CHAPTER – 3

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This chapter starts by identifying research gaps that have come out of this discussion so far, which will be followed by the problem and objectives of the study. The study adopts Pierre Bourdieu’s relational framework both for framing the problem of the study, as well as the data analysis. In this chapter we describe the relevance of such a methodology in the study and the way it is operationalized. The chapter will go on to indicate the criteria adopted for the selection of field sites, methods of data collection and the framework of data analysis.

3.1 Research Gaps and the problem of the study

There are several studies about the People’s Planning Campaign and it has also received national and international attention. But most of these studies focus on the general performance of the PPC rather than specific aspects related to institutions and practices. Studies have not yet been taken up to analyse the influence of various fields of societies on participatory institutions. Most of the field studies conducted so far are also quantitative in nature, and reveal general trends rather than focus on micro level institutional dynamics and practices of the people. However, these studies are not able to help understand the performance of the Kerala Development Programme (KDP), except for the statements in government reports. Some studies have shed light on the performance of the institutions. Most of them focus on technical aspects of institutional functioning rather than analysing them as a part of the larger social, political and cultural environment. It is also important to analyse the dynamics of institutions and practices in different political contexts, especially the politically backed campaign phase of the PPC, and the phase of KDP, which was described as an institutionalization phase of local level planning, and was different from the campaign phase.

Theoretical views about the role of institutions in creating collective consciousness and collective action were also accepted by the PPC. However, the effectiveness of the PPC in translating such a theoretical view into practice will require the examination of:
The extent to which the institutions under PPC and the KDP have been able to generate new civic engagement enhancing democracy at the grass roots level.

How far have they been able to create an attitude favourable to the common goals of the development of society, rather than protecting divisive individual and group interests?

How far were the institutions created by the PPC able to mobilize different strata of people towards participatory planning, and nurture participatory democratic values in them?

What were the dynamics of the institutions, and the practices of the people towards these institutional objectives?

The different socio-political and cultural factors that might have influenced institutional orientation and people’s practices need to be explored through a comprehensive study of:

- The transition from PPC to KDP and the changes that occurred in the nature of the campaign and its effect on peoples’ practices,

- The approach of various fields of society, political, class and mass organization, voluntary action, and religious, towards democratic decentralization and participatory institutions. How have they conceptualized, perceived and reproduced those institutions simultaneously affiliated to them and participatory institutions, through their interventions in the habitus of the people?

- Their activities to equip their allies and the general public to be involved in such institutions.

The response and involvement of different political parties, civil society organizations at the grass roots level also require examination.
3.2 Issues to be addressed

The major subject of this enquiry is the dynamics of institutions created by the PPC, the practices of the people towards this institutional orientation and the socio-cultural and political factors influencing these practices. Theoretically, there is reciprocal relationship between the attitude, practices of the people and institutional achievements. The central focus of enquiry is whether the institutions created by the PPC have been able to realize their objectives in their actual functioning. What were the dynamics of these institutions at the grass roots level? What were the social-political and cultural factors that might have controlled the practices of the people towards institutional orientations? Has the uninterested approach of the political parties towards the decentralization process, the clientelistic practices of the political parties and civil society organization, and the widening gaps between the lower middle class-castes and the poor group, and between the rich and poor, have affected the practices of the people towards the institutions created by PPC.

3.3 Objectives of the study

i) To examine the institutions and practices that were part of the People’s Planning Campaign in Kerala, through its phase of 1996–2001, and the Kerala Development Programme 2001–2006.

ii) To understand the social, political and cultural factors that influenced the functioning of institutions and practices during the PPC and the KDP.

3.4 Methodology

Pierre Bourdieu radically challenged the antagonism between subjectivity and objectivity in social sciences. He questioned the objectivist’s notion that everything is directly observable and transparent, and also negated the extremely subjectivist notion of individualism. He said social agents create social reality individually as well as collectively. He attempted to develop a comprehensive methodology of social analysis in order to explore social reality more reliably. He tried to merge the components of objectivism, that is the notion of viewing society as a social physics, objective structure grasped from outside, those orientations that can be materially
observed, and mapped independent of the representations of those who live in it, and
the element of subjectivism, that is the consciousness and interpretations of agents
that are essential components of the full reality of the world. Bourdieu argued that
though society has an objective structure it is also crucially composed in framed
expressions of representation and will (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992 :8-9).

Bourdieu emphasized the practical knowledge of the individual and observed
that he/she invests the practical knowledge in their practices in everyday life. He
explained that this individual practical knowledge is the product of their habitus,
which is formed out of the fields in which they are situated, which is essentially the
objective structure of social relations. He asserted that the social structure which
produces the practice of individuals is not the mere aggregation of individuals. He
weaved together the structuralistic and constructivist approach and stated that the
view point of the agents vary systematically with the positions they occupy in the
objective social space. There exists a correspondence between social structure and
mental structures, between the objective decisions of the social world and the
principles of visions and divisions that agents applied to them (Bourdieu & Wacquant,
1992:10-12). He explained that an adequate science of society must encompass both
objective regularities and the processes of internalization of objectivity, i.e. the
subjective understanding of objective reality. He identified symbolic systems as
instruments of domination. The field of positions (objective) is methodologically
inseparable from the field of stances (stand points—that is, subjective) or position
taking, the structured system of practice and the expression of agents.

Bourdieu emphasized that reality is relational. We can understand the
subjective position of an individual only in relation to his or her objectivist position in
the field or social structure. The relation between social agents and the world is not
that between subject and object, but a relation of mutual possession. Against all kinds
of methodological monism he affirms the primacy of relations (Bourdieu &
Wacquant, 1992:16-17).

The study has adopted Bourdieu’s relational frame work because of its
compatibility with the context of the study. This study relates the subjective and
objective elements of reality by weaving them together according to the context of the
study. Though the analysis linking the structure and agency has been used in
sociology (Giddens, 1984), the analysis of viewing society as a combination of
different social fields, having different sources of capital and dynamics, is the unique
contribution of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). While our study has
emphasized the intervention capacity of actors and their power relations within
different social fields, this framework is necessary for such analysis.

In the context of Kerala, the organizational network in the state is very dense,
every individual and group is observed to be professionally affiliated to one of them.
In order to operationalize Bourdieu’s concept in the Kerala situation, we analyse the
dynamics and approach of various fields in Kerala with special focus on democratic
decentralization, and its influence on the habitus of the people affiliated to
participatory institutions. We have identified the political field, field of voluntary
organizations and religious field as the major fields of inquiry. This researcher has
interacted with the personalities representing those fields at the gramapanchayat level.
Such a process is necessary to understand how those fields have been conceptualized,
perceived and adapted to the institutions created by the PPC and to understand how
each field influenced the habitus of individuals coming under each field, which is a
decisive factor in shaping the practices of individuals. There were also interactions
with the stake holders of various participatory institutions to understand the dynamics
of participatory institutions during the PPC and KDP phases. This included
interactions with elected representatives, office bearers of institutions, representatives
of various organizations, and the common people. A comprehensive analysis of
reality by combining both the subjective and objective aspects was possible through
such a relational method, by relating the approaches of various fields towards
participatory institutions and their influence on the dynamics of institutions. This
study has also given more emphasis to the positioning of marginalized groups within
each social field. Bourdieu’s argument about the relation between the species and
volume of capital that an individual and group owns, and their position in each social
field is also relevant in this context.

3.4.1 Methods of Data Collection

In order to unravel reality from a complex field, a combination of qualitative methods
has been utilized. A method of survey or structured interview, was inadequate to
explore the qualitative information that would be required from the field
3.4.1.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth dialogue with the respondents was the major tool of enquiry for gathering information. These interviews were based on discussion points as points of indicators. This gave more flexibility and convenience to conduct in-depth qualitative interviews. One hundred and sixty five respondents were interviewed from the three grampanchayats that were selected for the study namely, Vallikunnu, Kudayathur, and Venkitangu. The time span of the interviews was between two to two and a half hours. Some of the interviews extended to more than one session. In order to understand the responses of each field towards the other participatory institutions and democracy, people who were representing different fields in the grampanchayats were also interviewed. Those from the political field, civil society and the field of religion have been interviewed in this manner. In the case of the political field, local leaders of various political parties and their mass organizations were interviewed. The representatives of agricultural workers, farmers’ groups, youth and women’s organizations, were the major mass organizations focused in the study. Leaders of youth clubs, libraries, non-governmental charitable organizations, and other civil society organizations in the three grampanchayats were included in the civil society organizations’ interviews. Along with this, local representatives of Christian, Muslim, and Hindu organizations in the grampanchayats and the leaders of caste organizations were also interviewed.

The dynamics of participatory institutions in the grampanchayats were examined in the study. Grama sabhas, Task Forces and women neighbourhood groups (NHGs) were the institutions included in this enquiry. In order to get a feedback about gram sabhas and Task Forces in the grampanchayats, the elected representatives in the corresponding grampanchayats during the PPC and KDP phases were interviewed. The members of the Task Forces during these phases in the grampanchayats were also interviewed to get to the dynamics of the functioning of Task Forces. Representatives of agricultural women and scheduled caste Task Forces were included among the respondents for getting specific information about these Task Forces in the grampanchayats. Along with this, the representatives of Tribal Task Forces in Kudayathur and Fishermen’s Task Force in Vallikkunnu and scheduled caste
Task Force in Venkitangu were in the study to cover the functioning of Task forces for marginalized groups in each grampanchayat.

Informants on grama sabhas, Task Forces and various people’s organizations in the grampanchayats, voluntary activists and resource persons in the selected grampanchayats were also interviewed. While interviewing the representatives of various fields i.e., political, civil society and religious, the researcher also attempted to get their feedback about the functioning of participatory institutions. In order to get information about the women neighbourhood groups, the leaders of community development society (Panchayat level coordination system of neighbourhood groups), area development society (ward level coordination system of neighbourhood groups) during the PPC and KDP phases were also included in our interviews. Several people who were interviewed also revealed that often the same person held more than one position. For instance, respondents who were elected representatives of grampanchayats were also holding positions as political leaders, and Task Force chairpersons as well. This was helpful also in gaining a more comprehensive picture about the reality in these fields.

3.4.1.2 Visits to households

Empowerment of marginalized groups was a major objective of Kerala’s decentralization. This study specifically attempted to understand the changes that occurred in the living conditions of marginalized groups during the PPC and KDP phases. The study also considered their attendance and participation in institutions such as grama sabhas, and Task Forces. Information for this was collected through visits to residents of the gram panchayat. The household visits was concentrated in the settlements of specific marginalized group in the grampanchayats, i.e. of SCs, tribals and fishermen. The researcher visited thirty two houses in two tribal settlements in the Koovappilly hill area of Kudayathur gram Panchayat. Information was collected about the status of Scheduled Caste households from twenty eight families in two scheduled caste colonies in Venkitangu. I also visited thirty one families of fishermen in the Ariyallur colony to understand the life situation of the fishermen in the Vallikkunnu grampanchayat. These house visits were helpful to understand the changes that have taken place in the lives of the
marginalized after the interventions of Local Self Governments and the initiation of local planning.

3.4.1.3 Focus Group Discussions

Women neighbourhood groups have been functioning in the grampanchayats for more than a decade. A method that can uncover the group dynamics was needed to understand the changes in the functioning of neighbourhood groups during the period of one decade. Focused group discussions (FGDs) have been conducted among selected women’s neighbourhood groups in the three gramapanchayats. Two neighbourhood groups in each grampanchayat were selected for this purpose. Specific criteria were adopted for their selection. One neighbourhood group from each grampanchayat was selected from the settlement area of the marginalized group living there. A neighbourhood group from a tribal area of Kudayatur, a neighbourhood group from a scheduled caste residential area of Venkitangu, and a neighbourhood group from the coastal area of Vallikkunnu was selected for the study. A remaining neighbourhood group was selected from an area of the gram panchayat that had a mixed but not predominantly of the marginalized group.

3.4.1.4 Document Analysis

Along with the above methods, a detailed analysis of the documents published by grampanchayats during the PPC and KDP phases was used in the study, as an authentic source of information. The development reports of the grampanchayats, their yearly plan documents, and other panchayat booklets were studied. This was particularly helpful to understand the expenditure pattern and planning performance of the grampanchayats. In the case of Vallikkunnu grampanchayat a report prepared by the local unit of Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath (KSSP) was also available.

3.4.2 Selection of field sites

The field work was conducted during a six month period between October 2009 to April 2010. Two months were spent in each grampanchayat for the purpose of the field work.
Three panchayats with different backgrounds were selected for the case studies. Three different criteria were adopted for the selection of the panchayats. One was the region where it was located, i.e. one panchayat from each region of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. These three regions were the administrative regions of Kerala before the formation of the unified state of Kerala. Kudayathur grampanchayat is in Travancore, Venkitangu grampanchayat is in Cochin and Vallikkunnugrampanchayat is in the Malabar region. The second criterion was that the panchayats have a substantial population of one of the three marginalized groups in Kerala that are focused on in this study, namely scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and fisher folk. Kudayathur has a large tribal population, Venkitangu has a substantial scheduled caste population, and Vallikkunnu being located on the coast has a population of fishermen. The third criterion was that different political coalitions were the ruling group in the panchayat. Vallikkunnu had the experience of continuous Left Democratic Front rule led by the CPI(M), for three consecutive terms of five years each. Venkitangu had continuous United Democratic Front rule led by the Indian National Congress for last three decades, and Kudayathur grampanchayat had the experience of changing the political leadership (coalition) every five years.

3.4.3 Analysis of the Data

Pierre Bourdieu’s relational framework has been used in the study and in the data analysis. The dynamics of the participatory institutions has first been analysed. The second part of the thesis linked the dynamics of the participatory institutions with the approach of different fields of the society towards them, such as political field, civil society and religious field. The subjective approach of the individuals and groups who are involved in participatory institutions are influenced by the objective structure of the social field to which they are primarily affiliated. One hundred and sixty five interviews and six focus group discussions have been transcribed into written text for the purpose of analysis. The task of coding and analysis began with an initial reading of all data to derive a comprehensive list of categories, based on the theoretical framework of the study. The data were then added under categories. Coding and categorisation of the data was done manually. Broader themes were developed out of these categories. After developing the themes the relevance of the analysis were checked again with the context of the interview in which data were collected. This
kind of constant and continuous comparison method was used (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994) in this study in order to ensure the contextual accuracy of the analysis.

3.5 A Brief profile of the field sites

A brief profile of the selected grampanchayats is included here to give a preliminary picture of the field sites.

**Kudayathur grampanchayat**

- **District**: Idukki
- **Villages included**: Kudayathur, Vellyamattom, Alacode
- **Block Panchayat**: Elamdesham
- **Area of the GramPanchayat**: 28.20 square kilometre
- **Boundaries**
  - **North**: Vellyamattom, Alacode grampanchayats
  - **South**: Melukavu grampanchayat
  - **West**: Muttam grampanchayat
  - **East**: Arackulam grampanchayat
- **Population**: 12438 (2001 Census)
  - Male 6012, Female 6426
- **Scheduled Tribes**: 1531 (338 Families)

**Venkitangu Grampanchayat**

- **District**: Thrissur
- **Villages included**: Venkitangu, Irimbranelloor, Kundazhiyoor
- **Block Panchayat**: Mullassery
- **Area of the GramPanchayat**: 20.47 square Kilometre
- **Boundaries**
  - **North**: Mullassery grampanchayat
  - **South**: Manalur grampanchayat
  - **East**: Coal land
West : Canoli Canal (River)
Population : 25222 (2001 Census)
              Male: 11883, Female:13339
Scheduled Castes : 1902 Families

Vallikkunnu Grampanchayat
District : Malappuram
Villages included : Vallikkunnu, Ariyallur
Block Panchayat : Thiroorangadi
Area of the GP : 25.14 Square Kilometres

Boundaries
North : Kozhikode District
South : Parappanangadi grampanchayat
East : Kadalundi River, Thenjipalam, Chelambra Grampanchayats
West : Arabian Sea
Population : 42,209 (2001 Census)
              Male 20,922, Female 21,287
No. of Fishermen Families : 715