

Empowerment through participation? The effectiveness of participatory approaches in clientist societies

by Roos Willems

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A B S T R A C T

International development NGO's changed their intervention strategies and policies over the past decades following outsiders' criticisms and internal reflection processes. The traditional top-down approach made way for a bottom-up approach with a focus on identifying and supporting local initiatives through participatory methods. Yet when looking closer at the roots of the very concept of participation as well as the way it is operationalized in a West African socio-cultural context, unexpected findings turn up. Despite formal structures designed to guarantee the free participation of all individuals to decision making processes, whether at the national or local level, West-African cultural logic appears to prescribe men and women to comply with the existing inegalitarian power relations of their communities. This paper argues that concepts used in development approaches are very much culture-laden and that their meanings tend to change according to context. The application of participatory methods developed to ensure the empowerment of marginalized groups may lead to results quite different from those initially intended.

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Introduction

This paper suggests that the notion of participation differs when applied to different cultural contexts, and that this may affect the effectiveness of using participatory methods in the development field. Drawing on five years experience as a development practitioner working with farmers' organizations in rural Senegal, and my academic training as a cultural anthropologist, it illustrates the need for a more complex understanding of the basic concept of participation. Indeed, despite significant claims to the contrary, there is little evidence of the long term effectiveness of participation in materially improving the livelihoods of the most vulnerable social groups. In particular, the issue of empowerment through participation – a principle that has become part and parcel of the major current-day development policies and strategies-- will be critically examined within the context of a patron-client society, such as Senegal's.

A first section of this article gives a brief overview of the modern grand development theories of the 1950 till the 1980s, in order to highlight the specificities and underlying principles of the so-called post modern development approach of the following decades. The second section presents the background to the empowerment through participation approach and illustrates how this approach is operationalized by NGOs. The third section presents the findings of a number of 2006 focus groups and a 2008 baseline among 400 members of the farmers organisations the NGO worked with in Southern Senegal. The following sections four and five contextualize these findings in a larger framework with a particular focus on the workings of Senegalese politics in connection with widespread system of clientelism. Section six delves into the cultural logics underlying the previously presented findings and the conclusion gives a number of practical suggestions to development practitioners with regard to the effectiveness of the participatory approach in non-Western societies.

From modernization theories to local knowledge

Modernization theory is essentially based on Durkheim's model of an industrialized 'organic' society and Weber's discussion of the relationship between Protestantism and industrial capitalism. The works of Rostow on economic growth during the 1960s illustrated how the forms of growth already experienced in the North are taken as a model for the rest of the world. While economies are situated at different stages of development, all are assumed to be moving in the same direction, namely from tradition, poor, rural and irrational subsistence agricultures to modern and urbanized societies which are secular, universalistic and profit-motivated. In order for 'undeveloped' countries to become 'developed' they should merely focus on technology and high levels of investment in combination with the development of infrastructure, manufacturing and effective government.

Contrary to the purely economic principle of the modernisation theory, the dependency theory of the 1970s had more political and historical roots. Largely based on Marxist theories, the dependency theorists argue that rather than being undeveloped, countries in the South have been underdeveloped by the processes of imperial and post-imperial exploitation. An often used model to illustrate this theory is Wallerstein's. Here the North is the centre exploiting the peripheral South through the importation of raw materials and the exportation of manufactured goods thus preventing the South from developing its own manufacturing bases. Given that the root causes of underdevelopment are political, dependency theorists do not subscribe to the economic policies advocated by modernists, but suggest only radical, structural change can bring the solution, e.g. socialism.

While modernisation and dependency theorists are political polar opposites, they have a lot in common: both are essentially evolutionary, adhere to capitalism to propel progress, and both assume that change comes 'top down' from the state. The central problem in both is that they

“omit recognition of wider social and historical processes. This criticism is central to 'dependency theory,' according to which structures of dependence are set up by the world capitalist system, which penetrates local societies and economies, and extends down to tie apparently remote workers to the system.” (Hobart 1993:7)

In other words, both these development approaches essentially ignore the ways in which people negotiate these changes and initiate their own. And yet, according to Leys (2005), “it was not the shortcomings of the principal existing schools of development theory, serious as they were, that made possible the ascendancy of neo-liberalism ... [but rather] the radical transformation in both the structure and management of the world economy” (114). The old polarities of the Cold War all but became obsolete by the late 1980s (sometimes referred to as the “New Global Order”), and there no longer was an easy division between states on the periphery and those in the centre.

The new bottom-up oriented development paradigms that emerged in the 1990s to challenge these top-down perspectives are the market-liberal and neo-populist. Both give more credence to local perspectives “but otherwise mirror the same political divide, the former associated with the political right, and the latter associated with the political left” (Sillitoe et al. 2002: 3). While the market liberal approach focuses more on the fee flow on market information to appropriately influence farmers’ behaviours and options, the neo-populist approach gives prominence to local knowledge, which is taken seriously and granted a role problem identification, research, and so.

The post-modernist movement equally gives a preponderant role to local knowledge in development and postulate that most development projects fail because a target population is routinely being defined as “bounded from the rest of humankind by its aboriginal poverty, ignorance, and passivity”, while “knowledgeable outsiders” need to be brought in to develop them (Cooper and Packard 2005: 126). Postmodernism in general rejects any unitary theory of progress and belief in rationality, and advocates that ‘objective truth’ and grand discourses be replaced by a plurality of view points for everyone experiences things differently (Garnder and Lewis 1996: 21-22).

Empowerment through participation

Robert Chambers, in his influential book “Putting the First Last” (1997), argues that the conception of development projects, hitherto almost exclusively designed by external technical experts, should on the contrary, be based on local knowledge to be effective. The point of departure of his approach lies in the affirmation of “multiple realities, local diversity, and personal and social potentials” (Chambers 1997:196). Each situation is said to deserve a separate understanding in its own right, informed by local knowledge and historical evidence. The rapid spread of participatory methods (the most cited of which is the ‘Participatory Rural Appraisal’ or PRA) is attributed to their ability to “enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act and monitor” (102). Participatory methods include semi-structured interviews with observation, as well as techniques that draw in local people with innovative games, diagramming, mapping exercises, focus-group discussions and so on. “They aim to involve a range of people from any community, seeking to include those who may be marginalized such as the very poor and women. The intention is to empower all” (Sillitoe and al. 2002: 6).

Since the early to mid 1990s onwards, the idea that local people can be empowered through participation has spread and is now actively advocated by the large majority of development organizations. The NGO I work for in Senegal adheres to the same principles and has incorporated them in their vision and mission, as follows:

“As all people are created equal ... we strive for a world where all people ... can participate in the decision making processes ... We work with partner organizations who, in support of their own people, are committed to the elimination of exclusion, and who believe as strongly as we do in the rights and the strengths of people to take their destiny into their own hands. Since marginal or oppressed groups often feel inhibited to defend their own interests, we attach a lot of importance to balanced gender relations, culture and participation.”

In the organization's policy text, that formulates the organization's principles, objectives and strategies, we read that "the empowerment of ... men and women ... is of prime importance" and that "participation is an instrument of change that can help break the exclusion of subordinated people and provide them with the basis for their more direct involvement in development initiatives." The definition at head office level of the principles of participation and empowerment underlines the importance the organization attaches to them as guiding principles in the work done at the level of the field offices. In Senegal, the NGO I worked with has implemented development projects and programs since the early 1990s, particularly in the field of food security and sustainable agriculture. Whereas during the early 1990s the approach was one of direct project implementation, this changed in the wake of the new development paradigm of participation and support to local initiatives. These days, partnerships are established with local farmer's organizations so as to assist them in implementing their activities by providing financial and technical assistance together with organizational strengthening support. These farmer's organizations usually consist of between 12 to 15 village-based associations of male and female small scale farmers, who constitute the final beneficiaries of the NGO's development programme. The NGO essentially assists a farmers' organization's executive committee in delivering services to its individual members (e.g. providing inputs, introducing improved agricultural techniques, collective sales of produce, etc.) with a view to increasing the farmers' incomes and rendering their livelihoods more sustainable. Just as gender is considered an aspect to be integrated in all program activities, this is the case as well for participation. Operationalizing participation

In 2006, we decided to take stock of the integration of the concept of participation in the workings of the farmers' organizations. Because of the way they are structured (being a federation of village-based associations) we organized separate focus groups with persons who work at the level of the farmers' organization on the one hand, and with the individual male and female farmers, members of the village-base associations, on the other hand. In total five focus groups took place with each around 20 voluntary participants, one third of whom were women. Two focus groups consisted of persons working for a federation, while the three others assembled farmers who were member of one of the village-based associations. The geographical areas covered were Kolda and Tambacounda, both in the southern part of Senegal. The chairman of one of the farmers' organisations explains the motivations to establish a federation of village based associations in his region:

"The reason why we founded our federation was that we wanted to create a certain solidarity among the populations living in the same community. You see, because our community is comprised of several different ethnic groups. So first and foremost we wanted to create solidarity among the many ethnic populations so that we could work together in harmony without discrimination. Secondly, together we would be stronger to tackle the many problems we face in agriculture and animal husbandry. And also, to see how to eliminate the social classes, that is the rich and the poor. In short, the federation was founded to resolve the social and the economic problems of our region."

One of the members of the same organization's executive committee adds that:

"The federation helped some of its GIE members to solve their problems. For example, when things were going well in X, but Y was having many problems, then the federation can learn from the experiences in X, and apply their way of solving things in Y. that way, all GIE will reach the same level of development. That was a major reason for uniting into one federation."

According to an individual farmer, member of one of the village based associations (GIE), positive results are beginning to show:

“Yes, I can say that the level of solidarity between the populations has increased and also their living conditions. We are beginning to see some food security here. Nutrition has improved both in terms of quantity and quality. At first our wives were very thin, and now they have put on quite a bit of weight.”

One of his fellow members explains further:

“The federation really helps us to sell our produce through announcements on the local radio to the tradesmen. It also helps us in getting seeds for our fields and gasoline for the water pumps.”

When asked about the decision-making processes within the federation, the executive committee members complement each other in explaining the structure of farmers' organization:

“Well, the decisions are taken by the Board, who will delegate its execution to the Executive Committee. The Board exists of representatives of each of the GIE members of the federation.”

“In order to draw up our yearly action plan for example, there will first be meetings at the GIE's where members of the Executive Committee attend in order to take note of the needs. For example, GIE Z says that for 2006-2007 they need to drill a waterhole, or inputs for the fields, and this information is communicated to the Board.”

*“I want to point out that these GIE meetings are really meetings of the General Assembly of the GIE, because such decisions cannot come from just one person.”
The same question was asked in the focus groups of the GIE members.*

“We have a representative in the Board of the federation so we know of all the decisions taken by them”.

“The federation sends someone to the GIE to inquire about our needs which they then take back with them. Afterwards, they come to inform us on the decisions taken.”

A 2008 baseline survey of a random sample of 400 members of four farmers' organizations (representing about 10% of all members), confirmed the qualitative findings of 2006. Around 70% of respondents expressed satisfaction at the number of meetings their organizations hold, while 66% expressed being satisfied with the services their respective federation extend to them. Interestingly, when respondents at the GIE level were asked whether they ever had any of the proposals made during their GIE meetings taken into account by the executive committee of their respective federations, a mere 20% said they had. Yet, before interpreting these results from the micro-level, I suggest to have a look at the political macro-level and explore the functioning of democracy in Senegal.

Senegalese politics

Senegal is one of the most stable countries on the African continent and has been since independence. Three different heads of state have succeeded each other during the past 40 years, each time after elections considered to be reasonably fair and transparent. According to the World Bank's indicators on good governance (Kauffmann et al. 2005), Senegal scores better than the average of Sub-Saharan countries with regard to amongst others, political stability, government effectiveness, rule of law, corruption, etcetera. Economically however, the picture appears much bleaker.

If the average income of Senegalese citizens at the time of independence was comparable to that of South Korea, it has been dropping gradually ever since so as to become one of the lowest per capita incomes worldwide. In 1975, the Senegalese income per capita was still equal to 1/8 of the Spanish per capita income (Based on UNEP 2002). By 2004, however, the income gap between the two countries had doubled to factor 15 (Based on UNDP 2006). Senegal currently ranks 156/177 on the list of HDI per country, right after Mauritania and Haiti and right before Eritrea and Rwanda (UNDP 2006) and about one in every two households (48.5%) lives under the poverty line (ESAM-II 2004).

This bleak economic picture stands in contrast to the amount of development aid the country receives, up to 13% of the GNP, which places it among the most aided countries in francophone West Africa.

In a 2006 study, Molenaers and Gerard wonder why the economic performance of the country remains so poor despite reasonably good working democratic institutions and a rather high level of international development assistance. In other words: "Why is it that the presumed trickle down effect of international aid through democratic institutions does not seem to lead to tangible results in the case of Senegal"? The authors found that the most influential forces on the Senegalese political scene are the Islamic Sufi orders (confreries in French). If over 85% of the population express having confidence in the religious brotherhoods (with 60% having "very strong confidence"), a mere 17% puts their trust in the general assembly and barely 15% in the political parties (Vengroff and Magala 2001:148).

When in their early twenties, most Senegalese Muslim men and women will choose a spiritual leader, called marabout on whom to rely for spiritual and moral guidance, as well as economic assistance in times of need. Each marabout belongs to one of the four Islamic Sufi orders represented in the country. Individual adherence to one of the Sufi orders is not related to ethnic affiliations, and different members of one household may belong to different brotherhoods. As one scholar of Senegalese Sufi orders puts it:

"The Senegalese maraboutic system is characterized by its extraordinary presence in public life; in businesses, public transport, private homes, government offices, schools and industry the icons of affiliation with a Sufi order, and more specifically with a maraboutic guide, are omnipresent." (De Villallon 1999:134)

If in theory, maraboutic authority was supposed to be earned by a reputation for piety and knowledge in the religious sciences, in Senegal the maraboutic status is presently most often acquired by inheritance. During the era of colonialism, the marabouts and brotherhoods established themselves as powerful political and economic forces through their involvement in the peanut sector which had and still has albeit to a lesser extent than before a determining impact on Senegal's economy. Since then, the brotherhoods' and more specifically the marabouts' economic interests extended into export industries and more recently also in the rapidly growing urban informal sector (Cruise O'Brien 2003:32-91).

Because of the typical unconditional adherence of their members and a strictly hierarchical system, these religious leaders dispose of a solid popular basis whose voting behaviour they fully control (Thiam 2009). Hence any political representative, whether at the local, regional or national level, proposing an socio-economic reform that goes against the economic interests of the marabouts, will more likely than not have to deal with electoral defeat and the demise of his or her political career.

“Historically, the marabouts’ capacity to influence the making of politics in Senegal has been decisive. In such circumstances then, the premium for acquiring their support is high and extremely valued for any aspiring politician” (Futton 1986:67)

After the last presidential elections of February 2007, many blamed the unexpected victory of the incumbent president Wade on the influence of a great number of marabouts (said to be bribed with large sums of money and vehicles (Faye 2007)) on the voting behaviour of their disciples. One voter expressed her dilemma as follows:

“I did not want to vote for Abdoulaye Wade, but because of the appreciation and esteem my marabout expressed for him I changed my mind and voted for Wade. Anyway, I know that even If I had not voted for him, he was going to win because of the marabout’s support.” (Le Sud Quotidien, February 27, 2007).

In fact, many are those who worry that Senegal might soon become a religious state (Kane 2007).

Clientelism and demokraasi

The role of the maraboutic system on Senegal political scene is evidently but one concrete form (albeit a very important one) of the omnipresent patron/client relationship system that governs Senegalese society. Clientelism is not new to the country as it was one of the most characteristic features of the pre-colonial Wolof aristocratic monarchies. But even today, in spite of the movement of the past decades towards greater social equality and political democracy (Barker 1987), patrimonial norms and mores have not disappeared. Many elected office bearers as well as civil servants still treat state resources as their own, while many ordinary citizens continue to expect those in power to be generous in distributing these resources to their individual network members (Gellar 2005). Notwithstanding the official recognition of no less than 72 political parties (15 of which participated in the most recent presidential elections of February 2007), it is widely known –even if formally unacknowledged—that each group will mobilize their supporters by distributing resources through their personalistic patron-client networks.

“Officially and on paper, the legitimacy of all parties – ruling and opposition—has always relied on the myth that they operate in the liberal-democratic style ... This useful fiction preserves the idea that egalitarian citizenship is the basis of the Senegalese regime” (Galvan 2001: 58).

And yet, according to a 1997 study into the cultural meaning of the Wolof word demokraasi, to the Senegalese citizen the system works just as it should.

“One facet of Senegalese politics that has often perplexed outside observers is individual voting behaviour. Some Senegal-watchers lament the fact that many urban and rural poor fail to comprehend the significance of voting. .. This assumption is faulty. Recognizing the distinctive meaning of demokaraasi enables us to see that these people are not playing the democratic game badly. They are, rather, playing a game whose objectives are somewhat different. Because demokaraasi has been absorbed into concerns about social welfare, many Senegalese citizens have come to see participation in the electoral process as a means to reinforce the bonds of community solidarity necessary for collective long-term security” (Schaffer 1997:46).

Hence, the purpose of voting is to agree on one candidate. The act of choosing - the key element of democracy in the Western sense - is less important as the essence of "democracy à la sénégalaise" then appears to lie in the final consensus achieved, and the social peace it ensures. One farmer explains:

"A while ago there were two politicians who were candidates for office. When they came to this village, we got together and asked each other "which candidate do you prefer?" Some chose the first candidate, others the second. When we saw the first candidate had more support, those who had initially chosen the second candidate immediately joined the majority to make things run better. That is our demokaraasi here in this village." (Schaffer 1997:46).

Hence, it becomes clear that the act of voting signifies for the Senegalese men and women a way to reaffirm their ties of solidarity and a means to reinforce their safety-net. This analysis goes a far way in clarifying the aforementioned observations on the effectiveness of the application of the concept of participation within the farmers' organizations surveyed. Despite the fact that only 20% of their members feel that their suggestions are taken into consideration by the organisations executive committees, they still feel that the system is functioning democratically as long as a consensus can be reached. As one of the woman farmers explained:

"After harvesting, we meet to make our sales plan. We ask all the GIE's to tell us which products they want to sell that year, and after some democratic discussion, we take a decision on which ones we will include in the sales campaign. The final decision is always a unanimous decision."

Clearly, within a clientelist system, reaching a 'consensus' means that 'clients' will support patrons' decisions. In other words, 'participating' in this context does not mean that all are heard likewise and everyone contributes to the final decision in equal measure, but rather that the existing ties of solidarity are confirmed and safety nets are not disturbed. Hence, the very idea of "empowerment through participation" in the Western sense of the word becomes to a certain extent questionable and may in fact have the adverse effect. Because although decisions are taken in a seemingly democratic and participative manner, marginalized groups (or clients) will tend to go along with patrons' proposals for the development of the community, which will more likely then not perpetuate the latter's power position rather than empowering the former.

Cultural logics

Participatory methods have been criticized before, but usually unsuccessful results have been contributed to “bad practice” such as consultants not taking enough time to learn the methods or applying the methods too rigidly without attention for the local context. Other bad practices are allowing communities to compile shopping lists of request or letting “big” men and the local elite to dominate the proceedings. Also often blamed for bad results are the raising of high expectation subsequently not fulfilled or rapid, disbursement-driven programmes seeking to spend fast (Chambers 2007). Others have called the debate on bad or good application of methods the “tyranny of techniques” and pleaded instead for an examination of the concepts informing the approach in itself, such as the institutional model, the unitary community and economic rationality as prime motivator of decisions.

“In explaining motivations to participate, social norms are seen to occupy a secondary place to economic rationality. Social relations and participation, while supported by norms of responsibility and community service, are seen ultimately to serve the ends of economic development” (Cleaver 2002:234).

Yet, in the many critiques on the use and effectiveness of participatory methods, none, to my knowledge, have called into question the cultural meaning of the concept of participation itself. Few proponents of the importance of local knowledge in development work, caution that local knowledge comprise not only environmental and technical knowledge, but also cover the social and cultural environment: “Taking a broader definition of local knowledge, it consists in part of less conscious knowledge on unwritten cultural rules” (Antweiler 1998: 497).

Following this advice, we should take a look first at the cultural roots of the democratic adagio “one person, one vote”. In the Western world, the “socio-political order is built on the notion that individuals are primarily discrete and very largely self-defined citizens of the nations” (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 156). This principle is implicit in the concept of Western style democracy, but we rarely wonder where its roots lie. Recent research has shown that Western individualism did not result from industrialisation and urbanism, but instead preceded these evolutions. Hartman (2004) underlines the particularity of the Western notion of the individual compared to other world regions and traces its origins back to changing pre-medieval North West European marriage patterns and household structures.

The emergence of the nuclear household brought with it new notions of personhood and of social relations, in the sense that previous hierarchical and interdependent kinship relations were increasingly being replaced by a contractualizing and individualistic culture, in which all human being are considered equal. As such,

“the story that has only begun to be told is nonetheless one of the emergence of a popular egalitarian movement that was uniquely north-western European in its origins. ... [There is] evidence that before equality was widely touted in what historians have isolated prematurely as the “public realm,” there was grounding in daily experience to make that abstraction meaningful and to encourage its application to political rhetoric and action” (219-221).

It is true that it took several centuries for “private realm” egalitarianism to fully reach the “public realm” and become the cornerstone of current-day democratic political systems. Yet, there can be no doubt that the cultural roots of the concept of participation can be found in the Western conception of human beings as independent individuals.

This cultural logic is very different from the African communal system, where the notion of the individual is inclusive rather than exclusive.

“Individuals are not perceived as being meaningfully and instrumentally separate from the (various) communities to which they belong. This means that the individual remains firmly placed within the family, kin and communal networks from which (s)he is issued” (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 52).

What this notion means concretely becomes clearer when listening to the following explanation:

“We help each other ... You cannot not share ... You have to help others when you have something yourself ... If you keep your money for yourself, people will call you ‘bad’ and they’ll consider you a heartless person. Nobody will come visit you and nobody will help you when you are the one in need of money” (Willems 2007: 40).

This socio-economic interdependency between individuals (whether on the basis of their kinship ties or social networks or both) is one of the cultural cornerstones of Senegalese society, and is crystallized in the patron-client system. Combining this very different notion of “the individual” with a precarious economic system where people are necessarily focused more on immediate consumption than long term and abstract gains in political terms, the concept of participation receives a whole different meaning. For example, when farmers were asked whether they felt their organization was functioning democratically, some responded in exclusively economic terms with not a mention of the importance of participation in the decision making processes:

“Being a member of the GIE is useful because it allows us to have access to resources throughout the year so we can give our wives nice clothes.”

Hence participatory methods and/or formal democratic structures do not automatically or necessarily lead to the “empowerment” of marginalized individuals or groups. Many cultural, social and economic elements are part and parcel of the local context in which participatory methods and principles are applied, and need to be taken into account if development policies and strategies are to be effective and impact positively the livelihoods of the entire population.

Conclusions

The observations from my five years of working with farmers' organisations in Senegal are certainly not unique. One previous case study from Senegal on the decision-making processes in a women's organisation, observed that despite formal democratic structures members of local associations generally desisted from contributing to the decision-making process because they strongly felt that that was the role of the associations' leaders (Sorgenfrei in Jackson and Sorgenfrei 2003: 8). The author however barely ventures out to try to explain the phenomenon by placing it in the Senegalese socio-cultural context. In this paper, I have tried here to unravel the reasons why the implementation of participatory methods does not seem to have the envisioned impact. As we have seen, the discourse on empowerment through participation has been integrated by local people in Senegal. However, analysis of the cultural meaning of the concept as well as its cultural roots show that discourses transposed into culturally different contexts are likely to lead to unexpected results because of different cultural logics. Applying participatory methods designed to "uncover local knowledge and empower the marginalized" indiscriminately without sufficient attention to the respective cultural contexts may turn out to be counterproductive.

As we have seen, Western style participatory decision making processes developed in individualistic and contractualising cultures acquire a different meaning in communal societies based on social hierarchies and clientelist systems. Instead of empowering the poor, they may perpetuate existing inequalities.

It is very important for development workers not see clientelist systems in exclusively negative terms. Particularly for the poor and marginalized, informal patron-client arrangements can be very attractive and constitute an indispensable lifeline when public institutions are failing. In societies with well-functioning public institutions where security and assistance can be obtained from the government, vulnerable persons will turn to informal mechanism. When there is no other option of when people completely lack confidence in the public sector, the decision to adhere to a clientelist network is the result of a reasonable assessment of risk. It is rather superficial to derogate clientelist systems as a matter of "traditional values" or "false consciousness" when they constitute a real lifeline for marginalized persons particularly in the short term.

The implications of the preceding analysis are however manifold for development practitioners' daily work. There is evidently, the risk one runs in doing participatory appraisals or analyses at community level among beneficiaries be they of urban or rural origins. Even when applying the various participatory tools and methods rigorously and keeping the danger of "elite capture" in mind, one cannot be certain that the results show the best way to reach the development of the community. Because cultural logics are implicit, participants will not explicate why he or she favours a given option. The outsider who has not researched and taken into account the existing patron-client relationships within the community risks being led astray and design a development program which does correspond to the most pressing needs of the community. Secondly, it is important to realize that these cultural logics are not exclusive to disadvantaged communities. Within one's own team of national executives, in spite of trying to promote a culture of participatory decision-making, it may prove rather difficult to achieve genuine participation to discussions or a real exchange of ideas. This is because cultural logics are internalized and operate at the subconscious level influencing behaviours and agency. And finally, there is one more issue in connection with development that emerges from the preceding analysis: "Is it possible to take in western models of science and technology and participate in the capitalist economic global system without taking on western cultural values?"

However, this reflection brings us to a whole different area of reflection that falls outside of the scope of this paper. Even today, after half a century of development work and despite the major paradigm shifts of the 1990s, anthropological research continues to demonstrate that concepts used in development discourses –and the very basic ones at that– are very much culture-laden and that their meanings may change in different cultural contexts.

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