significant distributional consequences, and to summarize the “relevant analytic knowledge of these effects and of the borrower’s systems for reducing adverse effects and enhancing positive effects associated with the specific policies being supported.”

The Bank’s PSIA framework was developed in a combined effort between PREM and SDV. The first six PSIAs were initiated in fiscal year 2002 with incremental funds made available to country teams on a demand-driven basis. PSIAs have proliferated, now numbering more than 100, the majority of which have been conducted in countries that have a PRSP. In the *User’s Guide to Poverty and Social Impact Analysis* (World Bank 2003b), the analytical purpose of the PSIA is described as an upstream distributional analysis of the impact of policy reforms on the well-being or welfare of different stakeholder groups, with particular focus on the poor and vulnerable. It uses tools from both social and economic disciplines.

PSIA’s basic principles can be deduced from its purpose. First, distinct from analyses that evaluate the impact of previous reforms, PSIA is predictive. Although the PSIA may include monitoring components, its primary purpose is to inform the choice, design, and sequencing of policy reform.

Second, therefore, PSIA should be conducted in connection with a policy reform. This implies that general analyses of trends in poverty and inequality are not PSIA work. Neither is impact analysis that focuses on the poverty effects of natural disasters, war, migration, communicable diseases, or aid. The spectrum of policy reforms covered by PSIA work, however, is substantial and ranges from the broadest macroeconomic and fiscal reforms to more discrete structural and sectoral reforms (mining closure, liberalization of trade boards, and the like).

Third, PSIA does not necessarily conduct analysis in both social and economic disciplines, but rather seeks to build on existing work where possible. The analysis as well as the data collection can be based on qualitative or quantitative methods. The mixing of methods and disciplines can be parallel (conducted separately and then synthesized in a report), sequential (one study feeds into the next), or iterative (also termed “triangulation” because the studies are in constant dialogue and address the same problem). PSIA is based on many tools, some of which are participatory (PPA and BA), but is itself participatory only in that it consults stakeholders about their views. Stakeholder analysis, for example, “is a systematic methodology that uses qualitative data to determine the interests and influence of different groups in relation to a reform” (World Bank 2003b, p. 49). PSIA can be based on a wide range of data collection techniques: open-ended community discussion, key informant interviews, focus groups, quantitative surveys, observation, ethnographic field research, PRA. Proper structuring of qualitative methods and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative research requires sufficient knowledge of local customs and cultures and thus normally requires partnership with local consulting, NGO, or research firms.
Fourth, PSIA is concerned with a multidimensional understanding of poverty. The inclusion of both well-being and welfare as outcome measures underlines the multidimensional understanding of poverty inherent in the PSIA framework. The integration of economic and social tools can deal with both distributional impacts that can be easily quantified (most often but not exclusively in terms of monetary values) and those social aspects that are often more difficult to quantify (social inclusion, voice, access to services).

Last, PSIA focuses on poor and vulnerable groups but gives attention to all relevant stakeholder groups. A comprehensive PSIA identifies two types of risks in connection with a policy reform: (a) risks stemming from the policy reform resulting in unintended negative consequences for the poor and vulnerable; and (b) the risks to the reform in the context of a political economy where conflicting interests could delay, diffuse, or even halt reform. The second type of risk can only be caught and addressed by including key stakeholders—not just vulnerable groups—in analysis. Analytically, the social impact analysis in PSIA provides an understanding of the social and political context, sociocultural institutions, coping mechanisms, and social risks that may have a bearing on social behavior and policy impacts.

The value of PSIA is that it is a comprehensive inquiry designed to engage seriously in the policy process. PSIA complements many of the approaches discussed in this book, each of which addresses one or more aspects of participation (getting information, helping people to organize for action, decisionmaking) but none of which is specifically oriented toward examining the role of policy. However, in the use of PSIA it is impossible, except in a pre-1980s sense, to declare that the intended beneficiaries are “participating.” The PSIA User’s Guide contains a diluted version of BA, but does not recommend or emphasize participant observation, an element that might help it to meet its aim of understanding social context and sociocultural institutions.

**Self-Esteem, Associative Strength, Resourcefulness, Action Planning, and Responsibility (SARAR)**

SARAR is a community capacity-building and awareness-raising process. Participants draw on local experience rather than the experience and advice of outside experts. The process, although it contains an information-getting component, is focused on helping people to foster their analytical, planning, management, evaluation, and decisionmaking skills, and is particularly well suited for use with illiterate populations. Visual aids are typically prepared in advance, and common participatory research techniques such as pocket charts, three-pile sorting, story with a gap, force-field analysis, and nonserial posters are used at every step in the project cycle.

It might be said of SARAR that one of its effects is that it teaches people to do pure PRA—that is, to collect information on their own needs and priorities, consider approaches for dealing with them, create goals, and
design action plans. One of its progenitors, Lyra Srinivasan, originally used it to train rural extension workers, and it has since been applied to a wide range of sectors, including health and sanitation issues and environmental concerns.

**Citizen Report Cards and Community Score Cards**

Citizen Report Cards (CRCs) provide quantitative feedback from citizens on their satisfaction with a sector, industry, or service provider with regard to adequacy, quality, efficiency, and access. A population group is selected, stakeholders are identified, a questionnaire is designed and administered to a sample, and the responses are analyzed. This work usually requires the expertise of an external marketing research agency. The results are disseminated to various audiences and institutionalized by various organizations or agencies. When used along with media coverage and advocacy, CRCs go beyond data collection to being instruments for effectively holding providers accountable. This coverage component, along with follow-up to institutionalize the feedback process, is crucial to development impact, but can be expensive.

Recently, report cards were used in the Philippines on pro-poor services, and in Bangalore, India, on cross-state comparisons of urban services, to name but two of a number of countries where this approach is being applied. In some cases, the government has linked performance to continued funding, giving real clout to citizen voices. “The Filipino Report Card on Pro-Poor Services” characterized this as moving “ordinary people, including the poor, from ‘coping to voice’ and from ‘shouting to counting’” (World Bank 2004c, p. 2).

The objectives of the report card approach are similar to those of BA; the difference between the two is largely methodological, with report cards being based on quantitative, questionnaire tools and BA on qualitative, naturalistic tools of inquiry. Questionnaires can cover more people in less time at lower cost, while qualitative tools have the advantages of greater depth and, sometimes, validity. The distinction is blurred somewhat by the fact that the context in which report cards are formulated and administered can have qualitative elements. The methodology of CRC determines the degree of participation it can be said to have experienced. In the brief SDV note describing the Filipino CRC just cited, a town hall meeting is recommended as a follow-up measure (p. 3). Questionnaires may be formulated on the basis of input from focus groups and community meetings and account for just one method in community-based performance monitoring. When CRCs are coupled with Community Score Cards (CSCs), as is currently being piloted in Uganda (see box 2.3), a synthesis is achieved that may balance quantitative and qualitative concerns.
A report card exercise—the Citizen Report Card at the Community Level (CRCCL)—is underway in Uganda, undertaken jointly by the Bank and Action Aid in consultation with the Ministry of Health. It has similarities with the CRC as implemented in urban services in Bangalore (Paul 2002), and the CSC as implemented in rural Malawi (Singh and Shah 2002). The idea behind both CRC and CSC is that open comparison of cost, quality, and performance of public sector units will generate incentives to improve the system, hence improving client responsiveness and diminishing inefficiency and misuse of public resources.

The CRCCL focuses on both the household and the community in evaluating how information obtained from a CRC at the community level can be used by communities to improve health care delivery. The process in Uganda has three stages:

- A Citizen Report Card survey was carried out from December 2002 through March 2004. Quantitative and some perception-based data on district level health facilities’ performance was collected using a random stratified sample that covered 6,000 households and surveyed health service providers in 50 facilities.
- The second stage, underway at the time of publication of this volume, is the information and dissemination of the Report Card survey findings back to 25 health facilities and the surrounding communities they serve using participatory methods to assist the communities in effecting and monitoring change in the facilities’ performance. These communities and facilities constitute the “treatment group.” The other 25 health facilities and the communities they serve will not receive the Report Card information or the community empowerment support. It is hoped that the outcome of the information dissemination phase will be to set in motion processes and strategies for the communities and health facilities to exchange perspectives and reach consensus on strategies for improvement.
- The third phase will evaluate the outcomes of the treatment group villages after a year to see how information has been used by communities to effect positive change. A complementary evaluation will seek to identify the reasons for positive change and improvements in health care delivery as well as to identify barriers to systemic changes.

The systematic evaluation of service delivery innovations to increase the accountability of public service providers will show what works, what does not, and why, highlighting lessons toward good practice. The CRCCL cont.
Box 2.3 (continued)

exercise hopes to realize the following outcomes through community empowerment and social accountability: (a) increase grassroots transparency and accountability by giving communities access to information needed to understand, examine, and challenge health care providers; (b) give front-line health providers an opportunity to compare inputs, outputs, and performance with similar units, and thus highlight both allocative and technical efficiency of the services being provided; and (c) generate direct feedback.

Source: Gibwa Kajubi, for this book.

CSCs directly tap the knowledge and concerns of the community through an evaluation process at the local level. Service provision, project delivery, or government administrative units are monitored through a number of techniques that can include CRC. Like the CRC, the CSC process is an accountability mechanism. It asks both the service provider and the consumer community to score performance, and the scrutiny is public and linked to reform. However, because beneficiaries meet directly with service providers to provide instant feedback in the last step of the process, the value of the data collected may be dwarfed by a secondary gain: empowerment within the community. An effective CSC requires:

i) understanding of the socio-political context of governance and the structure of public finance at a decentralized level, ii) technical competence of an intermediary group to facilitate the process, iii) a strong publicity campaign to ensure maximum participation from the community and other local stakeholders, and iv) steps aimed at institutionalizing the practice for iterative civic actions. (World Bank 2004b, p. 1)

Clearly, CSC should not be understood as a remote tool for extracting qualitative data, but as facilitation of a communication process representing commitment to reform, excellence, and empowerment. In CSC, research is linked to results. A CSC project on sanitation in Maharashtra, India, for example, focused holistically on six types of outcomes: project (identifying indicators), process (change in procurement rules), institutional (ongoing feedback forums, new staff and incentives), policy (law, transparency), empowerment (information, voice), and capacity building (management skills) (Singh, Kumar, and Shah 2004). In a recent paper describing emerging practices within the movement toward social accountability, the authors point to the importance of increased responsiveness and a mutual engagement that goes beyond protest or enforcement to dialogue and organized, sustainable
feedback systems (Malena, Forster, and Singh 2004). These outcomes are important to development outcomes, service delivery, and policy design. The authors go on to outline the elements and capacities necessary for such a complex process of social transformation. The CSC is one practical tool but it is important to remember that it is quickly drained of its utility if divorced from this context of a larger commitment to social accountability.

**Appreciative Inquiry**

A large and rich learning, research, and change methodology that has been applied to an enormous variety of contexts and purposes, Appreciative Inquiry is both a tool and philosophy. An elicitive process of several steps that may consult hundreds or even thousands of stakeholders, AI seeks to tap the best of a situation or organization and capture imagined visions for a future that engender excitement and anticipation. As the primary progenitor of AI, David Cooperrider, writes, “instead of negation, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design. . . . In approaching every unit as a living system, AI focuses on what is working already, on the potentials latent in hidden resources, and on what wants to happen in the evolving organism of the organization. Based on further processing of this qualitative data, action plans are designed, executed and evaluated, all within the frame of a ‘positive change core’. . . . Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized” (Cooperrider and Whitney 2004, p. 3).

Despite sheaves of documentation and case studies by numerous AI practitioners, AI has not been utilized widely at the Bank, perhaps because its purely participatory and qualitative nature and the specialized training required leave the methodology ill-suited to the demands of the project cycle.15

**Workshops**

Workshops are not techniques as such, but are often thought of as mechanisms for involving stakeholders, getting information, and achieving buy-in. The *World Bank Participation Sourcebook* (World Bank 1996b) distinguishes between “workshop-based methods” and “community-based methods” for involving people in collaborative decisionmaking; ZOPP is one example of a workshop approach.

Although workshops have more extensive functions, the concept is examined here because of the interest in getting information in a participatory manner. Eberlei (2001) is concerned that participation by civil society organizations in the PRSP process has been largely through workshops, which
become their own “event cultures.” Some managers surveyed in this study were similarly concerned:

*Workshops are relatively easy to organize—easier than doing a big research project, and maybe that is why there are so many of them. But a lot of workshops are token participation, not thought-through processes. We need more than workshops and focus groups if we are going to do participatory research that is useful.*

*Governments often control the identification of stakeholders. Invariably you have a consultative process in a very constrained setting, dominated by the manager, and culminating in a large workshop with ritualized processes. Sometimes the workshop process itself takes over and the substance takes second place.*

How does this happen? The research and preparation involved in identifying and selecting stakeholders, relating their roles and capacities to the project’s aims, drawing on a variety of discussion techniques, aggregating, reconciling, and negotiating the findings with all the various groups, and determining how the results may affect the project are highly complex activities that are rarely carried out in full.

Table 2.1 summarizes some of the similarities and differences among most of the approaches discussed in this chapter.

**Managers’ Responses to the Learning Approaches**

Current research by the authors shows that most managers accept the value of participation and stakeholder involvement. Managers, together with their traditional partners in development, have considerable leeway in deciding how to identify stakeholders, how to get needed information, and how to use it. This allows, ideally, for appropriate flexibility in considering where, how, and when local beneficiaries can be involved. However, institutional support systems, guidance, and practical knowledge have not yet caught up with these changes in ideology.

A reading of Bank guidelines, for example, could leave one uncertain about exactly what priority, among many other priorities, the Bank places on the “social.” Despite a requirement to address social issues in the Project Concept Note (PCN) and the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), PCN/PAD annexes 2 through 10 (annex 1 is a logframe analysis of the project design) present a detailed project description, estimated costs, cost-benefit analyses, cost-effectiveness summary, financial summaries, procurement arrangements, financial management and disbursement arrangements, processing schedule, and so on, but no reference whatever to social or environmental considerations, and no tools for addressing them.

The manager, who has a heavy workload and who is most likely not a professional social scientist, must, with good will but very little support,
To produce information for managers on beneficiaries and affected populations by using conventional social science techniques in a naturalistic way to improve projects, sector work, and policy.

Using a related set of techniques, to get client feedback and to make development interventions more responsive to demand.

To analyze social issues and solicit stakeholder views for the design and often implementation of projects.

To get rapid, cost-effective, timely information, drawing on local knowledge.

To work with groups and communities to produce information on priorities and options, and to create local action.

To produce information to help inform, shape, and create poverty policy.

To act on macroeconomic, structural, and sectoral policy reform by using an organized set of processes for identifying stakeholders, analyzing issues, and monitoring results.

To empower local communities to enable them to act on their priorities.

To provide evaluation feedback from citizens on their satisfaction with a sector, industry, or service provider with regard to adequacy, quality, efficiency, and access.

What is its purpose?

|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 2.1 Characteristics of Participatory Approaches

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local communities, groups; also used with other stakeholders</td>
<td>Policy makers and service providers; people and groups affected by programs and projects</td>
<td>National and local sources who can help identify and provide information on social and cultural factors likely to affect development</td>
<td>Local communities, groups</td>
<td>Local communities, groups; also used with other stakeholders</td>
<td>Local communities, groups</td>
<td>National and local stakeholders who will be affected by or who can affect policy</td>
<td>Local communities, groups</td>
<td>National, regional, and local service providers and service users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What methods are used?</td>
<td>Conversational interviewing, focus groups, participant observation, institutional assessment</td>
<td>Methods drawn from BA, RRA, PRA, and farming systems research, among others</td>
<td>Wide range of largely qualitative methods, most of which are aids to group discussion</td>
<td>Wide range of largely qualitative methods, most of which are aids to group discussion</td>
<td>PLA techniques plus, in theory, some techniques used in BA, such as participant observation</td>
<td>Surveys, rapid field assessment, key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups</td>
<td>Extensive use of visual aids that help people foster their own analysis and decision-making</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td></td>
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Table 2.1 (Continued)
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<tr>
<th>How long does it take?</th>
<th>Generally three to four months; should be iterative</th>
<th>Intended to be carried out throughout the life of a project</th>
<th>Long term—a number of months</th>
<th>Short term—a few days to a week or more for one community</th>
<th>Longer than RRA—can take from four to five days to several weeks for one community</th>
<th>A week or less on average for one community</th>
<th>Long term—a number of months</th>
<th>Long term—a number of months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it tied to action by local stakeholders?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not necessarily</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who defines the problem?</td>
<td>Development organization and researchers</td>
<td>Development organization and researchers</td>
<td>Development organization and researchers</td>
<td>Development organization and researchers</td>
<td>Development organization and researchers</td>
<td>Development organization and researchers</td>
<td>Development organization and researchers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who generates the research?</td>
<td>Professional researchers</td>
<td>Professional researchers</td>
<td>Professional researchers</td>
<td>Inside and outside researchers</td>
<td>Inside and outside researchers with local community or group</td>
<td>Inside and outside researchers with local community or group</td>
<td>Professional researchers</td>
<td>Inside and outside facilitators with local community or group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From whom or what is the information obtained?</td>
<td>Beneficiaries and affected populations; other stakeholders</td>
<td>Various stakeholders including local people and groups</td>
<td>Existing studies; specialists who have knowledge pertinent to social and cultural patterns; beneficiaries and affected populations</td>
<td>Local people and groups</td>
<td>Local people and groups</td>
<td>Local people and groups</td>
<td>Documents, journalists, academics, groups, communities, and other stakeholders who can affect or be affected by policy</td>
<td>Local people and groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who or what are the results for?</th>
<th>Managers and staff on a project</th>
<th>Development agencies, government, researchers</th>
<th>Development projects and programs</th>
<th>Local communities, development programs</th>
<th>Policy-makers</th>
<th>Policymakers</th>
<th>Local community</th>
<th>Development agencies, service providers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who acts on the results?</td>
<td>Managers and staff on a project</td>
<td>Local communities, development programs</td>
<td>Development projects and programs</td>
<td>Local communities, development programs</td>
<td>Policy-makers</td>
<td>Policymakers</td>
<td>Local community</td>
<td>Development agencies, service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes it different from the others?</td>
<td>Is aimed at managers’ needs; uses conventional and participatory techniques to “listen” in a systematic way</td>
<td>A comprehensive iterative process for providing information throughout a project</td>
<td>Gives a larger social and cultural picture of general factors that may affect development of project; done by borrower</td>
<td>Faster than conventional techniques; based on respect for validity of local knowledge</td>
<td>Same as RRA but participatory, in the sense that local people and groups help to produce the knowledge; is always action-oriented at the local level</td>
<td>Uses participatory research with local communities to inform poverty policy, rather than to create local action</td>
<td>Aim is to analyze policy in a systematic way and use results to inform the policy process</td>
<td>Primary aim is not to produce information, although it does, but to empower people to use it for action</td>
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<tr>
<th>What was it created for that other approaches didn’t have?</th>
<th>No other approach targeted the manager as a client; no other approach relies as systematically on conventional anthropological, sociological, and market research techniques.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking a one-off approach rather than an iterative one</td>
<td>No other approach explicitly worked out the continuity of processes for getting and using information throughout a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using large-scale surveys rather than field research analyzing social and cultural patterns, particularly when responsibility for work is exogenous to project</td>
<td>No other approaches, such as conventional anthropological or sociological research, were specifically focused on factors that might have an impact on development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being oriented toward policy or poverty</td>
<td>No other approaches were participating, that is, local people or groups participated in the production of information and the decisions about its use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few other development agency approaches were being used to transform and empower communities</td>
<td>Development policies were not being analyzed in a systematic and iterative process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users were not being consulted or informed in an organized way; a new way of using information to improve services</td>
<td>No other approaches, such as conventional anthropological research, were specifically focused on factors that might have an impact on development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not focusing on managers’ needs; not following established procedures of social science research; using formal rather than naturalistic approaches</td>
<td>Using large-scale surveys rather than field research analyzing social and cultural patterns, particularly when responsibility for work is exogenous to project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using “outsider” information only; imposing outsider categories</td>
<td>Same as RRA. Also, not involving local people and groups as producers and actors on information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not focusing on policy; not following a coherent process</td>
<td>Not being oriented toward policy or poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using results and facilitation processes to manipulate communities, or simply to provide information for outsiders</td>
<td>Ignoring users; not using results to improve services; losing transparency.</td>
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</table>
determine which relevant social issues are likely to affect achievement of
the project’s development objectives. If done properly, this would be a chal-
genle even for more experienced social scientists. If social issues do exist,
managers are expected to evaluate the competing claims of various stake-
holder-oriented approaches, some of which are not clearly outlined, or else
use one simply because it is familiar, currently popular, or selected by a
consultant. An independent study of Bank-supported projects (Monico and
Mahony 1998) showed that task team leaders maintained no consistency
in their approaches to identifying primary stakeholders and that “project
teams engage primary stakeholders in project design only in accordance
with their own personal approach to development and knowledge, skills
and interest in participation. Participatory approaches have more to do with
the [task team leader’s] individual preferences and background.” Most
managers are, in fact, confused by the range of participatory approaches,
each with its own acronym, functions, and advocates.

In addition, many managers are suspicious of the mechanics of these
approaches and still uncertain about the validity of the data arising from
them. Some have come to expect less from social analysis than they get from
economic analysis. Often, presentations of findings are too long, too vague,
and too unsuitable for operational or policy application. Bank documents
provide no real guidance on how to incorporate the findings of social analy-
sis and little in the research would facilitate this. Compounding these
difficulties, analysis of Bank reports and documents and discussions with
managers shows that misunderstandings about social science research are
common in the Bank, and many of the Bank-sponsored discussions, work-
shops, and seminars provide little help—deteriorating, for example, into
unproductive debates on whether particular research methods can be
categorized as contextual or noncontextual; qualitative or quantitative;
objective or subjective; extractive or participatory; or producing depth rather
than breadth. Statements have been made in discussions and publications
that reflect confusion: “A questionnaire is the most representative approach”
confuses a research instrument with sampling; “qualitative methods” may
be seen to confuse a data presentation format with research techniques.
“Ethnography” is sometimes used to mean “qualitative research,” but other
times to mean “social and cultural characteristics” when, in fact, it refers to
a description of a group’s culture, presented in whatever format might be
appropriate.

Now, just as Bank consciousness has evolved toward stakeholder and
beneficiary participation in development, the process has come under seri-
ous and credible criticism by practitioners and academics in a forceful
debate (see, for example, Cooke and Kothari 2001). No longer is there a
simple call for more participation by stakeholders, and especially by local
communities: the nature and extent of their involvement and how it is pos-
sible for stakeholders to be meaningfully involved are being questioned,
as well as the claims and practical implications of various methodological and theoretical approaches. Some participatory approaches that have enormous potential for getting useful information are clearly being used in ways (extractive, for example) that may diminish their impact in the future and may even lead to community reactions (such as participation fatigue) that will make it difficult to continue to use them. These issues, which are bound to affect Bank practice, are part of the reason for reviewing the contribution that Beneficiary Assessment and related approaches can make.

**The Use and Contribution of Beneficiary Assessment**

This large institution, likened by some to a giant ocean liner, has moved, albeit slowly, toward supporting increasingly inclusive and responsive policies and programs over the last 20 years. As for the participatory approaches themselves, both BA and PPA have been the subject of several reviews with largely favorable outcomes (Amelga 1994; Salmen 1998b, 1999; Owen and Van Domelen 1998; Robb 2002).

BA has been used to study issues related to education (Brazil, Mali, Pakistan, Turkey); sericulture (India); agriculture, particularly extension (extensively in Africa, see box 2.4); social funds (in all regions); health (Ethiopia, Lesotho, Niger); energy (Malawi); and urban development (Brazil, Thailand); to name but a few. BA was also used in many of the early poverty assessments and became the cornerstone of the PPA approach, developed to ensure that poverty reduction policies take into account the experience and concerns of the poor. Between 1983 and 1997, BA was used in 106 projects in 59 countries across eight sectors. Through 2004, it was estimated that BAs had been conducted on over 250 projects in all sectors and regions of Bank lending.

BA has been used in project identification, preparation, and implementation. One example is the case of Zambia. Between 1992 and 1998, five BAs were carried out in the education and health components of the Zambia Social Recovery Project by Zambian researchers to look at basic issues in project preparation and implementation, to assess the impacts of actions arising from the mid-term review to which the BA research had contributed, and to examine the effect that the Social Recovery Project had on community empowerment, district capacity building, and poverty reduction (Milimo, Shilito, and Brock 2002).

These BAs clearly had significant effects on the project, on the health and education sectors, and on policy. Evaluation of the BAs’ impact has generally been positive. Of 41 task team leaders surveyed in 1998, 86 percent found BAs cost effective and nearly three-quarters were “very satisfied” with the overall quality of the BA (Salmen 1998b). Host country managers of agricultural extension programs in 10 countries reported that BA had affected project design and extension policy, and that they intended to use
Box 2.4 Beneficiary Assessment of Agricultural Extension in Senegal

In 1994 a BA covering roughly 3,600 farmers in all regions of Senegal was carried out to assess the effectiveness of a national training and visit (T&V) program. This sample included 2,400 individual conversational interviews and 150 focus groups. Three-quarters of the sample was in areas affected by the project; one-quarter, a control group, in areas still untouched by it. The objective of T&V was to increase agricultural production by having extension workers transmit improved cropping techniques to contact groups of farmers. The contact group members were then to pass the messages on to their neighbors and fellow community members to generalize the benefits of the learning.

Findings from this BA confirmed the value of the technology imparted but revealed the weakness in the dissemination strategy of the T&V approach as exercised in Senegal. The factor most attributed to increased production by the farmers was the improved cropping techniques taught by the project (mentioned by roughly one-third of the farmers, well above the second most important factor, water, mentioned by 16 percent). Yet, close to half (43 percent) of the farmers interviewed stated that they had received no message from extension agents, directly or indirectly. Indeed, less than half (40 percent) of all farmers interviewed knew of the existence of contact groups—a percentage that drops by half, to 20 percent, for women, who make up the bulk of Senegalese farmers (but who represented only 14 percent of the membership of the contact groups). So, the message was good but not getting through to most farmers, particularly the women. As a result of this BA, the Senegalese extension agency sought to improve its effectiveness by integrating contact groups with village associations and recruiting additional women as extension agents.

it again as an iterative feedback tool (Salmen 1999). A 1993 review (Amelga 1994) found that BAs:

- influenced policy and led to changes in project design through improved targeting, efficiency, and effectiveness of programs;
- informed policy with otherwise unavailable or new information;
- increased sustainability by providing operationally oriented feedback from the client population;
- gave voice to the poor by indicating what the poor see as problems and possible solutions;
- promoted dialogue, ownership, and commitment by involving all stakeholders in listening and consultation.
However, a 1998 study of the utility of BAs of social funds in eight countries noted that most evaluations of BAs had focused on the “level of follow-up action within the project addressing recommendations from the BA” and less on the “technical and process-related dimensions of designing and implementing a beneficiary assessment,” which the authors of the BAs felt was important to confirm and justify the validity of qualitative methods to skeptical Bank users (Owen and Van Domelen 1998). It concluded that the most convincing BAs were those that combined various methods producing both qualitative and quantitative data, and that checked validity through triangulation (following precepts established in the original BA approach as shown in appendix 1). It is this approach that will be employed in the model of “integrated knowledge of development” in chapter 4.

How Well Is the Bank Using Participatory Learning Approaches?

In view of all this, one might ask how the Bank has actually been doing in relation to its own aims. Several studies have produced a less than positive answer. In 1994, the World Bank’s board of directors approved adoption of “Immediate Actions to Mainstream Current World Bank Work on Participation” (World Bank 1994c). In 1997, a year after the Project Concept Document (PCD) was introduced, a study drawing on interviews of Bank task managers conducted by an independent organization noted that “it is clear that participation of primary stakeholders (poor and marginalized communities and groups affected by the intended project or policy) is not being incorporated into Bank-funded interventions in anything but a sporadic way” (Monico and Mahony 1998).

Participation in a Country Assistance Strategy

Participatory approaches are mandated in various Bank documents, from guidelines on how to prepare a CAS, to the various project cycle documents, economic and sector work, and policy formulation and implementation. In theory, this is a continuous process. Booth and Lucas (2001), in discussing poverty research, have pointed out that:

What is required is not a greater general emphasis on some particular point in the chain from inputs to final outcomes, but greater linkage all along the chain. There needs to be more thinking about change in a joined-up way, and on measuring things that are thought to be connected to other things that matter from a poverty-reduction viewpoint. (p. 13)

This statement is clearly applicable to the stages of Bank work in all sectors. Some published studies provide insights into how managers have
performed in relation to these mandated expectations, beginning with the CAS:

[T]he CAS is unique among Bank products, as it remains a Bank-government document, not negotiated with any other party. Efforts to involve civil society in the CAS are therefore for the purposes of consultation and joint assessment (two of the stages in The World Bank and Participation [1994]), rather than actual control over decision-making in the program. In many cases, participatory research methods are used (for example, to rank what civil society leaders or the poor themselves view as highest priority actions for reducing poverty) and sometimes the findings of these exercises and identified priorities are presented in the CAS focuses. Such CASs are then usually referred to as “participatory” CASs. (Clark and Dorschel 1998, p. 3)

The guidelines for preparing a CAS include

#32 (d) A discussion of the social, political economy and institutional factors . . . that affect the country situation and the Bank Group’s strategy

#32 (f) A diagnosis of other cross-cutting issues in the country—gender, environment, private sector or financial sector issues—drawing on available SSPs.

The associated Upstream Review Meeting Documentation requires “a description of the participatory processes to be followed in developing the CAS.”

Figure 2.1 shows a “high-case scenario” of how stakeholders might be involved.

In a study of the 47 full CASs done in fiscal 1997–98, according to information supplied by the relevant manager and NGO specialists in resident missions, fewer than 10 “had extensive consultation with a broad array of CS [civil society] stakeholders . . .” (Clark and Dorschel 1998, pp. 3–4). A study of CAS preparations in 2000, performed using documents only, showed that 30 percent had a “high” level of participation (although the methods and definitions used in the latter study do not permit comparisons with the Clark and Dorschel study) (World Bank 2000b, p. 13). The Bank streamlined and consolidated its policy and operational framework for CAS disclosure and stakeholder consultation during fiscal years 2002 through 2004. As a result, the Bank review found that civil society participation occurred in 79 (70 percent) of the 113 CASs, CAS Progress Reports, and other related strategies submitted to the Board during that period (World Bank 2005b). The participatory processes in CAS formulation have involved increasing consultation with a broader array of ministries in the executive branch, parliaments or legislatures, CSOs, private sector groups, and other donor agencies. This finding demonstrates a significant increase in civil
**Figure 2.1 A High-Case Scenario for Participation in CASs**

**ESW (Building Blocks of the CAS)**
- Specialized NGO involvement in SECTOR ANALYSIS health, education, micro credit, etc.
- Environmental NGOs and broader civil society input into NEAPs
- Women’s organizations input GENDER ASSESSMENT
- NGOs and local social scientists do participatory research to feed into the POVERTY ASSESSMENT
- Civil Society input into ESW on issues identified through interaction with civil society

**Priority Scoping**
- Determination of NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES and KEY STRATEGIES for responding to them
- Civil Society Involvement National level workshops either with single or multiple stakeholder groups. Participants to be given seminars of relevant ESW and other inputs and outline of government priorities in advance. Workshops could use “Groupware” or other technology and/or external professional facilitators
- ESW to be initiated on “NEW” PRIORITY AREAS identified by workshops

**Action Planning**
- ACTION AGENDA Actions needed to implement the key strategies; constraints and how to resolve; partnerships needed relevant indicators
- Workshops involving leaders and strategic thinkers from civil society who had participated earlier

**Lending Program**
- Government-Donor DIALOGUE about appropriate 3 year LENDING PROGRAM to meet the action agenda
- Discussion/ratification by BANK’S BOARD
- FEEDBACK on agreed strategies to civil society participation in CAS process

**Source:** Clark and Dorschel 1998, annex 2.

**Note:** CAS = Country Assistance Strategy; ESW = economic and sector work; NEAP = National Environment Action Plan; NGO = Nongovernmental organization
society involvement in CAS consultations over the past four years as CASs have become increasingly public documents. This level of disclosure represents an important advance—as recently as five years ago, most CASs were still not publicly available.

**Participation in the Project Cycle**

Bank Task Teams are expected to assess the extent to which relevant social issues are likely to affect the achievement of a project’s development objective and outcomes. The task team builds on existing social information available from prior studies in appraising the project’s social opportunities, constraints, potential impacts, and risks. Adverse social impacts will trigger planning either to draw on existing analytical studies or to undertake further analytical work during project preparation. The Project Concept Note reflects the findings of the scoping exercise and the proposed actions for doing any necessary social analysis. This work is the responsibility of the borrower, assisted, if necessary, by the Bank.

The “Guidelines for Completing the Project Concept Document” and the “Guidelines for Completing the Project Appraisal Document” that were used throughout the 1990s (and which are now both modified, and the Project Concept Document is now the Project Concept Note) were largely identical and stated, in part,

- **#6.1 Describe** the steps undertaken for social analysis and the results of the social analysis and how this analysis has informed project design. The analysis should (a) determine the key social issues in relation to project objectives; (b) identify the key stakeholder groups in this context and determine how the relationships between stakeholder groups will affect or be affected by the project; (c) identify social development outcomes of the project to achieve those outcomes.

- **#6.2 Participatory Approach: How are key stakeholders participating in the project?**

- **#6.3 How does the project involve consultations or collaboration with NGOs and other civil society organizations? (This involvement includes community organizations).**

- **#6.4 What institutional arrangements have been provided to ensure the project achieves its social development outcomes. . . What formal and informal organizations at the local, regional and national levels are relevant to the project? Do proposed institutional arrangements ensure access for and serve the needs of primary beneficiaries?**

- **#6.5 How will the project monitor project performance in terms of social development outcomes?. . . Have monitoring of social development indicators been integrated within the project monitoring**
system or will resources be earmarked for separate social impact monitoring? Can participatory monitoring strengthen the project? Does the project establish an information dissemination mechanism through which stakeholders receive social data and contribute to its analysis?

However, a study carried out by Monico and Mahony (1998), after managers had been using new 1997 Project Concept Document (PCD) guidelines (PCD E.7) for identifying and involving primary stakeholder groups for a full year, examined 19 PCDs. Various approaches, including BA and participatory assessments, had been used. Most of the PCDs did not provide specific information about primary stakeholders and often included only the more powerful stakeholders, many of whom had been identified at an earlier stage of policy analysis, before the manager was involved. “No PCD showed a consistent approach to follow-up or how stakeholder participation would evolve through different stages of the project cycle” (Monico and Mahony 1998). This study also found that the use of effective participatory approaches appears to have more to do with the task team leaders’ individual preferences and background than adherence to guidelines.

In more recent years the Social Development Department’s portfolio review16 of intended civil society involvement in Bank projects (actual involvement in identification, preparation, and appraisal, plus planned participation for the remaining stages of the project cycle) showed that in fiscal year 2001, 68 percent of 264 operations approved by the Bank had the intended involvement of civil society. “Involvement” ranged from minimal information sharing (47 percent), to some form of consultation (97 percent), to collaboration (67 percent), to empowerment (31 percent). The study notes that the actual quality of participation was not measured.

As in the previous 20 years for which similar records were kept, the portfolio review showed intended civil society involvement was highest in sectors that have traditionally taken participatory approaches, such as education and social protection, and lowest in areas such as structural adjustment and programmatic loans, or projects supporting economic and financial reforms. Participation of civil society organizations in the Economic Policy Sector, for example, was only 13 percent. Involvement was also higher in the earlier stages of the project, and lowest in the later monitoring and evaluation stages (World Bank 2001d).

It appears from interviews with managers, however, that beneficiary and affected population research is most likely to be done later in the project cycle, during the implementation stage. In the words of one manager, “If you do it then, the government funds it and becomes the owner.” Although this book looks only at participatory approaches to getting information, the interviews corroborate a finding from the Social Development Department database for 1994–98 that showed that participation (of all kinds) by primary stakeholders was most common in the implementation phase (World Bank ...
Managers offered a number of reasons for why information from stakeholders was not obtained earlier, and asked a number of questions:

- Some social issues are obvious, known from previous studies and previous experience in the sector, but how can the manager know enough to explore other complex or indirect factors that are not documented?
- Is it they, the managers, who should be responsible for determining the issues to assess? If it is government, how do the managers ensure that it is done?
- Where will the funding come from? Often, serious planning for involvement of stakeholders does not occur until funds are approved.
- Does the government have the capacity and commitment?
- Will people’s expectations be raised unrealistically by the process?
- Is this the right time to be doing this? Is the PCD stage too early to be engaged in these activities? As one manager said, “If you do social assessment during the preparation process, the government will give up on you.”
- Managers may also be selecting goals that they feel they can attain, rather than examining how such goals relate to people’s needs. They may be concerned about finding that, as one manager put it, “the beneficiary/stakeholder consultations don’t necessarily lead to what makes sense, technically.” In that case, because getting such information “...is a ritualistic process, done in a rush in capital cities with people who are not representative, producing ‘soft’ data,” it doesn’t seem worthwhile.
- Finally, managers say that during implementation various events occur that may require closer examination, for example, how the project is playing out locally or why an activity has not had an expected impact. Many issues are not even known at the identification stage, but surface later. “At the implementation phase the work is more tightly focused and more micro—you know exactly what you need to know by then.”

Despite these points, most managers felt that they would benefit from having participatory research carried out earlier in the project cycle (identification, appraisal), and had a number of ideas for dealing with these questions and issues. Some of these have already been presented as recommendations in earlier Bank studies, such as that of Monico and Mahony (1998), but obviously have not been implemented. Their thoughts are reflected in some of the recommendations presented later in this book.

**Specific Impacts on Policy**

Although the original purpose of participatory approaches was to help managers to improve projects (through a BA, for example), to enable communities to identify issues and take action (perhaps through a PRA), and to empower communities (as in a SARAR), by the 1990s, participatory
approaches had been used to affect policy as well. BA and PRA sector assessments were used in health, education, and urban poverty, and PPAs had been integrated into the PRSP process with the intention of affecting poverty policy. The boxes throughout this book illustrate examples of the effects that the approaches have had on project and sector policy.

However, practitioners still complain that participatory research has little impact on policy at the national level. Why this might be the case is examined in chapter 3, but how little effect participatory programs have indeed had is clear from a Bank study that looked at 21 PPAs in detail (those for which there was sufficient information out of a total of 43 reviewed, and about 120 done by various organizations throughout the world). Fewer than one-third of the 21 had had a significant impact on policy—Bank policy, national policy, or country capacity to implement policy. Also, of 28 countries that had PPAs as part of their PRSP, either complete or interim, 14 had some impact on the PRSP’s poverty analysis, but only four had an impact on budget priorities and public actions, and only three on the goals and monitoring indicators chosen (Robb 2002).

It would be incorrect to leave the impression that participatory work has had no effect on national policies at all. However, there is much to be done in widening the impact of learning gained through participation well beyond the improvement of single projects or World Bank guidelines.

Notes

1. For an excellent discussion of the history of industrial democracy and action research, see Greenwood and Levin 1998.

2. In 1994, informal guidelines for incorporating social analysis into project appraisal and preparation replaced the formal guidelines in the 1984 Operational Manual Statement, and some assistance to task team leaders in carrying them out was provided.

3. As Greenwood and Levin pointed out (1998), approaches similar to PRA were developed independently in other places—the International Potato Center in Peru, ISNAR in the Netherlands, and at Cornell, among others.

4. Social development generally includes human rights, social policy, governance, institutional development, gender, and social capital. As defined in the Bank, it is “equitable, socially inclusive and therefore sustainable. It promotes local, national and global institutions that are responsive, accountable and inclusive and it empowers poor and vulnerable people to participate effectively in development processes” (World Bank, Social Development page of Web site).

6. For a history of the ways in which social factors have been taken into account in Bank operations and a discussion of outstanding challenges, see Francis and Jacobs 1999.

7. An example of the confusion associated with these approaches, as noted earlier, is found in the Bank’s PovertyNet Web site, which describes BA as involving “systematic consultation with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders to help them identify and design development activities, signal any potential constraints to their participation, and obtain feedback on reactions to an intervention during implementation” when, in fact, it is primarily aimed at helping managers (Web site accessed January 2002). Elsewhere, the World Bank Participation Sourcebook (1996b) states, “Systematic listening and consultation [which includes BA] do not lead to increased facilitation of client participation in decision-making or action.”

8. Until the mid-1990s, most BAs in the Bank were designed and supervised by Salmen, in collaboration with project or sector colleagues. Today, other managers or consultants generally assume this task.

9. See appendix 1 to this book for a fuller description of the BA approach.

10. In fact, in this article, the terms were used interchangeably (Francis, personal communication).

11. QAG reviews social and other aspects of project work annually.

12. The practice seems to be that an approach is given a new name and acronym when it is used for a new purpose—PPA, when it is oriented toward a special “sector,” poverty; PME when it is oriented to a particular phase in the project cycle. Other applications may get their own names eventually, for example, PRO (Participatory Research for Organizations) or PRC (Participatory Research with Children), BARB (Beneficiary Assessment on Rights-Based Issues), PRACG (PRA on Reaching Common Ground), and so on.

13. PRA, it should be noted, is not the same as Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is not a common approach in most international agencies. While PRA emphasizes democratization, social and political inclusion, education, health, and better infrastructure as means of helping to reduce poverty, PAR sees poverty as the result of the fundamental and systemic oppression of the poor by wealthy elites, nationally and internationally, and its aim is to help people, using local knowledge, to do their own investigations into the sources of their oppression, to mobilize, and to create practical interventions. Orlando Fals Borda’s work is an instance of this approach.

14. In effect, Voices of the Poor differs from the other major mode of poverty assessment, the household survey, mainly in style and in including a more multidimensional conception of poverty, while suffering from problems of data aggregation not usually found in household surveys. The trade-off, however, is that by taking a “survey” approach, cross-community and international comparisons can be made.

15. Fred Nunes, a veteran of organizational development at the Bank, elaborates, “The WBG’s long established strength remains huge infrastructure
projects—dams, railroads, ports, roads, airports, etc., which rely on analysis. Even the move into human capital—education, health, population—was undertaken with a strong ‘expert’ frame and one in which we dragged our hard wired infrastructure project approach into these softer areas! The more recent explicit ventures into participation, partnership, civil society, and into programs as opposed to projects all call (scream) for a move toward AI. But this involves new language, new skills and in fact a new culture based on openness and uncertainty. This is as far away from the (technical) expert model as one can get. Such a shift is hard for a powerful institution that until very recently was a typical public bureaucracy—closed, top-down, and expert driven” (personal communication November, 2004).

16. This review (World Bank 2001d) is based entirely on project documents, such as the PAD and the President’s Reports.
17. For example, Norton and others 2001.
The discussion leading up to the final chapters builds the foundation for the argument by looking first at some common sources of confusion about participatory research on the one hand, and some more productive ways of thinking about it on the other. An understanding of how these ways of thinking can be integrated into information-gathering approaches is strengthened. Why does the book say, for example, that participation may not be the answer to everything; that despite the rhetoric, not all participatory approaches are participatory in practice; and that some of the information-getting approaches used in development work have become unmoored from their foundations?

Since the 1980s, participation has been a key concept in development. Managers have shifted from a purely econocentric, top-down, institutional perspective to a realization that the social concerns of beneficiaries matter, too, and that good information must be drawn from multiple perspectives. Now, however, the broad concept of participation needs to be narrowed down and focused through concentration on several issues. Should all development activity be participatory? When is participatory research appropriate? Is action always necessary in participatory research? Can participatory research affect policy? This section begins to answer those questions.

**Participation and Research**

*Which Levels of Participation Are Genuinely Participatory?*

Stakeholders and beneficiaries can participate in development activities in a variety of ways. The Bank’s PovertyNet Web site describes a continuum from low participation to high, in order of stakeholder influence:

- One-way information sharing—this alone is not considered meaningful participation.
• Two-way consultation—information is shared and views, opinions, concerns, and suggestions are sought in relation to such information. Consultation is carried out with a commitment to listen so managers can, for instance, modify options, prioritize activities, and take corrective actions in a project.
• Joint assessment.
• Shared decisionmaking.
• Collaboration—provides the means for shared decisionmaking. In this scheme, “community participation” is one form of collaboration.
• Empowerment.1

Three steps along the continuum—joint assessment, shared decisionmaking, and empowerment—are not sufficiently described to be able to assess what criteria are used to determine their presence or absence.

Only the last three (shared decisionmaking, collaboration, and empowerment) are participatory according to the PovertyNet and other Bank writings on participation (Clark and Dorschel 1998). Eberlei (2001), in examining the distinctions made by various authors among the “degrees” or “levels” of project or program participation, shows that most recognize between four and six levels. The four most commonly agreed on are

• information-sharing;
• consultation;
• joint decisionmaking;
• control by stakeholders.2

Different stages of projects or programs often have different levels of participation. High-level participation is unlikely in the earliest stages until beneficiaries and other stakeholders are brought into the process. Even Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), a process thought of as participatory, usually begins after the agenda and main focus have been decided by an external development body. For example, girls’ education projects begin with a sectoral focus that may not reflect the preoccupations and concerns of the supposed beneficiaries. Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs), although cross-sectoral, still have as their focus issues relating to poverty; the stakeholders’ participation begins after the poverty focus has been set. Indeed, as such poverty may not be an explicit concern of the poor, whose attention is focused on immediate needs, such as food security. Various Beneficiary Assessments (BAs) of social funds have shown that communities are more likely to be involved in implementation than in preparation of projects—preparation is more heavily influenced by local governments, municipal organizations, politicians, churches, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), promoters, or contractors. In fact, a BA review warned in 1998 that
the preparation phase was the weakest link in social fund operations (Owen and Van Domelen 1998).

Participatory elements occur in many types of information-getting approaches, such as BA and Social Assessment (SA), but the full gamut occurs only in PLA programs and some empowerment programs. Of these, few that are carried out by large international agencies lead specifically to local empowerment or action.

Can or Should All Development Activity Be Participatory?

Some managers are concerned that advocates, in their zeal to spread the gospel of participation, seem to claim that beneficiary and affected population participation is the solution to everything. However, only the most naive practitioner would argue for participation for participation’s sake. The learning approaches discussed in this book are used when projects and policies can benefit from the input of a particular group. Stakeholders can have valuable views on complex issues that must be dealt with at a level beyond the group or community. For example, they can explain that the current school examination system schedule is disruptive of community economic activities, puts excessive pressure on students, is subject to unfair or corrupt marking, and even that the content (and therefore the content of the curriculum) is irrelevant to the cultural, cognitive, and skills needs of the community. What could be more critical to planners than insights such as these?

However, it is patronizing to ask people to invest time and raise expectations on matters on which their expertise has little or no bearing. A local community cannot be expected to redesign the national textbook distribution system. Communities may be well aware of financial corruption at the national level, so much so that this perception may lead to civil unrest and is therefore important to understand, but they cannot be asked to redesign national financial reporting systems. Improving national examination standards cannot be addressed at the community level. As part of an education research project, however, discovering that people are dissatisfied with the education system because standards are so low is useful, as would be a discovery that local corruption means that the standards are not applied equitably.

It is quite possible, though, to involve communities or groups in aspects of a topic that are to be resolved at a level beyond the local: the Sericulture Project in India showed that people could speak knowledgably about training for women and children’s labor conditions. The Zambia BAs showed that the government needed to simplify application procedures for community subproject proposals, get greater district involvement, and reconsider the way in which funds and materials, which were being
misappropriated not only by local strongmen but also by church groups, should be channeled.

**Deciding When Participatory Research Is Appropriate**

Should the participation process be included in the full development cycle from problem identification to action taking, to monitoring and evaluation? When is simple consultation more appropriate? This book, of course, focuses on only one aspect of participation—research to produce knowledge and understanding. Such research should be participatory when

- a group—a community or organization—will be affected by, or is being affected by, an issue, a proposed change, or an introduced program; or
- a group’s views are relevant and needed for tailoring project or sector work, improving it, getting buy-in, or for evaluation and monitoring.

Deciding when research participation is not appropriate is more complex, and depends also on the form the participation takes. The minimum—consultation and information sharing—is useful for both of the categories above. However, full-blown participation involves a process—identifying issues, discussing and selecting options, and taking action—engaging an entire community or major parts of it over a period of days or even weeks. Drawing people from their other activities to ponder an issue and work through the complete process on issues that may affect them but about which they can do nothing wastes their time.

While the ethical issues of frivolous participation are fairly obvious, there are practical issues, as well. History is full of instances of natural resources having been exhausted in surprisingly short periods of time. People and communities are resources that could, in the space of a decade or two, easily be exhausted in terms of being disillusioned with fruitless, incompetent, and repetitive “participation.” Raised expectations are not being met, and in some places people are refusing to participate, or doing it mechanically. As one Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) expert in Africa who was interviewed for this study said, “Researchers now go into a community and bored people say ‘What kind of map do you want? Social? Mobility? You name it, we can do it.’ ”

In the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) Process Review, which was carried out meticulously and is a model PPA, individuals and communities were reported as being upset and disillusioned at the lack of follow-up to their investment of time and hope (Yates 2000). People were similarly disappointed in early Zambian BAs when not only communities but also district level officials were not getting feedback, although this was rectified in later assessments. In some places, participatory projects have caught the interest of governments that, having been
convinced of their utility, intend to repeat them as a regular process. Such
governments have funding or access to funding to do these in many com-
munities and often end up using people who can facilitate a few simple
PRA techniques but who lack the background to respond flexibly as
research needs arise and, in the process, waste a lot of time and commu-
nity goodwill.

However, most PPAs have been restricted, either through lack of inten-
tion, planning, or funds, to simple consultation with communities. Action
plans, even in the few instances in which they are created, usually do not
lead to mobilization, and if they do, fail to be implemented because of
lack of support. Some implementation has been documented. According
to the Uganda PPA, “Communities . . . formulated their own priorities for
action. Each community interaction culminated in the production of a
Community Action Plan (CAP) to address one of their priority problems.
These plans have been put into action by more than one third of the com-
munities at the time of writing this report” (Republic of Uganda 2000,
p. 7). But according to Yates’s UPPAP Review of 36 communities covered
in UPPAP 1, nine had no implementation, six had some form of mobi-
lization, “attempts were made” in five, four had implementation of some
sort, and two plans were implemented by district officials (Yates 2000,
Annex 5). In summary, she reports that, “Now people are very disap-
pointed about lack of follow-up to the CAPs. They feel let down” (p. 33),
and notes that Robb reported similar responses to poor follow-up in
Pakistan, Mozambique, and Zambia.

It can be argued, of course, that censuses and household surveys are also
carried out regularly and extensively, and have some of the negative con-
sequences mentioned here. However, because they are perceived to be more
difficult to do and more costly, they are not used as routinely, especially now
that international agencies, NGOs, and various groups believe they can
launch a PRA in very short order, and at modest expense, using local facil-
itators. Also, censuses and surveys are individual-centered techniques that
rarely involve groups or mobilization of entire segments of the community.
They are known to be extractive, and respondents’ expectations of benefits
are minimal. Many participatory approaches, on the other hand, involve
marquee techniques that are aesthetically interesting and attractive to groups.
Their philosophical and ethical foundations require the facilitator to encour-
age active participation and expressions of hopes and aspirations.

Is Action Always Necessary in Participatory Research?

Should research that does not result in action be carried out in communi-
ties? Most traditional PLA practitioners say no—that community or stake-
holder group participation means taking a role in deciding on action and
implementing it. Anything else is extractive. Often these traditional practitioners are the technical advisers and trainers on PPAs; that viewpoint influences the process. Traditional practitioners are increasingly anxious to ensure that participatory approaches affect policy, and some, at least, are wondering whether both policy information and local action plans can be combined in one exercise.

Yates, in her process review of UPPAP 1, concluded that “community empowerment is beyond the scope of the UPPAP” (Yates 2000), but that this must be made manifestly clear in each community, and that because poor people’s time, like everyone else’s, is not free (indeed, given the high opportunity cost for all activities undertaken by the poor, their time may be more valuable than anyone’s), some small incentive, such as food, should be offered. In a later document (Yates and Okello 2002, p. 19), Yates goes on to say that the UPPAP experience, “provides weight to the view expressed by Robert Chambers that the only ethical approach to site selection in a PPA” is to “choose communities and groups where responsible follow-up may be possible through an on-going programme (Chambers 1998, p. xvii).” Therefore, in UPPAP 2, a process of integrating local ideas into district plans was to replace community action plans.

Such raised expectations can also be avoided by structuring inquiries to relate directly to a planned or ongoing project. In BA, for example, much of the interviewing is conversational, on a one-to-one basis, conducted by an interviewer whose mission’s scope is clear to the community in which he is living. Even when focus groups are held, they are rarely intended to draw on attitudes and hopes of an entire community, or even of major subgroups.

Can Participatory Research Affect Policy?

This book has already looked at the impacts that specific approaches, such as PPAs, have had with regard to projects, sectors, and policy (see chapter 2). The outcome in relation to policy is mixed: the Zambia BAs on social funds clearly affected government policy in relation to decentralization (see box 3.1); the PPA in Uganda has had a wide range of impacts; and a PRA in The Gambia has led to various government measures to address problems of school costs to parents, including changes in timing of payment for school fees (Kane and deBrun 1993; Kane 1995b). On the other hand, Robb’s (2002) study of PPAs, which are designed to affect policy, shows less impact than one might expect.

It is not surprising that people who are interested in participatory approaches to getting information on beneficiary and affected populations often ask why these approaches are not having more impact on policy. However, perhaps the question should be, why should they? There may be
little a researcher or manager can do to force policymakers to take research into account, but in taking on the problem it is useful to bear in mind the following:

- the importance of understanding how policy is created, a factor that influences the impact of both qualitative and quantitative research;
- the need to design research in relation to policy issues and in relation to the existing structures and processes in participating institutions;
- the practical problems of “manageability” of qualitative findings;
- the lack of trust in qualitative findings, including on the part of those who create and implement policy.

**Policy Issue 1: Understanding How Policy Is Made**

Policymaking is a complex process that is fueled from many sources, not just from the outcomes of special research. As Blackburn (1998, pp. 148, 150) has said,

> Policy making is chaotic and complex: a tangled web of constitutional decrees, legislative acts, institutions, rules, guidelines and orders that can be issued by officials at different levels, and in accordance with strongly rooted traditions and practices. . . . Appreciating the “fuzzy” nature of such change means recognizing that there are multiple gateways into the policy process and thus multiple strategies for influencing the outcome.

However, it is often thought, particularly by researchers, that (a) research results in themselves are sufficiently persuasive to drive a process of rational decisionmaking, or (b) that the voices of the hitherto unheard have a moral force that will take preeminence in policymaking, despite overwhelming
evidence that such voices rarely do. The fact that evidence from research is not the basis of policy in their own organizations does not have much impact on the debate. Nor does the fact that the research findings are, in themselves, shaped by organizational policy—the inquiries that are funded, the selection of what to study, the definition of terms, and so on, all arise from social and political statements, that is, from the organizational culture.

The fact is that research provides one potential ingredient in policy-making, policy provides one ingredient in decision-making, and decision-making provides one ingredient in action. These inputs are organized in a dynamic nonlinear fashion that includes many other considerations, political issues and availability of resources among them. Furthermore, changes in policy do not necessarily lead to changes in outcome.

The concept of purely rational policymaking and decisions, part of the West’s intellectual heritage, discussed in chapter 4, persists. The statement “mainstream development policy, rooted in a positivist paradigm of rational decisionmaking” (McGee and Brock 2001, p. 3), describes a belief that policymakers have, and the type of “legitimate” evidence—quantitative—they are likely to prefer, rather than describing the way policy is actually made. This belief persists despite ample evidence that all human beings, including policymakers, choose alternatives and make plans on grounds other than those rooted in pure rationality and evidence-based knowledge. These choices are not “irrational,” as discussed later, but instead are based on factors that are not susceptible to proof—cultural and religious beliefs, ethical systems, organizational motivations, and so forth. In the case of government policymakers, even in “knowledge-based societies,” decisions are based on a complex of factors: the basic fundamentals of governing, including the realities of the political process and political economic issues; compatibility with political principles; the force of public perception and social tensions; the need to reconcile competing interests; institutional strengths and limitations; exogenous threats, and so on, of which research findings are only a part. Government bodies and international development agencies process research information in different ways through their institutional cultures and institutional objectives.

Policy Issue 2: Understanding How Research Is Designed

A second problem lies with the research itself. Research design and the order of proceeding with research often negates its impact. For example, managers may start out with the research method, “we need a survey on . . . ,” when, in fact, the problem determines the method, not the other way around. The first task in a piece of practical research is to identify the issue, such as teacher quality. The second task, however, is commonly ignored: determining what the research is to be used for. That use influences
not only the questions to be addressed in relation to the issue, but also the way in which the research is conducted. If the research is intended for policymakers, it must be framed in relation to policy.\textsuperscript{4}

To be framed in relation to policy, the research must ask

- how policy is made;
- who the stakeholders in policymaking are;
- can or should policymakers and their partners, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), be actively involved as part of the research design process, and not simply consulted as another group of stakeholders;
- how buy-in can be achieved;
- who will be affected by the findings, and how;
- what aspects of the issue are addressable by policy;
- what are the constraints to policymaking in this area and how can these constraints be reconciled with possible recommendations;
- how should the recommendations be framed and to what audiences should they be directed;
- how should the results be shared.

Any research that is intended to affect policy is two pieces of research: the first is an analysis of how policy is made and used, and the second is the research on the topic itself. The UPPAP did just that, involving major policymaking stakeholders from the beginning, framing the inquiry in ways that were relevant to policy and promulgating the results in a wide variety of forums, nationally and internationally. The results were transparent to government, CSOs, the communities, and the international agencies. Conversely, the PPA carried out in Zambia, which was equally well done technically, did not have the same effects on policy; a study of the reasons for this would be instructive. If participatory approaches can help the understanding of something as complex as a community, they can help the understanding of the policy process, as well.

\textit{Policy Issue 3: The Usefulness of Research Findings}

Other research characteristics are necessary, too, if policy is to be affected. The findings have to be, and be seen to be

- valid;
- traceable;
- relevant;
- manageable;
- substantive;
- usable (manager friendly—producing measurable indicators for evaluation);
- persuasive.
Box 3.2 Quantification from a “Qualitative” Research Technique: Beneficiary Assessment for an HIV/AIDS Project in Niger

In December 2001 and January 2002, conversational, one-on-one interviews were conducted with 3,619 key stakeholders to better understand their knowledge and behavior regarding the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Niger. One issue illuminated by this naturalistic approach was the use of condoms. While questionnaires often find that condom use is high, these more in-depth qualitative interviews revealed a low rate of use: 29 percent of miners, 16 percent of youth, 15 percent of farmers, 12 percent of the military, and 6 percent of police and customs officials. Even among full-time professional street and brothel prostitutes, fully 80 percent said they did not demand the use of condoms by their clientele.

The findings have to be substantive; sometimes they are lame or self-evident. As one manager said, “I know the poor are poor and that women are disadvantaged; now I need to know something more specific and more practical.” Findings also have to be succinct and aggregated. One issue everyone agrees on is that managers and policymakers whom they hope to influence have little time to wade through masses of data in any form, either words or numbers. Carvalho and White (1997) pointed out that quantitative work “is invariably heavily drawn on to derive policy recommendations.” Qualitative findings of the sort that the approaches described in this book produce are often used to support and illustrate findings from quantitative research, but are less likely to shape the line of thinking, or even to offer contradictions to quantitative findings. However, sampling and aggregation are quite possible in qualitative, participatory research (see box 3.2).

Managers have to be persuaded by the data, and use it to persuade others. If any of the previous characteristics is missing, persuasiveness suffers, and the manager falls back on any existing survey results, even if old.

Sometimes it is not clear how research findings might be incorporated into government policy and Bank documents, and little in the findings might serve to assist this goal. The task is made much easier if, from the outset, the designers of the research and those implementing and analyzing it have kept in mind the various uses to which the findings will be put, and the audiences who will be using it, as the UPPAP did. The art is not only in allowing insights and perceptions to emerge, but also in presenting these in forms that relate to their intended use. Too often, participatory research findings can overwhelm simply by their accumulated bulk.
Some participatory approaches have greater potential for affecting policy because they are mandated to do so. Bank PPAs, for example, are conceptually built into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process. It is not simply the mandate that has the impact, however, but the fact that the best PRSPs begin with the processes described previously—they are shaped by policy intention and audience from the beginning. Another approach, Policy and Social Impact Analysis, which, as noted earlier, is not participatory in relation to those who are actually affected by policy, does, however, spell out steps for creating policy and policy involvement:

- ask the right questions;
- identify stakeholders (stakeholder analysis);
- understand transmission channels (prices, access to goods and services, assets and transfers and wages);
- assess institutions (market structure analysis, organizational mapping, institutional assessment);
- gather data and information (data collection methods and data constraints);
- analyze impacts (social analysis, direct impact analysis, behavioral analysis, partial and general equilibrium analysis);
- contemplate enhancement and compensation measures (alternative design, compensatory mechanisms);
- assess risks (to and from the reform);
- monitor and evaluate impacts (indicators, baseline);
- foster policy debate and feedback into policy choice.

All of these steps can be undertaken using participatory approaches. BA, for example, suits these requirements, mainly because it is intended to meet managers’ needs in recognizable forms, routinely involves some aggregation, and is usually closely focused.

Notes

1. For a fuller sense of the meaning of “empowerment” and how participation forms a component of the process, see the “Empowerment Framework,” figure 1, p. 20 of Empowerment and Poverty Reduction, A Sourcebook (World Bank 2002a). Within a comprehensive picture, assuming sufficient capabilities and resources on the part of beneficiaries, providing space for participation, as well as information, accountability, and organizational capacity, results in improved development outcomes that become the basis for the next level of reform and development.

2. McGee and Norton (2000) qualify the last to “initiation and control by stakeholders,” meaning that stakeholders, rather than simply taking control of something that has been developed jointly, actually initiate the idea for the activity.
Some authors include “empowerment” as a degree but, in fact, empowerment is a motive for using participatory approaches, and an outcome.

3. However, in the same country, when food was brought to a community during the course of a BA, people felt that this signaled the beginning of something large and important; they also felt chagrined because, as hosts, it was they who should provide the food, and they had to work harder to provide more food for the visitors than the visitors had provided for the participants (Republic of Uganda 2000a, p. 16).

4. Three points are relevant here in asking why social scientists tend to study only one component of the policy process. First, social scientists almost invariably study those lower in social status than themselves: “hypology” or “hypography” might be coined to describe the process. This is not simply because those categories of people may need more help and attention, because much of the research is not particularly problem-oriented; it is also because social scientists can get access to such people through gatekeepers of their own social standing—teachers, community leaders, prison officials, and the like, whereas elites, the powerful and the wealthy, move in networks to which most social scientists do not have access, and they can “protect” themselves and their activities from examination.

Second, real life is cross-sectoral, complex, and multidimensional, and good research reflects that, but as Attwood and May (1998) have pointed out, policies are usually single sector, simplistic, and one dimensional. Closer attention to the realities of policymaking is critical for researchers. At the same time, research that involves policymakers as integral actors in the process, as the UPPAP did, can be used to show them how these issues might be tackled.

Finally, the variables that social scientists choose to study have often been turned into problems in political ways—the causes of homosexuality, rather than the causes of heterosexuality, for example. While the social, economic, and psychological characteristics of the poor are important to know, a study of the “voices of elites,” “voices of policymakers,” or “voices of development professionals” might tell us more about poverty, unless one wishes to argue that the poor have brought their own problems upon themselves.
Building Bridges between Divisive Dichotomies in Development Learning

Throughout the book, explanations are attempted for the options that a manager might draw upon in getting information about beneficiaries and affected populations. Ideas about data and perspectives are also examined—ideas that can form interesting springboards for discussion but that have, instead, become “divisive dichotomies.” For example, is a particular learning approach objective or subjective, is it scientific or nonscientific, participatory or extractive? What do the answers mean for the data the manager gets? There are alternative ways to think about these concepts that open rather than close down options. This chapter examines the “crossings” that need to be made among methods and bridges that need to be built between the dualisms, briefly outlined in the introduction, and what this could mean for development research.

The Case for Participatory Learning: Bridging Ideas about Methods and Information

In the hands of insightful practitioners who know and understand the alternatives and how to use them, and who understand social and cultural complexity, these participatory research techniques and behaviors form a useful addition to ways of understanding certain situations, activities, and processes. In the hands of local communities (for part of the argument for participatory research is that local people can use some of these approaches for their own ends), if they are culturally appropriate or can be adapted to be, they provide another way to approach group discussion.

Yet, participation is not enough: no matter how participatory an approach is, it still has to produce valid data. Getting people involved is only one aspect of finding good research information. The sections that follow look at ways to strengthen development research by bridging philosophies, concepts, perspectives, and methods.

Later, this book looks at journeys between ideas—crossings, hybrids, new perspectives. To do that, some areas where bridges are needed must
be understood. The ways in which some commonly used words cause confusion in research are discussed below, as is how a particular feature of the classical world view sometimes traps researchers' thinking.

Definitions

Definitions are tools of thought, rather than eternal verities, but much time and trouble is saved by reaching consensus on the use of certain words to reflect certain concepts. In the social sciences, some terms that are commonly confused are “methods,” “methodologies,” “instruments,” “tools,” and “data.” To compound the confusion, each of these terms is sometimes combined with another such as “qualitative,” “quantitative,” “hard,” “soft,” “objective,” “subjective,” “participatory,” “extractive,” and so on to form concepts that make little sense, such as “qualitative methods,” which may be seen to confuse a form of data presentation with techniques for getting information—comparable to confusing a form of art, such as “abstract” with the brush stroke techniques for producing it.

Research Terms

A methodology is an approach for getting information, arising out of certain philosophical assumptions about the observable world, the nature of reality, and the role of the observer. This scheme leads to the selection of appropriate information-getting tools, or methods—the survey, for example, or the focus group. An instrument is the mode of delivery of a method: the questionnaire, for example, is the instrument used in a survey—each questionnaire is different, depending on the focus of the survey. For a focus group, the instrument might be a short list of questions and some matrices for stimulating group discussion and organizing and recording information. Data is what emerges from the process of using the instrument. Data can be presented in prose, diagrams, or numerical form. Diagrammatic presentation can be either qualitative (Venn diagrams, mapping) or quantitative (bar graphs, pie charts). The terms tool and toolkit have become common in development research; these are usually assemblages of methods and instruments applied to a specific topic, such as water and sanitation issues or gender concerns.

No technique or its resulting data is inherently “qualitative” or “quantitative,” nor is one technique inherently more “scientific” than another. Science refers to a way of proceeding. It is a system for creating hypotheses or guesses that can be proved false (or true); “science” itself does not prove. Any technique or method can be used as part of this scientific system.
Participation

People often assume that some techniques are inherently more participatory than others, particularly qualitative techniques, because they are often more open-ended. While many quantitative techniques such as surveys are structured and standardized in ways that allow little room for participatory production of new insights, and open-ended qualitative approaches can allow more easily for joint discovery, qualitative techniques can be reduced to a mere stylistic semblance of participation. They can be tied to imposed information-getting agendas in the same way that the more rigid approaches are.

Making either qualitative or quantitative approaches open-ended, therefore, does not necessarily make them participatory. The questions have almost invariably been created by outsiders and the responses, although free form, are shaped by the nature of the questions. A participatory approach begins by sharing the process of determining what is important to know, working with people to explore this, and agreeing how to use the results.

Data

Quantitative data is not more “scientific” than qualitative. It is simply produced in a form that allows statistical analysis. In the data production process, trade-offs are made—data must be grouped into categories, and these categories are, of necessity, imposed. Using one concept (qualitative) to describe a second, unrelated concept (data), to arrive at the term “qualitative data” is only one source of confusion. A second source is the tendency to think in terms of dualisms, rather than continuums, thus producing unnecessarily rigid thinking. This point is particularly important for understanding how people have fallen into research camps, as if embracing strong moral convictions.

Divisive Dichotomies: Considering Methods and Information

In the early 1970s, Conrad Arensberg and Arthur Niehoff (1971) identified a feature of Western thinking that has led to a number of historical, cultural, and ethical impasses: the tendency to polarize concepts (regardless of whether they admit polarization, and whether one half of the pole relates to the other). One end of the pole is characterized as high in value, and the other low. For example, Westerners make distinctions such as moral-immoral, legal-illegal, but also clean-dirty, light-dark, up-down, white-black, right-left, and so forth; political parties that are far from polar in their stances are often seen as such. If one asks an audience the opposite of clean, light, white, not only can the audience almost always come up with the pairings mentioned
here, but the audience members are also able to agree on which is “good” and which is “bad.” According to Arensberg and Niehoff, people in non-Western cultures may recognize this dualistic principle but do not necessarily rank one pole as superior.

Although Arensberg and Niehoff felt that the structure of the Indo-European languages may have fostered this tendency toward polarization, the influence of the positivistic paradigm in modern science, beginning with the Enlightenment, may also be an underlying factor, with its unitary perspective, its belief that phenomena can be neatly and correctly compartmentalized, and that hypotheses are either proven or disproved. Religious paradigms of good and evil, beginning with the epic of Gilgamesh and continuing in the Judeo-Christian-Muslim worldviews and narratives, may bear some responsibility as well.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) principles are frequently phrased using these polarities, or “reversals”—center or periphery, them or us, bottom-up or top-down, North or South, and so on. It is a useful discursive device in the West; it is also a good instance of a Western nonrational assumption, discussed below. In fact, the tendency to dichotomize has so confused the debate in development research that certain major issues have been obscured. What emerges is the quantitative-qualitative distinction, and the frequent urge to clarify the differences by making additional polarized distinctions: scientific or unscientific; objective or subjective; hard or soft. The first term of each of these pairs is usually associated with “quantitative” research, the second with “qualitative.”

Many people are satisfied to see these polarizations as real, and to thank providence that they have fallen on the “right” or “good” side. However, there are those who agree that the midpoint between dualisms is worth reaching, even if only in a cobbled together or sequential way, rather than as a coherent point on the continuum. Hence, the value of the bridges mentioned in the introduction to this book. Many prevalent polarizations are not helpful in research—the “objective” versus “subjective” distinction, for example. The following discussion considers some of the most familiar distinctions.

Dualism 1: Scientific versus Unscientific

Twenty years ago, almost all the approaches discussed in this book, with the exception of participatory action research and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), were unknown in development research. Most major innovations in history—the steamboat, the telephone, the computer—were invented independently by more than one person and resulted from concatenations of technological, ideological, and sociological factors, that is, they were “accidents waiting to happen.” So too are many ideas and principles, such as the rights of man, the concept of evolution, the principle of the individual
as the basis of contract, and the like. Can this also be said for the development and expansion of stakeholder and beneficiary approaches in development? Figure 4.1 shows some of the circumstances that led to stakeholder and beneficiary approaches.

Most people are familiar with the development-related issues in figure 4.1, some of which go back some years. The needs of the poorest of the poor, for example, are as urgent today as they were 30 years ago. The philosophical foundations of the issues are far less well known, certainly to non-social scientists, but also to some practitioners in the field itself. Many people are still caught up in a simple “scientific or unscientific” debate. To understand this, consider first another simplistic dualism.
Rational versus Nonrational. To understand the philosophical foundations of development and development-related research, it is important to distinguish between the terms “rational,” “irrational,” and a critical third term, often left out in dualistic debates, “nonrational.” Rational means based on reason and evidence; irrational means flying in the face of reason and evidence; and nonrational refers to ideas that fall outside the realm of rationality and that cannot be proved or disproved. Take these concepts, for example: people are basically competitive; people value things more if they invest time in them; everything is really in the lap of the gods; local is better than regional; learning is best done through example; the golden age is in the past; some things are best left unsaid; children are naturally good; God is a loving father; we get our rewards in the afterlife. Nonrational is not “bad”—it simply operates in a sphere in which truth or correctness is established by means outside the realm of science, as is the case with religious truths. Most major cultural beliefs in any society are nonrational assumptions; some particularly Western ones, for example, are time is money, nature can be conquered, material well-being is a sign of success, and God is omnipotent but can only do certain things, such as cure cancer, and not others, like regrow a severed leg. However, as the anthropologist Richard Shweder subtitled his book, “there’s more to thinking than reason and evidence,” and nonrational assumptions have an impact on practically everything (Shweder 1984).

Most of our assumptions about development, whether they are economically, politically, or morally based, are also nonrational—for example, the unilinear assumption that people are climbing a ladder toward a developed state, rather than thinking that people are acting adaptively to new situations. So, too, are various assumptions about education; for example, the 19th century belief that children were simply small faulty adults, and the 18th century Romantic belief that children were living in a pure uncorrupted state are both nonrational assumptions.

Paradigms of Research and Knowledge. This point is important in our efforts to look at how people working in development get information because ways of getting information are also based on nonrational assumptions, rather than positioned along a simple scientific-unscientific axis. These assumptions are often called paradigms, and they tend to affect whether we think various kinds of research—household surveys, for example, as opposed to PRA exercises—are “valid” and “true.” Three of these paradigms can be explored by examining their answers to the following questions:

- What is the nature of reality?
- What is the relationship of the observer to what is being observed?
- What do the answers to these questions imply for the methods that are used to obtain knowledge?
Positivists of the past believed that nature was like a giant machine, which could be taken apart and its parts examined; there was a real world out there, a single reality that the observer could stand back and observe; and that experimental and manipulative methods could be used to force Nature to expose the laws on which it operates, so that they could be predicted and controlled. The result of all this would be “objective” facts. Few researchers would claim to be positivists today, although the so-called man-in-the-street still tends to think of this as “science.” The classic science experiment is based on this mode, as is the survey. In the experiment, the variables in a situation are extracted, as one can extract the various parts of a machine. Do students perform better—one variable, or part of the machine—on an exam when the classroom walls are light green, or vibrant red—color being the other variable or other part. Controlled situations are set up to test the hypothesis. If other factors can be ruled out (the two groups of students, the exam, and the general lighting, for example, are the same), it is assumed that the results of the experiment are valid for this situation and, under the same conditions, should be replicable in other schools.

In the household survey, the machine is once again broken up into parts, or categories of interest, and questions developed to reflect those categories. When the results are in and “put together,” it is assumed that they reflect “reality.” Of course, it is a reality designed by the researcher—after all, who created the categories?

Post-positivists have made some adjustments to this: a real world exists, all right, but we humans have limited sensory facilities and intellects to perceive it. We cannot achieve objectivity but that should not stop us from trying: by examining our biases; using multiple theories, methods, and researchers; and by being scrutinized by our peers in the scholarly community. No longer can we claim that the researcher is separate from what is being studied, and has no impact. As Cooke (2001, p. 103) says, “facilitators make interventions: these would not happen except for the presence of the outsider. The very presence of the interventionist changes things.” In the world of development research, an instrument such as the Bank’s Living Standards Measurement Survey draws exclusively on the post-positivistic tradition.

Today, a number of researchers involved in Bank work are calling for “combined methods” or “mixed methods,” blending qualitative and quantitative approaches, reflecting the fact that many now realize that embracing multiple approaches compensates for human limitations; it also addresses more aspects of “reality,” as manifested in the next philosophy examined.

Phenomenologists represent a broad category, covering a wide variety of approaches and schools of thought. In common, however, is their focus on meaning and understanding rather than on “facts.” Phenomenologists argue that there is no objective reality. What is important is reality as people perceive, experience, and interpret it. People use models—cultural, historical, group, individual—to organize and interpret Nature. Situations and contexts are dynamic.
and changing. Each aspect is interrelated with and cannot be understood independently of the others—in other words, no neatly separated machine parts. Knowledge is produced, not discovered. Phenomenologists do not attempt to identify the variables prior to the research—the variables emerge or unfold.

“Emic” research (see dualism 5) is one example, allowing the participants’ categories to emerge, rather than imposing predetermined categories. Some anthropological research is emic, and PRA has borrowed a primitive version of the idea in its wealth ranking and card sorts. Another example, perhaps more familiar to non-social scientists, is general systems theory, which was drawn from biology, physics, chemistry, and engineering in the 1920s, and emphasizes understanding nature through the differences of organization in interacting systems—organic, inorganic, and sociocultural. In practice, the result is that experiments, questionnaires, and other techniques that predetermine the categories of inquiry cannot be used. How to proceed without these techniques is explored in the next chapter, in relation to Beneficiary Assessment (BA) and Social Assessment (SA).

Critical theorists, including, among many others, those who espouse “canonical” approaches, such as Marxists, Freudians, Freireians, participatory action researchers, and feminists, believe, as do positivists, that reality exists but it is not what has been purveyed in mainstream thought. Feminists, for example, might claim that history as presented by Western white male elites is a distortion of reality. “Whose reality counts?” asks this philosophy, as does participatory research advocate Robert Chambers in the title of one of his books (Chambers 1997). Critical theorists argue that values shape the problem, the paradigm, the methods, the analysis, and their use. Manipulative, controlling methods are disallowed in favor of participatory approaches. The task of inquiry is to raise people to a true level of consciousness, to energize and facilitate transformation. SARAR (Self-esteem, Associative strength, Resourcefulness, Action planning, and Responsibility), described in chapter 2, is an example of a transformative process that has been used in the Bank and elsewhere to help communities to identify their own aims and act upon them.

The paradigms are presented here in admittedly simplified form to show that there is no magic answer that will allow it to be said that “PRA is best” or “the household survey is best.” The question that needs to be asked is, best for what? Although some (Guba and Lincoln 1985) argue that these paradigms are, of their nature, mutually exclusive, others (Patton 1990; Ravallion 2001, pp. 38–42) suggest using them separately or in combination as a situation may warrant, and still others show how to do so (Carvalho and White 1997) by integrating methodologies; by supporting, refining, or refuting the findings of one approach by using those of another; and by merging the findings of various approaches. In practice, many researchers do combine them, if not in completely integrated forms, at least by using them sequentially (see box 4.1); this book will argue that development researchers can profit by doing so.2
The philosophical assumptions underlying BA are clear: they incorporate post-positivism and phenomenological approaches (although they can also include surveys, if necessary—see box 4.1). Participatory research aims for a phenomenological approach but, stressing as it does the transformative process, it is also drawn from a critical theory perspective. The larger the participatory project, and the greater the need for cross-group, cross-country, or international comparisons, the more likely a post-positivistic approach will be taken.

All the participatory and stakeholder approaches discussed in this book are based on these philosophical foundations. Despite the fact that some, such as BA and Policy and Social Impact Analysis, have been seen by some as less participatory, each approach has, in some way, compromised on the participatory element to function within an institutional framework. Most of their differences are of focus—the supposed point of application in Bank work, level of participation involved, intended audience or user of results, and so forth.

**Dualism 2: Objective versus Subjective**

Related to the issue of perception is the issue of subjectivity; managers fear that beneficiary and stakeholder approaches result in “subjective” information. All fields of inquiry, including the cutting edge of the “hard sciences,” now recognize that the observer is part of the observed situation, in one form or another. From the outset, in any quest for information, some issues will be deemed important to consider, and others not. Someone makes that
decision, which is, in itself, a subjective decision. In a Living Standards Measurement Survey, for example, questions will be created, ruling out others; and perhaps possible answer choices will be selected, others rejected. Or someone will create a test or measure (for all tests and measures are indeed created by people) that purports to measure some aspects of a phenomenon and not others. In information-getting approaches such as surveys, tests, and measures, the biases are hidden; they are built into the instrument. Most participatory approaches take a more open-ended, face-to-face approach, which leads some to fear that bias can creep in. The difference between the two approaches is in the interjection of an instrument that someone has designed, will administer, process, and analyze, leaving open the possibility of subjectivity at multiple points. All approaches are subjective; some are more so because of poor execution but, for the most part, they only appear to be more subjective because their scaffolding is more evident.

Who holds the standard for “objectivity?” The frequent assumption is that it resides in officialdom, organizations, and institutions, ratified, perhaps by experts, and that the value of getting local stakeholder information is that it tells how much people understand about the official position, how many people fall into various categories of the official definition, and so on. If one accepts the premise that there are multiple perspectives on reality, however, then beneficiary and stakeholder approaches elicit other realities that are equally useful in understanding the whole picture (see box 4.2 for an example). All research paradigms have a role, and no one of them has a corner on the “truth.”

Box 4.2 Factors Underlying Actual and Reported School Attendance Rates for Girls in Turkey

In 1991, a BA was conducted in provinces of Turkey where school attendance rates for girls were particularly high and provinces where it was particularly low. Interviews were conducted with 135 community leaders and members of 513 households. Participant observers lived for periods of several weeks in the homes of families who had teenage daughters not in school. Findings were that the level of participation of parents in school affairs (in parent-teacher associations, school fairs, maintenance activities, and so forth) was a major factor contributing to the level of girls’ attendance in schools, that parents felt that girls generally need not stay in school beyond the time required to be literate unless they learned matters that could directly help them generate income for the family, and that official figures in the southeastern provinces inflated girls’ school attendance by at least 200 percent.
**Dualism 3: Perception versus Reality**

People who are caught up in the scientific-versus-unscientific and objective-versus-subjective debates also tend to think that beneficiary and stakeholder approaches produce data that consists of “perceptions” when “reality” is what is needed. Of course, the approaches discussed in this book, as shown earlier, are based on the philosophical assumption that reality consists of multiple perceptions. Even managers who have hard evidence of the value of getting beneficiary input and the hazards of ignoring it tilt toward the belief that perceptions are a lesser form of data, and a recent Bank publication uses the term “subjective” to apply to methods that capture perceptions, and “objective” to refer to conventional methods (Bamberger 2000, p. 6). Most people who hold this view would be opposed to the notion of having their future spouse, or that of their child, chosen by an “objective” scoring system alone; perception is crucial in making one’s selection. One of the major factors that influences most people’s decisionmaking is perception: the perception that water is polluted, that a health care center providing preventive medicine is not useful for curative needs, that their children are being looked down upon in school by a majority group, that a dam is going to do irreparable harm to the fabric of their community. All of these are perceptions that will shape people’s behavior. In this dualism, therefore, “perception” is not necessarily the “bad” end of the pole, whatever someone’s views on reality may be (see box 4.3).

**Box 4.3 Different Perceptions of School Among Children and Adults in Northeastern Brazil**

In the mid-1990s, a BA was conducted in the states of Bahia and Ceara in northeastern Brazil to better understand why children were not going to primary school. Conversational interviews were conducted with 50 parents, 40 children, and 36 teachers and administrators. One finding appeared most significant and somewhat new to the education professionals in Brazil and the Bank: children saw school in affective terms, as a place to socialize, to make and be with friends. They valued their relationship with their teacher as much or more on the manner in which they were treated as on what they learned. Parents and teachers saw the school in a cognitive light, as a place for learning. Schools that treated children with respect and allowed time and space for play experienced a lower drop-out rate than those that did not.
Dualism 4: Qualitative versus Quantitative

One of the most futile but persistent debates in the development world centers on the nature of data: “quantitative” versus “qualitative,” which are often themselves code words for “objective versus subjective” and “scientific versus unscientific.” Managers often see qualitative data as “anecdotal grassroots experience and isolated testimony” (Harper 1997 in McGee and Brock 2001) and, at best, drawn from experience of “old hands.” In recent times, however, the desire for better triangulation of data, and for data that can be drawn from large numbers and aggregated, has led to an emphasis on “mixed method” approaches, combining what were traditionally called qualitative and quantitative methods.

Recently, in an attempt to pinpoint the characteristics more clearly and to avoid this trap, Kanbur (2003) offered five dimensions for thinking about qualitative and quantitative issues, each presented as a continuum:

- type of information on population—nonnumerical to numerical;
- type of population coverage—specific to general;
- type of population involvement—active to passive;
- type of inference methodology—inductive to deductive;
- type of disciplinary framework—broad social sciences to neoclassical economics.

Dualism 5: Etic versus Emic

In getting information, one can create a set of questions and ask others to relate the realities of their situations to the questions. This is called an “etic” approach—the researcher imposes the categories. The questions that arise in this process may be seen to be objective in some minds, as discussed earlier—post-positivists, for example, who think a survey captures the one and only reality. With good preparation and knowledge of the group being questioned, it is possible for researchers to develop meaningful categories. It is likely, when working with more than one group, that categories that are meaningful for one will not be meaningful for another. If the researcher wants to compare results across groups, the questions must become more generic and therefore less meaningful to any one group.

However, when working with groups that are unfamiliar, historically, culturally, or on any other dimension, the danger arises that the questions may damage the picture that emerges by being too constricted or irrelevant. The alternative is to let the categorizations and questions arise from the situation that is being examined: people often have conceptual mappings and categorizations that are undreamed of when a survey is being designed, and the only way to obtain these is to take an approach that allows
them to emerge. So, instead of asking the etic “What do I see these people doing? What categories shall I create to interpret their world?” one can ask, “What do these people see themselves doing? What categories do they create? What rules have they used?” The Bank’s attempts in Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) to capture local conceptualizations of poverty is a simplified form of an emic approach.

Anthropologists use a questioning approach that permits the emergence of categorizations. The approach is usually embedded in an informal but careful interview process like the conversational interviews used in BA. PRA has borrowed a rudimentary and less powerful version of emic research in the form of wealth ranking and card sorts. Because, as discussed earlier, concepts and theories often become unmoored from their foundations, the analysis that arises from this version is simplified and less useful than it might be in the hands of people more familiar with the process and what it can do. Since the 1960s, for example, there has been considerable debate on what these kinds of categorizations mean—is the researcher getting at cognitive processes, or simply fiddling with shifting and perhaps idiosyncratic, rather than cultural, sets of categories?

An example of emic research in development work is Serpell’s study (1982) of barriers to school participation in Zambia, which, drawing on qualitative methods, showed that local people’s concepts of what constitute desirable cognitive skills were very different from the skills that local schools were teaching children. When combined with surveys, as Serpell’s work was, a philosophical triangulation emerges, combining an open-ended phenomenological approach (that is, allowing locally meaningful categories to emerge) with the positivistic approach of surveys, where categories of inquiry are predetermined.

Of what relevance is this to the manager? If what the manager needs is comparative data, across groups or countries, for example, an etic approach with standardized questions is the best and sometimes the only way to get that data. If the manager needs to understand a thorny issue that seems baffling, unpredictable, and not amenable to any comprehendible conceptual system, emic research is a good way to attack it. The way people view themselves, their confidence and self-respect, as well as the way they view whatever opportunities exist for their own self-advancement, are important determinants of development. If the manager realizes that beneficiaries and other affected populations see their world in a very different way from international agencies or governments, emic research will be useful. It is possible to combine etic and emic research, using emic research, for example, to determine categories of inquiry, which are then used to structure other research techniques, such as semi-structured interviews, or observation. However, emic research is sophisticated—in most cases, it requires a researcher with a strong social science background to reap its full benefits.
As discussed, the tenets of participation contain a number of dualisms. The most common relates to the role of participants in relation to data—do they help to produce it and decide what to do with it, or is it extracted from them and taken from their control? Despite the current rhetoric, most development-related research, from the vantage point of the local community or group, falls closer to the extractive end of the continuum (household surveys and focus groups, for example).

In contrast, traditional Participatory Rural Appraisal/Participatory Learning and Action (PRA/PLA) practitioners have always emphasized philosophy over methods, one aspect of which is that PRA research is always tied to action, and that local people can participate in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the action. As stated earlier, PRA/PLA as it is applied to development agencies (local civil society organizations can be an exception) is part extractive, part participatory, because the agency determines the agenda, and is more likely to take the data away to improve projects, rather than to foster local action.

This issue has been highlighted sharply in second-generation PPAs, which are simply PRA/PLA techniques applied to the issue of poverty with the intention of redefining poverty and improving policy without necessarily any local action component (Norton and Stephens 1995). Uganda provides a relevant case study. In the original UPPAP design, the trainers, being traditionalists, undoubtedly expected that the research would be tied to local action. However, this expectation was not clearly outlined in the design, and while action plans were created in some places, other places had none. Of those that created action plans, only one of 35 communities fully succeeded in implementing a plan a year later (Yates and Okello 2002). A number of communities were angered and disappointed at having participated as a group in exercises that clearly pointed to local ideas for action, yet in the first phase got no real assistance in organizing to address the issues and options that had been identified.

Can participatory and extractive research be combined? Yates and Okello (2002) conclude that they can be combined: the next UPPAP will pursue some issues that arose in the first round, but will also tie local priorities to district planning processes. Kane and deBrun (1993), in a Bank study in The Gambia, performed participatory research in 12 communities to get findings that would eventually affect policy, but also assisted all of the communities in creating action plans. The problem lies not in combining the two, but in following the action plans through over a long period: most development agencies have not been prepared to make that investment.

It is worth noting again that the dualism itself—extractive versus participatory—is a false dichotomy. Any form of consultation that seeks to
include beneficiaries’ voices is by nature participatory, even without locally driven actions as follow-up, particularly when the extractive method involves open lines of inquiry molded by the beneficiaries themselves.

**Dualism 7: Prescriptive versus Responsive**

One of the reasons for doing research with beneficiary and affected populations is that projects that impose solutions without taking local considerations into account are likely to fail (box 4.4). Responsive development recognizes people’s issues, what they think should be done about them, and what aspects of the situation they may be able to deal with themselves. Not only is this a practical response, but it is founded in a sound philosophical recognition that multiple perspectives apply in any situation, and the perspective of a government or international agency is not necessarily the “scientific” one—it is simply another one of the perspectives in the situation. However, most people working in development recognize that their organization’s mission is prescriptive in the largest sense—improving health care, addressing HIV/AIDS, expanding educational opportunities, and so on. Once that prescriptive nature is recognized, however, emic research that allows meaningful local views and categories to emerge, which in turn can be used to inform responsive action, such as participant observation and conversational interviews, is appropriate.

**Box 4.4 Adapting Communication on HIV/AIDS to Local Cultural Realities: The Beneficiary Assessment in Niger**

Effective communication is both meaningful and acceptable to its intended audience. Messages regarding HIV/AIDS prevention in Niger, as in many countries, were devised outside of the country with little regard for local cultural norms. When interviewed about these messages, the large sample of roughly 4,600 persons said they were monotonous (46 percent), melancholy or judgmental in that they insisted on hard-to-achieve behavior such as fidelity or abstinence (38 percent), theoretical (23 percent), and shocking or alienating in that they equated AIDS with death (21 percent). Communication was deemed ineffective because images and persons were not from Niger (73 percent), not concrete (62 percent), and not in the local language (53 percent). Based on this information, the government of Niger is now devising communication that responds more to the values and language of the people.
**Dualism 8: Depth versus Breadth**

There is a universal conundrum in the social sciences: how to get comparability and depth at the same time, an issue often touched on in the quantitative-qualitative debate. While beneficiaries may constitute one audience, policymakers, planners, and technical specialists are another, and they need credible representative information that is available in accessible and readily manipulable form. True participation requires that people produce their own categories. Local insights and categories emerge, but the information is difficult to aggregate. Information obtained through a survey approach, for example, imposes categories on people’s responses, but can be aggregated in ways useful to planning beyond the local community or group. A compromise is always made, for as has been said, even in participatory approaches, the topic—health, education, HIV/AIDS—has almost invariably been selected by the commissioning organization before the team begins to work with a community or group.

Depth versus breadth is not an issue to most managers: they want both. However, people often feel that while approaches such as surveys will give breadth, in the form of large, representative numbers, beneficiary and stakeholder approaches will give depth and put flesh and meaning on the numbers (box 4.5). This presents no problem if the two are integrated, as is increasingly the case (Bamberger 2000). But when, for any reason, only one approach must be selected, the survey almost always wins out.

The following two points (aggregation versus anecdotes and sampling versus “jewels”) look at some issues related to depth versus breadth as it applies to participatory approaches.

*Aggregation versus Anecdotes.* An advantage of most participatory approaches is that they produce information in ways similar to those used by people in their daily lives. For example, interviews and observation, if they have been carried out properly, tend to produce information that seems to ring true to insiders and to people who have some knowledge of the situation. The less processed the results, the more likely this is to be the case. A disadvantage, however, is that without processing, aggregation is difficult—individual instances remain individual, it is difficult to compare and contrast variables, and no larger picture emerges in manageable form.

Just as the procedures for analyzing quantitative data were developed by human beings, so too are those for analyzing qualitative data. In the kinds of qualitative research often found in beneficiary and stakeholder approaches, the larger picture is reached through different steps. Rather than aggregating individual instances numerically, patterns may be extracted from the texts themselves. Exceptions are sought, confirming and disconfirming cases are explored, and the reasons for these variations are determined. These steps are usually taken early in the research, continually and
in an iterative fashion. What emerges from the analysis in one stage is checked in the next, perhaps by using other methods, with other groups, or in different circumstances, and is also used as the basis for the next line of inquiry. Some of the data that emerges from participatory approaches is already grouped or aggregated. The results of an individual focus group, for example, show the group’s responses to the questions, rather than a tabulation of individual member responses. So do the matrices that are used in PPAs or other PLA approaches—they show decisions and choices that the group has negotiated among themselves from individual members’ varying experiences and attitudes. However, the group here is a subset of a community, or at most, representatives of a small community. The participatory process does not automatically lead to aggregation of results.

The approaches used in participatory research can, if planned properly, lead to data that can be aggregated much as quantitative data can be, rendering it “quantitative,” as well. Once again, the social science conundrum

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**Box 4.5 India Tuberculosis Control Project**

Based on a rigorous evaluation of its 35-year-old National Tuberculosis Control Program, the government of India planned to implement a new strategy to arrest the spread of tuberculosis (TB) in the country. The World Bank–funded Tuberculosis Control Project, one part of this endeavor, used BA and SA methodologies to collect and analyze the socioeconomic data needed for project preparation and design.

The study focused on urban slum dwellers and rural ethnic populations. FEMCOSULT, a Dutch organization, worked with Indian researchers to undertake an in-depth exploration of TB-related issues among slum dwellers in five cities. At the same time, the Foundation for Research and Development of Underprivileged Groups, a local organization, examined the sociocultural factors relating to TB among ethnic populations in another four districts.

The methodologies used were focus group discussions, mapping, in-depth household interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, and informal group discussions. The wide area covered by the sampling and the methodologies used illustrate how it is possible to achieve breadth and depth through the use of qualitative research tools.

The two studies found that in both urban slums and ethnic contexts, poverty, patient perceptions about providers, and the stigma attached to TB were the three factors with the greatest impact on beliefs and practices in connection with TB. Ineffective communication between service providers and patients was also found to discourage people from seeking treatment for TB.
mentioned earlier, comparability versus local meaningfulness, comes into play. By encouraging locally meaningful, emic categories, one can be somewhat assured that the categories will not be the same from one place to another. Sometimes this difference is a matter of semantics. Other times, it represents a real, albeit small, difference and in yet other cases, it reflects truly different ways of categorizing and thinking about issues, and truly different concerns. These differences between localities exist whether one uses a survey or uses interviews and observations; however, even an excellent survey, by its very nature, rarely can allow them to emerge.

One way to get this aggregation is for local teams who are familiar with important local variations to explore the possibility of using some imposed categories in relation to certain commonly perceived data. This might include using a set of commonly recognized ailments to probe the best forms of treatment (while allowing for the addition of other ailments that may be peculiar to particular areas, which are not included in the larger tabulations); using commonly recognized seasons of the year to look at variation in common natural disasters; or looking at common variables such as ethnicity, language, and religion when counting the number of children in school during a mapping exercise. There is obviously a trade-off between encouraging local meanings to emerge and the desire to aggregate. Sometimes the variation in local meaning is not significant enough to pay the price of nonaggregation. There are no methods for which the resulting data cannot be aggregated sensibly if this is a desired outcome. Aggregation must simply be weighed against other factors and planned for.

Of course, modern software is available to help. (See, for example, Barry 1998; Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Fielding and Lee 1998; Kelle 1995; and Miles and Weitzman 1995, among others.) In the experience of one of this book’s authors, readily available programs such as Microsoft Access have been useful for analyzing PLA card sorts and direct ranking, SPSS and EPI-INFO for mapping data, and more specialized programs such as QSR NUD*IST and Atlas/ti have been helpful for participant observations and interviews.

**Sampling versus “Jewels.”** A more common question arising out of the depth versus breadth issue occurs when the manager asks, “but what does this information represent? Is it, as survey results can be, generalizable to a larger population?” As one manager said, 

*Except when a one-off effort, like a real pilot project, is involved, we don’t need any more “jewel” projects that can’t be replicated, or “jewel” studies that can’t be generalized to other situations.*

There is no reason that the results of participatory approaches cannot be generalized. The same sampling methods employed to administer surveys can be used: regions, provinces, communities down to the village level can be identified, and each unit then selected through cluster sampling or another method or combination of methods. Because beneficiary and stakeholder approaches often draw upon shared group knowledge, the lowest level of
selection may be the local community, village, or group. But if individual conversational interviews, such as those used in BA, are needed, such people can be selected through normal sampling processes as well. Communities that participated in the Niger PPA were selected this way (see box 4.6). Conversational interviews add strength and weight to findings.

Sometimes, however, random sampling, such as cluster sampling, is not the best choice. It is more useful to use purposive sampling, in which certain individuals or groups of individuals are chosen because they have special knowledge, or represent special instances of a variable. People may be chosen because they represent a variation from the picture that is emerging. They may reflect the typical picture that is emerging, and can provide a more in-depth view of how the situation plays out in real life. They may represent the worst- or best-case scenario that needs to be addressed (for example, most likely or least likely to use a service). They may possess specialized knowledge (such as a local employer who knows what occupational skills are currently needed). In these instances, beneficiary and stakeholder approaches are no different from surveys. The people who can provide a comprehensive understanding must be found.

**Dualism 9: Micro versus Macro**

A common belief, closely related to depth versus breadth, is that research and action can either be effective at the grassroots (micro) level or at the regional or national level, but not both. This dualism is one of the reasons for the debate among PRA and PLA practitioners about whether participation can be used for policymaking. Can results be obtained that are useful both in the community and in the boardroom? Because PRA and PLA often do not use communities drawn from samples, and usually do not aggregate beyond the community because it is focused on local action, the results are difficult to generalize beyond the level at which they were collected.

Conversely, because many other approaches such as BA and even many PRAs and PPAs have no local action component, even though they may have been carried out in local communities, the impact at the local level is indirect: if policy and practice are changed at the national or regional level as a result of the research, and those changes are relevant to the particular communities studied, only then do they have a local impact. Is it possible to get both impacts? Yes, and the method is obvious: sample, aggregate, and ensure that the communities that have been involved are assisted to create some kind of action plan relevant to their own community or one that can be integrated into planning at a higher level, for example, a district. Does this happen? Not often. Figure 4.2 shows a typical participatory research process that is still incomplete in this regard.

How do the approaches discussed in chapter 2 relate to these dichotomies? Just as dichotomies oversimplify, charts on dichotomies are even more
Box 4.6 Sampling in the Niger PPA

The Niger PPA drew upon the sampling tradition originally established for most BAs and later adapted to PPAs, incorporating both cluster and purposive sampling. Below is an excerpt from the research plan.

The sample selected for this PPA will be inclusive and representative of the population of Niger. All 7 regions and the capital city of Niamey will be represented. While the majority of those persons interviewed will be poor, as is true of the country itself, guided conversations will also be held with other members of the Nigerian society: community leaders, local government officials, businessmen, religious leaders, NGO representatives, and others. Half of the persons interviewed will be women. The poor majority will be stratified by the poor themselves (using wealth ranking) into three categories: the “well-off,” the relatively comfortable, and the needy—in the pilot for this PPA conducted in Bankilare and Mayahi these groups represented 10%, 25%, and 65% of the village populations, respectively. The total number of persons interviewed will be on the order of 2,270. Of this number, 70% will be rural, somewhat less than the proportion for the country as a whole but appropriate considering the relative homogeneity of the rural as compared to the urban population. Two-fifths (41%) of the sample, or 925 persons, will be interviewed individually, one-on-one, the remainder in focus groups.

The sample will be drawn from two arrondissements in the more populous regions (Tillaberi, Zinder and Maradi) and from one arrondissement in the others (Dosso, Agadez, Diffa and Tahoua); for Niamey, two communes will be taken from the peri-urban neighborhoods. For each arrondissement selected three villages and one urban area will be chosen to represent the area’s major agro-ecological and ethnic character. Samples of 10% and 5% will be taken for the villages and urban areas, estimated at averages of 200 and 400, respectively (the same 5% urban sample will be taken for the neighborhoods of Niamey, estimated at 800 each). The total individual samples in the 30 villages chosen for the survey would thus be 600, while the sample in the urban areas of the 7 regions and Niamey would be 280. Focus groups would be conducted with young (15-35) and older (36 and up) men and women, separately, making four focus groups per site, or 168 groups for all 42 sites, covering an additional 1,344 persons (assuming an average of 8 persons per focus group). Finally, participant observation, involving familiarity with a particular site over a protracted period of time (2-3 weeks) would take place in each region and Niamey and would produce five case studies per site for an additional 45 persons. (Salmen 2001, pp. 2–3)
Figure 4.2 Future Challenges in Participatory Research

Policy

Government or donor commissions PLA

Team selected and trained

Community and team identify needs

Identify options

Team (usually) gets additional input on options if necessary from outside (costs and so forth)

Community assesses options and chooses

Community assesses resources

Community develops action plan

Community mobilizes for action

COMMUNITY RAISES FUNDS

Community applies the process to new problems

Team takes usable results back to national level for policy, planning, and action

Policy

Suitable national institution can work with community

Team goes on to other communities

Empowerment

Team works with community

Teaches new community

Teaches new community

Community applies the process to new problems

COMMUNITY RAISES FUNDS

Community assesses resources

Community develops action plan

Community mobilizes for action

Community assesses options and chooses

Team (usually) gets additional input on options if necessary from outside (costs and so forth)

Identify options

Community and team identify needs

Team selected and trained

Policy

Government or donor commissions PLA
Table 4.1 Comparison of Participatory Approaches in Relation to Dichotomies

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<tr>
<th>Perception versus reality</th>
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<td>Participatory versus extractive</td>
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<td>Targeted versus general purpose</td>
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a. In PRA/PLA as used by development institutions, the agenda and structure of the inquiry can be predetermined, reducing the participatory element.
oversimplified. Some fall somewhere on a continuum, or use both. For example, Report Cards are not purely extractive, in that service users’ views are consulted, but the methods of getting those views are extractive. Similarly, PRA/PLA is intended to be participatory, but in development work, it often is not. Among the most rigid of positivists, all the approaches other than surveys would be considered “unscientific” and “subjective.” All have the potential to be responsive rather than prescriptive: the context in which they are used determines which is the case. Table 4.1 presents a summary assessment of the approaches in relation to the remaining dichotomies, as well as some distinctions peculiar to the approaches themselves, such as whether their aims are simply to collect information or to use that information to develop activities (research versus action); and whether they have a general application or are tailored to address specific organizational information needs (targeted versus general purpose).

Now the book turns to how, practically, some of these bridgings might be accomplished by improving the research approaches themselves, and by using them together and sequentially in various aspects of development work.

**Notes**

1. Note that polarized pairings are constantly extended to context-specific frameworks, for example, the dog-cat distinction among common domestic animals, a polarity which shifts again to unite in the context of small animal–large animal veterinary practice.

2. Of course, combining multiple techniques without recognizing or accepting their philosophical implications reduces the power to interpret. When a researcher does so, the analysis and reporting is usually based on his or her favorite paradigm. The results are seen most often in “quantitative” studies that are studded with vignettes and quotes that are intended to be evocative and moving.

3. In one Bank document, the words “quantitative survey” and “perception survey” are distinguished in reference to the Bank’s Report Card process. The first is used to study the service providers’ activities, and the second the users’ views—for example, “The advantage [of the quantitative survey] over perception surveys is that it provides diagnoses about problems within service provider organizations—as opposed to a service user rating.” If such a survey simply culls statistics from an organization’s records, it is not a survey, but if it puts questions to the service providers, why is it not a “perception” survey?

4. This term was borrowed by anthropologists in the 1960s from the term “phonetic,” referring to all the sounds that are used in a particular language; its counterpart term, “emic” is taken from “phonemics” and refers to all the meaningful sounds that are used in a language (as opposed to sounds that native speakers of a language are capable of making but that carry no agreed meaning).
Earlier chapters explained the various information-getting approaches used in the Bank and their methods and purposes, and also tried to clear up certain sources of confusion. Chapter 5 shows how the issues explored in previous chapters can be integrated into participatory research approaches more comprehensively, to make them more responsive to managers’ concerns, to fit better into Bank operations, and to provide results to beneficiary and affected populations. Beneficiary Assessment (BA) is used as the foundation example, although how and where the other approaches might be integrated into Bank work is also explored.

What Help Do Managers Want Now?

Despite the problems described, many managers interviewed saw participation and beneficiary-related information as important in projects that are community-based. They see, for example, the value of consulting and including communities in projects to strengthen local involvement in schools through stronger Parent-Teacher Associations, or in irrigation projects that are dependent upon the cooperation and participation of local households. However, many do not immediately think of collecting beneficiary-related information in projects that will eventually affect beneficiaries but that have no identifiable community component.

A historical example that illustrates this principle was the slum upgrading project in La Paz where the conduct of what is now known as a BA by one of the authors revealed that many renters in the upgrading area were not receiving benefits from the improvements—access to water pipes and sanitary installations—and were continuing to use public areas for their needs, thereby undermining the entire improvement process. This unexpected finding led to a mandate that all residents, regardless of tenancy status, be accorded access to improvements, an important change that would not have come about had the project manager restricted his attention to the infrastructure being provided to the immediate intended beneficiaries of the project, the homeowners. Exceptions to this pattern of selective use of
consultation occur, of course, usually when the project is especially culturally sensitive, such as in the introduction of coeducational schools in a region in which girls’ cultural and physical security is a major determinant in whether they go to school.

When managers do seek beneficiary information, they genuinely want it, not simply to meet safeguards and get their projects to the board, but to make them work. However, they also want

- Fewer, or clearer pro forma requirements for consulting or involving beneficiaries and affected populations. Some managers feel safeguards are nuisances because they require commentary, if not action, on beneficiary consultation in situations in which, in their opinion, it is not applicable. Others agree that safeguards must be ensured, but the attitude of the social development staff should be generously helpful as opposed to simply eager to blow the whistle. As one manager said, “They should be a police force that is there to help.”
- Clearer guidance on what kinds of potential beneficiary-related problems or opportunities they should be looking for in their particular situations. Some suggested that this might include pertinent summaries of background sociocultural studies, advice from mission staff with long and extensive experience, advice from social development experts, and more carefully targeted and tailored support.
- Individual help and advice on working out the relevant issues, and designing, commissioning, and interpreting the needed consultations or research so that the results are relevant to their work, and valid. This issue has been raised before: “The complexity of the numerous sociological and safeguard tasks to which the Bank has committed itself has led observers inside and outside the institution to question whether it is even possible for staff (and especially task managers) to do an adequate job managing simultaneous analyses of complex social phenomena on so many fronts” (World Bank 2001a).
- Clearer justification for, and explanation of, the purpose and application of the burgeoning number of strategies for getting beneficiary-related information, each of which has its own acronym, and the number of which seems to be growing. No manager consulted knew all of the approaches discussed in this book, although they are all used in the Bank.
- Generally, more coordinated Bank Web-based help, rather than hundreds of independent pages.

Methodological Concerns of Managers

Few managers today have to be convinced of the value of getting beneficiaries’ views; what they do have to be convinced of is whether these views
are being obtained in ways that produce information they feel they can trust and use. Of the 43 Bank task team leaders interviewed, 27 expressed some degree of nervousness about the validity of data produced through qualitative approaches such as those used in participatory research and to a somewhat lesser extent, through BAs and Social Assessments (SAs). Managers may even see quantitative results as the ultimate check on qualitative results: in the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), “the poor saw themselves as getting poorer while the rich were getting richer. . . . Survey based results, on the other hand, were said to demonstrate that ‘if anything, growth in living standards has been strongest among the poorest households’” (Booth and Lucas 2001). Work was stopped on the PPA until these differences were reconciled. When qualitative findings are controversial, they may be largely ignored in favor of survey results, as was the case in a recent SA in Turkey. Combining approaches makes sense in these cases. Managers also have specific methodological concerns.

**Valid Data**

Managers want their “qualitative” results to be as valid as results coming from economic measures or from conventional surveys. Many expressed some degree of nervousness about the validity of data produced through qualitative approaches such as those used in participatory research and, to a somewhat lesser extent, through BAs and SAs. They want to be able to proceed with confidence in the results, knowing that the data give a good picture of what is happening. They want the findings to be traceable, that is, they need some evidence that the data from which conclusions have been drawn warrant those conclusions, just as standard statistical tests satisfy the desire to know that the conditions for certain relationships have been met. They want to know how the results were obtained—they prefer a paper trail to an interpretive fling at some anecdotal data. The more solid the data, triangulated from many methods and sources, the less likely the paper trail is to be a concern. A clear account of the research design, the sampling processes, and how the data were obtained and processed should be an expected part of the report.

In addressing the rationale for using qualitative research, it is particularly important to recognize that validity is perhaps the most important advantage that approaches yielding qualitative data have over more traditional quantitative, questionnaire-based surveys. When addressed through the naturalistic techniques of conversational interviewing and participant observation, people tend to speak more openly, with more candor and hence to produce more valid information, because a degree of mutual respect and trust between interviewer and interviewee has been created that is difficult, if not impossible, to generate when administering a questionnaire.
The importance of this issue of validity can be readily seen in the research on HIV/AIDS in Niger (box 4.4). Eminent social scientists from West Africa have complained of the lack of validity in responses to questionnaires regarding sexual behavior.\(^1\) When asked in a questionnaire survey whether they use condoms, men generally respond in the affirmative. However, in the BA conducted in Niger, for most groups of men interviewed, average condom use was less than 20 percent. Given the importance of condoms in AIDS prevention, this dramatic discrepancy between reported usage of condoms—depending on whether a questionnaire or conversational interviewing mode of inquiry was employed—would lead to widely differing policy responses with major implications for the health and well-being of a nation’s population.

**Representative Information**

Managers work with large populations. Many are still concerned that the information arising from qualitative approaches used in beneficiary or stakeholder research may not be generalizable to larger populations. The intensity of participatory processes often means that, unless extraordinary funding is provided, they can be carried out well only in small numbers of places, and therefore, sites and groups have to be carefully chosen to provide data that would otherwise be difficult to obtain rather than attempting to be, in effect, qualitative substitutes for large surveys. In research, they want to know what and whom the data represent, as did the manager in chapter 4 who said a “jewel-like” picture of one small place, or bits and pieces of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) matrices whose representativeness is not entirely clear, make him wary.

Careful sampling, using a creative combination of probability (purposive) and nonprobability samples, can help create external validity. Helping to determine some of the local categories through participant observation and emic research provides even stronger internal validity and reduces the concerns about representativeness. The wealth ranking technique of PRA, for instance, wherein community members determine the wealth categories of their own community, is probably the most accurate socioeconomic structure to use for the sampling of a given locale.

**Manageable and Applicable Information**

Managers want the results to be manageable, too, which can be a challenge with nonsurvey research. Often the findings are too long, too vague, ill fitting, and presented in forms that the manager is not able to readily use. The Vietnam Participatory Poverty Assessment, for example, contains general discursive analyses, but the illustrative tables are often specific to one
community. Readers may wonder if the data can be aggregated to a higher level, or if not, to what extent the selected community reflects the larger group. Aggregation can help to put illustrative examples in their contexts.

Managers also want results to relate specifically to the sectors and issues they are dealing with and the documents they are preparing. Knowing the manager’s requirements is fundamental to BA. Indeed, one undisputed advantage of the BA approach is its utility to managers, which derives from the injunction in BA manuals to involve the manager at every step of the process: from the design—including objectives, interview guide, sample frame, and team composition—to implementation (with attendance at progress reviews), preparation of the final report and beyond, with similar close involvement in future iterations.

Some “Bridges” to Help

Managers are aware that conventional large-scale surveys are expensive. One way to reduce costs is to supplement information gained from surveys with qualitative data. Qualitative data have their own positive strengths, as well. Most managers do appreciate the depth that qualitative data can provide. As one said, “When a piece of [qualitative] research is spot-on, it gives you a picture you can’t get from anything else.”

There are also informational quality advantages to using combined methods—that is, combining contextual and noncontextual methods, qualitative and quantitative findings, rapid and in-depth interactions, macro and micro coverage, various epistemological perspectives and resolutions of the other dualisms covered in chapter 4. Specifically, the sections below discuss ways of bridging these dualisms, and ask

- How can ways of getting information be improved and how can understanding be enhanced by integrating some of these concepts, using BA as the example?
- How can the various approaches in phases of Bank work be integrated as reflected in economic and sector work, Country Assistance Strategies, Project Concept Documents, and Project Appraisal Documents?

Box 5.1 provides an example of how a simple combination of approaches worked to validate results.

The recommendations will be shaped in part by a point that emerges again and again in this book: managers are often confused and sometimes even irritated by what one called “the ritualized and formalized alphabet soup.” “We just want to hear from the beneficiaries themselves,” said another. A third complained, “This [the various approaches to participation] is a good thing that has become bad. It has turned people off.” It should be clear by now that some of the approaches are better for the specific tasks
for which they were specially designed. This book recommends new and sometimes expanded roles for some of the others.

**Improving Ways of Getting Information and Enhancing Understanding by Integrating Concepts**

Can each of the approaches discussed in this book be strengthened by taking on board the dualisms and concerns about participation and bridging them? Some of the approaches have, in fact, managed to address and even to rise above the polarizations. For example, few approaches are still pinioned on the concept of one true “reality” although they may be weak on how to reveal alternative realities, partly because many practitioners do not understand the concept of emic research. In the case of Participatory Rural Appraisal/Participatory Learning and Action (PRA/PLA), the only approach that claims to use a simple version of emic research as one of its tools, the research schedule is usually too short to uncover local conceptions in anything more than a cursory way.

Also, despite their rhetoric, most of the approaches, in practice, are not fully participatory because the issue to be examined has already been determined by the Bank or other sponsoring agency. Most are also weak on
breadth—sampling and aggregation of qualitative data. Each would benefit from borrowing, where appropriate, from other techniques to create a stronger approach, and from being used in situations that tap its strengths. We take two brief examples, Policy and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) and PRA/PLA, before moving on to a more detailed examination of BA.

**Policy and Social Impact Analysis.** PSIA presents one instance of how integration of a more participatory component would strengthen what is already a strong approach. Beneficiaries could be involved in the production of some of the information gathered in the SIA phase, which already uses extractive approaches in the form of rapid assessment, surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups. However, a recasting of the philosophy toward beneficiaries—from people who are affected by change to people who can help to effect change—would help participatory processes to develop more naturally.

**PRA/PLA.** Figure 4.2 in the previous chapter presents a second example of how an approach might be strengthened. Although it focuses on PRA/PLA, much of it is also applicable to most other participatory research approaches.

One of the PLA family’s greatest strengths is its tie to action and its procedures for moving from the information-producing and analyzing stages to creating action. One of its weaknesses is that, as practiced by many development agencies, the action component is often left out, or not enough thought is given to how to fund the aspects of action that cannot be carried out or paid for by local communities. Another shortcoming is how to integrate and coordinate community action plans with district or regional plans.

The items in figure 4.2 are *real* weaknesses. Some *perceived* weaknesses of PLA are its inability to produce representative data, and to aggregate the data to present at least some of it in quantitative form. These perceived weaknesses are the basis of the assumption that PLA cannot affect policy. However, a number of studies have shown this not to be the case. Work in The Gambia, Eritrea, and Kenya, for example, was based on sample selection of communities, and aggregation of data from some of the most commonly used techniques in PRA—mapping, pie charts, and matrices (Kane and deBrun 1993; deBrun 1994; Kane 1995a, 1995b; Kane and Thomas 1998; deBrun 2000a, 2000b). In fact, PPAs, part of the PLA family, are based on the assumption that they can affect policy, which would be impossible unless sampling and aggregation were possible.

**Beneficiary Assessment as an Example of Implementing Bridgings**

The main focus of the remainder of this chapter is BA. Many of the points can be applied to other approaches, as well. At the beginning of this book,
some of the reasons for emphasizing BA were explained:

- It is aimed at managers’ needs.
- It has a long, established track record covering a wide variety of sectors and applications to projects and policy.
- It draws on conventional research techniques using professionally trained researchers so its soundness is easily monitored; it involves both qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- It reflects two strong philosophical traditions, post-positivism and phenomenology.
- It embeds its methods in participant observation, providing a strong check on its other methods.
- It uses systematic sampling to provide representative information that can be aggregated.

The steps involved in carrying out a BA are explained in detail in appendix 1.

Here, as part of the examination of how to integrate some of the issues discussed in chapters 3 and 4, BA is taken as an example within a particular approach. (In doing this, no argument is made that BA is the best approach for all situations; there is no best approach. Each has a purpose—PSIA, for example, is clearly designed for policy analysis.)

Past reviews of BA have pointed to certain of its strengths—clear focus, combined methods, and iterative learning for more operational relevance—but they have also pointed to areas where it might be further improved. Owen and Van Domelen (1998) point out that future BAs would benefit from applying the four criteria often used to assess conventional research quality:

- How can we be confident about the “truth” of the findings? (internal validity)
- Can we apply these findings to other contexts or other groups? (external validity)
- Would the findings be the same if the inquiry were repeated? (reliability)
- Have the findings been determined by the subjects and context of the inquiry, rather than the biases, motivations, and perspectives of the investigators?

Can these and other issues be integrated, and can the question, raised earlier, of whether micro and macro research and action can be done simultaneously, be reconciled?

*Improving and Developing Beneficiary Assessment*

BA can integrate the lessons learned from examining the dualisms reviewed earlier. It already incorporates most, but some, shown in table 5.1 in all capital letters, need to be strengthened or added.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Scope and distribution</th>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Relationship to participants</th>
<th>Perspective (etic or emic)</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Form of data</th>
<th>Research and action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-positivist (surveys and semi-structured interviews)</td>
<td>Breadth: surveys Depth: participant observation, conversational interviews, focus groups, PRA</td>
<td>Sampling, either cluster or purposive</td>
<td>Extractive: using results for managers only</td>
<td>Etic; can be EMIC</td>
<td>Conventional social science; SOME PARTICIPATORY</td>
<td>Quantitative (survey results; AGGREGATION OF PRA EXERCISE RESULTS)</td>
<td>Research at the local level; action at higher level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological (focus groups can be, EMIC RESEARCH)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical theory: HELPING COMMUNITIES TO REACH THEIR OWN ENDS THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH</td>
<td></td>
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Strengthen the Philosophy and Perspective. Philosophically, BA reflects a post-positivist orientation in its use of conversational interviews (semi-structured interviews carried out in a naturalistic way), focus groups, and occasionally, surveys. It also includes a phenomenological approach, which can emerge from participant observation, and a special version of conversational interviewing that incorporates an emic questioning process, as shown in appendix 1. One great strength of BA is its participant observation component, which requires residence in a community. When participant observation is combined with conversational interviews, the time and the mechanisms are provided to identify types of groups, situations, and processes before using these techniques, rather than depending on convenient gatherings, as often happens in PRA/PLA research, thus strengthening validity.

Widen the Depth and Breadth of Information. BA and other participatory research approaches have always included the principle of methodological triangulation—combining methods to get stronger information. However, while the PLA family contains nearly 40 techniques, the ones most commonly used—mapping, pie charts, matrices, seasonal calendars, and card sorts—are really variations on the same technique, the group interview. Observation and surveys are among the techniques but not used as often, the first because it is time consuming on a short field trip, and the second because of a traditional anti-survey bias in participatory research. BA triangulates among a variety of group techniques (including focus groups and some PRA techniques such as wealth ranking and mapping), individual-based techniques (conversational interviews), unobtrusive measures (observation), and surveys.

BA could profit from including more PRA techniques to strengthen information on activities, processes, decisionmaking, and other community attributes that have group dimensions and are affected by group dynamics. However, one of the complaints about PRA/PLA in the current debate is the fact that although it addresses group-based information, its brevity and the simplicity of its techniques prevent it from getting more complex information about group-based processes and activities. BA’s larger time frame and use of participant observation, when combined with certain PRA/PLA techniques, could bring a greater sophistication to the understanding of group dimensions of community activity. This will also strengthen validity.

Add Another Dimension to Representation. The principle of triangulation also applies to other elements of the research process, including the participants. Care is taken to ensure that participants reflect the range of stakeholders and beneficiaries involved—the PLA approaches, by deliberately seeking out groups likely to be overlooked in conventional research, and BA through forms of purposive sampling and cluster sampling. Including emic categories of people, as identified locally (the increasing
use of wealth ranking, for example) would provide yet another sampling dimension to BA and would strengthen internal validity. It would also help to address the issue of bias: local people, not simply the researchers, would be helping to determine the sampling categories.

**Aggregate Data Across Communities.** PRA/PLA data can be aggregated across communities to produce quantitative results. This involves trade-offs and requires special skills. Done inappropriately, it not only loses the unique picture of a single community, but also produces meaningless findings across communities. BA researchers, who are almost always professional researchers, are more likely than participatory facilitators to know when aggregation makes sense, such as in mapping, and when and how to do it in more complex cases, such as matrices and seasonal calendars. This strengthens internal validity.

**Incorporate Local Action in Research.** At the moment, BA does not involve stakeholders and other beneficiaries or affected populations in participatory ways except through consultation. This is not unusual, as mentioned before: much of the “participatory” work done in the Bank is actually extractive; that is, information is being taken away for institutional purposes, without systematic follow-up on each community’s ideas. The most common reason is that the researchers never intended to see the process through to the action phase—their real aim was to get information. Another is that even researchers who are action oriented may not be able to facilitate appropriate mechanisms for reaching consensus, deciding on action, and mobilizing people, skills, materials, and funding.

Not only would incorporating local action address a growing ethical and practical concern, that is, what the community gets out of the research, but it could also be used to help managers. If the action relates directly to the project, the manager can view it as a case study or an opportunity for drawing lessons. It is possible the community will choose to take some other kinds of action, but because all the research will have been focused on a particular set of issues or sectors, most action is likely to be concentrated on these. In such cases, managers can get a better understanding of alternative approaches, variations in need, application, choices, and the like.

A good community action plan will identify what the community can do on its own and what external assistance is required. Because community plans may cross several sectors, or fall between the purviews of various organizations, there may be no specific source of help. At the moment, there are few mechanisms or processes that the Bank can use to assist in providing funds to communities or to assist in networking with other sources of help, such as Social Funds, but a serious commitment to “community” and to “participation” requires that some form of assistance be available—otherwise, for most communities, the research process is purely extractive. The Uganda PPA I report (Republic of Uganda 2000b) noted that communities reacted
negatively to such a process, and the Ugandan government is now making a small fund available to each participating community. This stopgap measure is intended to be replaced with a plan tying local action plans into district plans. Another approach would be to consider each community action plan’s needs and tailor the response appropriately—funds, training, networks. The Social Recovery Program in Zambia provides matching grants directly to community groups, although these are tied to certain kinds of interventions. If no local action can be built into the project or other activity, the project can at least plant the seeds of self-learning in the community.

Assist with Community Self-Learning. No matter the outcome of specific Bank stakeholder and beneficiary studies, whether it is community action or something at a broader level, a visiting team can leave some basic information-getting skills behind in the community, so that members can use those skills, if not on the issues at hand, perhaps in relation to issues, even in other sectors, that might arise in the future. This community self-learning is easier to do with participatory techniques than with surveys or with certain other conventional techniques, but because it is recommended here that BA integrate participatory as well as extractive techniques, communities can be shown, in the course of an assessment, to identify new issues and choose options.

The one element likely to be missing, as figure 4.2 shows, is how to create an action plan, and where to go from there, because the visiting team is probably not going to be creating a project-related plan for action at the local level. Although the process of local action planning involves several stages, a BA team can be taught how to create an action plan fairly easily. This approach was used in a PLA project in The Gambia (Kane and deBrun 1993; Kane, Lawrence, and deBrun 1998). All the stages in figure 4.2 were included.

Development officials often assume that although no specific action is planned for a participating community, the ultimate action—a project, a policy change, or other undertaking—will trickle down. This kind of flow-through action emerges only as a result of analyzing findings across many communities, designing appropriate responses, and implementing them. However, not all of these actions will necessarily be carried out in all communities. Some communities were selected for study because they had already successfully addressed a problem, so they may not be included in a new program. Then again, the research in that community may have produced information on other problems that are still challenging them. Or, the issues and concerns that arose in a particular community may not reflect the priorities that will eventually emerge from the larger multi-community analysis, and it could be that the project results that they see, ultimately, are addressing lesser-identified problems. Finally, some communities may have identified solutions that are not reflected in the project, but that would work for them.

In each of these instances, communities may want to take some action on their own, and if possibilities for local action have been included in the
team’s approach, they often can. BA has never claimed to lead to community action but there is no reason that it cannot, and because it involves periods of residence in a community for participant observation, it has a better chance of helping with relevant local action than some of the PRA and PPA approaches do. What BA lacks, however, is a mechanism for helping a community toward this end. Figure 5.1 shows a process for doing this.

Create a “Corporate Memory” for Individual Projects, for Individual Sector Work, and Across These Areas. Finally, it is critical to Bank work that the lessons drawn and information gathered at each phase of a project or other work be built into a corporate memory rather than being carried in the heads of managers who are frequently transferred, or in project documents in which the lessons are distinguished largely by their absence. BA has a good track record of doing iterative studies that have been very useful in project and sector work, but the lessons arising from them need to be available to managers who join a project downstream, and to other operational staff who would find such information useful in new planning. Chapter 6 recommends the creation of a database, not only for BA but also for the processes and results of all of the approaches discussed in this book.

Integrating Development Learning Approaches for Better Information

How do some of the points the book has made come together? Figure 5.1 shows how to work at both the macro and micro level, getting information that is useful both to managers and to stakeholder communities and groups, and leading to action both at the institutional and community or group level. The first goal is relevance to the user, the manager, who is consulted at the outset about needs. Background information, drawing on the Country Assistance Strategy, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, broader socio-cultural information from Country Social Analyses, policy-related considerations from PSIs, other studies and records, and key informant interviews all help to put the issue into the policy, sector, and project contexts, and to identify stakeholders for consultation and sampling. A range of techniques is used to work with these groups, including participatory learning approaches for beneficiary communities and groups. The figure reflects the fact that communities can participate in identifying their own issues, assessing options, creating action, mobilizing, and even sharing their new learning skills with other communities. At the macro level, the institution and the manager will be drawing on information from all the sources at the national and local levels to take project action, improve sector work, and work to create better policy.

Figure 5.2 shows part of this process in greater detail—what can actually happen within a community or group, using an integrated BA approach.
Figure 5.1 A Project Using Beneficiary Assessment Integrated with Other Learning Tools

An Integrated BA Project

- Work with a manager to decide what information is needed

- Draw on existing information to refine focus

- Put the issues in context of policy, sector, project

- Identify government stakeholders
  - Key informants, focus groups, surveys, institutional analysis

- Identify community stakeholders
  - Conversational interviews, observation, focus groups, PLA

- Identify civil society stakeholders
  - Key informants, focus groups, surveys, institutional analysis

- Community research and action
  - Identify issues
    - Assess options
    - Create plan
    - Mobilize skills/resources
    - Share skills with other communities

- Manager uses information to
  - Create and improve projects
  - Help create and improve national policy
  - Improve and develop sector
  - Use lessons learned as a base for...

Sampling aims at external validity

- Micro level
  - Aims at action at community level

- Macro level
  - Aims at iterative learning, triangulation

- Aims at operational relevance
Figure 5.2 The Community Research Process

Community Research and Action Process

- Conversational interviewing
- Participant observation

Identify groups and issues

Explore through techniques such as

Mapping: make maps by relevant subgroups

Use for

Sampling

To choose people, groups, situations for

Conversational interviewing, participant observation, case studies, focus groups, PLA techniques, to.

Feed into macro-level research

Analysis

Feedback to national and local stakeholders

Develop Beneficiary Assessment report for manager

Prioritize local issues and options

Group or community

Selects from among issues

Assesses options and resources

Develops action plan

Mobilizes skills, materials, funds

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Conversational interviewing and participant observation can be used to identify important subgroups and major issues that concern these subgroups, rather than predetermining what these might be. These issues can be explored through the same techniques, as well as through standard PLA techniques, such as mapping and Venn diagrams. This figure takes one technique, mapping, as an example, and shows that important variables can be identified and recorded. The map can then be used for sampling households or groups, and exploring ideas with them through conversational interviews. The information has two destinations: the manager, for working at the macro level, and the community, for creating action.

Notes

2. In 1998-2000, deBrun carried out a national study of gender and poverty in Ireland for the National Women’s Council of Ireland, one of the Irish government’s Social Partners. This study covered several hundred communities and groups, and the aggregated results were used to help create a new national plan to address poverty, violence against women, health and education issues, and problems of local development.
Below are suggestions that reflect what was learned in the course of this book that are applicable generally. The suggestions relate to the enabling environment for these approaches, support for managers, tools to improve participatory research and learning, and support for researchers.

**The Enabling Environment for Participatory Learning**

This set of recommendations does not directly derive from the previous chapters, but became evident in the course of the interviews conducted for this study. For participatory learning to flourish, an organization must create an enabling environment and institutional incentives to promote it and to reduce obstacles that hinder it.

**Recommendation: Ensure That the “Social” Is Seen as an Integral Part of Every Bank Project, and All Economic and Sector Work**

There is a debate in the Bank about whether “social” is a sector, like “health.” Projects cannot be purely social, however, and perpetuating this position confuses managers, who may think participatory research approaches are relevant only in projects that have a social community component. It also limits social scientists, whose contributions are seen as constrained to certain kinds of projects. In fact, all projects and all sector work have a social component.

**Recommendation: Create Space in the Bank and in Other Development Organizations for Participation to Become Operational**

In the course of interviewing managers for this book, which began as documentation of the use of BA, many managers expressed confusion about all of the participatory information-getting approaches used in the Bank
and some had confused ideas about research in general. They also did not have the time or the support to get information that is not only mandated in Bank documents, but that they also feel is important to the success of their operations.

To date, some widely publicized studies, particularly Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs), have shown managers how useful participatory research can be. Some Bank staff, including some senior staff, have taken up the banner of participation in one form or another. Some studies have shown how the Bank is falling short in relation to Project Concept Documents (PCDs) and Country Assistance Strategies (CASs). Some Bank reports have outlined what it will take to make participation work—the Operations Evaluation Department’s 2001 précis on Participation in Development Assistance (World Bank 2001c) provides some clear guidance on this.

**Support for Managers**

What has not happened is the next critical link: giving managers and their partners the support—time, money, training, advice, assistance, and practical incentives—to be participatory. The rest of this chapter focuses on what this void means for one aspect of participation: getting information from and about intended beneficiaries. The research for this book shows that the wave of enthusiasm for participatory approaches of all kinds has outstripped the existing knowledge of people who might want to use such approaches, and the support available to them.

A review of Bank-assisted projects and CASs for the period 1994–98 (Clark and Dorschel 1998) made several points that continue to be relevant:

- Within the Bank, “the most important factor [in favor of participation] was the task manager’s belief in and experience with Participation.”
- Most government agencies and in-country groups lacked the capacity to engage in participation.
- Communities do not have enough training and ongoing technical support.

Clark and Dorschel’s work shows the need, as reiterated in this volume, for

- building capacity and creating support for managers, for countries, and for communities;
- using the approaches to study policymaking processes;
- getting broader cultural information from which our approaches can draw;
- getting participatory information earlier in Bank work;
- creating a database and taking an iterative approach to the information.
Recommendation: Provide Training for Managers

Managers need in-service training in the basic fundamentals of the research process. Of 43 managers interviewed for the current study, 29 said they did not understand the differences among most of the Bank approaches covered here. Many offered comments that reflected a degree of confusion about the nature of social research. Many stated that they knew little about this kind of research and, in current circumstances, did not have the time to learn. Another study on the use of participation in the preparation of PCDs came to the same conclusion in 1998:

Some TTLs [task team leaders] admitted to having inadequate skills for participatory work and they “did not always receive assistance from the Bank networks and their Country Directors.” . . . (Monico and Mahony 1998)

A second point raised by Monico and Mahony is that although the World Bank Board approved the Participation Mainstreaming Initiative in 1994, and several guidebooks on participation have been published, managers have no clear standards for participation—for example, how to incorporate it systematically in project development. They are confused about the various approaches and what each is supposed to do. At a minimum, managers should be helped to work out

- what they need the information for;
- how to frame their central questions;
- how to work out the general categories of information that are needed to address the questions;
- how to write informed terms of reference;
- what to expect from a consultant;
- where to get advice and help at all stages of the work, if necessary.

Research design specialists should facilitate this training effort rather than sector specialists who have done some research, or proponents of one approach or another. Participatory research is actually ill-served by some of its proponents and practitioners, who push their approaches as all-purpose.

Training in participation is already a recommended part of the program to be designed by Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development’s Civil Society Team in conjunction “with the Learning Board, Human Resources, WBI [World Bank Institute], and OPCS [Operation Policies and Country Services].”

Recommendation: Provide Easily Accessible Advisory Services to Managers

Managers should be able to get advice as needed on designing research properly, incorporating sampling, aggregating data, and monitoring the process to ensure that the information they get relates to their needs.
They also need advice on how to build an ongoing, iterative process that feeds into the organization’s work in a country. They need to know what the approaches discussed in this book can do to help them, and be able to get advice on using them separately or in combination. Quality standards should be established for identifying beneficiary and affected populations, for building the research process, and for incorporating it throughout the project cycle, sector work, and other Bank activities.

Most managers both inside and outside the Bank feel that they need more assistance than they are currently getting to carry out these tasks. Many said that those whom they refer to as “the social development people” are more concerned about supervising and evaluating the involvement of beneficiaries in their projects than in helping to get it right in the initial stages, and in continuing to provide support throughout the work. The word “police” was applied quite often. One manager who has a long history of supporting social research said, “Some people in the social division are still itching to be policemen. They think they have the right answer, and aren’t telling you.”

Some managers felt that social scientists were doing the social assessments they wanted to do, not those the task team leaders wanted: “What should sociology or anthropology bring—a net benefit or an obligation?” Managers were divided on where help should reside—having specialists working in a separate department, having individual specialists who know a region and sector such as human development working with that region, or having both. Although there were strong views in some cases (“if they’re in the regions, they are less likely to be police,” or, conversely, “a central unit could support a broader service”), there was no consensus.

Whatever the arrangement, a social development help desk similar to the Education Advisory Service, should be created to help managers to get the information they need on beneficiary and affected populations. Such a service should provide informed guidance on the relevant information that already exists—guides to previous studies on the social and cultural factors pertaining to development in the region or country, information from previous projects, and any other kinds of research that would help to focus the new research or point to possible difficulties and opportunities.

This advisory service should also provide practical guidance on preparing Bank documents. The existing Web-based guidance on the social and beneficiary aspects of PCDs and Project Appraisal Documents (PADs), for example, is inadequate. Managers need more Internet support and face-to-face help with project document guidelines—examples, direction to other similar projects or to sector studies, and so forth.

Managers should also be able to find out easily what has been done already, how to use that information to determine what else needs to be known, and be able to get advice on how to get this additional informa-
tion. For example, a survey done at the implementation phase on users’ attitudes to social funds might have shown, among other things, that people felt that funds were being misused by local organizations, as was the case in Zambia, where local churches were identified as one source of misuse. A manager might then do a BA to learn more about the role and power of these groups in communities, what alternatives there were, what safeguards might be put in place, and what kinds of capacities might have to be developed.

**Recommendation: Real Incentives Should be Created for Managers to Avail Themselves of These Services and to Carry Out These Activities**

Managers identified lack of time as the primary constraint in the preparation of Bank instruments. Time and costs together created other constraints. For example, managers found it difficult to integrate research and use it in an iterative fashion throughout a project because they would not have funding until the implementation stage. It was not always clear whose responsibility it was in the earlier phases, or where funding would come from. Often, they felt that they did not know a Social Assessment was expected until it was nearly due, and they had, because of short notice and little funding, to get any researcher they could get, whether external or from the Bank. One manager cited an unusable study he commissioned by a Bank staff researcher who was “cheap” and available on short notice but whose work was so poor and inaccurate that it not only was unhelpful to him, but it also offended the participating government and had to be redone by another researcher, which brings about the next set of recommendations.

**Improving Participatory Learning Approaches**

As the previous section mentioned, managers need a number of tools to undertake participatory learning approaches and to make them of better quality and more effective. This set of recommendations addresses those needs.

**Recommendation: Use Country Social Analysis to Examine Relevant Social Development Factors and Processes That Arise from the Social Context**

Such information can be used to provide policy recommendations at the macro and sector levels to improve the effectiveness of World Bank policy advice and lending for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Macro-level social analysis contributes to the assessment of what
the socio-cultural and political-institutional barriers are to sustained growth, improved governance, and poverty alleviation as well as to the determination of what policy and program actions are being taken or could be promoted to remove such barriers.

Each of the approaches in this book has a role to play, and the potential to do it successfully. The social analysis tool, BA, done properly, can target the manager’s needs. PRA/PLA can focus on research and action. PPA can relate peoples’ perspectives to policy. Policy and Social Impact Analysis can look at aspects of policy that are not being examined elsewhere. What has been missing, however, is the larger picture: broad ethnography focused on socio-cultural and institutional issues that are likely to need to be taken into account in future projects, from which these various approaches can draw.

Traditional ethnographic information is often dated: in the only systematic body of ethnographic data in anthropology, the Human Relations Area Files and its related products, which were designed for very different purposes than the needs of development managers, the “ethnographic present” can range from the early 20th century to the present day. Yet, good ethnographic information is critical to managers. Country Social Analysis (CSA), with its broad mandate and social science strengths, could provide it at a sufficiently general level so that its local meanings in relation to specific issues, problems, and projects could then be examined using BA or an approach from the PRA/PLA family.

CSA could be used to identify—without labeling them problems—major regional or national cultural premises, characteristics of social and political organization, religion, concepts of education and health, gender attitudes and behavior, and so forth that are not organized by sector but that have implications for sector work. For example, local conceptions of well-being have multisectoral implications, and well-being ranking has caught on in development circles, but this is only one of many conceptual categories that differ by culture. A cultural premise that “nature is there to be conquered” has different consequences for the environment, health, and resource use than does a premise that “we are dependent upon nature.” Urban areas such as Accra that can have mothers from patrilineal groups and fathers from matrilineal groups will have very different concepts of rights, access, inheritance, and “household” than areas where traditional patterns still hold.

**Recommendation: Use Participatory Research Approaches to Study the Dynamics and Processes Involved in Policymaking**

“Why don’t these participatory approaches affect policy?” is a question that several people asked at the beginning of this study. As has been seen, sometimes they have, and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process has had some effect in incorporating PPA findings. Still, the answer to the
question is that while it is known how researchers can stop their findings from having a policy impact, not enough is known about the realities of the policymaking process to understand what might be done to help ensure that their findings are incorporated into policy.

Earlier it was noted that social scientists rarely “study upward”—the activities of elites and the powerful are almost never subjected to the same kind of scrutiny as those of people in less powerful social groups. What else, other than information, affects policy? This was explored briefly in the book, but if the approaches described here produce valid and reliable information, they can be used to study the policy process itself. Good ethnographies and case studies that follow the processes by which specific policies have been made would make an important contribution.

**Recommendation: Obtain Participatory Information Earlier in Bank Work**

Because it is a comprehensive method, BA can be used at all points in the project cycle and in all forms of sector work, as reviews of existing BAs show (Salmen 1998b; Owen and Van Domelen 1998). Its greatest power lies in its potential for built-in triangulation in any one piece of work, but also, longitudinally, its potential for iterative operational learning over the life of an activity, from providing beneficiary information to shape a CAS or PRSP, to economic and sector work, to project work. Drawing from social and cultural factors relevant to development in a particular country, BA can provide detailed information on the meaning of those factors for a particular activity, and through sampling, the distribution of other variables related to these factors—for example, people may live in extended patrilineal households, matrilineal, and mixed households as in Accra, but what will this mean for a particular type of social protection program? What kinds of units receive food assistance or special access to health care? Does the gender of personnel working in health centers affect attendance rates, as in Niger, where BAs and a PPA found that most women did not attend health centers staffed exclusively by men?

Most managers interviewed for this book would like to use BA or another approach, if appropriate, earlier in the project cycle, but they encounter problems. As one said, if she tries to use it before the implementation phase, the government will tell her to “get lost,” and she will not have the money, anyhow. “By the implementation stage,” said another manager, “the Bank and the government are on the same set of sheet music, so the BA, both the process and the findings, are more likely to be acceptable to them. But that isn’t a good reason for not trying to do it earlier.” An example of a project that could have been far more instrumental in improving farmers’ lives had their conditions been known during the identification phase is presented in box 6.1.
Recommendation: Insert a Beneficiary-Related Annex in the Project Concept Document and the Project Appraisal Document

To ensure that social and beneficiary information is transparently incorporated into Bank work, it is also recommend that in addition to the various economic, financial, and managerial information presented in the annexes to PCDs and PADs, a new annex be created to present a summary of the relevant information on beneficiary and affected populations. This annex should address the basic question: what do the people affected by this development activity think about it? This documentation should also be included in Project Supervision Reports and Implementation Completion Reports. It should contain not only a summary of the findings but also an account of the research design, the sampling processes, and how the data were obtained and processed. Incorporating such an annex would be useful to other managers at successive stages of Bank work.

Recommendation: Create a Regular System for Monitoring and Evaluating Research

Terms such as Beneficiary Assessment, Social Assessment (SA), and social analysis now refer to a range of studies from the useful and relevant to formulaic responses to guideline requirements. As a matter of course, the Social

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Box 6.1 Neglected Feeder Roads in an Agricultural Project

In the mid-1980s, when the Democratic Republic of Congo was Zaire, a BA was conducted to gain an understanding of how the farmers of one central province who were the project’s intended beneficiaries assessed the value of the project. The major goal of the project was to increase the agricultural production of the farmers by providing fertilizer and improved seeds to them. The BA, conducted by several local religious nongovernmental organizations, the only nongovernmental entities in the region, revealed that, while the farmers appreciated having greater access to the inputs provided by the project, most were unable to gain real advantage from them because the poor condition of the roads meant they did not have access to the markets where their produce could be sold; they hence sold it at low prices to middlemen who had sturdy vehicles and were the ones to make the profits. Had this constraint of poor feeder roads been known at the time of project identification, through the application of directed participatory research, poor farmers would have benefited far more from this project than the already affluent middlemen who were its actual beneficiaries.
Development Department should evaluate a sample of beneficiary and affected population studies to ensure that standards are being maintained. Bank PPAs, for example, have varied widely in quality, as have other large-scale participatory studies. Proponents of the approach are pleased at the enthusiastic reception of the PPAs and therefore ambivalent about commenting on issues of quality. However, in relation to World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty (World Bank 2000d), for example, McGee and Brock ask, “Has it tested and validated, or tested and exposed the pitfalls of large-scale participatory research? Or is it not participatory at all?” (2001, p. 16). More examination would help managers to know what works and what to expect from studies they commission. Issues and Options for Improving Engagement Between the World Bank and Civil Society Organizations (World Bank 2005a, p. 31) spells out more specifically how to “pilot a new Bank-wide monitoring and evaluation system for civic engagement,” which may be the appropriate vehicle for a consistent Bank-wide research monitoring and evaluation program.

Recommendation: Create a Database and Take an Iterative Approach to the Information

Longitudinal learning is impossible without an organized method for maintaining information. BA and other approaches have gathered vast amounts of empirical evidence over the years, and have been able to draw important lessons in relation to specific projects or sectors. The potential for drawing larger lessons across projects is often lost because so much research is treated as one-off exercises. As noted before, it is impossible even to find out how many BAs, SAs, PRAs (Participatory Rural Appraisals), and so forth have been carried out, because of the blurring of the terms and the lack of any organized database. Managers felt that they needed more examples of how beneficiary information has been obtained, whether it was useful, and what lessons it contained. This kind of information, related to sectors and stages of the project, should be included in a database, the components of which could be filled out as the project developed. Knowing what research was done, what kinds of questions and issues it was most useful for, and how it affected the project would strengthen the Bank’s knowledge base and help everyone—from host countries, other development institutions, and those within the Bank—to have a realistic understanding of how participatory research fills a need.

A database on sector work would contain lessons of substance. A database on projects would contain lessons on the information that shaped project design, implementation, and evaluation. A database on methods would contain information on research design, methods, training, fieldwork, analysis, presentation of data, and action. Cernea and Kudat have pointed out that too many approaches in applied research methods are
“insufficiently described, inspected, discussed and codified” (1997, p. 3). Owen and Van Domelen noted that there has been little learning on how to do better BAs (1998). A database would provide the documentation needed and would “build on and put to good use the extensive base of empirical evidence gathered to date.” Such a database would allow BA and other approaches to be evaluated not only on their individual action outcomes, as they have tended to be, but also on the elements and process of the approach. These various types of data, of course, can be incorporated into one database, and cross-linked to show how lessons from sector work can be applied to a specific project.

Unfortunately, as also discovered in the course of this research, some of the most innovative and comprehensive uses of participatory research are not documented anywhere, and some of the least are overly publicized. Managers should be supported, with time and funding, in publishing their results.

**Human Resources for Participatory Learning Research**

As this book has stated several times, these methods are only as good as the people who use them. The same tools can be counterproductive in unskilled hands. This section provides recommendations on how to support the development of a community of skilled participatory researchers.

**Recommendation: Rigorously Maintain Standards for Researchers**

_The worst sin of anthropologists in the Bank is to undersell the value of participatory and qualitative approaches by doing inferior work. I should know—it just happened to me. . . . The relationship between the social scientists and the task team leader often determines whether the work has a political impact: in one stakeholder retreat, it emerged that there was significant corruption in the higher education system, so the study focused on it. The Minister was delighted because the views came from expert researchers from outside the system._ (Project Manager, Resident Mission)

What is a researcher? Researchers suffer the same fate as novelists: nonwriters often say, “I could write a novel if I only had the time.” Similarly, people who need to get some information at some point in their career, perhaps to do a graduate thesis, may think of themselves as researchers. However, research methodology is a sub-specialization within the social sciences—one that is deliberately chosen, not a matter of electives taken to supplement the main focus. If most noneconomists in the Bank will think back to their own graduate training, they will recall that they got very little research training (and economists were unlikely to get any training at all in social science research).5
Applying for and getting a job as a researcher in the Bank (or in most large international agencies) also does not make one a researcher. “Research assistants” sometimes form an even more precarious category when promoted to the category of “researcher.” “Researcher” has become a residual category, like typing once was—something to fall back on.

So what should a good researcher be able to offer a manager? He or she should not only have a command of a sector or field of study and understand the workings and typical needs of the Bank, but also understand the philosophical underpinnings of research, major theories, the principles of research design, sampling, and data analysis. Probably the most important of these, technically, is also the most rare—the ability to design research. One can always get technician-specialists adept in specific techniques to implement the design, but the structuring of the research is critical. The good researcher should be able to clarify the research question, and know how to get information about it, how to verify the information, how to know what it represents, and how the data can be pulled together to see if patterns emerge.

These attributes are not intended to create an elite—one of the authors has devoted her career to making research methods more accessible to nonresearchers. Many task team leaders and other Bank staff do their own research and publish widely in professional journals. However, among the resources in the support system for managers, design and methodology specialists should be available to help with this critical aspect of planning research.6

Recommendation: Create a Viable and Useful Consultant Database

Where can a manager find good consultants? “DACON is useless,” said one manager, and others who were concerned that this company provided no quality supported the view. A study of how managers in the Bank get their consultants would be extremely instructive: most either ask a colleague, or employ someone who has not let them down before. “The result,” said one, “is that you never find out the whole range—you get the same people over and over, and everyone competes for these few. We need a list of university people, people in NGOs, private firms, research institutes, etc. But nobody has the time to make such a list.” (See also appendix 2: Terms of Reference for a Consultant in Participatory Research.)

Recommendation: Encourage Lateral Networks and In-Country Networking

Both BA and SA require professional researchers. BA is almost always carried out by local researchers, and most developing countries have researchers who are well qualified in conventional research techniques, particularly in
survey approaches, because the post-positivist tradition is often strong. When BAs are designed and monitored from the Bank, at least in the initial stage, strong controls keep the work on course and prevent common mistakes, such as turning the process into either a quantitative survey or a nondirected, anecdotal description. Many local researchers either lack training in the collection and use of qualitative data, or they have concerns, often well founded, about the problems they will face in convincing officials in their own countries of the validity of such material. A number of developing countries could profit by workshops and networking on this issue. Assistance with analysis and synthesis of qualitative research material, which requires considerable skill, and on methods of quantifying qualitative data would be a particular help.

Serpell (1999) points out that one of the major problems Southern researchers face is isolation from other colleagues, even those nearby, in their region—that the usual mode of communicating results and sharing ideas is directly with external agencies in the North, and that many insights are lost as a result. Lateral networking and organized regional workshops would strengthen and validate local cultural knowledge, recognition of non-Western cognitive categories, adaptations of methodologies, and understanding of policy mechanisms and structures. The Uganda Participatory Development Network is an example of lateral networking: an informal association of about 60 organizations and institutions that are interested in using participatory approaches in community development work in Uganda participate in workshops, share information, and have access to a resource center. Several studies in Cernea and Kudat’s *Social Assessments for Better Development* (1997) were carried out by local social science networks, which the Bank initially supported with the aim of facilitating innovative and participatory initiatives. Assistance has also been given to other institutions such as the Participatory Action Group in Zambia. Funds such as the Bank’s Small Grants Program, which is aimed at assisting civil society groups in various forms of networking, might be deployed for this purpose.

Assistance in dealing with these problems will vary from one country to another. Indeed, a consortium of interested agencies should work with a selection of countries to explore research capacity in universities, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private organizations, and government.

**Recommendation: Encourage the Introduction of Participatory Research Approaches into University Departments, NGOs, and Other Research-Related Institutions**

BA, PRA, and PPA facilitators are drawn from a wide variety of institutional and technical backgrounds, including academe, but also from NGO and government staff, and may be local people. This mixture not only provides a diversity of expertise, such as knowledge of policy and institutional
structures, but also widens the ownership base. The benefits of such diversity come with a price: the team members need rigorous training for the work to be coherent.

Because PRA and PPA exercises in particular are deceptively simple, without professional input they can also be more costly and time consuming, and often end up with a mass of undigested material, some of it obtained through inappropriate techniques. Recent non-Bank projects in Zambia and Malawi, for example, experienced this problem: experts then have to be called in to engage in “retro-design” and try to make something out of the data.

If capacity is not built responsibly, new waves of inexperienced researchers will likely be used for participatory research. Conversely, institutionalizing training within one organization, NGO, or government department is likely to lead to less participation by civil society organizations, less buy-in by other government departments, more complacency, and research that is more routine and less creative.

The introduction of participatory research approaches into university departments can lead to the development of one source of researchers; another source is capacity building in NGOs and other civil society groups. This is already happening to some degree, particularly with the growing role of bilateral donors such as the U.K. Department for International Development. In the case of the Bank, capacity building might be funded through trust funds, grants, or the Small Grants Program. Support for institution building and capacity building for participatory, beneficiary-oriented research could also be provided by the World Bank Institute or through training partnerships between the Bank and NGOs.

Notes

1. World Bank 2005a, p. 32. The program is conceptualized as “an addition to the formal training programs and retreats for Country Directors and Managers, RMTs, Young Professionals and other Bank staff, as well as for Executive Directors and their staffs. Critical to this program is the building of a ‘community of practice’ involving Bank staff, CSOs and other stakeholders, such as the newly launched Community of Practice in Social Accountability (COPSA). . . . This would also include holding an annual training program for the Civil Society Group and Civil Society Country Staff across the institution.”

2. Managers pointed to the emphasis on safeguards in Bank instruments, and felt that the same attention and support should be provided for getting the research done properly: “Task managers who are unsure if the social safeguard policies . . . will apply should mark the relevant policies To Be Determined (TBD) and are advised to consult with the social development team in their region for further assistance in this matter” (World Bank 2000a, p. 12). This consultation is
clearly intended to apply to specific safeguards, such as Indigenous Peoples (OD 4.20), and the task manager is expected to include measures to analyze issues and ensure compliance with safeguard policies.

3. This recommendation is echoed in World Bank 2005a, p. 31: “Priority Action 2: Establish a Bank-wide advisory service/focal point for consultations and an institutional framework for consultation management and feedback.”

4. The document states in part, “It is time for the Bank to determine if it is useful and cost-effective to move beyond the limited M&E [monitoring and evaluation] process for civic engagement which has been in place for nearly two decades—an annual desk review of PADs which tracks only intended involvement of CSOs in Bank-financed projects—and to see if it can be replaced by a more informative and useful system. The goal is to measure the scope and quality of civic engagement throughout the project or strategy implementation cycle, to assess progress and cost effectiveness. This should be integrated with regular reporting systems so that it does not add significantly to the burdens placed on task teams. A baseline study will assist in monitoring future engagement and guiding future strategy. Results and trends will be reported annually to the Bank’s senior management, the Board, CSOs and to the general public through a periodic progress report on World Bank-civil society relations. ESSD will lead this effort in close coordination with EXT, OPCS and the Bank-wide civil society focal points” (World Bank 2005a, p. 31).

5. Being an anthropologist or sociologist does not necessarily prepare one, either. The field of anthropology, for example, has been well known for requiring field work, yet offering little or no preparation for it. Muddling through is a rite of passage. In recent years, sociology has abandoned the interpretation of large social and cultural issues (such interpretation was characteristic of an earlier generation: William Foote Whyte, C. Wright Mills, Daniel Bell, Peter Berger, Nathan Glazer, and David Riesman, among others) and is once again characterized by a post-positivist approach, mimicking the natural sciences and economics in its emphasis on measurement, hypothesis testing, and experiments, even in areas where these are inappropriate. The result is that certain kinds of methodologists are being produced—survey specialists, for example.

Beneficiary Assessment (BA) is a systematic inquiry into people’s values and behavior in relation to a planned or ongoing intervention for social and economic change. This method draws heavily from the tradition in social science known as “qualitative research . . . that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms” (Kirk and Miller 1989, p. 1).

The objective of the BA approach is to encourage the intended beneficiaries of a development process to express themselves freely and candidly about topics related to its successful evolution; to express themselves as subjects, or actors—persons whose living conditions, and in the case of HIV/AIDS, whose very lives, are most directly at stake in the activity being undertaken. This process of “subjectifying” the respondent, rather than the objectifying traditionally done in standard questionnaire work, is the hallmark of qualitative research. BA is not meant to supplement quantitative surveys but rather to complement them with information regarding the nature of human behavior and of motivation that might change this behavior.

Techniques

The three principal techniques of BA follow:

- **Conversational interviews**, carried out one-on-one around the structure provided by the interview guide in a naturalistic manner to induce the maximum amount of candor possible. Generally this interview is conducted with little reference to any written paper during the course of the interview.
- **Focus group discussions**, conducted with groups of from 6 to 12 persons; discussion generally follows the same themes as in the conversational interview. To facilitate focus group discussions, it is advisable to have one person lead the discussion while another takes notes as it transpires.
- **Participant observation**, in which one or more trained observers become participants in a certain reality to better appreciate its context. The participant observation method involves protracted residence of a researcher
in a community of intended beneficiaries. During this time, ranging from several days to several weeks, sufficient amount of rapport is to be established with key members of the community of interest; the researcher becomes involved in their day-to-day activities with the objective of gaining a comprehensive understanding of their living conditions.

**Definition**

The professionals and policymakers who plan projects and programs are often far removed from the people for whom these activities are intended. BA is a method that can be used to gather information about how an activity is perceived and valued by its principal users. The use of the BA approach allows for the views of key actors and stakeholders, such as the poor, service providers, nongovernmental organizations, community leaders, and local government officials, to be heard and incorporated into project work. BA is an intermediation tool that allows for systematic and continuous tracking of client attitudes from identification, through preparation to implementation of a project. Consultation with local people allows projects to respond to felt needs, and provides the basis for involving stakeholders in various aspects of project design and implementation, building commitment and, ultimately, ownership and accountability.

**The Uses of BA**

The BA approach examines how people behave, and why they behave as they do. The information derived from qualitative approaches such as this can be used to

- improve targeting, design, and service delivery;
- enhance ownership and accountability;
- help identify and mitigate any potential adverse social impacts;
- develop local resources and build local capacity and in-country knowledge.

BA is systematic consultation with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders to help identify and design a development activity, to signal any potential constraints to their participation, and to obtain feedback on reactions to an intervention during implementation. The following steps are involved in doing a BA:

- **Familiarization.** Technical specialists are selected to guide the BA project. Important problem areas are identified and reviewed using available information, including interviews with key stakeholders such as donors,
government, and local people. A guide for semi-structured interviews is developed to cover key themes.

- **Study design.** Target populations are identified. An appropriate representative sampling framework is devised, and the issues to be explored (according to the objectives of the BA) are clearly delineated. A research group and team leader should also be designated.

- **Selection and orientation of local interviewers.** The research group helps select and train local men and women who are fluent in local languages, good listeners, and skilled in recall and writing. The study team, including local interviewers, practices descriptive and accurate writing, note taking, awareness of and separation from preconceived notions, and data analysis.

- **Study methods.** BA work commonly includes interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and institutional analysis.

- **Preparation of the BA report.** The BA report includes recommendations that incorporate assessment findings into project design or sector work. The report should be reviewed by the interviewees to cross-check for accuracy.
Appendix 2
Terms of Reference for a Consultant in Participatory Research

While most people working in development today recognize that involving participants makes development programs more feasible, sustainable, and equitable, they may not be in a position to carry out research themselves. Finding a good consultant or team then becomes critical. By working responsibly with participants, a good consultant can help give a meaningful focus and operational practicality to a project; a poor consultant can waste time, money, opportunities, and in some instances even alienate communities to such an extent that no research, participatory or otherwise, can be carried out. The following are some points to bear in mind when looking for a consultant.

Expectations for a Consultant

The consultant should have experience in both conventional approaches (both qualitative and quantitative) and in participatory approaches. The consultant should be able to assess which tools are appropriate to the manager’s requirements and be able to combine them as needed. Surveys, for example, are not common in participatory approaches, but sometimes a survey is essential, and the option for using one should be available. Ask to see a past report or study (not a training program) produced by the consultant that used participatory research methods.

Participatory research poses typical problems: like all research, it requires a research design, sampling procedures, and strategies for analysis, which are critical but sometimes overlooked in facilitators’ enthusiasm for the attractive methods. Professional researcher input is necessary at this design stage. Most professional researchers, however, have less background in participatory approaches, although many of the techniques in Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Poverty Assessment are drawn from conventional methodologies. The two major problems are trust in “qualitative” data and the attitude of the researcher. Participatory approaches require that the researcher enter the community or group as a learner, and that
together, all produce and analyze the resulting information. Hard-won professionalism often stands in the way of assuming such an attitude.

**Terms of Reference for a Consultant**

The terms of reference for a consultant to conduct the research should include the requirements listed below.

- Design the research, drawing upon both conventional and participatory approaches for research (and if appropriate, for organizing the group or community for action). At a minimum, the design should show each of the manager’s issues and questions, as in figure 2A.1.
- Prepare a sampling design (if sampling is relevant, as it will be if the data is to reflect larger populations).
- Prepare a plan for collecting, recording, aggregating, and analyzing the data. (If this is not done, it is easy to end up with vignettes, a few attractive diagrams, and some data that will be dismissed as interesting but anecdotal.)
- Outline the resources and materials required for the team’s work. (This does not refer to the training, although the manager may wish to ask for this, but rather the actual team work—for example, a team can founder on practical issues of transport, which can be a major expense.)
- Provide (assist in, advise on) the criteria for selection of trainees for the team.
- Provide a training manual and any other materials needed to train the team. Indicate any other training materials needed.
- Identify a team or train and supervise a participatory research team.
- Prepare a protocol of instructions and recording templates for the team.
- Prepare a logistical plan for the team’s work.
- Prepare a plan for monitoring the work. (Often, well-prepared teams with a designated team leader can carry out the work with supervision from a distance, which is usually the case if the consultant or trainer does not speak the languages involved, or if there are multiple teams working

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**Figure 2A.1 Research Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager’s issues and questions</th>
<th>How each of these will be addressed (techniques/processes)</th>
<th>What information/outcome will emerge from each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
in different areas simultaneously. In this case, a system must be set up so that the consultant monitors the teams’ progress. One way involves the team preparing multiple copies of all recorded materials that the consultant monitors.)

- Supervise the team in aggregating and analyzing the data. (Ideally, this should be done at a minimum of two points in the project, to allow for correction of problems, and to take an iterative approach by basing later steps on what the team has learned so far.)
- Perform the final analysis and prepare the report according to the format required.
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World Bank operations increasingly rely on information about the insights, needs, culture, social organization, and resources of stakeholders and beneficiaries. What methods does the Bank employ to obtain this information, and how can these methods be improved?

*Bridging Diversity: Participatory Learning for Responsive Development* describes the Bank’s diverse approaches to social research and documents cases in which effective listening allowed projects and policies to generate their desired impact. At the same time, it finds that current approaches—although effective in sensitizing managers and policymakers to the perspectives of those they are trying to reach—could be more technically robust and more responsive to beneficiaries. The report’s authors argue that apparently opposing dimensions of research—subjective/objective, qualitative/quantitative, and micro/macro—could be bridged and illustrate their point with an in-depth examination of one Bank approach to information gathering: the beneficiary assessment. They describe how this approach meets project managers’ needs and how it could meet other needs by spurring project participation and community action.

*Bridging Diversity* proposes that various social research approaches be integrated within an information-gathering plan so that they serve as complementary rather than competing paradigms.