The Theoretical and Conceptual Framework and Application of Community Empowerment and Participation in Processes of Community Development in Malaysia

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Abstract: This study defines and discusses the concept of participation in the context of social development in general, and in terms of community development and community work specifically. Community development could not be achieved without community participation. The principles and techniques underlying the empowering process are also elaborated. The study describes the application of the concepts defined in some of the community work and community development activities in Malaysia

Introduction

Community participation is the main factor which can effect on processes of community development. Without community participation and empowerment community development could not be achieved. It is important to note that since this study focuses on people's participation process in community development activities, therefore it is beyond the scope of the study to generate, enrich or to improve the meaning and definition of 'community' deduced from the study. However, since the word 'community' is prefixed to other words, such as 'development', 'participation' and 'empowerment' to become community development, community participation and community empowerment, therefore it is worth examining some of the 'common' definitions used, which are particularly relevant to this study. Community participation and empowerment are considered necessary to get community support for community development projects (Cole, 2007). Community participation refers to peoples' engagement in activities within the community. It plays an essential and long-standing role in promoting quality of life (Putnam, 2000).

Community

The term 'community' has been used in different ways and at different levels (Stacey, 1974). In other words, 'community' as a sociological concept is a contested term, which can be deduced, discussed and argued from and within its own literature or body of knowledge based on community studies (Bell and Newby, 1974; Willmott, 1989; Nisbet; 1967). In reviewing ninety-four definitions of community,

Hillery (1955) pointed out that the common components of community are area, common ties and social interaction. This is relevant to Willmot's (1989) concept: territorial community, interest community and community of attachment, though the first two, according to him, are not mutually exclusive because non-local communities, i.e non-territorial communities can also contain interest communities, but are geographically dispersed. Obviously the territorial community who share and live in a common residential or geographical area contain localized interest communities, at least in terms of sharing some of their common problems or expectations. Working together to pursue shared needs or to overcome common problems implies that the sense of community of attachment could also enhance their existing spirit of community and feelings of identity, the social bonds that tie them together. The close and personal relationship between community members or group members within a small geographical area also resemble the characteristic of gemeinschaft (Tonnies, 1955).

Some portrayed community as an area which contains all or most of the elements of a common life; the politic, economic, social and religious life of the inhabitants - a kind of small scale social system (Ogburn and Nimkoff 1953), (MacIver 1924) and (Worsley 1977). Nevertheless, it is not necessarily to characterize community with a 'particular dominant occupational function'. Improvement in the transportation system can influence the behavior and occupational patterns of the inhabitants, whereby they could seek other jobs in nearby towns or industrial areas. In rural areas for example, farming is no longer

the only form of occupation, although initially the establishment of the community was built upon on the agriculture-based economy. As the community grows, and partly due to the scarcity of land for cultivation, younger generations start to find other job opportunities and engage in a new economic sector. Other external economic forces, such as industrialization in urban fringe areas, also play their part in contributing to the diversification of employment patterns among rural people.

In general, people living in one defined territory share the same social and political life. They share the same leader(s), either selected by them or appointed by external bodies. It is within the locality that social life and political life are integrated together. At the local level, people can manage their own lives through local leadership institutions. Nevertheless, to what extent the local community possesses political autonomy in terms of making or influencing decisions on matters related to their social life depends on the degree of relationship between the community and the external bodies at the higher level, such as the state or other main voluntary bodies. Some of these relationships are created through the national policy and its administration structure, and this is then strengthened by the local patronizing political culture. This is especially true if the establishment of the locality is initiated by the state through its development program, such as the planned village settlement, and resettlement scheme. It is within this framework that the local community's political and social life is intertwined with the national aspiration and politico-administration, and within such relationships people maneuver and manage their socio-political life. This social system approach to view community also comes from MacIver, who defines community thus; 'Community is a social unity whose members recognize as common a sufficiency of interests to allow of the interactivities of common life... out of which associations arise... [and]... is the whole incalculable system of relations". (MacIver, 1924:109-129)

From various definitions as reviewed earlier, community can be referred to as a social unit where the locality in which they reside is an integral part; within which members interact together to do things and to achieve what they want. By participating in various groups and collective action, communities are able to act together regarding the common concerns of their lives. This definition of community, which is derived from community studies literature, is particularly relevant to this study on the four basic components surrounding the concept, i.e. people, area, interaction and interest. In this study the definition of community is used as a convenient term to refer to individuals and groups who live together in

a defined geographical area which has its own social, economic and political entity, i.e the planned village settlement, interacting and working together to achieve their common interests in the process of developing their community life.

It can be concluded that, by referring to community as an entity, or in Stacey's term the 'local social system' (Stacey, 1974), which embraces the social, economic and political life of the people within a particular locality, the community life, its associations or groups and activities can be grasped in detail. In relation to the perspective that views community as an object of change, this understanding of people's lives and their activities facilitates us to examine the micro process of people's participation in developing themselves and effecting change in their community life such as: (1) the process of how they stir up members' concerns about problems, needs and interests; (2) how they organize to pursue their interests and meet their needs/objectives, prioritizing, influencing, deciding and working on these; (3) the mode of working practice to achieve group goals; (4) the degree and type of involvement of community members in the respective groups and activities; and (5) the degree to which the community gains control over life through their collective action in the participation process of bringing change and community development. In short, by conceptualizing community as a social unit living in one defined territory with its own social, economic and political entity which consists of individuals as actors and in their interaction with others, they are able to bring change to their community life through participating in activities, and this integrates both the ideas of perceiving community as a subject and as an object of change. This brings us to view some of the definitions on community participation.

Community Participation

The concept of community participation has become one of the most important subject matters discussed in various disciplines that have and need human input in the development process, such as in social policy (Richardson, 1983; Croft and Beresford, 1992), health (Oakley, 1989; Rifkin, 1985), community planning (Moser, 1989; Wandersman, 1979), psychology (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988), tourism development (Aref, 2009) and community development and community work (Abbott, 1995; Lackery and Dershem, 1992; Goulet, 1989; Oakley and Marsden; 1984; Gilbert and Ward, 1984; Smith, 1981; Galjart, 1981a and 1981b; Wandersman, 1981). In general, the concept of participation in this literature has been used to describe many kinds of activities and processes carried out, directive or non-

directive by the authorities responsible, or initiated by people themselves to bring social development and improvement for the betterment of community members. On reviewing this literature, which is based on observations of the practices as to how activities, program or projects were carried out, there are various models or typologies of community participation put forward by some of the authors. A close examination of these models or typologies shows that the fundamental aspect underlying their discussions is the extent of people's involvement in the decision making process, and the degree of people's control in the activities or projects for them as recipients of the development programs. Oakley and Marsden (1984) in their attempt to define this concept have outlined a continuum of definition based on different interpretations ranging from defining participation merely as a means at one end of the continuum, towards describing it as a process with some element of peoples' control at the other end. As a means, participation is considered as; "... a voluntary contribution by the people to one or another of the public programs supposed to contribute to national development but the people are not expected to take part in shaping the program or criticizing its content" (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:19). On the other hand participation can be defined as a process in itself where people have some control over the whole development process (Oakley and Marsden, 1984).

These definitions of participation bring us to discuss the issue of participation as a means and/or end. As a means, participation is perceived as a vehicle to achieve the pre-determined objectives or goals which may or may not be congruent with the needs of the participants. In this situation the aim to achieve the pre-set objectives, either as determined by the government, its extension agencies or other external bodies, is more important than the act of participation itself. Therefore, the act of participation in such situations can be considered as "an input into a development program" (Oakley and Marsden, 1984: 27) since people are not given the opportunity to decide or influence the decision that has an effect on them later. The mobilization of people in this form of participation is to get things done based on a fixed quantifiable development goal (Moser, 1989: 84) which can be state-directed or externally-directed activities, the 'top-bottom' approach to community development. In such phenomena participation turns into passive and static events which can then be induced or even coerced participation (United Nations, 1981) or a compulsory participation (Oakley, 1989), or manipulative participation (Midgley, 1986) by the government or other external bodies. It is for

this reason that Koneya asserts that 'citizen participation' is not 'community development', as in the former it is the government which decides to include citizens in government-centered programs, whereas the latter, i.e. community development, 'is a citizen-originated activity that organizes and uses citizen power to reach upward toward government' (Koneya, 1978:25). On the other hand, participation as an end in itself focuses on participation as a process in which people are directly involved in shaping, deciding and taking part in the development process from the 'bottom-top' perspective. Here, the development goal is of secondary importance but the 'process whose outcome is an increasingly 'meaningful' participation in the development process' (Moser, 1989:84) is much more valued. This is because in such a process the authentic form of participation (Midgley, 1986), direct participation (Richardson, 1983) or active participation (Gilbert and Ward, 1984) from people emerges where their confidence and competence are built up. In this situation, participation becomes a process "of achieving greater individual fulfillment, personal development, self-awareness and some immediate satisfaction" (Richardson, 1983: 57). It is an active and permanent form of participation in which the direct involvement of the people does not only help to sustain the life of a project or a group but extends a persons' involvement in creating or establishing other new projects or community groups. The distinctive features in defining participation as a process is that people are given the chance to 'formulate' their own development, to influence or to 'have a say' in the decision making process regarding the programs or projects initiated for them. In this respect, viewing participation as a process can help to develop people's capacities or abilities, recognize and improve their inherent potential, and provides them with opportunities to influence and share power, i.e. power to decide and to gain some control over their lives.

In reality, however, participation as a means is not a dichotomous entity but rather is a continuum based on the degree of people's involvement in deciding or influencing the decision making process concerning the development program or in its implementation. It is along this continuum that the models or typologies of participation are constructed by the writers mentioned above, as shown in Table 1. Although the types of participation are differ between the authors, the main aspects which differentiate between the stages within the typologies are the same. They share common ideas regarding the extent or the degree to which community members have the chance or are given the chance to decide for themselves.

Table 1: Typologies or Models of Participation - A continuum

Level of participation	TYPOLOGIES OF PARTICIPATION								
	Brager & Specht (1965)	Arnstein (1969)	Hollnsteiner (1977)	Koneya (1978)	Wandersman (1979-1981)	Johnston (1982)	Oakley (1986-1989)	U.Nation (1981)	Moser (1983)
High	Community control	Citizen control	Community control	Citizens define the problem and decide the action	Self-planning	Participating through creativity	Spontaneous participation (authentic participation)	Spontaneous participation	Participation as a end
	Community has delegated authority	Delegated power	People's representation on decision making board	Presents problems & boundaries, but citizen decide		Participating by taking initiative			
	Plans jointly	Partnership	Consultation starting with plan formulation	Presents problems, ask for ideas, then decide	choice	Participating by giving suggestions and making criticisms aimed at improvement of an activity	Induced participation (co-optive & manipulative of an activity)	Induced participation	
	advises	Placation	Community's choice of final plan from among pre determined option	Presents tentative decision, consult citizen, then decide					
	Community is consulted	consultation							
low	Community receive information	Informing	Appointment of local leaders to position in government bureaucracy	Announces decision, permits questions	Feedback	Voluntary participation prompted by awareness			
		Therapy	Unofficial representation by 'solid citizen' group which endorses outside- planned program	"sells" decision to citizen		Voluntary participation stimulated by a reward			
	Non participation	Manipulation		Decide, announces decision thro bulletin	No participation	Participation in response to an order or to force	Compulsory participation	Coerced participation	Participation as a means

(Left margin vertical label: CONTINUUM; right area under Moser: CONTINUUM)

The degree of intensity of participation is denoted by the stages along the continuum starting from the lowest, which some authors consider as 'no participation' since people do not participate in the decision making process that eventually defines participation as a 'means in response to an order' (Johnston, 1982:203). At its lowest degree or level, people's participation can take the form of being coerced (United Nations, 1981) or compulsory (Oakley, 1989) which can be manipulated (Arnstein, 1969) by the state or other external agencies that practice the anti-participatory mode of social development (Midgley, 1986). There is no 'people's control' at this lowest stage. Even if the state or the government practices the consultative approach to community development in a partnership program by giving people the choice within the predetermined projects, people's participation is induced. This sort of participation can be found in the government or any agency that practices a top-bottom approach in community development (Midgley, 1986), and in this incremental mode to encourage people's involvement, the participation in itself performs dual roles, i.e. instrumental and development roles (Richardson, 1983). In the former, participation is seen as a means, used by the state or the ruling party to achieve some pre-set goals, while the latter relates more to the development of human capacities. Although there is an encouragement or promotion given at this middle portion of the continuum as denoted by 'placation', 'choice', 'induced' or 'partnership', however as White reminds us, participation at this stage is not mainly concerned with the process of mobilizing the people, who should be regarded as the recipient or beneficiaries of the development introduced, but of uppermost importance is 'the participation of the organized community as such' (White, 1982: 19). It is through participating by organizing themselves to define their own problems together with the responsible authority to influence the decision making process, or by taking the creative effort among themselves to plan, decide and initiate their own groups, activities and projects, that authentic community participation is said to be established. At this point people have some control over the development process, the upper most level or degree of participation, and the decisional power taken by the non-elite, i.e. the ordinary community members, enables them to be free from manipulation and co-optation where authentic participation can be promoted (Goulet, 1989).

Whether participation is a means or an end is a matter of debate. But since both lie in a continuum, therefore the most important issue is how participation as a means can be 'upgraded' and has the capability to develop into participation as an end. In other words, this polemic can be resolved when the induced participation at the beginning of the top-bottom community development program has the ability to develop the people (who were forced or induced to participate at the initial stage) so that they have the potential to resolve problems and to take care of themselves later. This is parallel to the philosophy and definition of community development as a process by which peoples' efforts are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the living conditions of the community, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. This also takes into account the ability of the community to participate in local initiative activities without external support to maintain their self-sustaining groups. For this to materialize it depends on both sides, i.e. the openness of government (Abbott, 1995) and its development agencies - the extension worker including the VDSC as the case in Malaysia, and the community itself. As 'participation is not just an end in itself, but it is more than a means' (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980:227), therefore the cooperation and power sharing between the people and the development agencies is essential in promoting participation as a means towards an end so as to increase the level of people's participation towards the top of the continuum where the 'empowerment' is situated (Arnstein, 1969; Oakley and Marsden, 1984; Moser, 1989).

Community empowerment

Theoretically and pragmatically, in exploring the empowerment process with the Malaysian context, there are limitations at the macro level because the control that the state has over the citizen through, firstly, the politico-bureaucratic mechanism in-built within the community development process, and secondly, at the same time mutually supported by the culture of patronage. Structurally, examined it at the micro level, the process of bringing change through community development activities is closely related to government policy, facilitated by and under the auspices of the respective state's agencies. This politico-bureaucratic nature of promoting community change is further strengthened at the micro level through the District Office within the state rural development administration policy. In fact, a close relationship between the District Office, other extension agencies personnel and related departments, and the local people through their representatives, is encouraged by the state (Chee, 1974 & 1975; Siedentopf, 1987). In this politico-bureaucratic structure and patronizing culture, the appointment of voluntary community development personnel, such as the VDSC and the Mosque Committee members, for example, is based on certain procedures introduced by

the state, which intensify and extend the state's controlling power over the people. Interference by the local 'political man', the Member of Parliament (MP) or the State Assemblymen in community life, help to extend the patronizing culture macro-micro relationship. At the local level, this patron-client phenomenon can sometimes become more complex when there are some forms of individual-based patronage between the politician and his supporters, and thus this makes the state's control through its MP's and State Assemblymen over the masses more effective. The impact of these phenomena is much more significant when the patronized individual(s) is/are the community activist or community developer (unpaid). By upholding and promoting the community's traditional working practices; the self-help and mutual-help spirit to develop people's self-reliance and self-determination propagated by the state through the local community activists to meet the local needs, reinforces the patronizing framework and network

Generally in the Malaysian context, and specifically in exploring the participation process in community development, it can be said that to a certain degree, empowerment is limited by the social structure. However, this does not mean that empowerment does not take place within the given structure in which people live. This is because, within this structure, there are some real spaces for empowerment to take place. As discussed earlier, although people are socially structured, they are also creating reality. The same experiences that they face in their environment are shared together as subjective meanings, which are then translated into an action process to initiate something to fulfill their collective needs. In the process of participation people are empowered and can be empowered, and the central themes of people's empowerment is the ability that they have to make changes based on their own needs after realizing the problems they face. Hence, within these prescribed circumstances, individuals interact and influence each other, mobilize and organize themselves to decide, perform and take the action collectively to solve common problem(s) and to achieve their goals.

Facilitated by local activists, individual members exercise their abilities - the 'power to' act - through collective action, mobilizing themselves in initiating and establishing various community groups, conducting group activities, organizing self-help and other communal projects, based on their interests in an effort to solve and alleviate common problems they experience. In other words, these problems and needs, which are shared by individuals, are objectified and manifested in the establishment of the groups and activities. These are also the tangible

products of empowerment. Such activities or groups cannot materialize if they are not empowered to do so. It can be argued that it is through the relationship with others within the environment and the structure in which they live, that they are able to translate the problems (and needs), their subjective meanings, into concrete action by participating to acting upon it. It is through this process that individuals are able to exercise and experience their power with others. The process whereby individuals exercise their ability and capacity effectively to achieve certain goals, and to further develop those capabilities, is referred to as *individual empowerment*. By exercising those capabilities through participation in establishing, organizing, implementing and managing self-initiated groups or activities, individuals can gain more control over their lives, while at the same time strengthening their existing personal ability. Participating in such actions allows individuals to practice their potentialities and experience the actual empowering process.

The process of achieving goals or objectives, and to bring about changes however, cannot be attained successfully individually, moreover the problems needing to be addressed are shared between the individuals as group members. Support and commitment is needed from other community or groups members to form the group or collective empowerment. Individual empowerment actually can contribute to group empowerment (Staples, 1990; Kieffer, 1984). This takes place in the participation process itself when the empowered individuals, who realize their personal responsibility for bringing some changes to their social environment, help to enhance the functioning of the group and community members by informing, inviting, encouraging and organizing them to participate in identifying the problem, prioritizing the needs, deciding (making decisions) and taking part in conducting the group activity, project or even action. By mobilizing, integrating, utilizing and coordinating local resources into a self-help effort for community change (Kahn and Bender, 1985) as one collective action, *collective empowerment* is said to be generated. The ability of individual members to influence their friends and other community members to participate together in pursuing the action process is their *interpersonal empowerment*. Once these interrelationships are established collective empowerment is thus tightened and stabilized, which eventually not only sustains but further encourages individual empowerment to take place (see also Parsons, 1991; Kieffer, 1984; Longres and McLeod, 1980). In other words, when the group(s) are established and the members are able to define the boundaries of its actions and activities to meet the shared (felt) needs or to solve the common

problems which correspond to the changing environment or situation, group members can become active participants in implementing the decisions and the process which affects them. At the point where they are responsible for implementing their own choices and decisions, and are accountable for actions taken, that collective empowerment is exercised. Indeed, empowerment as a process of developing and exercising power - the ability to make decisions and to take the initiative on matters related to their lives - is an ongoing process of developing the 'power to' act to achieve their objectives.

An increase in individual empowerment has the ability to promote or build up and generate collective or group empowerment, which can effect change; to improve their living or community life conditions, providing care or help for the community, setting up community education centers and so forth. At the community level, the effort to bring these changes is related to the objectives of the groups or activities initiated by the empowered individual members. Empowerment in itself is a reflexive activity in which the process can be initiated and sustained by individuals, as the agents who seek to determine their own destiny or lives. In this reflexive process, which takes place within an action is empowerment; individuals gain and develop skills, competence and confidence. Furthermore, this individual empowerment is reinforced by continued involvement with, and support from, the group (Evans, 1992). Developing and gaining skills, competence and confidence in such a process is, in general, knowledge gathering. Here, the dictum 'knowledge is power' according to Foucault, could advance people's action collectively as a group, when they reflect on past actions and experiences, and know where their capabilities are in relation to the social arrangement in which they live. With regard to this, collective action can promote and bring collective empowerment nearer to the 'power over' situation.But it is important to note that empowerment through people's participation within the enclosed situation, shaped by the structure, is not equivalent to a change in the power structure, or a change in the distribution of power because power is held somewhere else by the state, submerged within the politico-bureaucratic framework they themselves promote, which is then strengthened by the culture of patronizing. Nevertheless, within this structure reinforced by the culture, the participation process takes place. People involved in setting up community groups and organizing their activities learn and gain knowledge. This is a real discourse experienced by them. Through this, empowered people know where the structure is and to what extent they can infiltrate the 'membrane' that surrounds the structure, while

participating in exercising the ability to develop and initiate some changes in community life. Consequently, they could also act collectively to take action to secure and improve their position, as the subject in the process of developing themselves through influencing, negotiating, demanding, and even, in some instances, using threatening and confronting strategies in the process of interacting with others to achieve their group goals.

Although, one can argue that people are gaining some power when they successfully influence other party, this does not mean that power is being taken or seized by them. Even if they succeed in exercising their power over the state's representative body in implementing development programs by controlling them, this does not mean that power has been taken or transferred directly from the power holder (the state) to the people - the status quo remains. The reason for this is that the action taken, and the interaction process between both parties, takes place within the structures and frameworks which are regulated and approved by the state. But it is justified to say that people have exercised their power over the state representative by making some adjustments to the power relationship, which disadvantages them in the prior place. Similarly, the state agency's power is not reduced if it complies with the demands made by the people through their collective action in campaigning activities. Their power still exists. In short, the action taken by the people is that of 'negotiation', and the effort put forward by them within the permissible surrounding structure. Since empowerment is not directly power which has been given or taken by the people from the power holder (because they do not have the power to execute this), empowered people have the ability to see the boundary of flexibility within the social structure, and to take this opportunity to try their best to maneuver within those real spaces available to meet their own needs at the group or local level. In other words, empowered people are in the process of checking the limits of the membrane surrounding the structure - its elasticity - and to what extent it can be tolerated, while participating in taking their collective action. Therefore, empowered people are both reproducing, and at some point exerting a kind of 'challenge' to the structure. Surrounded by, and living in, a paternalistic society or environment where the patronizing relation still dominates human interrelationships, the notion of empowerment is not synonymous with a process whereby people gain, seize or take power, and later develop an absolute control over the structure.
Pragmatically, in the Malaysian context, it is within the given structure that people participate and empower themselves by exercising their inherent

ability to develop and initiate change at the micro level, to fulfill their immediate and future needs without changing the power structure, and thus the superstructure. Also, at the macro level, it is within this structure that the process of empowering the people, propagated by the state through promoting and encouraging the joint effort between them with the aim of improving the economic, social and cultural condition of the community, which eventually could enable them to contribute to the national progress (see the United Nation's definition of community development adopted by Malaysia) is inculcated. Under this 'guided' environment, local people, together with the state-sponsored leadership institution such as the VDSC and other patronized local indigenous leaders, take the opportunity to develop themselves by stirring up local issues through group meetings (dialogue), raising members' awareness about the problems faced, and further, engaging into an action process to achieve the decided goal. Through learning by doing, facilitated by relatively more 'literate' individuals, the community activists, community members collectively learned to develop themselves and to achieve their objectives. In fact, the whole idea of the self-help campaigns and joint-venture or partnership-liked activities promoted by the state since the early 60's can be referred to as the empowering strategy used by the top authorities. Since the people's empowerment, participation and its processes take place within the existing structure, thus this 'symbolic empowerment' is used by the state as a strategy in promoting and providing the right for the people to participate in government programs and to enable them to initiate their own community development projects/activities under the auspices of the local rural development administration personnel, the District Officials, VDSC members and other state appointed personnel. This relates to the issue of product and process of people's participation process.

Conclusion

In this study, the people's participation in community development activities is viewed as a process by which individuals are involved in initiating, deciding, planning, implementing and managing the group and its activities. It is also a process of social development in which people, as subjects in their own environment, seek out ways to meet their collective needs and expectations and to overcome their common problems. In pursuing this collective action, the self-help and mutual-help spirit that underlies the Asian traditional community spirit of working, helped to hasten the achievement of these shared interests through group-based-activities. Thus, by understanding this collective action in which

members participate, it is possible to comprehend the dynamic aspect of the group process within which participation took place. Participation is a dynamic process. Hence, it is difficult to predict or even to quantify using a standard 'measurement'. Participation is rather moulded by, and originates from, individuals' experiences in participating. As such, the qualitative-ethnographic approach employed in this study was able to assist in understanding the process of people's participation in community development activities. This approach has also helped to deepen the knowledge about participation itself. This was not achieved merely by putting 'participation' into a measurable variable that can be operationalized into four quantifiable aspects, i.e. decision making, implementing, benefit sharing and evaluation (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977, 1980), but more importantly it involves understanding of how people organize themselves to meet their needs. It was through in-depth interviews, follow-up interviews and group discussions with community members that the participation process was grasped. It was through intermingling the inductive and deductive processes, incorporated within and between these three main techniques of data collection on different groups of respondents that people's participation process in community activities was scrutinized and better understood. Although the main source of information in this study was based on individuals' participation experiences in the process of establishing groups and implementing group activity, it was also supported and validated by direct observation on the actual process they engaged in, watching and studying video clips, and other recorded materials kept by the group. Therefore, these two interchangeable processes, inductive and deductive, supported by triangulating the methods within and between different sources of evidence helped to complement, integrate and simultaneously verify the information gathered within which people's experiences can be comprehended. From the sequential analysis carried out during the fieldwork and detailed post-fieldwork analysis, the people's action process in participation were analytically constructed.

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