

Who has the right to know what?

Development has too often failed to deliver on its promises to poor nations. The policies imposed from above by international agencies and state bodies have frequently not met the needs and aspirations of ordinary people. Development agencies have been searching for some time for alternative approaches. One of those being pioneered is 'indigenous knowledge', which aims to make local voices heard more effectively. However, while it is increasingly acknowledged in development contexts, it is yet to be validated and accepted by anthropologists.

It is self-evident to any anthropologist that effective development assistance will benefit from some understanding of local knowledge and practices. This therefore puts anthropology and anthropologists at the centre of development. This volume focuses on two major issues that anthropology might profitably address. First of all, how should indigenous knowledge be defined and who should define it, as it currently lacks disciplinary coherence? Second, once this definition is achieved, what methodologies should be used in such an interdisciplinary research endeavour when it must meet the demands of development (cost- and time-effectiveness, intelligibility to non-experts) while not compromising anthropological expectations?

The new opportunities and their methodological implications are addressed in the chapters of this book in a range of ethnographic and institutional contexts and demonstrate how wide-reaching and how crucially important this debate has become. *Participating in Development* is a thought provoking collection. Its authors both define and validate the role of the anthropologist in development as well as that of development in anthropology.

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