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Development as cross-cultural communication

Anatomy of a development project in North India

J.P. SINGH AND SHILPA A. HART

INTRODUCTION

International development has come a long way since being defined and measured purely by quantitative economic indicators such as income and production, and the emphasis placed on market incentives – or, at times, governmental pump priming – to beget wealth. These indicators failed to explain how and why change occurs; nor did they explain how obstacles to change can be overcome. The importance given to institutions, rules and property rights as existing structures that govern human conduct in socioeconomic development is but one indication of moves away from unidimensional economic reasoning (North 1994; De Soto 2000). Development project implementation, one of the greatest human endeavours in the postcolonial era, now also acknowledges the importance of communication in all phases of the development (Rogers 1976). It is through communication processes that social realities are constructed and transformed. These processes vary across boundaries of language, state, and culture. As cultural differences strongly influence the interactions among various participants in any development project, development is, at its core, a process of cultural communication. One of the contentions of this article is that cross-cultural communication theories allow us to examine in depth the various processes underlying development project implementation.

Defining development as a cultural communication *process* – rather than as an end result to be measured with quantifiable indicators – requires a clear understanding of culture and its role in the process of development communication. If culture is to be viewed as a lens through which one perceives the world, it is not so much an external reality as it is an internal interpretation of the environment. At this micro level, culture – even as it is a shared experience – resides in the individual. Hall (1976) explains that it is only when individuals from different cultures encounter one another that they

begin to uncover their unconscious, or internal cultures. This introspection reveals one's own cultural lens and how it differs from those of others. Differences in culture are made apparent through the process of communication. Philipsen (2001) explains that cultural communication involves 'the use of particular means and meanings of communication that can be found in particular times, places, and social milieus' (p.51). As such, culture is not a grand concept encompassing the evolution of civilisations; rather culture is specific to a particular location in time.

Cultural communication removes us from static concepts of culture in which groups are labelled more or less likely to develop based on their values and belief systems, and towards the dynamic context in which learning takes place within all cultures. As for sources of change within a particular culture, North (1994) argues that the choices made by individuals and societies are determined by learning through time. Thus, learning is 'the most fundamental long-run source of change' (p.362). Since development is concerned with creating an environment that enables positive social and economic change, it must pay more attention to the ways in which learning takes place differently across cultures. These differences have major implications for the success of development projects. North (1994) explains that learning requires developing a mental model through which one makes sense of the world. That mental model is also better known as culture. In this article, we argue that, in order to interpret development as cultural communication, we need to understand the mental models of all the participants in the equation, the origins of these models, and ways in which these mental models can abet or hinder the process of development.

A multidisciplinary approach to this argument provides a more holistic view of development. We draw on insights from cross-cultural communication, anthropological investigations of cultural representation, and institutional economics. Each of these perspectives makes valuable contributions to the study of international development. Hall and other cross-cultural communication scholars provide a framework in which we can define culture and culture clashes. Looking at culture at the individual level is enhanced by anthropological approaches to the study of culture and development. Freire (1970), for example, offers the concept of dialogic praxis, which entails a combination of thought, action and transformation. Freire thus offers a way out of cultural paralyses that may stall the development process. Freire's emphasis on consciousness-awakening parallels the call by institutional economists like North (1994) who argue that to understand change is to understand the process of learning. This process is embedded in culture and shapes our mental models. Thus, we look to create a synthesis of these three perspectives in expanding our understanding of development as cross-cultural communication.

The conceptual framework of this article includes the various insights outlined above, which are then applied to a case study of a development project in North India. The Cottage Industry – Global Market (CIGM) project works with women's artisan cooperatives in Himachal Pradesh who seek a global market for their hand-woven crafts. This case study includes an examination of the various players involved in

implementing the project and an analysis of the cultures, or mental models, that underlie their participation. The authors are personally involved in implementing this development project. It is instructive to analyse this case as we have taken into account a number of concerns raised by communication theories in implementing the CIGM project. Our analysis of the case is followed by a conclusion that highlights the intersections of cross-cultural communication, development communication, institutional economics and international development.

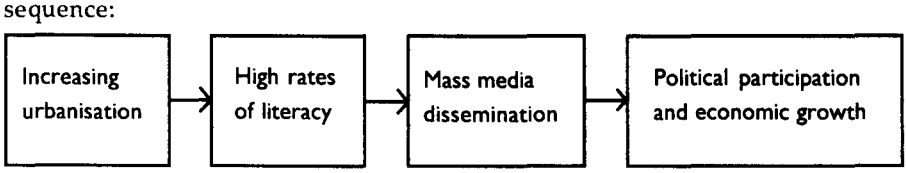
CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Understanding development as a process of cross-cultural communication involves a discussion concerning the evolution of development theory and the different conceptions of culture. The words 'development' and 'culture' are defined very differently depending on the context, and these various interpretations merit further discussion. Building on literature from cross-cultural communication, development communication, anthropology and institutional economics, we argue that the mental models of participants in development hold the key to understanding development as a process of cultural communication.

The decline and rise of focus on culture in development

The concept of development has evolved over time from one focused strictly on the rate of economic growth and modernisation to a more holistic approach to development involving grassroots participation. Early development theorists from the West emphasised the central importance of the individual in overcoming poverty. This conception, at times, followed the Weberian focus on the Protestant ethic, emphasising the type of individual who would be most likely to indulge in tasks related to development. Overall, economic growth was measured in numbers, not in human terms such as equality, justice and freedom. Today, development is not limited to economics, but involves practitioners from around the world, and from various social science disciplines, which look at development qualitatively. The trend towards more participatory approaches to development is growing, but the legacy of modernisation theory has not been forgotten.

In the early modernisation approaches to development, culture was perceived as an obstacle that needed to be overcome. Lerner (1958) argued that modernity needed checks on tribalism and isolation, to check 'traditional' ways of thinking. Modernity demands active participation, empathy, and people's ability to imagine alternative futures. The march towards modernity could be affected by accelerating the following sequence:



The broadcast-oriented channels of mass-media communication, as opposed to the traditional interpersonal ones, were posited as helping to replace the traditional ways with much needed secular mindsets. In fact, high levels of literacy were not necessary for understanding television and radio and thus these could be particularly effective for bringing awareness.

Lerner's thesis was supported by McClellend's (1961) psychological and empirical insight into the 'achievement motivation', roughly equivalent to entrepreneurship, which could be measured by a modern society's members' ability to fantasise and indulge in free associations which liberate them from traditional mindsets. To increase N-achievement, decreases in father-dominance and increases in fantasy life and feelings of superiority were seen as necessary. Reflecting on the modern industrialisation process led McClelland to note that N-achievement leads to economic growth through societies, which produce surpluses and favour capital equipment.

Landes (1980) echoed this attitude in his argument that the developing world lacks the knowledge, education and training necessary to reach technological parity with 'advanced economies'. His model assumed that the lessons of capitalism and technological advances needed to be passed down from the First World to the Third World. Landes explained that these lessons were best learned by changing the value system of a society so that it is conducive to the need for incorporating external (western) influences: 'If the ability to assimilate and generate knowledge is linked to the value system of the society, why then, we must find ways to inculcate and nurture the right values' (p.117).[1]

Beginning with Everett Rogers, scholars began to realise that it was neither easy nor desirable to try to change people's values. Rogers (1976) noted that if the prescription of people like Lerner were to be followed, in order for people in the developing world to achieve economic growth, they would need to adopt the value system of the West. A broader critique of such cultural factors was implicit in theories of economic development that followed from the applications of neo-classical and Keynesian economics to thinking about development. Here factors like savings, industrialisation and central planning – especially in highly stylised quantitative form – were seen as more conducive to development than the fuzzy focus on culture. In hindsight, this may have been tantamount to throwing the baby out with the bathwater; as scholars now re-examine the failure of development economics, they are returning to cultural factors again while, at the same time, acknowledging that the understanding of culture by Lerner et al was too Eurocentric (Sen 2002). Culture as such is examined from within and not in comparison to the West, as had been done earlier. A resounding critique of modernisation and its lack of emphasis on culture is also offered by Escobar:

> Development was conceived not as a cultural process (culture was a residual variable, to disappear with the advance of modernisation) but instead as a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some 'badly needed' goods to a 'target' population. It comes as no surprise that development became a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people's interests (1995, p.44).

Today, development practitioners are taking a closer look at the values of the communities they seek to help, but not necessarily to change those values so much as to understand them. Servaes (2001), for example, espouses the multiplicity approach to development, recognising a diversity of viewpoints, including those of the grassroots participants in development projects. The participatory and empowerment approaches in development communication move us a step closer to being cognisant of cultural factors in development. The emphasis on the process rather than the ends in participatory models allows for those affected by development projects to play the primary role in shaping outcomes that affect them (Huesca 2002; Dervin & Huesca 1997). Huesca's (2001, p.422) thesis on social movements is equally apt in the context of development: 'Rather than proposing that identity functions as an antecedent to action, the epistemology of action perspective suggests that identity is bound up in and inseparable from action.' The participants then reflect their own worldview, in effect naming it, in the process of development.

Similarly, Melkote (2001) strongly advocates for the empowerment model as it addresses unequal power dynamics at individual, organisational and community levels of analysis: 'The empowerment model puts the focus on a symmetrical relationship between relevant actors with all communication participants treated as subject-subject rather than the subject-object relationship found in the diffusion and social marketing approaches' (2001, p.432). Melkote's understanding of these dynamics builds on an intellectual history in development communication that pointed to structural barriers in development. This varies from general analyses of the powerholders and their prerogatives (Wilkins & Mody 2001; Rodriguez & Murphy 1997; Schiller 1987) to an increasing focus on marginalised populations themselves, especially in gender terms (Steeves 2001; Wilkins 1997; Sreberny 1998).

Development communication has come a long way since it focused on top-down models of modernisation based on western practices. The appreciation of structural constraints and the proliferation of participatory models pointed to challenges and alternatives. However, while scholars have moved away from the ethnocentric development model of the past, Escobar argues that a cultural approach to development would entail acknowledging the hybridisation of multiple modernities and traditions which make up cultures in the developing world today.

Culture is thus not a singular and fixed idea in approaching development: it is hybrid, has multiple facets, and varies with time.[2] The diffusion of new technologies in particular allows people to imagine new and hybrid cultural identities (Appadurai 1996; Garciá-Canclini 1995). 'Media circuits support the bulk of weight once shouldered in Mexico City by traditional central spaces of congregation, and these circuits convey information and imaginaries of urban life no longer responsive solely to national projects' (Garciá-Canclini 2001, p.259). Peterson (2003, p.205) similarly notes: 'Such media threaten indigenous ways of life, but they also offer new opportunities.'

The movement towards a more holistic development model recognises that development is not simply a means to an end, but a process that facilitates social change.

This process is dynamic and is not readily quantifiable. Early approaches to development were so focused on the end goal that the process was undervalued. Culture was constructed as an impediment to growth. Technology was supposed to hold the key to that growth, but this strictly instrumental conception of technology once again ignored the human element.[3] Change does not immediately result from the introduction of a new technology in the developing world. Instead, as North notes, change is the consequence of learning by individuals.

Collective learning spans generations and is embedded in the culture of a society. North argues that the rationality assumption of economic theory does not account for the nature of human learning. Instead, culture is at the heart of learning by individuals. 'History demonstrates that ideas, ideologies, myths, dogmas, and the way they evolve is necessary for further progress in developing a framework to understand societal change' (1994, p.362). Learning is transferred from one generation to the next through a common cultural heritage. This shared identity influences the formation of mental models, acting as a lens through which we see the world.

RECONCILING CULTURE WITH DEVELOPMENT

If culture underlies the process of development, it is essential to discuss the various conceptions of culture and how mental models vary across cultural boundaries. Culture can be viewed in grand terms, as in the clash of civilisations, or in terms of a micro conception, as in anthropology. On the macro level is an understanding of culture involving broad generalisations about the differences between developed and developing countries such as those discussed by Lerner and McClelland. Max Weber views culture in this way in his examination of the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the rise of capitalism.

Shifting to a micro conception of culture avoids the kind of broad generalisations of the grand view of culture. Instead of looking at culture using a horizontal model separating the West from the developing world, a micro conception of culture offers a vertical model indicating internal and external cultures. Building on Hall's iceberg analogy of culture, Weaver (2000) provides a vertical model of culture (see Figure 1). The tip of the iceberg is external culture, comprised of our behaviour. This tip is actually the smallest part of culture; the largest part, or internal culture, is inside our heads and beneath the water level of the iceberg. Thus, the motivations of our overt behaviour reside in our unconscious internal culture. While cultural differences are most apparent at the behavioural level, the true conflict is one of values and thought patterns hidden in our internal culture.

This vertical model of culture relates to North's conceptions of mental models and institutions. On the surface, or tip of the iceberg, are institutions that are devised to structure human interaction. According to North, institutions define the rules of the game through formal and informal constraints. These institutions are devised by humans based on their mental models, or internal culture. 'Institutions are not neces-

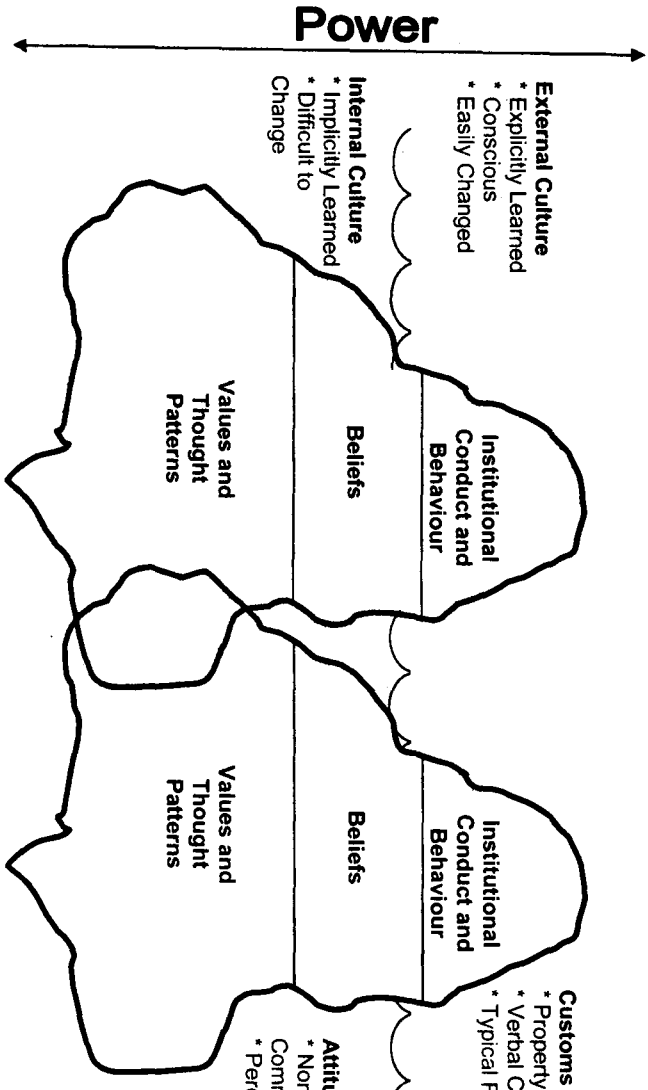


Figure 1: The 'Iceberg Analogy' of Cultures

Adapted from Weaver (2000)

sarily or even usually created to be socially efficient; rather they, or at least the formal rules, are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to create new rules' (1994, p.361). An understanding of what motivates the creation of certain rules requires an examination of the mental models of those in positions of power. These mental models are below the water level of awareness and are often difficult to characterise, but they explain the formation of institutions and the origins of conflict. Institutions (external culture) and belief systems (internal culture) structure society, determining the economic path of a particular group.

The challenge of connecting culture with development is now taken up by several economists, and in doing so they try to avoid the Eurocentric trap of connecting only particular cultural values with development. Lal (2001), acknowledging North's conceptual contributions, goes a step deeper to locate the genesis of internal cultures which can then lead to particular institutions and path dependence. Like many economists, he begins his analysis with factor endowments to show that 'there is a complex intersection between ideas – the cosmological beliefs of cultures as we defined them – institutions, and material interests' (p.94). Contrary to the concatenation of particular factors in Eurocentric theories of economic growth, Lal notes that European growth was both an intended as well as an unintended consequence (therefore, the title of his book) of the belief systems arising out of the papal revolutions of medieval times. He also challenges readings of Japanese economic growth, which either note that Confucian values can lead to westernisation, or that they can be supplanted elsewhere: 'The Japanese have been able to adjust to the needs of modernization without westernizing themselves' (p.190). Lal's model, nevertheless, reverts to the familiarity of the cultural glue – values and beliefs – that binds people together in economic tasks, albeit a glue which is peculiar to each culture, thus avoiding the trap of only seeing Eurocentric values in a positive light.

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPMENT

Tracing the history of development involves an in-depth analysis of cultural elements. Development is then a process, not the end goal after a linear series of steps. Communication and human interaction are at the centre of the development process, connecting the various participants in a development project. Philipsen notes that communication is 'a process through which cultural difference is expressed and constructed' (2001, p.51). If culture enables people to make sense of their environment, and communication is the process that highlights cultural difference, then cross-cultural communication involves the negotiations between people with different mental models when they come into conflict. In development project implementation, communication can take many forms: top-down, dialogic, bottom-up, etc, but the key is that communication is a dynamic process rooted in culture.

Cross-cultural communication scholars often characterise cultural differences by situating cultures in a horizontal model using ideal-types. Hall's model, for example,

positions two types of culture opposite one another. He situates individualistic western cultures on the low-context side of the model and collective Third World cultures on the high-context side. A low-context culture is one that is often associated with complex urban societies in which communication is explicit and authority is diffused throughout the system. A high-context culture, on the other hand, involves more implicit understanding among members of a community and is often hierarchically organised. One of the main distinctions between these two types of cultures is the extent to which outsiders or their ideas and beliefs are included in a community. While low-context cultures are easier for outsiders to navigate, high-context cultures require a certain level of communicative competence for successful admittance into the community. This horizontal model is rather dichotomous, and a more nuanced conception of culture is offered by Weaver (2000) by positioning high- and low-context cultures as two ends of a continuum. He recognises the varying degrees to which a culture is abstractive (low-context) or associative (high-context) in different situations. Weaver cautions that culture clashes should not be oversimplified as a conflict between East and West: 'In actuality, it has no absolute geographic parameters, but, rather, socioeconomic, philosophic, and experiential demarcations, with no sharp line dividing one culture into the associative grouping and another into the abstractive grouping' (2000, p.62).

A horizontal model of culture provides a framework in which we can describe differences in social structure. More individualistic cultures, for instance, tend to focus on achieved status in a community and having flexible roles in different contexts. Collective cultures, on the other hand, involve ascribed status and more rigid roles. By identifying certain characteristics in the social structure of a community, we can begin to understand its culture and how it differs from that of another community. Family structure, gender roles, and class/caste distinctions are some of the essential ways in which societies are structured. Positioning social structure on the continuum between high- and low-context cultures helps us to visualise cultural differences as they exist in the present moment.

While this binary conception of culture is useful in identifying cultural differences, it does not explain how or why those differences came about. To understand culture as a process means looking behind the horizontal model to see the power dynamics involved in cultural differences (see Figure 1). Here we return to the vertical model of culture in which the internal culture, or mental model, helps to explain external culture, or institutions. Cultural differences are deeper than differences in social structure such as status and class. These differences involve the varying degrees of agency and authority in cross-cultural relationships. The negotiation of power is embedded in development communication and essential to our discussion of development as a process of cultural communication.

Escobar's (1995) critique of development project implementation can be viewed as making the way for effective cross-cultural communication to replace the top-down communication of ethnocentric ideas of development — 'a monologue from the

height of power' in his words (p.78). The question then becomes, what would constitute effective cross-cultural communication? To acknowledge the role of culture as noted by Weaver and North is to replace development project communication from outside-in with inside-out. Only then can we try to locate cultural factors that might aid or abet development, rather than generating a list of values that must somehow be transplanted into the developing world. In Freire's (1970) words, the oppressed of the developing world can be liberated only through a pedagogy that enables them to find their 'cultural voice': 'In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of their oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation they can transform' (p.49). It is in this sense that culture and power struggles cannot be separated (Schech & Haggis 2000, 2002).

There is another reason to introduce Freire here. Both Escobar and Freire acknowledge the oppression not just of the physical reality of colonialism but also the psychological effects and internalisation of colonialism in people's minds. To both of them, colonialism continues in as much as we perpetuate the top-down communication of development ideas. The only way to remove such oppression is to acknowledge the role of all participants in any development enterprise: that of the oppressors as well as the oppressed. The reality, physical and psychological, dealing with power relations, of colonial and postcolonial oppression is often underestimated in the models provided by economists looking at culture now.

Summarising our conceptual development, then, we began our analysis by noting the importance of culture to the development process. Culture is understood in a dynamic, complex and hybrid sense rather than as a grand search for particular values or their supplantation. Acknowledging the origins of culture in original factor endowments and the resultant path dependence thereof, in fact, makes nonsense of the claim that values can be supplanted. Thus, the path of development project implementation must begin with the location of the cultural voice from within any culture.[4] The path taken by the researcher in understanding such voices must be anthropological.

CASE STUDY

An analysis of the Cottage Industry – Global Market (CIGM) project in Himachal Pradesh, India, illustrates the implementation of a development project as a process of cultural communication. The authors are involved in the CIGM project, which is now in its third year. Funded by the World Bank through its Development Marketplace competition, the CIGM project is designed and implemented by faculty and students in the Communication, Culture and Technology (CCT) Program at Georgetown University as well as by local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Himachal Pradesh.[5] They work with four women's artisan cooperatives that design and produce hand-woven woolen and cotton shawls. With a focus on capacity-building, the use of

communication technology, and women's empowerment, the project offers the rural women opportunities to learn new skills and earn additional income.

The initial objective of the CIGM project was to identify a niche market for the shawls woven by women artisans, and to connect the women with a global market using electronic commerce. The project promised to help artisans in the developing world to market their local handicrafts using information and communication technologies (ICTs). In fact, Georgetown's interests in drafting the project plan included unravelling the kinds of societal and institutional problems inherent in trying to bridge markets via electronic commerce. As such, we were questioning the technological instrumentality underlying the belief that electronic technologies can help societies overcome market failure. The question of technological instrumentality was not prominent on the World Bank's agenda, as our subsequent meetings with officials there bore out, but nor were they averse to including institutional capacity building indicators after our discussions with them. They were, nevertheless, far more interested in the market creation and revenue generation aspects of the project.

The implementation of this development project is a collaborative effort involving multiple actors: the artisans, local partners from NGOs, government officials, CCT faculty and students from Georgetown, and the World Bank. With actors coming from a diversity of organisational and international boundaries, challenges to effective cultural communication would be expected. For the sake of simplicity we here examine issues related to cross-cultural communication between the Georgetown team, the NGOs and cooperative members in Kangra.

An understanding of the CIGM project as a process of cross-cultural communication involves a discussion of the various mental models that influence the participants. At times the diversity of the participants enhances the creativity of the project, and at other times cultural differences hinder communication. Adler (2002) characterises the potential positive and negative implications of cultural differences as cultural synergy: 'Cultural diversity has both potential advantageous and disadvantageous impacts; the organization's approach to diversity, and not the diversity itself, determines its ultimate costs and benefits' (p.115). Thus, to acknowledge the potential conflicts that ensue when different cultures collide, especially in the context of flows of power, is not to say that cultural differences cannot be overcome. Instead, it speaks to the coordination of various internal cultures, or mental models. It also points to notions of cultural hybridities, in our case when cultures must negotiate technological interventions: 'Media production has been appropriated, adapted and in some cases, embraced by countless communities around the globe' (Peterson 2003, p.199).

After providing some background information about the location of the CIGM project, we analyse issues of cultural communication relevant to the project in three different areas: (1) goals and needs assessment; (2) capacity building; and (3) marketing. Firstly, the project design required a set of clear objectives based on the needs of the people it aimed to benefit. Secondly, the artisans were given and participated in designing learning opportunities to develop the production, management and tech-

nological skills necessary for their crafts-based business. Finally, the project team generated marketing strategies for domestic and international purchasers of handmade crafts. From the following analysis of the CIGM project emerge the mental models – and the issues of cultural communication — that underlie the behaviour of different participants in the project. The coordination of these diverse mental models is enabled by a participatory approach to development.

PROJECT LOCATION: KANGRA DISTRICT, HIMACHAL PRADESH

The CIGM project is located in the Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh in North India (see Map 1). Himachal Pradesh is a mountainous state situated in northwest India. With a population of close to 6 million, 4.7 million of which is rural, the area is rich with diverse cultures. Given its geographical location set in the Himalayan mountain range, many parts of Himachal Pradesh have more or less remained cut off from external influences. The Kangra District, in northeast Himachal Pradesh, is not known for its shawls. The neighbouring district of Kullu has enjoyed greater patronage, support and government recognition for its weaving sector (Kumar 2000). This is one of the reasons that Kangra was selected as the location for the CIGM project. We wanted to test the extent to which electronic commerce can bridge cases of clear-cut market failure.

In February 2000, the CCT program was awarded an $80,000 grant from the Development Marketplace Competition sponsored by the World Bank. We were one of the 34 projects funded that year out of a total of nearly 1,600 that applied. In June, the CCT team, two faculty members and two graduate assistants travelled to India to determine the region and partners with which they would implement the project. The government officials the team consulted wanted the project funding to go to Kullu but, as this region already benefited from patronage granted by powerful politicians in the region as well as government grants, the team chose Kangra for several reasons. First, it is a remote area where markets for shawls are generally underdeveloped and disconnected from markets elsewhere. As such, the region was unlikely to have its economic needs met. Secondly, in Kangra the team found an existing base of rural artisan cooperatives and NGOs. Finally, Kangra was selected for the project because it is home to a rich artistic tradition that inspires beautifully hand-woven crafts. By taking advantage of these locational assets, the project could help people in a remote area to market their unique crafts.

GOALS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Though the CCT team and World Bank had agreed to some broad objectives for the project outlined in the initial grant proposal, specific goals and means for implementing the project evolved as the team established working relationships with the local cooperatives, NGOs and government officials. One of the goals that could not be altered was to facilitate some form of electronic commerce for the project.[6] Careful not to enter the project location with a predetermined list of requirements and strat-

egies, the CCT team engaged in participatory development project implementation. In the participatory development model, 'Experts and development workers respond rather than dictate; they choose what is relevant to the context in which they are working' (Servaes 1999, p.89). In this bottom-up approach to development, the local community is at the centre of the development project. The aim is to recognise the agency of the people in the community at hand and to respect their local culture.

The participatory development model offers many opportunities for learning and growth, but is often more difficult to implement than a top-down development project. The desire to account for the needs and goals of various actors poses a major challenge when those needs and goals conflict with one another. Whereas in a top-down

Map 1: Project Location

development project local needs may not be taken into account, participatory development is an ongoing process of negotiation among participants about defining needs, the process of implementation, and evaluation of outcomes. The collective mental model of one group does not necessarily mirror the mental model of another group, indicating the embeddedness of cross-cultural communication in development projects.

In the CIGM project, each participant group had different expectations and viewed the project through a different lens. The World Bank's mental model was defined by quantitative indicators such as income. Recognising the potential for crafts-based industries in the Third World to connect with global markets using ICTs, the World Bank sought quantitative data to support the project. Eventually, World Bank officials showed flexibility in redefining the indicators in terms of capacity-building. In meetings at the World Bank, the officials explicitly recognised the critique of the Bank as driven by quantitative indicators and acknowledged that Georgetown's academic input was essential. However, they were skeptical of our ability to indulge in grassroots development with our 'academic mindsets'.

When local government officials, NGOs and cooperatives were told that the CIGM project was funded by the World Bank, they expected large amounts of money to be dedicated to their efforts. Most World Bank projects carry price tags of millions of dollars and it was difficult for them to believe that this project was only worth $80,000.[7] Their mental model did not include a clear business model for implementing the project and establishing a crafts-based business. CCT faculty and students approached the project with flexible goals, maintaining the desire for a collaborative approach to development. Their hope was to find the right local partners who would then redefine the project based on local considerations.

During the period of June-October 2000, the CCT team members made three trips to the region. Working with local partners and the artisan groups, the team conducted a series of assessments to determine the needs of the cooperatives. The first trip in June 2000 focused on finding a suitable region and cooperatives in Himachal Pradesh for implementing the project. This entailed input from government officials as well as meetings with individual cooperatives. A trip in August 2000 by one of the graduate assistants accompanied by her mother, who exports crafts from Tamil Nadu, India, sought to ascertain the quality of the shawls. A workshop held in October 2000 with participation from government officials, NGOs, cooperatives and one of the authors focused on defining specific capacity-building needs for the cooperatives.

Through the needs assessment process, the CCT team identified three major findings. First, the need to build artisan capacity became apparent. Only a few of the artisans working in the rural cooperatives were capable of producing shawls that met world quality standards. Most of the women needed further training in shawl design, dyeing, and weaving techniques. Cooperative members also lacked basic business skills such as accounting and management. The costing techniques were non-existent; most cooperatives sold their products with a mark-up over raw materials without considering labour inputs, depreciation of looms and other machinery, or the subsi-

dies received from the government. Before becoming active participants in the CIGM project, the cooperatives had limited sales and had not developed a system to categorise and inventory their products. The capacity-building needs of the cooperatives became the focus of the 'supply side' strategy for the project.

The second major finding was a need to build trust among participants in the CIGM project. Traditionally, the government had played an integral role in cooperative activities. In order to maintain government recognition and support of the project, local officials needed to be reassured that their role would not be supplanted. The women working in the four participating cooperatives wanted this foreign institution – Georgetown University – to demonstrate a serious commitment to the project. Thus, making the project truly sustainable was an important objective. Finally, the four cooperatives needed to establish effective relationships with one another. Having had little interaction prior to the project's inception, the cooperatives needed to build trust among themselves.

A related issue was the way cooperatives are organised and sustained. As opposed to the grassroots efforts which lead to the formation of cooperatives, most cooperatives in India – with a few notable exceptions — are the result of top-down efforts by government officials to organise groups for sustainable income-generation. We found in Himachal Pradesh that cooperatives were so more in name than in reality. Most of them were headed by people who were beneficiaries of government grants, loans and subsidies. Cooperatives are also often headed by local politicians who use their connections to the government to get these funds for their members, in turn strengthening their political base. It pays for them to show many members to get these government funds, so most of them include members who never work for the cooperatives. Only a few of them in Kangra were trained to actually weave shawls. As we found out in October 2000, most of the cooperatives made their living by buying machine-made shawls from the adjoining state of Punjab and selling them in local markets as hand-made.[8] The government officials exercise a great deal of control. Not only do they disburse funds, but they also audit and keep the accounts for the cooperatives. It is common for them to siphon off some of these funds for their personal use and to ask the cooperatives for favours such as gifts of shawls. Thus, the cooperatives are undemocratic and exist in a patron-client relationship with the government.

Lastly, the needs assessment revealed particular elements of the social structure in which the cooperatives function. We chose cooperatives with only women members and headed by women. Nevertheless, it was obvious that male government officials exercised a lot of influence over them. One of the NGOs prevailed upon us to include a cooperative that was headed by an entrepreneurial man but included lots of female members. His presence became a source of contention as the project proceeded. The weavers, when they worked, came from local areas and often included young women who were bringing in extra income to the family (about $2 for one day's work). Thus, they were working more for the family than for themselves. We also

found that two of our cooperatives were headed by high-caste women while the members came from lower castes. One of the cooperatives dropped out in October 2000 because its members came from high castes and they noted that they would find it difficult to work with the low-caste members of other cooperatives.

In terms of communication, while we sought to institute a participatory model of development, most communications between the cooperatives and other entities and within the cooperatives themselves had been top-down. This was further complicated by the Georgetown team being seen as the 'outgroup' by the cooperatives, one that was regarded perhaps with the same suspicion as their other patron, the government, was regarded. Members were often quiet in meetings and reluctant to express their needs. Individual meetings with the cooperatives, therefore, required a lot of relationship-building – talking about daily lives and family circumstances, etc – in order to have a dialogue.

The needs assessment findings provided the knowledge necessary to determine the project's direction. Initially, the project had focused on building the technical infrastructure to support the cooperatives in their economic development efforts. A closer examination of their needs revealed that technology was actually a secondary concern. The field trips indicated that capacity-building – both organisational as well as in terms of production – needed to be the top priority at that stage of the project. The next section outlines the capacity-building strategy that was implemented to meet the needs uncovered in the assessment.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

The capacity-building efforts of the project involved a series of training workshops with an emphasis on local resources and history, as well as the establishment of a Resource Center to provide administrative support for the cooperatives. In keeping with the project's bottom-up approach, CIGM staff selected local people and agencies to provide workshops in dyeing and design, aesthetics, and computer skills. APTECH Computer Education Training Center, Asia's largest provider of computer education and training, was selected to provide computer training through one of its branches in Pallumpur, Kangra District. Based on the needs assessment and specific requests of cooperative members, project staff determined the training areas that would enhance the artisans' skills and capabilities in other areas. To meet the need for improved business skills, the four cooperatives agreed to work with administrative staff, which included members of local NGOs at the newly established Resource Center, who would help to coordinate their activities. Of all the types of training carried out, the biggest success story of the project so far is that the shawls sold from the cooperatives are made by their weavers, often using local dyes and patterns, and doing better in markets than machine-made ones.

In order to create a competitive edge in the weaving industry, the artisans needed to develop innovative designs and dyeing techniques that could be identified with the

local area. Cooperative members participated in a two-week workshop on design and dyeing processes. Using local flowers and vegetables to produce dyes, the artisans revived traditional organic dyeing processes that had been replaced by synthetic chemical dyes. They learned new patterns to weave into their shawls and colour combinations that would appeal to purchasers.

An inspiring feature at this stage of the project was the designs that weavers borrowed from local architecture to incorporate in shawl borders. Related to the dyeing and design workshop was aesthetics training provided to enhance artisan skills. Kangra boasts an artistic tradition which is a confluence of Vedic ancient Indian and Central Asian influences: the Kangra School of Art. Thus, a few of the shawl designers are beginning to experiment by adapting patterns and motifs found in ancient monuments and temples in the region (Maneja 2002, p.68). These designs contribute to the local branding of shawls woven by the Kangra cooperatives.

Though there was a shift in focus towards shawl quality and design, the need for improved technological skills had not been forgotten. APTECH provided computer training for some cooperative members. The hope was that computers would be used in accounts and inventory management, computer-aided design, website management, and internet research for new ideas and marketing opportunities. While the benefits of design and aesthetics training were readily apparent, computer training did not produce the anticipated results. In hindsight, the Georgetown team proceeded with this aspect of the project too quickly. The NGO partners were not convinced of the electronic commerce part of the project and did not see any benefits from the computer training. In fact, a major communication hurdle all along has been Georgetown's insistence from the beginning – in keeping with the project intent at the World Bank – that eventually the project must include an electronic commerce function. The resource staff members have seen this as going against the spirit of participatory development and have explicitly resented the intervention.[9]

A visit to the cooperatives several months after the training revealed that computers were not being used for the intended purposes. At one cooperative, with the help of a local computer expert, they had downloaded Hindi film music to listen to while they worked. These observations helped project staff to question their assumptions about how the artisans would use technology. In fact, it brought into question the definition of technology itself. Having designed a project that seeks to connect Third World crafts industries with global markets, the CCT team's concept of technology was centred around ICTs like the internet. It was soon obvious that technology adoption was defined by need and the attendant patron-client relations that accompany technology diffusion. In fact, one of the authors found interesting parallels between the way the loom as a technology was adopted by the cooperatives and the way that we sought to introduce computers to them. Both were top-down processes and came with expectations of funds and subsidies, and the attendant dependence as well as resentments against the perceived external authorities. In fact, the loom may not be

as new and exciting as ICTs, but it plays a pivotal role in many of the weavers' lives. The relevance of computer technology is far less clear to the artisans.

After assessing the capacity-building workshops and consulting with local participants, the project team developed and implemented a plan to establish a secondary organisation, or Resource Center. The Resource Center provides all four cooperatives with administrative and technical support. In addition to Ajit Kumar, who also heads a local NGO to disseminate education to underprivileged children, the Resource Center now employs two local women who are responsible for accounting and administration: Veena Sharma and Priyanka Sharma. The Resource Center gets valuable input from an impressive network of local NGOs and others who believe in grassroots development.[10] The Resource Center also plays an important role in marketing the shawls. Resource Center staff have tapped into the domestic demand for hand-woven shawls, selling the shawls in craft fairs throughout North India. The marketing aspect of project implementation is discussed in the next section.

The resource staff members and other NGOs advised Georgetown that in order to ensure the project's success, we would have to marginalise the role of the government in the cooperatives' functioning and also to break an existing pattern of dependency. This was done in several ways. First, meetings of the cooperatives at the Resource Center have focused on working towards a business model in which the cooperatives become cognisant of their costs and seek to recover these costs through appropriate marketing and pricing techniques. Second, Georgetown has had less and less communication with the government officials as the project has proceeded.

The efforts at democratising the cooperative decision-making have been far less successful. The cooperatives continue to be headed by the influential women and a man, in one case, who created them. They are reluctant to let go of their control and divide the functions among other members. The presence of the man from one of the cooperatives, who in theory has relinquished his control to his wife, continues to be a point of contention for the other cooperatives. The competence of the cooperative headed by this man also means that other cooperatives are resentful when the former gets many of the orders for production. The Resource Center staff also subtly favour this cooperative and are far more critical of the other cooperatives and unwilling to work with them.

Over the last two years, the Georgetown team has consciously sought to build relationships with the Resource Center staff as well as with the cooperatives. For their part, the Resource Center staff, at least, do not see the Georgetown team as much as outsiders now as they did when we first went there. Communications with the cooperatives are difficult both for the Resource Center staff and for the Georgetown team members. Most of the cooperatives continue to regard both teams with some suspicion. Rumours of Georgetown faculty and Resource Center staff using project funds for personal use continue to circulate among the cooperatives. When questioned in a forthright discussion, one of them noted that everyone in a position of any power in India misuses funds, and she had no reason to believe that we were any exception.

MARKETING

Marketing efforts for the CIGM project were not limited to India's domestic market, but expanded to include the US market as well. CCT graduate students tested the products in various venues in the US, including Washington, DC, area retailers, eBay online auctions, and Georgetown University auctions. The marketing strategy also involved creating a branded logo for the shawls and a website for the project. The marketing strategy was designed by CCT students and faculty, but was developed in consultation with local participants in the project.

The brand name 'K2Crafts' and its accompanying logo are the result of extensive research on the branding of crafts from the developing world. This research included a market research survey, input from Kangra participants, and consultation with a professional brander. All four cooperatives use this common brand to market their shawls. The tagline 'From Kangra to Crafts' incorporates the importance of the local context of the project.

Last year, CCT students designed a website for the project (www.k2crafts.com) to provide information about the artisans and their crafts, as well as to establish a foundation for future electronic commerce activities. The website is designed with three different audiences in mind: development practitioners, shoppers and artisans. Those interested in learning about the history of the project and its development goals can find the information they are looking for. People wishing to purchase shawls are provided with photographs of shawls and contact information for placing an order. Electronic commerce has not yet been incorporated into the website. The K2Crafts website also provides information about the craft of wool weaving for those interested in the art form.

In August 2002, the cooperative women were shown the newly designed website for the first time. Though most do not speak or read English, they were captivated by the photographs and proud to see their beautiful products on the screen. Some of the women had become familiar with the concept of branding and immediately recognised the logo and shawl patterns integrated into the website. A cross-cultural communication challenge for the CCT team was to explain just how these images could be seen throughout the world. The internet remains an abstract concept for these women as it is not a part of their experience.

The Georgetown team has deliberately not turned on the e-commerce features of the website. The original plan was to have each cooperative maintain its own pages on the website after it had been designed. Mostly due to infrastructural problems, it was then decided that the e-commerce functions would be performed by the Resource Center staff. It is important that the ownership of the website and the e-commerce functions be taken by the project staff in Kangra itself. However, as noted earlier this has been slow going because of the resistance on the ground to this top-down project goal. However, this may be changing. As the Resource Center staff receive emails about the shawls from around the world, they are beginning to appre-

ciate the value of the website. They themselves now refer people to this website in order to promote the project.

The marketing success of the shawls as a whole has been surprising. This was seen as one of the key hurdles for the success of the cooperatives during the needs assessment phase. Now with the success of the shawls in North India and the US, marketing is seen as less and less of a problem, although electronic commerce, if adopted, can only serve to boost this further.

Apart from successful branding, the marketing success rests on innovative features of the shawls. The use of local vegetable dyes, patterns and embroidery give these shawls a distinct idea. Prior to project implementation, all the shawls produced were large, heavy, and used primarily by women in Himachal for warmth. A shawl bought at a local boutique in Washington by a team member to show the cooperatives what the women in the US might prefer became an unexpectedly impressive agent of change.[11] The cooperative women noted that it would in fact be easier for them to make the lighter and smaller shawls that the women in the West liked to wear and they proceeded to do so. Not only did these shawls sell well in the US market but they did well at trade fairs in New Delhi, a place known for its warm weather. So popular are these shawls right now that weavers from the successful shawl weaving regions of Himachal, such as Kullu, are now eager to join the project to make such shawls. This is a source of pride for the current weavers.

CONCLUSION

Communication is a central component of development project implementation; this article adds to this thesis by bringing in issues related to cross-cultural communication. As a communication phenomenon, it is important to emphasise the *process* of development project implementation, rather than merely the outcomes. An understanding of the process reveals cross-cultural communication as multidimensional and as something that affects all phases of project implementation.

Our modified version of Weaver's iceberg analogy of culture takes into account the mental models of the participants, whose external manifestation lies in behaviour and institutionalised conduct, but it also adds in the much-needed dimension of power, including the role played by external agents of change and patterns of authority.

In many ways, the development project analysed here confirms conclusions offered by cross-cultural communication theorists about 'ingroups' and 'outgroups'. Cooperatives and project staff on the ground regarded Georgetown's intent with some suspicion and viewed then as outsiders. Contributing to the sense of kinship in the ingroup of the cooperatives and staff members were shared values regarding family structure, gender roles, and the role of caste/class. However oppressive some of these values might be, it was important for the Georgetown team as outsiders to try not to interfere too much with them. However, the agent of change here could be the local NGO partners, who had had experience working with people on these issues under other circumstances.

Power relations, on the other hand, were an issue that the Georgetown team actively sought to change. It was crucial to the success of the project that most decisions about the project be made locally and that the Georgetown team not replicate, for example, the kind of authority patterns that the government officials exhibited while dealing with the cooperatives. Participatory decision-making, to the extent that it was possible – involving project staff and cooperative heads – helped to reverse perceived power relations. Table 1 summarises the cross-cultural communication issues involved in project implementation.

Table 1 – Major cross-cultural communication issues in the Cottage Industry – Global Market project

		Pre-implementation	*Assessment: January 2003*
Power relations (among project teams)	***Role of agency***	* Georgetown team seen as outsiders * e-commerce resisted	* relationship-building: now semi-outsiders * marginal acceptance of e-commerce
	Authority patterns	* patron-client dependency with government from past practices influences interactions with Georgetown * top-down decision-making within cooperatives	* dependency on government reduced * careful attention paid to not reproducing patron-client type relations * top-down decision-making in cooperatives reduced; exchange of information among them rises
Social features	***Family structure***	* weavers mostly young women who bring extra income to family: not working for themselves	* attempts made by Resource Center staff members to make a few women independent of family constraints
	Gender roles	* cooperatives dominated by men either externally (government etc) or internally	* marginal change in trying to bring women to positions of authority
	Caste/class	* cooperatives dominated by higher castes or those at a higher income level, many with political ambitions	

Development projects are fraught with failure. Practitioners often bemoan the lack of communication between participants involved in the project. Communication theory itself has come a long way in viewing communication as an integral part of the development process. However, cross-cultural and intercultural communication have developed as separate fields with little or nothing to say about communication issues involved in development projects. This article attempts to bring together two related theoretical traditions: development communication and cross-cultural communication.

There are two ways to bridge the gap between development communication and cross-cultural communication. The most obvious point of entry for the researcher is theories in either discipline and in cultural studies that examine cultures as sites of power. However, merely exposing power dynamics is not enough. Effective cross-cultural communication, which appreciates power dynamics but then goes beyond it, can point us towards overcoming a few of these structural constraints. A second way to bridge this gap is to do exactly what participatory action research ask us to do: become participants ourselves in social movements and development project implementation.[12] This article is then a first attempt at the challenges the researcher experiences in trying to follow the two strategies mentioned here.

Cultures are dynamic and hybrid (Appadurai 1996; Garciá-Canclini 1995). Cross-cultural communication patterns allow us to examine the process by which societies adapt, resist or change their mental models. In other words, they spell out ways in which learning takes place across cultures. We have argued here that in order to interpret development as cultural communication, we need to understand the mental models of all the participants in the equation, the origins of these models, and ways in which these mental models can abet or hinder the process of development.

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NOTES

1. A current variant of this approach can be found in Harrison and Huntington (2000).

2. Rodriguez and Murphy (1997) showcase the work of Latin American development scholars as they move from detailing the structural constraints towards now realising the subtle ways in which people exercise agency, including the formation of hybrid cultures.

3. See Melkote (2002) and Singh (2002) for differing conceptions of links between technology and development over the last 60 years.

4. We would also like to offer a theoretical caveat here. We have here synthesised relevant elements of various paradigms to give our argument a theoretical footing. This is not to say that there are, for example, no epistemological or ontological battles between, for example, institutional economics and participatory action research (such as Freire's). We are only noting that people like Escobar and Freire provide hope for avoiding the cultural trap of no growth by positing an agenda for action and in that sense they parallel the views of economists in search of agents of developmental change. Elsewhere, Singh (2002) has analysed how development communication theories have benefited from critiques of each other's paradigms and core assumptions.

5. World Bank's Development Marketplace is a competition that grants seed monies for innovative development projects from 'social entrepreneurs' (www.developmentmarketplace.org, accessed 15 January 2003). $14 million in funds have been disbursed since 1997 when the program began.

6. The Georgetown team recognised that even if the institutional requirements for e-commerce were ignored, Kangra posed several infrastructural obstacles. Only one of the four cooperatives chosen had a phone line, and the internet is unreliable and slow. See Singh (2001) and Singh and Gilchrist (2002) for the challenges faced by developing countries in implementing e-commerce projects.

7. At one point, a government official explicitly asked for a bribe. The NGO staffers and cooperatives, for their part, found it hard to believe that the Georgetown team was doing this pro bono. One of the authors had to produce detailed lists of accounts to show how the entire project money was being spent; 15% of the project funds were taken by Georgetown University to cover overhead costs (a low number compared to the average overhead cost of about 60%). The Georgetown team calculated that the total cost of professional services rendered by Georgetown faculty and students – including website development and marketing – was about $60,000.

8. The few weavers who do make hand-made shawls must compete with the low prices of machine-made ones, which was another reason that the costing practices overlooked many of the costs of the product.

9. The Georgetown team found that the staff members from the Resource Center, up until August 2002, were not interested in discussions regarding the website that the Georgetown students developed for the project (see www.k2crafts.com). One of the reasons may have been that while graduate students in the United States are viewed as professionals and semi-professionals by most professors, in spite of the stereotype of the exploited graduate student (!), this status did not carry over into the Indian circumstances. The result was that almost all the graduate assistants who have gone to India for the project have found themselves to be 'invisible' as far as the project staff on the ground are concerned. At one time,

one of the resource staff members complained that there had been a communication gap between Georgetown and them. This overlooked the fact that there had been many emails from one of the graduate assistants to the Resource Center staff. It became apparent to us that the only emails they regarded as legitimate were the ones that came from faculty at Georgetown. An interesting related issue was the difference in treatment accorded to the Caucasian versus the Indian faculty members. The former were treated with more deference and respect, mostly by government officials and cooperative members but, at times, also by the Resource Center staff members.

10. It was at first difficult to convince local NGOs and activists to adopt the project. Eventually, Rajiv Ahal, held in much respect by the local community for his development efforts, saw some value in the project and convinced his friend Ajit Kumar to head it. Both Ahal and Kumar's input and support have been invaluable. In fact they have also worked pro bono for the project refusing to accept any funds for their efforts. Ahal is well known among NGOs in India for working with poor and illiterate tribal women towards a profit-driven business entirely dependent on local resources, such as wild fruits like gooseberries.

11. We jokingly refer to this shawl as the Coke bottle in the film *The Gods Must be Crazy*, in which this bottle dropped inadvertently from a propeller plane changes – after being found by people from a local African village – social relations in the village and leads to a lot of conflict. In our case, happily, the conflict did not take place, at least as far as this shawl is concerned.

12. Fair and Shah (1997, p.20), summarising trends in development communication research since 1958, note that 'there is little face-to-face interaction between researchers and the people they are studying. Women, children, and other marginalised groups remain largely outside the researchers' concerns'.

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