# Researching Sustainable Development of the Rural Poor in India

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**Abstract**: This paper examines the methodology undertaken by one PhD researcher in a rural Indian context. The research built an in-depth understanding of how to deliver an improvement in the sustainable development of local rural Indian villages. The sustainable development projects are developed and implemented by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) but are part funded through the corporate responsibility programme of a multi national Bank. The research focused on the processes used in the projects, how they were implemented and the outcomes achieved. The research is unusual in management research, in that it takes a stakeholder perspective rather than the more customary corporate perspective. Consequently the focus is on understanding the processes, implementation and outcomes from the perspective of three groups of stakeholders. The three groups are the Bank, the NGOs and the villagers who are the end recipients of the projects. This paper does not explore the outcomes of this research but rather describes the research methodology undertaken to effectively execute the research. The research methodology chosen was that of case study with an interpretivist stance. Whilst case study can be an umbrella term for multiple data collection tools, there was a focus on collecting data via discussion and observation, in line with the interpretivist paradigm. To achieve the required level of discussion and observation was facilitated by undertaking an ethnographically-styled approach. This ethnographic-styled approach included the researcher spending time living in the Indian villages with respondents to understand the *outcomes* of the sustainable development projects which had been undertaken from their perspective. The data gathering processes include structured, semi-structured and in-depth interviews across the three primary stakeholder groups of respondents. Other data gathering included observation, documentation, artefacts, video and photographs. In summary this paper provides an insight into a method for undertaking research in a *local rural* developing country context. It particularly focuses on taking a stakeholder perspective to corporate interventions in a community, rather than the more usual company focused approach. It further contributes to the development of appropriate methodology for contexts where the researcher is from a different cultural and linguistic background to the respondents.

**Keywords**: interpretivist case study; language barriers in research; video research; research in a developing country; ethnographic-styled approach

## 1. Background to research

Corporate scandals have caused people to question of the role of business in society and the obligations and responsibilities that this encompasses (Boele et al., 2001; Zadek, 2002; Maak, 2007). Companies worldwide are being held to account for their actions, by a variety of stakeholders. However, there is no agreed understanding of what these roles and responsibilities are. There is no agreed definition or indeed any agreed term to use (e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Citizenship, and so on). The uptake of corporate responsibility within the world's largest companies has however increased, if measured against the number of reports published by companies now compared to fifty years ago (Wood, 2010).

Underlying corporate responsibility is Stakeholder Theory and the competing Shareholder Theory of the firm. The first says, in effect, that all people or groups which can affect or are affected by the company have a stake in the firm (Freeman, 1984), the second says that the responsibility of a company is to ensure maximizing (legal) profits for the shareholders (Friedman, 1970).

The reasons a company may adopt corporate responsibility are diverse. For example, companies can promote corporate responsibility for their own benefit (Friedman, 1970), or to enhance firm profitability, based on a resource-based view (Russo and Fouts, 1997) or from a strategic perspective (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). Alternatively a company may adopt corporate responsibility practices for moral or ethical reasons that characterize effective leaders (Daft, 2007). Whatever the reason, it can be assumed that the company would want to undertake their corporate responsibilities so that they do not cause *harm* to the company and / or the stakeholder. In this respect the thesis does not explore the business case for corporate responsibility but assumes that, for those who wish to follow a stakeholder approach, they would want to aim at a successful approach.


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The purpose of the thesis is to inform stakeholder theory, particularly in the field of community stakeholders, specifically poor rural communities in developing countries. The aim is to examine what role companies can take in breaking the cycle of poverty in these communities and to view this from the stakeholder perspective. The stakeholder perspective is under-explored in the management literature (Laplume et al., 2008). Indeed communities in general, Non Government Organisations[1] (NGOs), and other end recipients in this stakeholder category have had little published in the top management journals (Bamberger and Pratt, 2010; Bruton, 2010). However, communities are becoming one of the most relevant to many large companies. Some companies are 'globalizing' and spreading their footprint into developing countries directly, and others are outsourcing to developing countries with their supply chain and therefore have an impact on these communities. Indeed, rural communities are a source of employment for many industries. As a stakeholder perspective is to be taken, the views of the NGOs and the end recipients in the rural villages will be explored to assess the plausibility of the success of the company initiatives. The thesis shows that from the perspective of the villagers, poverty is not just lack of money and income. Poverty encompasses a range of social factors which are described as well-being and its converse, ill-being (Chambers, 1983; Sen, 1985).

Breaking the cycle of poverty is an intended outcome of sustainable development. There have been two special issues of the Journal of Management Education on sustainability (2003 and 2009) but both focused on environmental issues. The Academy of Management Learning and Education also published a special issue in 2010 on the issue of sustainability, but again the focus was on the environment. The focus of the thesis is on one aspect of corporate responsibility and sustainable development – the social aspect; whilst observing the effects on the economy and environment only as they are impacted by the social element. The social element is further limited to corporate interactions with communities in the realm of the social part of sustainable development, rather than from a philanthropic approach or how a company impacts the community. Brower (2011) explores the social side of sustainable development in a developing country context but from the perspective of how to develop appropriate training for students in this subject. Boutilier (2007) also looked at the corporate role in community development, specifically focusing on social capital in firm-stakeholder networks. However Boutilier (2007) makes the assumption that companies *can* deliver social capital in communities and that they are already good at it. Further, that the only aspect which a company should explore before commencing community development work, is what networks of social capital already exist within a community, in order to then apply appropriate strategies. The thesis shows that there are many aspects to community development and social capital is only one of them. Social capital is viewed as a process and an outcome, and there are multiple ways that it can be developed (Shortall, 2008). Maak (2007 quoting Andriof and Waddock, 2002) suggest that "*in an era of networked stakeholder relationships, understanding social capital is essential to learning how to construct and maintain corporation-stakeholder connections*."

As many rural communities are living in poverty and there is little written in the management literature about them, it is pertinent to explore a different literature to uncover where lessons can be learnt. Eisenhardt (1989) suggests that drawing together two different literatures is one way of building theory. One field of academe which has been working on poverty issues for many years is social sociology. Indeed it has been a topic of debate in international, political and public arenas for centuries. However, breaking the cycle of poverty has not been achieved. Since the 1980's it has been absorbed in the debate on sustainable development. Therefore, the thesis draws on the theory and practice of sustainable development in developing countries to explore what lessons have been learnt from that field. From this research, questions on how sustainable development is implemented by NGOs in rural India are explored. This fieldwork then informs the debate on stakeholder theory with communities.

The methodology undertaken is qualitative and as Birkinshaw et al. (2011) remind us, this is at the heart of International Business research even if quantitative methods are the current favourite.
For the individuals in these communities, and the communities as a whole, the improvement explored is their *empowerment* to be able to take control of future development. Empowerment is alternatively referred to as social capital.

Through an exploration of the literature, the following research question was proposed:

[1] NGOs are defined by the Wold Bank as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development" World Bank Operational Directive 14.70

How can NGOs make social interventions leading to sustainable development in rural communities? The effectiveness of the interventions of two NGOs were isolated and assessed by the levels of social capital (as a proxy from empowerment) within the individuals as well as the overall economic, environmental and social outcomes for the village.

This paper explores the methodology required to effectively answer these questions rather than seeking to answer the questions themselves. The results of the research are the subject of further papers.

## 2. Addressing the research question – what data are required and from whom?

In this thesis the research questions explored practical constructs. The focus was on *processes*, how these processes were *implemented*, and the *outcomes*. The research went beyond the traditional view of corporate responsibility research, in which perceptions are viewed from a company perspective alone (Bamberger and Pratt, 2010), and took a *stakeholder* perspective. Taking a stakeholder perspective can cover the views of a broad range of people, and groups of people who effect or are affected by the organisation (Freeman, 1984). This research focused on three primary stakeholder groups. These were:

- The NGOs who develop and implement the processes for undertaking sustainable development – There were two NGOs, referred to as NGO1 and NGO2;
- The organisations who provide the resources for the interventions – the Bank; and,
- The end recipients, that is, the villagers in the communities being helped towards sustainable development.

In line with the interpretivist stance of the researcher, the research focused on the *perceptions* of individuals, relating to the process, implementation and outcomes within each stakeholder group to create an in-depth understanding of the key dimensions involved in answering the research questions. To gain an understanding of peoples' *perceptions* it was necessary to use a methodology that elicited respondents' inner thoughts and feelings. These cannot be observed directly. The data gathering method selected to access these phenomena is *discussion*. The specific methods of *discussion*, or data collection, are addressed in section 4. However, it is important to note here that because *discussion* tends to involve words rather than numbers, although not exclusively (Bryman, 2008: 366), in broad terms the researcher followed a *qualitative* methodology.

Carr (1967) and O'Brien et al. (2004) suggest that only through comprehension of past context and events is it possible to fully understand the current situation. However, the use of current *discussions* to elicit past information concerning the earlier situations and events is subject to people's inner psychological processes, and accounts will differ. These differences in perceptions add to the richness of description surrounding events (Geertz, 1973).

It was also judged by the researcher that understanding the concepts of sustainable development – particularly the environmental and social aspects, would require direct *observation*. The use of observation also falls within the qualitative research approach taken.

## 3. Case study research

Following these criteria, this research was judged to be appropriate for case study research. Specifically, in relation to the collection of data through discussion and observation, case study does not restrict the researcher to a specific set of tools. Yin (2009) indicates that the main tools for data collection are interviews, participant-observation, documentation, archival records, direct observation and physical artefacts. There is no limitation to whether qualitative or quantitative tools are used in this process (Bryman, 2008). Bryman goes further and says that this can allow the researcher to access 'different levels of reality' and that the practical and flexible nature of case study is also an advantage of this methodology. In this research, these characteristics of case study methodology facilitated the use of discussion and observation at the different stakeholder levels. Tesch (1990) suggests that research approaches such as ethnography, participant observation and action research can all be adopted within the case study strategy. These examples suggest that it is acceptable in case study research to embrace techniques from other methodologies to collect different forms of discussion and observation as appropriate to the context, specifically, the ethnographic-styled approach for the discussions and observations at an NGO and community level. Whilst case study research is generally classed as qualitative, it can take on a variety of qualitative and quantitative tools for data collection. However, case studies can be undertaken under a positivist (Yin 1984, 2009) or interpretivist (Stake 2005, 2006) paradigm. Stake (2005: 443) suggests that undertaking a case study is not a methodological *choice* as such; it is more of an umbrella term for a theoretical perspective that can incorporate qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. However, the important *choice* that needs to be made, according to Stake, is about *what* to study. This concept of what to study is, in the terms of Stake, the 'quintain'[2]. The quintain is then researched by identifying cases which reveal information about the quintain. That is, the 'case' itself should be the vehicle for researching the quintain, rather than a mere setting or location in which the research happens (Stake, 2005; Bryman, 2008: 54). Additionally, the case is bounded within its context (situational, social and political) hence not dealt with in isolation. Finally, the activities undertaken through the case study require close attention. In summary, a case study, according to Stake (2005), is the research of a specific and 'bounded system' within an unique context, that is studied through a *variety of methods,* as appropriate, to understanding the quintain. The variety of methods available, infers that discussion and observation can be used as different forms of data collection, if appropriate for the context.

In contrast to Stake, Yin (2009) views case study as a *method,* to be used in the circumstances of certain research questions which pose a 'how' or 'why' question about a "contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 2009: 13). Also, Yin suggests that the case study, as opposed to other methodological strategies, "copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables than data points". This leads him to methodological approaches such as 'triangulation' through multiple sources of data converging, and starting from a theoretical conjecture. Only at this point does Yin suggest that, during the planning stage, the researcher should look for which case to study. Which case to study will, according to Yin, be integrally related to the unit of analysis. He also suggests that the researcher should try to stay more detached from the case.

Yin, who is well known for his writings about case studies (e.g. Yin, 1984; , 2009), is recognised as adopting some of the broad approaches of the positivist paradigm. However, Stake (2005) as revealed above, takes a more interpretivist view on such issues and allows for the researcher to be more involved (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002: 57). The primary difference is in the philosophical approaches to the *process* of how the data is collected *and* analysed. Following the arguments of Stake, an empathic, flexible approach can be used to develop depth of understanding of the quintain. This will facilitate understanding the processes and outcomes from the perspectives of individuals and groups of individuals (or the stakeholder groups). Yin (2009) on the other hand, develops understanding through methodological techniques such as replication and logical models which may create barriers to in-depth interpretivist understanding.

In summary the aim of the research was to inform theory from in-depth information about 'the processes and outcomes of sustainable development at a local level' (the quintain), as delivered by NGOs (the cases) from the perspectives of the stakeholders involved. The observation of events was judged to be critical to the researcher's understanding of the processes involved. Consequently, fieldwork in-situ was required to obtain this level of observation. This led to an ethnographical-styled approach to the collection of data at the village and NGO level.

## 4. Data collection

Prolonged periods of *in-situ* fieldwork were undertaken in rural villages of Dinapur, Nandgaon, Wahigaon and Sevapur[3] between March 2007 and December 2009 where the results of the interventions were studied.

Bernstein (1983: 135) argues that 'there is no determinate method for acquiring or pursuing this art [of understanding] in the sense of explicit rules to be followed'. Bernstein suggests that there are several schools of thought within the interpretivist tradition; Stake (1995) and Geertz (1973) take a more 'artistic' approach to interpretation compared to Miles and Huberman (1984) and Strauss and Corbin (1997) who emphasis a more procedural approach. The procedures emphasise validity, relevance

[2] Stake (2006: 6) defines a quintain as "an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied – a target, but not a bull's eye" He goes on to suggest that "For multicase study… we have needed a word representing the collective target…This quintain is the area or holding company or umbrella for the cases we will study. The word needs to be generic. Neither "program" nor "phenomenon" is a big enough word".
[3] Not the real names of the villages

and importance, addressing issues such as type, frequency and magnitude when generating an understanding of the topic.

According to Stake (1995) the interpretive case study, although bounded by its context does not require the researcher to maintain a distance. Due to the contextual nature of the methodology and the fact that the researcher does not need to be detached from the respondents, it is a method that facilitates the adoption of an ethnographic-styled approach. The implicit philosophical stance is that, as the stakeholders are intimately involved in the processes of interest, their interpretation is the best source of understanding about the situation.

The two cases chosen to study were NGOs which undertake the process of sustainable development in rural areas of Maharashtra[4]. The processes of sustainable development is inevitably long term, however the investigation was cross sectional in design not longitudinal. The cross sectional dimension was supported by an historical element as people were asked about past events, and the chronology of them. Reissman (2008) would suggest that because prior context is essential to our understanding of events, the *data* could be viewed as partially *longitudinal*. During the field visits there were changes apparent in some of the communities previously visited. The cross sectional design, with the collection of some longitudinal data is appropriate for use in an interpretivist case study because Yin (2009) and Stake (1995) suggest that it is accepted that there can be a need to investigate events in the recent past.

The method allowed respondents to recount their own versions of events and how they related to them in a variety of ways. These included structured interviews, semi-structured and in-depth interviews and the researcher observing examples of community work, environment generally and the personal circumstances of the respondents with regards to their health and education. Collecting data from the villagers themselves on social capital (as a proxy for empowerment) gave an understanding of the outcomes of the NGO interventions from a community perspective. This allowed the researcher to develop a picture of the effectiveness of the processes the NGO undertook. Interviewing the bank staff facilitated an understanding from their perspectives about what was effective in the processes and implementation undertaken by the NGOs on the Bank's behalf (i.e. with their funding).

Primary data were collected during four field visits through a combination of interviews, observation, focus groups, objects and artefacts, photographs and video. Data were collected from three levels of stakeholder groups – the bank staff, the NGO staff and the individuals at the community level. A total of 82 interviews, 3 focus groups and 5 recorded village meetings were conducted as shown in table 1. Linked to the interpretivist paradigm being followed, the type of questions in the interviews did not lend themselves to scale, ordinal or rank answers, as they require a detailed exploration of the context within which the communities exist. In fact, some scales were used in the structured interviews at the villager level, but this should not be confused with a positivistic (or a quantitative) approach (Bryman, 2008: 367). These answers were used to support the rich data collected and to facilitate common understanding of the responses, given the language constraints of the researcher and the literacy levels of the respondents. The collection techniques are now explored in detail.

**Table 1**: Sources of primary data

| Primary Data Source | BANK | NGO2 | NGO1 | TOTAL | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Locations: | Mumbai[5] | S | D | N | W | G | |
| Semi structured interviews Bank | 7 | | | | | | 7 |
| Semi structured interviews NGO level | | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 23 |
| Semi structured interviews village level | | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 |
| Structured interviews | | 10 | 5 | 10 | 12 | | 37 |
| In-Depth Interviews | | 12 | | | | | 12 |
| Focus groups | | | 1 | 2 | | | 3 |
| Village meetings | | | 1 | 2 | 2 | | 5 |
| Post village visit interview with translator | | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 11 |
| Total | | 26 | 14 | 22 | 20 | 11 | 100 |

[4] Maharashtra is a state in the North West of India. Maharashtra is then sub divided into 'regions', 'districts', 'blocks' and 'villages'.
[5] Mumbai (or Bombay) is the capital city of Maharashtra

Key: S – Sevapur; D – Dinapur; N – Nandgaon; W – Wahigaon; G – General i.e. non village specific

## 4.1 Interviews

### *4.1.1 Semi-structured interviews*

At the bank and NGO level, semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and recorded direct to a laptop computer using 'Audacity' software. These recordings were later transcribed by the researcher. Backup digital audio recording was carried out as well as some videos of interviews taken at NGO and village level. Several of the respondents provided between 2 and 5 interviews over several field trips. Initial interviews were between 60 and 90 minutes in length. The sampling strategy for the bank staff was a 'comprehensive selection strategy' which LeCompte and Geotz (1993) describe as when everyone involved is a respondent because the number of people working in the area is small. The number of people working in the corporate responsibility department of the Bank was six. The bank CEO was also interviewed giving a total of seven bank respondents.

With NGO1, again a comprehensive selection strategy was chosen focusing on all the staff that have involvement with the three villages of Dinapur, Wahigaon and Nandgaon. This was supplemented by further interviews with other NGO1 staff that work in the same district, the CEO and the regional co-ordinator. A summary of the number of respondents is given in table 1.

### *4.1.2 Structured interviews*

Most individuals at village level were illiterate. These respondents did not speak English and consequently were interviewed through an interpreter. Therefore, a structured interview was conducted to aid the consistency of understanding of the questions and the responses given. These interviews took between 45 and 75 minutes. As this interview schedule was designed to assess elements of social capital it was based on a pre-validated survey tool developed by Grootaert, Narayan, Woolcock, and Nyhan-Jones (2004). This interview schedule used Likert scales, which aided consistency of delivery of questions and understanding of answers[6]. All interviews were video taped so that where open answers were also given, or comments made, these were available for later translation and transcription. This video evidence provided extra transparency to the interview answer scripts which were conducted through the interpreter. Numbers of structured interviews are also given in table 1. The village of Dinapur was used as a pre-test of the interview schedule. The schedule proved sound, but much was learnt about the delivery of the interview. Despite there being lessons to learn about the process of delivering the interviews from the pre-test, the data were still valuable and judged by the researcher as suitable for inclusion in the overall dataset.

### *4.1.3 Village and SHG meetings*

Observation by the researcher and discussion by respondents at the village and Self Help Group (SHG) meetings provided data to enhance the understanding of how the villagers had experienced the changes to their lives, initiated through the processes of NGO1. The participants' discourse during these meetings and the stories told are, according to DeMarrais and Lapan (2004), data supplemented by the recording of interviews. This exploration of people's lives allowed the researcher to understand specific experiences through the stories told by the participants (Kramp, 2004). Exploration of respondents' everyday lives involved spending multiple weeks in the villages to attend village meetings and SHG meetings as well as to conduct the interviews and spend time observing general village life. Achieving this required staying in the villages for longer periods of observation than merely visiting for interviews and exiting immediately. This ethnographic-style approach allowed for an inductive and deductive approach to enquiry – whilst having some theory to direct the work, it did not obstruct the induction of findings from crucial observations and analysis whilst in the field (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: 85). Hence, large quantities of data were gathered through asking the assembled villagers to discuss their experiences. These assemblies constituted five village gatherings (which were videotaped and later transcribed) and three focus groups with SHGs (also videotaped and transcribed).

[6] Due to the very low educational level of these persons the scale type answers could be demonstrated easily by the interviewer. Also as the interviews were conducted in a language unknown to the researcher it was felt that the use of Likert scales would give a common term of reference against which to isolate and assess answers.

 

#### *4.1.4 In-depth interviews*

Following the field trips to collect data from NGO1, these data were partially analysed prior to the following field trips for collecting data from NGO2. One of the key findings, based on a community wide approach adopted by NGO1, meant that the researcher was prepared for the fact that the collection of data from NGO2 may need to take on a more flexible approach because NGO2 did not adopt a community wide approach. The same structured interview was used however, it was evident that the richness of information obtained from village and SHG meetings of NGO1 would not be gained by only using the structured interview. NGO2 serviced the community of Sevapur via individual assistance to women only. Therefore, to gain the same level of understanding of the processes involved in the NGO interaction and the social and environmental aspects of life in Sevapur, an in-depth interview process was conducted. Twelve recipients of the NGO intervention were asked to reflect on the process taken that lead to where they were now – in effect giving their personal story of involvement with NGO2 (Bryman, 2008: 388). This involved visiting the respondents several times, to get input on emerging themes after the first interview was translated.

#### *4.1.5 Note taking*

Field notes were taken about the researcher's perceptions of what was happening, what was seen during the interview processes and whilst observing village life in general. These notes were written up at the end of each day and subjected to some initial analysis. This process of collecting all the impressions of the researcher ensured that the researcher was not just reacting to what appeared to be important, but rather, delayed judgement until the analysis was (partially) complete (Eisenhardt, 1989). However, as Goffman (1989: 130) says, these notes are at their most informative during the first few days because "[t]here is a freshness cycle when moving into the field. The first day you'll see more than you'll ever see again. And you will see things that you won't see again".

Interestingly Goffman (1989) also suggests that you should not take too many notes as they will be read by no one other than yourself and maybe only once again. The primary danger being that there will be too many pages of notes to analyse. In the case of this research, much video footage was also recorded to supplement the written notes.

The form of notes taken varied from 'jotted notes' to full field notes (Lofland and Loftland 1995 cited in Bryman 2008). The jotted notes were used by the researcher during the structured interviews to keep a record of observations about the person being interviewed and to record informal observations in general and any ideas towards analysis so that they were not lost (Eisenhardt, 1989). Full field notes were taken of conversations and events together with initial ideas towards analysis.

#### *4.1.6 Observer as participant*

In order to address the research questions effectively, it was decided by the researcher that discussion *and* observation should be used as forms of data collection. Observation was required particularly as sustainable development involves the interaction between the people, their environment and their economy. To undertake this observation the researcher took a 'spectator' role in the villages whilst conducting overt research and therefore in the terms of Gill and Johnson (2010: 167) was an 'observer-as-participant' as shown in figure 1. Observation allows the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the social reality and to 'see as others see' (Bryman, 2008: 465). Being an observer-as-participant also facilitates the researcher to observe behaviour over an extended period to verify whether what is observed is the same as what is spoken about. The video evidence of the geographic community enabled a record of the observations to be catalogued. This was particularly important in judgements of levels of impoverishment, environmental degradation and other social structures (Yin 2009).

#### *4.1.7 Documentary evidence*

Secondary data were requested from the Bank and the NGOs via email at the start of the research design phase with additional documents supplied during follow up field visits. These data have been used as corroborating evidence for the primary data (Yin 2009: 103). This documentation included:

- Administrative documents such as applications for funding by the NGOs to the bank, progress reports from the NGOs to the bank and training documentation from NGO1;
- Formal studies of NGO2 that had been conducted prior to this research; and,

- Articles and video footage of the interventions by NGOs 1 and 2.

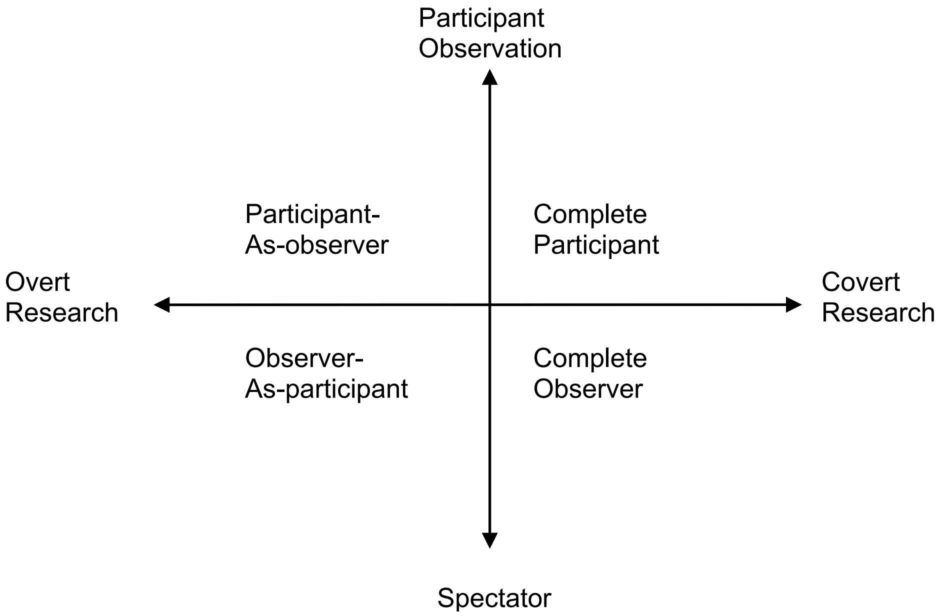


**Figure 1**: A taxonomy of field roles (source: Gill and Johnson (2010))

The photographic and video footage supplied by the respondents are extant to the research. As these data run the risk of not being accurate or containing an element of bias they were treated as printed documents, i.e. only for use as secondary data to corroborate primary data (Yin, 2009: 103).

#### *4.1.8 Objects and artefacts*

The use of photographs and video for data collection is not new and has been used by social anthropologists for decades (Bryman, 2008: 424). The taking of photographs and video was considered helpful to provide an additional source of observational data. These videos, taken by the researcher are treated as primary data. The use of these data are also considered to be necessary in order to answer the research question, in that corroboration of findings was being sought from the end recipients of the Bank's funds. This corroboration of sustainable development goes beyond what people say about it, to observation of the environs of the village.

The collection of so many data over prolonged periods of time (4 – 6 weeks per visit over three years) could cause the researcher to experience some blurring of what happened when and where. However, the photographs and video were all date and time stamped and so acted as an aide-mémoire for the researcher of the sequence of events and supplemented the field notes (Bryman, 2008: 419).

As well as the video and photographic footage other physical artefacts were supplied by the NGOs. NGO1 supplied numerous copies of training aids used by them at village meetings, for example on how to grow turmeric crops organically and how to make organic pesticides and fertilisers. The researcher was also given articles as examples of the economic output of villagers such as the paper bags that were produced out of recycled paper and sold to shops in Mumbai and insect traps made from recycled drink bottles, used amongst their vegetable crops. Whilst the potential relevance of these is limited, they do again act as an aide-mémoire for the researcher to supplement field notes.

## 5. Conclusion

The complexity of this research, and the methodology undertaken could be questioned for PhD research, which is after all 'an apprenticeship'. However, taking this approach of viewing the results from the stakeholder perspective has made a contribution to the corporate responsibility literature. By conducting the fieldwork at such a local level has also addressed the identified lack of empirical work at this level (Bamberger and Pratt, 2010). Finally, the use of case study, using an interpretivist paradigm and an ethnographic-style approach is a contribution to research design in the management field.

The primary lesson learned during the fieldwork was that the development of empathy with respondents is key to ethnographic-styled research where gaining understanding is the critical issue. Following the approach to case study suggested by Stake (2005) facilitates this more than does the approach by Yin (2009). To create empathy with respondents there has to be a level of trust and relationship built without the researcher becoming so close to the respondents that he or she becomes subjective.

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