Introduction to *Participative Design for Participative Democracy,* 1989

A new and major wave of activity to democratize is now evident in Australia. It ranges across the Office Structures Review in the Public Service, various second tier wage/productivity agreements signed by major institutions to a continuing sequence of smaller scale changes in both private and public sectors. In short, those who forecast the end of democratization when there was a slackening of interest and a sense of demoralization about the problems involved in the first waves, underestimated the power of a *good idea*. The immediate sources of the new wave are many but these are less important than the fact that this good idea is now much more in tune with a large proportion of people's aspirations and values.

Amongst other things, the successive waves of democratization in Australia reveal that good ideas have influences and consequences apart from a direct and immediate effect on widespread organizational change or national policy. It will never be possible to dissect out what proportions or bits of this current wave are due to changes in the value base of the external social field or to the educational effects of the previous waves, but surely they have influenced and in a very real sense, made each other. Previous waves have influenced values and higher expectations of the quality of life in virtually all spheres, paid employment, domestic relations and others. Regardless of short term setbacks, failures and disillusionment, ideas were implanted for incubation and good ideas, good for people, are difficult to put down.

Given all this, there are still no guarantees that this wave will produce the critical mass of understanding and motivation that is required to bring about a genuinely democratic culture. Hence this volume. It is simply one more step in such an effort. The judgement of the authors herein is that it is timely to bring together in one volume some of the most important ideas and practices informing the changes we see about us.

But there were always problems lurking around in the minds of many which some made explicit. How after even a very successful introduction of participative democracy at say the operational level of a work organization can we extend it to all levels and particularly to the crucial mechanisms and processes which must link self managing groups across and up and down the remaining hierarchy? Does it only apply to work organizations or can it be adapted to organizations with other purposes and to our various levels and types of government? How can it best be incorporated into the education system so that learning of and about participative democracy can begin before we enter organizations as adults? In short, how can it be extended into a culture wide system?

While most energy has been put into democratizing work places, this has by no means been the only area in which it has been tried and also, there are clear indications of the way ahead in making participative democracy work effectively in the area of government.

Now that we are in a new wave it is important that people have access to these ideas, their origins and evolutions as well as best guesses as to their implications for the future. In addition, there are many misunderstandings of the processes and goals of participative democracy. Whatever their origins and some are discussed here, progress will not be made on the broad canvas until they are opened to widespread debate and trial.

Our goals therefore are to:

- put in one easily accessible volume the most effective and up-to-date methods for introducing democratic forms at all levels of society;
- enable more learning about the concept of democracy so that our path through to a more participative and, therefore, genuinely democratic society can be as free of pot-holes and rocks as possible;
- head off any regressive trends towards greater autocracy by the previous two.

Part I consists of two papers by Fred Emery. They are totally different in kind but each has a specific purpose in forming the context for the reader. `The agenda for the next wave' sets the scene as perceived by a social scientist at the forefront of international social science. It is an edited transcript of a keynote address he delivered to a small but select gathering of international social scientists and apprentices in the action research tradition, in Canada in 1985. I believe the sense of this paper will be immediately obvious to any reader. It outlines the choices we have before us as we confront our multiple problems and what we must attempt to do if we are not only to save, but also to enhance our democratic heritage.

It opens the way for the papers in Part II which centre around the concepts and practices of organizational democratization and their function to create learning and environments which generate continuing learning. Unless this vicious cycle replaces the really vicious cycle of de-skilling, apathy, dissociation and their consequences such as gratuitous violence, we will inevitably return to a more undemocratic society. This latter cycle both feeds on and produces contempt, distrust, oppression, cruelty and general inhumanity not a pretty scenario for us.

The second paper in Part I presents not an overview but a detailed analysis of where we have gone wrong in the most fundamental assumptions we have made about ourselves; how our perceptual system works and how we have translated it into what we call the `education system'; the products of which often bears little relation to the learning we wish to produce.

This volume is about the nexus between learning and democracy, learning about democracy through concepts and practice and learning how to set up democratic structures which are intrinsically learningful It is not about teaching except as part of an integrated learning process. This, to be successful cannot be divorced from the broadest context in which the learning is required and the purposes it is serving. Useful learning, particularly for adults who are trying to understand and behave responsibly in an environment characterized by rapidly growing uncertainty, must utilize every available ability to perceive, correlate and act adaptively. While education has traditionally been conceived as putting things into people's heads, there is now a desperate need for people to understand what their heads (and the rest of them incidentally) are into what is going on out there, what do we make of it and how do we work with others, and the environment generally, to bring it under our adaptive control?

Knowing the environment and its complexities, including its many diverse ideas is an essential component. When given opportunities to elucidate our environment and share collective and individual ideals and hopes, we find a great commonality, but these opportunities are few and far between and the human ideals rarely surface otherwise. Life is too busy, too dissociated and too full of short term problems for us to sit down together and think about what is going around us. Every change is treated as a problem to be solved and put behind us as quickly as possible. Context and thought through adaptive strategies fall by the wayside. This is the pattern documented in the `next agenda' paper and specifically addressed in terms of philosophies and beliefs of learning in `Educational Paradigms'.

If we do not know how to look at our extended environment it is certainly predictable that we will not understand the growing uncertainties of our age and the changing allegiances of our kids, for example. Conflict will grow past the point where we can control it. There are many now who trust their own perceptions above the so called traditional wisdoms stuffed into them by parents, teachers and other authorities alike. They have a point. Human beings are not machines in a mechanical universe (as is implicitly claimed by the first educational paradigm).

Theoretically, there is a clear alternative. It consists of integrating ecological perception with a design principle which acknowledges and builds upon a multifunctional and creative human nature. Part II discusses and demonstrates these at the organizational level. Part III presents the thinking and practical work which has been done on diversifying this into other areas and levels. It makes clear the fact that democratization is not simply something for a multinational or a small group; a discrete organization. It is as applicable to a community, industry or nation, any entity or grouping which needs to plan, devise a policy and work effectively towards it.

The two main methods we have designed and progressively developed, the Participative Design Workshop and the Search Conference, are different but overlapping forms. Both were conceived within and derived from the same set of concepts and principles; those which comprise *Open Systems Thinking* (Emery F, 1969, 1981). The Participative Design Workshop's specific purpose is to achieve structural organizational change and participant's learning of how to achieve it. The Search Conference is designed as an alternative to elitist and optimizing planning and specifically includes appraisal of the extended social field and its changes.

By virtue of this element and its inherently democratic processes and discourse, it is highly effective for almost any form of planning, policy making or future oriented activity. It is this broad applicability of the Search Conference which has demonstrated that participative democracy need not be confined to discrete organizations or more narrowly to work organizations. Any group coming together around a common purpose can practice in the participative democratic mode and as Alan Davies has shown, it can be equally well adapted to the planning and conduct of an educational course or conference, which is anyway, only a temporary organization or community.

Democratic principles and mechanisms are also as feasible vertically as they are horizontally. There are no good reasons why we should not have organizations in every sector comprised of non dominant hierarchies of functions (objectives) where participative democracy is comprehensively practised, replacing the various current autocratic and representative structures. Our traditional belief that a hierarchy, one above another, must mean that the superordinate has the right to order and the subordinate to obey, is increasingly proving unworkable and is, therefore, obsolete. All that is required now is the foresight and will to bring more of the alternative precedents into being, to show that it is possible and practical.

There are two companion volumes. A comprehensive treatment of the context, theory and practice of Search Conferences can be found in Searching (1982). Rather than attempt to replicate much of that here, I have included only a short paper on the brief introductory workshop for those interested in becoming Search Conference managers. This spells out some of the basic assumptions and concepts but those who want to know more are referred to *Searching, 1999.* The second, *Towards Real Democracy* (Emery F, 1989) is a rich

elaboration of democratic concepts at the larger system level. It will answer many of the remaining questions about the structures and processes required for a coherent democratic culture. The rest of this book will serve its purpose if it alerts some to the possibilities which already exist and the need to get started.

Time and effort will certainly be required to fulfil this next agenda. And in many ways we are only at a beginning. But there was a previous beginning and that also has a history.

Three Landmarks Leading to Participative Design

This publication has a direct ancestry spanning 18 years from the first socio-technical design performed by the workers themselves (participative design) in l971 with the Royal Australian Air Force. A second stream of the history which shares the ideals and purposes of the first began with the first Search Conference (participative planning and policy making) designed by Fred Emery and Eric Trist in 1959 (Emery M, 1982).

These streams converged in the early seventies into a coherent strategy and tool kit for restoring dignity in organizational and community settings by re-involving people in the decision making that affects their lives. The emphasis is clearly that of effective participation and the goal is a participative democracy.

The history of the move towards the redesign of organizational structures is, of course, longer. The **first landmark** was the group climate or leadership experiments in 1938-9 (Lippit and White, 1939). These laboratory experiments established that there were only three structural genotypes; autocracy (now technically termed bureaucracy) democracy and laissez-faire (essentially a non-structure). In addition, they established that these structures have profound and predictable effects on the people who live and work within them, regardless of the personalities involved.

In the autocratic (bureaucratic) structure there was a marked increase in quarrelling, hostility, scapegoating, damage to equipment and a reduced creativity, initiative, commitment to, and time spent on, the task. Laissez-faire with its absence of leadership, rules and procedures produced a similar pattern but also included feelings of being lost and inadequate which were relieved by ridiculing the weaker and less competent. Democracy produced greater vitality, creativity, cooperation, commitment to, and time spent on, the task. These differences continue to be reaffirmed as in the note on `Laissez-faire vs Democratic Groups' (Part II).

In fact laissez-faire continues to be a major concern and mention of it pops up in various places in both Parts II and III. It has contaminated many variations on the methods described in here because so many people cannot see or do not wish to believe that it is not democratic. Which only goes to show how far there is to go before we have a democratic culture where there is widespread understanding of this philosophy and way of life.

During this early period, the term Action Research was coined to describe the method of testing and developing theories by creating and changing practical, action based settings. The philosophy was `there is nothing so practical as a good theory' and its operational form was expressed as `you don't know how a thing works until you change it'.

The excitement of these results created a wave of attempts to introduce democratic forms in the real world of work and the **second major landmark** was erected in the English coalfields

(Trist and Bamforth, 1951). British miners had traditionally worked the face in cohesive multiskilled teams but industrialization designed to increase productivity brought with it the one-man, one- skill job, destroying the old team structure. Rather than the dramatic economic benefits expected from the introduction of `scientific management', there was an increase in absenteeism and accidents amongst other phenomena.

The social scientists were called in and discovered a pattern of four interrelated `defence mechanisms' against the new work patterns.  Named Informal Organization (forming cliques), Individualism (competition, playing politics), Scapegoating (passing the buck) and Withdrawal (absenteeism, `psychosomatic' illness), they corresponded exactly to the effects of bureaucratic structure found in 1939, thereby demonstrating that the relation of structure and effect held regardless of artificial or real setting. Needless to say, the only cure was to design and implement a variation of the old team structure geared to the new technologies. Socio-technical analysis was born.

Again, this work excited considerable attention and was followed by intensive conceptual as well as practical exploration (Emery F, 1959). It created the groundwork for the **third landmark**, the Norwegian Industrial Democracy project (Emery and Thorsrud, 1969; Emery and Thorsrud, 1976).

Norway entered industrialization late and although there was resistance to its introduction, a war torn economy demanded a national effort. Thorsrud, a resistance hero and social scientist saw the application of the coal study findings as a way through and called in the Tavistock Institute socio-technical team. An historic tripartite national agreement was signed to test, through action research, democracy in four of Norway's key industries. Years of effort were poured into the analyses and redesigns and it was pronounced a success the first demonstration of planned socio- technical change at the national level.

There were two major consequences of the Norwegian success. Firstly, Norway became the destination of an immense `tourist trade'. Anybody who was interested or thinking of democratizing their workplace felt a compulsion to see the new systems in action and this created a rash of new problems for the organizations involved. Indeed, to this very day, we have platoons of Australians trooping off to Scandinavia to study the effects of democratization which, as I discuss below, is a silly and expensive demonstration of the cultural cringe.

The second consequence is now known as `paradoxical inhibition,' a concept derived from Pavlov's classical experiments on conditioning dogs. It means that the areas or people closest to the changes feel most threatened and develop a resistance to them while others at a safer distance adopt the changes. It is now recognized that this is one of the consequences of treating structural change as an `experiment' and focussing attention on it and the `guinea pig' people involved. In the Norwegian case, there were certainly other influential factors such as the more advanced industrialization of Sweden but for Norway, it meant a slow diffusion while democratization jumped the fence into Sweden and galloped far beyond.

The Fourth Landmark: Participative Design

Recognition of paradoxical inhibition was a contributing factor to the advent of Participative Design which is the fourth landmark in this potted history. The main factor, however, was the return of Fred Emery to Australia in 1969. Some enterprises and unions in Australia had

heard of the Norwegian ID program or the work in the UK and were ready to give it a go. Fred was not only the established leader of democratization, he was also the only person in Australia who knew how to do it. He had more work than he could handle. Remember that at this stage, all the work had been done by those trained and experienced in socio-technical analysis and design and it was an extraordinarily time consuming and intensive task. It was a job for the experts!

Fred swung into gear with a two pronged attack. One, to train up a competent team to democratize Australia and two, to find a way to speed up the process. It was the second that proved the breakthrough. A major part of an old style socio-technical analysis entailed the social scientists clambering all over the plant or office, detailing every measure of input, output, transformative process and social system until they were sure that they knew how the place worked. But of course, there are already people who collectively know all that: they are the people who work there. Moreover, they already have ideas, and in many cases strong views, as to how their work sections can be changed for the betterment of themselves, their mates and the enterprise as a whole. By pooling their knowledge and initiatives for change, they themselves can redesign their workplace. This is the essence of participative design.

As soon as Fred realized that the workers had already conceptualized the need to move to a more satisfying and productive design, there remained only the need to create optimal conditions for constructive utilization of the mutual trust required to produce a genuine structural alternative; one that would through its processes of creation and implementation provide the conditions for continued learning and adaptation towards fulfilling joint purposes.

This again was the subject of action research. The merging of the series of DHRs (Development of Human Resources workshops) with Fred's independent efforts provided the tests which resulted in the basic refined tool box of concepts and processes that we carry today and give to others as they embark upon organizational and cultural redesign. The resulting process bears little resemblance to that conducted before 1971 and because of its advantages has spread widely.

We first published *Participative Design: Work and Community Life* in 1974. It was a slim volume of 14 pages and as it had a shiny gold cover, we called it `the little golden book' after the popular children's series. By that stage we knew that the concepts and practices it described were worth their weight in gold for making effective organizational change but more than that, we had seen the effect of the ideas on people - even those for whom a democratic arrangement at the moment was a far flung dream. But it was not so much a dream as a vision to be realized and it thus created expectations and other undercurrents which are to this day working themselves into reality.

Concurrently we had been developing the Search Conference, a highly participative form of planning, and the early seventies were a time of great cultural excitement and change. But diffusion and change bring their own problems. By the middle seventies, Industrial Democracy (ID) became a band wagon offering a grab bag of competing ideas, speculations and practices sometimes drawn indiscriminately from the academic melting pot and flung back into the fire beneath.

While some were brave new thrusts towards a more desirable future, others had been tested exhaustively and found wanting. But many of the newcomers to the field had not done their homework and the resulting confusion did considerable damage to the original concepts and

practices. Some variations on the Search Conference, for example, proved positively inimical to its goals and in some cases, the name was used without any attempt to resemble the processes involved. It is really only in the last two or three years that clarity and credibility have begun to return to the field.

One of the results of this damage done, particularly in the ID field, was that many of those who had grasped the participative concept and were intending to use it, went ahead and did so but without any great fanfare or publicity. After the first great wave of media and other attention, silence descended and the cry went up – 'Industrial Democracy in Australia is dead'. In 1988, the cry is that ID has risen from the dead but the truth is that it spent many years playing possum, waiting for a social climatic change. There has been a similar pattern developing in the US over recent years but for different reasons.

These problems began to surface quite early and are illustrated by the difference in the introduction to the first and second editions of the monograph Participative Design. The first (early 1974) said simply these two papers are meant to provide the essential `guts and guidelines' from social science experience for raising the quality of work life. By late 1975 we felt it necessary to add the following:

 "There has been nothing in our experience in the last couple of years which has caused us to revise the basic concepts laid down in this little book. Our experience has further confirmed that this conceptual tool kit is effective in democratizing an increasingly wide and various sample of organizations and groups.

What we hope to do in this introduction without cluttering up the main text is to set more firmly the context into which this book fits, and to clarify a little more the concept of democracy within. Historically we have lived with two quite distinct threads of democracy. They can be described as representative and participatory. The following examples of representative forms are included to make quite clear what this book is not about.

> *Representative forms*
>
> Joint consultative councils
> Workers directors
> Works councils
> Co-determination
> Worker control
> Town councils
> Advisory committees, etc.

Such formal mechanisms for democratic consultation have been studied, analyzed (Emery and Thorsrud, 1969) and found lacking in their ability to meet the day to day requirements that can only be met by first hand involvement. This book is concerned with precisely this latter; the need for participatory first level forms of democracy which are appropriate to the nature of people as purposeful systems.

Throughout the history of the democratization of work program there have been critical phases in the development of ideas about how to introduce the concept of participatory democracy. For a long time it was believed that there might be some productive activities so tied to one-person-one-machine that they could not be democratized. It has become clear that

if there is a managerial function to coordinate and control the work of a number of people then there is always room to involve them in self management of at least some of the co-ordination and control. A democratic social structure can be brought into being in so called technologically determined situations simply by this move. It is the devolution of levels of management function to a work group with the responsibility that this entails which is the critical leap from bureaucracy to democracy. The more that a group manages itself the more it is democratic.

Clearly participative design does not necessarily include or preclude change in the technical system. A variety of experience has shown that a self managing group can muster and implement ideas for improving the technical system it works with at a level of ingenuity not reached by others." (Minor editorial changes have been made from the original.)

Participative Design has been directly exported from Australia to Norway, India, Sweden, Canada, Holland, USSR, UK, USA, and NZ. In 1973 it was introduced into Norway and India and at the Summer School of the International Council of the Quality of Working Life held at Fleveroord in Holland. From there, active young teams spread it into several European countries and Israel and from there, it moved through close collegial and other contacts to such countries as Peru. Its diffusive potential is unlimited in the sense that minor cultural variants are the rule while the fundamental dimensions of locus of responsibility for co-ordination and control remain unchanged.

The fundamental and proven assumption of participative design is that maximal effectiveness is obtained only by designing in the unique circumstances of people and environment *in your place*. The tools themselves have proved to be cross cultural but their application and the final product in terms of a first new design is a matter of the creativity and collective concern of the participants.

Among the benefits of a genuine participative design is that it goes a long way towards solving the problem of resistance and paradoxical inhibition. Involvement evokes powerful feelings of psychological ownership and as the interests of the involved have been taken into account, so there are fewer people to resist the change. This on its own is an overly simplistic statement but the principle holds. If the change proposed has been sufficiently broadly discussed to have encompassed the concerns of the potentially disadvantaged; e.g., middle management, and they have been instrumental in the resolution of their concerns, then the stronger it becomes.

This assumes that at the beginning of the process, guarantees will have been given as to the active sanctioning of the process and its outcomes. We are not discussing here talkfests, sensitivity or coping, `how to adapt', personal development activities. We *are* talking the hard realities of structural and economic change and obviously, every participant will be in there attempting to obtain their most optimal solution. The key here, of course is strategy and that which has generally been adopted for success is that of the Indirect Approach (Hart, 1946; Boorman, 1971).

This is the broad front approach; the opposite of the single site `experimental' or `demonstration' strategy. Instead of a redesign taking place in one area, a redesign workshop will, for example, consist of four or more teams who work in parallel on their own areas and then compare notes, or who work with another team functioning as a `mirror group'. In this latter case, the groups swap roles for the second round of redesign so that each has the

opportunity to work on their own area with the assistance of a team which can query their unspoken assumptions and other matters taken for granted by those whose area it is. This was the basic design which we employed in the DHR workshops and it clearly provided multiplier effects for learning (see also `Further Learning about Participative Design', Part II).

A Comprehensive Open Systems Approach

Throughout these papers there is an implicit emphasis on the integrity of the methods, their coherence and consistency. To every extent possible they have been designed and are managed to meet the criteria for effective communication and maximal learning of and for democracy. While many of these look like radical alternatives to what we have come to understand as education or learning, they are actually very simple and basic features of every day life as it is practised in informal peer and friendship groups outside the institutional infrastructure. That is, they are the fundamental forms of relational structure people choose when they are free of bureaucratic constraints. Clearly, they are of the type which employs as many of our human capacities as are necessary at the time, including the abilities to consider the past, anticipate the future and plan for it.

The conjunction of an inherently democratic group structure such as found in a group of mates (of both sexes) planning their weekend using the local vernacular, spoken language, is a pure prototype of the purposes underlying the new methods for learning to be democratic. It is a sad reflection on our culture that although everybody knows how to be democratic and still does do it, it is considered inappropriate behaviour for formal organizational business.

It is one of the great strengths of these methods that they are essentially simple, using our greatest skills as conscious communicators with spoken language. Has there ever been a culture in which people did not confer? The spoken word, dialogue or conversation is the essential glue of humanity (Ong, 1967) and all of our participative methods are built around group (large and small) task oriented discussion. These participants are doing their own qualitative research. This is a belated recognition that `research' is an age old part of the human condition to be curious, to learn and to pass on to others. It is also, incidentally, a recognition that humanity and its concerns cannot be adequately captured by sterile, objective `empirical' techniques (Emery M, 1986). Learning, influencing and being influenced by conversation are intimate elements of belonging, perhaps the most basic human need (Greco, 1950).

To further this learning, the ground rules of the Search Conference ensure that no hierarchy is either built in or allowed to develop between participants, regardless of their status in everyday life. Designed to increase the effectiveness of strategic planning by giving people more control over their long term purposes and directions, each participant is there because they have in their heads a particular piece of the jigsaw puzzle which confronts them. Because they are equally necessary to the solution or restructuring of the puzzle, and they often come from quite disparate organizations, hierarchical status is irrelevant to the task.

But in a Participative Design Workshop the focus on the natural activity group with or without a deep slice team often makes it difficult to avoid established status differences. Basically the bureaucratic realities are reflected in the beginning of an organizational redesign task; it is common for many staff not to know what others really do in their jobs or how they perceive them, and here it is critical that they do know and appreciate other's positions and duties. It is necessary, therefore, for time to be spent redressing this situation,

and throughout the whole of such a project which may be extended, the process managers must constantly be alert for the destructive use of bureaucratic status and therefore, their need to intervene and restore equality of relationships.

Another dimension common amongst all the various forms of participative activity is our elevation of the importance of direct perception or ecological learning. As is implied above, we all directly extract meaningful information from our environment and all our varied perceptions are valid. To adopt this stance as it is spelt out in the paper `Educational Paradigms' is to advocate change as it is now clear that our accepted version of `education' (teaching) has been fabricated from doubtful premises. The unitary human perceptual system does not operate as a machine in a Newtonian mechanical universe or environment. Essentially, this new understanding elevates everyone to, and equalizes them, at the status of researcher, learner, teacher and resource.

The effects of all these changing concepts filter slowly through the cultural morass and can be traced through the proliferation of citizen action groups, small political parties and schools and the resurgence of concepts such as that of the Science Shop which serves as a link between community groups needing information and specialist research. Science Shops provide free or very cheap access to the privileged resources of elite establishments.

The Australian 1987 higher education green paper (now white) is perhaps a most powerful symbol of governmental acceptance of community pressures for educational democratization. To survive, research and teaching institutions must respond to the groundswell of public confidence in their own perceptions and doubts about the value of abstract knowledge which is protected and controlled by those institutions. And despite the problems, many do respond because they too have been touched by the new forces and values in the environment.

Another dimension of these barriers involves the whole concept of `structure' and the previously sacrosanct status of representative systems and the representatives themselves. It has been obvious to some for a long time that representative systems have failed to deliver democracy and in fact, only add to the financial and other burdens that are carried by the populace at large. Yet often when the subject is broached, the argument is put that `we have to have some structure - do you want anarchy?' This argument reveals the depths of the belief that dominant hierarchies are an inevitable part of life.

They aren't and the papers in Part III clarify the fact that governance structures designed on the second design principle involve processes that are more detailed and strictly controlled than are those of the current representative system. In this they are directly analogous to the organizational level where goals, rules and conventions must be more detailed, carefully worked out, explicit and known in a democratic structure than any needed in a bureaucracy where buck passing is the name of the game. What is a representative system if it is not just a higher level form of the ubiquitous design principle 1?

In the field of education, the debate is probably more polarized and even less well understood. As the note on `Structured vs Unstructured' (Part IV) points out, the dichotomy is inadequate, serving only to create a conceptual morass. It, the debate, is currently surfacing again under the rubric of a return to the 3 Rs and better discipline. But here there is the complication of laissez- faire. It is often difficult to establish whether those who advocate the return to `structure' are opposing laissez-faire or democracy as they are so little differentiated. Therefore, we have a three way confusion.

Let us not forget either the Master Servant Act which still determines the structure of most paid employment and exerts a continuing influence on many parts of all our lives. It enshrines in law, bureaucratic structure and personal dominance. It is often forgotten in the rush by some to `humanize' organizations that organizational structures are legal entities and that employees need to understand industrial relations and the changes taking place in their workplace. Nothing is worse than the despair of a self managing group or organization which has been successfully sabotaged because its experience had been confined to the practice and who have not been able to articulate or argue their case on conceptual grounds or with outside support. One of the great benefits of the last waves of industrial democracy is the recognition that ID or democratization cannot be taken out of the industrial relations context (Cole et al, 1986).

Genuine democracy requires widespread and contextualized conceptual and practical understanding if it is to stand a chance against the forces of autocracy.

This volume is an accumulation of our understandings of why systemic, structural change is necessary and desirable and how it can best be achieved. Participation can apply in any area and there is no longer any reason to assume that democratization applies only to the small group level. There is a general need to raise the basic and common human ideals through processes in which the people intimately involved in those decisions which affect them, affirm their ideals and design their own futures. In the course of doing this, they almost always take into account their respect and regard for other humans, other species and the environmental interdependencies on which they too are dependent.

The various papers here have either been revised over time as we have learnt from our experiences or are new, and it therefore contains our most recent considerations as to concepts, tools and process. The emphasis upon process is necessary as one of the early resistances to democratization arose from the perception that you had to have a semi-autonomous work group (SAWG) now known as a self managing group, which looked like the classic text book example.

You *do* have to have democratic structures to build in such critical features as mutual support, respect and learning but most grass roots designs deviate from the schematic, abstract models used to illustrate the concept (Part II). Different groups choose different levels of autonomy for starters knowing their design will evolve according to the development of their people and the demands of externalities. Lots of workplaces have an old man who just wants to go on doing what he has always done and who has not experienced the woman who is so lacking in self confidence that she is reluctant to try anything which tests her abilities.

A Participative Design Workshop done well recognizes and makes clear the value of individuality. The process not only allows but places a premium on the idiosyncrasies and circumstances of the people involved. The design must be optimal for all those involved. In time, many of those who opted to stay out of the new arrangements change their mind and gradually become integrated into the democratic arrangements. But this is a learning process for them, without compulsion. The exceptional case is that of a supervisor who by claiming the right not to change is thereby denying to others opportunities to take responsibility and grow.

Like its predecessors, this volume concerns itself with the ways in which people can begin to take charge of their own affairs and mobilize their hidden potentials. We eschew the fashionable trend towards `stress management' and other similar techniques and philosophies which really boil down to the message that as you cannot change the system, you had better learn to cope with it; ie, that people are powerless to change the organizational context of their lives. The basic assumption here is, as above, that there must be a bureaucratic structure. Such attitudes just make it more difficult for many to take seriously the task of learning to actively accept responsibility for basic change.

While there can be no argument against people looking after themselves, the `I'm alright Jack (so stuff you)' attitude, so prevalent today, is a denial of the generic conditions created by organizational structures. This attitude is no more than an elaboration of the increasingly dissociative nature of our culture, an expression of responsibility centred entirely upon the self. Democratic structures provide opportunities for mutual support and respect and thus learning of the other as an essential prerequisite for preventative medicine at the cultural level. Individual responsibility must be complemented by an awakened sense of collective responsibility. The whole debate involves much broader thinking than has generally been the case up to now. A coherent framework of concepts informs this view and those interested in this more detailed underlying theory can consult the references.

This brief survey only highlights some of the consequences of a social science which appears to have neglected its responsibilities to the community. While it has not been fashionable or in the career interests of the individual social scientist to make such statements or to pursue action research which serves both academic social science and the practical affairs of people, it is encouraging that there is a revival of such concern.

Many during the seventies slowly became conscious that we were reaching a critical point in our culture, a possible turning point where subtly but collectively, the decision will be made about our future directions. As the first paper points out, there is a choice to be made: it will be made but by whom and towards what purposes? We, the authors, make no secret of our values: there are no hidden agendas here. It is better that any choice be an informed and conscious one than a slippage into dependency and dissociation or a rigidly imposed and, therefore, superficial democracy. The question is simple: do you want a democratic society or don't you? The answer is yours.

A Note on the Differences between Australia and North America

It is not unusual in Australia today for the people I am addressing or working with to assume that democratization is an American invention. Similarly, academic colleagues who are entering the field frequently quote only the most recent publications of which there is currently a flood from America. But these academics rarely acknowledge sources other than American and thus ignore the roots of their work. Much of it appears to be a case of re-inventing the wheel with the replication of all the early assumptions and dead ends.

There is very little history of American origin as diffusion into the USA has, until quite recently, been slow for reasons which appear to concern a deep cultural substratum, totally distinct from that observed in Australia, Scandinavia, Europe or India, (in my experience and also from reports of colleagues). Canada appears something of a mixed bag but the recent demise of the Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre (June 1988) could be taken as a sign that trends towards Americanization have become dominant. The value trends so strongly

observed in the US and competing in Canada at the moment are, of course, also observed as emergent and potentially damaging in cultures such as the Scandinavian, often to the chagrin of the native professionals in the field.

At the most superficial level one sees the immense amounts of money paid to visiting US academics and consultants. These often have no more than a passing acquaintanceship with the core of the field. They may once have interviewed a foreign manager or surveyed the `alien' literature. But they are the well marketed, prestigious high-priced experts who grace the opening of a conference, recruiting local money and bearing gifts of easy fix-it solutions and promises.

What is this American legacy? While it is dangerous to generalize about such a turbulent nation whose regional and cultural differences are so apparent, there is still to be observed a widespread reluctance to change anything more than the superficialities: a reluctance to change the system or `the American way'. It can be seen as a deep form of authoritarianism and ambivalence: conflict and aggression are everywhere in America from the streets of the inner city ghettos to the highest levels where newspeak is easily absorbed into thick, luxuriously, wall-to-wall carpeted minds.

It is not difficult to find remnants of the old collective culture of America but it has been so overlaid by the belief in competition, individual achievement and fear of `communism' that individuals often have to perform intellectual gymnastics to extricate themselves from the inconsistencies and paradoxes that arise for them in confronting democratization. Frequently they fail. It is right and proper, says the rhetoric, to help one another but changing the system is something else, even though it means being better able to help others.

The problem lies in the fact that democratization is a radical change to `the system' as we know it. It is about changing the fundamental power relationships in our societies and cultures. As such, it will automatically cause distress, anger and disbelief within anybody who has given allegiance to or has derived benefits from `the system'. The heart of the problem is the old `love it and hate it' phenomenon.

There are many vested interests in maintaining the status quo. Any student of the processes of changing bureaucracies knows that they breed informal or `shadow' organizations which in many cases run the show. America is a mass of shadow organizations - they derive their power from the formal structure, the rhetoric and the paradox. They are loath, therefore, to destroy their power base. But shadow organizations do not run the show in the interest of the total enterprise; they really only look after the interests of their members.

However, `the times, they are a-changing' and some have chosen to look fairly and squarely at the whole and its direction. They make their judgements on that basis. The successes of the British and Scandinavian experiments of the 40s, 50s and 60s, and, paradoxically, one of the first government reports to appear, *Work in America* (O'Toole, 1974) may now be bearing fruit.

That latter was a detailed exposition of amongst other things, the effects of bureaucratic work structures on people's mental and physical health. It did little at the time to change the attitude and values of the American people to their organizational system. The old was too strong and America was too powerfully insulated for the message to be heard. To distance themselves from this problem they developed and accepted the concept of QWL. In essence, QWL is a

rag bag covering everything from better human relations, individual job enrichment, health and safety to genuine democratization. Hans van Beinum (1987) has detailed the problems with this concept.

A basic change required nothing less than a broad front strategy of information from the outside, the deterioration of America's place in the world and its domestic economic paradoxes and gathering problems.

For those of us who have been brought up to regard America as one of the great bastions of freedom and democracy, their struggle with their own internal authoritarian paradox has been instructive. But one thing is clear: it doesn't matter whether a regime is blatantly or subtly oppressive, human ideals are always simmering away underneath. When they reach boiling point they surface in ways which accord with the nature of the environment at the time. America has been very slow to democratize but it would appear that they are moving as prejudices break down under the weight of economic and other older cultural pressures. Recent publications such as Weisbord (1987) will help.

I have spent time on this because it illustrates the ways in which participative philosophies and methods wax and wane with cultural cycles. While Australia is tied internationally in many ways which influence our directions, we appear to have been lucky in the strength and depth of our cultural roots. Australia has been and is a leader in democratization although this has not been generally acknowledged in Australia. This is not an academic observation. Overseas visitors constantly remark on our strange every day democratic conventions, indeed, it bothers some when the waitresses and waiters of the new tourist industry decline to see themselves as servants and assert their rights to human dignity. Democracy lives in the environment ('anyone can die out there, mate') and the flesh and blood of Australia, and there is, therefore, a special responsibility for Australian researchers to describe, analyse, and diffuse their findings.

In Summary: The Path Ahead.

As this historical overview shows, the track began in the world of work and the original analysis of work as the leading edge of change was undoubtedly correct. From the huge effort poured into this sector, we have learnt much. New needs arose, however, from the transition from a relatively stable to a dynamic environment, characterized by relevant uncertainty and discontinuities. These were needs for new, more effective means of planning, educating and governing. This transition phase has continued to intensify and the same needs are now more obvious and more urgent.

Over time the fragmented needs have coalesced into a coherent need, not simply for democratic workplaces or communities, but for a participative democratic culture; one that reaches into and ultimately transforms the hidden niches in our society as well as its institutions. The form of this book follows the form of the need- first to make it explicit in terms which begin to provide the means to the end. There are now well established pointers to this future and it is the most fundamental of these that we present here.

Part I details the agenda and one major means (our direct perception) we must urgently begin to practice if we are to revitalize our people's confidence in their own abilities and potentials. Without this, participative democracy is a dead duck.

Part II reviews some of the highlights of our learning from the previous waves of exploration into the world of work, but in today's context where there is still the danger that powerful concepts such as group responsibility will be interpreted and applied mechanically as job rotation and/or multiskilling.

Part III presents the major papers on extending participative democracy into the area of governance. These lessons are applicable in many fields as indeed is the modified model of democratic management discussed in `Participative Design' (Part II).

In Part IV we really begin to tackle the education system, clearing up some traditional misconceptions and describing some of the means tested so far for practically transforming education into a vehicle for the realization of a more participative democracy, one which intrinsically provides more and continuing learning.

This introduction will already have alerted the reader to the track being long and fraught with dangers both of the past, present and future. And, of course, it is not difficult to understand that the learnings encompassed here are primarily the work of adult/continuing educators, those who have never really been admitted to the institutional hallowed halls of `learning'. They have not traditionally been so subject to the academic, managerial or centralized institutional pressures which would incline them to the quick fix. Charged with the responsibility for `educating the community' rather than the already educated elites, a freedom has been extended. This is gratefully acknowledged.

If this book does nothing else, it should also alert the reader to the diversity of effort that is needed if `real', participative rather than representative, democracy is to be approximated in our cultures. A `broad front' approach is now essential. Rather than being seen as a proliferation of `ratbaggery', every effort that employs good ideas and practices must converge to increase the awareness and practical know how for the continuation of the momentum for more real democracy. It is still important, however, for idealistic practitioners themselves (for whom this book is written) to know how the whole fits together.

This book then encompasses a vision and the authors make no secret of the values they bring to this. We simply hope that we have conveyed some clear and practical guidelines for those who share at least part of that vision.

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