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**A CASE STUDY OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TO
ENHANCE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:
A COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM PROJECT IN HUATULCO, OAXACA**

By

Loretta Ishida

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Resource Development

1999

ABSTRACT

A CASE OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM PROJECT IN HUATULCO, OAXACA

By

Loretta Ishida

Three community groups and an academic researcher collaborated to explore ecotourism as a community development project in the area of Huatulco, Oaxaca in Mexico. The project was initiated by a regional grassroots organization in response to peasants' difficulties making a subsistence level living from their agricultural practices.

Two issues were analyzed from a participatory action research framework: the diverse nature of the participant groups and the role of the outside researcher in the research process. The levels of participation of leaders and followers and men and women were examined. Consequences of limited participation of some participants included: the reproduction of the top-down power structure of the dominant society, the lack of development or use of participants' potential, and an uneven work distribution among the participants. The outside researcher can play many, evolving roles throughout the research processes. However, tensions may develop among the participants when those roles are not clearly defined, when participants' concept of time, and their time available for the project differ. The outside researcher's alliance with a community group can also cause tensions when the researcher deals with people who may have different or conflicting interests with the community group.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After I obtained a bachelor's degree in zoology and environmental studies, I joined the U.S. Peace Corps to gain experience on issues where people and the environment interacted. I worked in a small urban community in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. There my ideas about participation began to develop as I struggled between trying to help people address what they saw as problems and promoting issues that I perceived as problems. While working with groups of people, I resisted doing the actual tasks for them and encouraged participants to develop the confidence and skills to carry out their own projects. In graduate school, I learned that what I wanted for the groups in the Ivorian town was a form of what the academic literature called "empowerment." I was introduced to more concepts that resonated with my personal and professional goals: participatory rural appraisal, top-down development, development from below, insiders and outsiders, conscientization, praxis, and participatory action research.

Participatory action research struck a chord. It was development not only originating with local people, but was completely controlled by them. It was research beyond the confines of the university, conducted by people to resolve their own problems. It was action that went beyond building a well or latrines or a school, but changing people's attitudes and beliefs about themselves.

A fellow graduate student told me about her dissertation work with the Seminar on Resource Management for Rural Development in Oaxaca, Mexico. The Seminar's approach is a form of participatory action research. The Seminar, supported by the National Autonomous University of Mexico's Institute of Social Research, is a forum in

which peasants and academics can discuss problems that the peasants face in Oaxaca. Community representatives reflect on their problems with others once a month. Each delegation returns home to share these reflections with community members and to continue the process of reflection. Based on these reflections, each community can then decide on the best course of action to resolve its problems.

The Seminar operates on the principle of tapping into the potential of diversity (Mejía Rosas 1998). Diversity exists in a number of ways: people of academic backgrounds and peasant backgrounds, people of different ethnicities (around nine indigenous groups plus Mexicans of European heritage), and people of different nationalities (Mexican and from the United States). Though these differences could cause conflict, the Seminar is a forum in which people deliberately seek to communicate and connect across these differences. In the effort to be understood by someone with a different background, one often has to formulate one's language and thought-patterns to make ideas understandable to others. The other Seminar members will then ask questions to get the presenter to clarify the situation further or will contribute their experiences in a similar situation. This kind of dialogue has allowed a number of communities to find creative, non-violent solutions to often very serious conflicts. While most of the participant communities sought resolution to land tenure conflicts in the past, many groups are now facing the more abstract problems of economic and social development, exacerbated by the increasingly global nature of the economy.

When my colleague said the Seminar was interested in collaborating with other graduate students, I met with the Seminar coordinator when he visited the United States. I asked to attend the June and July 1998 Seminar meetings in Oaxaca, in the hopes of

observing first hand the Seminar process. The graduate student introduced me to one of the participants, the director of a grassroots organization in Huatulco, located in the southern Oaxaca, hoping our interests might converge around one of the organization's project ideas. Through this organization, various communities in Huatulco had shared their problems and had begun to test the idea of an ecotourism project within the Seminar. After a visit to Huatulco, the director and I agreed to collaborate on developing this project.

I approached this project on two different levels: as a scholar looking to collect material to write a thesis and as a practitioner seeking to work on a practical project. From this project, I hoped to learn and gain experience as well as provide assistance to people involved in a development project. Attempting to play two roles, I sought to apply scholarship and experience in order to contribute new knowledge to academia and to gain knowledge and experience to enhance my practice. I not only brought with me ideas from academia, but also my experience in Côte d'Ivoire. While the West African and Latin American cultures are very distinct, I did see some similarities among predominantly agricultural peoples in developing areas. This factor may have both benefited and hindered my work: the benefit comes from being able to base my work in Huatulco on past experiences and the hindrance from acting on my potentially wrong assumptions about similarities.

I was an outsider, not only from outside of Huatulco, but from a different culture and from an urban, rather than rural, background. Though the director of the grassroots organization who has a long history of working with the communities in the region introduced me to the community groups, there were inevitable barriers between insiders

and outsiders. Based on my cross-cultural experience in the Peace Corps, I knew Polit's statement was a strong possibility:

Developing projects creates great levels of expectation from all those involved. When communication differences mushroom because of distinct cultural perceptions, those expectations can't be met and disappointment pervades the whole performance. (Polit 1991:359)

However, maintaining the positive attitude toward difference that the Seminar takes, i.e. that it produces tensions that result in the most creative outcomes, we attempted to use the differences between the Huatulco participants and me as positive elements of this study. Sometimes we succeeded, sometimes not.

This thesis is a number of things: an account of the four month collaboration between three community groups in Huatulco, the grassroots organization, and me; my attempt to tell the story of these people; and most of all, my struggle to understand the process we went through in light of others' experiences reported in the academic literature, my own reflections, and discussions with my academic peers and mentors.

Many people were integral to the research and writing processes. My graduate studies and this research were generously funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency's STAR Graduate Fellowships program. Dr. Jim Bingen has enthusiastically supported me throughout my two years at Michigan State and spent many hours working to help me produce this thesis. Dr. Joe Levine and Dr. Lela Vandenberg supported me by respectfully giving me room to work, yet providing valuable contributions to my research when it was required. Diane Ruonavaara has provided guidance, encouragement, and commiseration from the beginning to the end of my research. To her, my mentor, I owe many thanks for helping me understand participatory action research, for introducing me to the people in Oaxaca, and for continually valuing

my learning process. My friends and family have been vital in providing moral support, especially Jamie Harding, Kristy Wallmo, and Pam Vigil. A number of ideas presented in this thesis are a result of discussion with these people. While it is difficult to attribute specific ideas to specific people because of the evolutionary manner in which this thesis was composed, I would like to acknowledge the above people for collaborating with me in the generation, development, and fine-tuning of many concepts.

My friends and collaborators in Oaxaca, Mexico, made me understand the expression, "*Estás en tu casa*" ("You are in your home") by truly welcoming me into their lives and making me feel at home. Rogelio Ballesteros, Sandra Millán, and Olivia Estrada at the *Amigos del Sol* language school and Clara Valdés should be commended for patiently teaching me Spanish. Dr. Miguel Szekely facilitated my entry into the Seminar and the Seminar participants graciously accepted my small attempts to contribute to their work. I owe the greatest thanks to the people in Huatulco, who will never know how much I have learned from them. I only hope that, in a small way, this research will honor their struggles and successes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND PRONUNCIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Action Research
GAIA	<i>Grupo Autónomo de Investigaciones Ambientales</i>
CSE	<i>Centro de Soporte Ecológico</i>
FONATUR	<i>Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo</i>
ODDDECO	<i>Organización para la Defensa de los Derechos y Desarrollo Comunitario</i>
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SEMARNAP	<i>Secretaría del Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca</i>
The Seminar	The Seminar on Resource Management for Rural Development
UCI	<i>Unión de Comunidades Indígenas</i>
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

PRONUNCIATIONS

Huatulco	Wa-tul'-ko
Oaxaca	Wa-ha'-ka
Xuchitl	Soo'-cheel
Zipolite	Zi-po-li'-tay

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Case Study: The Problem, Research Approach, and Background

Background to the Problem

The peasants in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca face significant difficulties in sustaining their livelihoods as farmers. The soil is washing away down the mountainsides, rainfall patterns are changing, peasants must rely on fertilizers to produce the most meager of crops, and more attractive jobs in factories along the U.S.-Mexican border and work in the U.S. draw villagers away from their homes (Simon 1997). The farmers' investment of time and money in planting their traditional crops is usually more than what they gain at the end of the planting season, and so the pull to leave farming is growing. Giving up farming means more than just changing jobs. It means giving up the only thing most peasants know how to do as well as giving up a tradition that has shaped their culture for generations.

Recently, especially since the presidential term of Carlos Salinas de Gortari from 1988 to 1994, the Mexican government has taken a neo-liberal track to economic development, lifting foreign investment restrictions and privatizing state-owned companies, among many other measures, while cutting farming subsidies and eliminating constitutional protection of communal land tenure (Warnock 1995). What has not changed with the neo-liberal economic policy - and is actually consistent with it - is Mexico's tourism industry. The government has been developing the "sun and sand" image for tourism for years and has relied on tourism as an important source of economic

development¹. In 1974, this development process was placed in the hands of a special government division called the National Fund for the Promotion of Tourism (*Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo* or FONATUR).

The area of Huatulco, Oaxaca (see Figure 1), is the site of FONATUR's most recent resort-complex called the Bays of Huatulco (see Figure 2). This mass-tourism project, started in 1984, attracts tourists to its 4 and 5 star hotels to enjoy the beaches, the ocean, and the tropical dry forest. Though the Bays of Huatulco may be described by some as ecotourism because natural resources are the main attraction, very few of the benefits remain in the area. The surrounding farming communities have hardly benefited from this resort (Barkin and Pailles 1999). The Mexican and foreign investors who built and/or control the resort businesses are the ones reaping almost all of the financial returns and many of the employees in the service industries are from other parts of Mexico.

The Organization for the Defense of Rights and Community Development (*Organización para la Defensa de los Derechos y Desarrollo Comunitario* or ODDDECO), a regional grassroots organization, works with peasant communities in the coastal region of Oaxaca that includes the area of Huatulco. Its recent work has focused on economic development projects. The organization works predominantly with peasants who are facing the difficult financial situations of the region and country. To tap into the tourism industry at the doorstep of communities in Huatulco yet focus the benefits to local people, ODDDECO wanted to incorporate tourism with the natural resources

¹ To give a sense of the financial importance of tourism, it provided \$7 billion in income to Mexico in 1996, representing 5 percent of the gross domestic product (Luxner 1997). By 1998, tourism grew to be the second largest source of income to Mexico, passing the oil industry (Esquiroz Arellano 1999).

available on communal lands to develop a community-based ecotourism project.

However, members of the organization had very limited experience and knowledge on how to launch such an enterprise, though a few ODDDECO leaders and members have had exposure to ecotourism in the region. The peasants are experts at farming, not at providing a service to visitors. They tend to conceptualize their environment as a place to live and extract food, water, and firewood, not as something they can “sell” intact. Therefore using the forests, rivers, and hills that are already in their possession to attract tourists is a new idea to them.

In summary, peasants in Oaxaca are struggling to make a living from farming. While some alternatives are available, such as immigrating to the U.S. or participating in other economic activities such as tourism, there are major drawbacks to these options.

Statement of the Problem

ODDDECO has explored economic alternatives for its peasant members that would provide a reliable source of income while allowing them to continue their traditional farming practices. While ecotourism seemed like a good option, taking advantage of the natural resources already belonging to the peasants, ODDDECO members had very little idea of how to engage in such an enterprise. Therefore ODDDECO decided to grapple with identifying and planning a development project through a participatory action research approach that would allow it to address the practical problem of how to develop an ecotourism business. Beginning with the practical concerns of ODDDECO, this study examines the participatory action research

involved in the ecotourism project, with a focus on the issues relating to PAR that emerged from the research process.

Research Directions

ODDDECO established that it would use a participatory action research (PAR) approach to the ecotourism project. PAR is an appropriate framework to use in any community-initiated project for several reasons. Problem identification is integral to the research process and is to be done by the community that the research will benefit (Selener 1997). Based on the research and reflection done by the community members on a problem, the actions they choose to then take are directed at furthering the community's interests (Fals-Borda 1991a). Participation is required at all stages of the research process and control of the project remains in the hands of the local community (Hall 1982). PAR is an approach that allows the Huatulco community members to define the problem through their eyes, to research their options in ecotourism, and to critically reflect on the implications of such a solution. New knowledge will be continuously created through these processes (Rahman 1991), specifically about how to implement an ecotourism project and more generally, about how learning and action are complementary means to the community's development.

ODDDECO recognizes that the organization's power lies with its members, and while outside "experts" can help them achieve their goals, they are not the only source of answers to the peasants' problems. I was invited to join as an outsider participant as an equal with the other participants, bringing with me specific skills and knowledge that I had gained through my experiences and education. This collaboration occurred during a

four month period at the beginning of 1999, working with three community groups in the communities of Arroyo Xuchitl, Bajos de Coyula, and San Miguel del Puerto (see Figure 2). Being invited to participate in the initial stages of ODDDECO's ecotourism pilot project offered me, as a researcher, an interesting opportunity to examine how PAR would affect the process of this community development project both in theoretical and practical terms.

This study focuses on five objectives:

- To describe and analyze the participatory action research process of this ecotourism project.
- To understand how social relationships, specifically those between leaders and followers and men and women, affect the participation of the members ODDDECO in the project.
- To explore the role of the outside researcher in this participatory action research and the implications of that role for both the researcher and the ODDDECO participants.
- To discuss the implications of this research for other participatory action research and ecotourism projects.
- To discuss the implications of this research for ODDDECO.

Because these objectives are to be met within a specific case, it is important to understand how this case study is bounded by the context in which it takes place (Stake 1994). In order to understand the political, economic, environmental, and social context surrounding the Huatulco communities, the following questions framed the field research:

- What is the regional tourism context, especially in light of the Bays of Huatulco tourism complex?
- What other factors affect ODDDECO's work?
- How do the people participating in the ODDDECO project define the problem that ecotourism may address?
- What is their concept of ecotourism and how do they envision a project in their community?
- What is the role of ODDDECO in the participatory action research process?

The above questions shaped an understanding of the research context. Answers to these questions would help develop insight into the people's perceptions and knowledge of the situation, as well as facilitate how people clarified their ideas and established a communal knowledge base on which to ground the subsequent steps of the PAR process.

In the attempt to keep the control of the research process in the hands of the participants, the majority of the project was based on their decisions on how to develop the ecotourism project. The PAR process for developing the project allowed me to be a co-participant in the community groups' efforts. One contribution I made was to engage the project participants in understanding how emerging issues affected the project and ODDDECO's development activities in general.

Significance of the Study

"Participation" is currently a very popular concept for community development scholars and practitioners. In order to avoid unwanted outcomes and to meet the development goals, many studies (e.g. Boo 1990, Escobedo 1991, Western, et al. 1994)

underline that the key to success is involving local people in the process of defining and implementing community development projects. When speaking of participation, generally it is people from outside of the community coming with a pre-determined problem who seek the participation of local people to solve the problem. This form of participation is functional, where the people's views are sought usually in terms of meeting some objective or contributing to some feature of a project. For example, participation can ensure that valuable local knowledge is used, allow people to develop a sense of having a stake in the continuation of the project, and raise the consciousness of people as to the value of their natural resources (Escobedo 1991, Kleymeyer 1994, Wells 1994). When the process of identifying and setting the problem is open to local people's participation, the purpose of participation goes beyond a functional level to sharing the control of the project between the local people and the outsiders. Participation introduced at this stage and carried through the entire project cycle can even involve handing over the control and decision-making power to local people with the outsiders serving as resources to contribute to the local people's desired ends. This definition gives a more operational meaning to participation.

Kaufman (1997:169) states:

One of the many sources of confusion in the debates on participation is that participation-as-empowerment is both a goal of change and a method of change. As a goal, popular participation ultimately refers to the organization of society in which there no longer exists a monopoly over the means of political, economic, and social power by a particular class, sex, race, social stratum, or bureaucratic elite. As a method of change, participation is a means to develop the voice and organizational capacity of those previously excluded. It is a means for the majority of the population to express their needs and to contribute directly to the solving of social problems.

This study examines this difference between the goal and method of change when implementing a participatory philosophy to a real-world development process, especially in the complexities of applying theory to practice. Using an ecotourism project as a case study, issues are drawn out that can affect any participatory, community-based process.

Ecotourism: Definitions and Issues

A variety of definitions for ecotourism exist. Though the term's origin lies in the pursuit of ecological sustainability of development (i.e. providing economic and social development possibilities to countries, regions, or local communities taking advantage of, but striving to conserve, natural resources), the term has often been used to include almost every sort of tourism that takes place outdoors. The academic literature is riddled with many different definitions of ecotourism, each emphasizing a different element, theoretical, or philosophical perspective. Hector Ceballos-Lascurain's often quoted definition of ecotourism focuses on the ecotourist who travels to

relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past and present) found in these areas... This person will eventually acquire a consciousness and knowledge of the natural environment, together with its cultural aspects, that will convert him into somebody keenly involved in conservation issues. (Ceballos-Lascurain 1988:13)

The Ecotourism Society's definition emphasizes the social responsibility needed by the ecotourist, especially in terms of the conservation of the natural environment and improvement of the welfare of the local community (Western 1993). Goodwin (1996:288) also stresses the conservation of wildlife and plant habitats, achieved through

“providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people to value, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income.” Salazar et al. (1991) describe how ecotourism will result in political, as well as economic, change. This happens because the economic benefits promote an increased stewardship for the community’s natural resources, and the tourist returns home, motivated to be more environmentally active. Alternative and community-based tourism community (Dernoi 1988, as quoted in Pearce 1992), community-based ecotourism (Kersten 1997), and integrated conservation-development projects (Wells and Brandon 1992) suggest additional possible goals for an ecotourism project. These are, respectively: personal and cultural understanding between the tourists and host; the diversification of income to the local community and the revival of the cultural heritage of the community; and economically and ecologically sustainable community development.

Ron Mader’s conceptualization of ecotourism was the most helpful in this study: Instead of creating yet another definition, Mader (1999) captures the ideas of most definitions and describes ecotourism as a special form of tourism that meets three overlapping criteria:

- “1) it provides for conservation measures
- 2) it includes meaningful community participation and
- 3) it is profitable and can sustain itself.”

He advocates engaging in ecotourism as process, with the goal of balancing the three components and seeking the convergence of all three (see Figure 3). The idea of ecotourism was new to the community groups participating in this ecotourism project and their conceptualization continued to evolve throughout the study period and will continue to evolve as the project develops. In a participatory and emergent process, it was not

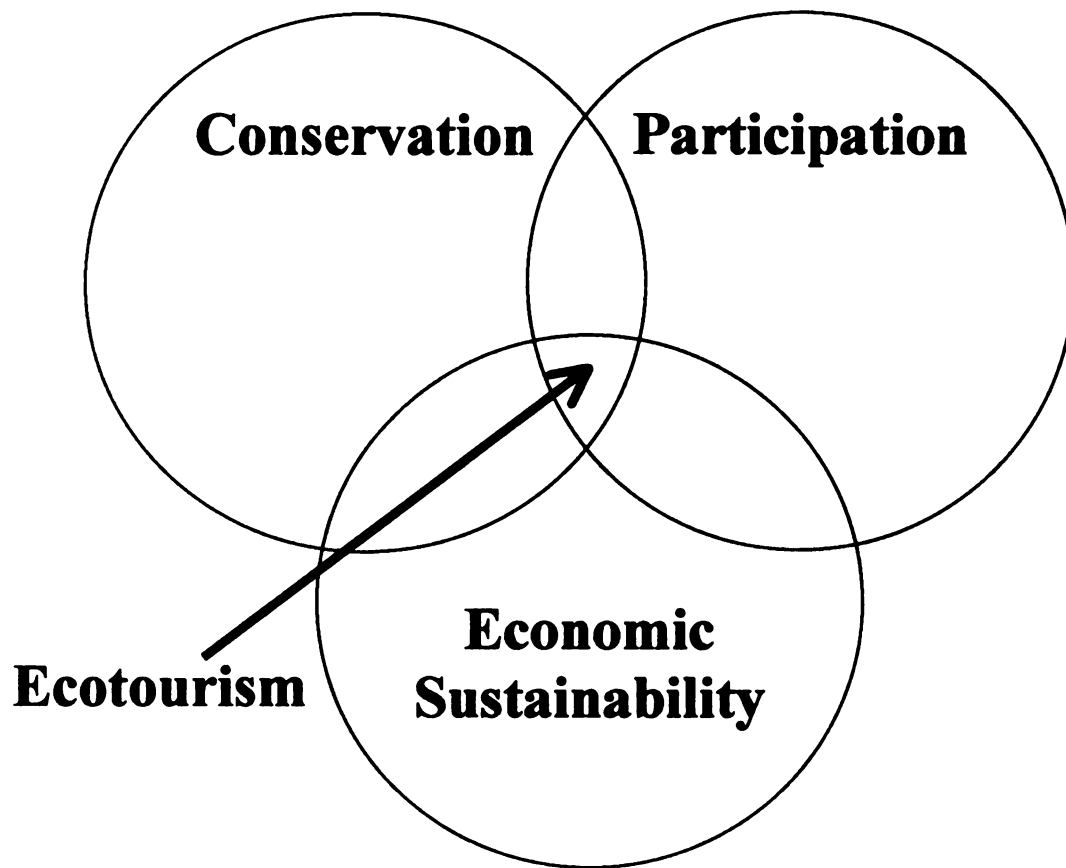


Figure 3. Ecotourism as the intersection of three criteria (adapted from Mader 1999).

appropriate to decide on a fixed definition, but the general understanding of ecotourism did revolve around the above three criteria.

Meeting the criteria of ecotourism can help ensure positive changes for a local community, such as decreasing the depletion of natural resources, allowing people to participate in their own development, and creating an income source. However, there are some changes that accompany such a process that may be undesirable to some, including environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts.

Environmental deterioration, such as soil erosion along paths or increased sound levels, can result from the mere presence of more people. This is especially apparent when the tourists' use of the infrastructure and resources is greater than that of the local community (Cater 1993, Eadington and Smith 1992, Ecotourism Working Group 1995, Wall 1997, Wallace 1993). There are potential risks if tourism becomes the primary source of income for a community (Wall 1997). Ecotourism is subject to the same forces as conventional tourism: there are annual cycles of travel that can be affected by factors such as recessions in the economy of the tourists' home countries, natural disasters in the host areas, and the comings and goings of fads in types of tourism destination (Murphy 1985). Therefore if they have given up all other sources of income and ecotourism declines or fails, local communities may be in a worse condition than before engaging in tourism. Though one of the goals of ecotourism is to increase the income of a community, it can cause tensions when the benefits are unevenly distributed among community members (Eadington and Smith 1992). In most cases, not every member of a community will participate to the same degree in tourist activities and this can lead to conflict. One consequence may be a shift in community power structures. Those who

benefit the most from an increase in income may have held power prior to the introduction of tourism, but gain power due to their new financial resources (Ecotourism Working Group 1995).

Tourism in general, and ecotourism in particular, can impact the host community's culture, which is especially pronounced if a community's culture is part of the attraction to tourists. Though an aspect of culture tends to become "commoditized" or given some monetary value when it becomes a tourist attraction, some argue that this can be a positive influence, especially if local cultural forms are disappearing (Cohen 1988). However, cultural artifacts and rituals carry important meanings for the community, and commoditization can alter these meanings. These changes can be positive or negative, depending on one's perspective. Some communities choose to display their traditions through demonstrations of dances, construction methods, and dress, even if these traditions are no longer a part of the people's modern, everyday life (e.g. Tilley 1997). MacCannell (1984) believes this is a negative force for a community because its culture no longer evolves in a natural manner and a community's customs remains frozen in time. Cohen (1988), on the other hand, points out that such commoditization may revive traditions that are beginning to disappear in modern times. Culture is not merely art, dances, and rituals, but is an element of how people conduct social relationships in everyday life. Kleymeyer (1994) advocates using culture and traditions as a "toolbox" or resource upon which communities and planners can draw to enhance the design, adoption, and sustainability of such projects. Many cultures have a tradition of environmental care taking that achieve similar results to those desired by ecotourism. Some communities have participatory decision-making and work-sharing

traditions that are particularly conducive to ecotourism and community-based conservation projects. In other words, the implementation of a new project can be facilitated by already established customs. If such cultural traits no longer exist in the modern community, a revival of them for the purposes of the project can also renew a sense of history, especially important for marginalized ethnic minorities.

Cater (1993:89) warns that ecotourism is “not the automatic panacea for all tourism ills whatever or wherever the destination,” as should be clear from the discussion above. In addition to these potentially negative impacts, a community may be overwhelmed with the sheer numbers of tourists and their high level of needs, as well as the impacts the tourists cause, as the ecotourism destination becomes popular (Pedersen 1991).

Ecotourism can be a positive form of change for a community but brings serious challenges as well. Communities, such as those in this case study, can benefit from understanding both negative and positive aspects and make decisions after reflecting on issues that are problematic for them.

The Huatulco Ecotourism Project

While details of the project will be discussed throughout the following chapters, this section provides the descriptive overview of the project development during the research period².

² The process was taken to the last stage only in Arroyo Xuchitl. At the end of the fieldwork, the other two communities were still forming a solid group of committed individuals but were on the track to following similar steps as the Arroyo Xuchitl group.

The Origin of the Idea

The idea for an ecotourism project had been discussed among ODDDECO leaders and within the Seminar for several years before the beginning of this project, but due to the lack of funds, the idea was not initiated in its fullest form. The people who live near the Bays of Huatulco observe tourism around them. People in Arroyo Xuchitl observe the tour trucks taking tourists on white-water rafting trips going through the village on their way to the Copalita River. Several ODDDECO members, who in 1988 organized to build the road that leads from the coastal road through Arroyo Xuchitl and half way to the Copalita, felt that these tour operators were making money off of the natural resources that the community members had taken actions to protect, using the road that they had built, and leaving no benefits for the community members. Therefore, they thought, why not get involved in the nature tourism industry? The director of the organization was aware of the growing popularity of the variety of tourism that differed from the Bays of Huatulco mass-/luxury-tourism model called ecotourism. He felt the communities had all of the necessary elements – natural materials from which to build accommodations, the natural areas that tourists were already visiting, other attractions such as pre-Hispanic ruins and caves, and their culture which some foreigners are eager to learn about – to develop ecotourism in the Huatulco area. The leaders of ODDDECO decided to take advantage of my interest and presence to launch a pilot project in the three communities of Bajos de Coyula, Arroyo Xuchitl, and San Miguel del Puerto to test their ideas.

Community Group Meetings

The ODDDECO director and I first met with the ODDDECO leaders at each site. Discussions focused on the selection of the group of participants. The group would be

made up of 8-10 people who have participated in past ODDDECO projects and share the characteristics of being committed to the organization, being hard workers, and willing to invest time and energy in a project where the payoffs would only come later. The local leader was then given the responsibility of selecting these people and inviting them to a meeting to present the ecotourism idea. Members of the group would be the owners and operators of an ecotourism business. Therefore a participant had to commit to attending meetings, to invest their time and labor in building the structures and infrastructure needed to host tourists, and eventually to take responsibility for some aspect of operating the business depending on one's skills and interests.

During the first meeting, the director presented the idea of ecotourism, explaining that many foreigners do not have daily exposure to nature as the peasants of Huatulco do and go to great efforts to enjoy nature during their leisure time. When he described how some people would travel and pay money for a chance to see stars in a clear sky or butterflies in a forest, several people chuckled because stars and butterflies are a part of their daily environment that they take for granted. The director pointed out the tourist activities that were already occurring around them and the community members could get involved in the same types of activities. He said that almost all of the resources were available to build simple cabins to lodge people and to take them on excursions around the community to see nature. Since the peasants were already having difficulty with agriculture and needed to migrate for work, this project could present an alternative income that would allow them to stay in their community and develop what they already had. After opening up the meeting for discussion, the director then asked people to

consider if they would be willing to participate in the project and give their commitment at the following meeting.

Several other meetings followed, both formally and informally. During the formal meetings, there was always someone missing from the group even when people were informed ahead of time of the meeting. Information, therefore, often had to be repeated at later meetings. Even after people were asked to commit to being a member of the community group, some members' commitment was not clear. However, plans continued to be developed and carried out. During these formal meetings, the director did most of the talking with some interjections by the local leader or me, followed by a short period of group discussion. Much more dialogue and idea generation occurred during informal meetings. Informal meetings occurred when the director was passing through the community, when he and I and whoever else was present were discussing a detail like funding, or when several of the community members were chatting during their everyday interactions.

Collecting Information Relevant to the Project

- *Observing Similar Activities*

Various excursions were taken by several group members to observe other projects to see what ideas the ODDDECO project could imitate or borrow. Zipolite is a beach about an hour's drive from Huatulco. The entire beach is lined with businesses that offer food, drink, and lodging in very simple, rustic accommodations (see Figure 4). The buildings are made from wood and thatch. People can stay in small rooms or just rent a hammock, and share bathroom facilities. Because there were not adequate funds to bring every person from the three community groups, those who visited took pictures and



Figure 4. Beach-front restaurants/lodging at Zipolite (all photos by author).

studied how the structures were built and noted details, such as the types of services available and the prices charged. A friend of the ODDDECO director owns one of the establishments. On video, we filmed images of his rooms while he explained how they were constructed. He also explained on the video aspects about his garbage and wastewater management.

During a trip to the city of Oaxaca to attend the Seminar, some members visited a community park where most of the construction was wood, which gave them more ideas on how to use the resources available in their communities to build similar structures. On the return trip to Huatulco, they visited a couple that lived about 2 hours from Huatulco. They showed the group members how they propagated flowers and other decorative plants and displayed them in attractive planters made from gourds and plastic bottles.

They promised to share some plant cuttings when the Huatulco groups were ready to landscape. The wife, a nutritionist, explained that there are many dishes people may not currently make but can be prepared from locally available foods and are very nutritious and tasty. She also offered to give a workshop to those who would be cooking for the tourists. The images and verbal accounts of the three experiences were later used to share with the group members who could not see the places in person.

- *Workshop*

Group meetings had a number of drawbacks. People often arrived late and were easily distracted because the meetings were held in household courtyards where children and visitors required the group members' attention throughout meetings. People's patience would have been tried if we had too many meetings or if meetings ran over an hour. Therefore, to focus the group members' attention and accomplish a number of things in one day, the director and I had an idea to conduct a workshop away from people's homes.

I organized the workshop where the following topics were covered. Because ecotourism was a completely new concept to most members, some literature definitions were presented and various group members conceptualization of ecotourism were summarized (see Figure 5). The workshop participants discussed similar projects after viewing the video from Zipolite and hearing the experiences of some of the participants in the tourism industry. Participants were asked to reflect in small groups on potential impacts, both positive and negative, their ecotourism project could have on their community. The workshop ended with a discussion of the next steps to take in the project development.



Figure 5. Workshop for project participants

Accomplishing Specific Tasks

- *Looking for Funding*

Unlike previous ODDDECO projects that began with some form of funding, this project did not. This decision was made partly to encourage the kind of dedicated participation that was required for the long-term success of the project. If people were willing to work hard despite the lack of funds, their investment of time and energy was likely to continue well into the future. Another reason for this decision was to concentrate on the use of non-monetary resources and not depend on monetary ones. The three groups began with the resources they had on hand, consisting mainly of people's time, ideas, and physical work. However, some funding would be necessary. The director, whose role in the organization included writing funding proposals, took the responsibility to find some financing. He and I wrote a proposal that included a funding

request for some hardware like tools and nails, food staples to compensate the group members' work, and for promotion material such as starting up a website. After exploring a number of possibilities, he decided to pursue funding from a government program.

- *Acquiring the Land*

Because of the communal nature of the land, certain considerations had to be made when deciding where to build the cabins. The ODDDECO group wanted the use-rights of the parcel in the group's name with some written agreement among themselves on how to share the benefits and what to do if someone wanted to leave the group later. Therefore, they began to look for parcels of communal land that had attractive features such as large trees, distance from the village and noise, plenty of water, and a location near the power lines. The parcel also needed to be available and not used by other community members. At the beginning of May, they had decided to use a section of one of the member's land, but had yet to go through the procedures to turn over the use-rights to the entire group.

- *Work Expeditions*

Actual building had to occur to make this project concrete. During my time with the ODDDECO groups, several expeditions of group members went out to accomplish set tasks. These tasks included evaluating potential plots of land, evaluating the plot chosen for the layout of the facilities to house the tourists (see Figure 6), and beginning to collect wood and thatch for building. The group members committed two days a week to work only on the project.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 is a description of the context that surrounds and affects this case. In Chapter 3, certain issues arising from participatory action research will be outlined, followed by a description of the methods used in the research to explore these issues. Chapter 4 is an analysis the complex characteristics of the participating community groups. Issues for the outside researcher will be addressed in Chapter 5. The summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study are found in Chapter 6.



Figure 6. Expedition to assess potential building site for cabins

CHAPTER 2

The Social, Political, and Economic Contexts of Case Study

Introduction

In order to understand the processes that occurred in this case study, it is important to recognize that this case study is bounded in a number of ways. One is the physical location, described in this chapter for the region and then for the three study sites. This physical location is shaped by the people, social institutions, and organizations that exist there, all of which affect the case study. The remainder of the chapter, therefore, is a description of the various social, political, and economic contextual elements of the area of Huatulco.

The Local Socio-Political Structures and Land Tenure

The three communities of the ODDDECO ecotourism pilot project occur under two governmental entities: the political structure of the *municipio* and the land-tenure structure of the agrarian community.

The *Municipio*

A *municipio* is similar to a municipality in the U.S. in terms of services provided, structure of elected and hired positions but comparable in size to a township. It is governed by a president, vice-president, and various departments. The number of departments depends on the size and complexity of activities within the *municipio*. The president and vice-president run along national political party lines in elections held every three years. The departments are divided among the political parties according to

their proportion of votes, and the parties appoint the director of their designated departments. Because of its partisan nature, the *municipio* government can either support or hinder the ecotourism project, such as when the ODDDECO groups apply for business permits.

The Agrarian Community

There are two major forms of communal land tenure in Mexico: *ejidos* and agrarian communities. Agrarian communities, which have roots in indigenous land use patterns, were recognized during the colonial period and are regulated by communities according to local tradition (Randall 1996), and therefore can vary in how they function throughout Mexico. Bajos de Coyula and Arroyo Xuchitl are part of the agrarian community of Santa María Huatulco and San Miguel del Puerto is part of the agrarian community by the same name. The governance structure is important to the ecotourism project because, within these two agrarian communities, any use of communal land must first be approved and subject to specific regulations. The ODDDECO groups envisioned their project as rustic accommodations within each community, as well as excursions through each community to view the flora and fauna. Therefore permission for this kind of land use was necessary from the agrarian community.

The agrarian community of Santa María Huatulco was approximately the size of the *municipio* of Santa María Huatulco. The agrarian community was 51,519 hectares (Instituto de Ecología 1994), but lost a portion through expropriation by FONATUR, leaving about 30,300 hectares. The Bays of Huatulco complex is still under the jurisdiction of the *municipio* of Santa María Huatulco. There are about 1500 *comuneros*, or people who are allocated their share of the communal lands. These lands are managed

by the Assembly, whose members are the *comuneros*, both men and women. The Assembly meets every three months to make decisions on the use of communal resources and discusses issues that affect the *comuneros*. An executive committee is elected every 3 years, led by the *comisariado*. *Comuneros* are those people who have papers signed by the President of Mexico that entitles them to the use of a given piece of land. Any son or daughter of a *comunero* can apply for land after age 18. Officially, a *comunero* only has use-rights to a parcel. These use-rights can be passed on to one's children but cannot be sold. However, just as with *ejidos* which have similar rules, informal selling, leasing, and sharecropping do occur within agrarian communities (DeWalt and Rees 1994). Selling use-rights among *comuneros* occurs in Huatulco, but there are Assembly-established rules that determine the maximum price of a plot and the percentage of the payment that goes into the communal treasury.

The Assembly of Santa María Huatulco has established regulations that affect the conservation of natural areas. There are established protected areas, it is illegal to cut down large trees, even if one has use rights to a parcel on which those trees grow, and burning to clear a field is banned in almost all cases. Any plot allocated to a *comunero* that has not been built upon or farmed for more than 5 years reverts to communal property and may be reassigned. Therefore, farmers are limited to leaving their fields fallow for a maximum of 5 years which, on the increasingly exhausted soils of this region, can be harmful.

Community-Based Ecotourism Pilot Project Sites

General Characteristics

The pilot project sites were Arroyo Xuchitl, Bajos de Coyula, and San Miguel del Puerto (see Figure 2), hereafter referred to as Xuchitl, Coyula, and San Miguel, respectively. These three communities are located in the eastern portion of the region called the Coast (*la Costa*) of Oaxaca, which is flanked by the Sierra Madre Sur mountain range.

Oaxaca is one of the most socially diverse state in all of Mexico in terms of indigenous peoples. The region of *la Costa* is predominantly made up of the Zapotec ethnic group, one of Oaxaca's 16 ethnic groups. The Zapotecos are descendants of the rulers of the pre-Hispanic Zapotec civilization, famous for having built cities like Monte Alban and Mitla. These two areas were located near the present day city of Oaxaca and have been excavated and opened to the public as museums. *La Costa* is riddled with ruins from this civilization, mostly unexcavated or studied. The people of the three sites do not consider themselves indigenous, but most of the residents migrated to the Huatulco area from the predominantly Zapoteco Sierra region in the 1960s. They first migrated in response to the seasonal or year long work that was available in the coffee plantations, and while some have remained to work on the plantations, many moved toward the coast to become subsistence farmers. They have physical characteristics similar to indigenous people and share certain indigenous cultural traditions such as communal functions called a *cargo*, including leadership roles, and collective work. Collective work, called *tequio*, includes building the school or cleaning the streets of the village. People are expected to carry out their *cargo* and *tequio* without monetary pay

(Bonfil Batalla 1996, Diskin 1990). Like many indigenous groups, the people of the three communities also respect reciprocal and cooperative social relations among relatives, godparents and godchildren (Diskin 1990). The agrarian community structure is said to originate from a pre-colonial land tenure system (DeWalt 1994) to which the three communities adhere.

The state of Oaxaca contains a high level of biodiversity because of the variation in its geography, with mountains, plains, and coastal areas, and its position at the convergence of North American and Central American species (Nahmad, et al. 1994). The predominant vegetation type around Huatulco is tropical dry forest though marine, beach, and estuary ecosystems are also important. In a tropical dry forest, the deciduous trees of the region have adapted to the extended dry season by shedding their leaves. The tropical dry forests throughout the world are some of the most fragile and least protected ecosystems (Barkin and Pailles 1998). Therefore, the flora and fauna in Huatulco are not only very diverse but also need protection.

The majority of the people are farmers. While there is some small-scale fishing by communities on the coast, the main agricultural crop throughout the region is maize, the staple food of the people. Most of the peasants have rain-fed fields and therefore agricultural activities are centered around the rainy season from November to May. During the rest of the year, people attend to their daily chores, building and maintaining their houses and fences, or clearing new fields to plant in the next growing season. Before the rainy season, people prepare their fields and continue to tend their crops through the end of the rainy season, when the maize reaches maturity. Maize is the most important crop, though some people also grow beans, hibiscus, sesame, and chiles.

Coffee is grown as a major cash crop in the higher elevations of the Sierra Madre, both by peasants and on privately-owned coffee plantations.

Current Challenges

Conditions for farming have worsened over the past few years. Older community members tell of how water sources were considerably greater when they were children. For example, the *arroyo* (stream) for which Xuchitl is named always flowed in the past, but now is dry during the dry season, though groundwater continues to be only a few centimeters below the surface. Within the past 10 years, rainfall has been considerably less and/or beginning unexpectedly early or late. In the 1998 growing season, the rains came in August instead of June and the maize yields were very low and the bean harvest failed completely. People also tell of new pests attacking their crops that were not problems before, such as “worms” that eat the bean shoots. People say that one hectare of maize now yields one tenth of the yield from five years ago. Some people attribute this drastic decline mainly to the changes in the rainfall patterns, though the peasants also cite natural high and low cycles in productivity, deforestation, and declining soil productivity as additional reasons. With the current low price of maize, it is cheaper to buy maize than to produce it. Peasants still plant maize because it is a custom and it also provides pasture for livestock after the maize has been harvested.

Peasants who live closer to the coast are subsistence maize farmers, growing corn for consumption and selling the little surplus to cover daily costs. Those who live in the coffee-growing areas grow coffee as their cash crop and plant maize for consumption. In addition to the same problems of declining harvests and poor market prices for maize,

these peasants are subjected to the fluctuations in the world price of coffee and in 1999 had to sell their coffee for half the price they received three years before.

Some families supplement their income through some kind of business venture. Some have small stores of everyday goods such as soap, oil, and sweets. Others sell beer and soft drinks when they can afford a refrigerator. Most of the families keep some livestock including chickens, turkeys, pigs, sheep, goats, cows, and donkeys. Some people hunt iguana and armadillo for additional meat sources. Only a few households have fruit trees and even fewer have vegetable gardens.

As a result of not being able to subsist on agriculture even with additional income from the above sources, many people look for work outside of their community. The Bays of Huatulco tourism industry does provide some jobs though the number was far greater during the construction period in the 1980s. Many people work from one to two years in the United States, usually as illegal immigrants. Almost every family I came into contact with had several members living in the United States.

Bajos de Coyula

Coyula, with a population of 385 (INEGI 1996), is a community that is located on the edge of the expropriated land belonging to the Bays of Huatulco complex. It and the nearby community of Arenal were incorporated into the complex with the idea that the farmers and fishers would provide food to the restaurants and hotels, though this has not happened to the extent expected. The peasants of Coyula do plant papaya, coconuts, and maize year-round because irrigation water is available from the Coyula River that flows through the community (see Figure 7). Members of the ecotourism group in Coyula told of how several families have allied with FONATUR and accepted their presence. Most



Figure 7. Irrigated fields in Bajos de Coyula.

community members resent FONATUR's imposition of regulations on the use of natural resources that were formerly part of the communal land system. According to law, FONATUR was to begin building infrastructure and buildings within the first five years after expropriation in order to maintain their claims on the land. Though this period is long past, the community has not been able to free itself from the control of FONATUR due to political influence and corruption at higher levels of the judicial system. ODDDECO is currently working with a group of Coyula residents to strategize how to regain the rights of the peasants as *comuneros*, independent of FONATUR.

Arroyo Xuchitl¹

Xuchitl is a community of approximately 394 people (INEGI 1996). It is located in the foothills of the Sierra Madre (see Figure 8). Maize farming dominates this community. It is also an *agencia* (municipal office), that is, there is a branch office with elected community members who can carry out some of the services of the municipal government. As in the other two communities, people live in a range of housing, from cinderblock structures with zinc roofs to mud and stick construction with a kind of treated cardboard roofing. Most people have electricity, primarily for lighting. Drinking water comes from ground water sources that are plentiful throughout the year. Most people cook using firewood collected from surrounding brush. People indicated that there was no shortage of firewood, especially in the dry season. Additionally, there is much deadfall from Hurricanes Paulina and Rick in 1997. ODDDECO has worked closely with the community group in Xuchitl in recent years and therefore the group is one of the most organized and experienced of ODDDECO member groups.

San Miguel del Puerto

The town of San Miguel, with a population of 727 (INEGI 1996), is the center of the *municipio* of the same name. This *municipio* and agrarian community are located in the coffee growing region of the Sierra Madre. Though still officially classified as tropical dry forest, the climate is much more humid and the vegetation is green year-round. A number of private coffee plantations established during the last century provide

¹ Because I lived in Xuchitl, and because the project was the most developed in that community by the time my field research period was over, the majority of this case study centers on the activities in Xuchitl. The little information provided on the other two communities is to supplement or confirm the research findings in Xuchitl.



Figure 8. Dry stream bed in Arroyo Xuchitl.

seasonal employment during the harvest and all year work for some. The plantation workers are paid very little. For example, the current weekly wage in the plantation where the president of ODDDECO works pays only 27 pesos a day, less than \$3 U.S. according to the exchange rate during the research period, where most wage earners make 40 to 70 pesos an hour. Housing is provided but conditions are very basic, for instance workers' houses often have no electricity even when the manager or owner's house does. *Comuneros* who are independent coffee-growers do not necessarily fare better than the plantation workers because of the decline in world coffee prices in recent years. However, unlike private plantation workers, they have communal land on which to grow maize for their own consumption.

Tourism in Southern Oaxaca

The Bays of Huatulco Tourism Complex

FONATUR was established in 1974 by the Mexican government to identify and develop resort areas throughout the country. Its main functions are to develop the infrastructure to, and within a site, and attracting investors to purchase land on which to build and operate tourism businesses (García Villa 1992). Each site has been chosen based on “scientific studies,” with a major goal of attracting outside investors (García Villa 1992). FONATUR sites include Cancún, Ixtapa, Los Cabos, Loreto, and Huatulco. The Bays of Huatulco site, made up of 9 bays, was chosen in the 1970s but it took 15 years until the site was officially expropriated by the government and developed because of the lack of infrastructure to the coast (García Villa 1992). Huatulco was expected to match or surpass Cancún in size (García Villa 1992). In 1984, a little over 21,000 hectares that spanned a band of land 32 km long, was expropriated from the agrarian community of Santa María Huatulco and the Bays of Huatulco was officially established for urban and tourism development (Instituto de Ecología 1994).

FONATUR established a Master Plan for the development of the Bays of Huatulco. The plan focuses on “integrated development,” balancing tourism, urbanization required to support the tourism, and ecological conservation (FONATUR 1991). Development was to occur in two stages: one from 1990-2000, with the construction of hotels, high-income residential areas, and the supporting infrastructure around most of the bays, and the other between 2000-2024, with additional hotel construction (FONATUR 1991). Development has not gone according to this plan. The most severe setback occurred in 1985 with the earthquake in Mexico City. Earthmoving

equipment was transferred from Huatulco and other parts of the country to aid in the clearing and rebuilding of the damaged buildings. Construction currently is only in the first phase (1990-1994) of the first stage of the Master Plan.

In 1998 there were 175,000 visitors who could stay in 26 hotels, with a total of 2113 rooms, mostly 3 stars and above in ranking (FONATUR 1998). Average occupancy in the hotels in 1998 was 51.6% (FONATUR 1998), with the high seasons at Christmas and Holy Week, two of the major Mexican holiday periods.

The main developed areas are the Bay of Tangolunda, the Bay of Santa Cruz, and the town of La Crucesita located inland of the Santa Cruz and Chahué Bays. New construction is focused presently on the Bay of Chahué. Tangolunda (see Figure 9) is where the 4 and 5 star hotels are concentrated, along with an 18 hole golf course, a few stores and restaurants, and some apartments. In the Santa Cruz Bay, deep-sea fishing boats and bay tour boats use the marina. Nearby, there are dozen beachfront restaurants. There are also a few hotels and bank offices in Santa Cruz. La Crucesita is a half-kilometer away and is the residential and commercial center of the entire complex. The market is very small and expensive and there is little choice in food, clothes, and everyday goods. The hospital, telephone company, utilities companies, and post office are located in La Crucesita.

The town appears very planned and managed. The medians of the roads are manicured and irrigated to be green, even in the dry season. Bus stops exist where buses do not yet run. People who work in the tourism businesses generally live in La Crucesita in apartment complexes and subdivisions of small row houses. There are parts of La

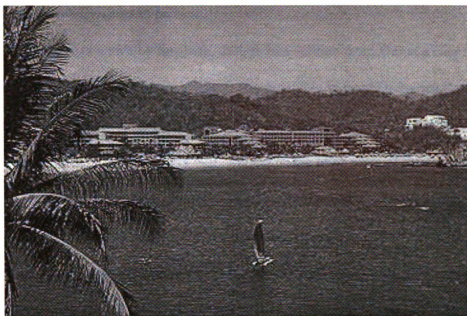


Figure 9. Luxury hotels in Tagolunda Bay



Figure 10. White-water rafting near the Bays of Huatulco

Crucesita where the roads, sidewalks, and streetlights are all in place, forming an empty grid waiting for new subdivisions to be built.

Most of the tourists arrive by airplane, though bus service from Oaxaca City is available several times a day. There are always taxis available to travel between La Crucesita, Santa Cruz, and Tangolunda, though special arrangements need to be made to go to the other bays if one does not have a car. Access to the bays west of Santa Cruz is limited because the road is still under construction, though bay tour boats carry people in several times a day.

Other than restaurants, bars and nightclubs, and shopping, the tourist activities offered in the Bays of Huatulco are all nature-based. One can white-water raft (Figure 10), bike, hike, snorkel, deep-sea fish, ride all-terrain vehicles, windsurf, go horseback riding, tour coffee plantations, and of course, tan on the beach and swim in the ocean.

Regional Tourism

Oaxaca City, at the center of Oaxaca state and 275 km to the north of Huatulco, is a developed tourist destination. As a colonial city, it has many churches, museums, restaurants featuring Oaxacan cuisine, and plenty of shopping. Nearby villages are known for special crafts unique to each one and the area is rich in pre-Hispanic civilizations' ruins. Many visitors who come to Oaxaca City will take trip to the coast for a few days to enjoy the beach.

Other popular vacation destinations along the southern Pacific coast of Oaxaca are located to the west of Huatulco. Puerto Angel is about 50 km from Huatulco and another 5 km to the west is Zipolite, a beach made popular in the 1970s by mainly European hippies. Zipolite still has a very casual atmosphere: one can rent a simple cabin

or just a hammock to sleep, small restaurants place their tables out in the sand, and nude bathers are not an uncommon sight. Another 70 km to the west lies Puerto Escondido, a holiday spot for Mexicans from Oaxaca. It is also famous for its surfing competitions. All three destinations are featured in most tour books, especially those for low-budget travelers.

The Mexican Economic Policies and Their Effects at the Local Level

Tourism has played an important role in the Mexican economy for many years. As a part of the national tourism strategy, FONATUR expropriated a large portion of land for the Bays of Huatulco in order to attract foreign investment and foreign tourists. In addition, the construction involved in developing the infrastructure and building hotels, services needed to maintain these structures, and tourism businesses created many jobs. While there were several positive aspects of the government strategy, there were also negative effects for local people. First, the jobs created did not all go or remain with the people from Huatulco. Many of the waiters, hotel staff, and store employees are from other parts of Mexico. Second, a large area of the agrarian community of Santa María Huatulco was taken away, and in light of the worsening agricultural conditions, the government now controls the most attractive and lucrative portion that used to belong to the *comuneros*. In return for taking away their land, FONATUR gave the *comuneros* the control of the local transportation businesses. FONATUR also gave them exclusive rights to build and operate beachfront restaurants. While these are popular tourism spots today, they are mostly owned by non-*comuneros* because the *comuneros* were almost all peasants, not small-business operators and therefore sold the businesses to others.

The *municipios* of Santa María Huatulco and San Miguel del Puerto had a border dispute before the arrival of FONATUR. When FONATUR appeared in the picture and needed to negotiate with the local governing bodies, the government made the boundaries official and drew the line between the two *municipios*, placing all of the bays within Santa María Huatulco. Santa María Huatulco received a number of direct benefits from FONATUR, including infrastructure improvement and a new municipal palace, not to mention the indirect benefits such as jobs. San Miguel, which claimed coastal land from Tangolunda eastwards, received no benefits from the tourism of the Bays of Huatulco complex whatsoever, thus creating tension between the two *municipios*. Though Santa Cruz was not greatly populated when FONATUR began building, there were a number of households that were displaced and given very small residential plots with small houses as compensation.

In addition to the Mexican government's tourism strategy, other economic development policies have affected the people of Huatulco negatively. When Carlos Salinas de Gortari was elected president in 1988, he faced a country with a large debt and rapidly increasing inflation. To deal with these issues, he implemented policies of economic liberalization. These policies were formalized when he made Mexico a partner in a free trade agreement with the U.S. and Canada in 1990, which was implemented as the North American Free Trade Agreement, signed in 1993 by all three countries (Warnock 1995). To attract foreign investment, not just from the U.S. and Canada but from all over the world, Salinas' development strategy underlined "Mexico's international comparative advantage," defined in terms of "low wages, low costs of production, and cheap energy" (Warnock 1995:52). Opening up the markets affected the

Oaxacan peasants in at least one major way: imported corn from the U.S. and Canada, thanks to those countries' subsidies of their farmers, is now cheaper than Mexican maize. Not only is maize a traditional staple, important to people's diet and culture, but most peasants would grow enough surplus to sell in order to have cash for other basic needs. Today the costs for peasants of producing maize surpasses the income they will receive from their crop, both the subsistence and cash portions.

Organizations Relevant to the Case

Local Environmental Groups

Grupo Autónomo de Investigaciones Ambientales (GAIA) is a non-government organization that has been working with the agrarian community of Huatulco since 1997 on a two year assessment of the natural resource use, primarily funded by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). This assessment involved community members' participation on working groups to determine social and environmental problems and to identify possible projects to address these issues. In February of 1999, GAIA gave a final report of this assessment work at the Assembly of *comuneros* meeting. At this meeting, GAIA and the Assembly agreed on GAIA's proposal to continue with the collaboration and begin the implementation of projects.

Centro de Soporte Ecológico (CSE) is also funded in part by the WWF. It has a fund created by its "investors" which include the founders, the Secretariat of the Environment (SEMARNAP - *Secretaría del Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca*), some of the Huatulco hotels, and other sources. It has three areas of programs: watersheds, reforestation, and ecotourism. Its reforestation activity is to conduct WWF's reforestation efforts of the region after the destruction caused in 1997 by Hurricanes

Paulina and Rick. It has also sponsored an ecotourism project near Huatulco in a small community. First CSE presented the idea to the community members at a meeting where about half of the population attended. Out of that meeting, interested people came forward and formed the project members. The project was put on hold when Paulina wiped out the bridge going to the community, but the bridge was rebuilt in the spring of 1999, and the project picked up where it left off. The director indicated that CSE has had difficulties with this project. For example, some members have withdrawn, preferring to work in a hotel in the Bays of Huatulco. The director commented that the participants fail to realize that hotel work is sporadic, available only in the high season, which lasts about two months between Christmas and Holy Week, with a daily wage of 72 pesos, plus the individuals have to pay for transportation. The ecotourism project is estimated to pay 1500-2000 pesos a month. CSE has to struggle to point out that the benefits of this project are longer term and more dependable than working in the tourism industry.

ODDDECO

ODDDECO is a grassroots organization that provides support to community groups throughout the coastal region and the Sierra Madre Sur. Its origins are in liberation theology and base Christian community activities from the late 1970s. Workers in a coffee plantation, a priest, and two young social activists, one of whom is the current ODDDECO director, began working together. They reflected on the coffee workers' lives and the social structure in which they lived and what actions they could take to overcome their problems, through the context of applying and living out the teachings and works of Jesus and his disciples. After reaching out to other coffee plantation communities, the people formalized their work under an organization called

the Union of Indigenous Communities (*Unión de Comunidades Indígenas* or UCI). UCI worked under two divisions, each headed by one of the social activists. One division managed the administrative aspects of UCI's work, such as obtaining and managing funding, purchasing materials for projects, and coordinating the marketing for coffee for the coffee-growing members. The other division carried out the actual social organizing and project implementation.

UCI was very successful in terms of projects. It obtained funds from major national and international donors and acquired expensive materials such as tractors and trucks to carry out its projects. But certain members felt that the UCI administrators were getting carried away in the cycle of obtaining and spending funds, including on their own salaries, and was losing its focus on peasants' needs. A group split off, led by the head of the social action division and the community leader from the original coffee plantation, and founded ODDDECO in 1994.

The organizational structure of ODDDECO can best be described as a network of community groups with a total of about 1000 members, usually operating independently, but occasionally mobilized in clusters. ODDDECO's constitution lays out a hierarchical structure of leadership that includes an elected executive board and provisions for periodic member meetings. In actuality, while the executive board does represent the major ODDDECO leaders, the one person who acts in the position of director (though his actual title is "advisor") carries out most of the leadership functions such as community organizing, writing funding proposals, and serving as the official representative to outside collaborators. The community leader from the coffee plantation who was one of UCI's founders was elected president. His role is constrained by his living in a remote coffee

plantation and his suffering from tuberculosis. The vice-president, who is from Xuchitl, is in effect the director's "right hand man" and accompanies him to attend to many ODDDECO duties.

ODDDECO's work encompasses a wide range of issues that face some or all of the region's peasantry. ODDDECO's constitution lists many types of activities it can address: obtaining agricultural credits, marketing agricultural products, building and improving houses, defending indigenous rights, initiating health activities, and conducting research and conservation activities on the fauna and flora of the region. ODDDECO serves mainly as an organizing body that helps member groups by providing administrative and technical skills, serves as a legal, organized front to obtain economic and technical support from governmental and non-governmental sources, and serves as a networking body for the members.

The ODDDECO activities since its formation include local political action and a number of economic development projects. During the local municipal election in 1996, the organization allied itself with the PRD (Party of Democratic Revolution, one of the two opposition parties to the dominant PRI – Institutional Revolutionary Party) in search of a political space to carry out its agenda. Though the PRD lost the presidential seat to the PRI, the division directorships are divided among the various parties that participated in the elections, as explained above. The PRD was assigned the Ecology Division and ODDDECO's director was chosen to fill that role. One of the accomplishments he was able to achieve in lines with ODDDECO's mandate was to change the boundaries of a new national park while it was still in the planning stage. The original plans included boundaries that extended beyond FONATUR's expropriated land limits and included a

number of communities. The Ecology director worked with SEMARNAP to keep the national park within FONATUR's land without taking away land from any communities. This park was established in the summer of 1998.

Economic projects have included training women in sewing skills, establishing household gardens, obtaining funds for home improvements, starting a chicken raising cooperative with women's groups, and planting organic *Jamaica*, a hibiscus used to make a soft drink/cold tea. All of these projects were funded from regional or national credit programs, many of which required ODDDECO to return the original amount after a period of time to qualify for more credits. The results of these projects were mixed at best. For the sewing project, the organization did obtain sewing machines and held sewing classes for a number of women in Xuchitl, but the classes ended and most of the women do not sew because of insufficient training. The machines are now in storage. The *jamaica* project was beneficial to some, and not to others. The project members planted different plots at different times in the hopes of spreading out the harvesting time. They did not know that all of the plants flower at once, no matter the planting time, and they were overwhelmed with the amount of work needed in the harvesting. Some members obtained enough and were able to sell it for a good price. Others, lacking time to harvest a profitable quantity, left a significant amount unharvested. The other projects had similar mixed benefits and the credits extended for all projects are soon due for repayment if the projects want to qualify for more credit programs.

While a number of activities sponsored by GAIA, CSE, and ODDDECO overlap, the director conceptualizes ODDDECO as significantly different than the other organizations in its commitment to local communities. GAIA and CSE are both headed

up by individuals whose salaries are a major portion of the funding they seek for the organization's activities, thus receiving a disproportionately larger benefit from the organization's work than community members. Their projects are driven by pre-determined agendas that are presented to community members who are then invited to participate. ODDDECO, on the other hand, is composed of community members. All outside funding goes to community projects. Most of ODDDECO's political and economic activities are in response to community needs, defined by community members themselves.

Summary

The three pilot project sites for the ecotourism project were the communities of Bajos de Coyula, Arroyo Xuchitl, and San Miguel del Puerto. These communities are in the political system of *municipios* and the land tenure system of agrarian communities, both of which affect the ecotourism project in terms of business permitting and granting land use-rights. The communities are located in the tropical dry forest ecosystem and its members are predominantly subsistence maize farmers, though the national government economic policies and changing environmental factors have decreased farmers' abilities to live off farming. The government-supported mass-tourism complex called the Bays of Huatulco has also hurt the area's peasants by taking away land and not providing a significant number of jobs for local people. There are two organizations engaging local peasants in environmental issues in addition to ODDDECO, though ODDDECO considers its activities to be based on peasant-defined concerns and focusing its interests on local communities.

CHAPTER 3

Research Issues and Methods

Introduction

The previous chapter was a description of the context in which this research took place. The context helps one understand factors that affected the actors, processes, and outcomes of the research. The academic literature provides a framework through which some issues that emerged from the research can be understood. In this chapter, two categories of issues raised in the literature will be presented. The first area concerns questions relating to who controls the research process and the implications of this control. The second category of issues is about the role of the outside researcher. The remainder of the chapter is a description of the methods used to explore these issues.

The Evolving Concept of Development

The notion of development in its modern sense originated in the post-World War II era, where Western nations, led by the United States, set out to spread their economic successes to countries that lacked them (Esteve 1997). This movement was shaped and spurred on by decolonization and the Cold War, leaving nation-states open to framing their internal social, political, and economic relationships. These relationships had foreign policy implications (Myrdal 1970), most notably, nations that followed the capitalist/democracy model attracted the interest of the U.S. and the Soviet Union supporting those that followed the socialist/centralized government model.

The central focus of development began with economic growth. While this is still a dominant concern, considerable research and debate has sought to broaden the definition of development. For instance, Gunnar Myrdal (1970) critiqued the West's overemphasis on the economic conceptualization of what represents a developed state, where it tried to superimpose strategies that worked for its countries on very different systems and conditions of the "undeveloped" countries. Around the same time, Dudley Seers (1969) also critiqued the economic blinders of development advocates and sought to broaden the measures of development from economic growth and gross national product to measures of the alleviation of poverty, unemployment, and equality. Gustavo Esteva's discussion echoes Myrdal and Seers (Esteva 1997), and summarizes the changing and widening foci of the United Nation's development efforts. Despite this long-standing discussion, development language today often reflects the dominance of the developed countries and development organizations in defining what is development. Raff Carmen (1996:95) writes:

[The] tools of progress are, pre-eminently, education, literacy and mass communication... So, too, are references to campaigns, strategies, targets and approaches laid on to attack 'the problem', defined - almost invariably negatively - in terms of 'lack of education', 'lack of knowledge', 'illiteracy', 'superstitions', 'traditions', 'lack of awareness', 'lack of skills and knowledge'.

While the emphasis of development efforts has shifted more toward people for whom the efforts are being made (people at the "bottom" rather than the powers at the "top"), critics demonstrate that the perspective of those at the "bottom" is often ignored. Carmen (1996) critiques newer development movements that seemingly emphasize people's skills and knowledge. For instance, terms such as "Putting the Last First" (Chambers 1997) and "Putting People First" (Cernea 1985) "is about the development

intervener’ goals, plans and constructions, as if people had not been ‘first’ all along. As a matter of fact, they had not” (Carmen 1996:48).

Some academics have documented people’s movements to mobilize people to better their condition through their own efforts, illustrating that not only are the “underdeveloped” not as helpless as they are often portrayed, but that they are actually taking action with or without outside intervention. Muhammad Anisur Rahman’s work in Africa revealed some interesting concepts of development from local people (Rahman 1993). He translates various local languages’ words or phrases that came closest to “development”: “to *stand up, take control* over what they need to work with, *to do things themselves* in their own *search for life, to move forward, supporting each other.*” (Rahman 1993:135, translations in italics).

Research into Development

Both standard and participatory research approaches can be used to help people explore their problems and propose solutions to them. In standard research², the academic researcher frames real-world situations into research problems that he/she can investigate and analyze from a detached point of view, though the researcher’s biases and assumptions do affect the research to some extent. Participatory forms of research, on the other hand, begin with the problem for research set by a party other than the academic researcher, a group actually facing that problem.

² Standard research includes various types of research, usually called qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell 1994) or positivist and constructivist research (Mertens 1998). The distinctions between these approaches are significant, but the common characteristic is that the academic researcher defines the research problem.

One type of participatory research is action research (AR). AR, developed in the context of organizational and industrial efforts to improve performance, is where management (or some party that holds power) defines the research problem and determines how the results will be used, though workers or community members are incorporated in the intermediate stages of research in order to tap into their knowledge and abilities (Brown and Tandon 1983). Another form of participatory research is participatory action research (PAR), which has roots in radical philosophies and in movements of groups with little power in developing countries (Selener 1997). In PAR, the group of people attempting to solve a practical problem controls the entire process (Hall 1982).

Of the above research approaches possible for addressing the ecotourism project, this research project shared the most characteristics with PAR, including local people (through ODDDECO) defining their own research problem. Two issues from PAR were prominent in this research: the characteristics of the participant group and the role of the outside researcher.

Characteristics of the Participatory Group

Most grassroots organizations, such as ODDDECO, organize people to address a common concern, using the people's abilities and ideas. One tends to assume then that such organizations would be highly participatory with democratic decision-making processes. Carmen (1996) notes that in fact, participation should not even be an issue when talking about people's control over their life and ownership of actions taken to improve it – participation is a given. PAR seeks to establish horizontal relationships

within a group where all participants bring valued knowledge, experience, and abilities (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991). Again, the assumption is that the participants share power equally.

In reality, groups are complex and participants are not all the same: abilities as well as levels of power usually differ. Michael Kaufman (1997) describes the concept of “differential participation.” This addresses the different levels of power group members have and how that power affects their participation. He uses it specifically to describe the tendency for women to have less power than men, though he acknowledges that the concept can be applied in different ways.

Maguire (1987) shares the concern of differential participation. Even though PAR's main focus is to enhance oppressed people's power through knowledge-generation and action that leads to their liberation within society at large, Maguire critiques most PAR work as somewhat homogenizing those who make up the "oppressed group." She focuses on how women are usually ignored in PAR projects and accounts, specifically through:

- Male-centered language.
- Women's unequal access to project participation.
- Inadequate attention to obstacles to women's participation in projects.
- Women's unequal access to project benefits.
- Unsubstantiated generalization of the benefits [“community” benefits may actually be men's benefits].
- Absence of feminism from theoretical debates on participatory research.
- Exclusion of gender issues from participatory research issues agenda. (Maguire 1987:51-52).

Another differentiation of roles in a group is between the leader(s) and followers of an organization. A leader may have mobilized people to form the group in the first place, she may be chosen by the members to represent them to other institutions, or he

may be the idea generator, the task implementer, or the motivator for the group. When considering people's abilities to mobilize and act for their own purposes, one may wonder from where the leaders emerge. The term "organic intellectual" coined by Antonio Gramsci (Hoare and Smith 1985) identifies "leadership [that] arises from, and is nourished by, the actual situation of workers and peasants" (Hall 1981:11). Bingen (1996: 27) describes grassroots leaders as shaped by "societal and economic interests, historical events, and international and institutional conditions." This background in turn affects the organizational structure and actions members choose.

Case studies of grassroots organizations reveal that leadership and the associated power is a problematic issue. Lara and Molina's study of neighborhood housing committees in Costa Rica revealed that the use of the power of a leader is affected both by the leader and by the followers (Lara and Molina 1997). They note: "In spite of the ideals or good intentions of a leader, they are almost always captive to their own need and desire for power and prestige" (Lara and Molina 1997:49). At the same time, people's expectations of leaders affect their leadership approach:

Whether or not ... the leader will accept responsibility for developing democratic and participatory practices depends on the specific community and organization. We found that a leader's actions and options were conditioned by the aspirations and expectations of the group as well as by the broader socio-political context. We repeatedly saw that the attitudes, ideals and aspirations of members play as important a role as the individuality and convictions of the leader... In order to maintain their leadership role, leaders must, at least to some extent, respond to the conceptions and expectations of the community they represent. (Lara and Molina 1997:47)

Differential participation, therefore, can be understood in at least two dimensions: the relationship between leaders and followers and between women and men, both in terms of roles they are expected to fill and roles they choose to fill.

Role of the Outside Researcher

The second topic highlighted in this thesis is the role of the outside researcher in PAR. Usually this person is from an academic institution or an expert in a specialized area. Since PAR is based on horizontal relationships between all participants (see above), the distinction between “researcher” and “research subjects” of standard research is not made because all participants are co-researchers (Freire 1982, Gaventa 1991, Hall 1981). Therefore I use the term “outside researcher” to indicate that this person comes from outside of the community group engaging in research, who generally has a specialized, academic background, and who may have different interests than the community group, such as engaging in graduate research.

The PAR literature casts the outside researcher in a wide range of roles, such as organizing the community group, providing moral support, establishing links to sources of technical, financial, or political support, among many other roles (Hall 1981, Selener 1997, Smith and Willms 1997). Whatever the role, a key factor is the balance of contributions from the outside researcher and the group researchers, acknowledging that all have knowledge and skills that are relevant to the problem at hand, and the combination of the different knowledge and skills is the strength of PAR (Maguire 1987, Selener 1997).

Perhaps the most emphasized role for the outside researcher is that of a facilitator. In Paulo Freire’s approach, the role of the educator is to lead the learners in critical reflection that will eventually lead to conscientization (Freire 1970), or critical consciousness. Though Fals-Borda allows for the facilitator role to be played either by

an inside or outside “agent of change” (Fals-Borda 1991b:4), this person guides the group through praxis to achieve social transformation. Selener (1997:37) also underlines the outside researcher’s role “as a facilitator in setting the research agenda, defining problems, collecting information or data, and analyzing problems in light of the social, economic, political, and technical context.”

Because he/she can play different roles depending on his/her skills and what role the community group needs filled, the outside researcher must deal with two factors: the expectations from others for one who fills a particular role and the researcher’s own drives to fill a particular role. Academic researchers engaged in PAR may face expectations from people associated with the conventional “expert” role they play in society. Knowledge generation, mainly through scientific research, has long been the domain of academics. People who generate knowledge and define what is considered legitimate knowledge are powerful, often using their power to dominate those without specialized knowledge (Selener 1997). PAR aims to validate other forms of knowledge, especially popular knowledge, and give control of knowledge generation to local people (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991, Selener 1997). However, community participants may still expect an outside researcher to possess knowledge and status greater than theirs.

While facing expectations from others, the outside researcher also may have his/her own expectations for his/her role. Giving up one’s control and power is very difficult and even threatening (Chambers 1997), thus an outside researcher may still consider himself/herself an expert. Also, one’s motives for getting involved in PAR are varied, and such motivations do affect the research. Maguire (1987:209), for instance, notes that most PAR projects “begin with the researcher’s rather than participants’

commitment to an alternative approach to social science research.” The outside researcher may cast himself/herself in a role when approaching research with an agenda, such as playing the facilitator role to promote the PAR even if that approach is new or unknown to the participating group.

A major distinction between PAR and AR is the political position of the outside researcher. In AR, the outside researcher will often act as a go-between for management and the workers or comparable parties, promoting cooperative action, but he/she definitely works within the prevailing system of power structure (Brown and Tandon 1983). In PAR, on the other hand, the outside researcher clearly allies himself/herself with the community group engaging in research (Brown and Tandon 1983). PAR assumes a conflictive relationship with more powerful social structures rather than a cooperative one, which is the case for AR (Brown and Tandon 1983). This alliance of the outside researcher means he/she “must be committed to the cause of the people, involving him/herself in the entire participatory research process, *including the actions implemented*” (Selener 1997:21, emphasis mine). This alliance, or partisanship, can create tensions for the outside researcher in a number of ways including going against the class from which the researcher comes (Selener 1997). An outside researcher may find himself/herself in a position working against academic or political institutions that support the researcher’s career. Logistical issues, such as the researcher’s time commitment, may cause a constraint to the level of commitment the researcher can make.

Maguire (1987) addresses this issue of time. Most outside researchers do their work under some kind of institutional framework. Additional professional commitments or limited funding for their work may shorten their time working with a community

group. The time needed to build a trusting relationship with a community group takes a long time. Thus, the amount of time it takes to carry out most participatory efforts combined with one's professional, financial, or personal constraints may cut that time to decrease the possibility of obtaining the ideal outcomes of community empowerment or effective participation. Maguire (1987) cites several PAR cases where time constraints made it difficult for the research to meet PAR goals (see also Seymour 1997).

Maguire discusses time in the framework of the limitations of the local participants as well:

While researchers may be able to invest their total work time in a participatory research project, participants continue their regular life activities. How much time is required of local people to participate in a project? (Maguire 1987: 46)

These issues then raise dilemmas for all participants, both the outside researcher and the community participants. When each participant is expected to engage in the research process and the community group's agenda, time limitations may decrease the degree one is able to carry out one's commitments.

Research Design

The issues of differential participation and the role of the outside researcher are problematic and research into them can advance the theory and practice of participatory action research. The following methodology was used in this study to investigate the issues outlined above.

Assumptions of the Research Approach

PAR can use a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed design, depending on what the participants deem appropriate to address their problem. While the potential for the use of quantitative design exists, I used a qualitative approach for the initial research conducted

to become familiar with the context, as well as to analyze the information gathered after I completed the fieldwork. Creswell (1998) asserts that both the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm and the assumptions about the qualitative methodology shape the choice of this approach. The qualitative paradigm (Creswell 1998) assumes that perceptions of reality are subjective and different for each study participant, and that the researcher has an interactive role in the research. Accepting this concept of reality, I have attempted to understand the perceptions the participants within this study, understanding that this construction of their reality is influenced by my own perceptions, not only because I bring biases and assumptions to the research, as do all researchers, but my role as a co-participant in the research process lends itself to my interpretation of the events occurring around me.

Using a case study to frame the qualitative approach, an understanding of what was occurring within particular boundaries was developed. These boundaries included a set time frame, a moment in history, a particular location, and specific actors.

Understanding the context, however, goes beyond a methodological point. In the PAR framework as discussed above, the importance of allowing the participants to set the research problem is paramount. If the issues they want to resolve emerge from their reality, “the everyday becomes not the contingent and incidental, but *that which is at stake* for those living out the circumstances that have given rise to the movement” (Pratt 1998:434)³. Thus the context in which the research takes place is not merely that which

³ This quote is taken from Mary Louise Pratt’s discussion of research on social movements in Latin America. It is quite relevant in the context of PR when people take action to change their lives. Whatever the scale of this change, it is a type of social movement.

frames the research findings, but is the starting point for the entire research process.

The Case Study and Ethnography Designs

Stake (1994) emphasizes that a case study strives to understand what can be learned from this single case more than generalizing beyond the case. Putting boundaries around the case allows the reader to create a frame, understanding that changing one of the boundaries, such as the actors, time in history, or location, could deeply influence the outcomes. Therefore such boundaries increase the value of single experiences because of the rich lessons to be learned from each one. This study involved a bounded, context-specific process regarding a particular group's interest in ecotourism. It was also bounded by the collaboration period between the ODDDECO groups and myself, and bounded in location by what ODDDECO determined as pilot sites and participants.

The focus of ethnography is on describing and interpreting a group and the social phenomena they exhibit, usually in terms of a group's culture (Creswell 1998, Atkinson and Hammersley 1994). Understanding how individuals interact within a group engaged in PAR provides further information on why events occurred as they did. The group's culture is shaped by who is a participant, the ethnic history of each person, the collective experiences, and the experiences accrued during the research period. These factors, again, are important to understand in order to appreciate the lessons one can extract from a single case study.

Data collection⁴

- *Entry into the Study Context*

Developing trusting relationships is key to being able to do both qualitative research and PAR. In qualitative research, one cannot understand people's perceptions if those people are not willing to share them. It is through relationships between people, not a one-time encounter of a researcher with a list of questions interviewing a community member, that each person will reveal his/her stories. As the people involved in PAR strive to work in solidarity with each other and to develop equal relationships between the researcher and the community group, trust must be built between the outside researcher and the community participants.

Trusting relationships take time to build, usually many months or even years. Because of the very limited time available to conduct this research, I worked through ODDDECO's network of relationships with community members. Mainly through introduction by the director who served as "gatekeeper" (Creswell 1998), I met ODDDECO members who were interested in ecotourism. I worked closely with the ODDDECO leadership to determine the processes and methods we used to organize community groups and begin implementing the project. In addition to working on the project, I lived in Xuchitl and shared everyday life with most of the group members in

⁴ This study received approval from the Michigan State University Internal Review Board for research involving human subjects (IRB# 98418). I received the consent of all persons that participated in the different aspects of this research. People's names have been kept confidential, though some are identified either by their residency in a community or membership in an organization. Prior to asking for their consent, I informed people of the goals and procedures of this study and their role in it and they were permitted to withdraw from the study at anytime with no negative consequences.

that community. Our everyday interactions contributed to developing relationships that nurtured trust and permitted collaboration.

- *Instrument Design*

The fieldwork for this study took place during a four month period between January and May 1999. Initially, observation and unstructured, open-ended group and individual interviews with the ODDDECO leadership and members were the primary research approaches. The same methods were used with tourism professionals and community development workers in order to understand the research context and to establish relationships with the participants. The type of sampling used was snowball and opportunistic sampling (Miles and Huberman 1994). The snowball sampling began with the gatekeeper (the director of ODDDECO) and the people to whom he introduced me. I then proceeded to contact people who these people introduced me to, following new leads as they arose. The opportunistic sampling involved observing or interviewing people whenever an opportunity arose, whether it was asking about the communal lands structure after an assembly of *comuneros* meeting or observing daily life as we ate together.

In the PAR framework, the participants determine the research process, including the decision of what research instruments to use. The ODDDECO participants and I used the following instruments: researching and communicating with funding sources, observing other similar tourism projects, exchanging ideas and experiences in tourism activities, and participating in a workshop on ecotourism. As we began to organize the community groups and carry out plans, I used participant observation to examine the process through which we worked.

I kept field notes on interviews and observations and kept a journal. Though field notes included reflective notes in addition to descriptive notes about what people's responses were in interviews or activities observed, the journal (or a collection of what Maxwell (1996) calls memos) was where I specifically recorded reflections on my role, assumptions, and perceptions, and how they changed, as well as on-site, preliminary analysis of the data I was collecting. These different types of field notes are especially necessary to document data into different categories: accounts of events, quotes or paraphrases of what people said, and my impressions and feelings during the research process.

Reflection is one half of the process of praxis, central to what guides PAR. Praxis involves a back and forth movement between acting and reflecting, one step influencing the next. This action-reflection cycle can occur at various levels, each time creating new knowledge. For example, a participant's explanation of the agricultural practices in Xuchitl was recorded in writing. While recording, I would realize what information I did not understand and would construct new questions to clarify the story. Thus this reflection led to action: asking more questions. On a deeper level, I would look back on a week's activities in the project development and compare it to the PAR literature (Hall 1981, Fals Borda and Rahman 1991, Maguire 1987, Selener 1997) and to other participatory researchers' experiences. This reflection then shaped the choice of subsequent actions, actions that would provide material for further reflection. While reflection is primarily a mental and emotional activity and action more of a physical activity, recording both shows the map of the development of the research process, strongly leaning toward my personal experience in that process.

Methods for Verification

A central question to any form of research is determining if the findings are “right,” or correctly represent what is going on. Stake (1994, 1995 as cited in Creswell 1998) focuses on triangulation, or the use of multiple perspectives in data collection and analysis. This was especially important in order to avoid misinterpretations due to cultural differences and language barriers. Multiple perspectives were sought from the different researchers (an academic, community members, ODDDECO leaders, Seminar participants), the tools and techniques used to produce data (observations by the researcher, group reflection, and document analysis), and the type of data produced for analysis (the researcher’s observations and reflections, other participants’ observations and reflections).

A useful test of the validity of the research lies with the community group. Because the primary benefit of this study was for the community groups and ODDDECO, and their participation in almost every step was expected because of the use of PAR, the participants determined the validity of the findings for the ODDDECO groups by what sense they choose to make from the data and analyses. Another test of validity will occur after the publication of this work, when the participants will receive feedback from the analysis and writing process and assess that feedback for its fit with their perception of reality and its usefulness in their context.

Summary

Development as a concept has been problematic since its modern inception after the Second World War. Questions such as “What is development?” “Who defines

development for whom?” and “Who participates in development and how?” have shaped the discussion of development. Participatory forms of research, such as PAR, are one way to tackle these questions. Two issues in PAR that are particularly relevant to this case study: the characteristics of the participant group and the role the outside researcher plays in that research process. Individuals in a group of people, engaging in their own development are not homogeneous. Different functional roles or differentials in the power distribution, such as between men and women or between followers and leaders, add dimensions to participatory research that cannot be ignored, for the differential affects the promotion or decrease of the participation of the group members.

Understanding what the outside researcher’s role actually is and understanding the implications of that role is important for the goal of fostering the empowerment and autonomy of the community group engaged in research. Forming an alliance with the local community group can present problems for the researcher and issues of time can affect the outside researcher’s participation. Expectations by the community group of the researcher as well as those imposed by the researcher also shape that person’s actual role. The methods used in the research were qualitative in nature, framed by the case study and ethnography research approaches. The issue of differential participation as they relate to the Huatulco ecotourism project based on patterns in relationships that emerged during the research will be addressed in the following chapter. The analysis in Chapter 5 will examine the questions raised about the role of the outside researcher based on self-reflection of my participation.

CHAPTER 4

Differential Participation in the Ecotourism Project

Introduction

The diversity within a group means its members may participate in collective efforts in different ways. Within the context of the Seminar, differences are seen as an asset: the variety of perspectives, experiences, and ideas result in the most creative approaches to each member community's problems. The Seminar, however, faces challenges in overcoming some of the power differentials that exist among the participants, power gained by virtue of education, gender, experience in the Seminar, or simply a dominant personality. The dominance of some participants over others means others' participation is reduced, thus decreasing the benefits associated with differences. This research suggests that ODDDECO also faces these same challenges. The need to understand the different levels of participation within a community group engaged in PAR was raised in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the implications of differential participation of the ecotourism project members will be explored, concentrating on the relationships between leaders and followers and between women and men. First, the nature of different members' participation in ODDDECO will be described then the power dimension behind their roles and the tensions that creates for PAR will be explored.

ODDDECO's Structure and Member Participation

The organizational structure of ODDDECO was described in Chapter 2. Each community group has one or two leaders. These leaders appeared to have emerged

naturally rather than have been formally selected. Their responsibilities include calling the group meetings and coordinating the group's activities. These leaders work closely with the director, both on specific projects and on more general issues of concern to the organization. For instance, during a meeting with one of the community leaders about the ecotourism project, the director and leader brainstormed about possible ecotourism activities before moving on to a discussion about how the organization could help some of its members deal with a legal issue from an ODDDECO-organized action in the past. The director interacts directly with the community group members during most phases of a project. In the ecotourism project in Xuchitl, the director was present and led most meetings and activities, though some of the tasks were organized and carried out by the local group.

The director plays the most number of functional roles within the organization. He usually thinks up fundable projects based on the needs of the various community groups, he does most of the legwork to obtain these funds, and runs the meetings with local groups to implement the projects. He showed me a number of proposals he had written from the past or shared ideas he had for future projects, some of which he planned to submit to a specific funder, others of which were still in the idea stage. Several funded projects were in progress during my time in Huatulco, and the director made various trips to the involved communities and to Oaxaca City to coordinate the next phase. In addition to playing these roles, the director had characteristics of a leader that are difficult to label - perhaps charisma or some natural ability to get people to follow him. It was striking how many people willingly joined the ecotourism project, even though most had no idea what the ecotourism concept was about. There were doubters, especially because

ODDDECO's recent projects had mixed results, at best. Despite this doubt, most people appeared to trust the director enough to be willing to try something new.

The director has a background that was conducive to the development of his leadership skills and role: he comes from a poor, rural family; he has a high level of formal education that gave him writing skills and critical thinking skills; he has a diverse work background in social organizing, civil service, and road construction as a contractor; and he has participated in a variety of national and international experiences.

The local leaders were people who, for the most part, had no more than a few years of formal education. Two were in their early 30s and even the older leaders in their 40s and 50s began their social activism very young. One of the young leaders was the community leader in Xuchitl who became involved in the community affairs of the village and the agrarian community at age 19. He met the ODDDECO director shortly thereafter and began to work with him on local issues. The other young leader, working in San Miguel, is the eldest son of ODDDECO's president, who is engaged in the liberation theology movement like his father and has followed his father's footsteps in community organizing.

The local leaders did not share the same background as the director, but had other abilities that helped them in their leadership positions. They conceptualized their leadership being based on three types of characteristics:

1. Trustworthiness/reliability – a person's willingness to help a fellow community member. If one went to a leader and asked for help, he/she could trust the leader to help, often immediately. The Xuchitl leader told me of many instances where

ODDDECO members would have a crisis that the director acted upon immediately, often postponing his other responsibilities.

2. **Knowledge of a system.** A leader who has connections within the civil service and/or knows people's rights can help steer others through a system. For example, civil servants may lazily fill out a birth certificate. When errors are discovered years later, it might cost the person bribe money to get someone to fix it. If a leader knows the head of public records or knows what kind of evidence to present to rectify the error, he/she can find a solution to an otherwise difficult situation.
3. **Poder de la convocatoria (power to call people)** – the ability to get people to respond to an invitation to a meeting. One person may ask people to attend a meeting and no one will come. One with the power to call people will announce a meeting and people attend even if they do not know the purpose of the meeting, knowing that that the leader had an important reason for inviting them. For instance, the Xuchitl leader was one of the two people in his community who provided the community announcement service: anyone who was organizing a community meeting would send a message to him and he would read it over a loudspeaker that could be heard throughout most of the village.

While an in-depth study into the social, economic, and historical contexts that shaped the ODDDECO director and community leaders would give us a more complete understanding of their leadership abilities and styles (Bingen 1996), such a study is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the key to the ecotourism project was the

leaders' influence on community members and their abilities to organize the working groups.

The ODDDECO members at large mainly are the beneficiaries of income-generating projects or are involved in political activities, such as participating PRD election efforts. Their participation therefore mainly involved their physical presence at meetings or their work to carry out a task. They are not consulted purposefully for organizational decision-making, though if they are present during such discussions, their input is welcomed and taken into consideration. No women are local leaders and both men and women are followers. The women have been at the center of some specific projects. Most of the women are spouses of ODDDECO members, and therefore have either participated directly in ODDDECO projects or have done so indirectly by working with their husbands. For example, many women work in their family fields and therefore worked on ODDDECO's agricultural or livestock projects in which their husbands participated.

Power Differentials Between Leaders and Followers

Leaders

The participants in the Seminar, including the ODDDECO director and the other local leaders who sometimes participated in the Seminar, conceptualize their role as representatives of their communities or community groups both in positive and negative terms. They called themselves *mandaderos* (*mandar* is to command or send, therefore a *mandadero* is one who is commanded or sent by another). While their role was to share accounts of the activities of a community group or bring that group's problems for the

Seminar to consider, several representatives described their role as one where they try to both anticipate and solve their community's or group's concerns and needs.

As humble as this depiction may sound, the director of ODDDECO admitted that a *mandadero* is a position of power, though most of these leaders would not recognize it as such because of the negative implications of “power.” However, the Seminar participants discussed how power could be used for the good of a group or for a leader's selfish aims. In many countries, connections and corruption dominate how things work. In Mexico, it appears that people often get jobs or manipulate the bureaucracy through personal connections. Many people in positions of political power are said to be corrupt, using their position to influence a decision in their favor or to swindle money. A *mandadero*'s connections can benefit an organization or a community to access funds or speed up paperwork for a legal process or they can be used to improve his social standing or allocate a disproportionate part of funds for a project for his salary.

ODDDECO's director discussed the power-trap that leadership presents. While the rewards of effective leadership are people's respect and trust, these are also a burden. He says it is virtually impossible to say, “No,” “I am not able,” or “I do not know.” It is expected of him to do whatever is asked or figure out how to do it. ODDDECO members often come to him with personal problems and look to him for solutions. Thus, in the Oaxacan context, followers' expectations of the leader are to be filled, willingly or not, and most leaders both resent and enjoy the power vested in them.

Followers

Generally speaking, the director, the local leaders, and I generated ideas for the ecotourism project, which were then presented to the community group members. The

followers rarely gave or were asked for their opinions. When asked why we could not solicit people's ideas, both the director and the local leader of Xuchitl said that the members could not conceptualize things beyond their everyday existence; when it came to agricultural matters, they were experts, but with new ideas such as ecotourism, they drew a blank. The leader in Xuchitl, who was a farmer and mason, could think critically in broad terms. When asked how he was different than the rest of the Xuchitl group members, he explained that his experiences outside of Xuchitl (working in the coastal city of Salina Cruz where he learned to be a mason, holding a job in the municipal offices, and participating in the Seminar) exposed him to a wider range of ideas, a feature that only a few of the group members shared.

On occasion during group meetings or at the workshop, the participants were asked for their ideas on what roles they would like to play in the ecotourism enterprise or to reflect on the possible results, both positive and negative, of bringing tourists into their communities. Responses were somewhat slow in coming and the participants did not generate a very long list, but it appeared that this was due to not having much experience at such discussions rather than an "inability" to think beyond their daily lives.

While granting that a range of experience allows one to begin to think beyond one's daily life, the adult education and PAR theorists specifically describe the processes that allow the most sheltered of people to become critical thinkers through praxis (e.g. Hall 1981, Fals Borda and Rahman 1991), or what Freire (1970) calls conscientization. Praxis and conscientization are processes grounded in people's existence in the concrete world (Freire 1970) and therefore, the broader their experiences, the more resources one may have upon which to reflect and from which to learn. Perhaps this was the case with

the development of critical thinking skills for the ODDDECO leaders. However, even if individuals lack a wide range of experiences, a group can learn from the collective and varied experiences of the group members by critically reflecting upon those experiences and upon what people know of their environment. This reflection informs action that serves as a way to test new ideas and to acquire new experiences.

The ODDDECO leaders' dismissal of those who lacked critical thinking skills, as discussed above, appeared as if they were ranking participants based on their level of critical consciousness and therefore valuing them differently. It appeared that the followers with fewer experiences remain dependent on the leaders for guidance. This means it is less probable that individuals or groups within ODDDECO will take initiative to define issues or act on their concerns. For an organization with material resource limitations, it restricts its available human resources by not developing each member's capabilities. For example, the director cannot visit outlying communities very often because he lacks the money to buy gasoline or the appropriate vehicle to reach these communities in the rainy season. If the local leaders and community members were able to better organize themselves, the director's input would only be necessary on rare occasions.

Power Differentials Between Women and Men

Women

Early in our collaboration when the director, local leaders, and I discussed how to form each community group. During these conversations, I asked if there were women among the people they intended to invite to participate. The answer was no, but the

question made them recognize that women would be an important part of the project. The leaders' acknowledged women's participation was crucial because they felt women were more responsible and women would be the ones cooking and cleaning the cabins for the ecotourists. Most of the male members' wives eventually would be incorporated into the project whether the women were official members of the project or not, which was consistent with past ODDDECO efforts.

The Coyula and San Miguel groups were only at the very initial stage of formation during my research period. At the first meeting in Coyula, there were three women and three men; two of the women and two of the men were actively engaged in the conversation. At the first meeting in San Miguel, there were four women and 15 men; the women only listened and about half of the men actively participated. In Xuchitl, three to five women participated in the meetings, compared to the eight men. Three of these women were present and participated in the project meetings more consistently than most of the men. However, more telling than these numbers were the explanations people gave for why women's participation was restricted.

A factor that limited women's participation was their relationship with their husbands. Married women must receive permission from their husbands to engage in activities outside of the home. When going to run errands to the market in the nearest large town or to do other household related tasks outside of the home, the request for permission appeared to be a formality. However, a request to participate in a non-conventional activity such as the ecotourism project, one's husband could potentially refuse. Two of the Xuchitl participants were willing to participate in the project if their husbands gave them permission, and since their husbands were working in the U.S., they

had to wait until the next time they communicated with their husbands to ask. One of these women was granted permission by her husband. However, she limited her participation and sometimes sent her daughter to meetings because of her husband's persistent expectation for her to stay home most of the time, even during his absence. When he was home, he disapproved of her even attending parent meetings at their children's school. The other woman was quite outspoken during meetings. Her husband returned during my research period and he and his wife attended the meetings. Later there were rumors that this man had his doubts about participating in the project so I suggested to the director and the Xuchitl leader to encourage the wife to continue to participate. The local leader said men become suspicious if another man asks the wife to join an activity without her husband. I pointed out that this was very unlikely since the woman was the leader's sister, but my comment was ignored. On the other hand, the third female member of the Xuchitl group was an older woman. The director and the local leader characterized her as very responsible and reliable, so her membership in the group was valued. When asked about the difference between her participation and that of other women, the director replied that this woman's husband drank too much. Since all men drank too much on occasion, their explanation did not seem relevant to my question. I was left with the impression that perhaps her age exempted her from suspicions.

Whatever the explanations, the end result was very limited participation by the women. Many of the initial activities of the project, such as construction of the cabins, were men's activities in the general division of labor that existed. Though the group discussed future roles for the women, such as cooking and cleaning the cabins, one woman expressed a desire to be more active in the initial stages, beyond just attending

meetings. While the project site was being discussed, two of the potential sites were rather far from where most of the group members lived. The women expressed the difficulty in going back and forth to a distant site when the project was under way because of their responsibilities at home. The leaders' attitude was that people needed to get serious about this project and invest a lot of effort into the work. The site was being chosen for more than convenience, based on characteristics such as pleasant natural surroundings, and people would have to adapt, they said. While they may have had a point (both men and women may walk a half an hour to reach a field that they are farming, the same distance to the farthest potential site), it is also an indication that the male leaders may have been ignoring the needs of the women and not very interested in promoting women's participation. It is hard to assess whether or not site location would actually limit women's participation, but it did not appear that their opinions were being heard in the decision-making process for where the site would be.

Men

While the above discussion about women illustrate that male participants had power over the women that reduced women's participation, there was at least one constraint on men's participation as well. Several conversations with the men in the group revealed a factor that placed pressure on them as "providers" of their families. Men are expected to provide a certain amount of money each week to their wives for household expenses, either from the sale of their agricultural surplus or from wage labor. A few of the men had conflicts with their wives when they were under- or unemployed and could not meet this obligation. Devoting time to develop the ecotourism project meant the participants took time away from their regular household activities. Without

material compensation for this work, the men would be under financial and personal strain to participate. Therefore one of the motivations for seeking outside funds for the project was to buy food staples such as maize, beans, salt, sugar, and oil that could be distributed to those who worked on the ecotourism project. This was one attempt at addressing men's issues, that would benefit women as well, both in terms of the wives of the men receiving food to feed the family, and in terms of the women participants also being compensated for their work¹.

The Implications of Differential Participation for ODDDECO

Local people through their membership in ODDDECO controlled the research and development the ecotourism project. However, different parties controlled different phases of the project. The leaders and I dominated the decision-making and idea-generating aspects while the local leaders and community participants shared the physical work more equally. The intended benefits were to be shared equally among all participants. The director dominated the overall process and most of the project activities would not have happened without his presence. Compared to the ODDDECO leaders, the followers had little influence.

There were occasions, however, that broke from that trend. For example, I explained to the Xuchitl leader that my approach of asking open-ended questions was to stimulate discussion, with the intended result to get greater participants input into the direction of the project. During this discussion he, in turn, developed his own questions

¹ At the time of writing, ODDDECO was still applying for funding and had therefore not further developed this idea.

and we decided to organize a meeting just to discuss our questions, focusing on how people envisioned the project in general and their role in it. During this meeting, people were asked to list their skills and talents and how they could apply them to the ecotourism project. Despite the participants' limited understanding at the time of ecotourism, they were able to generate a list of abilities as well as skills they could learn that were relevant to ecotourism activities. The director responded favorably when this meeting occurred without his presence.

In the context of PAR, which seeks to change power structures in society at large, not addressing oppressing power structures within the participatory group is inconsistent (Maguire 1987). ODDDECO members are aware of power structures in the society that limit their voice. Political power is especially noticeable: national policies have affected agricultural prices and employment patterns; PRI, the dominant party, uses promises of services and presents of cement and corn to gain votes; and the national government expropriated a large portion of communal lands for a tourism complex that provides few benefits. One consequence of differential participation means duplicating dominant, "top-down" power structures of Mexican society. This impedes ODDDECO's goals to promote community development based on their capabilities to sustain their livelihoods. ODDDECO has already made progress in empowering its members politically. Engaging in PAR with its critical analysis of power structures can allow ODDDECO to examine how it functions as an organization, looking to improve its internal relationships to be more empowering of its members.

The Seminar conceptualizes diversity in terms of positive outcomes. Limiting that diversity through differential participation means not taking advantage of the

perspectives and abilities of the people whose voices are less prominent. Another consequence of differential participation relates to concentrating the responsibility for a project, whether it be the decision-making or carrying out tasks, with only a few people. This concentration places a larger burden on their time and resources than if the responsibilities were more equally distributed.

The primary goal of the ecotourism project was to organize a community development project, not to examine power relationships. Taking a participatory approach enabled ODDDECO, community members, and an outside researcher to collaborate in the hopes of combining everyone's skills, knowledge, and perspectives toward the ecotourism project. However, PAR's analysis of power revealed characteristics of ODDDECO that has implications not only for the ecotourism project, but also for how it operates in every aspect of its work.

Summary

In ODDDECO, the director has a large share of the responsibilities for the organization. He and the local leaders collaborate in making decisions about the overall work of the organization as well as individual projects. The followers, though they are the beneficiaries of ODDDECO's work, participate mainly in a functional manner such as carrying out tasks. In the ecotourism project, the director, leaders, and I dominated the decision-making and the idea generation because the followers were not expected or thought to be able to contribute in those manners. Women, and to some extent men, had limitations placed on their participation. Married women, for example, needed their husbands' permission to participate. Restricted participation for some of the members

means not taking advantage of their skills and perspectives and it also places a disproportionate amount of responsibility on the members who participate the most. Addressing power issues within ODDDECO as well as power structures in society that affect ODDDECO members can allow the organization to better meet its goals to uphold peasants' rights and develop their abilities.

CHAPTER 5

The Role of the Outside Researcher

Introduction

The Seminar engages academics and peasants to address peasants' challenges. This process aims for the potential gains resulting from examining issues from each participant's worldview. Each person's knowledge and access to information is considered for the usefulness to this process. With this concept of collaboration, one major contribution of an outside researcher in a community group's efforts is to add diversity to the problem-solving process. The results are outcomes that are different and hopefully better than outcomes without that researcher¹. In Chapter 3, several issues were presented regarding an outside researcher engaged in PAR: understanding the nature and expectations of the outside researcher's role; the consequences for the outside researcher in allying with a community group; and how time affects the outside researcher's participation. In this chapter, the manner these issues affected my involvement in the ecotourism project will be explored.

PAR is about both individual and social transformation (Maguire 1987, Smith and Willms 1997) as well as valuing different forms of knowledge, including reflection (Smith 1997). The discussion presented in this chapter is a combination of accounts of what occurred and my reflections on those events. The account of my learning as a researcher, engaging for the first time in PAR with a community group, is a result of

¹ This is not to imply that the outside researcher's input is more valuable, but in a collaborative setting, his/her input adds one more viewpoint not previously available from which the community group can draw a solution.

observations and actions as well as my reflections on those concrete events, and therefore each element cannot be separated.

Playing Multiple Roles

What emerged from this research was that the outside researcher could play many parts. Those roles change over time and each person in the research group may perceive the outside researcher's role in different ways.

My Role as Negotiated with the Director

Because my entry was through the Seminar and ODDDECO, my initial level of involvement was negotiated with ODDDECO's director. A major role that Seminar members play for those who are presenting their community's issue is to pose questions. Consistent with this process, it was agreed that one of my roles working with the community groups could be to raise questions. These questions would encourage community members to clarify their ideas and perhaps reflect on issues that they had not previously considered.

In order to have a better understanding of ecotourism, I reviewed the academic literature on the topic prior to beginning my fieldwork. This allowed me to collect information to share with the Huatulco participants. It also helped me formulate questions that would allow community members to consider issues in ecotourism and decide for themselves how they would address them (see Appendix for the questions, some of which were addressed during the collaborative period, the rest of which were left with the groups for future consideration).

Since the director had an academic background, he understood the constraints of time and requirements for conducting thesis research and he committed ODDDECO's efforts to help me meet those commitments while I helped ODDDECO carry out its work.

How Participants Perceived My Role

The community groups mainly saw my role as lending the perspective of a potential tourist. Because most of the group members had not had extensive interaction with a foreigner, they wondered what foreigners liked to eat or what kinds of activities would interest them. The vice-president of ODDDECO was very direct in soliciting my reactions to his community. He asked me the following questions, which I addressed at the workshop held for the community group:

- How do you feel here as an outsider?
- Would you recommend visiting Xuchitl to others?
- Would other tourists feel comfortable the way you have been living?
- What should we change?

The director saw my role as an academic researcher fully immersed in the project and taking the leadership to move the project along, rather than a detached observer of events. He also recognized that my position as an academic researcher allowed me to critique the project processes and he asked for my input on that aspect.

Other Roles I Played

Throughout the research and collaboration process, I played other roles as well. One was simply providing an opportunity for the people of Xuchitl to become accustomed to a foreigner living amongst them. Every day, people would see me

walking to the store, riding the truck into town, or collecting firewood. This acclimation was more intense, of course, for the family with which I lived. At first, my participation in daily chores made some of the family members ashamed that a visitor was doing such menial work until they realized I did not mind helping. They were surprised that I enjoyed their everyday, simple food, which they do not consider proper to serve a guest. My time with them may make them more comfortable interacting with tourists in the future.

Tensions Created by Multiple Perceptions

Participatory engagement provides freedom for the outside researcher to play roles that are not typically filled in conventional research. Conventional researchers are often observers or gatherers of people's knowledge or opinions. Even if they are more involved with a group of people, their role is established at an early stage of the research with those people as one trying to understand and analyze a specific phenomenon. This role usually does not require the researcher to contribute to the group's objectives.

With many roles, instead of a narrowly defined role, the opportunities for learning and sharing are even greater for the outside researcher. What complicates the outside researcher's interactions with a group is that people have different perceptions of the outside researcher's role, not all of which are made clear to everyone. Those perceptions change over time, both as relationships evolve and as the researcher gains experience and people's trust.

The nature of the researcher's role can be varied at a given point in time and over time, and varied depending on who defines the role. This complexity can create tensions. The director and I did not fully articulate our expectations of each other until well into

our time together. These expectations were finally addressed when I expressed my frustrations with the slow pace of the project and everyone's dependence on his presence to do anything. The director asked me to take more initiative and lead the community groups, in other words, play a similar role as his. This request was different than my preference for such initiative to come from the community groups. Following a discussion of this issue and my indication that I did not want to pursue a leadership role by myself, we agreed that the director, the local leaders, and I would collaboratively plan for moving the project forward.

Implications of the Researcher's Solidarity with Community Groups

Relationships with Community Participants

In PAR, the outside researcher is accountable to the community group and PAR theory casts the outside researcher's role as a co-participant of equal standing as the other participants. In practice, however, both community members as well as the outside researcher may have expectations based on the outside researcher's social status or level of education. The Huatulco participants did not seem to put me on a pedestal for my academic background. I was the same age or younger than most participants, which may have contributed to people's view toward me. Despite my explanations of the nature of my academic research, one participant asked in an early interview, "Why are you asking these questions?" This made it clear how important it was to explain *why* I was doing particular things, such as interviews about farming practices to understand the context. Not being transparent about one's research can contribute to the mystery of academia for

those who are not a part of it, adding to the sense that academics have a special body of knowledge not accessible by others.

The outside researcher's expectations of himself/herself may differ from those of the community group. At the same time, the researcher's own expectations may be multiple. The community members did not seem to expect me to be an expert or to be more capable than them in research because of my academic status. My expectations, however, were to respect ODDDECO's experience in community development and not impose my approach. I expected the project participants to define my role so that it would meet their needs. Yet with academic requirements, such as to follow prescribed research methods, meet deadlines, and produce a written research account, I occasionally had to push my research agenda. For instance, I wanted to understand how the group participants perceived the idea of ecotourism. Though a group discussion would also contribute to the collective construction of knowledge on ecotourism, this method of collecting data could result in results that were qualitatively different from individual responses. My academic objectives were not very relevant to the group's objectives and I asked them to take their time to help me. My attempt to resolve this was by making clear my academic responsibilities, asking for people's help in meeting them, and realizing that a collaborative process involves give and take from both sides.

Time

Outside researchers who come from North America or Europe may have a different concept of time than people from the rest of the world. Tendencies to be punctual and a focus on "getting things done" can present challenges to an outside researcher's involvement. Despite experience in West Africa where people have a

similar sense of time as Mexicans, my own pace still caused me a considerable amount of frustration as it clashed with that of the people around me. The director was notoriously late for everything, sometimes up to two hours late and sometimes not showing up at all. However, the lack of reliable and quick communications prevented him from telephoning to say his plans had changed.

While any outside researcher who works in an institutional setting may have other responsibilities that limit one's time with a PAR process, graduate students face very defined time limits and research requirements. As Maguire (1987) notes, research participants have to attend to their everyday activities in addition to working on the research, while most, or all of the outside researcher's time may be devoted to research. The local leader of Xuchitl was very willing to engage in discussions, whether to help me understand the local context, give his reaction to my reflections, or plan the next steps. However, on several occasions, he apologized and excused himself to go do his work. While the slow pace of the project was frustrating, realizing that people had limited time to commit to the project helped me slow down.

These limits for both the community participants and myself became more and more frustrating as my research period was drawing to a close. Though staying longer may have permitted more time for data collection and participation in the project, the peasant participants were also on a schedule. Provided the rains would begin on time, they would become very busy from June through December with their agricultural activities, leaving very little time for anything else. Therefore it was important to accomplish as much as possible before both my departure and the beginning of the rainy season.

Engagement and Detachment

The immersion into relationships and into the research process required by PAR can create a tension for an academic researcher. A major factor to balance the outside researcher's role as a researcher and as practitioner is one's ability to step out of the research situation to analyze what is happening without denying one's involvement in the research process. In PAR, reflection is vital, especially to be able to analyze the research at different levels. For instance, the outside researcher's analysis would involve understanding the one's emotional engagement as a co-participant. These feelings are relevant data yet it is important to also detach from that level of engagement to be able to see patterns in participants' relationships, including the researcher as one of those participants.

For example, my frustration with the slow pace of work can be analyzed in two ways. Perhaps as an academic, my research time frame was more important than allowing a process to progress at its natural pace; if this was the case, my attitude was not consistent with allowing the community group to control the process. On the other hand, as a participant, I was expressing a frustration that was perhaps felt by others and was therefore valid in trying to improve the group process. The local leader of Xuchitl admitted that the director's tardiness often interfered with his work schedule and he saw participants' late arrivals to meetings as their lack of seriousness about the project.

While I attempted to immerse myself into the lives of the project groups, I always felt a level of separateness because I knew I was leaving. This helped maintain a distance that enabled me to be analytical. At the same time, it inhibited me from making greater commitments to the community groups and to ODDDECO than I already had.

Each participant has different perspectives and values that affect his/her perception of the research process. Since the outside researcher's perspectives and values shape his/her analysis, the more different the outside researcher is, the more the analysis may contradict accepted patterns in the community group's overall culture or organizational structure. An outside researcher must then grapple with how to address these contradictions while maintaining solidarity with the community group.

This issue was particularly difficult in this research regarding gender relationships. Because the more equitable distribution of power is so central to PAR, the ODDDECO leaders' *machismo* should not simply be dismissed as a cultural factor that should not be questioned. However, both as an individual and as someone from outside of the organization, I felt there was little I could do to precipitate much change in this area. Maguire (1987:69) acknowledges this dilemma:

A possible contradiction exists between participatory [action] research's intention to be culturally sensitive and its intention not to collude with systems of oppression... How can participatory [action] research be culturally sensitive and yet not collude with oppressive sexist policies and practices which are frequently defended as culturally appropriate or traditional?

This dilemma was not resolved in this research. I was comfortable enough with the participants to express my values and to raise questions about gender relationships but I had to accept the limits of my influence and be satisfied that I had pointed out the issue.

Impacts on Other Aspects of Research

When the outside researcher is new to a particular area, it is important to his/her research to explore the context in which the community group is living. However, some of the people who can provide information about the context may have interests other than those of the community group. How to be truthful to informants outside of the

community group yet not reveal information about the community group that may be used against them is a challenge when the outside researcher has allied him-/herself with the PAR group.

In order to understand the Huatulco context, I talked with two other environmental organizations and people in the tourism industry. Both organizations and some people in the tourism industry had interacted with the director of ODDDECO before, especially during his time as head of the Ecology Division of the *municipio*. The director had some strong negative opinions of the environmental organizations and how they operated, mainly that so much of their budget was devoted to overhead costs (especially the salaries of the employees) compared to what was invested in the communities. He felt the people working for these organizations were more interested in creating and maintaining their own jobs than really working for the benefit of local community members. In conversations with certain people in these organizations, some of their animosity toward the ODDDECO director was evident as well. These organizations clearly had differing work philosophies. Realizing this, yet being in solidarity with ODDDECO's efforts and understanding the possible political implications of the ecotourism project, I was uncomfortable collecting information from the other organizations. I also felt the need to be cautious in dealing with tour operators because they would be potential competitors once the ODDDECO ecotourism business was in place. I did not want to conceal any of my ODDDECO activities, yet I did not want to provide information to outside parties that could be used against ODDDECO efforts or be co-opted into their own projects. My attempt to overcome this dilemma was by first discussing with the ODDDECO director what I could and could not reveal to others about

the project (basically, he said I was free to discuss it). During interviews, I described the project in general terms and explained why I was seeking information about their work.

Summary

Engaging in PAR presents the outside researcher with a number of tensions relating to that person's role in the research process. Different parties may perceive the outside researcher's role in different ways. This means the researcher can play many roles but if all participants do not understand those roles, conflict may arise among the participants. The outside researcher must be engaged personally in the research as well as be able to detach from that involvement enough to analyze the research process. One's alliance with a community group can also cause tensions as the outside researcher interacts with parties outside of the community group who may have different or conflicting interests with the community group, such as to how much information the researcher can reveal. Both participants' concept of time and their time available to participate in the research may differ, making time a problematic issue for the outside researcher who is expected to participate fully yet has to meet professional or personal responsibilities.

The discussion of the role of the outside researcher in this chapter raises implications for future PAR, which will be discussed in the following chapter. In the final chapter, I will summarize the entire research process, draw conclusions from the specific case for ecotourism and for PAR, provide recommendations for ODDDECO, for future ecotourism efforts, and for further research in related fields.

CHAPTER 6

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research process and the analysis of issues that emerged from this process. In addition, the chapter outlines implications of this study for other ecotourism efforts and PAR studies. Recommendations for ODDDECO and for future study are outlined. The chapter concludes with final observations and reflections on some PAR issues and how this study relates to a global context.

Case Study Summary

Peasants in the area of Huatulco in the Mexican state of Oaxaca face difficulties maintaining a subsistence level living from their agricultural practices. In an attempt to explore options for these people, a grassroots organization, ODDDECO, engaged pilot groups in Bajos de Coyula, Arroyo Xuchitl, and San Miguel del Puerto to explore community-based ecotourism as an income-generating business.

ODDDECO's participation in the Seminar on Resource Management of Rural Development allows it to contribute to the solutions to problems that other Oaxacan communities face. The Seminar allows the organization to receive input from others into ODDDECO's projects as well. Together with about ten ODDDECO members from each of the three communities, community groups were organized and each explored how it could set up a business to house tourists and provide opportunities for the tourists to

interact with local people, learn about local customs and foods, and to enjoy the nature surrounding the communities.

After meeting through the Seminar, the director of ODDDECO and I decided to collaborate on the ecotourism idea and began a four month process of participatory action research. Certain issues emerged out of this participatory action research that were explored through the use of qualitative research methods, especially from the case study and ethnographic research approaches.

Two issues in PAR that are particularly relevant to this case study were the heterogeneous nature of the participant groups and the role of the outside researcher in the research process.

Different roles or differentials in the power distribution affect the promotion or decrease in participation of the group members. PAR provides a framework to analyze these differentials. The leaders of ODDDECO, especially the director, had a large share of the responsibilities for the organization. These leaders, for the most part, made the decisions for the ecotourism project. The followers participated primarily by attending meetings, contributing to ideas if they wished, and carrying out tasks such as collecting the building material for the cabins to house tourists. Though some women attended meetings and voiced their views, men controlled the project. Women's participation was limited, mainly because married women needed their husbands' permission to participate.

Limited participation for some members of PAR means their skills and perspectives are not used to improve the outcomes of the project. It also places a disproportionate amount of responsibility on the members who participate the most. While PAR explicitly examines power issues in society that affect a community group,

dealing with power differences within a group like ODDDECO can allow the organization to better meet its goals to uphold peasants' rights and develop their abilities.

The outside researcher can play many roles within the research processes. Those roles change over time and may be perceived differently by each participant. When roles are not clearly defined and expectations not expressed, tensions among the group participants are possible. The outside researcher's alliance with a community group can also cause tensions when the researcher deals with people who may have different or conflicting interests with the community group. Participants' concept of time and the actual time people have to participate in the research may make time a problematic issue for the outside researcher who is expected to participate fully, yet has to meet professional or personal responsibilities.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Ecotourism

Much of the discussion about ecotourism advocates community participation as vital to the success of an ecotourism enterprise. Within this discussion is an understanding of the complexity of participation. For instance, participation occurring at different stages of an ecotourism project impacts both the outcomes of the project and the amount of power the local community gains through their participation. Authors also understand that encouraging local participation is not a simple process. Most of these conclusions were drawn from projects that were initiated from outside of the community.

Mader's conceptualization of ecotourism (Mader 1999) allows us to see that there are three criteria to meet in order to have ecotourism: community participation, economic sustainability, and natural resource conservation. People wishing to engage in

ecotourism should understand which of these criteria are the most important. In many instances, conservation is the priority. Therefore understanding *how* to get local participation in order to meet that goal may help meet that priority. In the ODDDECO case, economic development and community participation were the primary concerns, therefore understanding how the dynamics of participation (including how different community members participate according to age, gender, etc. and the involvement of people from outside of the community) affect building the business is important.

This study confirmed that starting an ecotourism business from within the community was complex. The pilot group participants' interests were placed at the forefront and therefore their direct involvement was considered a given. However, it took a long time to organize the pilot groups, especially because people had their everyday responsibilities to meet first. Therefore, people wanting to launch an ecotourism project must understand that basing the work on community members' knowledge, ideas, and abilities is a long process and involves more than just inviting people to a meeting and expecting them to start work immediately. A grassroots organization with active members has the networks and organization to facilitate launching a project, but even then, results are not immediate.

Conclusions and Recommendations for ODDDECO

ODDDECO represents a network of largely peasant groups that have a history of organizing people around or in response to peasant interests. Some of these efforts have been very successful, others less so. However, each can serve as a learning experience that informs future efforts. The decision in the ecotourism project to select the

participants because of their motivation and history of hard work, for instance, was based on previous experience of people failing to meet their responsibilities over time when participation was open to all those interested in a project. Even though the ecotourism project was not at a fully operational stage at the time of writing this thesis, an examination of the initial stages can still serve as a learning experience, applicable to both the ecotourism project and for future ODDDECO projects.

The lack of horizontal relationships within a community group results in differential participation. The differential participation meant that there were varying levels of participation among the different community group members, with some people holding more power to impact the project than others. The discussion on differential participation relationships in the ODDDECO groups in Chapter 4 revealed possible outcomes for encouraging more equal levels of participation. These include a greater independence for the community groups from the director, building the members' capacity to be critically analytical, and an increased level of members' input into decisions and ideas for the organization's work. The above outcomes would mean a more proportional distribution of work, not only with the decision-making, but also for the actual tasks that need to be undertaken.

The literature on leadership and followership written in the context of North American organizations may contain elements that are helpful in achieving a more equal power distribution within ODDDECO. In this literature, the roles of leader and follower tend not to be clearly distinguished, meaning most people fill both roles at some time (Kelley 1992). Newer organizational models are de-emphasizing the leader at the top with followers carrying out what he/she decides. These models describe a team approach

where all strive to meet a common goal based on the vision and abilities of all, where the leader facilitates this process (Hesselbein, et al. 1996, Oakley and Krug 1991). Kelley also speaks of developing followers beyond passive people who carry out delegated tasks to people with both “independent, critical thinking” skills (Kelley 1992:93) and “adding value” (Kelley 1992:131) to their duties by transforming them into activities that forward the organization’s goals. Therefore, ODDDECO’s director and local leaders can encourage the members to participate in the critical thinking needed to determine people’s problems and how they can collectively solve them, so that leadership is shared. In addition to this focus on the group level, allowing each person to define how his/her contribution gives individuals value in a group process.

Conclusions and Recommendations for PAR

PAR shapes a process that allows for social analysis to reveal how power structures affect people with little power. A critical analysis for examining relationships *within* a community group is rarely undertaken with as much scrutiny. Examining how power structures limit or encourage the participation of each member can help identify areas that affect the goal of people’s empowerment. Groups engaging in PAR efforts can understand how members are different from each other and discover how the group can operate more equitably through a critical self-analysis.

Part of this self-analysis on participants’ different roles and levels of power includes the outside researcher. Very often, the researcher takes on the role of facilitator, whether facilitating the group’s analysis of reality or guiding the group through the research process. Being a facilitator is only necessary if the community group lacks a

person to play this role or if the group needs assistance in social analysis and conducting research. This assumption that the outside researcher tends to fill the role of the facilitator was clearly not valid in this project because of the capabilities of ODDDECO's leadership in facilitating and guiding the project. If PAR is about placing the control of the research process into the hands of those who will benefit from the research, this means the community group can now define the role of the outside researcher for its own purposes. Instead of the outside researcher struggling with the question of "what role should or can I play?" the community group should make that decision. These decisions may be the most realistic to expect when the group is as well organized as ODDDECO was. However, future PAR can continue to push local community groups to define the role of the outside researcher for their own purposes.

Playing a role that is useful to the community group does not mean giving up one's views and opinions - in fact, they are valid when the outside researcher is received as a participant of equal standing. Some situations, such as an unequal power distribution among the participants, may need to be addressed. However, as Smith (1997:234) points out, "just because changes are necessary does not mean they will actually happen." Outside researchers need to struggle with what is ethical in terms of balancing one's own beliefs and supporting those of others. The outside researcher, just like all other participants, decides to participate based on a sense of connection with the group. Dialogue can help address and perhaps resolve differences among the group members.

Time issues are a major constraint in participatory efforts both for the outside researcher and community participants. While an ideal situation would be for all participants to be involved in a long-term collaboration, this should not preclude

engaging in less-than-ideal situations. Collaborative opportunities should be seized when they arise if they benefit the community group engaging in PAR. However, time issues of all participants should be recognized and discussed. I participated in ODDDECO's work for a very short period. The organization has a history of relationships between the leaders and ODDDECO's membership spanning over 20 years, with numerous political and economic collective action efforts taken on behalf and by the members. Through what I learned about the organization, it appeared that it had established strategies for tackling problems and a vast network of human and material resources into which it could tap. This is not to say that the organization was without flaws, nor that it had not experienced failures, nor that it could not benefit from more experience and resources. It did not appear, however, that outside experts were essential to ODDDECO to help it in its development efforts. My role in one of its projects was for a brief period toward the beginning of the project's evolution. The abilities of the project groups and ODDDECO as the sponsoring organization will have a greater impact over the long term on the ecotourism project's success than my brief participation.

Recommendations for Further Study

From the four month collaboration with ODDDECO's ecotourism project and the subsequent analysis and reflection of what occurred, issues like leadership characteristics, dynamics within ODDDECO, and the complexity of an outside researcher's involvement emerged. A closer and more extensive examination of ODDDECO's structure and ways of operating would deepen an understanding of how the structure and the relationships

among members affect the organization's participatory approach. Hopefully, feedback to ODDDECO will allow the members to reflect on these issues for themselves.

In-depth studies of similar grassroots organizations, both through conventional research and through PAR, can broaden the concept of participation, specifically to understand the different forms and what factors encourage or inhibit people's participation. These kinds of studies can also add to understanding the complexities of each person's participation: one's participation can differ according to the level of one's influence and workload, and can be affected by social relationships, such as that between the genders or position in a hierarchy. Conventional research in this area can contribute to understanding participation by studying existing relationships and levels of participation of a grassroots organization. PAR can also do this, with the added components of examining an outside researcher's role in promoting greater levels of participation and an analysis of power within and outside the participatory group.

One distinguishing aspect of ODDDECO's strategy for participation was limiting who would participate in order to increase the chances of long-term project sustainability. As explained above, the ODDDECO leaders chose to select the participants for the ecotourism pilot project based on past experiences with failed projects. This model is different than a perhaps more common participatory approach of presenting an idea to a group of people and expecting participants to self-select based on interest. Further studies comparing these two models may reveal how differences in these approaches affect project success. If an outside researcher is involved with a grassroots organization which is carrying out participatory action research, further study to examine how that

person fits into the relationships of people can help academics and practitioners understand how they can best contribute to local people's movements.

This case study involved the initial stages of a community-based ecotourism project. The Huatulco project had not progressed enough to assess how a PAR approach affected its final development. Applying PAR to ecotourism projects can hopefully balance the three criteria of conservation, economic development, and participation equally. Assessments of this approach to future projects would be helpful in fine-tuning ecotourism efforts to meet all criteria as well as examine further complexities of the PAR approach itself.

Final Observations and Reflections

Was it PAR?

An ongoing question during my fieldwork was whether or not we were engaging in PAR. Certain aspects of our collaborative work correlated with PAR theory. For instance, the ODDDECO leaders and I had horizontal relationships in which we discussed the problem facing peasants around Huatulco, planned how to address it through ecotourism, and used reflection throughout the research process to question and improve the project. On the other hand, as already discussed, the rest of the group members participated on a different level.

This question persisted during the analysis the field experience and the thesis writing process. In the end, I concluded that the ecotourism project was an attempt at PAR, both in some of the inherent characteristics of the project, such as starting with a community-defined problem, and in some of the elements that I encouraged, like

facilitating the reflection on how individuals could contribute to the project. The analysis involved the PAR theory to examine the relationships among the participants. The entire field and writing experience served as a learning process on how to engage in PAR and I now have a better understanding of the complexities involved in such an endeavor.

The Academic Researcher in PAR

A major struggle during my involvement with the ODDDECO community groups was understanding the boundaries and areas of overlap of my roles. These roles involved academic research to study a PAR process, promoting PAR, and engaging in PAR. Playing these three types of roles required moving back and forth between three positions: that of a full participant; that of the facilitator, limiting my involvement to helping the participants through a process; and that of the observer researcher, detached from the participatory process in order to study it.

A person can play each role separately. When one is a full participant, he/she is more an activist than a researcher, though that person can gather information on an issue, engage in praxis in order to improve one's practice, and reflect on the process in order to learn from the experience, all of which are often conducted by a researcher. Being the facilitator is a more conventional role for the outside researcher, as pointed out above. The facilitator is engaged in the group's cause to the point of helping it through the process of solving problems, but also tends to refrain from making contributions that would directly pertain the issues the group is addressing. The third role of a detached person most closely fits the role of a conventional researcher.

The three roles involved the following types of work. As a participant, I contributed to the planning and organizing aspects of the project and I added my knowledge about ecotourism. As a facilitator, I raised questions about the participation of women and asked open-ended questions to stimulate people's ideas for the project. As an academic researcher, I attempted to understand what was going on, I categorized information to build a story, and I analyzed the entire research process in light of the academic literature when I was separated from the situation. The benefit of playing all three roles at once is that the contributions of each role are different. These benefits can serve to both meet the goals of the community group as well as improve the chances of meeting the goals of PAR, such as empowerment and democratic relationships among the participants. Though many times the work with ODDDECO was following a top-down power structure, my involvement as a facilitator allowed me to encourage greater participation from the group members. As a researcher with a detached perspective, I could raise issues about the implications of their leadership style to the ODDDECO leaders. As a participant, I could contribute my personal and professional ideas and volunteer to carry out tasks that would move the project forward.

However, moving between the three roles can be confusing. I often got emotional when I became frustrated with certain individuals, but several people reminded me that my researcher role enabled me to separate my emotions as a participant to analyze of how people's actions and attitudes affected the project. Sometimes I wanted to increase my level of participation. One important instance was in planning the workshop. The format that the director and I planned involved some financing to cover the costs of transporting the participants and their lodging. I considered providing the money for this but hesitated

and eventually decided against it because of the potential implications of such an action. Though my contribution might have been a useful and legitimate resource, different than what other participants could contribute, one possible impact may have been counteracting the effort to increase the autonomy of ODDDECO and the community groups from outside resources by tapping into their internal resources.

The Participation of Local People in Global Trends

The Seminar participants have been involved in an ongoing discussion of the impact of globalization on the lives of peasants. One important impact is that the price of corn on the world market has dropped to such an extent that it has become more economical to buy imported maize than to produce it locally in Oaxaca. Tourism can be seen as a globalizing process where the movements of people, capital, and culture are increasingly erasing national borders. The peasants of Huatulco have seen drastic changes in the past 15 years in their landscape: major infrastructure development, previously established communities displaced by new ones, and the arrival of “outsiders,” both Mexican and international. These changes have brought higher prices for basic products, better services (such as a hospital and telephone), and exposure to the materially based lifestyles of people of a higher social class.

From one perspective, all of these changes have happened to the local people without much involvement on their part. People may be overwhelmed with their inability to affect or control these changes. However, ODDDECO’s ecotourism idea was to engage peasants in a process that is already happening at the local level – tourism. Instead of allowing themselves and their lifestyles to be displaced by global forces, peasants are examining ways to place their way of life within those forces. Despite most

peasants' exclusion from tourism activities in the Bays of Huatulco because of their lack of appropriate skills, peasants in surrounding areas can capitalize on resources they already possess: natural and cultural resources. Lanfant and Graburn (1992: 111) discuss this at a more abstract level:

The 'return *to* the local' as an important factor in [tourism] planning has been matched by the 'return *of* the local' in the form of a network of grass roots movements... The local society is no longer taken as passive but as capable of accepting or rejecting the dominant model or of coming up with its own... It is no longer merely a reactionary form, but as a force in negotiation, intervention, and creativity is capable of its own initiatives, with all their paradoxes.

The ODDDECO ecotourism groups now face the challenge of incorporating their project into the local, regional, and global tourism arenas. Making appropriate outside contacts with tour operators, guidebook authors, and other forms of publicity such as the Internet will be crucial for local peasants to find their niche in a wider tourism movement. Taking a participatory approach to the ecotourism project allows ODDDECO to tap into its internal resources as well as extend the circle of collaborators to people outside of the organization, such as the members of the Seminar, the director's contacts with other non-profit and governmental bodies, and myself. The Seminar coordinator or I, with connections and access to resources outside of Mexico, can help ODDDECO make contacts into the international tourism scene.

PAR enables a group of people to develop its own abilities in generating useful knowledge and to apply that to issues with which it is concerned. Collaboration with an outside researcher is one way a group can benefit from a worldview, types of knowledge, and contacts beyond what is available to the group members. Participants may have other connections beyond the group as well. When each participant can extend his/her

sources of information and network of resource people beyond the group, there is an increased chance of success of the group's efforts and chance of participating in a wider regional, national, or global scale of events shaping the lives of local people.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Discussion Questions Based on Issues Raised in the Tourism and Community-Based Conservation Literature

Goals of Ecotourism

What is ecotourism?

How is ecotourism different from what is occurring in the Bays of Huatulco?

What kind of tourism or ecotourism have you seen?

What goals do you want for this project?

What are the differences between your culture and that of the tourists?

How would you benefit from people observing you and living with you?

What do you want the tourists to get out of the interaction with the community and with nature?

The Stakeholders

Who will participate in the project?

Who should participate?

Who will be excluded from the project, and why?

Who will be affected by the project?

Who will benefit and who will not benefit from the project?

Who else could contribute to the project?

At what point should you have these people participate?

How can you encourage the participation of these people?

Who are the “voiceless” that you need to make special efforts to include?

Who represents the various stakeholders?

Who may mobilize in favor or against the project?

Whose participation could enhance the project and who could create obstacles for the project by their lack of participation or opposition?

Who can contribute economic and technical resources?

Whose behavior needs to change to make the project a success?

Income

What is your income at this time?

How much will the tourists pay?

For what exactly will they pay?

What other sources of income can you create?

What are some reasons tourists may stop coming?

What would you do if the quantity of tourists coming decreases or stops?

Logisitical Issues

How are you going to attract tourists?

Where will the tourists live?

How will you feed the tourists?

What will you feed them?

What will you provide to drink?

What will you do with the waste products?

How will the answers to these questions change if the number of tourists doubles?
Triples?

What studies of the flora and fauna already exist for the region?

Of these studies, which can help you?

What places or types of resources would be attractive to the tourists?

What kind of infrastructure exists to get to these plase?

Are there difficulties with this infrastructure, such as difficulty of access in the rainy season?

How will the tourists get to your community?

What kind of organizations or businesses exist that deal with nature and tourism?

With which ones could you collaborate?

What will you do in emergency situations?

Potential impacts

How does your community look now?

How will it look like after tourists begin to visit?

Do you think your community will change when tourists come to visit?

How do you think it will change?

How will your daily activities change?

How will your homes change?

How will your land change?

Up to what point will you accept changes to your life, your land, and your resources?

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