CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The geo-climatic characteristics of Iran make most of the country more suitable for pastoralism than crop cultivation, particularly in the Zagros and Alborz mountains of the central plateau (see Map 1.1 and 1.2). Despite the fact that three quarters of this plateau consists of dry and semi-arid areas, its seasonal rangelands, which contain around 7000 species of plants, have the capacity to support 20 million animal units per year (ONPI, 1993). But the ecological characteristics of this area, particularly its seasonal vegetation, will only support a migratory based grazing and resource management regime. Accordingly it became an appropriate base for a pastoral nomadic way of life. History shows that pastoral nomadism is the main use of this resource, and has been the mediator between economy and ecology. Pastoral nomads have a long history in Iran, perhaps longer than the sedentary rural and urban dwellers. Most of the dynasties of Iran have originated from tribal groupings and pastoral nomads have played an important role in the nation’s history, culture, and economy (Lampton, 1954; Keddie, 1981; Tapper, 1983).
Map 1.1. Major tribal groups of Iran. (Keddie, 1981)
Map 1.2. Main cultivated areas of Iran (from Kingsbury, 1964)
The past five decades have been a period of very significant change among nomads, with a number of issues becoming crucial to the continuation of their nomadic lifestyle and existence. In the past, nomadic pastoralists had achieved a degree of 'natural' balance with their environments, a long term co-adaptation, but this is now under threat. The current situation has become a serious problem of conflict between the State and the nomads, with the natural resource base at serious risk.

There are social issues of poverty and high rates of population growth among the nomads which in turn pose numerous threats to the environment of the Iranian plateau. The environment throughout Iran is being increasingly degraded and the quality of natural resources has become so low that it is unable to support the demands made on it. The evidence for these statements will be discussed later in this chapter.

The primary causes of this situation are State interventions and a developing market economy which have changed the relation between nomads, resources, wider society and government. As Galaty and Salzman (1981:22) pointed out:

It seems clear that unidirectional change has occurred in nomadic pastoral societies, in large part generated by a global setting of societal transformation and development, in the context of the market and the state.

It is becoming increasingly obvious to many people, especially the nomads themselves, that the nomads are helpless in the face of social, political and environmental forces which could soon destroy the nomadic way of life. Hence, the issues are environmental, social and cultural, and reflect the global story of humankind on a local scale. The situation of tribal groups all over the world is no better than that of Iranian nomads and for some is even worse. As Goodland (1985:13) observes:
...at present, there are approximately 200 million tribal people, roughly 4% of the global population. They are found in all regions of the world and number among the poorest poor.

There is thus an emerging global and very complex problematique for which conventional development approaches seem increasingly inadequate. This thesis argues that the mainstream perception of the problem is conceptually limited and this is leading to policies which are inappropriate.

The perceived problems associated with nomadism in Iran and adjustment strategies for these problems, will be introduced in the first section of this chapter, and then placed in context by considering the actual situation of nomadism from different points of view. This will be followed by an exploration of the consequences of developmental activities and the growing complexity of the situation. In the third section a meta-level understanding of the problem will be offered followed by the presentation of an holistic approach to reconceptualise, understand and analyse the problematical situation. In the fourth section different perspectives on the situation will be presented and finally arguments will be mounted for a new paradigm of understanding.
APPROACHING THE PARADOXICAL SITUATION

Pastoralists today do not live between two times, two places, or two sectors, but live in a single field of complex qualities and relations. (Galaty and Salzman 1981:23).

When a complex web of problems which is related to all aspects of life is confronted, difficulties in problem definition and categorisation arise as functions of different perspectives. Such is the case with the perceived problem of nomadism in Iran.

NOMADS: ISSUES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FROM MAINSTREAM POINTS OF VIEW

From the perspective of those in government agencies and most academics (“the mainstream” view), the major issues related to nomads in contemporary Iran appear to be as follows:

A) Nomadism is responsible for natural resource degradation through over-grazing and resulting soil erosion.

B) The nomadic way of natural resource management is characterised by a low level of productivity.

C) Poverty, low levels of social welfare and lack of equity among nomads is endemic.

D) The deterioration of cultural identity and diversity among nomads is a growing concern.

E) Nomads, with their capacity for independent action, pose problems of social control for governments.
Importance of Nomads for the Government

Historically, not only have the nomads been important political rulers, national protectors of geo-political borders, and contributors to historical heritage but nomadism has also been the most appropriate mode for the management of production in arid areas. Despite the listed problems, nomads are still extremely important to the nation and the government. According to President Rafsanjani the “Iranian nomadic community has played a major and considerable role in our national production and self-sufficiency for centuries” (ONPI, 1993:5). According to the Minister of Rural Development, who is responsible for nomadic affairs, “In the framework of national development strategy, one cannot forget to adopt a responsible approach towards the future development of pastoral nomads community” (ONPI, 1993:14-15).

From the point of view of some researchers, nomadism in Iran, compared to other economic sectors, is still fruitful. One third of the total area of Iran (164 million ha.) is unusable for any purpose other than pastoralism. According to Spooner

. . . in the case of nomadic pastoralism [in Iran], special attention should be given to its contribution, not only to the local and national economies, but its potential for integrating into the national society those areas of the country that might otherwise be uninhabited. (Spooner in ONPI, 1992:71).

If nomadic production ceases it is difficult to conceive of other productive uses for this land which will be of benefit to the national economy.

The single natural resource (other than petroleum) which Iran does possess in superabundance is its extensive semi-arid rangelands, and it behoves the country, otherwise so sparingly endowed, to utilize these resources to the utmost. They amount to some forty million hectares, to which perhaps another twelve million
hectares (which are very optimistically classified as forestland) may be added, yielding a total area of 52 million hectares which is at least minimally suitable for pasturing livestock. This area, located predominantly in the Elburz and Zagros mountains and their foothills on the perimeter of central plateau, supports approximately 90 percent of the country’s quadruped livestock, most of which, in turn, belong to nomadic tribes. . . Livestock products contribute about one-third of the country’s annual non-petroleum exports and account for the same fraction of gross agricultural production. . . In Australia, where large-scale sheep farming has existed for almost a century (complemented in recent years by cattle-raising), one half of the total annual exports - Approximately A$450,000,000 - derives from the produce of land which is comparable to semi-arid tracts in Iran. (Stauffer, 1965:284-5).

As well as their direct production which contributes a major role in the national economy, the nomads are the main breeders of indigenous species of livestock in Iran, providing the breeding stock for the rest of the livestock industry in the country, including large-scale commercial livestock raisers.

This lends support to the argument that: a) nomadism is a valid mode of survival and a fully rational way of land utilization (Stauffer, 1965:285-302); b) if the nomadic sector could be based on a stronger socio-economic and ecological foundation, then nomads could continue to play a positive role in the national context (ONPI, 1993); and c) helping nomads and tackling nomadic issues contributes to addressing the national socio-economic problems.

Problems Associated with Nomads

The following section describes the problems associated with nomadism in Iran, from the mainstream point of view.

A) Natural Resource Degradation
The total area of Iran is 1,648,000 sq km (approximately one fifth of Australia’s land area). In the northern part of the country, along the Caspian sea, there is a green belt with a high rate of rainfall. The rest of Iran is mostly arid or semiarid, with 27% of the land area being meadow and pasture. According to the *World Atlas* (1990-1), the environment of Iran can be characterised by three words: “deforestation; overgrazing; desertification”. The same source predicts the projected population of Iran to be 130 million by the year 2020, with an annual population growth rate of 3.6%.

Natural resource degradation is one of the dominant concerns of the Iranian Government. Soil erosion in Iran has increased by up to 250% between 1981 and 1991 while a budget of 75 billion Rials (one US dollars at the official rate of exchange was equal to 73 Rials in 1992) was allocated to the Forest and Range Organisation in 1992 - an increase of 200% from the 1991 budget. As recently stated by the Minister of Rural Development of Iran:

> Due to lack of sufficient efforts for the restoration of national rangeland during the last decades, in this time we are witnessing undesirable conditions and destruction of our natural resources to such an extent that in comparison to countries such as Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, we are in a worse situation.

*(Jihad Magazine, Vol.150, 1992:5)*

In the last three decades there have been an overwhelming number of statements in the popular press based on the view that the Iranian natural resources are in a state of deep ecological crisis. Despite the fact that there is a lack of clear data and scientific analytical literature to confirm this concern, it is generally accepted that the environment throughout Iran is being increasingly degraded and supplies of natural resources are increasingly falling short of demands. Over-grazing by nomadic herds is
claimed to be the major cause of soil degradation in Iran. Soil erosion has allegedly increased by 250% between 1981 and 1991 (ONPI, 1993). The finger of blame is always pointed at the nomads. Nyerges (1982: 217) sums up the current mainstream viewpoint, when he states:

Much current academic and political interest has focused on the problems of environmental deterioration in the arid rangelands of Africa and the Middle East. These problems are widely interpreted as the result of mismanagement of livestock and vegetation by traditional pastoralists.

The role of nomads in natural resources deterioration has been interpreted by researchers as the result of the mismanagement of herd and pasture and the intensive exploitation of resources in two main ways:

1. the direct and indirect deterioration of vegetation either by cutting shrubs and fire-wood gathering (direct), or through overstocking, and early/late grazing (indirect); and

2. the direct and indirect erosion of soil, through top-soil trampling by livestock which disturbs natural texture of the soil structure (direct), or indirectly through grazing of livestock on the vegetation and decreasing the mulch which normally prevents erosion of the soil.

There are not any formal, clear, up-to-date, and detailed statistics about the rate of deterioration. Informally, Iranian academics and professionals claim that there is very significant deterioration and that the rate of deterioration is increasing rapidly. The issue here is not only deterioration of soil and vegetation quality, but also reduction in the total area of range land in Iran. Moreover, the situation is getting progressively worse as regeneration efforts are too little and too slow to halt the degradation. ¹

¹ Most of the information in this paragraph derives from personal communication and correspondence with the academic staff of Faculty of Natural Resources, University of Tehran (1993).
B) Tribal Autonomy and Issues of Control

Tribes have played a dominant role in the political history of Iran. Most dynasties of rulers originated from tribes. The last one was the Qajar dynasty which ruled the country from 1779-1921. Control of the tribal element has been and remains one of the perennial problems of governments in modern Iran (Lambton, 1954; Keddie, 1981). The political implications of nomadism were a particular concern during the Pahlavi period (1927-79), particularly in the first stage of State formation, but some level of concern for control over nomadism persists in present government circles and this is evident in a range of policies (Tapper, 1983).

Tribal organisation may be seen as a political response to a condition of alienation from and opposition to the State, as much as an economic or ecological adaptation (Barth, 1961). Since the formation of the modern style of State in Iran, tribal organisations have been viewed as inveterate opponents of the state. Tribal organisations and nomads, with their capacity for independent action, are perceived as problematic for the state because historically they have been the makers and breakers of dynasties. The recent history of the Middle East is filled with examples of the disintegration of tribally organised society and its replacement by the social and administrative framework generated by the rise of the nation state (Martin, 1988).

During the height of the tribal system in Iran, the tribal chiefs had enough power to run their own society and to influence the wider societies beyond. There were a continuous struggles between the tribes which dominated the State at any particular time and the
other tribes which continued right up to and included the Pahlavi dynasty. What marks the Pahlavi period as apparently different from previous times is the appearance of nationalisation and the application by the government of a single determined policy of control over the tribes within geo-political borders. "All tribally-organised peoples were perceived by Reza Shah to be incompatible with national unity, and a menace to internal unity" (Fazel, 1985: 81-82). The Pahlavi dynasty built up an increasingly monolithic and highly centralised state apparatus set on a path of national integration and modernisation. Integration began with military control of nomads, and it became increasingly "evident that tribes could be defeated and given time, eliminated altogether" (Avery 1965:286). This program was followed by a policy of enforced sedentarization in 1925. Then, after 1962, control was achieved through the process of modernisation and nationalisation of resources (pasture) and the establishment of national security guard, called the 'Gendarmerie' (Tapper, 1983; Keddie,1981; Halliday, 1979).

Today the revolutionary government is faced with low numbers of nomadic people who have no cohesive tribal system and potential power for or against the government. Following the revolution they were seen by the revolutionary leader and government as two-folded oppressed people who should be considered as treasures of the revolution and must be helped and managed in such a way to be integrated with national and religious goals of State. The government point of view is represented by the Director of the Organisation for Nomadic People of Iran:

The caravan of progress and flowering of the human community is moving rapidly in the present century. Iran's pastoral nomads, who posses a genuine and deeply-rooted culture and an ancient civilisation, should not stay behind this caravan.

(ONPI, 1992:7)
Thus the issue of controlling the nomads has changed from a political focus to encompass a much wider range of national ecological, social and economic concerns.

C) Social Equity and Quality of Life

Poverty and a low level of social welfare and equity are endemic among migratory nomads and even among settled nomads in rural and urban areas, leading to considerable social unrest. This is one of the main concerns of the government. Nomads in general, and nomad women in particular, have a low level of literacy (See Figure 1.1), and a very low level of access to hygiene services, potable water and electricity. Part of the concern of the government about nomads, as stated by the Minister of Rural Development, is:

...individual nomads are being forced to separate themselves from a nomadic way of life due to ever-increasing problems in migration, lack of welfare services and subsistence possibilities, as well as the weakening of the relationship between the individual and his tribe.

(ONPI, 1993:24-25)

The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (I.R.I) in 1979 introduced a new relationship between the State and the nomads because of the underlying philosophy of the revolution which emphasised equity in terms of access to resources and quality of life, and with regard to the fact that the regime’s Islamic leaders and responsible bodies were concerned about the welfare of the nomads. To serve the deprived and oppressed is among the goals of the government of Iran. Nomads are perceived as people who suffer due to their relative inaccessibility to government services and hardship due to the nature of their life in comparison to that of the sedentarised community. For these reasons, the nomadic community is known as “twofold oppressed” within government circles.
Figure 1.1 Percentage of literate Migratory Nomads Above 6 Years of Age by Gender (1987). Information derived from the First National Nomadic Census, 1987"(ICC, 1988).
The socio-political pressure of the previous (Pahlavi) regime on nomads, through enforced settlement and neglect in resource allocation, are reasons the government today has made substantial efforts to address their problems. These efforts include the provision of infrastructural facilities, technical assistance, new organisations and attempts to change relationships between nomadic communities and government bodies. The general objectives of *The First Five Year Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan (1989-93)*, reflect this concern when it states as one of its objectives “endeavouring to ensure Islamic social justice” (PBO, 1990:1). A statement by the Minister of Rural Development, reflects this viewpoint and the goals toward the nomads:

> We have to create suitable ground for nomads to enjoy basic welfare possibilities and socio-economic and subsistence conditions through the expansion of production, welfare, social and infrastructural services. (ONPI, 1993:15-16)

**D) Production and Productivity**

The serving of national needs with regard to animal production and export of meat, by stimulating the livestock industry through veterinary services and animal breeding programs, is part of the national plan for food security at a national level. Nomads represent less than two percent (1.9%) of the total population of Iran (61 million) but they control 23% of the livestock. They are the major breeders of small livestock and providers of meat, wool and dairy products (ONPI, 1993). Despite the perceived environmental costs of nomadism and the poor quality of nomadic life, many government officials recognise the fact that the economic output of nomads is achieved at very little cost to the government; it just needs to be developed to more efficient levels of production.
In Iran the population is becoming centralised in a few large cities. Between 1900 and 1956, the number of towns with a population of more than 5,000 grew from 100 to 186. Between 1956 and 1966, this figure increased again to 249 (Bharier, 1972:51-61).


The population of urban population is expected to increase from 55.88 per cent in 1367 [1988] to 59.67 per cent at the end of the plan period [1993]. During the same period, the number of city dwellers is expected to rise from 29,471,000 to 36,568,000. On this basis, the urban population is expected to increase, during the first plan, by an annual average rate of approximately 4.4 percent.

In the meantime the average rural population growth rate is not expected to exceed 1.2 percent per annum (PBO, 1990). The rate of urban population is increasing as the consequence of both a high rate of growth population (3.2%) and migration. In the coming twenty years, it is predicted that nearly twelve million people will have to migrate to different towns (ONPI, 1993), and the whole population will reach 130,222,000 in the year 2020 (*World Atlas* 1991-2). Centralised economic policies will accelerate this population concentration in urban areas.

The shift to a more urban lifestyle is typically associated with changes in food consumption patterns from grains and bread, to a red meat based diet (Bharier, 1971). This shift to an urban-based population consuming a red meat diet, has led to increased competition for land use, which has become another governmental concern. There is only a very small area of arable and irrigated land available for agricultural production (see Map no 1.2), that is not able to also support livestock. There is now competition for fertile
land to be used for red meat production, forcing Iranian policy-makers to place more
attention on pasture as a main source of animal feeding. The Minister of Rural
Development states the extent of this concern:

In order to supply red meat during the coming 20 years, we will have to make
even greater uses of the rangelands. In such a case, establishment of equilibrium
between the number of animals and rangeland area in the form of the farmers
reduction on the latter shall not be considered as a long-term policy, in my opinion,
the most effective way of creating the equilibrium would be the allocation of
rangelands to the livestock breeders and provision of the required training and
support accompanied by suitable possibilities... If it is decided to implement the
policy of rangeland restoration and maximum exploitation during the coming 20
years, the nomadic rangelands which constitute one third of the total national
rangelands, cannot feed more than 18 to 20 million animals based on authorized use
of fodder proportional with the rangeland quality until 1390 [2011].

(ONPI, 1992:23-24)

This would seem to represent a significant opportunity for the nomads. However, they
have traditionally not approached animal husbandry just from the point of view of
providing meat to the market. They produce a wide range of goods for their own use and
for market, including dairy products (cheese, butter, yogurt, and cooking oil) crafts
(tents, rugs and carpet) and tools. Meat is only one of the products they get from their
animals. Hence, their changing production methods do not meet the needs of the
government and the expectations of the professionals in fields related to meat production.
These professionals include specialists in the fields of economics, animal husbandry,
veterinary science and the meat industry.

economic growth with the aim of increasing per capita production” is one of the general
objectives of national policy makers (PBO, 1990:1). This will be accomplished, it is
claimed, through raising the productivity of both pasture and animal production through the use of the technological and advisory services of the Government.

Compatibility between the stocking rates of breed livestock and the grazing capacity of improved pastures are targeted in a way which will meet the goals of policy-makers, which is for provision of red meat for national demand.

Red meat production shall increase by average annual rate of 3.4 per cent from 525000 tons to 620000 tons. Fodder production shall increase by an average annual rate of 10.6 per cent from 9.063 million tons to 14.89 million tons. (PBO, 1990:55)

All these above mentioned goals are considered to be achievable through technological, financial, and institutional support by government.

Necessary facilities for expansion of agricultural products such as trade information, technical data and credits shall be provided to farmers by the government. The government shall continue encouraging the formation of production cooperatives which depending on the nature of field of production. (PBO, 1990:69)

This is the same all over the world. Development strategies often tacitly assume that there are no viable existing technology, information, and institutions that could be used as a base for development. The strategies ignore the indigenous characteristics of nomadism and their system of production. Hence they impose a wide range of incompatible western technological-based solutions upon the nomads (Sandford, 1983; Galaty and Salzman 1981). And finally it could be said "To date, no one has found a strategy that will manage and develop Third World rangeland" (Gilles, 1985:1159).

E) Change, Cultural Identity and Social Issues.
Deterioration of cultural diversity in Iranian society, the loss of tribal and cultural identity and loss of spiritual sustenance, is another concern particularly of scholars and educated nomads. Technology, the money economy, and infrastructural facilities for nomads have rapidly and fundamentally changed the nomadic way of life, and ‘progress’ has brought concerns about the range, soil, and forest degradation associated with the unorganised settlement of nomads.

Change engendered by and associated with the market and the state has been widely seen to have had rippling effects across nomadic pastoralist societies, producing alterations in their social fabric and cultural role. (Galaty and Salzman, 1981:13)

Settlement is also associated with some socio-cultural issues: “Sedentarisation may have an effect on social equality and stratification (Sandford, 1983: 21).

There is a concern about the nomads which extends beyond the economic and ecological aspects of their lives which represent only the tangible aspects of a profound cultural challenge. The deterioration of the spiritual value system and alienation from cultural, tribal identity and the natural environment are a hidden challenge. From this perspective every step of modernisation helps to demolish the spiritual connection of nomadic society with their cultural identity, spirit and self-esteem. Rapid change creates many socio-cultural issues for tribal people. As World Bank specialist Goodland (1985 : 24-5) has put it:

While all change involves some degree of social disruption, rapid change increases social tension and, ultimately, vulnerability to disease and emotional disorders, antisocial behaviour, and alcoholism. While societies are dynamic, the capacity to adapt to change is not infinite, especially in the case of tribal populations. The social resources that help tribal members manage and cope with change are limited. Unfamiliar concepts, values, and roles impose additional demands on the coping process of the tribal society... A tribal population confronted with development of modernisation often experiences loss of self-esteem; its members feel a deprivation of their sense of personal worth and devaluation of their social identity.
According to Goodland, there are three major socio-cultural issues which are associated with the process of rapid social changes: a) loss of self-esteem; b) increase in actual and perceived roles of conflict and ambiguity; and c) increase in the perceived gap between aspiration and achievement.

There is a concern among some scholars that development activities among Iranian nomads are responsible for the crisis they now face. Developmental activities and changes among nomads have contributed to a mismatch between the indigenous way of life and thought and modernisation.

In a tribal society, cultural values and social norms determine the behaviour and kinship system (which is the framework of their relationships) and also indicate the pastoralist’s conception of the ‘good life’ or of ‘desirable change’, and ultimately their reaction to any effort or willingness for change and betterment (Sandford, 1983). These values and norms are often destroyed entirely by confrontation with new ways of thinking and understanding. There is an argument that socio-cultural change among nomadic people then leads to loss of self-esteem, socio-cultural uncertainty, gaps between aspiration and achievement, ambiguity and finally psychological and social conflicts (Goodland, 1985).

Due to this cultural and value transformation, it would be very difficult to get the attention of culturally wounded nomads following the nomadic way life, to participate in the process of change. Their situation worsens when they migrate to settled communities because they can’t be acculturated to the new environment and they are missing their own cultural values. Rappaport (1978), comments on this issue:
... restrictions on mobility, both forced and voluntary, are linked to changes in such diverse variables as personal identity, cultural variability, experienced stress, and interaction control mechanisms. It is held that forced sedentarization which fails to take into consideration the salient features of a nomadic lifestyle would prove destructive both to personal, group identity and cultural organization. (1978:246)

The nomads face cultural duality and social challenges with the new context and selected society within which they live. The early outcomes of this shift are mentioned by Galaty and Salzman (1981:14):

In this context of increased interaction between groups, several distinct and apparently contradictory ethnic phenomena are emerging. The first is the increased emphasis on ethnicity in new settings of interaction and competition... The second phenomena is the lessened emphasis on ethnicity altogether, because of the growing importance of national and regional identities and also the increasing significance of the identity with a “sector”.

In the meantime, the cultural, political and economic standards of the rest of society have changed, which has made it possible for the dominant order and views of the society to be imposed upon the nomads as a new standard (Galaty and Salzman 1981). On the other hand, nomads do not always share the goals of the sedentarised community and ultimately this leads to socio-cultural conflicts between the still migratory nomads and the rest of society. In this contradictory situation, the settled nomads do not participate in collaborative efforts in community development projects due to their own sense of themselves as “different”.

Socio-cultural problems among sedentarised nomads become manifest in local conflicts with the dominant society, domestic violence, divorce, prostitution, suicide and drug use as
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well demonstrated by news articles in local newspapers and informal statements of official bodies who are engaged with these issues at the local level.

CHANGE AND INTERVENTION BY THE GOVERNMENT IN NOMADIC SOCIETY

History and Background

The historical background of nomads, and their interrelationships with the State will be discussed in Chapter Three. The focus of this section is on the process of change and development among nomads since the formation of the State in Iran.

The Government of Iran, both before and after the Islamic revolution (1979), had both short and long term strategies in place to address perceived problems with the nomads. Sedentarisation and eliminating the nomadic leadership were the major strategies for dealing with the political problems presented by the nomadic life during the early part of the Pahlavi Dynasty. The goal in the second phase of the Pahlavi regime (from World War II to 1979) was to modernise the general society and the nomads. These changes were happening within a national and international context which was dominated by: a) the "market" and the "State" (Galaty and Salzman, 1983); b) the idea of modernisation and western culture (Tapper, 1983); and c) the "technology transfer" approach, and technical solutions for productivity which were developed in the West (Gilles, 1985).

An attempt was made to introduce technological solutions, social well-being and education to nomadic communities. These changes were planned in such a way as to optimise returns from livestock and rangelands through protection and
biological/ecological manipulation, combining agriculture with pastoralism and included the introduction of social facilities associated with settled communities.

Process of Change

The process of change among Iranian pastoralist nomads is considered here in two inter-related dimensions: resource management and social change.

The "Technology Transfer Approach" and Natural Resource Management

The most important change in resource management among nomads was the nationalisation of pasture (1963). Combining agriculture with pastoralism and the introduction of veterinary services and range management projects followed nationalisation. Nationalisation of pasture, transferred the ownership right of pasture from the tribal system to the State. "In Iran, nationalization was aimed in part at confiscation of lands by the state, for development of agro-industries" (Galaty and Salzman, 1981:11). Combining agricultural activity with pastoralism was the other major change in resource management which was introduced by development projects and supported by the market (Beck, 1991).

The introduction of veterinary services and range management projects were the other two main interventions in resource management among Iranian nomads (Sandford, 1983). Range management and veterinary services are committed both to the protection and productivity of ranges and herds. Since these two disciplines were developed in North America and Australia, they carry most of the socio-economic features of the contexts that they were developed in (Sandford, 1983; Gilles 1985).

Techniques of range management have been developed in the West to solve these problems but virtually all efforts to apply this technology among zones occupied by
pastoral people have failed. Attempts to limit stocking rates, to redistribute grazing through borehole development and to develop pasture rotation systems have been unsuccessful. (Gilles, 1985:1159)

Social Change and Sedentarisation

Throughout the world, development activities associated with nomads have involved settlement as is mentioned by Sandford (1983:21):

In many countries the phrase ‘developing pastoralists’ has, to many government planners, become synonymous with settling them in non-pastoral occupations such as crop-farming; and discussions about development with pastoralists then become discussions about settlement, a prospect that many pastoralists strongly resist for very good reasons.

Attempts to settle the nomads, implemented in the Pahlavi period as a simple solution to the perceived problem, brought the government face-to-face with complex, socio-cultural issues including a large demand for infrastructure facilities. New employment opportunities, housing, roads, infrastructure facilities and social organisations needed to be provided by the government in the resettlement procedure. This was obviously very costly and complex and it was impossible to provide sedentarised nomads with such services and facilities in the short term.

During the first five years of the revolutionary period, the Iranian Government put considerable effort into providing services to migratory nomads rather than activities to sedentarise them. Help was given to nomads through direct infrastructural services (water supply, road, health, education, and transportation) and by new organisations, often staffed in part by new staff with nomadic backgrounds (Beck, in ONPI, 1992:23). Indirect
economic benefits were also provided to the nomads through favourable markets for their products (Beck, 1980).

However, after several years of providing these new services to the nomads, the trend of “voluntary sedentarisation” continued and the government was forced to rethink its development strategies for them. Although there had been a renewed trend among policy makers toward the settlement of the nomads after the revolution, the policy of the new government has been to assist the nomads to remain nomadic. However, as the nomads voluntarily began to settle in urban areas, the leading Minister responsible for nomads reflected on the recognition and adaptation of the government strategies to this changing condition:

...regardless of our own previous findings, we have to seriously consider the recent phenomenon [settlement] in planning for the nomads. (ONPI, 1993)

Based on the *First National Conference on Nomadism, Teheran, 1984*, the policy makers decided to group all nomads in two major categories:

a) the nomads whose main activity will continue to be animal husbandry relying on rangelands; and

b) the nomads who are leaving the nomadic way of life and joining settled communities mainly because of resource shortages.

Faced with an increasing national and nomadic population, the natural resource capacity led the government to think of settlement as the main alternative for at least one million
nomads in the following twenty years. For those who would remain nomadic, a series of initiatives have been implemented:\footnote{2}{Most of the information in this section derives from the 'Proceedings of the First National Conference of Nomadism', Supreme Council of Nomadic People, 1984.}

\begin{itemize}
\item[a)] infrastructure facilities and technical assistance through technologically-based projects;
\item[b)] advisory services in animal husbandry, range management and veterinary advice, religious propaganda, health and hygiene advice and/or services;
\item[c)] organisational changes among nomadic communities in the form of new councils and cooperatives;
\item[d)] establishment of new organisations in the State bureaucracy;
\item[e)] research and planning on nomadic issues.
\end{itemize}

The Pressure for Further Solutions

Approaches to nomadic development have nevertheless continued to be dominated by centralised “top-down” planning based on economic estimation and resource allocation. The major response to these issues has been the search for, and implementation of, simple technological solutions to the problems of nomads such as: Replacement of Natural Gas with Fire Wood, Animal Breeding Projects, Small Scale Range Management Projects and Subsidised Livestock Transportation.

The solution for the second group of nomads (those who are gradually settling) was seen to be in the design and planning of new settlement centres specifically for the nomads.

Despite considerable allocation of both efforts and resources, these solutions have been found to be inadequate for both groups of nomads. In fact, the provision of traditionally sedentary
services to mobile people and the settlement programs and range management projects have actually increased the high rate of natural resource degradation and unorganised settlement. At the International Conference on Nomadism and Development (Sept, 1992), it was commented that "Past policies failed to recognize the cultural characteristics linked to the unique pastoral nomadic economy and society" (ONPI, 1993:62). Over 450 national and international researchers and experts attended this conference which was held in Iran, reflecting the continuing global concern about the nomadic issues.

The pressures for further new approaches to the nomadic issue have continued to dominate the agenda of recent conferences on nomadism held in Iran (1984 and 1991 National conferences) and the 1992 International conference. These recognised issues are:

a) inadequate financial support (budget and resources) for nomadism compared to sedentarised societies;

b) lack of harmony and even conflict between organisational task forces of different government departments involving nomads;

c) inability of government departments to reach the nomads due to their mobility and diversity;

d) lack of active nomadic support for Government-initiated activities;

e) few resources allocated for the wide range of development programs;

f) lack of enough research and information about nomads; and

g) lack of an effective organisational relationship between the Government and nomadic community.

3 Most of the information in this paragraph derives from the proceeding of three conferences and also my personal communication with policy makers in ONPI(1988-93).
In the meantime, the various difficulties presented by sedentarised nomads have occupied an increasing proportion of the time and resources of many of the government’s departments, and gradually it has become clear that the Sedentarisation of nomads is not a solution to the problem⁴.

A Call For Radical Change

In spite of the 25 years of “new directions” in government nomad relationships since the second part of the Pahlavi dynasty, little progress has been made in dealing with welfare and environmental issues. And as was stated in the only seminar on nomadic issue which was held in Pahlavi time (Issues of Nomadic Community, Kermanshahan, 26 June, 1976), (see PBO, 1976) the new directions were associated with a range of complex and interrelated issues. Perhaps it was not a matter of simply adding welfare and environmental dimensions to the main issues of control, production and natural resource management or settling the nomads.

A new chapter of relationship was opened by the Islamic Revolution in 1979. This phase, which is still continuing, put a significant emphasis on efforts to save the nomads from what is called “two folded oppression” by offering the same incompatible strategies for assistance.

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⁴ Now most governmental agencies responsible for providing socio-economic services to urban and rural people (Department of Housing, Mayor, Department of Labor) are faced with huge levels of demand from settled nomads.
As it was stated in the final statement of *International Conference of Nomadism and Development*, there is a quest for developing a totally different integrated and systemic approach for development:

The development of nomadic pastoralism is neither a means of national development nor an isolated aim of development, but it is an integral part of the cultural, social and economic system of each country and of the region as a whole. Therefore, a new perspective and holistic approach is needed in future development plans within this sector. (ONPI, 1993:66)

**Changing Perspectives and Approaches**

The nomadic way of life and its associated problematique can be considered from a number of different perspectives, as mentioned earlier. It can, for instance, be seen from a purely ecological point of view which sees nomadism as a disruption to the balanced ecosystem. Another point of view is that of an economic enterprise, manipulating resources and products to meet the needs of a market on a national scale. There is also a political perspective, which sees nomadism as being associated with a powerful, hierarchical organisation and a sophisticated socio-political system with the potential to perturb existing processes of power and control. Still another perspective toward nomadism is historical, where the nomadic way of life is seen as an historical heritage which adapted within an ecological context and contributed much to the cultural values of Iran. Finally, nomadism may be seen in terms of a community which is a victim of inequity in terms of access to social and community services compared to settled communities.
The generation of policy and development practices appropriate to improving the situation of nomads as a whole problematic issue, is made difficult by the fragmentary knowledge which is generated through this multitude of perspectives. It is very difficult to get any sense of "the whole picture" when there is so much variation in the types of explanations being provided of the "nature of the problem".

There are also other matters of importance with respect to knowledge for policy making and practice. There is, for instance, the issue of how any knowledge gained through inquiry is put into practice in a range of situations from policy making levels down to field practice. The conventional model of scientific or technological development sees theory and practice as two quite separate endeavours; the researchers develop their theories as explanations of "why things are so" and, in principle, the practitioners take these theories and put them into practice. Often, however, the theories, for one reason or another, are not easily converted into practice. Indeed, theories from different sources or perspectives may sometimes even be in contradiction to each other. And there is matter of access by the practitioners to the most relevant theories.

The researcher and practitioners (such as policy-makers, extensionists and field officers) often find it difficult to communicate with each other, not only because of their separate locations, but also because of their language. The theoreticians speak the language of science and "explanations" whilst the practitioners are "action" people and field-oriented. In agriculture, and some other areas of endeavour, specialist extension professionals are trained to fill the role of linking researchers with practitioners in a two-way communication flow. This conventional model of diffusion included three major functions: teaching, research, and extension (Rogers, 1983). All too often, however, this conventional model of
research and extension (Figure 1.2) translates into a one-way flow; the researchers feel that they know the "true", objective explanations and believe that anything the field practitioners have to say is too affected by their own narrow experiences and subjectivity to be of much use in the formulation of theory.

**Figure 1.2** Conventional Model of Research and Extension, based on the model produced by Rogers (1983).

So, theory and practice remain divorced from each other. And, as for the recipients of all this advice, their voices are virtually ignored entirely. At a more profound level, the issue of the manner by which knowledge is generated, is also of very considerable importance here.

Thomas Kuhn’s seminal *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) was among the first works to emphasise the historical significance of differences in ways that scientific knowledge is generated. Kuhn introduced the word “paradigm” to describe any particular set of beliefs which provide the framework for the generation of knowledge and the “ways of doing science” that result from these. The issue of paradigms is of central importance to
the work reported in this thesis and will be expanded on later. At this point it is sufficient to stress the limitations of what might be termed the prevailing “techno-scientific” paradigm of development and the challenge of seeking to change it.

The issue of the separation of theory (research) from practice is of major importance because:

- The theoreticians try to provide objective explanations for what is happening to the nomads and their environment as their ways of life are changing.

- The practitioners on the other hand, actively try to change the ways of life and the environment of the nomads based on current goals and their understanding of what would be better for them.

Each of these two approaches is inadequate without the other. Yet, in spite of their differences, these two “schools” also have much in common in terms of the “framework of beliefs”, or paradigm, from which they operate. This thesis represents an attempt to expand the boundary and the framework of inquiry in order to explore new possibilities to improve the situation. A useful starting point is to investigate the approaches of the two “schools” to the “problem of nomadism” - what might be termed the academic and pragmatic.

The Academic School

Nomadic and pastoral societies have long served anthropology as prototypes of ‘traditional’, since by virtue of their distinct habits and apparent resistance to change, they seemed to maintain social practices lost to groups occupying the geographical and political mainstream of Third World nations.

(Galaty and Salzman, 1983:4)
Most of the studies done among Iranian nomads have been carried out by foreign anthropologists and historians. As Spooner points out, most of the historical information about nomads has been derived from the viewpoint of their settled neighbours, “who have invariably been unsympathetic” (1973:4). As far as nomadic studies more generally are concerned

Before 1970 the predominant interest in pastoralists was as paradigmatic cases of the segmentary lineage society within British structural functionalism. During the 1970s however there was an upsurge of different and competing views, many centred on ecological and/or economic interpretations of pastoral social organisation. (Seymour-Smith, 1986:216-17)

Some of the anthropological studies of Iranian nomads are still regarded as among the best classical anthropological studies of nomadic studies. *Nomads of South Persia*, by Frederick Barth (1961), is one such example.

Nomadic pastoralism has provided interesting material for ecological studies in the anthropological sub-field of “cultural ecology” which have been concerned with the relationship between culture and habitat. The cultural ecological view consider the nomadic way of life as system of co adaptation with an arid or semi-arid ecological situation, and as a food chain system (Nyerges, 1982; Spooner, 1982; Johnson, 1983). “Pastoral nomad mobility, composition variability, and dependence upon herding make them particularly appropriate subjects of ecological analysis” (Johnson, 1983:175). As Spooner (1992) says:

Most studies of nomadic pastoralism have been formulated in ecological terms. ... Research on traditional nomadic pastoralism so far has been focused mainly on the relationship between animal husbandry and range ecology...The major concern of these scholars has, therefore, been the mechanisms of adaptation in the life of these human communities.
Introduction to the Problem

(ONPI, 1992:70)

Spooner (1992:70-71) identifies a gap between ecological analysis and a sociological approach and makes an attempt to correct this problem in nomadic pastoralism studies.

From another part of view, the nomadic way of life is considered a sophisticated socio-political system (internally and externally) which interacts with the wider context within which it exists the context including other communities, formal structures of power within the state and international organisations. Yet another viewpoint considers nomadism as an economic enterprise concerned with manipulating the inputs (resources) to outputs (products).

Area of focus and concern of academic research among Iranian nomads could be summarised in four major group (Table 1.1).
Table 1.1. ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON IRANIAN NOMADS AND MAIN AREA OF FOCUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Organisation of Tribes and their Historical Relationship with the State</th>
<th>Socio-Political Change and Economic Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Barth (1961)</td>
<td>• Abrahamian (1982)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Brooks (1983)</td>
<td>• Barth (1961)</td>
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<td>• Irons (1974, 1979)</td>
<td>• Tapper (1971)</td>
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<td>• Oberling (1972)</td>
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<td>• Salzman (1973)</td>
<td>• Keddie (1981, 1984)</td>
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<td>• Spooner (1988)</td>
<td>• Salzman (1980)</td>
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<td>• Tapper (1979, 1983)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Ecological Adaptation</th>
<th>Economical Aspect of Nomadism and Economic Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Amanolahi (1981)</td>
<td>• Abrahamian (1982)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Beck (1991)</td>
<td>• Barth (1964)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Salzman (1971a)</td>
<td>• Beck (1981a)</td>
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<td>• Hole (1978, 1979)</td>
<td>• Fazel and Afshar-Naderi (1976)</td>
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<td>• Johnson (1983)</td>
<td>• Safi-Nejad (1969)</td>
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<td>• Nyerges (1982)</td>
<td>• Stuffer (1967)</td>
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<td>• Spooner (1982)</td>
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Common features of academic research relating to Iranian nomads is considered in two respects: a) the area of focus and concern and b) methodological approach to interpretation and making sense. In terms of the area of focus and concern of academic research (Table 1.1), generally it could be said that:

I. There is significant concern with the socio-political organisation and understanding of socio-political strategies of nomads in historical and contemporary contexts.

II. In the meantime many areas and dimensions of the nomadic way of life in Iran are still unexplored by researchers and little information and knowledge about nomadism exists (Beck, 1991; Keddie, 1981). For instance "No study of inter tribal relationships in Iran exist" Beck (1991: 448). Study of indigenous knowledge and the role of women are part of this neglected arena among the Iranian nomads, although the role of women has been considered by some anthropologists in recent years (For example see Tapper Nancy, 1978; Beck 1978, Wright 1978,1981 and Fazel 1977).

III. Much more research is needed into “what has changed” and what are the consequences of change for nomadic societies (Galaty and Salzman, 1981).

In terms of the methodology for interpretation and making sense of nomadic research, generally it could be said:
I. Most of the works are methodo
daly based on an “objective” approach which
attempts to explain the socio-cultural patterns of nomadic life and generate theory
to predict the situation (Galaty and Salzman, 1981).

II. As stated by Sandford (1983:141), the scientific (bio-physical) research concerned
with development among pastoralists is often divorced from the reality:

Not much research has been carried out, and what has is often made irrelevant. Most of the research is woefully divorced from an appreciation of the history of land-use and climate in the area, nor does it make use of oral history that would partially substitute for absence of scientific records.

III) Objective understanding of the socio-political function of nomadic society is not
accompanied by an understanding of the nomad’s perspectives about ‘appropriate
change’ and what is a ‘good life’ (Sandford, 1983), or ways to implement
appropriate changes. Only rarely have studies been conducted which focus on the
nomad’s viewpoints about change or changes in nomadic ways of looking at things
(Galaty and Salzman, 1981).

IV) The role of socio-economic context in the process of conceptualisation often is
neglected and the information is interpreted based on the assumptions of the
researchers (Sandford, 1983). An example which reflects this tradition of
understanding, interpreting and making sense of nomadic life is Schneider’s argument

Developmentalists ordinarily frame development policy on the assumption that
pastoralists keep animals for food, whereas, a more accurate perspective would
suggest that, they appear to keep them as stores of value and media of exchange.

Exceptions exist in the case of some anthropologists who have been at pains to
experience nomadic life and to learn and understand the values, knowledge and
issues of these communities and cultures through long term participant
observation, including Beck, Wright, Barth, Salzman and Affshar- Naderi.

The Practitioner School

The interests of national and international policy-makers over the last century in Iran have
been focused on the formation of the state and have included the issue of modernisation in
the capitalist manner (Halliday, 1979). Based on this ethos, development practitioners
have been employed to control and manipulate nomadic society, to “modernise” nomads as
part of the new centralised state. It seems to be an international trend that development
schemes for nomads are established firstly by politicians and then designed by economists
and agriculturists (Sandford, 1983), rather than by nomads themselves, or by ecologists
or anthropologists who have considerable understanding and experience with nomadic
societies (Salzman, 1980).

What marks the events of the last century in Iran as different from those of previous times,
is the application of single, determined, “top-down” policies of control over the nomads by
the non-nomadic based Pahlavi dynasty, and an expanded emphasis on a market-economy
(Tapper 1983). The political determination of the Pahlavi dynasty was to totally transform
Iran into a modern state (Keddie, 1981; 1984 Halliday, 1979).

In keeping with the authoritarian and centralistic nature of the regime, which
did not even tolerate independent thinking in the upper ranks of the
bureaucracy, the Shah’s agrarian policy lacked any emancipatory and
participatory traits.
(Schirazi, 1993:21).
The development of the nation-state and the consolidation of state power associated with the concept of "modernity", have been the predominant development strategies across the globe (Galaty and Salzman, 1981). In the particular case of Iran, financial and technical assistance was given to programs for the enforced settlement of nomads. programs with such objectives as national security and modernisation in mind (see Keddie, 1981, Tapper 1983). Some of the features of this approach have been:

a) Lack of effective communication between the government and the nomads. This is a common issue among nomads and the government and there is a need for “an easy flow of communications from pastoralists to the government as well as the other way round” (Sandford, 1983:143).

b) Nomads are considered as the problem makers. “They are seen as destroying their environment, because either their own population growth or their social values require them to keep excessive numbers of livestock” (Sandford, 1983:17).

c) “The governments seldom involve the nomads and pastoralists in politics; one consequence of this being that they often are told by others what is good for them” (Baxter, 1986). As Harskainen argues: “One of the central problem areas in the discussion about pastoralism and pastoralists is the lack of mutual understanding between the planning organisation on the state level and pastoralists themselves” (1990:79).

d) The problems perceived by practitioners tend to focus on the technical. “This follows from distrust of existing pastoral institutions and from the belief that modern science has already discovered the technical solutions to the problems of pastoral areas” (Sandford, 1983:18).
c) “Attempts to develop the pastoral sector have looked very much like attempts to copy the (North) American or Australian models of pastoral development” (Sandford, 1983:6). They have been based on positivist, technological and economic perspectives toward betterment, without considering the socio-cultural context of nomadic communities, leading to what Salih (1990) refers to as “political corrosion” with “development programs implemented without reference to the local communities or due consideration to their socio-cultural make up” (Salilh, 1990:6).

f) Much of the effort of practitioners in development activities among nomadic and pastoral communities is not informed by a clear definition of development (Sandford, 1983), nor a clear way of looking at change (Galaty and Salzman, 1983).

As a result of this way of dealing with nomadic affairs, “there is much talk of need for control and for discipline” (Sandford, 1983:18, emphasis in original), and a strong resistance among nomads and pastoralists, against the “process of change” and the “way of looking at change” is now being witnessed all over the world (Galaty and Salzman, 1981).

The Major Elements of the Mainstream View

While there are differences in the approach of academics and practitioners, there are also underlying common characteristics.

Separation Between Research (theory) and Change (action)

It is assumed by both parties that research and development activities are two different tasks and must be done separately in such a way that the theory that is generated by
scholars should be used and implemented by practitioners, as illustrated in Figure 1.3. The practitioners are seen (both by themselves and academics) to deal with the situation as it informed and defined already by academics. The result of this gap between academics and practitioners involved in development is explained by Chambers:

On the one hand we have rural people and a handful of researchers with access to and understanding of rich and detailed systems of knowledge which do not influence development; and on the other we have government organisations and staff engaged in development but ignorant of and conditioned to despise that knowledge.

(Chambers, 1983:84)

The “one-way flow of knowledge” in the current system of research and development for Iranian nomads is illustrated in Figure 1.3.
Figure 1.3. The flow of knowledge in the current system of development for Iranian nomads.
The Issue is Defined and the Solutions are Technological

In the mainstream approach to research and development, a problem is seen as a mismatch between what is scientifically known and technically feasible (the ideal situation) and the current practice (perceived situation). Solutions are seen as being technical. It is as if technological solutions can be known and defined for every situation without considering the context (Russell et al. 1992).

The mainstream approach sees all new technologies being designed by research scientists and then transferred to the end-users who put it into action to address the problem. This is the Transfer of Technology (TOT), which is identified by Axinn (1988) as the “general agricultural extension approach”.

The basic assumption with this approach [general agricultural extension approach] is that technology and information are available which are not being used by farmers, and if knowledge of these could be communicated to farmers, farm practices would be improved. The purpose is to help farmers increase their production.

(Axinn, 1988: 6)

The “diffusion” model of technology transfer (Rogers, 1971, 1983), based on a one-way link from a research-based pool of information producers, to processors, marketeers, and consumers, continues to prevail (Ingram, 1985), even where it is seen to be grossly inadequate. The response to charges of inadequacy are met by the argument that more resources need to be deployed into researching the nomads and the rangelands, and more technological inputs need to be provided.
Neglecting the Nomad's Voice, Views and Knowledge

Attempts to deal with the perceived problem as the 'real' problem are a common and tacit tradition among both practitioners and research scholars of pastoralism nomads in Iran (Russell et al. 1992). Sandford (1983:11-17) addresses this central issue of traditions of understanding in considerable detail regarding pastoral studies all over the world, when he talks of "some problems with the mainstream view" and what the view entails.

This rationalistic view accepts the existence of an "objective" reality and most often makes no distinction between the possible understandings of material and biological phenomena. There is a basic assumption that a fixed reality is 'out there' and that by applying rational understanding, accurate knowledge of its elements and the laws of its functioning can be gained by an objective inquirer (Russell, et al. 1992).

Neglecting local knowledge of indigenous people in general and pastoral nomads in particular is the other common problem with the mainstream view. According to Chambers (1983), professional power often fails to recognize knowledge of local people in the process of change and development. Based on this "propositional" understanding and belief there is no room for nomads and their views, knowledge, and voices to be represented in the process of problem identification or responding to issues.

Considering the State of Affairs as Fragmented Parts

Another common characteristic of both scholars and practitioners, is the tendency to consider phenomenon in such a way as to separate issues and reduce them to their parts.
As is demonstrated in Figure 1.3, separation of different aspects of nomadic life into distinct fields such as natural resources, social issues or economic issues, is a very common and accepted practice in both research and developmental activities. The reductionist viewpoint neglects the recursivness, diversity, and complexity of the different dimensions of nomadic life and is dominant within both schools. This is an increasingly inadequate paradigm as it cannot deal with the issue of nomadism as a “field of complex qualities and relations” (Galaty and Salzman 1981:23).

Neglecting the Socio-economic Context

In most efforts to understand the pastoralist community the wider socio-economic and cultural context is neglected (Symour-Smith, 1986). This tendency is particularly significant in the area of change and development by practitioners. For instance, in the fields of animal husbandry and range management, there is a very strong emphasis on the production of beef, on commercial ranching, on the specialised stratification of the production process in breeding, on markets and on processing facilities as are characteristic of North America and Australia. These characteristics are “a reflection of an ideal of what pastoral development is about” (Sandford, 1983:6) and they have exercised a strong influence in much of the developing world.

A Search for a Better Model of Understanding

Development interventions must always arise from our models of the world and our traditions of understanding. Examining the current theory and practice of developmental activity among pastoral nomads in Iran allows us to identify the models of understanding that inform particular practices. Four main characteristics of the current model of
understanding shared by academics and practitioners are their acceptance of the *technocentric paradigm, objectivism, reductionism, and positivism.*

The history of research and development among Iranian nomads during the past five decades reveals many examples of how the dominant view, both in ‘theory’ and ‘action’, has failed to recognise the complex socio-ecological context. There are some movements toward better understanding and action both among academics and practitioners.

The argument of this thesis is that a new way of understanding and action in research and development among nomads is needed to challenge the prevailing paradigm, or in other words, to challenge the ‘rationalistic tradition’, which is a tradition in which we seem deeply immersed. This tradition was named rationalistic because of its stress on specific styles of consciously rational thinking (Bawden, 1990; Russell et al. 1992).

In the case of ill-defined problems, it is appropriate to move beyond the objective, analytic, and reductionist approach and to learn to think more subjectively and holistically. The intention is not to argue that there are not problems associated with nomadism in Iran, but to put the problems into expanded frameworks and perspectives. After all, it is most important to consider all possible aspects of the issue and the views of all stakeholders together, in order to bring about *situation improvement.*

The theoretical underpinnings of this research will be discussed in the following chapter (section) and some implications of this way of thinking to ways of improving the problematical situation will be presented.
CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM

IN A RATIONAL WAY:

A NEW CHALLENGE

What we need, then is a new 'paradigm' - a new vision of reality a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions, and values.

(Capra, 1983)

From Problem to Theory to Practice

Arising out of Chapter One, the problematic situation that is seen to exist between the Iranian government and nomads, relates to perspectives on natural resource and community management. The issue is seen to involve mental abstraction and high level of complexity. In broad terms we are dealing with: (a) a complex human system which is highly interrelated with an ecological context; (b) different viewpoints, perceptions
and conceptualisations of the issue from different perspectives; and (c) an absence of the voice of the nomads in problem identification. In this chapter I aim to develop an hypothesis to match the issue and its defined characteristics.

The basic proposition of this thesis is that the current situation will not improve until new ways of approaching the situation are developed and utilised. Such new ways of approaching the situation involve more than methods, techniques or even methodologies. A paradigm shift is required; a shift in the way complex situations are perceived and conceptualised in to ways which then permit strategies for change to be effected in practice.

Every model of understanding grows out of a “paradigm”; a network of prejudices (literally understood as a pre-understanding) that provide possible answers and strategies for action.

At any given point in historical time and geographic location, a set of perspectives can be identified that is used by most people to make sense out of the world. This set of perspectives contains the prevailing philosophical speculations about the nature of humanity and the rest of the universe, is attuned to the history of human achievements relevant for the times, and is shaped by local events and structures as well. For the most part our world view is so basic we are rarely aware of it.

(Plas, 1986)

The argument in this thesis is that a new way of understanding and action in research and development among nomads is needed to challenge the prevailing paradigm. A new way of looking, will change the context, and ultimately the problem. “If you change the context, you change the problem” (Jean Monnet, cited in Oye 1992: 31).
Capra, in The Turning Point says, "The survival of our whole civilization may depend on whether we can bring about such a change" (Capra, 1983:xx).

The necessity of this paradigmatic shift is not based merely on intellectual trends, nor on a particular theory, but on the needs that were discussed and outlined in the preceding chapter. The paradigm that each of us holds, significantly affects the way we understand and interpret our world and those problems we associate with living in it. When any particular paradigm ceases to provide adequate explanations of situations, or to offer methods for the improvement of them, the paradigm and the belief systems which sustain it, are called into question (Capra, 1983). Based on the general failure of the current paradigm in enabling, understanding and tackling the current issue, one of the most crucial tasks of this research was a choice of paradigm.

A Choice for Appropriate Theories to Match the Issue for Better Understanding and Improvement

The paradigm developed in this thesis and based on the characteristics of the current issue, fits within a family of new paradigms. This paradigmatic development benefited from three main intellectual streams including: a) "constructivism", b) "systems thinking", and c) "critical thinking". Constructivism will help in the consideration of differing viewpoints on the current situation as different constructs. Systems thinking assists in the consideration of the actual complex situation as a set of interconnected aspects in a given context. Critical thinking provides its benefits from the dialectic interplay of theory and practice, displaying dominant positivist thinking to look for "reason" in every step of the research for change for improvement. In general,
Constructivism provides a perspective to consider and accommodate all different views toward the situation, and systems thinking offers a holistic way to look at things. Finally, critical thinking, offers a dialectical approach to benefit the praxis of interrelated theory and practice.

None of these ideas are new; what is different in this research is a combination of these ideas as a way to choose and apply appropriate methodologies in facing ill-defined, complex and changing situations. The theoretical domain of this current research is illustrated in figure 2.1.

Figure No 2.1. Paradigm shift and theoretical domain of this research
Chapter Two

Basis of the Selected Paradigm

There is a growing debate in academic and intellectual circles in general and soft sciences, like social or developmental sciences in particular, concerning the shortcomings of the dominant paradigm, (Kuhn, 1962; Capra 1975, 1983) and the need for a shift from positivism to post-modernist, post-positivism (Habermas 1974, 1978) and/or post-Newtonism (Uphoff, 1992), as new paradigms for “human inquiry” (Reason & Heron, 1986).

The critique of the current scientific approach and the inappropriateness of its use in focusing and making sense out of social life, parallels the revolution in “cognitive science” which has led to the emergence of new disciplines and ways of understanding multiple social realities (Gardner, 1985; Bruner 1986; Goodman, 1984; Maturana, 1988). Constructivism, as a school of thought, emerged out of attempts to make sense out of situations where a social reality is constructed by different individuals in the form of mental constructs (Kelly, 1955; Guba, 1990; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Systems Thinking and its Application in This Research

Another part of this debate concerns the shift in scientific thinking from reductionism to holism. In general it can be said that the essence of this strand of the debate concerns the perceptual shift from seeing all parts as separate, to seeing all parts as interconnected and changing as a whole. In this view, a system is considered as (a) an object for theoretical research, (b) a set of activities in a functional sense, or (c) something that we want to consider as whole (Marchal, 1975). From each of these
perspectives, the system is considered as a phenomenon or a set of interconnected
*hard* variables in a *real world*.

More recently, systems thinking has taken a different approach in considering and reacting
toward the real world. It offer us a way to consider and conceptualise the actual world as a
perspective or *constructs* toward the reality (Checkland and Scholes, 1990). Shifting from
systems engineering or the *hard* tradition of systems approaches, to human activity
systems which are radically different (Vickers, 1983), has led us to consider systems as
constructs; and what Checkland and his colleagues (Checkland, 1981, 1986; Checkland
and Scholes, 1990) call *soft systems*, or what Vickers (1983) refers to as *appreciative
systems*.

The contribution of the holistic approach to this research is that it permits the
conception of complex characteristics of the situation as a whole. The dynamic and
complex aspects of the nomadic way of life, which has interdependencies with its socio-
biological environment, display the character of being complex and highly organised way
of life. The other main dimension of nomadic life which makes it vital to be studied by such
an holistic approach, is the ever changing socio-economic and ecological environmental
context within which nomadic communities exist, and the radical and rapid continuous
change to all aspects of nomadic life. *Cultural (or Social) Anthropology*, which is an
holistic approach and focuses on relationships rather than parts, is considered as an
appropriate methodology to review and create a rich picture of complex interconnection of
parts and sub-parts within nomadism and its environment.
Hence there is a strong movement in problem identification and problem solving in which systems thinking is emerging with potentially important implications. Systems thinking enables us to go beyond hard systems metaphors and considers the situation as differently constructed abstract systems. A “soft” systems approach enables us to consider all the viewpoints (constructs) held, and to explore the inherent complexity of all factors in the current situation and share all different perspective and constructs; in sum to study the problematical situation from a number of different “whole” perspectives.

A very simple holistic model, which includes the major role players and illustrates their interactive relations within the current socio-economic and ecological environments, is presented in Figure 2.2. This model and several other models in next chapters represent the major areas of concern and an interactive environment of change between government, nomads, natural resources and the environment within which they interact.
Figure 2.2. The interactive change of nomadic Pastoralism in Iran: Nomads at the interface between the socio-economic and ecological environments

Constructivism and its Application in This Research

According to Guba (1990), a paradigm is developed to answer and respond to three major ontological, epistemological and methodological questions. (1) What is the nature of "reality" (Ontological)? (2) What is the nature of the relationship between the knower (inquirer) and the known (Epistemological)?, AND (3) How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge (Methodological)?
Methodologically, finding out knowledge from a constructivist position involves the identification and establishment of consensus among different mental models which exist within the context. The two main aspects of this process as mentioned by Guba (1990) are 'hermeneutics' and 'dialectics'. The hermeneutic aspect consists of depicting individual constructions as accurately as possible, while the dialectic aspect consists of comparing and contrasting these existing individual constructions so that each respondent, including those of the inquirers, are confronted and accommodated within the process of research.

The implication of constructivism in this research, is that a dialectic is used to uncover the meaning of the constructs of each major party in the research, along with the constructs that exist between and among the interacting individuals and groups. Of course this includes the researcher who works as the facilitator and who can never be separated from his or her value and context, nor from his or her own constructions. The role of the researcher in this paradigm is that of orchestrating the dialogue and facilitating a dialectical conversation. Constructing the meaning is the major role of the researcher rather than data collection. The interactive relation between the researcher and researched will help them to make viable meaning and understanding, even though the outcomes are not generalisable for any other context and time.

Understanding constructivism and its paradigmatic principles and its associated discipline base in humanistic inquiry, is crucial for the researcher who does not want to be remote from his/her original role. Collaborative inquiry, which recommends a dialectic approach to understanding, will be considered as the major guide for this
research. It is important to identify the relationship of researcher and client, in such a way as to benefit the client through the outcomes (knowledge) and the process of the research (Reason 1988, 1992) and thus collaborative inquiry offers the advantages of ‘epistemological heterogeneity’ (Reason and Heron, 1986).

**Applied Methodologies**

All of these approaches are considered as an appropriate intellectual guide for this research for making sense out of ‘reality’ by designing ‘inquiring systems’ and Hawkesbury intellectual traditions informed the approach to Critical Systemic Inquiry (Figure 2.5). As a meta-researcher, I had to select and manipulate a methodology for each arising circumstance in order to make an unclear picture more clear and to facilitate an understanding of the complexities and diversities discovered during the process of the research.

Applied methodologies and methods in each phase of the research will be discussed in greater detail in specific chapters.
FIGURE NO 2.4. Intellectual position of this research
Figure 2.5. Some intellectual traditions informing the Hawkesbury approach to Critical Systemic Inquiry (amended from Bawden, 1988)
The first chapter focused on issues of nomadism in contemporary Iran. My intention in this chapter is to provide a broader picture of the situation for a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between nomads, the State and natural resources in Iran. The underlying concern is to provide a more holistic and historical view of these interrelationships in both an ecological and historical context. The aims of this research are to: (a) explore some aspects of pastoralist nomads to prepare a richer picture of the context for making sense of pastoralist nomads in general and Iranian nomads in particular; (b) to review the
interrelationships between the State, nomads and natural resources in terms of changes in resource management over time; and (c) to argue the future tendency of the current relationships based on review of common theory and practice.

The first part of the chapter is about the main characteristics of a specific group which we call "pastoral nomads". Examination of their characteristics includes their history and, in discussion of their history, I will explore the State and its relationship with nomads. Some general features of Iranian pastoral nomads will be presented from an ecological perspective and then the history of nomadism in Iran will be discussed with particular emphasis on the interrelationships of nomads with the State, and the changes in these various dimensions. Conclusions based on a literature survey are included in the last section of this chapter.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF PASTORAL NOMADS OF IRAN

Definition

Definitional difficulties arise when a study includes a community which is physically mobile, politically problematic and socio-culturally complex. These difficulties arise not only because of the lack of geographical framework, complexity and even the political sensitiveness of the issue, but also because of a concern for change and development
which exists in this study. “Nomadic pastoralism” or “pastoral nomadism” is something
different to “nomadism” or “pastoralism”.

[The word nomad] is Derived from the Greek nemo (to pasture), the term is used
in anthropology to refer to the lifestyle not only of pastoral nomads but also other
social types characterized by the lack of a permanent residence or settlement.
(Seymour-Smith, 1986:209).

So a definition for “nomads” is people roaming from place to place. In contemporary
usage, the word is not restricted to roaming in search for pasture. Pastoralists are defined
as: “The people who derive most of their income or subsistence from keeping domestic
livestock in conditions where most of the feed that their livestock eat is natural forage and
pasture” (Sandford, 1983:1). Pastoralists may, or may not, be nomadic. Both terms
describe a way of life and economic and land use systems, without attention to nomadic
socio-cultural features and barely capture the social characteristics and kinship system of
nomadism.

Pastoral nomadism is not to be equated with transhumance. “Transhumance is best
reserved for seasonal movements of cultivators, who have fixed habitations but move their
flocks according to seasonal variations in pasture” (Spooner, 1973:42). This term used to
describe a spatially limited pattern of movement in mountainous areas which was first
recognized in the Alpine regions of Europe. “Although pastoral activities are one of the
concerns of a transhumant community, agriculture nearly always remains the dominant
interest' (Douglas, 1974: 18). Therefore the term transhumant is mainly concerned with
the issue of movement rather than the other characteristics of pastoralists.

In some studies, pastoral nomadism is discussed as a form of tribal society. Sahlin
(1968:vii) says: "... 'tribe' is like the 'nation' of older usage, a body of people of common
derivation and custom, in possession and control of their own extensive territory". This
term is concerned with social features and social structures of certain societies, regardless
of their economic and ecological features.

According to the *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology* (1986), pastoral nomads
constitute a social type which may be defined by the coexistence of a dependence on
livestock with spatial mobility or nomadism.

Such societies have been and are found in many parts of the world, including
Africa, Asia, Southern Europe and South America, where they have been the
subject of anthropological study. However the principal geographical focus of the
study of this social type has been on East Africa and the Middle East... there have
been many attempts to formulate a general theory or model of this type of society.
(Seymour-Smith, 1986:216)

This thesis is specifically concerned with nomads who fall into broader category of *Middle
East pastoral nomads*. The three main characteristics of Middle East pastoral nomads are:
a) animal husbandry by natural forage and pasture takes up the major portion of their time and this is the main source of their income;

b) nomadic households follow a regular pattern of movement between summer and winter quarters;

c) they have a strong kinship system, and a highly developed social and political organisation compared to agricultural communities.

According to these characteristics, the nomadic community in this study is distinguished from rural agriculturalists, urban populations, semi-nomads, sedentarised nomads, transhumant agriculturalists and sedentary pastoralists. The sedentarised nomads, who are still part of the kinship system, but have left the annual migration and have not any share in flocks or any right to pasture are not considered as nomads in this study. Nor are absentee shareholders in flocks and “grazing rights licenses”, who may spend all or part of their time in cities, considered as nomads. However, because of their crucial role and rights to common resources, they have not been neglected in this study. Areas described as nomadic areas in this study are areas used by nomads and are identified separately from rural and urban areas.

ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PASTORAL NOMADISM

During the 1970s there was a significant shift in anthropological studies toward ecological interpretations of pastoral nomadism and especially pastoral nomadic social organisation
(Seymour-Smith, 1986). The central concerns of the anthropological field of cultural ecology are the study of relationships between environment, population dynamics or demography, human culture and social organisation (Spooner, 1973).

The term "ecological approach" in this thesis refer to "cultural ecology" or "ecological anthropology" and generally refers to a broad subject area, including the study of relationships between human social behavior and environment. Cultural ecology methodologically focuses on the relationship rather than the parts. From this perspective, social behavior and the environment are not seen separate, but rather as a system. Therefore, the essence of the ecological anthropological approach is an emphasis on holism (Fisher, 1988). This approach, which takes into account the physical environment, resources, resource use, social organisation, politics and any other relevant issues, is considered here to be an appropriate holistic perspective toward pastoral nomadism. Since "new models of cultural ecology incorporate the notions of adaptive strategy and decision-making in order to integrate the level of individual behavior into the overall theory" (Seymour-Smith, 1986:64), there is a focus here adaptive strategy and the issue of decision making.

In this section I present an ecological interpretation of pastoral nomadism, and focus on the natural cycle of life, the interrelationship between the nomads and their environment, timing, decision-making, adaptive strategies and social organisation.
The Basis of Nomadic Life

Pastoral nomadism can be seen as a continual struggle for adaptation to the continually changing environment; a challenge which has been going on for thousands of years. "The primary requirements in all form of pastoralism, whether nomadic or non-nomadic, are pasture and water" (Spooner 1973: 8). Nomads use their livestock to harvest and convert solar energy captured and fixed in plants into products useful to humans. Consequently, there is a very integrated relationship between the major components of nomadic life: nomads, pastures and herds (Figure 3.1). Pastoral nomadism is a form of livelihood that is ecologically adjusted at a particular technological level for utilisation of marginal resources (Douglas, 1974).

Figure 3.1. The major components of nomadic life and their relationships.
The foundation of nomadic life is livestock. The number of livestock raised by nomads is based on vegetation density and other variable natural factors. Each nomadic group exists in a particular geographic space within which the natural resources change constantly. Totally dependent on this relocation of natural resources, nomads and their animals have no choice but to move from highland pasture to lowland pasture and back again every year. For them, coexistence with nature means survival and, sometimes even wealth, while to stay in one place means death and famine.

In Iran, both the vegetation density and geographical location of the pastures vary with the time of year following the natural season. As the season changes, so does the pasture. The nomads begin to migrate slowly down toward the warm lowland winter quarters in the dry and hot summer and they have to migrate slowly back to highland summer quarters which have a cool climate during the summertime.

**Migration Route**

Every nomadic group knows very well the pattern of seasonal and edaphic change in its area and has carefully adapted its migration pattern to it (Barth, 1961). This indigenous knowledge and experience has been gained through the struggle of many generations. The migration route which nomadic units in Iran follow are called Il-rah. The il-rah is a schedule of traditional rights to utilize certain places at certain times in the year. These rights are traditionally sub-divided and allotted within a tribe among its various sections,
so alternative routes in the il-rah are held by different sections of the tribe (Barth, 1961). Understanding the organisation of a nomadic region depends on the recognition and understanding of the il-rah; how it is developed, how it functions and how it is regulated and administered. All nomadic groups have their own territories which include lowland pasture winter quarters and highland pasture and summer quarters and also their migration routes, the il-rah. The length of il-rah for different tribal units, such as tribes sub-tribes, clans and even for different sub-clans, varies according to several factors, for example the topography and their historically recognised rights.

Timing and Decision-Making in Nomadic Life

Timing of resource management in nomadic life is a very dynamic and complex issue; the sedentary period in summer quarters and winter quarters and the rapidity of migration, are based on natural and ecological conditions. When the vegetation density of pastures dictates, nomads move in larger and aggregated groups and establish their night camps close to each other. Sometimes, because of the poor pasture, they have to break up into smaller units and keep greater distances from each other. The rapidity of movement along the migration route must also be adjusted to vegetation along the way.

Since many factors change annually (for example, the number of animals and the rainfall), planning (decision-making) is a continuing affair for the tribal community. From this point of view, nomadic pastoralism "...is a complex and demanding enterprise full of decisions
that must be made quickly, and a wrong choice can have serious long-term consequences” (Beck, 1991:1). Poor planning for the annual migration, for instance not planning properly for the watering of the animals or not considering the grazing capacity of the pasture compared to the nature of animals, or inattention to security matters, can cause great inter-tribal or inter-clan clashes. These sometimes result in physical clashes and famine, examples of which are common in the history of nomads (Barth, 1961).

Pastoral Nomads and Their Environment

From an ecological perspective, there is a high level of co-adaptation between pastoral nomadism and its ecological context. From this perspective nomadism can be called a “plant-animal-human food system” (Spooner, 1982). In nomadic pastoralism the livestock supply the food and fuel of the nomadic family, their clothing, housing, means of transport, and goods for trade. The herder, on the other hand, affords the herd protection against rapacious beasts and men (who might slaughter rather than milk the stock), digs wells, builds windbreaks against the winter blizzard and supplies obstetric intervention for the herds, including early post-natal care in feeding. The herd and the herder therefore, are mutually dependent on each other and both of them are highly dependent on the grass which the herds consume without nutrient replenishment. The dung works as a manure (input) for pasture and is sometimes carefully collected as fuel by the shepherd also.
In general, quantity of water, soil type and other bio-physical characteristics of the region determine the nature and quality of the foliage. The temperature and length of daytime controls the growing period of the pasture (Douglas, 1974).

An industrial dynamics model of animal husbandry as practiced by nomads is illustrated in Figure 3.2. This model characterises the complex interrelationship between nomads and their biological environment, including the herd and natural resources, from a systemic view point. This model gives an idea of how the nomads affect this system of relationships in favor of their changing goals and needs through changing animal reproduction practices, animal production, health and grazing strategies. It is important to note that this model is based on cultural ecology and borrows some ideas from cybernetics to illustrate the recursiveness of relationships and the effects of the nomads' practices on the condition of natural resources, such as soil fertility and water resources.
Figure 3.2. An industrial dynamics model of animal husbandry, by nomads.
Pastoral Nomads and Surrounding Social Context

The other important area of study among pastoral nomads is the study of social organisation and the study of the interaction between nomads and the social context within which they live. Some "ecological determinists" see the social characteristics of a pastoralist society as a superstructure which is essentially determined by biological conditions. But there is an argument about this view. Seymour-Smith (1986:62) says, that the opponents of the ecological determinist view "...have argued that cultures and societies have their own logic and their own principles of organisation, and cannot be reduced to series of adaptations to environmental conditions."

From a systemic viewpoint we cannot understand pastoral nomadism without considering the social context with which they interact. This is very clearly recognised in modern anthropology:

...in modern anthropological studies of pastoralists it has also been recognized that these groups cannot be studied in isolation from the national and regional context of inter-ethnic relations and their relationship to a dominant state system and/or to neighboring agricultural peoples.
(Seymour-Smith, 1986:217)

Historically, there has not been exclusive separation of nomads and settled societies and there is evidence that the population ratios between nomadic and settled populations have fluctuated as a function of various natural, socio-economic and historical changes. There is historical evidence of the evolution of nomadic societies from settled agriculturalists...
communities (Spooner, 1973), and there are cases where nomadic groups have settled and begun cultivation and cases where rural people have left their land and begun a nomadic life (These variations will be discussed later in this chapter.) Despite the historical transaction between nomadic and sedentary communities, there is evidence to show the close relationships of nomadic groups with each other and with settled communities. It could be said that nomads and settled societies have historically, had a mutual relationship and, despite the severe competition between them for pasture, neither could exist without the other (Douglas, 1974; Spooner 1973).

In general, the resources that all pastoral groups utilise are of a marginal nature and cannot be readily used by any other system of land-use. The different ecological and socio-cultural contexts of pastoral nomads and sedentarised communities have not isolated them from each other and the changes which have occurred in their living contexts during the last century have increased these interrelationships.

As illustrated in Figure 3.3, pastoral nomads have had a significant relationship with sedentary communities through markets and shared resources. Herding activities did not end the herder’s need for agricultural products. This relationship has been enforced by the expansion of the market and political structure in general and the formation of the State and its interventions during the last century in particular (Galaty and Salzman, 1981).
Figure 3.3  Pastoral nomads and their relations with wider societies through the market.
Adapted from Mc Dowel (n.d. 4).
Adaptive Strategies and Nomadic Life

Pastoral nomads have a wide range of adaptive strategies which allow them to adjust to and cope with internal or external constraints (see Figure 3.4). These adjustment strategies refer to a set of action plans which may or may not be articulated by one actor in a given social situation. In fact, the nomads may not be conscious of their plan or their action which results from it.

Pastoral society, especially through its social organisation and system of land-use, is itself a way of adaptation to the natural environment along with the migratory way of life. The migratory grazing system by itself, is an important adjustment strategy which helps nomads cope with ecological constraints and lack of vegetation.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.4.** Nomads and their adjustment strategies within ecological context.
Flexibility in the face of unavoidable, uncontrollable natural forces is another main adaptive strategy of pastoral nomadism. Various natural factors such as rainfall, temperature, disease and so on, are not predictable from year to year. To cope with these unpredictable factors the nomads are flexible. For instance, they vary the composition of the herd between different species (goat or sheep) depending upon a variety of conditions. They also vary the grazing path and annual migration time/pattern as part of their adjustment strategy for compatibility with diverse natural forces. As stated by Sandford (1983: 3), these adjustment strategies are part of the nomadic way of life:

Inheritance, marriage, and property laws regulate the combination of different species of livestock with water, land, labor, and other resources and livestock and people move from place to place in such a way as to maintain the efficiency and security of the harvesters and processors and of the labour that tends them.

Social Organisation as an Adaptive Strategy in Pastoral Nomadism

When nomadic life is considered as an intersection of a biological and a social system (Figure. 3.5), the social organisation appears to be an important adaptive strategy because the tribal organisation itself unites the families into a group which is better able to survive within the changing and harsh conditions of their environment. In this regard Beck argues that:

The local-level ties of tribally organized people were created on a voluntary basis according to principles and processes of kinship, marriage, coresidence, economics, politics, and friendship. These local-level ties did not create tribes. Rather, tribes were formed through the political affiliation of individuals and groups to local-level and in some cases higher-level groups and leaders... Small tribal groups joined larger ones, when, for example, state rulers attempted to restrict access to resources or when foreign troops invaded. (Beck, 1991:7)
Figure 3.5. Nomadism as the interface between the social system and natural environment.

The interactions between social organisation and ecological/political conditions have been studied among nomads including Iranian nomads. A comparison between two major tribal confederacies, one in the Zagros mountains the other in the eastern part of Iran, called Baluchistan, provides some insights.

In Baluchistan, the nomadic groups are semi-settled (Salzman, 1971a). Their migration takes place within a rather small area which geo-politically is not very important. As a result, the highest level of organisation among them is the subtribe or clan level. On the other hand, the two largest groups of nomads in Iran are located in the Zagros region. They are called Bakhtiar and Qashqai. The extent of their migration is geographically broader and their territory (South Persia) is geo-politically more important than that of the nomads in Baluchistan. In this area, the second biggest tribe in Iran was formed. It is called the Qashqai Confederacy, and is the federation of five different tribes formed into what is called Khamseh in order to play a role in political events (Beck, 1983).
These cases illustrate a pattern and a general conclusion: (a) the greater the geographical extent of migration, the greater the eco-climatological changes, or the harder the ecological constraints and the more sensitive political conditions imposed on the nomads, the more sophisticated and more complicated the hierarchical organisation of the nomadic group is likely to be and (b) tribal organisation is dependent on the ecological and political conditions within which nomadic groups live.

Tribal organisation, and even nomadism itself, has been seen by some authors as political response to a condition of alienation from and opposition to the State, as much as being economic or ecological adaptations. Irons (1974) perceives nomadism as a political adaptation, and based on his study among the Iranian Yomut Turkmen, argues that hierarchical political institutions among pastoralist nomads have been generated only by external political relations with state societies and never developed purely as a result of the internal dynamics of such societies.

These socio-political structures also serve as a regulatory means for any possible anarchy in production and for maintaining ecological balance of the nomadic areas. There is something of a paradox in the way nomadic organisation can be seen as both highly atomistic and highly centralised. Fisher (1978) argues that pastoral nomadic social organisation affects at two levels, each of which is an adaptation to difficult types of factors. On one hand:
The physical dispersal of nomadic groups in response to ecological conditions requires the existence of groups which can readily fission into self-sufficient atomistic units.

(Fisher. 1978:27)

and on the other hand:

some other centripetal forces exist which can facilitate the formation of groups of greater inclusiveness. These are essentially political. Larger social groups sometimes form in order to defend grazing rights from other predatory pastoralists, especially those forced out of their own ecological niche by changes in grazing conditions and carrying capacity or by the expansion of population beyond carrying capacity.

(Fisher, 1978: 27-8)

The tendency to develop centralised and hierarchical social structure is an adjustment strategy to political situations, including the need to coordinate responses to settled people (rural and urban communities) and the State (Figure. 3.6).
Figure 3.6: Adjustment strategies in the social and ecological context of pastoral nomadism.
PASTORAL NOMADISM IN IRAN

Though pastoral nomadism today has lost its former importance in Iran, a glance at Iranian history shows that it has a long history, perhaps longer than rural and urban settlement and most of the dynasties of Iran have originated from tribal groupings. Nomads are not only important in the historical, political and cultural development of Iran but also in the economic and social spheres. Much of the Zagros Mountain range remains marginal for agriculture, but it offers excellent contribution to the national economy (Stauffer, 1965).

The geo-climatic characteristics of Iran, involving great seasonal and geographical differences in climate and vegetation, make most of Iran more suitable for livestock raising than agriculture. Keddie (1981) argues that:

\[\ldots\] as in much of the middle east, irrigation led to salination of the soil and deforestation to erosion, so that agricultural difficulties and aridity almost surely increased over the centuries, which encouraged a pastoral nomadic adaptation to arid condition.

(Keddie, 1981:1)

The Zagros and Alborz mountain ranges, with their foothills on the perimeter of the central plateau (Map 1.1), support more than 3/4 or 75 percent of Iran’s grazing livestock, most of which belong to nomadic groups.
Chapter 3

According to the first official nomadic census (ICC, 1988), the nomadic population of Iran is 1,152,099 people, organised into 546 tribes, including tribal confederacies and independent subtribes. The largest tribe is the Bakhtiari with 36,333 families followed by the Qashqai with 17,444 families.

Although the proportion of nomads in Iran is less than three percent, their fraction of the population plays a very important role in the development of the country. They are the main suppliers of animal production for domestic market and raw materials (wool) to the country’s most important non-petroleum industry, the carpet industry.

Socio-Political Organisation Among Iranian Nomads

Most of the Nomadic tribes in Iran are organised hierarchically. But the socio-political organisation and tribal pattern varies between nomadic groups according to their size, historical background, the region within which they migrate and their relationship with the settled section of the population.

In spite of variations, generally it could be said that the smallest component unit of the nomadic socio-economic and political system is the tent or nomadic extended household. A lineage is made of several extended families, and several lineages form a bonkoh or more (Figure 3.7). The bonkoh is the largest visible unit of the tribal system. Several bonkoh can be organised into a tireh (sub tribe) and several tireh make tayefeh (tribe). Finally the combination of several tayefeh constitute a confederation or eyel.
Figure 3.7. Bonkoh and its components parts.
Chapter 3

NOMADS IN IRAN'S HISTORY

In the Middle East and Central Asia nomads have been studied more by historians than by anthropologists, and since nomads have inevitably been studied through the eyes of their settled neighbors, who have invariably been unsympathetic. We must be aware of this prejudice of the written record, for we cannot afford to neglect the historical perspective.

(Spooner, 1973:4)

"Nomadic tribal groups have held a position of great importance throughout the course of Persian history" (Douglas, 1974:53). Nomadism has a long history on the Iranian plateau. How long have the nomads been in existence? How, why and when did their societies originate? These questions are of interest for archaeologists and historical anthropologists. There are few historical documents about the origins of Iran’s different nomadic groups. But there is much historical evidence to support the hypothesis that different nomadic groups gradually penetrated and migrated toward the Iranian plateau from the peripheral regions (Garthwaite, 1977; Beck, 1986). Some of these tribes gradually became assimilated into the settled rural population and were "converted" from pastoralism to agriculture. Others continued their pastoral nomadism and consolidated their territories, continuing until the present time. The population of the country has always consisted of two component fractions: nomadic and settled. Douglas (1974:53) tells us that Herodotus wrote about the Persian population which he noted was formed into "...10 tribes, 6 of them settled and 4 migratory".
IRANIAN NOMADS AND CHANGE

In the last five decades Iranian nomads have been confronted with a range of radical economic, social, political and cultural changes. Population can be considered the most significant indicator of dramatic change among Iranian nomads in the last half century.

Population

Population statistics about nomads in Iran are few and what figures there are contradict one another. All information from the 1800s consists of rough estimations, mainly by anthropologists or foreign investigators. For instance:

According to one estimate, nomadic tribes made up about half the Iranian population in the early nineteenth century and a quarter at the end of the century; if we make it a very rough estimate that Iran’s population doubled from about five million to ten million between 1800 and 1914, the absolute number of nomads remained about the same.

(Keddie, 1981:25)

There are no early census data about nomads, mainly because tribal groups were mobile and regarded as untouchable people and also because of the issue of trust. The difficulty of generating accurate census data among nomadic people remains. The nomads misinform government officials to obtain economic advantage; they also fear divine wrath if they boast about herd ownership.
Chapter 3

According to Bharier (1972), in 1901, 79% of the total population of Iran resided in rural and nomadic areas. By 1966, rural and nomadic dwellers had decreased to 61%. Between 1900 and 1956 the number of places with a population of more than 5,000 grew from 100 to 186. Between 1956 and 1966, this figure increased again to 249 urban centers.

Although Iran has always had a significant nomadic sector in its population, these nomadic people have not been mentioned in the national census. For instance, in the national census of 1966 the nomadic groups were not mentioned in the formal report as a category (National Census Report, 1966).

According to the first nomadic census of 1986 (ICC, 1988) which considered many factors in gathering the information among nomads, the nomadic population of Iran had fallen to 1,152,099 people, or 180,223 families, with 6.39 persons per family. This should be compared to the estimate of five to ten million nomads in 1914 (Keddie, 1981).

In spite of the lack of clear information, there has been a significant decline in the nomadic population both in absolute and relative terms in Iran during last century, particularly in the last twenty years, mainly because of people shifting from a nomadic way of life to settled life. To understand this decline of population, the wider and historical context within which this change has happened, needs to be reviewed.
Table 3.1 and Figure 3.8 give a general view of the relative population of the nomadic population to the overall population during the period 1884-1986.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1884</th>
<th>1888</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1986</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nomadic Population</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2250</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>5712</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>1152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in thousand)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (of whole population)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.1.** Nomadic population and percentage of nomadic population compared to the whole population of Iran (1884-1986).

1. Information in four first columns derived from Issawi (1971:33)
2. Information in fifth column derived from National Census 1956, PBO.
3. Information in column six and seven derived from *Zakhaer-e Enghelab*, ONPI.
Figure 3.8. Percentage of nomadic population to whole population of Iran from 1884-1986. (Based on information derived from Table 3.1)

Nomads and Ruling Dynasties

The historical study of relations between Iran's major nomadic tribes and ruling dynasties helps to clarify both the history of these tribes and the nature of State power (its social and economic bases) and finally the process of its transformations.
Tribal groups in Iran are conventionally viewed as historically inveterate opponents of the State. How did nomadic societies originate, and how did these origins involve the State? This major question seems to be a "chicken or egg" question about which created the other. Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth century Arab historian, explain this process through his general "Theory of Dynastic Cycles". In his book, *The Moghaddimah*, he argued that nomads in general possess superior military power over sedentary populations and are therefore able to obtain royal power over the latter. Gradually they lose their power and military superiority as they become sedentarised. Consequently another nomadic group gains power and this cycle is repeated over centuries. Spooner (1973) sums up the relationship between dynasties and nomads:

> Nomadic populations have, however, produced dynasties and ruling elites for the government of non-nomadic societies, and have thus in some cases been instrumental in the diffusion and maintenance of a Great Tradition.

(Spooner, 1973:4)

Modern historians and anthropologists (e.g. Khazanov, 1984; Lattimore, 1940; Sahlins, 1968) agree on the general superiority of nomads over settled populations because of their military power and also because of the highly specialised nature of pastoral production system, but they do not support the hypothesis of group solidarity advanced by Ibn Khaldun. Their main argument is about the episodic occurrence of group solidarity and collaborative spirit among nomads (Sahlins, 1968). An hypothesis argued by Sadr (1991) is that: true nomads have a dependence on symbiosis with an organised State, and effect should not appear until such states develop. He reaches this point after surveying several established viewpoints, taking a skeptical view of "ecological determinism", but looking
more favorably on the view of Kroeber which stresses the link between nomadism and sedentarised communities.

In the specific case of Iran, the nomads were makers and breakers of dynasties. With the exception of the twentieth century (the Pahlavi dynasty), all major ruling dynasties had nomadic origins. “Every important Iranian dynasty from the Buyids (945-1055) through the Qajars (1796-1925) was either tribal in origin or relied on tribal armies to take power” (Keddie, 1981:25-26). Lambton (1954) describes the process:

One aspect of Persian history is that of a struggle between the tribal element and the non-tribal element, a struggle which has continued in a modified form down to the present day. Various Persian dynasties have come to power on tribal support.

Minorsky (1943:187-188) views the continual conflict between nomadic Turks and sedentary Persians as the basic feature of Iranian history. Issawi (1971) sees Iranian history as “feudal” and “tribal”. Keddie (1981:25-26) states: “The impact of this large, semi-autonomous and militarily powerful group of tribes on Iranian life and politics has yet to be appreciated”.

Sometimes, as the result of clashes between tribal-based dynasties and other tribes, the State and capital cities were invaded by nomads. In spite of these clashes, nomads were considered by most dynasties as the main source of power for controlling the settled communities (inside the borders) and defending borders from any external invaders. For
instance, sometimes the nomads were forcibly moved by the State to provide security against incursions by Turkman, Uzbek or Moguls.

These statements indicate uncertainty about the origins of nomadism and the State in Iran, but, more importantly, show the critical relationship which has existed in Iranian history between State and nomads as the main source of power for many of the historical events in Iranian history. Finally, it can be seen that, as the Iranian State developed and changed, it played a major role in the change and transformation of tribal organisation. This issue will be discussed in detail in the next section.

**Changing Relations Between Nomads and the State**

According to historical events, in spite of the tribal origin of most Iranian dynasties, there have been two significant shifts in relationships between of nomads and State in Iran, first in the Safavid period (1501-1722) and second in the last century. Keddie 1981:12-13) tells us that:

...by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Iran was beginning to recover from the ravage of prior invasions and to find a system of accommodation to a large nomadic population that could be termed ‘tribal feudalism’, if one uses the term broadly, recognizing the absence of serfdom and a manorial system. Under this system military power was largely in the hand of tribal leaders, who also held revenue rights to and often administered large peasant and sometimes even urban populations.
in spite of the critical role of nomadism in the Safavid period, which established a formal political and economic system between the nomads and State, between the eleventh and nineteenth centuries the nomadic tribes managed their internal affairs and were considered as autonomous rulers of villagers or even townspeople, mainly because of their military power which was based on their fighting force and mastery of horsemanship. During the heyday of the tribal system in Iran the chief wielded power to run the nomadic society and even more to influence the wider societies. As pointed out earlier, the late nineteenth and twentieth century were an exception in terms of the historical relationship between of a nomadism and the ruling dynasties, mainly because of radical change in the wider geopolitical context and essence of the State and the ruling dynasties. Keddie tell us about the change in political context:

European governments pushed and promoted the commercial interest of their nationals... In addition to European interest in Iranian trade, and later in concessions for European economic activity Britain and Russia had very strong political and strategic interest in Iran.(Keddie, 1981: 37)

Keddie goes on to say:

".. Iran’s dependence on Western economic forces; its political and military weakness; its government’s search for Western advice and approval; and Russian and British protection of the Qajars against revolts made Iran a country with a very limited independence. Iranian politics in the Qajar period are frequently shadow politics, with real politics often occurring not only, as in many countries, behind the scenes, but even beyond the seas.

(Keddie, 1981: 39)

The transformation and displacement of power from internal, traditional and indigenous sources of power (nomads) to external, modern and non indigenous sources, was the second major shift which determined the direction and flow of power within Iranian
society. Relationships between the State and nomads after the formation of the new form of State all into three main eras:

a) From the Foundation of the Pahlavi dynasty until the Second World War.
b) From the World War II until the Islamic Revolution.
c) The Post revolution period and the formation of Islamic Republic of Iran.

During these three periods different ways in which the State looked at nomadism and we can also see different nomadic strategies for coping with change and transformations in society.

From the Foundation of the Pahlavi Dynasty until the Second World War

It is neither permitted nor appropriate that the sons of the ancient land of Iran, with its resplendent historical tradition and civilization, should still roam and wander like savage beasts across the desert and mountains. All of you must abandon this wandering and nomadic existence and resume once more that mode of life of your illustrious forebears who caused cities to flourish and prosper. (Part of a letter of Reza Khan, dropped from airplanes over Lur territory in South West Iran in 1925), (quoted in Stauffer, 1965:305)

Britain, which had a long term competition with Russia to use Iran as a geographical protector of its own interests in India, started to exercise closer control over Iran following the end of World War I. To do this properly the British changed their policy.

According to Keddie:

By 1921 the British saw a protectorate was impossible and favored a strong government that could suppress the Jangalis and other threats from leftist or
autonomies movements...Reza Khan had no interest in fundamental social reform to help the popular classes, and his reform efforts were mainly measures for centralization and efficiency, including suppression of tribal and autonomist movements and strengthening the army and bureaucracy. (Keddie 1981:87).

Reza Khan, later Reza Shah of Iran (1925-41) was usually supported by the British and gradually became the main mover for a new order and the establisher of a powerful dynasty later called the Pahlavi (1925-79).

The early years of Reza Shah’s rule also saw a successful effort to disarm and settle the nomads. This was done primarily to suppress power centers that might be a threat. Many tribes were forcibly settled by government troops. No alternative way of making a living was provided, and most tribes had to continue their husbandry and agriculture on inadequate land. Ex-nomads could support much less livestock when deprived of chance to move from severe winter grazing quarters, and horses and cattle died from severe winters and lack of grain. Tribes were settled at the cost of impoverishing nomads, and of decreasing livestock production. (Keddie, 1981:96-97)

The Pahlavi period was different from previous times precisely because the application the policy of control over the tribes was not based on tribal organisation. This dynasty had built up an increasingly monolithic and highly centralised State apparatus set on a path of national solidarity and modernisation under a strong ruler and was influenced and supported by western ideas of modernity. When Reza Khan came to power as minister of war, one of his first steps to bring order to the country was to deal seriously with the tribal organisation of pastoralist nomads. During a series of campaigns from 1921 until 1925 he managed to defeat and largely disarmed the major groups: the Shahsavan, Bakhtiari and other Lurs, Qashqai and Turkmans.
The political perception which formed Reza Shah's tribal policy was consolidated within the new regime's broader political and economic aim of forceful transformation of Iran into a modern State, through removing the tribal system which had been the greatest obstacle to the achievement of his policy.

Reza Shah's tribal policy finally led to the particular program referred to as the "enforced settlement program". This program continued until the beginning of the World War II. This State intervention had variable effects: economic disaster and ruin for some, a necessary shift towards agriculture for some others. This particular policy was enforced strongly by the army. But the weakening of the State changed the story:

In 1941, however, with his enforced abdication and the political weakening of the state, the tribes literally rose, destroyed their settlements and took to the mountains again in large numbers.

(Brooks, 1983:343)

The enforced settlement program is one of the most important historical events from the nomads' point of view; even after more than five decades they still mention it in their daily dialogue as "tahkte" (Turkish for enforced settlement).

The major shift back toward nomadism in this period was a significant transformation in relationships between the State and the nomads. Until the beginning of the twentieth
century, these tribes were integrated into the State, which itself emanated from tribal aristocracies. Transformations occurring in these relationships (superficial, beginning in 1925 and profound after 1960), coincide with the State's own metamorphosis, sedentarization, nationalization of pasture grounds, and other policies aimed at the abolition of the nomadic pastoral system of production so as to facilitate the penetration of capitalism. The State, with its petroleum revenues, was the main instrument of this penetration (Digard, 1979). Keddie (1981), identified Reza Shah's period as a turning point for the tribes; Reza Shah continued a policy of "military control without economic solutions".

From the Second World War Until the Islamic Revolution (1945-1979)

During the occupation of Iran by the British and the Soviet Union from 1941 until 1945, and even for some time after that, the important nomadic groups experienced a newly-regained degree of autonomy under their traditional chiefs.

Under the increasingly dictatorial rule of Reza shah's son Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, in general, and after the downfall of Mossadeq (the Prime Minister) through an American sponsored coup d'état (1953) in particular, a wide range of policies was implemented discriminating against the nomadic tribes (Brooks, 1983). During the 1960s, under the general modernizing program's, a range of reforms (the White Revolution) was introduced and implemented, including land reforms and the nationalisation of forests and pastures.
More general economic and social services associated with settled communities, such as road building, housing, health and hygiene services, in parallel with radical economic change, such as introducing agricultural activities and a market economy, produced a major swing away from nomadic life and animal husbandry (Tapper, 1983).

After 1962 the nomads' lands were nationalised and their management fell under the control of various and uncoordinated government agencies. The nomads' migration and activities were mainly controlled by military and security forces at the local level named the *Jandarmery*. During this period the official attention focused on nomads in terms of planning and policy-making was limited. In 1966 the Organisation of Budget and Planing considered nomads in the *Fourth National Plan for Development*, followed by the establishment of a subcommittee to begin a survey on community development in nomadic areas. In 1968 a particular office was established for community development in the nomadic area in the Ministry of Housing. In 1971 this office transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture and its name was changed to the Organization of Mobile Pastoralists. Mobile Pastoralist was a term used in official language as a way to deny the existence of tribes and nomadism, which were supposed, by policy makers, to be an indicator of underdevelopment. As Tapper (1983:29) says: "Often the very existence of tribes and even 'nomads' was officially denied". On the other hand, the continuous resistance of tribal organisation against the State, such as the 1963 revolt of the Qashqai and Boyr-Ahmad in Fars was ruthlessly suppressed (Brooks, 1983; Tapper, 1983; Beck, 1983). The
land reform and the process of modernisation not only disempowered tribal chiefs (Khans) but, according to Keddie:

...ordinary tribes people also suffered from the government’s agricultural policies. First townpeople and wealthy farmers were more likely to take advantage of loopholes in the land-reform law to lay claim to disputed tribal land than were tribespeople who had less influence with the authorities. Second, nationalization of pasture, one of the points added to the White Revolution, took away tribal control of pastureland and made tribes increasingly subject to governmental whims, policies and gendarmes.

(Keddie 1981:167)

According to Brooks (1983:340), what makes the Pahlavi period different from the nineteenth and early twenty century is “the application of single determined policy of ruthless control over the tribes by an increasingly monolithic and centralised State aparatus set on a path of national integration and modernisation under a strong ruler”.

According to Tapper (1983:29), “…by the mid-1970s, the tribal political threat was held to have disappeared; tribal cultures were now ‘discovered’, particularly by Empress Farah, as a respectable objects of academics and tourists interest”. The economic growth of the regime during the 1970s, followed the economic boom of the period from 1973, which saw the take-off of the Shah’s modernisation and industrialisation program. Keddie summaries this period of change among nomads:

Mohammad Reza Shah, like his father, in fact pursued a policy of settling the nomads not only by force of arms but by depriving them of their livelihood so that they increasingly became agriculturists or entered the subproletariate of the urban slums. As in the case of peasant farming, the regime felt that nomadism was not modern whereas big American-style animal farms were; and wealthy Iranians and Americans profited from the latter. In both cases a way of life in which ordinary
people had learned to make maximum use of marginal resources, and which could survive with tested modifications, was increasingly sacrificed to a wholesale use of inappropriate modern Western imports.

(Keddie 1981:167-8)

Tapper (1983:29) comes to the same the conclusion about this period: “Muhammad Reza Shah resumed his father’s policy to the tribes, though more cautiously”.

**The Post Revolution Period**

Given the political and economic depredation suffered under the Shah, it might be assumed that nomads and their leaders would have quickly joined the revolutionary movement against him during the revolutionary period (1978-79)

In early the 1979 the tribe’s chief in exile returned to Iran and joined the others in resuming positions of regional and national political power.

Tribes people as such played a very minor role in 1978 in what was essentially an urban revolution (Tapper, 1983:29)

The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a State in 1979 began a new chapter in the old struggle between the State and nomads.

On the one hand, the relationship between tribal institutions and the State might have been expected to be less contradictory. As mentioned by Fazel (1985:80): “there seems to be a greater congruence between the tribal institutions and Islamic polity than under
monarchy”. But because of the nature of the State, the new and revolutionary government, which was neither supported by any foreign power and lacked military stability, was not happy with any sort of potential power in nomadic area; particularly when the return of former leaders was associated with the rebuilding of tribal organisation and also the recovery of tribal pasture and land ownership that had been handed over to the government, city-based stockmen and merchants (Tapper, 1983). Clashes between the State and tribal chiefship (mainly those who had returned from exile) started, particularly among the Qashqai tribe and this confrontation with the State finally led to a weakening of the chiefship within the tribal system. Among the Qashqai tribe this issue was particularly serious as Beck points out: “Since the revolution of 1978/79, they [The Qashqai leaders] have begun to claim tribal autonomy once again, but continue to face formidable problems” (Beck, 1980). “They [the paramount Qashqai leaders] sought to reestablish their position in the confederacy, region and national, but their efforts failed” (Beck, 1991:17). This confrontation lead to three years of military clashes between the Islamic Republic and the leadership, from 1980 until 1982 when the government finally won the military struggle. According to Tapper (1983) land ownership has been a major factor in events during early post revolutionary period.

On the other hand the underlying philosophy of the revolution emphasised equity in terms of access to resources and quality of life for oppressed people. With regard to the fact that the regime’s Islamic leaders and responsible bodies were concerned about serving the deprived and oppressed nomads, the government attempted to react and afford
developmental facilities and social welfare services as part of its revolutionary goals. The programs and developmental activities of the post revolutionary government regarding nomads were based on these main goals:

(a) providing social amenities associated with Islamic culture and settled societies;
(b) natural resource conservation;
(c) improving animal production.

The government has made very substantial efforts to address the above goals through various strategies:

a) Provision of infrastructure facilities and technical assistance (roads, drinking water, formal education and literacy campaigns, veterinary services, range (auditing) and range management projects, health and hygiene services);

b) Provision of advisory services (extension activities in animal husbandry, range management and veterinary services, religious propaganda, health and hygiene services);

c) Organisational change among nomadic communities (the establishment of Cooperatives, Nomadic Islamic Councils and Nomadic Military Mobilisation).

d) Organisational change and establishment of new Government organisations including: the establishment of Nomadic Cooperatives Organisation and the Higher Council for Nomads of Iran, the Ministry of Jihad for Reconstruction (nomadic branch) and converting the Mobile Livestock Breeders Organisation into The Organisation for
Nomadic people of Iran which was detached from the Ministry of Agriculture and incorporated into the Ministry of Jihade Sazandegi (ONPI, 1990).

It must be mentioned that during the post revolution period there was a considerable amount of assistance given to nomads through direct infrastructural services (water supply, roads, health, education, and transportation) by new organisations and also by new staff with nomadic background (Shirazi, 1993: Beck, 1992). Nomads also received indirect economic benefits particularly through favorable markets for their products. According Tapper:

The revolution has had some beneficial economic effects for the tribespeople, especially pastoral nomads, who have not only regained their pastures and returned to pastoralism on a large scale, but have found much more favorable markets for their produces.

(Tapper, 1983:31).

Meanwhile, the revolution was considered as an opportunity for some nomads to adjust their nomadic way of life with the emerging socio-economic situation, as mentioned by Keddie:

During and after the revolution many in the popular classes scored gains by their own efforts; many nomads went back to a more economically rational and productive migratory system.

(Keddie, 1981: 269)

Outcomes of the Changing Relationships
The first section of this chapter explored the biological setting of pastoral nomads through an ecological perspective and the second section looked at the socio-political context of nomads and State from a historical perspective. An overview of changing relationships involving Iranian pastoral nomads in the contemporary socio-biological environment is presented in the next two figures (Figures 3.9 and 3.10).

The outcomes of these interventions have already been presented in Chapter One as the main area of focus of this research. The issue of nomadism no longer will remain purely the “nomadic issue” as it incorporates many aspects of the wider socio-ecological context within which it exists and includes both national and international factors. After five decades of intervention in nomadic life, we are now facing a range of issues, from very severe ecological deterioration and social inequality, to the disappearance of the cultural heritage of nomadism as the main contributor to Iranian culture and history.
Figure 3.9. An "industrial dynamics model" of animal husbandry by nomads and the role of State and the market in the process of change.
Figure 3.10 Nomadism and the State in the process of change
Future Trends

The approaches to nomadic development have continued to be dominated by centralised planning and by standardised and simplified technological “solutions” designed by government agencies. In contemporary Iran all applications of these approaches are limited. On the one hand resources are shrinking as the result of eight years of defence against Iraq invasion (1980-8) and the decrease oil prices (the main source of national income) and the demand for resources has increased as the result of the growth of population which has doubled since the revolution (1979). On the other hand, the current bureaucratic centralised planning and simplified technological solutions for resource management are still neglecting nomads’ views in the process of decision-making and are not coordinating in their policies toward nomads. The mainstream view, in searching for possible solutions, is split between two alternatives: (a) the settlement of nomads and (b) supporting migratory nomadism. Any new suggestion about the issue, tend to be grounded and conceptualised on the basis of the assumptions of the mainstream view.

The government’s concern with social equality has not lead to anything but the provision of more governmental services associated with settled communities, to nomadic communities. Different government agencies are focusing on the issue of nomadism from their own perspectives which are based on their official program and often tacit interests and agendas. In the meantime the issue is expanding into a broader arena. Urban and rural people are seeing settled nomads as unexpected competitors for the available resources of the government. Unorganised migration presents different agencies with huge
demands for facilities at the national level. The issue is now becoming an international one, not only in terms of natural resource degradation but also in financial, economic and political terms. For instance the Iranian government, faced with insufficient hard currency, is engaged in a new political struggle to borrow from the World Bank to implement settlement projects for groups of nomads.

On the other hand, settling the nomads did not solve the nomads' issues of concern in the past, nor can it in the present. Sedentarisation did not address the government’s concern either, but it did generate more complex and serious issues, both environmentally and socially. More intensive resource exploitation by settled nomads and socio-cultural incompatibility with settled society (both urban and rural) present serious and complex challenges to different sectors and departments of government.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented a view of pastoral nomadism based on an ecological and systemic point of view which sees the nomadic way of life as a system based on a long-term co-adaptation between herds, pasture and nomads and which represents a very high level of compatibility between its parts and its environments. Variety of adjustment strategies and technologies such as flexibility, regular migration and a particular form of socio-political organisation were applied to keep balance and compatibility between the needs of nomads and their unpredictable socio-ecological context.
Historically it was shown that the socio-political organisation of nomads and the ruling dynasties in Iran have been coupled with each other for centuries. Since early this century, the international political economic context transformed Iran to a "market-State" platform and "modernism" dominated as the intellectual approach for change and development.

In terms of process, firstly tribal chiefs as the major role players in the political context were targeted by the centralised State. Then the socio-political organisation of nomadism was eliminated by the military control of nomads. This process was accompanied by infrastructural change in the economic enterprise of nomadism through domination of the market. After five decades of struggle between nomads and the State, a new chapter of relationship was opened by the Islamic Revolution in 1979. This chapter, which is still continuing, is substantially influenced by the characteristics of State, the international market, and political international context. But a radical shift appeared with the Islamic revolution in term of: (a) emphasis on Islam as an ideology; (b) independence from the Capitalist West and the Communist East; and (c) a significant emphasis on social equity and justice. But in terms of the intellectual approach behind the applied strategies for change, there has been little change.

This process of change and intervention could be summarised as comprising three interrelated components: (a) excluding nomads from the political system and neglecting the nomadic society; (b) sinking them in the dominant capitalist market and the modern
social stream; and, finally (c) saving them by offering incompatible and inappropriate assistance.

Based on what was mentioned in this review, and in terms of the outcomes of this process mentioned in Chapter One, the destruction of the nomadic way of life and the generation of a wide range of problematical situations associated with nomadism in Iran, are the result of what occurred earlier. I am arguing in this thesis that the crisis of the nomadic way of life is not only the results of what changes in socio-biological settings, but is also the result of underlying ways of understanding, interpreting and reacting to the world which still continues.

The Ecological perspective and historical review show that the contemporary problematical situation is not the product of nomadism's failure. We are now witnessing how this system is reacting to changes in its wider context and how the regional, national, and international environments, resources and society are affecting nomadic life. A probable scenario for the future is that today's efforts and activities, which are based on narrow short term views, not only cannot improve the current situation but will also create more complexity and dependency in the near future.
The "strategy of neglect" still closes its eyes to nomads and does not give any hope for betterment. The "positivist strategy" still attempts to modernise nomadic society, through a technological approach, and still fails. This research takes an activist position and, based on a theoretical position, I attempt to do some things with nomads. My interest is not to maintain the "traditional nomadic way of life" in a new changing context, but to consider the quality of the nomads' lives as the first priority. Considering the nomads themselves as the most valuable resources of nomadism, will help us to see the situation as they see and perceive it and to understand it not as the sums of parts but in all its relationships and complexities.

Putting nomads and their agenda first will help in the development of a desirable adjustment strategy based on nomad's views, needs, wants, understandings and opportunities in such a way that will use their indigenous knowledge and skills as the most precious source of knowledge. Based on this argument, I posit a shift to an action-oriented approach to research for change.
CHAPTER IV

AMONG THE GHAREGHANI NOMADS:
THE FIRST PERIOD OF FIELDWORK

INTRODUCTION

The problematic situation between nomads government and natural resource was introduced in Chapter One. The theoretical position of this research, which is based on systems thinking and constructivism, provides the guide to generate a systemic understanding of current situations. Chapter Three explored a holistic and historical background of the problematical situation and the need to identify the perceptions of the different “stakeholders” (nomads and various government agencies) about what constitutes the problematic situation. This chapter reflects on the first period of
fieldwork where, the aim of this fieldwork was to; (a) gain an understanding of the situation; (b) explore the situation and the process of change as experienced by a particular group of nomads and; (c) try to explore the situation and the process of change among nomads as perceived by different government agencies at both provincial and local levels.

The methodological approach of this first phase of research was based on ethnographic research methods.

**RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES IN THE FIRST PHASE OF FIELDWORK**

**Basic Principles Regarding Selection of Research Methods and Technique**

The selection and implementation of appropriate techniques and methods was based on the theoretical position of the paradigm plus the characteristics of the situation within which the research was to be conducted. The theoretical position of this research allows the researcher considerable flexibility in selecting the most appropriate research methods and techniques to suit the context of the research and equally important, to allow for the need to establish participant perception of the situation and their attitudes to different methods and techniques. Given the requirement for a detailed understanding of the current situation of nomadic people, this research was intended as a case study of a particular group of nomads. While the insights gained may be
valuable for broader discussion, the selected group was not intended to be representative.

Three fundamental principles guided the selection of methods:

a) To consider the nomadic way of life from a systemic perspective set within its everyday context rather than under experimental conditions created by the researcher.

b) To generate knowledge with minimal external value reference and theoretical/methodological prejudice, both in the phases of data gathering and explanation of data.

c) To combine theory (research) and practice (change) into research praxis for better understanding and active improvement to the problematic situation.

Listed below are the main characteristics of this research.

a) the research is more qualitative than quantitative, and the methods used are more informal, creative and flexible;

b) the research is not based on the need to test a particular hypothesis (hypothesis testing mode);

c) the research questions focus as much on how situations might be improved for the better as on conceptual understanding of the issues;

d) data collection and interpretation are done in a natural setting through an experiential and participative process with “clients” as co-researchers.
Ethnography as an Appropriate Approach in this Phase of Research

Ethnography was considered appropriate in this research. Generally ethnography is characterised by the first-hand study of a small community or ethnic group (Seymour-Smith, 1986). Conventional ethnography focuses on one specific culture or society and considers theoretical or comparative generalisations from the standpoint of the ethnographic example (Seymour-Smith, 1986). This research pays particular attention to field research and participant observation. The philosophical base and common features of ethnography are that, in terms of observation, ethnographic research studies the behavior of the people in every day settings through a range of sources including informal conversations and observations. Modern ethnography is unstructured, flexible and its focus is a frequently single-setting and small scale. In terms of explanation, non-conventional ethnographers distrust general formulations, which come from natural science, or historical evolution and the analysis of data involves interpretation of meanings and behaviors, without the isolating unit of study (Hammersley, 1990). To be unstructured and flexible in the process of observation does not mean that ethnographic research is non-rigorous, but these characteristics are necessary to carry out the research in its natural setting:

Ethnographers argue, then, that is necessary to learn the culture of the group one is studying before one can produce valid explanations for the behavior of its members. This is the reason for the centrality of participant observation and unstructured interviewing to ethnographic method. (Hammersley, 1990:8).
Applied Methods and Technique

In the course of doing field work, a variety of tools and techniques were drawn upon. Many of them were borrowed from social science disciplines and manipulated to suit the requirements of the particular circumstances on the field. "Participant observation" (Spradley, 1980; Malinovski, 1922) and "semi-structured interviewing" (Goldman and McDonald, 1987) were considered important methods to this phase of research.

Participant observation (see Spradley, 1980), is the central anthropological research technique. This technique involves the study of human communities through extended periods of field work, in which the researcher should be immersed in the daily life of the people. In the process of active observation, the researcher should attempt to appreciate the cultural meanings and the social structure of the group with its all-functional interrelations between customs and beliefs (Seymour-Smith, 1986).

Semi-structured interviewing (Goldman and McDonald, 1987) was used as an appropriate technique for communication and data collection. Data were generated in a semi-structured framework to accommodate the circumstances of the interview and interviewee. Although the area of discussion was nominated by me as interviewer/researcher, the participants clearly delineated where the data started and finished in most cases. The chosen way of documentation was audio tape recording, and the tape recorder was left within reach of the interviewees so they could switch it off any time they wanted to disclose data that they did not want recorded. Interviews were conducted individually and with groups when appropriate. The responses of different individuals were identified separately.
Key informant interviews were conducted with those considered to be "most knowledgeable", as well as with the elders among the community in order to establish cultural and historical data in more detail. Life histories were collected on different occasions in order to recreate the history of tribal structures in a particular sub-clan. Also the collection of oral histories about outstanding and famous people of the past using the accounts of tribal elders and leaders, proved to be another useful tool in uncovering perspectives and values.

Local teachers as key informants and co-researchers. Although the majority of nomads do understand and talk Farsi, the fluency often does not extend beyond the basic level for communication with outsiders and that needed for daily coping. There are many Turkish proverbs and words sprinkled throughout their Farsi speech which must be translated and interpreted. Sometimes additional background and information was needed to explain and express their cultural behavior, social events and ceremonies. Thus the role of local teachers in the process of research was very critical. They were used as linguistic and cultural interpreters particularly in the early stage of the research and during the introductions to the community. In addition they were local community participants in the research process.

Proverbs and poems illustrating nomads' concerns and feelings in concise ways proved to be a rich source of information.
Techniques of non-verbal data collection and communication were used to record daily activities which were not recognisable through questioning. This process was very important in the understanding of the rules governing social interactions such as greeting, sitting patterns, etc. among male/female, young/elders, and social groups. These techniques were also applicable in the investigation of their ecological activities such as the grazing pattern and rules, managing the herd, and selection of camp area at different times. Eliciting their indigenous knowledge and skills in dealing with ecological factors and managing natural resources was possible through non-verbal techniques. Recording daily activities, personal and social interactions, videotaping time allocation and eliciting weights and measures was part of that attempt.

(a) **Videotaping** was used as a technique to review and document all processes of research.

(b) **Time allocation studies** were conducted to identify daily and periodic activities/tasks and especially to compare activities at different times during the day and season and to compare the different groups of nomads with one another.

(c) **Eliciting weights and measures**. One of the basic difficulties between educated people and many local people and the nomads in particular, is the difference between their weights and measurement systems. In this study particular care was taken to explore time, weight, distance and any other counting units used by the nomads.

(d) **“Birds’-eye view” observation**. The mobility of the nomads and their herds even in their winter quarter could be investigated from the elevation of Bozan Peak, the highest point in the winter quarter.
For the following reasons questionnaires were considered inappropriate in these circumstances:

a) the history of questionnaire use and official data collection by government staff has left nomads very suspicious of the motives of those using them;

b) the nature of this research and its theoretical position denies any use of a questionnaire in any form where it would imply that the researcher had established an agenda in advance and without consultation of the nomad group. This would reduce mutual interaction and the development of a relationship which would ultimately terminate any group participating simultaneously in a discussion.

Selection of Field Site and Nomadic Groups for Study

The first phase of the fieldwork conducted during September 1991-April 1992 focused on the need for factual information related to nomadic issues. The research site was located in the semi-arid region of Fars Province (Iran), south west of the city of Mamasani, in the rangeland area known as Dasht-e Kangary (in the Mahoor area). The research focused on the Ghareghani, a Bonkoh of the Qashqai confederacy (See figure 4.1 and table 4.1). In no manner were the group nor area selected intended be a random sample of the whole Iranian nomadic community or even of the Qashqai confederacy.

In the first phase of the first period of field work, up-to-date information about the current situation of nomads was sought. A number of issues were important in the
Chapter Four

selection of the field site and the group with whom the research would be conducted.

Consistent with the overall goal of the research, which was to improve relationships between the Iranian government and nomads particularly in the context of natural resources, the search focused on a group of nomads located in a nomadic area where the Iranian government had been active with regard to natural resource management.

From these considerations the target group and field side were selected.

![Diagram showing the general tribal design of Qashqai Confederation, Dare-Shori Tribe, Ghareghani Sub-Tribe, Ghareghani Clan, Lineage, Camp, and Household.]

**Figure 4.1.** General tribal design of Qashqai Confederation, and Ghareghani clan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribes</th>
<th>Subtribes</th>
<th>Lineages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qashqai Confederacy</td>
<td>Darrehshuri</td>
<td>Ghereghanli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaleh</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qermezi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kashkuli Bozorg</td>
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<td>Naderli</td>
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<td>Farsi Madan</td>
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<td>Narrehi (one part,</td>
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<td>Qerkhli)</td>
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<td>Shesh Boluki</td>
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<td>Kashkuli Kuchek</td>
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<td>Qarachai</td>
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<td>Igdar</td>
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Table 4.1 Qashqai confederacy and its component parts

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¹Most of the information in this Figure drives from Beck (1991: 421) and my personal communication with Ghereghanli people.

*The Ghereghanli Bonkoh are included families from these lineages (1991).
The Bonkoh as an appropriate level for study

The choice of the Bonkoh as an appropriate level for research can best be understood and justified in terms of the social structure of nomadism in general and pastoralist nomads of Iran in particular. The bonkoh is the largest visible level of nomadic organisation, which also acts corporately on a regular basis. Bonkoh consist of several lineages with each lineage consisting of several camps and each camp comprising one or more families Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Ghareghani Bonko, and its components parts in 1991, in winter quarter.

Based on the socio-political changes in nomadic life mentioned in Chapter Three, tribal organisation has been changed radically and the clan is now acting as an independent
organisational unit. The clan represents the main characteristics of the natural setting of nomadic life for two main reasons: (a) it is territorially and organisationally identifiable by insiders (members of the clan) and outsiders, including different government agencies, and (b) it also acts as a dynamic and cohesive group for a wide range of socio-economic purposes and particularly as a coherent unit for purposes of resource management.

Because the members of a bonkoh can, and do, act jointly, it is an appropriate level for exploring the possibility of collaboration by a group of nomads with development agencies. Higher level divisions are not appropriate because they do not generally act as corporate groups any more. The bonkoh is the largest group which acts corporately on a regular basis. For instance, although the government sets limits on the time during which migrations can occur by prohibiting the use of pastures at particular times, the timing for the migration of various camps, within the time frame set by the government, is made by agreement within the bonkoh. Another example of joint activity is the collaborative purchasing and marketing of both grain and livestock products by the bonkoh as a unit. There is extensive communication and ritual interaction within the bonkoh. Finally, an "informal" leadership structure exists within the bonkoh. Such leadership is partially hereditary and partially based on the personal leadership skills and charisma of an individual. Personal experiences within the Ghareghani bonkoh, confirmed that even after a huge amount of political pressure from the wider system within which it exists, the bonkoh is still a vital and dynamic organisation, fulfilling many functions for its members.
The Ghareghani bonkoh in Dasht-e Kangary

While the research area for study, in terms of geographical scale was consciously limited for the purposes of this research, the wider context (social, political, economical and also the kinship system) within which this particular group exists was by no means neglected. The main reason for the selection of the particular area was to re-examine an existing research and development project which was being conducted there called the Integrated Rangeland Evaluation Project (IREP). The aim of IREP was to evaluate the potential of natural resources in the rangeland within an integrated framework. The aim of this particular project, which is being carried out by The Ministry of Rural Development (Jihad for Reconstruction) and Faculty of Natural Resources (University of Teheran) is to evaluate the natural resource base and eventually design an executive range management plan, called a Small Scale Range Management Project (SSRMP) for any landholding in the region. This was the first IREP exploration in Iran and took place in the south west of Fars province and covered the Ghareghani winter quarters which is part of Mahoor area.

The observations of the Ghareghani which follow, were gathered during the first phase of fieldwork and represent my interpretations of what I observed and what was told during my extensive conversations with them.

HISTORY, ECOLOGY AND ECONOMY OF THE GHAREGHANI

Ghareghani as Part of the Qashqai Tribal Confederation
The Ghareghani bonkoh is a part of the Qashqai tribal confederation (il-e Qashqai). The Qashqai tribal confederation consists of five Taifeh (tribes). Each taifeh consists of a number of Tireh (sub-tribes). These in turn, consist of a number of bonkoh. The bonkoh consist of several urdo (camps) who stay in one particular region together in one location (both in summer and winter quarters) but on different camp sites. A camp consists of one or more siyah-chador (tent), which means household or families are the smallest unit of tribal organisation. A number of tents or households which have common ancestor and kinship are called Beyleh (lineage), and each clan usually consist of more than one lineage. The Ghareghani bonkoh is the largest remaining part of the “Ghareghanli subtribe” and is part of the Dare-Shori tribe and the Qashqai confederation (Figure 4.1. and table 4.1).

The Ghareghani clan is Turkic-speaking, using a dialect significantly different from the urban Turkish. Most tribesmen also know Persian and Luri. The clan consists of several lineages which have different histories and origins. The Taleb-Lu lineage, which is the largest lineage (Figure 4.3), sees itself as Turkish. Their major neighbors, both in summer and winter quarters, are other Qashqai tribes.
Figure 4.3. "Taleb-Lu lineage", as the largest lineage in Ghareghani clan, its changes and leadership, in last four generation. (This information is gathered in winter 1991)
The name Ghareghani is used by most members of the group to describe themselves and it is also used by the leaders of other clans and in official communications. However, members of the Taleb-Lu lineage which is the strongest lineage among the clan in terms of population, leadership, and wealth, have identified themselves as a new family called Jahandideh, and consequently they call the clan "Jahandideh". Attempts to impose this name on the clan have not generally been successful. Therefore the name Ghareghani will be used in this thesis.

In the first period of field research, conducted in 1991, the ghareghani clan consisted of sixteen camps and thirty-two families (See Figure 4.2). Currently (1994), three years later, it consists of less than twenty families\(^2\).

\(^2\) Information from fieldwork has been supplemented by correspondence with Abdol Hamid Jahandideh in 1994 and 1995.
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History and Socio-Political Background of the Ghareghani

External Relation and Dynamics

Recent discussion of political development among pastoral societies claim that political institutions are generated only by external political relations with the state and never developed by the internal dynamics of pastoral nomadic societies (see Chapter Three). In other to understand the situation of the Ghareghani today it is essential to focus on the Ghareghani as part of the Dareh-shori tribe and Qashqai confederacy as a socio-political context. The Qashqai confederacy has played a major role in Ghareghani identity, history and background. Therefore it is appropriate to review Qashqai history, origin, socio-political role and relations with the state.

Qashqai Confederacy

The Qashqai confederacy is the second largest tribal confederacy of Iran after Bakhtiary confederacy, containing 17,444 family, or around 113,000 people (ICC, 1988). The Qashqai are considered “Turks” and they are Shi’a Moslem. They are located in lowlands and highlands of the Zagros Mountains, within Fars and Isfahan provinces, in such a way that their summer quarter (Yeylag) is located in the south-west of Isfahan province and northern part of Fars province. Their winter quarter (Gheshlag) is in the south and south-west of Fars province (See map 4.1 and 4.2). The migratory routes of the Qashqai tribes which is illustrated in map 4.2 shows that the directions and distance that the different tribes move between summer and winter quarter is different and varies from one another.
Map 4.1 Outer limits of Qashqai territory (from Beck 1991)
Map 4.2 Migratory routhes of the Qashqai tribes (from Beck 1991)
There are different stories about Qashqai history among nomads and their leaders, but it is generally accepted that Qashqai origins are from a variety of different ethnolinguistical roots, that their ancestors are mainly from central Asia, and that they gradually migrated at different times to the Zagros mountainous area prior to the 15th century (see Peyman, 1968; Oberling, 1974; Irons 1979; Beck, 1991). The Turkish language played a major role in the identity and confederation formation of the Qashqai.

From earliest historical evidence, the various group affiliated as ‘Qashqai’ were not of homogenous origin. The dominant political elements were Turkic, derived from western Oghuz/Ghuzz groups... The main development of the Qashqai confederacy appears to have begun in the seventeen century. However, no detailed historical data on the Qashqai exist until the eighteenth century...

It is clear that Qashqai leaders were a major political force in the region well before the 1818 date given by Fasai. Centralised tribal leadership was present by the time of Jani Aqa in the early 1700s, and paramount leadership has remained in one lineage to the present day. The Qashqai are distinguished from other tribal and nomadic pastoral populations in south-west Iran by their political allegiance and affiliations... leadership remained within a single lineage for a longer period than in any other tribal group or confederacy in Iran in the twentieth century...


The territory of the Qashqai nomads is strategically important. Ecologically it is fertile. However although ‘Qashqai territory did not touch or overlap with Iran’s newly formed state frontiers’, they were nonetheless considered by most of the Persian based states, local governments and foreign powers as the most important role player in South Persia (Tapper, 1983; Beck 1983,1991; Obering, 1972). During several historical periods, the Qashqai leaders have dealt directly with state rulers. During the Qajar dynasty (1796-1925), the Qashqai rulers were considered not only the rulers of
tribal communities, but were also entrusted by the central state to undertake non-tribal duties such as tax collection and conscription. Therefore, they were organised and dominant in rural and even urban communities. During World Wars I and II, the Qashqai leaders were recognised by the Germans as a major role player (for discussion of the political role of the Qashqai see Beck, 1983: 298-90; Tapper, 1983; Bonine & Keddie, 1981: 8-9).

The relationships between the Qashqai and the state during the Pahlavi regime was dominated by the two main goals of the State which were elimination of chiefship and the modernisation of the nomadic community. Under Reza Shah, a military solution to the tribal problem entailed forced settlement and removal of tribal leaders (Wright, 1992: 6). Muhammad Reza Shah (the son of Reza Shah) resumed his father’s policy regarding the tribes (post World War II), though more gently. The chiefs were deposed, chiefships were abolished, and settlement was encouraged and aided.

The United State became deeply involved in Iran after World War II. Qashqai lands were nationalised, as well Qashqai khans were removed form office. Without their leadership, most Qashqai were extremely vulnerable to external pressures. (Beck 1983:302).

The 1979 overthrow of the Shah brought a more benign attitude toward the Qashqai nomads, although there were some clashes between the returned formerly exiled tribal leaders of Qashqai and the revolutionary Government. Ghareghani people and leadership as part of the Dareh-shori tribe have played a major role in the external dynamics of the Qashqai confederation at the national and international levels, during the political events of the last five decades (post World War II). This was recognised
by elders among the Ghareghani. But what occupied the memories of elder Ghareghani
were the internal clashes between ‘the Qashqai khans’. As stated by Tapper (1973),
much Qashqai history is the history of the Qashqai khans.

*Inter-tribal Dynamic*

Historically the major Qashqai tribes in Iran have been the Amaleh, Dare-shori,
Kashkuli-Buzurg, Shish-Buluki Kuchek and Farsi-Madan, each headed by a family of
Khan (chief) until 1962. All these tribes were united in a political confederacy until
1954 (Beck, 1978). The main function of the *Ilkhan* (the Qashqai confederacy leader),
who served as khan to the Amaleh tribe, was to co-ordinate the administrative affairs
and external powers of the confederacy. The internal administrative affairs of
leadership were handled by local leaders and headmen (*Kadkhoda*). Tribal leaders
(*Kalantar*) usually from the *Khavanin* family, had a role of liaison with the *il-khan*
(confederacy leader) (Beck, 1983). The ability of *il-khan* to control the internal affair
of the tribal system always was closely monitored by external powers either by the
State or foreigners. Weakness of leadership was monitored by other khans and often
lead to independent action (for more information related to internal and external
relationships of tribal leaders among the Qashqai see Beck, 1983 and 1991.).

There are some historical events which show intense clashes among the heads of two
subtribes about the ownership of Dasht-e Kangari (the winter quarter of Ghareghani)
which emerged when the head of the Qashqai confederation was in conflict with the
state and was not powerful enough to control and manage the sub rulers. There are
two tall army tourrit towers in the Dasht-e Kangari (Map 4.4) which were used as defense in clashes between Amir Hamzeh (the Ghareghani headman) and Jahangir Khan (Dareh-shori tribe).

Ecological Characteristics of the Ghareghani

In order to understand the complexity of the Ghareghani family system and to achieve a rich picture of it, we need to understand the ecological context of their lives. This includes both the strengths and weaknesses of their ecological system and their ways of coping and management within the constraints of this ecological system.

The following presentation of ecological information is derived from scientific observation. In this research method it is important to value and realise the importance of the traditional scientific viewpoint, while keeping in mind that it is but one of a multiplicity of viewpoints on a very complex situation. Following later in this chapter will be a discussion of the viewpoints of the nomads toward their ecological context which is informed by their indigenous knowledge.

Hydro-geological situation of their pasture

The hydro-geological situation of the Ghareghani pasture differs between the winter quarters, and the summer quarters. The winter headquarters are located in the western part of Fars province in the Mahoor rangeland. The pasture there is known locally as

\[\text{\footnote{An army tourrit tower is a 5-6 metre hollow tower made of stone and gypsum containing many positions from which gunmen can defend their area. They are constructed only for the purpose of defence and are located on very high ground.}}\]
the Dasht-e Kangari, and this means in the Persian language, *the land of Kangar* (kangar is a kind of artichoke). The annual migration of the Ghareghani takes them to the south west of Isfahan province, four hundred and seventy kilometers from the winter pasture. The Ghareghani summer quarters is located three hundred kilometers south of Isfahan province, in the Semirom district (map 4.3).
Map 4.1. Migratory routes of Ghareghani between summer and winter quarters.
a) Winter Pasture

The area of Dashte-e-Kangari the site of the winter pasture, is about 280 sq.Km. Its altitude is between 915 and 1200 m from sea level. It must be mentioned that the Mamasani district is generally designated by the government as an undeveloped and discriminated area.

The geological formation and structure of this area, which is Miocene formation, is called the "Gachsaran Profile". The gypserous foundation for soil genesis is too porous to be a useful support for an underground water source. Rainfall varies year to year with 400-450 mm as the average. However, the Egdeha River which is fed from this watershed and the Fahliyan River into which it flows, are very suitable sources of water for animals and humans alike. A thin topsoil layer (1-5 cm) on top of a thick gypserous profile and the hilly topographic features of the area support unique varieties of hardy grasses and bushes of wild almond. Low and unreliable rainfall make most of region much more suited to pasture based livestock raising than sustained arable farming. (See Map 4.4)

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4 The post revolutionary government of Iran divided the regions of Iran into three different categories in terms of availability of the amenities.
5 Most of information in this section derives from personal communication with Natural Resource Research Center in Fars Province and Mamasni district, 1991-2.
Map 4.4 Location of Ghareghani nomads in Winter Quarter (1991)
In addition to poor soil and water resources, a major constraint to successful cropping of this area is the shortness of the wet period required for sowing. Although some dryland cultivation is carried out within the area, its characteristics make it far more suitable as a seasonal pasture for nomads than as a region for cropping. Livestock, because they are mobile, are less subject to the adverse impact of the localised summer drought than crops. The annual migration routes of the Ghareghni (Map 4.1), which previously took one and a half months to accomplish, and now takes two weeks, brings them to the area during mid-autumn. They leave the winter quarters in mid-spring.

b) Summer Pasture

The summer pasture of most of the Ghareghani people who are part of Darch-shori tribe, is located in high land in the Zagros mountain in Isfahan province at an altitude between 2150 and 3000 m.a.s.l (Map 4.3). Most of Ghareghani who stay in Hanna are more widely separated than they are in the winter quarters. Despite the severity of winter in the summer pasture which limits cultivation time, the fertility of soil and good water sources make this area an appropriate place for growing vegetables and apples. Semirom, which is near Hanna, has been considered by most of the Ghareghani nomads as the centre for settlement, despite its severe winter.

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5 Most of the data presented were collected during the first field trip 1991. The source of information is mainly personal communications with the head of Natural Resource Research Center in Fars Province, and Mamasni district.
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Features of the Ghareghani Economy

The features of the Ghareghani economy include both their internal economic enterprises and their external economic relationships.

The pastoral economy of the Ghareghani depends on the utilisation of pasture and the most important source of income is still animal products. The average size of Ghareghani family herds is 180 and this varied from 50 to 350 during 1991-93. The composition of the herd also differs between different families and in different years. Nomads spend most of their productive time in activities directly or indirectly related to animal husbandry. They specialise in sheep and goat husbandry and the processing of their products. The products derived from sheep and goats are meat, milk, wool and hides. Milk is never consumed fresh, but immediately heated and transformed to yoghurt as a staple food. Other products are rugs and carpets mainly made of wool. Other domesticated animals are donkeys, for transport and riding, horses for riding only and dogs (watchdog). Poultry (chicken, duck and turkey) are kept by most families as a source of meat. Hunting and collecting are of little importance in the economy, though hunting still is the favourite sport of wealthy families.

Nowadays the Ghareghani are closely engaged with the market and cash economy trading their surplus animal products and buying consumer goods to meet their needs. Thus the necessities of life are increasingly obtained by trade. Wheat flour, sugar, tea, cigarettes, fruits and fuel are part of their needs from the market.
Communication and Decision Making Among Ghareghani Nomads

It is important to understanding the processes of communication and decision making within the Ghareghani people (internal dynamic) and between them and the wider society (external dynamic).

Information and its Importance

Traditionally, the Ghareghani nomads made their own decisions on the use of resources such as water and pasture and tribal affairs, at the local level. The characteristics of the nomadic way of life, which include a socially separated and extensive mode of production and constant confrontation with and adaptation to ecological changes and mobility, demand up-to-date information to predict and cope with ecological change, security and annual migration. With the advent of a centralised administration and a market economy, they lost much of their authority and independence in decision-making and now they need much more information about policies and prices which affect their dealings.

Ever changing prices for their stock, the requirements of the market place, the rate of interest charged by moneylenders, all lead to a need for up-to-date information. Therefore information is becoming an essential factor of nomadic life. Lack of reliable and speedily sources of information make the situation difficult, particularly for resource poor nomads who have less access to transportation, mass media and personal communication with officials and outsiders.
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Internal Dynamic

Person-to-person communication is the most common mode of communication among the Ghareghani. It is very common among Ghareghani people to ask about current affairs and news just after greeting. They ask each other and nonmembers of the clan “What is the news?” “News” includes all information related to nomadic life, including the pasture situation, rainfall, social events, political changes and recent changes in market conditions and prices. Such detailed questions and answers involve an appraisal of current situations and the circulation of vital information to all members. Sometimes they walk to another camp just to get information. They have more free time in their winter quarters, so this sort of person-to-person communication happens more regularly in winter. In the summer quarters, which coincide with the harvest time for nomads, they need more up-to-date information about the market and especially the price of meat. In late winter their main concern in communication is about migration to the summer quarters. Any news on government announcements about migration, or the ecological situation and rainfall in the summer pasture is considered very important by the Ghareghani.

Ghareghani nomads tend to be members of a number of small informal groups based on lineage or extended family membership, as well as gender, age and socio-economic interests. They have very close relationships with the other members of the groups to which they belong. Social events and ceremonies are opportunities for all sub-groups and participants to get news from each other and collectively discuss it.
The older men and the household heads often talk about tribal issues such as security, economics and politics, particularly when they come together around the fire. Major collective issues concerning migration, political elections, and trade and tribal conflicts at the clan level, will be decided by heads of families through extensive consultation with elders. The elder’s role in the consultation process is based on his past experience. Also the elders are the facilitators of group discussions.

Women usually circulate social and family news during washing time, or while carrying water and gathering firewood. The Ghareghani household head is engaged in an ongoing process of appraising ecological, economic, socio-political conditions and available household resources. But all current and related information is discussed and circulated among the family. We see here that information flows at three levels - those of clan, lineage and camp. Only when information is thoroughly discussed at all the levels, is a decision reached by the family, which is then offered to the other levels of the system.

It is clear and extremely important to know that during the complex flow of information and the process of decision making:

a) the Ghareghani do not just exchange information about personal and group matters, but they also analyse the news and make decisions, which reflect needs, values and social judgments;

b) the flow of information and the process of decision making is multi-level and participative, involving individuals, families, camps, lineages and clans, with none of the members of the clan excluded from the process of decision making;
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External Dynamic

As mentioned earlier, the nomadic community in general and the Ghareghani in particular, are opening their society to a much broader context which includes the national and international context. Hence their communication is increasing from its somewhat narrowly focused base. Traditionally, the headman of the clan or chief of the sub-tribe needed to have contact with State officials only very rarely in order to regulate nomad matters. These contacts were regulated through tribal organisation. But now, any household head will have to contact or communicate with government staff regarding their basic family needs. Personal communications have increased as an essential means of daily life including provision of subsidised goods and services from governmental sources. Mass media as a new channel of information, plays a major role in this situation. Now a majority of Ghareghani nomads have portable radios and all who have radios, listen to both domestic and foreign stations. Their main program interests are weather conditions, national and international political events, local news and official announcements. There is a particular program on national radio which offers cultural and educational programs for nomads.

The relationship between the government staff and the Ghareghani, and its role in the process of decision making will be discussed later in this chapter. Based on the centralised nature of the state in Iran, most of the services which are offered to nomads are determined by the bureaucracy. And it could be said that the communication
between the government and nomads in most cases is based on a technology transfer model characterised by top-down decision making and one way communication.

Ghareghani "Indigenous Knowledge"

Dissemination of technologies to increase agricultural production using the conventional transfer of technology (TOT) model has often failed to consider the natural environment. Furthermore, as Chambers (1989) points out, it usually does not incorporate the indigenous knowledge systems and resource endowment system around which resource-poor farmers normally operate. TOT to nomads follows this pattern. Continuing intensive animal production and range management strategies, while neglecting these factors, may worsen the physical, natural and human environment of resource-poor nomads.

According to McClure (1989), indigenous knowledge is knowledge based on awareness, familiarity, conceptualization, and beliefs acquired by local people through an accumulation of experiences, non-formal experiments, and an intimate understanding of the environment of a given culture, at a specific geographical location and during a specified period of time. Indigenous knowledge systems are learned ways of looking at the world (McClure, 1989).

Understanding these indigenous knowledge systems, not only could lead to a practical pool of knowledge for managing the environment, but also reflects the ways of understanding and the epistemologies of indigenous people (Chambers, 1988). This
will be discussed in next section. One of the bases for a participative management approach among indigenous people in general (Scoons and Thompson, 1994) and among nomads in particular, is based on the growing focus on the critical role of indigenous knowledge.

The indigenous knowledge of the nomads can be divided into four categories: the domains of climate, pasture, livestock and daily household activities. The field of climate includes local understanding of climate features and predictors of change. Included in the pasture domain is the understanding of flora and regeneration of vegetation along with the understanding of the interrelationships between pasture, meteorological events and grazing. The livestock category includes grazing, reproduction, animal health practices, and strategies, and animal production and processing of animal products. The indigenous knowledge of Ghareghani nomads, as it relates to these features of the nomadic way of life, is disappearing rapidly as the old generation is dying.

*Experience of Drought and its Prediction*

The knowledge and ability of nomads to predict drought and rain is reflected in the time spent observing and categorising the climate (winds, cloud, temperature and moisture), nature (flora and fauna), animal behaviour (seasonal bird migration, domestic animal behaviour) and also astrological coincidence. For instance, rain is classified in different ways according to its style, season and intensity.

The presence or absence of drought is one of the most important determinants of the quality of nomadic life. Therefore predictions about the nature of the coming year are
considered important knowledge and the person making the prediction is considered as a valuable guide in spite of a relatively low level of accuracy. This importance of drought prediction is reflected in daily dialogue and folklore.

The Character of Rainfall

The Ghareghani nomads are aware of the main characteristics of rainfall, and classify rainfall in different ways according to style, density, season, and associated events (thunder, lightning and storms etc.). The second important aspect of their awareness is their sophisticated definition for an optimum rainfall of pasture and farming in each particular situation. The third important aspect is that they change grazing routes and patterns according to rainfall. The principles linking these observation to specific rainfall prediction are expressed in folk sayings such as the following: "When the North clouds come the rain will fall" or "when it rains gently, rain will continue and when rain splashes, or is associated with thunder, it will go".

In terms of the impact of the rainfall, Ghareghani say that rainfall has positive as well as negative impacts on both pasture and animal husbandry, but the best pattern is for rainfall to continue from middle autumn to late spring in the winter quarter, with enough snow in the summer quarter for the enrichment of natural springs.

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¹ This refers to the north cloud which comes not from the "geographic North", but from the north west (the direction of the Mediterranean Sea)
GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION AMONG THE GHAREGHANI: ITS PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

As recorded in the earlier discussion (Chapter Three) the major governmental interventions among nomads in Iran have been: removing the formal authority of tribal leadership, nationalisation of pasture, land reform, compulsory formal education, military surveillance at the time of migration, conscription and a range of community services and infrastructural services. These are all part of the government interventions among the nomadic community, which are associated with the introduction of a market economy.

The relations between Ghareghani and the government can be considered from different points of view, but we consider them in terms of change and intervention. The information in this section was generated in semi-structured interviews and discussions between myself, the nomads and local level government officials and by my direct observations in the research area.

Developmental Activities and Infrastructural Facilities and Services Among the Ghareghani

The services introduced by the government to the summer and winter quarters of the Ghareghani are summarised in table 4.2.
Table 4.2 Summarised Government Services Among the Ghareghani

(A) **Infrastructural Facilities**

- Primary education through two “multi grade” classes run by two teachers for seven months in the winter quarters and around one month in the summer quarters.
- Two roads which connect their winter pastures to the center of the district, (Map 4.4.) and one road in the summer quarters.
- Distribution of drinking water in the winter quarters among Ghareghani families.
- Hygiene services through the “center of hygiene” in Pire-Sorkh, one hour’s drive away from the winter quarters and also in the summer quarters.
- Construction of a water tank and “rain collection station” in the winter pasture.

(B) **Monitoring and Policy Making**

- Issuing and monitoring grazing licenses.
- Issuing and monitoring the migration permits.
- Issuing and monitoring gun licenses.

(C) **Advisory Services**

- Regular vaccination of herds and distribution of anthelmintic tablets among them.

(D) **Distribution of Foods, Goods and Supplementary Services.**

- Distribution of wheat flour and subsidised goods through the nomadic cooperative located in Pire-Sorkh.
- Distribution of some supplementary animal fodder such as barley, and sugar beet plates at subsidised prices.
- Distribution of fuel (gasoline and kerosene) by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) representative in the area.
- Supplying occasional subsidised transportation facilities (at lower prices at the time of migration).
Chapter Four

Nationalisation of Pasture and its Outcomes Among the Ghareghani

The nationalisation of pasture during the early 1960s constituted a major institutional intervention in the nomadic area in general. Dasht-e Kangari has been known as the seasonal pasture of the Ghareghani for at least two generations, although the grazing rights to the pasture were held as a common property before the nationalisation of pasture, although they were managed under the authority of a few particular families. The other nomads of the Ghareghani had access to them in return for certain payments.

A particular proportion of the herd (announced yearly on the basis of the rainfall and ecological situation) and that of the harvested crop from the cultivated land, went as payment to the ruler of the Qashqai confederation (the Il-Khan). Methods of revenue generation from common resources and also penalties for violation of a variety of regulations were imposed by the chiefship system. As a by-product of this process, a management system emerged that protected, maintained and regulated the use of common property resources. The annual rules for management of pasture and migration routes were announced to the nomads through agreement among heads of the tribes and sub-tribes (Tireh and Tavaef).

Both the land reforms and pasture nationalisation encouraged the fragmentation of land that had been previously common property resources. Grazing licenses, which had political and economic overtones, were issued as a means of nationalising pasture by the government. For the political reasons mentioned earlier (the disruption of the nomadic power base), the new beneficiaries of these licenses were families who had been peripheral family units rather than the wealthy families who owned the herds.

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8 Since nationalisation some of these families have claimed that the land had previously been their private property.
These peripheral families, who had worked in dependent positions as labourers or shepherds (in many cases for generations) had had no previous experience managing land or herds and did not have the relationship with the next level of the tribal system which held the information and authority necessary for a harmonious way of nomadic life.

Within three decades of the nationalisation of pasture, part of the grazing rights of the Dasht-e Kangari were transferred to resource poor families at a low annual charge. The area of pasture was insufficient to support these families and they were awarded the poorer parts of both summer and winter pasture and water sources. More grazing licenses have been issued, with an increase in the number of productive units up to a level five times greater than before nationalisation of pasture. This has become a contentious and growing issue in recent years, particularly since the revolution.

Before the reform, a fixed proportion of fertile pasture was allocated for dry land farming, mainly for supplementary animal food (barley). Within the last three decades, more and more pasture land has been transferred into cultivated land for the purpose of dryland farming. The economic pattern of land use has thus been changed with an overall decrease in the area of pasture.

In conversation with the heads of families, it was revealed that the outcomes of the introduction of the nationalisation of pasture, combined with other socio-economical reforms, included an increase in the number of ‘productive units’ on the same area of land. Due to partitioning of the pasture, intensification of land use has occurred.
Furthermore, the introduction of veterinary and human hygiene services has influenced the growth of both human and livestock populations, which in turn has accelerated the population pressure on resources. Increased population pressure is widely considered by the nomads themselves as an important factor in the shrinkage of the area of available pasture along with the conversion of pasture into arable farming.

The heads of families also reported that new technology, by introducing new ways of natural resource exploitation, has had a great influence on the state of the pasture. Technical innovation, which was introduced and initially supported by the government in the wider context of rural and urban communities, created external pressure on nomadic resources from non-nomadic people. The nomads report that tractors and transportation facilities increased the access to previously remote nomadic resources by both nomadic and non-nomadic people, who can now access what was previously inaccessible, with both positive and negative impacts on the nomads. For instance, other products produced by the nomads are transported to market more rapidly while, on the negative side their pasture and forest are now exploited by villagers for grazing and firewood without permission.

**Administrative Changes and their Outcomes**

In the meantime the more or less autonomous governing structure of the tribal system has been essentially eradicated, with the nomads being given a bureaucratic, non-nomadic, military and State based structure in its place. Conversations with the heads of families revealed that this new system is not a territorial system which can defend
itself against any external invasion (both from nomadic and sedentarised societies) of nomadic pasture ownership rights or which can manage /monitor the sophisticated process of natural resource management. These roles are seen by the researcher as critical duties of a properly functioning governing body. They see that the maintenance and upkeep of common property resources is now suffering more and more from both external and internal pressure as the result of an ineffectual management system.

**Annual Migration and its Difficulties**

In general, all nomadic people in Iran are regarded as victims of twofold discriminations: they have a difficult life due to the nature of their lifestyles and the consequences of the policies of the pre-revolutionary government under the Shah; in addition, the interventions which have been made, have not been compatible, well planned or implemented and thus have done little to ease the pressures on the Ghareghani in their daily lives. The services rendered to the Ghareghani by the government agencies often follow the interests of the State, and often generate serious difficulties to daily nomadic life. The best example of these difficulties is evident during the annual migration of the Ghareghani.

What might now be construed as the nomadic pastoralist system, which includes the summer pastures, winter pastures and the migratory routes, between them were long recognised by the State and settled communities as nomadic territory. The establishment of the centralised modern style of state-hood, accompanied by the imposition of new administrative and political borders in the nomadic areas, has
divided the tribal territories of Ghareghani into two and then three provinces. The establishment of new rules for managing the nomadic communities has presented the nomads with a lot of new administrative difficulties. The continuing conflict between new political-administrative based boundaries recognised by government departments and resource utilisation or ecological-based boundaries recognised by the nomads, has created many difficulties for nomads.

Spending winter in Fars province and summer in Isfahan, creates both natural and official difficulties for both nomads and various government agencies. At the time of migration, there are significant administrative issues such as the issuing of migration permits and the management of the inevitable conflicts over pasture between nomads and sedentary people. The inflexibility and lack of coordination among authorities and government offices in Fars and Isfahan provinces, present the mobile nomads with a complex, irrational and costly sets of procedures. For instance, any case of conflict on grazing rights among nomads, which is brought to court in the summer quarter, often takes several months to be cleared up there, by which time the parties involved are likely to be well dispersed.

The migration routes commonly used by each family of nomads have been converted into formal roads in recent times due to occupation by settlers. The settlers have changed this land from pasture to cultivated land. Occasionally lethal conflicts happen during the migration time. Due to this occupation of the former migratory routes, it suits rural people on the migratory route, government and the nomads themselves, if a quick migration takes place. A combination of all the existing factors, push as the
nomads to pass through the migration routes in just in ten days, which is a shortening of the migration phase by about 30-35 days. This means they must stay one month more in both winter and summer quarter which is strictly prohibited by the government for ecological reasons. For the wealthier families especially, renting private pasture or grazing land after the harvest of wheat or barley are the preferred adjustment strategies. However there are also different strategies the nomads can use to "escape" the established rules, such as hiding from the government agents or paying them cash or lambs as bribes against enforcing the established rules. In addition to these illegalities, there are also inequities. The agricultural by-products produced in the summer quarters by those with adequate resources, have become a complementary source of animal feed. Therefore the nomads who have orchards and cultivated land in the summer quarters can cope with the shortening of the annual migration route much better than the resource poor nomads who have no option but to continue to wander around.

Most support programs for the Ghareghani have been carried out within the geo-political borders of two separate provinces with the nomads wandering between them in the time of annual migration.

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES AMONG THE GHAREGHANI**

Clearly the living conditions among the Ghareghani have been significantly affected by the socio-economic changes over the past three decades and particularly, by the ever-increasing influence of the market, by new introduced technologies, and by institutions.
Chapter Four

Frequently the Ghareghani people have been compelled to adjust their way of life to difficult changes and adjustment strategies to these changes lead to new ways of life.

There have been some significant changes in the Ghareghani production system over the last three decades as they themselves recognise. Before nationalisation of pasture the main concern and activity of each family was a multi-production system of animal husbandry with limited grain cultivation in winter quarters for subsistence purposes. Their previous strategy and production system and relations with the land have been changed in such a way that they now react more individually, with the main concern being to meet market demand. The average household’s herd size has increased and households are now engaged in various ways of earning income. Their internal and external relationships are radically changed and they are controlled by the market and contractors and have less power in the processes of decision-making and resource management.

Changes in Trade Relations

The Ghareghani families who in the past had only limited interaction with urban and rural merchants and money dealers, in either their summer quarters (mainly in Semirom and Isfahan) or winter quarters (mainly in Shiraz, Kazeron and Mamasani), now have a more regular and wider relationships with them. Previously the relationships with urban and rural dealers was merely a way to meet their demands for supplementary food, (mainly wheat flour, tea, cube-sugar and cigarettes), clothing and some implements and instruments needed for industrial crafts, dishes, and saddlery.
Nowadays however, the Ghareghani are keen to enjoy many of the technologies and services that have long been enjoyed by their settled counterparts. They are becoming enthusiastic consumers of household technologies such as sewing machines and cooking stoves and of motor vehicles which ease their isolation. But to pay for these capital items, they obviously need increased levels of revenue, just as they do to enjoy the benefits of health and education services. Ironically, as they now turn to their livestock as sources of such income, they must deal with the problem of declining productivity in the face of the falling quality and quantities of natural feed.

Buying and transporting supplementary feed to compensate for these deficiencies is an expensive exercise, as is the purchase of veterinary services, yet it is to these strategies that the nomads now feel they must turn. A strong focus on improving the productivity of their pastoral system is the obvious response to their declining terms of trade, yet the difficulties of achieving gains is clearly apparent to them.

New Ways of Investment

In the past, the significant indicator of wealth among the Ghareghani nomads was the quantity of the herd itself and the number of children, especially sons that one had. The average size of the family, and birth rate among nomads is generally high due to the high value placed on female fertility throughout the centuries. Now new indicators are replacing the number of children. Long term investment among the Ghareghani is becoming a means of security and is an indicator by which some families show both
their wealth and their intention to settle. Having a bank account, purchasing land or a house in a rural or an urban area and buying a car and jewelry, are all becoming more popular among wealthy families.

**Cash Flow and the Issue of Loans**

“Harvest” time for the nomads is in late spring or early summer and it is at this time that they sell the surpluses of their herds and some dairy products. The first priority for the cash that they earn from selling their products, if they have not sold the herd in advance, is to pay their debts, using what remains as stored surplus for the approaching year. Wealthy families buy jewelry as a way of investment and of satisfying the women and they also buy new clothes. Poor families, who are not able to pay all the previous years debts, have to make a similar, or even worse contract for the following year.

The urban dealers and money lenders have had a major role in the life of nomads, but their role and function has changed over time. Moneylenders played a more important role after the nationalisation of pasture and before the revolution, when newly independent and resource-poor nomads held grazing rights from the government. Ghareghani nomads often complain that merchants or moneylenders constantly try to trick them by referring to complicated records and also by making incomprehensible calculations in their daily and seasonal trade. After the revolution and due to the Islamic law, in which moneylending with a fixed rate of interest is forbidden, most urban or rural moneylenders were arrested and punished by the government. The increasing number of Ghareghani nomads on one hand and the increasing cost of daily life and animal husbandry of each family on the other hand, increased the demand for
cash. Based on current regulations, the nature of loans have been converted to new and complicated forms of contract between nomads and money lenders, including *Nim-sudi* (which will be discussed later).

Each Ghareghani family conducts business with at least one merchant in the summer quarters (Semirom), and one in the winter quarters (Shiraz, Kazeran, or Mamasani) to cope with their needs and financial necessities, to spread their financial risks, and to retain their sovereignty.

Despite the sophisticated strategies they follow to avoid domination by any one moneylender, the moneylenders know that the Ghareghani are seriously dependent on them. At the present time, the Ghareghani are more dependent upon the market (merchants and moneylenders) for a broader range of goods and services, including more loans, than ever before. The role of the moneylender and the merchant is thus growing both in terms of the degree of dependency and the pattern of dependency across nomadic life.

*Nim-sudi* Contract: A New Way of Nomadism

In Persian, “Nim” means half, “sud” means profit and “i” means “the”. “Nim-sudi” is the name of a contract within which nomads turn over half the ownership of their herd, or at least some portion of it and the products of that portion, to their creditors. Then the creditors, who are the moneylenders and merchants, gradually pay the herd owners for their share of the herd until the debt is finished. The “shared” animals will
then be sold and the income, including that from all animal products, is divided equally between the two shareholders, regardless of the expenses which have been paid by the nomads, including labour, fodder and pasture rental.

The *Nim-sudi* is always a verbal contract on which a nomad never reneges after giving his word. In recent times, the terms fixed between the nomad and money lender must take into account diverse modern-day factors, including the futures market, the price of meat, international exchange rates and both current and future interest rates - both black market and sanctioned. Rapidly changing international and internal political and economic circumstances and the lack of information available to the nomads about these affairs, places nomads at a distinct disadvantage in the formulation of these contracts. This was not always the case. Before the 1960s and pasture nationalisation, the few wealthy and politically powerful nomad families were able to make favourable bargains with money lenders. However, with the nationalisation of pasture, families which were in the service of wealthy nomad families were given autonomy through their own grazing rights and access to various government services and they lost the umbrella of the wealthy families they once worked closely with. The members of the wealthy families were the “decision-makers” and “knowledge keepers” of the herds as well as monitors of herds and of economic and political affairs.

The “new beneficiaries of pasture” thus formed, have no historical, social or economic base from which to work at this time. These families are, thus, the poorest of the poor among the nomads and are most vulnerable to the money lenders for at least three reasons. The first is that they lack enough grazing land to make a living from their
herds. Secondly, they do not have large enough herds to support themselves and,
thirdly, they have no background, knowledge or support structure to prepare them for
dealing with the moneylenders.

Yet they cannot borrow money from any source except the moneylender because a
bank wants collateral in the form of property deeds for a car or house or land.
Nomads have no deeds. Their official papers are only a birth certificate, grazing right
certificate, gun license and perhaps, a marriage license. The size of their grazing rights
depends upon the size of the herd.

The situation is getting worse as the majority of resource-poor and middle class
Ghareghani are now highly involved in this contract system. The nomads seem to hate
this sort of contract and the majority are embarrassed to even raise this issue. As stated
by Lois Beck from her study of the Qashqai:

Nomads hated this form of nimsud contracting and all that is implied. It often
increased rather than alleviated their level of debt and, for some, brought about
or furthered their impoverishment.
(Beck, 1991)

This contract system is becoming a means of intervention by moneylenders and urban
investors in natural resource management and land use, in such a way that the role of
the nomads, as herd owners and herd managers, is descending to that of a shepherd, or
even worse, an indebted shepherd. The majority of the nomads, and all resource-poor
Ghareghani, are indebted to the traditional moneylenders or a range of new investors,
among them some government staff or young urban dwellers with surplus cash. Nim-
sudi contracts are seen as giving a high rate of return to creditors.
The *Nim-sudi* contract, which once was a strategy for risk management, is now an introduction to bankruptcy for many nomads and cold spell an end to nomadic life in general. The main immediate reason why many Ghareghani abandon nomadic pastoralism is their inability to get out of debt and their loss of full ownership and control of their herd. For the remaining Ghareghani nomads the *Nim-sudi* is considered "dirty business", which is gradually transforming the essence and function of nomadism. The behaviour of the nomads in decision-making regarding pasture, animal husbandry and settlement can be understood by considering their new roles and situations.

**Major Changes in the Ghareghani Economy**

Significant changes in the Ghareghani production system over the last three decades can be recognised as follows:

a) a significant shift from a multi-animal production strategy (dairy products, meat, and handicraft) which covered their nutritional needs and dealings with the market to buy their agricultural products and manufactured goods, to a mono-product (meat) strategy in animal production as a market oriented strategy;

b) the average households’ herd size has increased in the last three decades;

c) a significant shift in the role of nomads from that of herd owner and herd manager to that of a shepherd, who has less control and power over the production system and resource management;
d) a significant shift from animal husbandry to multiple sources of income, based primarily on agricultural activities such as dryland farming and horticulture and working as a labourer in urban areas;

e) a significant shift from collective action to a situation where they work more independently of one another in all economic activities.

These changes in the Ghareghani way of life are gradual and continuing. The nomadic way of life as a system, determines their relations among themselves, their natural environment (animal and pasture) and the wider socio-economic context within which they live and react. Hence livestock, pasture, and the way the nomads interact with them regarding overstocking, the lack of herd management strategies and the low productivity of natural resources, must be conceptualised in a new way with the market and the State being seen as the main controllers of the system and with outsiders as investors and policy makers.

Introduced Technology and its Effect on the Internal and External Relations of the Ghareghani

The Ghareghani way of life has significantly changed through new introduced technology which has changed the structure of the nomadic way of life and has also changed their internal and external relationships in both ecological and social domains. The Ghareghani believe that the introduction of modern technology into their lives began the time of change. For them, the introduction of the gun made a significant alteration to their lives. The gun gave them an improved ability to protect their herds and their families against outsiders. It also increased the power of the tribal
organisation against the State and the settled community. Closer to home, conflicts which were at one time settled by throwing sticks and stones, now resulted in death and injury⁹.

The introduction of the tractor increased the degradation of the soil because the tractor ploughed deeper than the shallow topsoil and hills were not contour ploughed. For settled communities and nomads, using the tractor was a means of converting pasture to arable land. However, the topsoil is shallow and the plough was deep. In addition, the hilly areas were not contour ploughed. Production from these pastures is now low due to the loss of topsoil from land which was never really suitable for farming.

If the nomads convert pasture to farmland, they become owners of that land under the present government regulations. As pasture, it is owned by the Government and they only have grazing rights. Despite the environmental aspect of mechanised cultivation, the Ghareghani now regard the tractor as a essential factor in their agricultural and animal husbandry activities, particularly in dryland farming which has an intensive period of ploughing¹⁰ and also in transportation of fodder and water.

In terms of the economy, the utility truck helps the nomads obtain and deliver water, and feed, and to transport livestock. These vehicles are used in the migration, which makes migration easier on the nomad families. It is also used for visits to market and

⁹ The best example was the serious conflict between member of the Ghareghani clan (Safar Moselu) and another clan member which caused two injuries and one death (1992).

¹⁰ In dryland farming among the villagers and nomads, ploughing time is based on rainfall, the land must be prepared a short time after rainfall. Arable land is increased and labour is decreased, therefore, there is an intensive demand for tractors for a short period just after the first rain in autumn.
service centers. In addition, for some nomads, vehicles are a source of income. They rent the services of their vehicle to transport the goods of other groups of people including other nomads. The necessity of obtaining governmental services and access to the market place has made modern transport a basic requirement for present day nomadic lives.

A utility vehicle or a tractor is too expensive for all nomad families to buy. Among the Ghareghani, the Taleb-Lu lineage (three families) was able to obtain one tractor through a government subsidy. Then they were able to purchase a car and utility. These vehicles are now a profitable business for them, because they rent out the services of the vehicles to all the other nomads in the clan. They have a monopoly among the clan in this area and the other nomads must pay what ever they decide to charge for this essential service.

Socially this is important because this has formed a new dependency relationship among these nomads. In previous times, the Taleb-Lu had power over and responsibility for many of the other families. In the current situation, the Taleb-Lu have power, though no responsibility for the families. The resource poor nomads say

We were under the shadow of the highland families (Taleb-Lu) and we benefited from them too. Now we are alone in the hot sun and dependent upon them too.

These factors increased the perceived gap between the resource-poor families and the Taleb-Lu, so that the poor families consider themselves abandoned by the Taleb-Lu and forgotten by their new ruler, the government. The resource-poor families are now considered by the Taleb-Lu lineage to be competitors in resource utilisation. They feel
that the other families were their servants and since the government separated them
from the Taleb-Lu, those families are now the responsibility of the government. The
Taleb-Lu feel the government “played” with them in this case and though they mouth
sympathy for the resource poor families, they are not deeply concerned about them any
longer.

Lack of a local resource manager and the increasing wealth gap, increases
dissatisfaction and leads to tension and conflicts between the members of the
Ghareghani and between them and other clans. According to the records of the
‘Ghareghani Islamic Council’, between 1984 and 1990, there were 356 pieces of
 correspondence, of which more than fifty percent were related to local tensions and
conflicts. In 1994, the member of the clan council who held the records and gave me
this information was engaged in an intensive clash with another clan in which two were
heavily injured, one injury resulting in death. The council member himself has
subsequently been executed.\textsuperscript{11}

\section*{Changes in Diet}

Before the dominance of the market place, the Ghareghani people consumed their own
products - mostly meat and dairy products with some agricultural products, mainly
bread. Today, the increasing demand for meat in the market has shifted their multi-
product system toward a mono-product system and this has led them to consume less
meat and dairy products in their own daily diets. The loss of dairy products and meat

\textsuperscript{11} Safar Moselu (Masht ‘Safar’), was elected as a member of council in 1983 and was engaged in a
serious clash over pasture ownership in summer quarter 1992. During this clash he killed one person
from another clan and was jailed. In 1994 he was executed according to current law.
has led in turn to nutritional imbalances and has been associated with protein and calcium deficiency particularly among children. Despite some supplementary foods, such as fruits, other dietary changes have been associated with dental decay and digestive upsets which are now common abnormalities among Ghareghani. The introduction of new products such as tea, cube-sugar, rice and cigarettes has also had detrimental effects on health. For instance the very regular and common habit of drinking tea with a sugarcube held between the teeth, is recognised as the main cause of dental decay by some educated young Ghareghani\textsuperscript{12}. In turn, the loss of all teeth by the age of fourteen is considered to be a major contributor to the digestive problem which are common among Ghareghani men and women.

Malnutrition is much worse among poor-resource families now that they are deprived of access to dairy products and meat and this malnutrition adds further to the range of diseases commonly associated with the nature of nomadic life. In addition to infections and parasites nomads are subjected to a harsh lifestyle as well as being at risk from traumatic injury, sunburn and bites from animals, scorpions, spiders and snakes.

**The Roles of Women and Mens Among the Ghareghani**

The Ghareghani are part of the Qashqai and generally women have more authority in their families compared to other Iranian tribes (Beck, 1978). Polygamy among the Qashqai is rare and most marriages are planned by the family. Most Ghareghani families comprise one adult couple with approximately four children.

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\textsuperscript{12} Personal communication with Dr Ali Chobineh, who is a dentist and also the head of the Health Center in Mamasani, in 1991.
The role of men and women in daily activities among Ghareghani cannot be considered separately. Both are integral members of the family and lots of their responsibilities overlap. However, some areas of women’s and men’s lives do not overlap with regard to the socio-political and economic context within which they live. Traditionally, economic and political interactions, both internally and externally, were considered as exclusive male matters. Addressing security and herd management has been the most important role of the men in nomadic life. Economic and political relations with elders, regional officials, urban merchants, army personnel, court authorities and other agencies are not regarded as the joint sphere of male and female, but considered as the exclusive concern of men.

Women are considered by the Ghareghani as the symbol of purity for the family, lineage and clan. For instance Ezat-o Nessa, who was the wife of Taleb and ancestor of the Taleb-lu lineage (See Figure 4.2), is very well known and respected as the representative of honor by all Ghareghani. Women are symbols of honour and purity and as housewives, are respected by the men as vital to the family. Therefore in Ghareghani eyes, they should be protected and guarded by their men. Their exclusive tasks can be identified as: child raising, cooking, carpet and rug weaving, water collection, reception of close relatives and firewood gathering. In addition to these distinct daily activities, they also have some common responsibilities which overlap with men’s tasks. These responsibilities include milking and milk processing, particularly in spring and early summer, and tending the young animals separately. In spite of differences in their traditional roles and responsibilities, there is a significant
degree of equity between males and females among the Ghareghani. The issue of equality and harmony between male and female among Qashqai nomads is considered by Beck:

In an area of the world in which the role and positions of women and men are presumed to be different and unequal, the case of the pastoral nomadic Qashqa’i of Iran presents a surprising degree of symmetry and equality between the sexes. There appears to be a correlation between a means of production that involves an integrated domestic unit and a balanced relationship between women and men. Where no clearly defined separation of women’s and men’s domains is found and where women’s and men’s activities are integrated, especially with reference to subsistence tasks, women and men tend to share in the decision-making and play active economic and political roles.

(Beck and Kiddy, 1979:351)

The Changing Context and its Effects on Female and Male Roles Among the Gharaghani

As mentioned earlier, the conditions of life for Ghareghani nomads are rapidly changing and the integration of Ghareghani into the state and the market economy dramatically changed the role of men and women. Ghareghani families became more dependent on the market and government services and the head of each household had to have a closer interaction with the external socio-political and economic domain. Introduced technology also assisted the men’s roles more than the women’s daily tasks.

All of women’s activities are demanding and none of them have benefited directly from introduced technology. This is in contrast to the work done by men, which has been facilitated through introduced technology. Addressing security, herd management, trade, external socio-economic relations and political decision making has been the
most important role of the men in nomadic life. These roles have been changed through introduced technologies such as the gun and transportation facilities which are always associated with males. Institutional changes and economic changes such as the new security role of the government, the introduction of the cash market and the new meat oriented production system, have changed the men’s role in nomadic life. In some cases the men are removed from many pastoral tasks to work as labourers in towns, with their tasks being left to be done by women.

In general it could be said that the introduced changes and technologies affected the equality between male and female in such a way that men benefited more than women. The changes did not facilitate the women’s daily tasks and did not enhance the status of women.

Formal Education and its Effects

The introduction of a new formal educational system to nomadic life has separated the children from their families. The Ghareghani have had to send their children to school which, despite all of its advantages, has also meant the loss of free labour. Children are free labour for the daily tasks and this reduces the cost of animal husbandry and the intensive task of their parents. There are some hidden costs for each family to support the local teacher who teaches in their clan. In addition, although the enrolment is free of charge, parents have to buy more clothes and shoes per academic year in order for their children to attend the remote school. Separation is particularly difficult and costly when their children leave the region to continue their education in secondary school.
This opportunity, which is more readily available for boys than girls, generally is considered as a separation from the nomadic way of life. Formal education of children is considered by most Ghareghani as a means to remove their children from nomadic life and to provide a better life for them.

THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE GHAREGHANI AND THEIR ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES

Based upon the above observations, it can be seen that the integration of Ghareghani into the state system and market economy, and also the introduction of technology and certain institutional changes, have brought some positive changes to the Ghareghani. It has not been without cost however, for there is now increased pressure on resources as well as increased tension among social classes through income disparities and between the genders, as the benefits have flowed essentially to the wealthy families and to men.

There are other concerns:

Issues Concerning Family Welfare

The unpredictability and uncertainty about the future, particularly the future of the children of the present generation, is a dominant concern. Given the feeling that the nomadic way of life is dying and the poor financial returns of animal production from nomadic pastoralism, there is often a sense of dissatisfaction with the hardships of nomadic life. A perceived lack of sympathy by the elders for the future lives of the young, is one of the major issues within families and, indeed, often reaches a level of crisis. The hardship of the lifestyle, particularly for the women, is increasingly a matter
of concern for Ghareghani families. The numbers of people involved in annual
migrations is declining as children leave their families after completing high school or,
sometimes, even after primary school. Even relatively wealthy families, with larger than
average herds, find that income from nomadic livestock production is inadequate
without external supplementary income, for instance from urban employment, or from
property investment.

Issues Concerning the Ghareghani Clan

There are a number of concerns related to the socio-political nature of nomadic life
particularly with relation to its economic features. One major concern of the
Ghareghani is the absence of any formal socio-political structure which can manage
nomadic activities or, at least, act as a mediating structure between the Ghareghani
clan and government agencies. The Ghareghani are acutely aware of the lack of
communication between themselves and the government. They say "We are as a herd
of sheep without any shepherd".

The movements of groups during their annual migration and the wide dispersal of
camps at both summer and winter pastures make access to government services very
difficult. Electricity, water supply, social welfare services and health services are
strongly desired by the Ghareghani and they value facilities like water tanks, electricity,
health services and education. Their concern is that the services are not usually
available at the appropriate time and place. Most Ghareghani believe that lengthy and
complex bureaucratic procedures must be endured to obtain government services.
Education is particularly desired, as it is seen as being essential for the future of the
next generation.
Animal husbandry is seen to be a complex and managerially demanding task, because of the need to respond to a large number of variable factors outside nomadic control (market prices, security, rainfall). There is considerable dissatisfaction with the high level of insecurity associated with nomadic livestock production.

Issues outside the control of nomads

A major set of concerns for the Ghareghani revolve around factors seen to be beyond their control. Consistent with a strong belief in God as the controller of nature, the vagaries of the environment and natural disasters such as drought and diseases are considered to be beyond any human control. Legislation, official rules and regulations, on the other hand, are seen as means of control by the State over nomads, who feel themselves disempowered. Lack of access to various developmental services, and uncertainty about pasture ownership are manifestations of control being in “government hands”. The increasing encroachment of sedentary society (both settled agriculturists and urban people) onto pasture lands and migration routes is a source of great anger and frustration, while uncertainty about ownership rights to pasture and grazing rights licenses, are part of the same concern about sedentary encroachment.

The market’s rules are seen as a major uncontrollable issue while the new version of *Nim-sudi* contracts are being called the ‘cancer’ for nomadic society by the nomads. A lack of a reliable and expedient sources of information makes these situations even more complex, particularly for resource-poor nomads who have less access to
transportation, mass media and personal access to officials and outsiders than wealthier nomads.

There are a lot of issues, from range degradation, to bankruptcy through "loan sharks" and from legal access to resources and services, through to ever-worsening terms of trade which contribute to a significant sense of powerlessness within the new socio-economic context.

THE GHAREGHANI RESPONSE

The Ghareghani have both short term and long term responses to external factors. The long term strategy of the majority is likely to be the abandonment of the nomadic life. Sedentarisation is seen as the only alternative for escaping the current problems of nomadic life. Those who ultimately expect to settle attempt to maintain grazing rights for as long as possible. Grazing rights are seen as the only collateral they have. Investment in urban areas, land for agriculture and business such as houses, vehicles (for haulage and carting) and gardens are beyond their means. The concern with education is part of this response - a preparation for eventual settlement.

Those Ghareghani with access to relatively large pastures (both in summer and winter quarters) seem more likely to continue a nomadic lifestyle, providing they can obtain some government support and supplementary income. Short term responses revolve around risk management. Employment in urban areas and in seasonal work also
provides supplementary income. The increasingly common *Nim-sūdi* contract is a strategy for risk management.

**Thematic Concerns of Nomads and Future Trends**

Examination of nomadic concerns and the future trend as seen by the Ghareghani leads to several key points:

There is a diversity of concerns even within a relatively small group. This diversity partly reflects different levels of risk for more and less prosperous families and the different availability of winter and summer pasture. Other individual factors also contribute, including personal preferences, location of relatives, age of children and so on. The multiplicity of nomadic perspectives disadvantages nomads greatly, as government agencies, needing to cover large areas, tend to prefer relatively homogeneous policies and programs.

a) None of the nomads anticipated any possible improvement in the future, unless the uncontrollable factors (natural, state, and market) can be changed.

b) The nomads do share the government's concern with the degradation of rangelands, but they see this as *just* one of many factors which are impinging on their future lifestyle. It is, perhaps, rather less of a concern to them because the other factors are so overwhelming.

c) There is a great sense of powerlessness over social life and economic well-being within the present socio-economic context and for the future.

d) The Ghareghani, in contradiction to stereotypes, do not wish to resist the benefits of settled life in the form of welfare and other services. They cannot however,
make proper use of these services while pursuing nomadic livestock production as a livelihood, unless the mode of delivery of services is adjusted.

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY

The experience of living with the Ghareghani Bonkoh for six months in the autumn and winter of 1991 as a participant observer, revealed a deep sense of unease, almost hopelessness, within these nomadic families. They were keen to share their concerns with the researcher, and discussions with individuals, families and groups often extended over several hours at a time.

In essence, the story that consistently emerged was:

a) Traditionally, although the lifestyle was hard, it was extremely satisfactory by nature of its harmony, rhythm and autonomy. Over the years, this sense of harmony and autonomy has been severely disrupted, with all aspects of the traditional nomadic ways of the Ghareghani under threat in one way or another.

b) The outcomes of these challenges, which have come particularly through the interventions of successive governments, have seen large numbers of nomads adopting a sedentary lifestyle. Those remaining as nomads feel that they are having to face up to a large number of dilemmas, with no one to really help them in dealing with them, as the quality of their lives continues to deteriorate.

c) There is little optimism that the situation is improving, in spite of the efforts of government agencies whose intentions to help are well acknowledged.
There is no doubting the complexity of the situation in which these Ghareghani nomads now find themselves; and the sense of helplessness in the face of so many dilemmas in very real. Major examples here include the following:

a) While the Ghareghani clearly appreciate the attractions of the nomadic way of life, they are also increasingly envious of the advantages of sedentarisation.

b) Being settled would allow them to access better public services, the health and education for their children and many believe this would enable them to improve their economic situation; yet with settlement would come loss of independence and indeed, loss of their way of life and culture.

c) While they recognise the advantages of a market economy in terms of reducing many of the hardships of a nomadic lifestyle, they also see the position this has put them in with respect to dependency on both consumers and creditors.

d) They clearly recognise, and are concerned about the fact, that in increasing the productivity of their sheep flocks and goat herds, they are putting pressure on the pastures, which themselves are slowly being limited in extent through a number of different causes.

e) They want their children to be educated and go off to school, but they know that this results in extra expenses for them, both directly in terms of the cost of clothes and other costs, and indirectly, as the loss of a source of free labour in tending the flocks.

f) They are conscious of increasing social tensions among nomadic families, as some benefit from the new situation, where other are grossly disadvantaged. These dynamics are resulting in changes in status within the tribes, even at the level of the
Bonkoh, with those who are resource-poor finding themselves becoming merely shepherds for urban based investors who are becoming increasingly wealthy.

g) Finally, they strongly resent the fact that they are always being blamed for degrading the natural environment, while few of those doing the blaming bother to try to understand the full context of their position as nomadic pastoralists.

In essence then, the Ghareghani people now see themselves as oppressed and discriminated against by those very authorities who claim to be wanting to help them. Where once, they say, there was a harmony between the people and the world around them, now there is nothing but breakdown in such harmony. And at the heart of the matter, they claim, is the fact that the “government does not understand us, or the real nature of the problems we now face”.

From the perspective of this current research, these claims have a particular importance; for this was not ever intended to be merely a study of nomadic people in Iran, but research into opportunities for their “development”.

The ethnographic phase of this research played the important role of clarifying the nomadic situation for the next stage of the inquiry process, which emerged as an inquiry into the claims of the Ghareghani that they were not being understood by those who were trying to provide for their development.
REFLECTION AND PLANNING FOR NEXT ACTION

A period of critical reflection followed this first phase of field work in which I focused on exploring the different viewpoints between Ghareghani and various government agencies engaged with the issue of change and development. As the result a number of key issues were explored, along with a search through new literature with particular respect to the process of development, action inquiry, knowledge and knowing, complexity and systemic inquiry.

The outcomes of this phase of research could be considered from two different perspectives: firstly, it took at traditional descriptive/analytical approach to answer the question “What is there?”. Secondly from a different perspective, it considered this information as the base for further change and improvement to bring a better understanding of, and betterment to the situation and thus the question “How could it be improved”. The next phase of research aimed to seek information; this required an attempt to answer the questions “What is betterment?” and “Betterment for whom?”

To answer these critical questions the beneficiaries of the current system and their perceptions about the situation and betterment have to be identified. The differences in perception between different government agencies and the nomads’ perceptions about the issue also need to be explored. In the next chapter I will focus on the different government agencies and their concerns about the situation to identify their views. Comparison between nomads’ and government agencies’ views will be the next step. Then I will discuss the possible alternatives for improving the situation.
CHAPTER V

TWO DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OF MEANING:
THE PERCEPTIONS OF NOMADS AND
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects on some of the outcomes of the first period of fieldwork, focusing on the systems of meaning of the Ghareghani and on different perceptions of nomads and the government toward the current situation.

Making sense of the language and the logic behind Ghareghani daily activities, language, proverbs and behaviour was an important task in this research for several reasons. Firstly, it was a necessary means of communication with them to understand
their current situation. Secondly, based on the nature of this action research, to change and improve the situation, it was necessary to identify different views and perceptions to understand "what is there?" and more importantly different views toward betterment to understand "what is better?" These question could be addressed by making sense of the nomad's way of looking at the world. Thirdly, all this information will help not only in the phase of communicating and understanding, but will also accelerate the process of participative action.

TWO DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

The nomads' way of life is intimately connected with nature. They have been rather isolated from other influences and people, and so they developed their own language and linguistic system based upon their life and needs. Therefore, the roots of their words were considered by the researcher an important tool to understand their metaphors and, indeed, their way of viewing their world. Within the hermeneutic methodology of this research it was important to understand not only the words, but the meanings the words have to the nomads. This necessitated a close relationship between researcher and nomad.

The following key terms, are examples of concepts understood differently by nomads and governmental officials and which demonstrate the different language and logic of the nomads and the government officials.

Measurement

Measurements are not widely standardised in nomadic groups. Time, distance, weight and borders or community boundaries were observed during the research to be non-
standardised but related to daily activities known by all members of the nomadic community. For example, concerning time they say “in a glance”, “in a cooking soup time” or “in one smoking”, referring to the time it takes to smoke one cigarette.

In weight measurement, one Mhan is equal to 6 kg, one Charak is equal to 1.5 kg, one Vaghe is equal to 750 gm and a Bist-o Panj (which means 25 in Farsi) is equal to half of one Vaghe or 375 gm. These weights are approximate. Now this group of nomads is accepting the kilogram as the standard weight of measure and they are quite clear about the relationship between the kilogram and their traditional form of measurement because the kilogram is used in trade and in their relationship with the government and market.

Historical events which have had a significant influence on nomadic life, such as natural diseases, disasters and political events, are used as marker events. For instance they consider the ‘enforced settlement project’ (Takhte Ghapoo in the local language) of Reza Khan, which occurred in 1925, as a common reference date. They refer to the Takhte Ghapoo (not 1925) and then they will say, for instance, “He was born two years after Takhte Ghapoo”. This can make it very difficult for a researcher or outsider to understand to what they refer, but it also shows the researcher and outsider how certain events affect their lives and how important these events are to them and their culture.

Nomads relate distance in terms such as “as far as one can see”, which means as far as one can see and distinguish the difference between stationary and moving objects; or
they refer to the distance that they travel between making camp during the migration; or something is “a stone’s throw” away.

In general, the nomads perceive distance as less than urban dwellers. It is commonly known that if a nomad says “it is one kilometre or one Farsang (equal to 6 Km) down the road” one must travel several kilometre or Farsang! This is probably linked to their ease of mobility and distance.

They quickly and easily recognise geographical features such as a broken trees, rivers, caves, towns and vegetation. These landmarks are recognised and are important in the delineation of a family’s holdings during migration and grazing. Based on this skill, they recognise their pathways for migration and the territories of each clan or sub-clan. The government officials do not realise that the nomads are so skilled in this and feel it is necessary to fence areas that they want to isolate for experimental stations or to let lie fallow. This is very costly. The nomads still try to graze upon this land, not because they do not recognise the border, but because there is pressure to feed their herds.
**Ghareghani Measurement System is Contextual**

Measurement system among Ghareghani is not standardised, land measurement, time, distance, weight and herd size are contextual. On the other hand the measurement system among government officials are widely standardised. Different measurement system which is based on two different system of understanding, has made and still makes difficulties particularly in pasture management and issuing grazing licences.

**Land Measurement**

Land measurement by nomad reckoning is non-standardised in conventional terms. To measure an area of land is done, not in terms of acre or hectare, but in terms of *Khish* or *Joft gav*. These terms are based on ecological and environmental factors. For instance, *Khish* relates to how many *Mhan* of seed it takes to sow a particular area of land. One *Khish* is one area of land that can be sowed by 4-5 *Mhan* of seed (one *Mhan* of seed weighs 6 kg). Therefore the *Khish* is related to soil fertility, texture and rainfall.

One *Joft gav* is equal to one *Khish*. *Joft gav* means literally, two cows. The *Joft gav* refers to an area of land which is ploughed by two cows is one period of time. Since the cows plough at rates determined by soil composition, *Joft gav* does not refer to land of fixed area.

Their system measurement is related to the degree of soil fertility, soil composition, and other ecological factors such as rainfall which is contextualised according to the situation referred to. In this instance, one *khish* does not refer to the same land area in
summer and winter quarter. In winter quarter, one khish may be applied to vastly
different land areas which may even adjoin one another.

Herd (Bore) Size

Bore to formally educated, urban-based government officials, refers to a particular
fixed number of animals which graze together. They do not recognise that to the
nomad the herd varies depending on a wide variety of ecological and economic factors
and interrelationships between these factors. Bore to the nomads, is based on context,
taking into consideration, geographical situation, ecological circumstances, the social
class of the herd owner and shepherding skills. In addition, one herd has these
characteristics and is under the control of one shepherd. Thus Bore refers to the varied
skills of shepherds and the pasture in which they are grazing the animals. The number
of animals in a Bore (herd) varies according to the complex inter-relationship of all
these factors in a given moment. ‘Herd’ does not refer to simply the number of
animals one has. It is relative. A Bore for a poor family, in an arid area will be perhaps
60, but for a wealthy family in a fertile region, it might be 200 or more.

Miscalculation of this critical issue by government officials, who are responsible for
pasture management and issuing grazing licences, will make complex problems.

TWO DIFFERENT MYTHS

Nomads in this study are tribally “Turk” and “Shi’a Moslem”. Therefore they follow
certain beliefs and ways of interpreting the universe and life, and particular ways of
dealing with resources too. Tribal institutions in various socio-cultural, economic, and political aspects, constitute a whole system of law and order. Apart from their culturally-based world views, the nomads have been affected by western values and beliefs which are coming through in the way of governing the nomads, mass media, education, and market. Consequently there is a complex changing combination of traditional, religious, modern-urban and tribal institutions which reflects on all aspects of their belief systems and consequently their daily life.

Very strong tribal identity was established among Qashqai nomads after the Safavid Dynasty. Since the 1900s there have been significant and growing urban-modern influence on nomadic society in general and in Iran in particular (Beck 1983).

Considerable mismatch between the nomadic way of life and the new (mainly it is called “western”) beliefs and behaviour system, will be presented. Different understandings of ‘identity’, ‘quality of life’, ‘environment’ and different behaviour toward life and resources are part of this gap. The most important issue beyond these examples is the huge difference between two systems of logic and ways of understanding.

**Identity**

Tribal identity is one of the most complex issues among nomadic society and has been neglected by the State and most of its agencies (See Tapper, 1983). Among Qashqai nomads common identity is always expressed as ‘Turks’ and they created their tribal
boundaries based on this identity. People, even from other origins and ethnic groups, who present this common identity are part of their community considered as “Turk” and the rest are considered as “Non-Turk” and called *Tajik* (see Beck 1983, 1991).

Although the Qashqai nomads were considered as a minority in relation to the dominant Persian population and dynasties, their identity was appreciated in dealings with the State until the Pahlavi Regime. The ruling family (Shahilu) and their functions among the Qashqai people as an intermediary between the State (since the Safavid Dynasty) and Qashqai people is the best historical example of the appreciation of identity (See Beck 1983, 1991). But during the last century, tribal culture was threatened and tribal identity was formally abolished both by State development policies and by cultural invasion. And none of the beliefs and values shared by the Qashqai are recognised by the new logic of understanding. Transmitting “national identity”, which was mainly dominated by ‘Persian urban dwellers’, and ‘western culture’ to nomadic societies was a major concern of the State in the past century. Islamic belief systems recognise the common identity (*Omat*), based on common goals and beliefs, rather than national and geographical borders. But when Shi’a Islamic thought appeared through the State in 1979, it did not follow the Safavid Dynasty’s strategy of establishing its authority among the Qashqai through an appreciation of nomadic non-geographical identity.

Among the Ghareghani people the kinship and lineage systems based on common ancestors and socio-economic class plays a major role in the issue of identity. Lineage is the most important indicator in recognising each other among Ghareghani. Since the
revolution, with its emphasis on the issue of social justice, resource-poor families do identify themselves as 'down-land families' from the wealthy families by calling them 'up-land families'. These emerging issues may destroy the socio-economic unity and identity of the clan.

Barekat (Quality of Life)

The word Barekat has a particular meaning to local people and nomads which reflects their attitudes toward their current life. The government official understand that Barekat refers to the level of animal production and income in each year. To the nomad it has to do with the quality of the nomad’s life which is beyond the herd numbers and wealth.

The nomads’ indicator of betterment is perceived by them in terms of barekat. Barekat refers to the entire quality of life including rainfall, health, low rate of mortality, productivity, and ease of life, all as lived by the nomads. It does not reflect only their production or income, though their income and expenses are, of course, influences on their quality of life. They consider their quality of life to be part of God’s influence, and that it is not all man made. A bi-barekat (without barekat) year may mean that the nomad did his best, but disease, disaster and/or death may have contributed to a decrease of the barekat of that year. This does not always mean he just had a bad financial year.

In response to the question, "How is your life and animal husbandry?" several times I heard the elder nomads reply, "barekat has been removed from nomadic life." Even
though the size of the herd is greater than before and money has increased, they say,

"God has taken the *barekat* from the money and animal husbandry enterprises."

Promises and Trust

The given word of the nomadic man is as strong as the word of the God. When they make a bargain with one another, with another clan, sub-tribe or another nomadic tribe, they swear upon God and the ‘Imam’ and will never break their word. This is a basic tenet of any nomads’ way of life and is used in contracts, trade, promises and friendship agreements. The unwritten promise is insurance for the keeping of the rules, regulations and borders within the complex tribal system of clans, sub-clans and tribes and individuals. Money lenders, traders and buyers prefer this type of contract with the nomads for it is stronger than the official contracts that could be made. However, any sort of organisation or new governmental agencies, banks and other financial organisations that nomads must deal with in order to obtain goods and services, does not recognise the strength of this verbal promise in their dealings with the nomads as enough insurance for credit and making a contract. The consequence of this is that these institutions cannot help the nomads who do not have the official documents that they demand for giving credit.

And the nomads do not honour their official written contracts with the government because they don’t respect the contracts and they see that it is the responsibility of the government to help them. So they do not pay back government loans and feel no shame about this. Following such difficulties, the government stops giving loans and a
viscious cycle is set up. This situation has existed since centralised government came to this area.

Environment

Indigenous knowledge represent the nomads way of thinking about the environment within which they are living. There is a significant difference between Ghareghani nomads and government officials in their ways of looking at the resources and environment. The Ghareghani clearly see themselves as an integral part of the whole universe and wider nature which is created by Allah for a certain goal and they see their community as a phenomenon dominated by natural factors in the local ecosystem. They believe their role is to understand and generate knowledge/skills to predict and manage the situation. The Ghareghani nomads cannot separate the land from vegetation, herd and the climate. In their understanding they are all strongly interrelated with each other. There has been a rapid decline of the valuable indigenous knowledge system due to the processes of settlement and death of the older generation.

On the government side, the various government agencies look at the environment from different viewpoints, separating elements according to administrative activities. For instance the FRO officers, who are responsible for pasture and forest, do not care about cultivated land which belongs to a nomad. The Veterinary Unit, which is responsible for animal hygiene, does not care for pasture condition and its relation to animal husbandry. Thus, the government officials do not see even the relationship of
environmental factors from an ecological (holistic) perspective. The best example was the complaint of the FRO Regional Director about the separation of pasture and forest responsibilities from each other within the department and a separation which generated a significant misunderstanding about the environment. He explained to me that departments separate soil, forest and pasture issues from each other based on academic literature. Individual officers on the basis of their personal experiences and organisational perspective cannot separate the three.

**Ojagh (Fireplace) as a Symbol of Life Sustainability**

The *Ojagh* or fireplace, is seen as a symbol for how a family is sustainable and reflects the continuity and stability of family life. For instance, when a male and female have no fertility, the nomads say “Their *Ojagh* is off”, which means they cannot continue the next generation. To indicate appreciation for hospitality they say “God keep your *Ojagh* on”. This is taken to mean that it may be continued forever.

When a young women comes to join the family of the husband she must appreciate their fireplace as a symbol of their family’s unity, stability and continuity. She joins and must help in the continuity of this fireplace. Today, elder nomads in the Ghareghani clan say “The *Ojagh* of nomadic life is already off, though we see some nomads still exist.”

**Sacrifice as a Multi-functional Belief**
Chapter Five

The Islamic practice of animal sacrifices is very common on different religious occasions such as: in the "Hajj ceremony" (one of the five pilgrimages of Islam), which is known as "Ghorbanee": or the donation of animals, thanks to Allah, for meeting their wishes, or accident or sickness protection, which is known as Nazr, or on the birth of children which is called Aghighe. Religious taxes such as Zakat (a tax on agricultural products) and Khoms (one fifth of financial year surpluses) included the donation of a certain portion of a person’s herd for certain people, particularly for the poor.

These practices, which are rooted in both religious and nomadic beliefs and laws, balance the stocking rate through limiting animal numbers and, at the same time, balance herd ownership to some degree. Ultimately the pasture, which was considered the victim of traditional exploiters (nomads), was transferred to the government by nationalisation. According to scientific range management programs, auditing the pasture, evaluating the capacity of the pasture and issuing grazing licenses, were the main tasks of the government for maintaining and developing the pasture. After a short period of time the government recognised that the problem is the surplus of livestock held by grazing licence holders. A law passed in parliament (Article No 44, which was cancelled after the revolution) gave authority to the administration to cull surplus livestock, but in reality this never happened. This official policy not only led to confrontation between the government and nomads but also, because of private ownership of the herds, was not practical.
Neglecting values and behaviour systems as essential factors for managing social
demand and ecological resource, led to failure of the new approach even though it was
supported technologically financially, and politically (both nationally and
internationally).

Livestock

According to Islamic belief, which defines the relationship of “mankind” and “world”
toward “Allah” and each other, all resources which are available to mankind are
considered the “deposit of Allah” to the most outstanding creature of God and must be
held honestly either by society or individuals. Plants and animals are considered living
beings with rights, which are not established by, or removable by, man. Therefore
animal rights are not only a very obvious belief to the Ghareghani, but they act in
accordance with these beliefs. For instance, they call livestock "dumb" or tongue-tied
(Zaban baste). In their understanding, the livestock have all basic needs that humans
have, but these are not communicable and therefore we have to be aware of them. Any
animal which is killed for food on any occasion needs to be slaughtered (Zebh) as an
offer to God (Allah) in a “right way” (Halal) with the slaughterer saying the name of
God and the animal being watered before killing (Shi’a belief). Otherwise the animal is
not allowed to be eaten (Haram). When a new born lamb gets sick the nomads bring it
to their family tent and take care of it during the day and night, not only because of its
economic value, but for its being.

Islamic principles are widely interpreted in Moslem communities as prohibiting the
felling or destruction of vegetation in general and trees in particular, under most
circumstances (see Dove, 1992). Pasture, as the “common property of Islamic society”
(Anfal) is considered not only as "God’s deposit" but also as a resource for the next generation. Therefore, a series of sophisticated rules has been established to define the rights of individual and Islamic society in maintaining the resources for future.

The ideological principles of Islam play a major role in the nomads’ perception of their ecological context. The historic and traditional characteristics of nomadic life, which are based on close relationship with herds and pasture, play a longer-term role in their perception. Regarding a distinction between ideological and traditional belief and in spite of the fact that Islamic beliefs and laws have been mainly grounded in longer term tradition, there are many traditional beliefs which put value on ecological elements, for instance, certain trees are considered hallowed and are therefore protected or preserved by nomads (see Plate No 1.19, Photo Essay One). Existence of trees in cemeteries and holy shrines indicate the trees are a symbol of life and are an appreciation of their ancestors. The only place in Dasht-e Kangari in which there are planted trees, is the Ghareghani cemetery (see Plate No 1.20, Photo Essay One).

**Gun**

The Gun, and previously the horse, played major roles in nomadic life. The number of horsemen in each clan, sub-tribe and tribe was the most important indicator of political power and social prestige in the society. A gun, to nomads, does not just represent the importance of security. A gun is considered not only as a means of defence and a tool for the favourite sport of nomads (hunting), but it is also considered as an economic investment. Tribal men who are known as the best shots, consider the gun their best
and most reliable friend. The gun and associated stories are reflected in the Ghareghani daily speech and poetry.

To the government (since the Pahlavi Dynasty), the gun is a most dangerous technology. Disarming the nomads commenced after enforced sedentarisation (1925) and was continued until the revolution.

**Government**

As previously stated, changes in market, technology and state relationships, are not simply socio-economic changes, but, more importantly, represent a change in the way the Ghareghani look at the world.

A major theme which emerged from discussions with nomads, was that the perception of the government and its role has changed. For a long time nomads were in power and played a major role in ruling both nomadic and settled communities. During the last century this power was eliminated after a long struggle by a centralised and foreign supported State (the Pahlavi dynasty). Now they desperately need the government to help them improve or even abandon their way of life. For instance, the Ghareghani informal ex-headman (Haji Khan) who died during my first period of fieldwork, mentioned to me that the Ghareghani, which is now a clan had formerly been a sub-tribe consisting of 400 households with 200 horseman and approximately 100 camels. Another key person, Masih Khan, mentioned that their horsemen once surrounded the city of Shiraz and the way that they controlled the urban people. Now they do not have any camels, any horses, or even control of themselves and their destiny. When the
interviewed nomads compared that situation to the present time, they concluded that the time of nomadic life is over.

The word that they used to name the government (*Dowlat*) used to be applied to possessions and livestock. They used to rely on their property and livestock (*Dowlat*) as the main source of independent life, but now they desperately rely on the government as *Dowalt*. There is a strong belief among all interviewed Ghareghani that the nomadic way of life cannot be continued without government support and help. The Ghareghani recognise that the government is the fundamental policy maker and also the source of development and services. They now consider the government as the main source of power and change, but they see this source as being in the non-nomadic hands of people who are unable to understand their situation.

The nomads' belief about equity is very important in their attitudes toward the government. While they believe that God made everyone different, like the fingers on the hand are different, they at the same time believe that the government should treat each exactly equally. They believe that if a match is given to one nomad, a match should be given to each nomad. Their scale of thought however, is national. They believe that the government should provide exactly the same sort of services to them as to the urban dwellers. This belief is important in relation to services such as health care and veterinary services where the nomads complain not so much about the lack of services, but about the inequity of the services.

There are two proverbs which serve as metaphors for the view the nomads hold of the government and their relationship with it. These were told to me late in the fieldwork,
when a bond and trust had become well established between myself and the nomads. These proverbs are common to the internal group of the nomads and are seldom shared with outsiders, particularly government agents or officers.

Both proverbs talk about the bear, which like the government is seen to be powerful, rich and strong. The first is from the story “The Friendship of Auntie Bear”. The story is told like this:

There is a bear which is the friend of a man. The bear is very loyal to the man and wants to protect and care for him. While the man sleeps, the bear stands guard. A fly lands on the man’s nose. The bear doesn’t know what to do. How can it keep the fly from the man’s nose? The bear is perplexed. It does not want the man disturbed, so the bear picks up a very large rock, one which it takes both his paws to lift and drops it onto the fly on the man’s nose.

The nomads say, quietly, among themselves, that the government’s friendship can be like that of “Auntie Bear”.

The second proverb relates to the relationship between the nomads and the government. There is a saying that the hair of the bear must be plucked quickly and when it is plucked, take as much hair as you can for you may not get this free opportunity again!

There is, in the minds of the nomads, the thought that the government is benevolent like the bear which allows a few hairs to be plucked, a rich, powerful and masterful bear. The rewards of the government to the nomads are like the hair of the bear; they must be taken advantage of quickly and thoroughly, because the opportunity may not arise again! This hair is the metaphor for the facilities that the government can
provide, such as roads, social services, veterinary services and anything else the
nomads cannot provide for themselves. There is the attitude that if the government
offers veterinary services, one had better take them now even if they are not
appropriate, the opportunity may not come again.

As already mentioned, the nomads lack many services and are very poor compared to
the rest of the Iranian community. However, because of these attitudes to the
government, which shape the thought of the nomads, there is often an exaggeration
about just what they do need and what they do not have at the present moment.

In their understanding the government is a source of power and this source of power
and control is remote from the nomads' situation. There is a sense of friendship on the
part of the nomads toward the government and the government is seen by the nomads
to be somewhat amicable, but, due to a lack of understanding, there are some issues
which smoulder underneath the surface of this relationship which continue the sense of
separateness between the two groups.
GOVERNMENTAL VIEWS AND ISSUES

In addition to exploring nomadic perspectives toward the current situation and issues concerning nomadic life during this fieldwork, I also explored the perspectives of various governmental agencies involved in nomadic issues, especially as they affect the Ghareghani.

Involved Government Agencies

At the National and Provincial level the main agencies involved were:

- the Organisation for Nomadic Peoples of Iran (ONPI);
- the Forest and Range Organisation (FRO);
- the Planning and Budget Organisation (PBO).

At the local level, a wide range of government staff including teachers, health officers, FRO officers, and ONPI officers, deal with nomads, and all of those were interviewed in 1991.

The major finding of this phase was the lack of communication between nomads and government agencies. This lack of communication was based on different factors including their different interests, concerns, language and also their ways of understanding and looking at the situation. In the next part of the thesis I will show how their way of looking at situation was different from that of the nomads. Then I will reflect on their major concerns about nomads and also, finally, I will focus on the difference between their logic and models of understanding.
Thematic Concerns of Government Agencies

Thematic concerns of different government agencies engaged with nomads could be categorised as follows:

1) There was a view of development as a linear process which involves passing through a number of steps and sequences. Thus, there is a natural progression from nomadism to settled rural life to urban life. According to this view the days of nomadism are over.

2) The Government’s role is that of a change agent and policy maker involved in promoting the necessary change, from this perspective, the Government must convince nomads to accept technical advice and to implement new technologies.

3) Nomads are seen as responsible for environmental degradation. This view is often accompanied by a belief that nomads have difficult lives and that they will be better off when settled.

Within this generally shared overview of the "nomadic problem", various government agencies tended to have different concerns and interests based on their official responsibilities.
Comparison of Government Officials’ and Nomads’ Ways of Viewing the World

Listed below (in Table 5.1) are the general characteristics of the governmental officials’ belief system and that of the nomads as I came to understand them through my research. Differences exist in their ways of regarding life and thinking about life. These differences are reflected in their language and belief systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS</th>
<th>NOMADS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• use quantitative language.</td>
<td>• use qualitative language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are more nationalistic.</td>
<td>• perspective is more humanistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• generalised and standardised ways of understanding.</td>
<td>• words can be understood in relationship with their particular circumstances and social and ecological context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use linear logic and rational reasoning.</td>
<td>• use metaphorical indicators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1. Comparison between government officials’ and nomad’s ways of viewing life.
Nomad’s Problem or Nomads as the Problem?

The nomad’s concerns are not compatible with the broader policy concerns of different departments of the Government of Iran. Putting the government’s agenda first will lead to a perception of the “nomads as the problem” and neglect the nomads’ issues. For instance, focusing on such issues as land degradation is addressing the wrong problem from the nomads’ point of view. In the context of uncertainty over land tenure, income levels and the very future of a lifestyle, land degradation is a part of a much greater problem from the nomadic perspective.

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE FIRST PERIOD OF FIELDWORK

Using a ‘Systemic Action Research’ context, and ethnographic methods in this phase of research I could conclude that:

a) there was a continuous fundamental shift in all aspect of Ghareghani way of life and which threatened the previous harmony with it socio-ecological context;

b) these changes have placed more pressure on the environment and expanded the economic gap between social groups;

c) there is no evidence to show that the situation is improving; and

d) there is a significant problem in communication between nomads and government officials, both in language and the underlying logic of understanding.
Changes and their Outcomes

Introduced change has mainly been based on the domination of the market and the state on the ordinary life of the Ghareghani nomads. Introduced changes delivered by new technology and new organisation have changed the system in a way that has led to more pressure on natural resource and increased the social gap, cultural issues and tensions. Introduced technology, which neglects the socio-ecological context, not only has not improved the quality of life of the Ghareghani, but has also degraded the natural environment and created more pressure on resource-poor families and, especially, on women. New social institutions which were not based on Ghareghani beliefs and value systems and did not consider the knowledge of the Ghareghani people in any significant way were not considered effective and were not accepted by the people.

Based on the shared understanding of all participant of this research, the environmental, social and economic situation is getting worse and more complex. There is not any evidence to suggest hope for a better future. Lack of communication between the two parties (nomads and officials) is considered by all participants as the main obstacle for situation improvement.

Lack of Communication

Using ethnographic methods, the first phase of the research showed how the ‘belief systems’ of Ghareghani nomads and the administrators with whom they deal, are different. The nomads’ belief system is harmonistic, holistic, empirical, spiritual,
contextual and qualitative as compared with the logic of the new context which is unidirectional, reductionist, positivist and quantitative.

The difficulties in communication between nomads and their new socio-ecological environment includes government (technocrats and technologists) and market (economists). The use of various terms which reflect different ‘ways of understanding’, ‘structure of reasoning or ‘epistemology’ between nomads and officials have been presented. My argument from this stage of research is that, due to the use of different epistemologies, which are the ways of reasoning and making sense out of reality, both parties remain fixed in their entrenched positions and come to an equitable agreement for change and betterment.

What is happening now, in terms of communication, is that the understanding of one group dominates the process of change. Domination by the government and market on nomadic life, is pursuing and pushing the nomads to follow the new order, to give up and agree with the dominant logic. As a result, the solutions to these difficulties of communication have now become new issues themselves. For instance, the settlement of nomads is one of the major solutions of yesterday which has again become a major issue.

The research in this phase, shows that it is necessary to identify the differences and accommodate them in order to begin to build a collaborative working arrangement. An approach which enables both nomads and government agencies to recognise each other's needs and priorities seems to be a prerequisite for action likely to be supported
in practice by all parties. Attempts to put the ‘nomads’ agenda’ first and involve them in process of issue identification/management are a priority. But what is more important, and is beyond putting them first, is to consider their language, knowledge, and ‘epistemology’.

Nomads’ participation in the process of research and development seems to be the most practical way of achieving the goals.

**PLAN FOR THE NEXT PHASE**

Based on these findings, the proposal for the next phase of research involved the application of a new paradigm and associated methodologies to improve communication in such a way that brings the two language and two epistemologies together. This facilitation process would need to grounded in an equal way, recognising the differences in language and logic, to facilitated improvement of the two groups’ understanding of each other and appreciating the logic of the other.

The next stage of the research involved the formation of an action research team, consisting of local officers of government departments concerned with nomadic issues. Efforts were made to have the nomads participate as much as possible in the process. The researcher acted as a facilitator for this team. Thus my role as the researcher was to make a bridge between two languages and systems of logic. To facilitate this, I created an action reseaching team. The team's purpose was to develop and negotiate strategies for addressing the issues which concerned the parties involved.
Chapter Five

The team attempted as far as possible, to recognise the differing interests of all interest groups and to meet all their needs, or at least to negotiate compromises of benefit to all participants.
PHOTO ESSAY 1

THE GHAREGHANI NOMADS, GOVERNMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCE: AN OVERVIEW
1- THE GHAREGHANI NOMADS

Ghareghani portraits 1.1-1.8

Ghareghani at work: 1.9-1.11

1. -agriculture (winter quarter) 1.12
2. -handicrafts (summer quarter) 1.13
3. -food preparation (winter quarter) 1.14
4. -distributing barley for fodder (winter quarter) 1.15
5. -craft weaving (winter quarter) 1.16
6. -herding (winter quarter) 1.17

(Note: Plates No 6, 7, 8, 13: R.J Fisher)
2-GHAREGHANI TERRITORY

**Winter quarter**

- outlook
- protecting a tree seedling from grazing animals
- Ghareghani cemetary

**Summer quarter**

- pasture
- apple orchard

**PLATE**

NO

1.18
1.19
1.20
1.21-1.22
1.23
3-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES
FOR THE GHAREGHANI NOMADS

PLATE
NO

The Ghareghani nomadic School (Winter quarter) 1.24
A government water collection project 1.25
Vaccination of Ghareghani herds by ONPI technicians. 1.26
Government health centre for nomads (Ghareghani winter quarter, Pir-e Sorkh) 1.27
Water through: Government project 1.28
Fenced range regeneration trail 1.29

4- GHAREGHANI HOUSING IN WINTER QUARTER 1.30- 1.34
CHAPTER VI

THE SEARCH FOR AN APPROPRIATE
METHODOLOGY FOR PARTICIPATION
IN CONVERSATION

INTRODUCTION

In the first phase of the research an ethnographic approach revealed the “what is” of
the researched situation. During that phase, the complexity of the situation, the unease
of the nomads about the situation, the lack of any signs of trends for future
improvement and, finally, the essential need for improvement in the mutual
understandings of the government officials and nomads, were all recognised.
Reflection on the outcomes of that phase of the research, led to the notion that a more action-oriented or development-focused approach to research would represent a potentially important innovation in a situation which seemed irresolvable. In other words, the findings of the phase lead to a higher order recognition of the need for “Research for Action for Development”. So the researcher turned to an action-oriented approach to research, impressed by two basic tenets: (a) that “action” is considered an essential means for understanding complex social reality (Lewin, 1946), and (b) that “action” in “research” can be focused on the goal of emancipating people (Habermas, 1974) in the name of “action for development”. There are important distinctions here between;

(a) researching the effects of actions taken to ‘disturb’ a social context in order to seek particular insights into the nature of that context; and

(b) researching the types of actions necessary to achieve particular (and desired) outcomes in order to achieve change through “empowerment”.

As both situations were relevant to the circumstances identified during the first research phase, it was considered important to integrate the theoretical and philosophical foundations of these two positions in guiding choices between various methodologies for subsequent research phases. It is these meta-researching investigations which provide the major theme of this chapter where the goal was to develop and test a research methodology for negotiation and collaborative action through an appropriately designed mode of action research.
THE SEARCH FOR AN APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGY TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION

Reflection on the outcomes of first fieldwork led to the higher order recognition of the need for research for action for betterment. The complementarity of two different types of research (ethnographic and action) echoed a similar call by Chambers:

Academic research has its place in analysing and understanding what is happening, but the most important contributions now will come from those who engage in practice and who find things to do and ways to do them that work.
(Chambers, 1994:264).

The underlying motive for this approach lay in the claim that reductionist scientific/technological research and development had generally failed to take account of the "praxis" of development (a close nexus between theories and practice) while centralised planning had been unable to take account of the diverse range of nomadic situations and perceptions. It was felt that what was needed, following the exploration of the differing and often paradoxical language and logic of the nomads and the various government agencies, was a methodological approach which would bring theory and practice together in a way which provided an appropriate context for systemic improvement. A strategy was necessary which could be applied to achieve more effective communication and mutual recognition among the two parties, in such a way to meet at least some of their legitimate needs. To address this issue, and based on the observations and critical reflection of the first phase of the research, the plan for the second phase of the research was for the application of an appropriate methodology to facilitate communication and change, in such a way as to improve the two groups' understanding of each other, thus leading to improvement. Based on the selected
paradigm of inquiry (mentioned in Chapter Two), the researcher turned to an analysis of the extensive literature on action research and participatory research.

**Action Research and its Main Characteristics**

The basic (classical) form of Action Research (AR) was established a half century ago, by Curt Lewin, who posited that change and action were important as a means for understanding social systems (Lewin, 1946). It led to the development of a distinctive form of social inquiry that attempts to change the social system while generating knowledge about it. Early action research work was conducted to discover ways of dealing with post World War II social problems. Over ensuing years the focus of action research has been expanded to include education, organisational change, worklife problems and community development issues. In the United States, action researchers have particularly studied business firms and educational organisations (Brown and Tandon, 1983).

A key concept in action research is that of *praxis*: the process by which theory informs practice and is then itself modified by reflection on the outcomes of that practice. The theory of action research itself has been influenced and modified by practice over the past five decades. “Classical” action research has been influenced by different ideologies and new types of problems and goals and we are currently witnessing new types of action research (Elden and Chisholm, 1993).
Emerging Types of Action Research

Elden and Chisholm (1993) have presented a wide range of emergent varieties of action research developed since the 1940s and showed how classical action research has been influenced by new types of problems and goals. They argue that the adaptation of emerging varieties of action research is a distinguishing feature of contemporary action research.

There are different emerging types, modes and varieties of action research, which are appropriate to different ends. Brown and Tandon (1983) for instance, categorise different action research approaches into two main groups: (a) the “Northern tradition of Action Research” (AR), which concerns organisational change through problem solving; and (b) the “Southern tradition” which is called Participatory Action Research (PAR), and which is concerned with empowering disempowered communities in the Third World.

“Participatory action research” has been acclaimed for producing new knowledge as well as solutions to organisational and social problems. But the term has quite a different meaning to different audiences; the “southern” tradition is committed to community transformation through empowering disenfranchised groups; the “Northern” tradition is concerned with reforming organisations through problem solving. (Brown, 1993: 249)

The above mentioned categorisations not only give a wider picture of emerging types of action research, but also reflect the effects of different socio-political settings and ideological trends on action research. They might be said to represent quite different researching cultures and they certainly demand very different methodologies in practice.
**Chapter Six**

*Action Research (AR): Research for Organisational Reform and Development.*

The "northern" tradition of action research which focuses on organisational change through learning and problem solving, has been influenced by a particular paradigm of inquiry and by ideologies and value systems which reflect the development of "established institutions" through control, based on "scientific understanding". Some of the "change oriented studies" considered the organisation and its components as a laboratory and benefited from the client merely as a source of information, with the goal of increasing organisational efficiency and enhancing adaptive capacity, or upgrading the organisational ability to innovate. The emerging varieties of action research, which are more concerned with democratic and humanistic values, aim at increasing organisational self-design and self-development and seek the collaboration of the client in the process of research as a major contributor of "personal knowledge" to "informing the practice" by "theory" (Elden and Chisholm, 1993; Brown and Tandon, 1983; Grundy and Kemmis, 1981). Here there is a much greater sense of participation by the stakeholders in the process of change. Yet the extent and indeed the purpose of this participation, varies greatly.

*Participatory Action Research (PAR): Research for Empowerment and Emancipation*

The adoption of "participation" as a major guideline for development of communities is supported by both theory and practice (Scoones and Thompson 1994). Since the 1980s, there has been an explosive growth of interest in participatory approaches among development institutions, ranging from the smallest NGO, to the World Bank as evidence by the literature. The *Abstract on Farmer Participatory Research* (ODI,
1989) for instance contains 340 abstracts of which more than sixty percent were published in the 1980s-90s (Whyte, 1991). The variety of participatory methodologies in agricultural development alone is quite bewildering as can be seen from a recently published list (Table 6.1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEA</td>
<td>Agroecosystem Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Beneficiary Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELTA</td>
<td>Development Education Leadership Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D&amp;D</td>
<td>Diagnosis and Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRP</td>
<td>Diagnostico Rural Participativo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRP</td>
<td>Farmer Participatory Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSR/E</td>
<td>Farming System Research /Extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAAP</td>
<td>Group de recherché et d'appui pour l'autoromotion paysanne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARP</td>
<td>Methode Accelere de Recherche Participative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALM</td>
<td>Participatory Analysis and Learning Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Process Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRAP</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal and Planing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRM</td>
<td>Participatory Research Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTD</td>
<td>Participatory Technology Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Rural Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RASK</td>
<td>Rapid Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAP</td>
<td>Rapid Assessment Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAT</td>
<td>Rapid Assessment Techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>Rapid Catchment Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REA</td>
<td>Rapid Ethnographic Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSA</td>
<td>Rapid Food Security Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA</td>
<td>Rapid Multi-perspective Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROA</td>
<td>Rapid Organisational Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRA</td>
<td>Rapid Rural Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>Samuhik Brahman (joint trek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFD</td>
<td>Theatre For Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFT</td>
<td>Training for Transformation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1. Some participatory approaches of the 1980-90s in agricultural development.
(Quoted from Scoones and Thompson 1994)
Since it was first established, new ways of doing action research have emerged in response to changes in relevant theoretical and practical contexts. Influenced by new worldviews, democratic values, social and ecological concerns and increasing emphasis on the role of peoples' knowledge, action research has shifted towards more participatory strategies, particularly toward an approach called Participatory Action Research.

Participatory action research is based philosophically on the phenomenological tradition and involves a process of inquiry through which people share their mental constructs and work together on issues which they consider relevant in order to bring about an improvement. People involved in a collaborative inquiry become informed and develop a commitment to improve those things they have helped to investigate (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) in such a way the primary attention is given to the promotion of human welfare (Reason, 1988).

According to Whyte (1991:7), PAR evolved out of three different steams of intellectual development and action: (a) social research methodology, (b) participation of clients and 'low ranking' people in the process of decision making both in organisations and communities, and (c) sociotechnical systems thinking regarding organisational behavior. Reason (1988) argues that the roots of this approach to inquiry lie in a "new world-view" which is emerging through systems thinking, ecological concerns and awareness, feminism and education, as well as in the emerging philosophy of human inquiry. Participatory action research has emerged out of experience with community development in Third World countries in order to render
development assistance more responsive to the need and assumption of local people, where the objective, conventional, positivist view is increasingly considered to be inappropriate to address such issues (Tandon 1983). The practical outcomes of the experiences among oppressed peoples have led to a significant shift in the recognition of ways of understanding (phenomenological epistemology), which reflect a more active role for the client as a “co-researcher” in constructing knowledge and inquiry.

Participatory action research as a methodology, developed during the 1970s and recognised the marginalisation caused by universal science. Its main challenge is to re-establish a dialectical relationship between theory and practice in such a way to approach problem solving in a collaborative way to restore to people their ability to transform their own worlds (Freire, 1972). It is flexible, exploratory and collaborative. Of particular importance here is the ideological context in which the inquiry is being conducted, and for what purpose.

Notions of purpose and the “disposition” of the inquirer were first developed by Aristotle and have been more recently explored by Habermas (cf. 1974) who emphasises the importance of the “constitutive interest” in human inquiry. Following this notion Grundy and Kemmis (1981) differentiate between:

(a) “Technical” Action research, which is guided by an “expert” or “authority”, and where the outcomes of the research will be measured as achievements towards a “pre-existing” idea.

(b) “Practical” Action Research, which tries to improve the practice through the application of the personal wisdom of the participants.
(c) “Emancipatory” Action Research, in which the emancipation of the discriminated client is the goal. In this critical approach, ‘theory’ does not determine the ‘practice’, but informs it.

As Grundy says:

Emancipated strategic action follows from the disposition of critical intent. This is not a tendency toward negative censure, but rather implies the positive intention toward rigorous discrimination. Critical intent is not, however, the intention to be rigorously discriminating only with regard to one’s own practice. Critical intent is the disposition which motivates action and interaction at all stages of emancipatory action research and is particularly important in the development of the theoretical perspective which informs and underpins the project.
(Grundy, 1982:358)

From this perspective, all action research is participatory, but the nature of the participation, and its influence on the outcomes, can be seen as widely divergent and a function of the “constitutive interest” of the researcher.

The crucial elements of participatory action research approaches have been identified by Argyris et al (1981):

a) a collaborative process between a researcher and the actors in the situation;
b) a process of critical inquiry;
c) a focus on social practice; and
d) a deliberate process of reflective learning.

Participatory action research always involves the formation of a team of people with common concerns around a particular problem. The team members will have different perspectives and interests but will share a concern with exploring issues within a
context of "situation improvement". They will also share a willingness to listen to and attempt to accommodate the views and interests of other team members. Team members become involved in a process of critical reflection through which they seek to understand the situation of concern. On the basis of this understanding they develop plans of action which are then implemented. Actions are then reviewed and new plans are made. Thus the process is cyclical and exploratory (Argyris et al, 1981).

In the original "classical" action research approach, the focus was on people as the data suppliers and the "laboratories" of social research/change. In PAR an epistemologically different approach is taken, with all participants contributing to the process of making sense of reality and being considered the main contributors of meaning conceptualised from their own social reality. This approach recognises the "client", both in the processes of co-understanding and cooperating for desirable change in such a way that there is a client shared ownership of the research enterprise. In PAR, the client is thus seen as an active contributor and participant in the process of action, and action is seen as a change for the "better" - an improvement in the exiting situation with the stakeholders contributing as co-researchers to both the definition and achievement of that end.

PAR involves practitioners in the research process from the initial design of the project through data gathering and analysis to final conclusions and actions arising out of the research. (Whyte, 1991:7)

Therefore this approach to research stimulates community-initiated action rather than pre-designed and standard plans for development. (For discussion of PAR see: Whyte, 1991; Brown and Tandon 1983; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Argyris et al.1981).
All research within an action research context is conducted in real world situations as a method of community based learning and knowledge gained through dealing with the situations reflects an accurate and valid increase in understanding of the system under study (Brown and Tandon 1983; Korten, 1980; Whyte 1991).

The empowerment and emancipation of oppressed people is considered to be the most important missions of PAR (Tandon, 1981, 1988), which thus makes it requirement of Grundy’s category of “Emancipatory Action Research” (Grundy, 1982).

Tandon (1988) has summarised five important outcomes of PAR as follows;

a) re-legitimising and appropriating peoples’ knowledge;

b) refining ordinary people’s capacities and potential for conducting their own research and critical analysis;

c) contextualising knowledge from the dominant system for use by the clients;

d) developing new knowledge that is relevant to the client; and finally

e) liberating the minds of the oppressed to their own interests.

In Table 6.2, an attempt has been made to illustrate the fundamental differences between “classical” or “northern tradition” action research and the “emergent” or “southern” tradition.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>VALUES AND AREA OF FOCUS</strong></th>
<th><strong>Participatory Action Research</strong></th>
<th><strong>Action Research</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge generation and developmental change in community in Third World Countries</td>
<td>Knowledge generation and developmental change in organisations in Developed Countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MODES:**

a) Technical and Practical

- Social analysis by “expert with emphasis on issues of Equity and Oppression” (Brown and Tandon, 1983). Local people are the source of information and wisdom (indigenous knowledge).
- Individual group analysis by expert with emphasis on issue of organisational efficiency. Clients are the source of information and wisdom about the organisation.

b) Emancipatory

- The goal is emancipation, self-reliance, and liberation of oppressed people, as guided by a facilitator, and benefited from personalised information based on critical collective reflection of clients.
- The goal is increasing organisational self-design and self development through the collaboration of the clients in the process of research.

*Table 6.2. Area of Focus and different modes of Action Research and Participatory Action Research. Based on information derived from Brown and Tandon, 1983; Brown, 1993; Grundy, 1982.*
Choice of Approach

To the researcher in the present context, both of these two approaches (PAR and AR) had advantages and disadvantages as the basis for the second phase of the research. The ethnographic study had, for instance, clearly revealed a strong sense of loss of power over their own destiny, among the nomads. There was a general acceptance that their migratory way of life would gradually disappear and that it was the government's responsibility to help them improve the quality of their lives. This situation, it could be argued, is characteristic of those circumstances for which PAR had been designed, yet equally it was a situation which posed significant difficulties for the researcher from a number of different points of view. A major issue was the ethical matter of the "right to intervene". Given the political background and sensitive nature of the relationships between the government and nomads, this issue was further complicated by political and socio-cultural considerations. Attempts to bring PAR strategies to the nomads would clearly have the potential of creating further tension around the relationship of which both parties were already very concerned. A very real possibility existed of a PAR project among nomads turning into a political act, or at least being interpreted as an action for autonomy. So while a case could clearly be made for a research process which allowed the nomads to gain a greater sense of empowerment, as the researcher, felt that it was not all appropriate for me to assume such a responsibility.

A second alternative for an action face for achieving change in the present situation, was to turn to those government agencies with responsibilities for different aspects of the nomads position. Again a strong case could be made to introduce conventional
Action Research methodologies to them, with the concept of Participatory as the constitutive interest of the researcher and the assumed benefit to the government agencies. The problem was that such an approach needed the approval of the agents, as clients, if it was to succeed. While the nomads were in little doubt that the issue of the need for common understanding between themselves and the government was a central one, the view of government agencies had not formally been investigated.

My own experience however, had been with a number of different government agencies and the impression was strong that while there was enthusiasm about findings new ways of assisting nomads, these did not include the possibility of challenging, let alone changing the “official worldview” of the situation. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the prevailing model of development with government agencies, continues to be the search for scientific solutions for technical problems. Under these circumstances, a technical action research approach, with the researcher as “organisational” or “technical expert” would have probably been acceptable; but equally, even if I had been such an “expert”, little would probably have changed for the nomads, at least in the short to medium term.

In the event, I decided that the most appropriate approach to the second phase of the research, given the arguments for the need for action-based innovation, was to develop a hybrid approach to action research. This would be based on the following logic:
a) That government agents would benefit from hearing about the observations and feelings of the nomads, and about their need for new relationships to be built between them and government agencies.

b) That agents would benefit from a form of action research which would help them question their own professional “field” practices with respect to “shared understanding”.

c) That the essential part of this review of practice would be through exposure to action research principles, including the differences within these as characterised by technical, practical and emancipatory dimensions.

d) That an ideal outcome of such an endeavour would be that the agents themselves, working through a practical action research mode would recognise the advantages of the adoption of a more emancipatory process in the way they were dealing with the nomads.

So the approach adopted was to combine elements of both practical and emancipatory action research into a methodology which I would introduce to the agents of the appropriate government departments and agencies.

DEVELOPING THE METHODOLOGY

In preparing for the second phase of the research with regard to the development of an appropriate methodology, the researcher turned to the four elements of action research approach which Argyris et al. (1981), had proposed:

1) a review of the collaborative process between researcher and actors;
Chapter Six

2) the process of critical inquiry;
3) focus on the social practice;
4) deliberate reflective learning;

Each of these elements will be discussed as a context for explaining how the methodology of this phase of research was developed as a praxis of theory and practice.

(1) Collaborative Process Between Researcher and Actors

The major questions addressed in regard to the collaboration process were:

a) With whom would collaboration occur? Specifically, which governmental departments and what types of government agents should be chosen to be members of the research team? What would be the size of the team needed?

b) How would the process of collaboration with the selected actors be designed, organised and implemented?

c) What would be the “constitutive interest” of the actors in this collaboration process?

The Research Team

As the starting point for this phase of research, it was important to decide who should be selected to establish the research team and why. The main guide for the selections was the underlying theoretical position of the research and the following indicators for selection:
a) The group should include representative practitioners from responsible bodies, who have formal informal roles in the process of decision-making and active implementation of decisions concerning the nomads and their resources.

b) The representatives of the various agencies and departments who would participate in the action research team, should have knowledge, relevant experience and background in the areas of nomadism and organisational affairs.

c) Group members would need to have access to the current policies of their departments concerning the nomads and the authority to share these official viewpoints with the group.

Three departments were chosen by the researcher as having probable candidates for the research team. They were FRO, ONPI (Organisation Nomadic People of Iran) and PBO (Planing and Budget Organisation). It was proposed that the representatives of these three departments make up the research team.

Factors of group dynamics were considered in deciding the size and composition of the group. Following Auvine Brain, et al. (n.d.), it was recognised that the "comfort level" within the group, as affected by the range of "worldviews", and the efficiency of group processes, were important principles of group design.

Collaboration

The second question concerned the process of organising the actual mechanisms for collaboration. Due to the formal centralised organisational structures of the selected departments, it was recognised that it would be necessary to follow formal
procedures for obtaining official collaboration for this research to proceed. The first stage would be to call for assistance and collaboration from the directors of the three selected departments at the provincial level. It was presumed that this call would be considered positively by all the departments for two reasons. Firstly, they would be all intensively engaged with the nomadic issue and would therefore welcome or at least respect professional insights into the issue. Secondly, because of the personal relationships that had been established over the years, there would be a considerable amount of mutual trust between me as the researcher and many of my former colleagues.

Having formal and official support from three different departments would be a starting point for working with the action research team.

_Constitutive Interests_

During the introductory meeting with the directors of the three selected departments, their “constitutive interests” for cooperation in this research would be explored. Awareness of the constitutive interest of the actors was considered an important aspect of collaboration between the researcher, team facilitator, and the other nomads of the “researching group”. This awareness would be facilitated by the process of critical thinking.

(2) _The Process of Critical Inquiry_

As explained in Chapter Two, critical inquiry is not so much a theory as a way of thinking and conceptualising phenomenon and their relationships, to reflect a
continuous state of "questioning" during the process of inquiry. Experience suggests that proposing a critical inquiry to a client who is unused to such imprecision of both task definition and process of inquiry is a difficult task.

In order to introduce criticality, the researcher was very careful to place emphasis on the depth of the issue and the hidden aspects of the nomadic problem from an organisational perspective from the earliest stage of inquiry. The failure of formerly applied strategies for change and improvement (betterment) was an important lever in this respect. Relying on trust and encouraging new ways of looking for new " possibilities" in working in unknown situation with the clients, would be the main guide in this phase of the research (Uphoff, 1992).

It was decided that the major essential for facilitating this inquiry would be to use experience as the major source of learning. Emphasis would be placed on social practice, and any theoretical discussions about the intellectual position of the approach would be contextualised by reference to practice. It would be in this way that the idea of praxis, as the interplay between practice and theory, would be introduced and reinforced.

(3) The Focus on Social Practice

I accepted that a range of social practices would be encountered within the agencies to be involved in the research. The challenge presented here would be to: (a) raise consciousness about the existing practices; (b) facilitate a critical review of their adequacies and inadequacies under the complex conditions of the issue of nomadic
pastoralism; and (c) encourage exploration of novel practices based on the methodologies of systemic action research.

The aim of the innovative practices would be to encourage the adoption of systemic praxis by practitioners involved in its creation.

(4) Deliberate Reflective Learning

Regular group discussion among team members would be conducted as a means of collective reflection on daily personal observation and organisational perspectives of each member. The role of the facilitator would be to establish an environment for negotiation between participants and at the same time create an opportunity for all to explore the situation in innovative ways.

Creating and maintaining a learning environment among all members would be the most crucial task of the researcher. Appreciation and respect for the other personal, professional and organisational perspectives, and more importantly maintaining a focus on the nomads and their perspectives in the explanations of the daily social observations and practices, would the major theme guiding the process of learning.

Reviewing the past experiences of organisational projects and focusing on the actual outcomes of current approaches of development in social reality, would also represent rich sources of learning.

It was hoped that by looking at a wider perspective than only an organisational one and focusing on the Bonkoh as an ‘human activity system’, would allow the development of a new praxis, set within a systemic social environmental context. Most importantly, it was a my major hope, as the researcher, that the various practitioners involved in this attempt, would, though their collective reflective learning, come to
appreciate the crucial relationships that exist between the perspectives that they hold, and the development of policies and practices they promote.

Methods and Techniques

Part of applied methods and techniques, which guide the experience in this phase of the research could be summarised as follow:

a) Review of Organisational History

This technique was applied through different ways of expression including collective research meetings to discuss and review organisational history, and to explore tacit organisational strategies and beliefs among participants with particular emphasis on relationship between the organisation and local people. Reviewing the history of applied projects and plans, was considered very fruitful.

b) Group Facilitation

Group Facilitation is a technique which is based on the new paradigm of intervention and guides people through a process whereby they gain self-reliance in inquiry and action, learning to create their own knowledge. The role of the facilitator is fundamentally different from conventional interventionists. Facilitators use facilitative, as opposed to authoritative, approaches to intervention. A facilitator is considered a catalyst who provides help and guidance in looking at a situation in new ways and who fosters desirable change. Facilitation works best when the necessary values and beliefs are already accepted and practiced by the facilitator and then by the rest of group. It is not enough that the facilitator demonstrates these competencies, it is
necessary that they be fostered in the participants for success to occur (see Auvine et al, n.d.).

Providing equal opportunities for all participants to demonstrate their ideas, encouraging participants to take responsibility themselves and co-operating with them through the research are part of the facilitation task. Group facilitation was considered the most critical role and responsibility of the researcher in the whole process of the research, especially in this phase.

c) Group Depth Interviews

Group Depth Interviews (Goldman and Macdonald, 1987) require establishment of discussion groups to provide all participants an equal and active forum to raise their issues. According to this technique, the researcher’s role is that of a facilitator who moderates active participation and also provides an appropriate environment for the interaction of all participants. This method was used to conduct groups of the different government agencies and groups encompassing government officials and nomads. It was used for two main reasons: (a) to allow actors to become familiar with each others’ viewpoints toward the issue, and (b) to allow actors to make a collective contributions on the issue.

d) Brain Storming Technique

Brain Storming Technique (Delbec, 1975) was used in groups to help participants imagine as many ideas as possible. During brainstorming, the participants are encouraged to produce ideas as quickly as possible without considering the value of
the idea. In this stage the emphasis is on making as wide a picture as possible not on the quality of the ideas. No criticism of ideas is permitted since participants must feel free to present their thoughts and use their imagination about the issue. This technique lets the individuals within a group generate a list of associated ideas relevant to an issue and also to generate possible solutions.

e) Collective Research-Meeting

This was the most commonly used framework for the ongoing processes of this phase of research. This was accomplished through regular meetings with team members. These techniques were used separately or jointly to:

a) establish a rich picture of the situation

b) facilitate a shared understanding of the actual situation/problem among all group members, and,

c) consolidate a base for collaboration by all engaged parties for situation improvement.

The application of Action Research and the methods described will be discussed in the next Chapter (Chapter Seven).
CHAPTER VII

RESEARCH FOR ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT:

PARTICIPATION IN CONVERSATION

(SECOND PHASE OF RESEARCH)

INTRODUCTION

The first phase of the present research was conducted to explore the actual situation from an observer/participant perspective and with the primary consideration of the nomads' understanding of the situation they believed that they face. Consistent with ethnographic inquiry, it was most important to understand just what the situation was, simply to explore the question, "what is the actual situation?" - not to change it. The apparent irresolution of the situation that the nomads believe themselves to be in, suggested the need for an approach grounded in a context of "Research through Action for Development". Among the outcomes of this activity however was the recognition that there needed to be considerable improvement in the communication
and mutual understanding between government officials and nomads. The methodology, methods and techniques of this phase of research was discussed in the previous chapter. What will be presented here is the process and outcomes of the second phase of the research.

THE METHODOLOGY IN ACTION

Following participation and presentation of two paper on “First International Conference on Nomadism and Development” in Shahr-e Kord (Emadi et al, 1992 and Russel et al, 1992), the second phase of the research was conducted for three months (Aug-Oct 1992). In this phase, I was accompanied at various times by my colleagues, both esteemed international scholars, Dr Robert Woog and Dr Bob Fisher. The first task was to establish an action research team.

Establishment of Action Research Team

The first step in establishing an action research team was a request for help from all directors of the three selected departments (FRO, ONPI and PBO) at the national and provincial levels. This call was welcomed by all three departments because, firstly they were all intensively engaged with nomadic issues and looking for some professional insights on the issue, and secondly because of their personal relationships and feelings of trust toward me.

It took two weeks to get the formal permission for collaboration from the different provincial level directors. During this time I had several meetings with the directors
of the selected departments in order to negotiate and select the group members. During an introductory meeting with the directors of the three departments, it became clear that the "constitutive interest" behind their enthusiasm for cooperation in this research was to get academic support for their organisational task and for what they were doing and to seek endorsement of their organisational perspectives and understandings the situation involving nomads.

Both experts of the PBO in Fars Province had left that organisation just one month earlier, therefore we had no access to them and the only staff available were unable to come to the area and accompany us. Hence they recommended that another person from the FRO organisation, who had formerly worked with PBO, could handle this job. ONPI's expert was nominated by the director of ONPI in the Fars province and was working as the head of the Socio-Economic Research Center (SERC) in FRO. The two persons nominated by FRO were very pleased to have this mission. One of them was the Head of SERC, and the second was the District Director of FRO in the same district. The characteristics of the members and the size of the group were appropriate. Both the Provincial Directors and the research team agreed to collaborate in this action research when it was proposed in the manner that a new and alternative solution to old issues would be examined. As will be explained later in this chapter, team members had several major concerns about this approach, right from the beginning of the inquiry. The first two introductory sessions were held with the above members.
First Meeting

As the action research team we met each other for the first time at the FRO research center in Shiraz on 30 November 1992. From the early stages of group formation in the first meeting, ONPI's representative began complaining about the FRO staff. At the beginning of the session he was talking about FRO's absence from a recent meeting. FRO's staff complained to him about his late feedback on their report and so on.

The discussion displayed some significant formal clashes and also suggested the lack of any regular communication; it appeared to me that conflict in such a situation had been almost unavoidable. This was a difficult beginning and I understood that the formation and facilitation of such a group would not be an easy job. However, I let them talk and complain about one another to learn more about their official relationship and their attitudes towards each other. In the meantime I suggested that their conflicts were due to their organisational relations rather than the personal sphere. Then I tried to establish a sense of unity among them through the use of various techniques. The first effort was to talk about their common issues rather than their disagreements on current issues.

The next step was to generate more discussion about their organisational activities and projects regarding nomads and the level of achievement among them toward the current projects. It was obvious that they were each going to show the success of their activities and projects compared to the others. The discussions showed that the organisational interference between the agencies and their policies are so significant
that it works as the major obstacle for the process of collaboration. I asked myself “How long might it take them to be close on this approach?” Gradually I came to believe that the shift needed was not only a technical or methodological change. It was a radical change in attitude and beliefs among the government staff and experts toward the people and their role in the process of change and research which could not be changed by theoretical discussions and lectures.

One major improvement in the ongoing process of research which was raised during group discussion and personal dialogue was the identification of obvious differences in their personal, academic and organisational views toward the situation and the issue. It became clear that the personal perspectives of participants toward the situation were different from their professional perspectives and that these were distinguishable from their organisational worldview.

As a metaphor, the situation could be considered a game and the participants had three sets of cards in their hand; organisational, professional and personal. The more we emphasised organisation and professional knowledge the more value we put on the organisational and professional cards. The more relaxed and informal the process, the more the trend shifted toward playing with the personal card. There was a continuous shift in the game with different sets of cards being played. I found it very efficient for us to spend time with each other informally to explore personal views. I facilitated the process in order to build discussions on the personal views among the group, keeping in mind our professional knowledge and organisational task.
Through a questioning process, it was established that each participant held three views. One, his personal view, which was based on his own constructs of reality; second, his professional view; and, third the view of his organisation. In reality this meant, for instance, that one participant felt in himself, from his work and experience with the nomads, that their culture and lifestyle had reached its end and could not continue. His academic/professional viewpoint as a subject matter specialist (a social scientist or range management specialist) meant that he would focus on his specialist area in order to support the nomads and he worked to implement this viewpoint. Finally, because of his organisation's brief, he knew what he had to hold and how to implement the task and view of his organisation toward the nomads.

It was important to use critical thinking at this point and focus on the "constitutive interest" of the participants. Based on their specialties, they were aware of their prestige which resulted from their role as a specialist. Hence they would express what a specialist in their area "should" express, not what their personal belief was. Then, because their "constitutive interest" was also to secure and promote their job and belonging within the organisation, they would defend or promote the organisational perspective, which again might be in contradiction with the personally held view or professional viewpoint that they held. In short, this research exposed the contradictions between the professional and organisational expressed/held views and the personal viewpoint. The process of working with this group was based on developing this personal viewpoint as the most important starting point for change. The participants also openly expressed their personal need for greater understanding
of the nomadic situation in order to resolve some of the internal conflicts they acknowledged during informal discussions.

The influence of the personal viewpoint was much ultimately stronger than the professional or organisational viewpoint that each person held. Therefore, it was decided that focus should be placed on the personal view of each participant. This viewpoint was the result of the direct experience of each participant, so a personal experience was offered that could change this viewpoint experientially without anyone knowing exactly what change in the viewpoint would occur.

Later in the process of research, this decision proved to be a good one because: (a) most of the professional debates and academic conflicts along with the organisational defences and posturing had been eliminated from the process; and (b) the participants were able to debate and discuss issues together in an open way in order to help resolve the conflicts between their own viewpoints.

The next focus area which improved the process was a discussion the issue of participation. Generally, the team members held a positive attitude about local peoples' participation in the projects implemented by their organisations. All of the officials agreed that participation and joint effort between the government and the nomads was appropriate. At this time, however, they understood participation to mean that the nomads would participate in projects designed by the various departments.
The raising of the issue of participation created an appropriate base for discussion about "bottom up" approaches and their conflict with organisational goals. At this time, I asked them to rethink and review their personal experiences by focusing on the role of the nomads and their views about the processes and the results of the governments' activities with the nomads. I gave them some examples to consider. We continued talking about the possible ways, techniques and the trustworthiness of the new approaches for working with people.

The District Director of FRO, who had worked face-to-face with the nomads for eight years, was very open and enthusiastic about this approach. He was already adapting his professional views and he had recognised that in many cases his academic/professional knowledge required contextualisation. He had many critiques of the scientific knowledge he had acquired through formal studies in higher education which had not been benefited him in his work because it did not work in the field.

The ONPI officer, who was educated in conventional social science and had very brief experience with the nomads, had some difficulty in terms of what an educated person should expect from the processes and characteristics of a research. This was his first experience as part of a research team where the research proposal was not written and clear. Later, I came to understand his concerns and suspicions about the methodology that we were going to use in terms of his professional views toward academic research.
During the next sessions I made it clear to the participants that I did not have a
methodological blue print but was developing a better understanding of the situation
with them to develop or modify an appropriate methodology in order to improve the
tsituation. It seemed very new and unusual to them to, simultaneously do the research,
be practitioners, engage in collective reflection and participate with the nomads in
this process.

Gradually it became clear to all of the participants that the best way to understand and
make sense out of the methodology was to do it with the nomads. We decided
together to have a field trip and to participate with the nomads in this process of
investigation. My proposal for the field trip was to visit the Ghareghani nomads and
this suggestion was accepted by all of the participants.

Commonalities and Differences in the Views and Interests of the Action Research
Team Members

At first it was necessary to compare, contrast and share together the different views
and interests of the action research team members. In this section I will first discuss
the shared concerns, then the different interests expressed. The shared concerns of all
officials were related to:

a) Combining research and action. The officials shared the view that development and
research were two separate activities. All of them found it strange to participate in
a project which incorporated both research and action in the same activity.
b) Including the nomads in the process of the research. These officials had all had contact with nomads, but none had previously considered including the nomads in the process of research.

c) Concern over possible criticisms of their agencies. All officials had some concerns that the findings of the research might reflect negatively on their agencies’ plans, organisation and agendas.

d) Each member of the team knew the problem from the perspective of their own agency. Each considered that their perspective was the only one. It was difficult for them to be part of a group which had the objective of reviewing and reflecting on a problem they already thought they understood fully.

There were also some differences in the interests and concerns of the team members:

a) The ONPI representative had a background in conventional social science. His belief was that his organisation held the primary responsibility for the nomads and nomadic issues. This belief created some division between him and other members of the group as he considered them to be persons who offered services to him and his organisation. Professionally his background led him to search for quantitative data which would support or not support sedentarisation of the nomads. In this way he sought to predict outcomes and then be able to report the findings to his superiors in his organisation. He believed that his organisation had a balanced and objective view of the nomad situation and that the nomads could be managed in a more efficient manner if the management were improved. He believed this would happen if the other agencies would follow the objectives of his organisation.
b) The FRO representative also believed that the nomadic way of life could not improve without increased productivity of animal husbandry. From his view this required more efficient range management practices. He believed that the nomads were poor managers of this resource from a scientific viewpoint. Further, he believed that since the FRO was in charge of the rangeland, his organisation had the key role in the improvement of the nomadic way of life. His concern was with the conservation of natural resources and that the inefficient management of the nomads disturbed the natural resources.

We found at an early stage of this discussion that: (a) in spite of their different concerns about the nomadic issue, what was common and clear among the different agencies was that each thought that they were fully aware of the problem and the situation of nomads; (b) there are obvious differences in their personal, professional and organisational views about the situation; and (c) the application of Action Research to enhance organisational change could not succeed without the participation and direct involvement of the nomads.

A major plan for the next stage of the research was formed involving Action Research and Participatory Research methodologies.

Moving Further Down to the Field Site

On the way to the field, I spent some hours going over the history of the research area and describing the situation to the officers. This included the location of the nomads on the map, their Il-rah (migration route), tribal relationships, their general economic
situation, their relations with their neighbours and their social situation and identity.

The FRO’s District Director was asked to add some points about FRO projects, both present and past, in that particular area. As we drove on, in order to avoid any organisational clashes, the ONPI officer was also asked to comment about his department’s efforts and programs in that area. He talked about community development, social services and ONPI’s settlement program.

**APPROACH TO NOMADS (OBSERVATION AND EXPLANATION)**

When we arrived at the area, I asked the driver to take us to a particular point on top of the hills in order to see the region and the location of the different camps. When we arrived at the camp, by previous agreement we separated into three groups. Everyone was to talk to each of the families on several occasions during our time there.

Our first task was to understand the general situation of the nomads in terms of various issues. Meanwhile we were going to explore the nomads, views about their situation and their main concerns, interests and issues. We were going to explore their ideas and views about government services and how relevant they were to their needs and issues. Finally, we were going to discover, with the nomads, possibilities for improvement in the provision of these services.

We arrived at the nearest camp, where I introduced the team to the head of camp as friends of mine, without mentioning their official positions. Saffari, who is the head of that particular extended family, seemed to be better than at our last meeting...
months previous when he suffered from the effects of a stroke. We had a chat about his family, their herds and some new changes concerning his eldest son who is a teacher and livestock dealer.

We left FRO's researcher with them and on the way to the next tent we passed a nomadic primary school which was located on top of the hill. The teacher (Keshavars), who was my main assistant in the previous phase of the research research, raised his hand and asked us to stop. Then he came down. We had a short and friendly chat to find out the news about the clan and its new issues. He and his colleague are the only government officials who stay with the nomads and I consider them to be the best sources of information and communication with the different nomad families. They are not originally from the Ghareghani clan, but have good relations with particular families. The Ghareghani respect them because they are teachers. As outsiders who were familiar with the situation from inside, I asked them to join us in this second phase of research.

Then we arrived in the Esmail camp. Esmail’s large black tent was ready for his regular guests. He is one of the two old men who is generally recognised to carry the responsibility as the informal headman of the clan. He knows all of the government staff in the region, therefore he recognised Kargar (District Director of FRO). During the first minute of our chat he made a joke when we asked him about the FRO's program and its’ success. He said "If there is not any benefit for nomads through FRO's projects, we are still happy that there is some official upgrading and benefits
for FRO's staff and District Director." His words were directed toward Kargar, who now has a higher position at the provincial level.

Masih Khan (one of the key elders of the clan and head of the second lineage) was standing on the top of the hill and inspecting us. When we stopped, he came to us to clarify who we were and where are we were from. He seemed to be happy when he recognised me. We were invited to his tent to have tea with a very warm reception. This was the first day of confronting the team members with the actual situation and was continued as a regular daily program. Every afternoon when we returned to our quarters after spending the whole day with nomads, we had an organised group discussion with all team members to reflect on the day’s experiences. I was the facilitator of the group.

Confronting Team Members with the Socio-ecological Context

Previously, the officers had an abstract perception of what was happening in the situation. Through their collective viewing of the situation and discussions, they were able to see the impact of the projects of their various agencies upon the projects of the other agencies. They began to see that the projects interconnected in ways which had not previously been recognised nor thought of.

An example is relevant here. When a small water reservoir is built by ONPI, the herds of the nomads will congregate in the particular area which causes overgrazing. This problem of overgrazing is the responsibility of FRO. In addition, ONPI has built a
road into the area which means that the nomads can now transport their water by vehicle and thus they do not need the reservoir in this particular area. They need the reservoir in an area which is not accessible by road.

Collective reflection on, and explanation of, the social context based on the direct observations of the officers, lead to an environment in which all participants were able to look at the situation from the perspective of the other organisations. They became familiar with the wide range of activities and projects which were being implemented at the regional level and were able to examine their previous and current strategies and policies toward the nomads. The situations they observed highlighted the interconnections in the social context.

When the officers had conceptualised their findings, theoretical input and discussion was introduced to inform their findings and practice. The relevant theories were introduced as aids in expressing their findings which they were not able to express in conventional scientific language and logic.

At this time, some nomads were invited to share their views and perspectives on the various projects with the governmental officers. This was an attempt to introduce the nomads' views and perspectives on the situation and to include their perspectives in the ensuing discussions.

Confronting the participants on different occasions with the nomads and their capabilities, assisted the process of understanding in depth the theory of participation.
When their language and logic was interpreted and contextualised by the facilitator, the participants became more familiar with the idea of the nomads’ indigenous knowledge and its importance in the process of decision making for change and development. It became clear during these meetings between the government officials and nomads, that the nomads were able to see and understand outcomes of various projects while they were in the planning stages. Thus it became clear to the officials that inclusion of the nomads in the planning stages of projects was important. Their direct social experience was informed by the systemic way of thinking, which enabled them to see the picture as a whole.

The Dynamic

The dynamic of this continuous process in brief was that, first, the officials had a regular meeting with all camps of the Ghareghani clan. Secondly, we had a regular group discussion among the officials based on the daily visits and observations in order to keep the process of action and reflection in line with a participatory approach.

The process of these regular meetings and discussions can be summarised in the three following points:

a) equalising the context and facilitating interaction for effective communication between team members and nomads;

b) facilitating a learning environment in which all participants were informed and could consider other perspectives that were presented;

c) exploring the possibilities and facilitating the processes for situation improvement.
Processes of Collective Reflection

The daily discussion between the researcher and officials was divided into four main sections which followed the basic experiential process of inquiry as outlined by Kolb (1984): (a) the observations of all participants during the day was discussed among the group (rich picturing and diverging), (b) their personal reflections and explanations of that data were elicited (assimilation), (c) group reflection and discussion of the personal explanations was facilitated, encouraging exploration of the issues and problems associated with the particular group of nomads who were met during the day and finally this process was followed by (d) exploring the possible strategies to accommodate the issue. In the meantime, every participant had an opportunity to make notes and to make comments about the ongoing process and content of the discussion. Any further contentious issues that arose during the evening concerning the above process, unclear data or situational explanations among the participants, were brought to the field trip/experience next day to be explored as a group.

This process, which was facilitated by the researcher, helped all participants to have a closer look at the situation and to deal directly with nomads in seeking more information in order to explain their different observations or conflicting information from a nomadic family. This technique also allowed all of them to express their personal and official interests and viewpoints to one another and to compare and negotiate their personal and official concerns and interests with the rest of the group.
Finally they were encouraged to look at the situation from different viewpoints, particularly the perspectives of the nomads.

**Research as a Process of Reflective Learning**

Regular group discussion among team members was conducted as a means of collective reflection on daily personal observations and the organisational perspectives of each member. My role as facilitator was to establish an environment for negotiation between participants and at the same time create an opportunity for all of us to see the situation in a different way, in a broader and longer term framework considering different viewpoints.

Creating and maintaining a learning environment among all members was my most crucial task. Appreciation and respect for the personal, professional and organisational perspectives of others and, more importantly, keeping in mind the nomads and their perspectives in the discussions of the daily observations and activities, were the major elements in the process of learning.

Reviewing the past experiences of various organisations’ projects and focusing on the actual outcomes in social reality was a way of learning which on several occasions transformed the attitudes of the officers toward current approaches to development. Taking a wider perspective, rather than a purely organisational one, and focusing on a Bonkoh, enable them see the effects of various organisational strategies and their inappropriateness within the social context and nomads’ needs. Hence they were
connected to the problematical world which was caused by the policies and actions which were based on their perspectives.

During each session we reviewed the whole process from the meta-level to see “what we learned” and “how we learned” (Bawden, 1992a). Combining social practice and research (Action Research), introducing learning from experience (experiential learning), and systems thinking, were very unfamiliar activities to all participants at the early stages of this research. On many occasions they were very uneasy with the situation resulting from this way of thinking and viewing situations. The social practice and its outcomes made this process more understandable and comfortable.

**Discovering the possibilities and addressing the issues with the nomads**

The final stage, in which all group member participated, involved exploring possible ways of improving the situation with the nomads themselves. In this stage, no common strategy by all members of the clan nor camps, could be discerned. Each family was considering a different way to adapt to their new situation which included the options of settlement, following the traditional lifestyle or a mixture of the two. We were faced with this range of different choices for adaptation by each family. This diversity within the Bonkoh was not surprising, because of the different interests, concerns and access to resources of each particular family. What came as a surprise was discovering the unique possibilities to improve the situation for all the members of Ghareghani and the action research team to improve the situation without any fundamental investment or transference of technology.
According to the shared findings of the first and second stages of research, we realised that each family of Ghareghani had its own strategy to transform its way of life to a more sustainable form. In general there were two groups in terms of access to resources. The first was the small number of families who had enough resources to continue animal husbandry in the same area without migrating with their family. The second was the group of families with fewer resources in terms of pasture and access to governmental services who wanted to leave nomadism and settle down in the winter quarter, the summer quarter or somewhere else which was more appropriate for them. The pressure on the latter group to stay and suffer was due firstly to their lack of adequate capital to invest in a new life (buying land and materials for building), and secondly the value of the land for which they held grazing rights. These factors keep them in touch with nomadism and herding as the main requisites for maintaining grazing rights, even to the extent of borrowing more animals or following a Nim-sudi contract.

In specific terms this means that the families who do not have enough grazing right to continue animal husbandry (resource poor nomads) often choose to settle. In the meantime their only asset is their grazing right to a particular pasture and a small amount of cultivated land. Therefore they hold onto these resources as the only capital for the future. In this way grazing rights often are unavailable to those nomads who want to continue in animal husbandry and have not enough pasture. Hence, for nomads who cannot afford to settle with a minimum standard of living and are not able to make the best use of the current available pasture, do not transfer it to nomads
who want to continue animal husbandry, because they are unwilling to lose their only capital asset.

For the nomads who want to continue animal husbandry and who have the resources to do so, this reluctance to give up rights is a severe limitation because they cannot increase their herds. They blame the government who divided the pasture among too many poor-resource nomads who settled and still hold the grazing rights. Eventually, they too are forced to find other more productive ways to invest their capital which take them away from their role at the animal husbandry. In the long term this has implications to the production in national level because the vast area of rangeland in Iran is unproductive for any other use pattern if migratory animal husbandry does not exist.

At first glance these two group of nomads seem to have different problem and solutions, but they are the two sides of the same coin and the situations of both could be improved if the restrictive rules were to be changed in favour of all nomads, the whole community and the State. Conditional grazing rights and their regulation appears to be the key issue. These right are the first condition to obtaining livestock and are an antecedent of grazing which needs to be proven by being in touch with the pasture. The rights are annually renewed and not recognised by law as a transferable right. However, since these rights are the only valuable capital of poor nomads they cannot abandon them very easily even though they are conditional and not very valuable.
The group of nomads who have relatively more access to resources, are not happy with the actual size of the pasture as an optimum production unit. According to them, everything has radically changed for them during the past five decades, particularly in economic terms (increased market emphasis on meat, rather than dairy production and the high cost of animal feed, etc.) and changing technological aspects of life (rising labour costs, use of machines for transportation of herd, etc.). They have to run an optimum size of herd to be economical and this optimum size of herd needs more pasture than they already have.

In the meantime we recognised and explored different ways that some nomads particularly the resource-poor nomads, transfer grazing rights to someone else, mainly to the people who want to stay and continue animal husbandry. This right transference is intimately involved in the conversion of low quality pasture to dryland farming, which is one of the most important and crucial issues of natural resource deterioration in Iran in general and in this area in particular. What encourages the poor nomads to transfer their rangeland to non-fertile land and cultivate it is to gain the ownership of the land. According to the law, you own the land once it has been cultivated. However, you will be penalised for cultivating pasture land. Poor nomads are cultivating the land even though this will lead to court cases and payment of penalties.

This “common tragedy” is not only a “tragedy of the commons” (Hardin, 1968), but rather the tragedy of the privatisation of common resources. When there is no effective control on common resources and a high demand for privately owned
property (land and animal products) the net result is one of environmental
degradation. All members of the action research team were witness to the fact that the
problem was not the communal resource but the way of allocating the right of access
to the resource. The conditional and short-term validity of grazing right does not
encourage responsibility for the right holder to maintain the common property wisely.

The participants in this research recognised that an urgent and critical precondition
for improving the actual situation was a change in the law and rules for obtaining
grazing rights so as to give a stronger (but still conditional) right to grazers. This
should occur in such a way that the resource-poor nomads, who are staying on
pasture just to hold this right, can gain enough money from the transfer of the grazing
right to give up nomadism with more insurance for a new life. In the meantime the
more credible and transferable right will help the people who want to stay to obtain
more grazing rights, pay more money to sellers (poor families) and put more effort
into the maintenance of the pasture over a long term period. The ownership of pasture
should still remain common, but the condition of right allocation will change in such a
way that all shareholders will benefit. The concerns of resource poor nomads will be
addressed in spite of the natural resource issue already mentioned.

There are many barriers which limit the help of the government to resource-poor
nomads. Among the most important to this research are: (a) the high level of
diversity among nomads does not let the government run a centralised program for
settlement of nomads; (b) a huge level of investment is needed for a settlement
program, which the government cannot afford as it is now facing an annual 3.2% rate
of population growth and a decrease in the price of oil which is its main source of income.

"Collective Proposal" which Emerged in the Field

This collaborative research showed that at least four families were happy to buy others’ grazing rights and pay them well for their rights. Six camps (twelve families) were happy to sell their grazing rights and give up nomadism. Each of those twelve families made their own decision to settle down in different locations.

None of these proposed policy changes required intensive capital investment from the governmental agencies participating in this research. Ecologically the proposed changes had advantages because the new owners would feel more responsibility for the common property which is needed to support their herds. Economically, the nomads who continue animal husbandry would be able to graze an optimum size herd on a larger land are a, gaining better value from the resources. Socially, there would not need to be the large presence of families on the land because their presence would not be needed merely to prove grazing rights.

Discussing the Proposal with Officials and Emerging Surprises

After the fieldtrip I arranged a metting with the Provincial Director of FRO (Mr Mohseni), his deputies and team members, to raise the issue and present the collective
proposal. After a long discussion we became aware that, according to current legislation, there was not any serious legislative barrier against this proposal.

According to present legislation there are possibilities that the people who had the grazing license could transfer it to other people conditionally. The conditions which apply are that the rights are rights of the permanent ownership and the new right holder should be a herder and livestock owner. None of these conditions was considered as an obstacle for the current proposal.

The major question which surprised all of us was why this issue has not been raised by nomads and officials so far? And why we (team members, nomads and particularly the FRO officers) misunderstood the current legislation? It became clear that the legislation was not published because of the distrust by the organisation toward of the nomads. The early outcomes of this discussion showed that the major obstacle for improving the situation was not what we perceived earlier, (the legislation), but our personal and organisational perceptions.
OUTCOMES

The action research team attempted as far as possible to recognise the differing interests of all the parties and to negotiate positions acceptable to all parties. The outcomes of this phase of research can be considered both from methodological and empirical perspectives (feasible changes), and can be summarised in terms of both process and feasible change as follows:

(1) Research Process and Methodological Findings

In this particular situation the combination of Participatory Research and Action Research provided a methodology which holds great promise for genuine participation and collaboration between the change agents and nomads for feasible change and useful knowledge. The two methodologies are two sides of the same coin. On one hand, without participation of nomads in the process of the research, we could not make sense out of the social reality. And without an understanding of their social reality it was not possible to reflect on the previous changes and create a future plan. Organisational change and improvement emerged through the learning process as a fundamental requirement. On the other hand, the empowerment of disempowered nomads in general and resource poor-nomads in particular, which is the most important task of PAR, could not be met without government help and support.

Both the government officials and the nomads recognise nomads’ disempowerment as partly the result of the lack of communication between the two groups. Here we refer particularly to government officials not listening to the nomads and the resulting
misunderstandings. The historical background of the nomads and their interaction with 
the State is still considered to be the main obstacle for effective communication.

As far as the nomads and officials remembered, all previous research and development 
activities were conducted to fulfil the apparent strategies of the researchers and 
sponsors behind those strategies, without concern about the real needs of the nomads. 
And as a result, the implemented projects often failed to cover the nomad’s needs. The 
best examples in the area in which our survey took place were the Integrated Range 
Evaluation Plans (IREPS) and Small Scale Range Management Projects (SSRMP) 
which have been neglecting the nomads, voices and knowledge and, finally, after 
spending considerable amount of time and money, have failed to meet the Ghareghani 
needs.

This phase of my research was recognised by all participants as the process of dealing 
with issues face to face and gaining increased familiarity with the methodology which 
could be used and implemented by the officials in future. The very obvious and 
immediate outcome of this phase of research by the action research team, particularly 
the officials, was their increased consciousness and awareness of new ways of looking 
at their organisation, the limitations of nomadic life, and systemic relationships between 
the two.

Shared new understandings of all the participants in the research were:
a) the identification of the lack of harmony between different departmental activities and projects, particularly between community development and resource management plans;
b) the realisation of the lack of a holistic perspective behind each departments’ plans and goals;
c) recognition that, although equity is one of the major goals of the government, the benefits of different projects have not been absorbed by poor families;
d) recognition that the nomads themselves have plans for adjusting to the situation and awareness of these plans by the government is essential if any future collaborative action is to occur;
e) recognition that it was necessary to identify the differences between major groups and seek to accommodate them in order to begin to build a collaborative working arrangement.

(2) Improving the Problematical Situation

Participants were able to identify simple modifications in the activities of each government department which would result in improvements in the nomads’ situation. The underlying strategies for these modifications are listed below.
a) We do believe that the betterment in nomads understanding is not about whether they should stay or give up the nomadic way of life, but is a concern with their total quality of life. Therefore, when there is talk about transforming the nomadic life and settling the nomads, the selections of the nomads themselves about the “quality of life” should be recognised, explored and supported.
Chapter Seven

b) Government services must be delivered differently in order to meet nomadic needs.

c) Nomadic participation in the process of designing new modes of delivery seems to be the most practical way of achieving this. (A nomadic role in managing these services would also seem reasonable.)

d) Opportunities for dialogue are needed to enable both nomads and government agencies to recognise each other's needs and priorities.

e) Policy development and program implementation need to be able to deal with the diversity of perspectives and differing needs within the nomadic population.

f) Some of these desirable outcomes may be achieved through systemic action research, particularly before implementing projects, and without any extra investments.
CONCLUSION

In turning to an action-oriented approach to research, I was extremely conscious of the two quite different "traditions" which characterise it. As Brown (1983,1993) has posited, one can recognise profound differences between what he has termed the "northern tradition" of Action Research with its emphasis on organisational change through problem solving and the "southern tradition" of Participatory Action Research which has been developed in the context of the empowerment of disempowered communities of the so-called Third World.

At first glance, each of these two approaches would seem to have relevance in the present context. The "northern" tradition is perfectly relevant for exploring changes in the organisation of government agencies to more closely fit the self-spoused needs of the nomads, and the "southern" tradition is highly appropriate to the nomadic communities in their search for greater empowerment and their participation in the planning and decision-making processes.

Here I chose an approach which was to help government officials learn new approaches to development through learning how to “gently empower the nomads” by using new ways of thinking about the issues from both sides (See Figure 7.2). Thus an action research team was formed comprising local officers of different government departments concerned with nomadic issues with the researcher as facilitator. The team
was faced directly with the problematical situation, as perceived by a range of the stakeholders including representatives of the nomadic communities. The action face of the research included actions to *broaden the perceptions of the government agents* as well as actions to *practice novel participative researching approaches to development*.

Among the outcomes of this (second) phase of the research was clear agreement within the action researching team of the failure of conventional approaches to the "problems with the nomads", and the particular transformation of that worldview into one more accurately portrayed as the "problems being faced by the nomads" (including that of the perceived failure of achieving any sense of shared meanings between the nomads and the government agents). There was also the crucial outcome of new action-researching development practices by the agents and the appreciation of this innovation by the nomads.

The recognition among the action researching government agents of the importance of both traditions of action research strongly accords with the recent argument of Brown (1993):

> 'The southern', developing country tradition of participatory action research is concerned with understanding and changing communities and societies, while the 'northern', industrialized country tradition has been more concerned with work groups and organizations. Some problems, however, require work at both the organisational and societal levels and involve both powerless and powerful constituencies. (1993:250-1)

In concluding, I argue for the potential of a mutual and fruitful dialogue between AR and PAR. In this particular situation, a combination of the two provides a methodology
which holds great promise for genuine participation and collaboration between the change agents and the clients for feasible change and the generation of useful knowledge both among community and organisation.

The ‘bottom up’ approach of PAR with its reference to social realities and its associated issues, facilitated the process of organisational reform. Organisational reform and learning facilitated the communication between community and organisation to bring about a feasible social transformation.

At the start of this work I, as the researcher, together with the participants in the action research team were confronted by an ill-defined problem and the proposed methodology did not guarantee a particular kind of result. The expected outcome was an exploration and an improved understanding of complex social reality. Using a participative technique it was possible to identify problematical issues associated with nomadic life and feasible change strategies.

This work supports clearly the prepositional conclusion of Checkland about systems methodology:

This work started by trying to use systems ideas in ill-defined problem situations. Its outcome is a system-based methodology for tackling real-world problems, and incidentally for exploring social reality. It lends support to the view that the latter is not a 'given' but it is a process in which an ever-changing social world is continuously re-created by its member. The implicit value system of soft systems methodology is that never-ending learning is a good thing.

(Checkland, 1981:20)
COLLECTIVE CRITICAL REFLECTION AND PLAN FOR THE NEXT ACTION

The early reflection was done by the Action Research team. The wider context within which the researcher, government agencies and nomads exist was also considered to be major contributor to the outcomes of the research. Based on this belief a critical reflection on the outcomes of this phase of research was invited from other persons in the larger context.

Some nomads who belonged to the same tribe as the Ghareghani (Dareh-shuri) and other nomadic tribes were interviewed during the second phase of research in order to add their contributions. The findings of this phase of research were also shared with directors of government agencies at national, district and provincial levels. Back in Australia, my colleagues, who were also my supervisors and members of my advisory panel, also had a critical reflection on the methodological outcomes of the research. Here I will discuss the major points of these contributions and critiques which emerged during and after the research.

a) Nomads’ reflections on the research: The other groups of nomads wanted to know what the implication of the ‘desirable and feasible change’ among a small group of nomads held for the rest of the nomadic community, particularly when we claim that the findings of this research should not be generalised or stereotyped in another context. Their view was if there is not any contribution, these findings and changes were just as a drop in the ocean.
b) Practitioners critique: To do the same job with the same approach would require a huge amount of time, personnel, and a particular facilitator, to bring about the change in another context.

c) Contribution of my colleagues: Based on the above mentioned outcomes and applied methodologies there is a need for the application of Systemic Action Research among government officials.

The plan for the next phase of action research was designed based on the above critiques in such a way as to focus more systematically on the wider context for feasible change. In the meantime, FRO, with the new policy and attitude toward the local people and their role in natural resource management, was searching for new strategies to encourage people participation in natural resource management. My colleagues and myself received an invitation which showed the intention of FRO to obtain benefit from the outcomes of the research at a national level this time. The invitation from FRO asked us to conduct a workshop in Iran. The purpose of this workshop was to introduce new concepts of participation to staff of FRO at a wider level. We designed the workshop to facilitate the process of learning through the systemic paradigm and to utilise Systemic Action Research among all provincial officers of the FRO at the national level. This invitation was a great opportunity for me and my colleagues to attempt to obtain the previous outcomes in a wider context.
Figure 7.1. Action Research, Participatory Action Research and Systemic Action Research in this research.
Figure 7.2 Participation in systemic conversation involving nomads, government agents and the facilitator and combining participatory research and action research process.
PHOTO ESSAY 2

DISCUSSION WITH GHAREGHANI NOMADS

Plate No

The Author and government officers meeting with Ghareghani (Winter quarter)  2.1

The Author and Ghareghani (Winter quarter)  2.2

Discussion with Ghareghani nomads (Summer quarter)  2.3

Outdoor meeting with Ghareghani (winter quarter)  2.4-

2.5
ORGANISATION LEARNING:
THIRD PHASE OF RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

During the first phase of the research, the complexity of the situation, the unease of the nomads, the lack for any signs for improvement in future trends and finally the essential need for improvement in the mutual understandings between the government officials and the nomads, were all recognised.

Reflection on the outcomes of the first phase of the research, led to the conclusion that a more action-oriented or "development-focused" approach to the research would represent a potentially important innovation in a situation which currently seemed
irresolvable. In other words, the apparent irresolution of the situation that the nomads believed themselves to be in, suggested the need for an approach grounded in a context of "Research through Action for Development". The focus in the second phase of the research then, was to apply and test a methodology for negotiation and collaborative action through a modified approach of action research to improve understanding of complex problematic situations.

In terms of outcomes, concerns about the number of "failed projects", the lack of harmony between and within different government agencies involved in the nomadic area and a lack of understanding of the nomadic perspectives, were identified by members of government agencies who participated in the action research. Methodologically it was recognised that Action Research could provide an approach which would hold great promise for genuine participation and collaboration between "change agents" and the "clients" for the generation of useful knowledge and feasible and desirable change, both within communities and organisations.

The plan for the third phase of research was designed following a collective reflection of participants on the findings of the previous phases. The outcome was the recognition of a need for a more systemic focus on complementary strategies for organisational development. This third phase of research was thus designed to help those in government organisations learn how to "master" and promote more participative strategies for improvement of complex problematic situations in a systemic, long-term and broader scale, through a process of "development through learning". This final phase of the research then, was an effort to explore and develop
new strategies for institutional change, through systemic action research in
organisations, and was focused on learning how to learn how to help through
participative development strategies, at a national level.

The intellectual strands which informed this work were based on experiential learning
(Kolb, 1984), systemic action research (Bawden, 1988), and the metaphor of the
learning organisation (Senge, 1992). Observations and explanations in this chapter are
based on the experience of a workshop conducted in Iran during August, 1993. The
workshop was conducted jointly by officers from the Forest and Range Organisation of
Iran (FRO), and me with added inputs from two resource persons who were
colleagues from the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury Dr Bob Fisher and Dr
Robert Woog.

In this chapter the process, including the methodology and learning strategy used
during this workshop are described. The outcomes, as the main shared observations
and interpretations, follow. This phase of the work was an attempt to facilitate
organisational learning and could be described as research into a participative
methodology for systemic organisational development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In moving away from reductionism, linear thinking and standard solutions, in
favour of more inclusive holism, open systems thinking and methodological pluralism, they promise to serve better the growing population of vulnerable
resource-poor farm families. The new sensitive to context, the new awareness of behaviour and the new repertoire of methods present agricultural scientists
and extensionists with challenges and opportunities which imply deep and long term change. Meeting those challenges and exploiting those
opportunities presents an agenda for the 1990s and for the twenty-first century.
(Chambers, 1994:264)

The underlying concern of this chapter arises from findings of the second phase of the research as informed by relevant literature. The most important issue recognised from the previous phase of action research, and collective participative reflection on it, was an organisational one: How could processes for changing the prevailing government agencies as development organisations with a new (systemic) perspective on development be promoted through research?

Based on a critical appreciation of the diverse perspectives of the nomad clients, as well as the complex socio/ecological context of their lives, it was recognised that a need existed for relevant theories, methodologies and frameworks for changing policies in order to transforming organisations. Clearly this task involved far more than changing the personal attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of organisational members to see the situation differently. The challenge was to facilitate a paradigm shift across the whole organisation through the process of experiential learning.

The experiences of the researcher over the recent past, together with emerging theories in the area of learning, support the view that changing ways of thinking and acting, involves much more than simply transferring knowledge and skills to individuals (Maturana, and Varela, 1980). In the first place it is considered highly unlikely that, as individuals, we can be “taught” how to change our own paradigms (Kolb, 1984). This is far more likely to happen experientially. In other words, we need to personally
experience situations which confront us with the need for changing the way we think and act. From an organisational perspective, we then need to be able to share these experiences, and the insights that flow from them, across the whole organisation, so that new paradigms, where appropriate, can be adopted collectively by those who "create" them (Bawden, 1995).

Argyris and Schon (1978) suggest that the process of "collective learning" can be thought of as "organisational learning", which is "a metaphor whose spelling out requires us to re-examine the very idea of organisation".

The third phase of this current research then started as an attempt on helping one government agency transform itself into a "learning organisation" or "critical learning system" (Bawden 1995). Theories and methodologies that were found particularly useful in informing this phase of the research experience are: "Experiential Learning" (Kolb, 1984), "Organisational Learning" (Senge, 1990), and "Systemic Action Research" (Bawden, 1992). These strategies and methodologies are all complementary and theoretically inter-related with each other.

**Experiential learning**

The process of experiential learning has different meanings for different groups of scholars. Warner et al (1989) have recognised four "domains" or "villages" which have distinct constructs of experiential learning, as follows:
1. *Village One* is concerned particularly with assessing and accrediting learning from life and work experience as the basis for creating new routes into higher education, employment and training opportunities into and professional bodies.

2. *Village Two* focuses on experiential learning as the basis for bringing about change in the structures, purpose and curricula of post-school education.

3. *Village Three* emphasizes experiential learning as the basis for group consciousness raising, community action and social change.

4. *Village Four* is concerned with personal growth and development and experiential learning approaches that increase self-awareness and group effectiveness.

(Warner et al, 1989:3)

This present research is mainly concerned with the ‘third village’ assumption of experiential learning, the domain which places learning from experience as the core of social change for development through group consciousness. Generally speaking, advocates of this construct of experiential learning argue that the process of learning must start from reflections on one’s own personal experiences in the “concrete” world. In terms of process, Kolb’s (1984) description of experiential learning as a “cycle of different psychological activities”, is by far the most popular. The process of learning is presented as a “continuous cycle” consisting of four major stages (Kolb 1984):

1. sensing and “diverging” about the concrete world (concrete experience);

2. making sense and assimilating (abstract conceptualisation);

3. planning or converging (generalisation); and

4. accommodation (active experimentation).

Experiential learning can be considered as the process by which we transform our experience in the world into knowledge of the world as the basis for adaptation to the world (Kolb, 1984). According to Kolb, as we pass through all four stages, we learn and, if we want to learn more effectively, we have to pass each sequence and spend
more effort at each of the stages. The more we are involved, fully, openly and without
bias, and the more deeply we reflect on our observations, the more effectively we
learn. Experiential learning provides a useful way of "learning for being" (Reason and
Heron, 1986).

In proposing the learning process as an action process of different activities, Kolb
argues that effective experiential learners must be able to:

1. involve themselves fully, openly and without bias in new experiences;
2. reflect on and observe their experiences from many perspectives;
3. create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories;
4. use these theories to make decisions and solve problems.

Kolb’s work has been subject to criticism:

Kolb’s descriptions of each stage are general and abstract. Further confusion
arises as proponents of experiential learning often use different keywords to
summarize their understanding of the Kolb cycle and the experiential learning
process.
(Warneret al, 1989:26)

Nevertheless, Kolb’s description appears to offer a general pattern for a process of
learning as a sequence of stages which are appropriate as a foundation for inquiry
through action research (Bawden 1990). One such application is that of the so-called,
soft systems methodology (Checkland, 1988) which is a methodology with an
increasing number of advocates in organisational development. Since in this phase of
the research we are focusing on organisation as an "human activity system"
(Checkland, 1988), we believe that a learning process for development should be
experienced within organisational context as a *critical learning system* (Bawden, 1995).

Application of experiential learning in an organisational context has some advantages. According to Hoberman and Mailick (1992:145), experiential learning tends to provide the following opportunities to those involved:

- to be active participants in meaningful situations;
- to use learning in experiences related to the work venue;
- to discover new relationships and gain new insights;
- to strengthen independent analysis and learning;
- to learn from group analysis and feedback.

**Organisational Learning**

*Organisations as well as individuals can learn. They can take in and use new information, adapt their identities, purposes and priorities to new environments and circumstances, change and survive or, perhaps fail to learn and adapt, atrophy and die.*

(Duke, 1992:XI)

One of the key ideas to emerge from the work of the two organisational theorists Argyris and Schon, and which has considerable relevance to the present research, is the idea that people within organisations can go about learning together to two quite
different ends. They refer to these differences as (a) single loop learning and (b) double loop learning (Argyris and Schon, 1978).

Single loop learning represents learning which is focused on helping the organisation maintain its “performance” within the existing range of norms which are regarded as “self” for the organisation. Double loop learning, on the other hand, calls for “new sorts of inquiry which resolve incompatible organisational norms by setting new priorities... or by restructuring the norms themselves together with assisted strategies and assumption” (Argyris and Schon, 1978).

Helping those within the government agencies in Iran to think and act differently with regard to the nomadic issues could be considered to be an attempt at “double-loop inquiry”. And this, as has already been suggested, needs to be conducted in an experiential way. It also demands a particular (systemic) approach to learning. Senge (1992) is among those who strongly supports the need for a systems approach to organisational change. He considers the learning organisation as an entity “where people continually expand their capacity to create what they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge 1992). From this point of view, the structure of an organisation is not the “organisational chart” but the pattern of interrelationships among key components of the system. Senge (1992) submits that systems thinking is a “discipline” which needs to be accompanied by other “disciplines”: 
a) personal mastery, to realise the our potential and expand our personal capacity to
create the appropriate organisational environment and the result we most desire;

b) shared vision, to establish a sense of commitment in a group;

c) mental models, to improve our internal picture of the world;

d) team learning, to facilitate dialogue and collective thinking skills.

The basic argument here is that, as individuals, we all too often fragment the world
around us, and in the process, lose sight of the need to think and act in terms of “the
whole situation”.

At the heart of a learning organization is a shift of mind - from
seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the
world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something
“out there” to seeing how our own actions create the problems
we experience. A learning organization is a place where people
are continually discovering how they create their own reality.
And how they can change it!
(Peter Senge 1992)

Systems thinking is an essential reversal of this trend, leading individuals to adopt new
ways of viewing themselves and the world around them as integrated systems.

Senge’s five “disciplines” would prove to be useful in the design of the workshop
process central to this third research phase. Also useful were the notions developed by
Bawden and his Hawkesbury colleagues on “systemic action research” (Bawden and
Packham 1985, Bawden, 1995), for these provided an important theoretical and
philosophical framework in which learning organisations, as critical learning systems,
could be grounded.

Systemic Action Research
Systemic action research is a particular approach to participative inquiry with a major emphasis on an exposure to "systems theories, philosophies and practices" by all of those involved in the research (Bawden and Packham 1985). It has been developed specifically for those complex situations involving communities and their inter-relationships with their environments (both bio-physical and socio-cultural) which typically characterise the context of "sustainable rural development". The basic aim of the present research was to introduce "systemic thinking and practices" as "ways of knowing" which complement, integrate and indeed transcend, both the technoscientific thinking and methods of the government agents and the indigenous, experiential knowledge and practical wisdom of the nomadic pastoralists. The logic of this approach is based the argument that :"as what we do in this world is determined by the way we see it (Maturana & Varela 1972), there will need to be some significant changes in the way we go about our “seeing” and our “doing” if we are to improve on current, apparently intractable complex situations (Bawden, 1992).

The emphasis in this approach lies in the establishment of learning or researching systems rather than research on selected systems (Bawden 1992). This approach could be considered as an appropriate vehicle for organisational reform for development. At its heart, lies the process of experiential learning.

Learning organisation (Senge, 1992), Soft Systems Methodology SSM (Checkland, 1981), and Action Science (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985), can be seen essentially as
experiential strategies of inquiry for action for improvement. All these elements would be crucial integrated aspects of this phase of the research. Indeed the research question which would guide this particular phase would be; How can the researcher as facilitator, use the experiential process, systemic process and action science principles to help practitioners in an organisational framework develop more appropriate organisations and more effective development praxis?

In terms of applied methods and techniques, the researcher followed two key ideas to consider appropriate methods: (a) the role of researchers as facilitators; and (b) knowledge generation without referring to any external value reference in both the phase of rich picturing and issue identification.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF FRO

In order to understand the specific background of this workshop it may be useful to mention some of the history of the FRO; its goals and its responsibilities for natural resources. This will help in the understanding of the context, needs and process of the workshop.

The organisation is responsible for three-quarters of Iran's land mass. It is responsible for the protection, support, development and usage of all pasture, forest, watershed and coastal land. The organisation received this responsibility in 1962 after the nationalisation of natural resources. The controlling of pasture and range by the state was a means for economic and political control of the resources and the community.
As mentioned by Digard, (1983) "In Iran, nationalization was aimed in part at confiscation of land by the state for the development of Agri industries" (in Galaty and Salzman, 1983).

At the time of nationalisation, the FRO was a very small organisation. It was poorly prepared to take responsibility for 1.2 million square kilometres of land. It was suddenly expected to control, protect and utilise remote forest and rangeland. Due to the political and economic issues involved in the control of resources, a military based organisational structure, was established and a high ranking military officer appointed as the general director of the organisation. Thus, a top down, centralised structure remote from the needs of the people, was created. The people did not like the new FRO which, from their viewpoint, usurped their resources, took away their local power and autonomy and did not understand the management of their local resources.

The nomads and forest dwellers were given permission by the government to use the land for their economic survival. But the government was thinking about the productivity and management strategies for the land and gradually gave control of the land over to government agencies and agri-business companies. The local people were, thus, gradually omitted from using their native, local land. The government thought they were stupid and could not use their local resources in a productive way for national benefit.

In addition, the government was attempting to implement new management strategies and technological innovations borrowed from Western countries, particularly Australia
and the United States, in order to increase the productivity of natural resources. These technological innovations and management strategies did not take into account the socio-economic structure in Iran and were on a scale appropriate only for large land holdings. They could not be used by local people on their small properties. Thus, only the government, overseas companies and very rich landholders could use this technology in the Iranian context. This technology increased the social gap between large land holders and the local land users. Systematically the local land users were isolated from the resources.

Eventually these policies brought about a clash between the government and the local people who used the natural resources for survival. And the government goals of "conservation and productivity" were not met. In 1979 the government was faced with a revolution. At the same time, because the policies about land usage were not people oriented, people broke fences and severely harvested the pasture and forests. They saw this as a retaliation against the severity of the pre-Revolutionary government and its management strategies. A significant amount of pasture and forest, as well as many national parks, were lost at this period of time.

After the revolution, all different governmental agencies, including FRO, were encouraged by the revolutionary leadership to become more people oriented in their goals and strategies. A few laws were changed and the top governmental positions were given to people more in line with the new government ideology, which was more "people-oriented". Despite these changes, there was no clearly defined government
strategy nor was there a clear detailed blueprint for grass roots people’s participation in natural resource management.

In 1990, the FRO separated from the Ministry of Agriculture and joined the Ministry of Jihad-e Sazandegi (responsible for Rural Development) which was established after the revolution. This ministry had goals and policies based on Islamic thought, equity and revolutionary aims. Employees of the old FRO were disgruntled with the Ministry of Agriculture because they had lost much of their autonomy and budget to that ministry. They had expected to regain some of their money and power with the changeover to the Ministry of Rural Development.

When the changeover occurred, FRO remained as an organisation, but the key persons in the structure were now from the Ministry of Rural Development. These people brought with them the concern for social equity. People in the old FRO had a more technological background (mostly in area of range management and forestry) and productivity or conservation interests rather than social equity interests. Although some old staff had already reached a new view about people’s roles in natural resource management, tensions soon developed between the new management structure and the old employees.

There were several important people-oriented changes made at this time. The new management encouraged the establishment of “forest dweller co-operatives” as a new approach for participating local people in forestry. They were to begin handing over to the forest dwellers control of the land for their own benefit and for regeneration of the
forests; the FRO handed over the pasture to private pastoralists for a longer period of time; it established a new Deputy of extension and people’s participation who was responsible for changing the strategic direction of the FRO from technological to people based.

However, there was still the lack of a clear and effective strategy, both theoretical and experiential, that would encourage participatory activity with the local people. It is important to note here that, in spite of a difference in ideological approaches and interests, both old employees of the FRO and the new management, realised that the conventional approaches to conservation and productivity which had informed the past policies, had failed and could not work now¹.

The new management wanted to benefit from new theories and intellectual ideas about people’s participation in natural resource management. Based upon their need and on my previous work with the nomads, I was invited to give a workshop on this issue with my colleagues from the University. Thus, in 1993, Dr Bob Fisher, Dr Robert Woog and I conducted a workshop with the FRO.

I had concluded, in phase two of my research, that I needed to change my research to a broader scale intervention. I also concluded that it was important to facilitate changes in attitudes of the government staff toward the local people and their role in the process of change. This workshop with the FRO was seen by us as a means of

¹ Most of information presented in this section derived from several recorded interview with Director of FRO, who is also a Deputy Minister of MJS, Mr Fallah, his Deputy Mr Samadi, Directores of Range Department and Direcor Forest Depatment in FRO during first, second and third phase of the research (1991-3).
publicising the results of the first two phases of my research. I wanted to introduce the viewpoints of nomads and local people to the government through learning organisation theory. We were thus able to take this opportunity to not only present our ideas and examples, but to continue the third phase of my research. It was also a means of beginning the process of institutionalising a learning process approach to development within FRO.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORKSHOP AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS

The workshop was conducted in July and August of 1993 at Chalus, near the Caspian Sea. The participants in the workshop consisted of: (a) the heads of the ‘Office of People’s Participation and Extension’ of FRO in Teheran and each province (33 people); (b) Iranian academics who were engaged in the fields of development and agricultural extension, mainly from the University of Teheran (5 people); (c) members of the boards and government-appointed directors of the forest co-operatives, (7 people) and: (d) myself and my two colleagues, as facilitators. Each of the participating groups, other than the research team, carried major controversies as internal tensions, within themselves based on their interests and concerns as will be discussed.

The area of focus of this workshop became broader than what was proposed earlier which was the focus of nomads and the one department within FRO. What we hoped to do was to conduct a process of learning within the organisation with all participants focusing on their perceived issue (natural resource degradation in Iran) and reframing the issue within a systemic perspective through the process of action and reflection.
As planning discussions before the workshop revealed, FRO is confronting a wide range of serious issues in the northern part of Iran along the Caspian sea. These include an intensive rate of deforestation by forest dwellers and semi-nomads, the lack of any organised program for forest regeneration, and industrial exploitation in forest area. According to these issues the workshop was located in the northern part of Iran, where we had access to forest dwellers and semi-nomads during the workshop.

**FRO Officers**

We were faced with a highly diverse group of participants. The national and provincial officers of FRO were divided into two groups. One consisted of the new generation of officers focused more on the social side of development. They were most concerned with equity and justice and an ideology based on Islamic values. The second sub-group consisted of old generation employees, most of whom were educated as technologists and who were concerned with natural resource 'conservation' and 'productivity' in the conventional way.

**Academics**

Several academics were invited to present lectures in the thirteen days in a fairly traditional information transfer approach, but we gradually engaged them directly in the whole process of the workshop. This included their participation in group discussions, reflections and field work. They were all well respected in this field. Their background was as very conventional lecturers in the area of development and
agricultural extension. They were specialists in their own areas with diverse viewpoints on development within the conventional framework.

In general, they had a sympathy with the concept of participation, but no in-depth knowledge of how it could be utilised in research and development. Also, their conceptions of participation were different from our own. We (the facilitators) had the view that we would all be co-learners and they were not familiar with this concept. This, and the fact that they had no knowledge about action research, were the causes of some difficulties in the workshop. Eventually this was resolved by enlisting them as collaborators in the research.

**Officials of the Forest Co-operatives**

The third major group of participants were the members of the boards, and the appointed directors of the forest co-operatives. The split within this group was that the directors of the forest co-operatives were selected by FRO and were employed by FRO. This was in direct contradiction to the by-laws and concepts of co-operatives which specify that the directors of the co-operatives should be selected by the board members who were representative of the voters in the co-operative.

The board members and the directors immediately became polarised in any discussions related to co-operatives and people due to their different platforms. Our conclusion was that this conflict provided a good basis for discussion and reflection about the participatory approach and its role in research and development.
In order to cope with this enormous diversity and to follow our theoretical position, we had to use different strategies, methods and techniques.

**APPLIED STRATEGY**

According to the basic principles of organisational development through a learning process the learning strategies behind this phase of research could be summarised as follows:

1) creating a critical learning environment;
2) collective reflection on past experience and current problems;
3) assisting the participants to see their views toward the problematical situation from a meta-level;
4) introducing systems thinking as a new way of looking at the situation;
5) supporting participants in creating a new strategic plan for the next action;
6) reviewing and evaluation of the whole process as a new way of monitoring, planning researching and learning.

The programme of the workshop was carefully designed by the facilitators to meet the proposed goals and follow the theoretical position and above learning strategies. The major learning themes of the workshop focused on three different areas: (a) fundamentals of experiential learning; (b) systems thinking; and (c) people’s participation in natural resource management. The learning process was facilitated through four learning tasks, including: (a) group discussions and team work; (b)
propositional inputs including lectures and learning packages; (c) field trips; and (d) personal reflection on the process through preparation of a paper by each participant.

The program of the workshop was designed for thirteen working days in such a way that the four major learning tasks complemented each other to maintain a continuous process of action and reflection. At the end of each task and, after personal questions and comments of participants, a group discussion was conducted in order to facilitate group reflection on the content and process of the workshop.

The learning strategies behind this workshop could be mentioned in detail as follows:

(1) - Creating a Learning Environment.

The first step was to create, in Senge’s words “Personal Mastery”, an atmosphere of organisational learning which would encourage all its members to develop themselves toward goals and purposes which emerged from the process of the group. This step was important in providing an experiential learning environment which would alleviate the need for defensiveness on the part of participants and encourage openness and “divergent” thinking. In this situation there were large differences in the organisational status and background of the participants. There was also open conflict between the participants and their organisations. According to Kolb (1984), managers generally have a strong orientation toward task accomplishment and decision-making and they prefer abstract learning. Therefore in this workshop we were confronted with a particular trend among participants toward passive and propositional learning rather than experiential learning.
At this point it was critical to assist the formation of an atmosphere of trust, respect and equality among the participants, minimising the necessity for “one-up-manship”, personal and organisational defensiveness and competition in group discussion. This created the background for systemic action research to take place and allowed new ideas to arise and different perspectives to be aired and viewed by all participants.

In order to facilitate this process the full group (45 participants) was divided into three smaller sub-groups (each of approximately 15 participants). The sub-groups were carefully selected to include both old and new members of FRO, creating a maximum of diversity of opinion in each groups. Facilitators were appointed for each group. The primary role of the facilitator was to encourage active participation by all members of the groups equally, preventing domination of some members over other members. The role of the facilitator is explained by Hoberman and Mailick (1992):

Most experiential approaches replace the teacher with a facilitator. The facilitator does not assume the teacher’s unquestionable, expert authority or maintain total control over the learning process and content. He or she introduces experiential learning activities, monitors performance, and encourages feedback and self-analysis. The facilitator serves as a guide, mentor, and consultant. The role is to facilitate open discussion, keep things moving, summarize for reinforcement, introduce new issues and concerns, encourage experimentation and risk taking, and guide the learning process.

(Hoberman and Mailick, 1992:132)

In order to diffuse the hierarchical relationships existing among the participants, an informal learning environment was created rather than a formal educational environment which has been traditionally utilised in these workshops. The stage was set for this informal learning atmosphere by having the Director General of the FRO
(Deputy Minister) announce formally to all participants on the first day of the workshop, that the purpose of the workshop was to informally learn together and address the major issues confronting the FRO as a group. There was to be a minimum of defensiveness and “posturing”, because the purpose of this exercise was to be one of collaboration.

(2) - Collective Reflection on Past Experience and Current Problems.

The theme of this activity as captured by Schön:

Professional education should be redesigned to combine the teaching of applied science with coaching in the artistry of reflection-in-action.  
(Schön, 1987:xii)

Collective reflection was utilised to assist participants to reflect in detail about their current situation and current problems and issues that they face. This was done collectively, not individually, in order to reveal past and present experiences creating the present “mental model and metaphor” (Senge et al. 1994) of their organisation and the associated issues.

When a practitioner sets a problem, he choose and names the things he will notice...Depending on our disciplinary backgrounds, organizational roles, past histories, interests, and political/economic perspectives, we frame problematic situations in different ways.  
(Schön, 1987:4)

In experiential learning terms, this was still considered the diverging stage.

Participants were encouraged to openly explore and discuss their attitudes and their perceptions about the organisational problems they face, in order to elicit their definition of the problem itself.
The outcome of this stage showed clearly the differences and similarities in the views and opinions of the participants. It also revealed to the facilitators the actual “mental models and metaphors” that they were using in regard to the organisation and its problems.

The actual process used was to encourage the small groups to openly discuss the problems and situations as they saw them. The ideas thus generated were then listed and presented by a representative of the group to the large group. This process helped each participant to see where he stood in relation not only to his group, but to the whole. It revealed to the individuals the commonalties and differences represented in the group as a whole workshop.

In terms of systemic action research, the outcome of this stage revealed to the researcher, for the first time, the participants’ own views of the problematical situation.

(3) - Assisting the Reflective Participants to See Their Views Toward the Problematical Situation from a Meta-level

The strategy for assisting the participants to see the problematical situation from a meta-level was based upon the information generated during the discussions. The information they presented revealed their tacit picture of the organisation and their idealised vision of the problem and organisation as a metaphor. It was part of the learning process to make these tacit assumptions and “mental models” clear to the participants at this point.

Using the Kolb (1984) learning cycle, as our methodological guide we “generated and assimilated knowledge” from our divergent “conceptualisation” of the problematical
situation. From the "abstract conceptualisation" of the "assimilated knowledge" we moved to a meta-level view of the problematical situations.

In terms of outcomes, we explored the organisational metaphor of the participants. During discussions with the participants, their particular assumptions about their organisation emerged. The basic assumption of FRO officers, regardless of their professional and official background, was that the FRO is a collection of staff and resources structured around the FRO organisational chart. It was seen that the goal of the FRO was to protect natural resources by pre-determined laws, norms and rules, from non-rational use by local people. Part of the goal was seen to be the technological exploitation of natural resources for the national interest. In general they considered their organisation as a means of protection of natural resources through controlling local people in the national interests.

Based upon these organisational metaphors and assumptions "organisational change and development" to most of the participants meant: (a) necessary allocation of more financial resources for administrative and technical purposes; (b) providing more clear and powerful laws/rules to obtain more control over natural resources; and (c) importation and application of advanced technology in natural resource management to accelerate more effective exploitation of resources.

(4) - Introducing Systems Thinking as a New Way of Looking at the Situation.
The aim here was to cause a rethink or re-evaluation of participants' tacit metaphors and the cognitive pattern of past experiences by introducing the situation from a meta perspective. The process was to encourage the participants to re-conceptualise their own work and issues in light of new experiences, knowledge and theories which were introduced through lectures, discussions and two bi-lingual resource packages (prepared by facilitators) consisting of materials from three major areas (systems thinking, participation and natural resource management). A systemic perspective was introduced at this point. Specifically, the situation of the forest dwellers was presented. The forest dwellers are the people who live in the forest. The perspective of the FRO officers was revealed to be that the local people were degrading the land and not allowing the forest to be regenerated. Their solution was to remove the forest dwellers and settle them.

At this point the participants were divided to nine groups consisted of five participants and taken to the forest to speak with: (a) the forest dwellers, who were organised into forest co-operatives; (b) forest dwellers who were working in co-operatives; (c) forest dwellers who were not members of co-operatives; and finally, (d) semi-nomads who did not benefit from co-operatives. Then the participants were taken to the lowland to meet with semi-nomads who had been settled through an FRO project. These two field trips, each lasting a day were considered as an experience for further reflections.

When the participants returned, they reported that they saw the solution that had been implemented was not adequate in the long term. They learned several things. They learned that the semi-nomads or forest dwellers who were settled in the lowlands to
allow the forest to be regenerated, could not take their animals with them and continued to live and forage in the forest. They observed that the forest dwellers would eventually sell the shelter which the government had given them and move back to the forest where they would again take up residence. This was a very expensive and long term enterprise for the government that did not ensure the regeneration of the forest. The solution did not work for the forest dwellers either, because they needed to continue their animal husbandry activities.

Another major issue which was explored by participants was related to the forest co-operatives. They were arguing that the co-operatives are faced with a major issue in terms of management, and the proposed solution to this problem by FRO had not worked. The issue was related to the establishment of co-operatives where FRO officers were installed the heads of the forest co-operatives where inevitably they had conflict of interest in that they implicitly viewed the forest dwellers as exploiters of the forest and yet their role was to help protect these interests and rights of the forest dwellers and protect the forest itself.

The other outcome of this activity was that all participants reached the point of recognising that the problem of degradation of natural resources could no longer be seen as something separate from the socio-economic or cultural dimension of the people’s lives. The other common conclusion of the different groups was that “if we follow the present practice and assumptions, the harder we try to solve the problem by concentrating on separate parts, the worse the problem becomes”.
Changing our individual understandings and building a collective understanding was seen as part of the improvement process. The main task of the facilitators in this step was to encourage the group to move toward a common vision and introduce a systems perspective to enrich their findings and interrelate their findings with the previous inquiry phase. It became clear that through the workshop process we were co-creating a new, common understanding.

The FRO officers at this point realised that their own views of the situation had been too narrow and a more complete picture was needed. Thus participants confronted the same situation from a systemic perspective. In this manner they had a new experience of the problem as well as seeing and sharing how different members of a team perceive problems and issues differently. From the experiential learning perspective, this was an effort to reconceptualise the real world from a systemic perspective. The introduction of system thinking into the situation was the introduction of a new “abstract conceptualisation” based upon the same “concrete experience”.

(5) - Supporting Participants in Acting and Creating a New Strategic Plan for the Next Action

Supporting participants in creating a new strategic plan for the next action was accomplished by asking the officials to review their past actions and viewpoints on the problem from the new systems perspective. Next they were asked to imagine themselves back in their respective offices confronting the same issue they were confronting during this workshop using the new systemic perspective. They were
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asked to write a paper about how they would confront this problem with this new perspective.

In experiential learning terms, this was the *accommodation* stage. Here the change of perspective was accommodated and active experimentation with the inclusion of new knowledge occurred. The participants were supported and assisted in finding new ways of tackling the issues based upon new ways of looking at it. They were asked to explore more systemic strategies for situation improvement. There were many outcomes in common among the participants in the papers prepared for this task. An overview on papers showed that the participants in general, and Provincial FRO officers in particular have a significant trend toward: (a) a more holistic manner with environmental issues; (b) people’s participation as the key factor in addressing the current issues and, (c) some major change in the organisational system to allow it to operate in an holistic manner in conjunction with the participation of the people. Here, in learning organisation terms, a new “shared vision” was evident.

The following *collective actions* were agreed to be done by the participants:

a) To take the results of this workshop, as a group, to the Director of the FRO in order to initiate a change in the rules and regulations of the department.

b) At the provincial level, the officers asked for more room for independent decision making, based upon their regional contexts, without the direct intervention of the head office.

c) They wanted also to invite the active participation of the people of the regions in their decision making and planning for the areas.
d) They decided to provide the climate for an ongoing flux of action and reflection through the establishment of regular support group meetings.

e) Both the provincial officers and the heads of co-operatives decided that regular meetings would give them the opportunity to support each other and share ideas in the proposed new way of working.

In experiential learning terms, this is a starting point for new, future, experiential learning and further action research cycles.

(6) - Reviewing and Evaluation of the Whole Process as a New way of Monitoring, Planning, Researching and Learning.

Finally a review and evaluation of the whole process as a new way of monitoring, planning, researching and learning, took place. This stage was informed by systemic action research which encouraged us to go to the next loop of understanding. This was the epistemic level of the entire process in which we collectively evaluated the whole process of the workshop. In the previous five stages we looked at the problematical situation from the meta level. In this epistemic review, we used theory to inform the process of systemic action research in order for the participants to make sense of the entire research process.

From these six stages, we saw a new policy develop with a new way of dealing with a problematic situation which is justified by the combination of several learning theories. It is clear from this list of principles that behind the variety of tasks there is a specific
model for learning which is different from the conventional model of vocational and professional education.

APPLICATION OF THE LEARNING ORGANISATION MODEL IN THE WORKSHOP

A) Systems Thinking

Application of systems thinking, as a basic element of the learning organisation, creates a framework for the participants to identify their current issues within an interrelated, longer term, and wider context. For example, combining all the concerns of the FRO, in terms of conservation, and productivity and contextualising these two aims in a long-term socio-ecological framework, pinpointed some significant paradoxes in current policies and strategies of FRO. The best example was the recognition of the obvious paradox between the current goals and strategies of FRO in terms of settling the migratory nomads (both in range land and the forest) on one hand, and the actual result of that strategy on the other hand. When all possible outcomes of this strategy, including people’s attitudes and reactions were considered, the conclusion was reached that dislocating local people from the ecological context simply neglects the complexity of the problem by removing the perceived lineal cause of the issue. It was collectively agreed that the focus must shift from “settlement of local people” to settling the problematical situation in an holistic way. Organisational boundaries, in terms of goals, interest and responsibilities, were the major inhibitors which prevented participants from considering the situation from a wider perspective. Going beyond these boundaries and limits, even for a short period of time, allowed a new perspective
to be developed which was much closer to the personal views of participants compared to their organisational views

B) Mental models

Facing the participants with the existence of mental models, of which they were usually not consciously aware, both within themselves and between them and local people, was the second task. Recognising the different perceptions and mental models of participants regarding organisational goals, responsibilities, boundaries and their role with people, was a crucial stage which needed an open and flexible environment. To recognise this obvious but very complex phenomenon, we provided some examples and more importantly we faced them with groups of local people in fieldwork with varying attitudes, perceptions and interests in respect of the same issue (natural resource management). This task helped them realise the role of their tacit mental model in understanding reality, and the effect of these models on their personal and organisational behaviour toward local people.

For instance a very powerful belief among participants, particularly the forest protectors, was that “the local people are against natural resources, and they are not capable of managing the natural resources properly”. The other strong and clear mental model among participants was that “the ecosystem is in balance and it must be protected by any intervention”. The best type of natural resource exploitation assumed to be the modern and intensive one, which was the role of the government to implement. The patterns of decision-making and the judgment process which lead to conclusions about the perceived facts was also considered. For instance, the most
commonly accepted and dominant rule for explaining any problem and remedy which was considered "scientific", was to find the cause of the problem and then remove that cause as a final solution to the problem. Referring to the quantitative aspect of a situation through offering figures which explained the optimum position of parts in isolation, was the other characteristics of the participants in dealing with issues and in decision making.

These sorts of simple, generalised beliefs and mental models emerged during discussion and fieldwork and later on when we asked participants to compare the tacit models with some facts which did not support the models, misfits between mental models and reality emerged as a basis for self and group reflection on the validity of tacit models. In some cases this gap between the mental models and reality lead to a deep rethinking and reframing of mental models among participants. This reframing was fostered by systems thinking which was offered along the way, and reinforced by a team working with a shared vision.

C) Building shared vision

Since the organisation works as a common identity, understanding the ‘mental model’ of all the members is not enough and we need to explore and build a shared vision toward a common goal, and to answer the question about “what we want to create” (Senge 1990). All too often, organisational shared vision has been made by influential actors (bosses and policy makers) or by personal interpretation of events. But providing an environment for participants to discuss their perception of betterment and appropriate goals for organisation (free of any influential group or unrefined interpretation of events), and also providing a balanced platform for translating the
personal vision of participants toward betterment, will help us to build shared vision among participants. The most significant obstacles in this phase were the social boundaries and the organisational/professional hierarchy, which limited the area of focus and also limited free interaction.

OUTCOMES

Unlike other methodologies in which results are always considered as the final product of research in relation to predetermined research objectives, in an action research approach the process of research is part of the outcome. The shared understanding of all participants of the praxis of the learning cycle (action and reflection) and their shared decisions and plans for collective action were the main outcomes. Feedback from the participants in this workshop, confirmed that there had been significant transformations in ways of thinking about the complex relationships between nomads in Iran, the environments in which they live and work, the technologies that they use as pastoralists, the agents of government departments concerned with these aspects of sustainable development, and Iranian society at large. Because of a significant shift in their views and perspectives toward local people and their role in the process of change and development, they decided to tackle some perceived organisational constraints in FRO. Participants collectively decided to raise these issues with the Deputy Minister and Director of FRO in a general meeting and discuss them. Their emphasis on the issue of people’s participation and solid demand for less centralised and “top-down” strategies and flexibility in implementing projects and proposals was raised during discussions and was welcomed by the Director of FRO. It was clear that
these issues originated from their new ways of looking at the situation and were
initiated mainly from their new experiences and collective reflection on them. Finally,
they reached an agreement to provide a climate for an ongoing flux of action and
reflection through the establishment of regular support group meetings among all
participants.

The essential metaphor introduced during this event, was that of the organisation as a
learning system as distinct from a regulating system. What we were facing in the
process of the workshop, was some combination of various barriers among some
participants, particularly the perceptual one about local people and their role in natural
resource destruction. But we were witness to a shift among a majority of participants
in their way of looking at the situation. The shift was particularly obvious among the
technology-oriented practitioners toward recognising the impact of social issues on
ecology. Due to the tremendous diversity of personal, professional and organisational
backgrounds of participants, there were significant clashes between them about ways
of looking and conceptualising the experience and collected data. What made these
clashes fruitful to all participants was the applied methodology which considered this
diversity of viewpoints as a source of building rich pictures and also led to shared
definition from the problematic situation. Considering the same reality from different
angles and perspectives helped all participants to move from their strict discipline
toward multidisciplinary perspectives and even beyond that to a interdisciplinary
approach to analysing the situation. Evaluations confirmed that most of the participants
found the inputs and lectures of invited academics and researchers irrelevant to their
current complex and changing issues. This outcome lends weight to the Schon argument about the gap between academics and practitioners:

In recent years there has been a growing perception that researchers, who are supposed to feed the professional schools with useful knowlege, have less and less to say that practitioners find useful.
(Schon, 1987:10)

CONCLUSION

The outcomes of this phase showed that there will need to be some significant changes in the way we go about our “seeing” and our “doing” if we are to improve on current, apparently intractable complex situations (Bawden, 1988) within the organisation as a learning system.

As Senge (1990) has mentioned, we experienced how a learning organisation involves a shift of mind from seeing problems as caused by someone or something out there to seeing how our own actions create the problems we experience. A learning organisation involves experiential learning in which the participants discover different faces of reality and ways to improve problematical situations. This phase of research confirmed the advantages of this approach within a governmental organisation in facing local people and natural resource management.

This phase of research therefore lent strong support to the idea, recently articulated by Robert Chambers (1994), of the need for new strategies for institutional change and
action research in organisations for "learning to learn, and learning to help in participative (to which we would add, systemic) ways."
PHOTO ESSAY 3

DEVELOPING LEARNING ORGANISATION WORKSHOP WITH FRO OFFICERS (CHALUS, 1993)

Fieldtrip to Sarri (settlement project for semi-nomads)  Plate No
Oppening ceremony (Deputy Minister and Director of FRO, Participants and facilitators)  3.1
Some of participants  3.2
Presentation by facilitatores and group discussion during the workshop  3.3- 3.6
CHAPTER IX

SOME CRITICAL REFLECTION ON PRAXIS

INTRODUCTION

The whole process of this research was a story of development: an approach to development from ethnographic observation, through to critical systemic action research, which has as its focus the improvement of relationships in a system involving the nomads, the government, natural resources and technology. This work started as a dream for a legitimate change in the quality of the life of Iranian nomads. Informed by appropriate theories the process of inquiry proceeded in a participative way, to follow a never-ending flux between ideas and experiences as emphasised by Vickers (1984).
It is usual at this point in a thesis to offer outcomes and conclusions which have arisen from the research as the primary focus for satisfactory evaluation of the research process. However, in this type of research it is not enough to give outcomes, as, from the beginning, the research has not been primarily focused upon outcomes. The methodology was not a blueprint. This whole research project has been conducted within the type of learning process approach envisaged by Uphoff (1992):

A learning process approach is appropriate for most areas of human activity. It presumes that neither the ends nor the means of social interventions can be fully known in advance, and that understanding and consensus on them must be built through practical experience.

(Uphoff, 1992:12)

This research, with its emphasis as much on the process itself as its outcomes, needs a different ending. So, as I come to the end of this thesis, I make a critical reflection on the whole researching process and the outcomes of this process on my own abilities as a pluralist researcher.

**WHAT THE RESEARCH MEANT TO ME**

*If there is nothing of yourself in your thesis it is incomplete*

(Mills, 1994:77)

In the preface I introduced myself as part of the context for the research which was to be described in this thesis. Now it is appropriate to return to myself and reflect critically on what this research has meant to me. In this body of research, what happened to the researcher in terms of praxis development as part of the research
process must be shown. The understanding of the researcher about the processes of
his change is therefore a critical part of the evaluation of the research.

At the start of this work I was confronted by ill-defined situations in both the
educational environment and field work; the applications of theories could not
guarantee a particular kind of result. The expected outcome of the research was an
exploration and an improved understanding of a complex social reality. The process of
the research, to me, was not only dealing with the ill-defined situation, but also the
process of gaining competencies in ways of understanding and dealing with unknown
situations. In the process of the research and my work with nomads, governmental
organisations and academics, I found many opportunities to learn from my colleagues,
the nomadic community, and their interactions. My understanding of the complex
research situation and its associated methodologies emerged through the process of
critical reflection on action and contributed a dramatic improvement in my
understanding as a pluralist researcher. These understandings could be summarised as
follows:

- the need to see the situation in all its complexity and to see the world as an
  integrated whole, not separate parts;
- the importance of both experience and theory in the process developing new ways
  of thinking and ways of helping other to develop new ways of thinking;
- the insight to not impose, but to facilitate and share ideas in a mutual based
  relationship with clients and shareholders in the research;
- the process of development as a form of systemic action research;
• the importance and significance of a variety of different approaches to research and the role of methodology as a 'tool box' for knowledge generation. This gave me the opportunity to be free of dominating methodologies which must be imposed on any situation or context. Further, it offered the means to select appropriate methodologies for my different research phases.

**Research as the Process of Challenge and Change**

This research was the process of challenge and change. My personal learning throughout the entire process of research could be defined in five inter-related time-frame phases (see Figure 9.1).

1. **Coming to Hawkesbury and learning in its new (to me) theoretical and educational environment.**

2. **The first fieldwork which involved being with and learning with the nomads and ethnographic research.**

3. **Facilitating change and learning in the process of action research.**

4. **Practicing change through promoting a 'learning organisation' approach on the part of the government and shifting from micro to macro focus in both contextualisation and conceptualisation of the issue.**

5. **Reflecting on the whole process of this experience, putting all the parts together and informing the theory by action and publicising the outcome of the research by writing the thesis.**
Figure 9.1. Chronological map of the Learning process and development of thesis.
The Centrality of Praxis in the Process of Learning, Research and Development

The new relationship between theory and practice which assisted me in getting out of this fuzziness, this unclear situation, was the discovery of the dialectic between theory and practice which led to a praxis. This was introduced to me in three phases, through learning, research and development.

Learning Praxis

The Hawkesbury learning environment, with its flexible and student oriented approach, is in direct opposition to the traditional system of education within which I grew up. As such, it presented me with many behavioural and attitudinal paradoxes. These paradoxes pushed me to reflect deeply on my personal previous learning experiences and professional background. In the beginning stages of the work when I was selecting an appropriate theory and practice area of focus, I was confronted with multiple choices which frustrated me. It was the introduction of a new dialectical relationship between theory and practice which helped me at this stage of my research. The centrality of praxis as “critical reflective action” within learning, research and development (Bawden and Packham, 1991), was the key element which guided me to the next phase of my research.

Then, experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) introduced a fundamentally different relationship of theory to practice in the process of learning. Here, theory informs action and action informs theory in a dialectical manner. The outcome of this process is the praxis which changes the way of being (learning). The "changes [that] come as
a result of learning new ways of thinking about how we come to know anything at all" (Plas, 1986:55) resulted from the combining of theory and practice together. This process of experiential learning was integrated into my personal life and led me to the development of a "praxis for personal development" which informs the research throughout.

Ethnographic Research Praxis

The need for exploring nomads' lives, views and issues led me to ethnographic research. Through six months of ethnographic research I became aware of the current situation of a group of nomads and their relationships with government agents. But what is as important to me as the information which was collected and presented (Chapter 4 and 5) is my own self-understanding, skill and the praxis which emerged during the process of this phase of the research. These changes happened through the following features of applied method as described by Hammersley (1990:2-3): (a) people’s behavior was studied in everyday contexts; (b) data were gathered from a range of sources particularly informal conversations; (c) the approach to data collection was unstructured in the sense that it did not involve following through a detailed plan set up at the beginning, nor were the categories used for interpretation; (d) the focus was on a relatively small scale; and (e) the analysis of the data involved interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions.

These features facilitated a contextual and dialectical relationship between theory and practice in the process of research.
Action Research Praxis

At the second phase of the research to improve the problematical situation, I was introduced to action research as a methodology which made a connection between theory and action in a dialectic manner in such a way that the outcome of the research itself was a praxis in much the same way that learning itself was a praxis.

As the name suggests, action research is a methodology which has the dual aims of action and research...

- action to bring change in some community or organisation or program
- research to increase understanding on the part of the researcher of the client, or both

(Dick, 1993)

Learning Organisation Praxis

When I was confronted with the complexities of an organisation, Argyris and Schon (1978) guided me in learning how organisations can learn and change, again, by putting theory into practice within an organisational context. In particular, Schon (1987) in Educating the Reflective Practitioner made the process clear, which led me to the development of a “praxis for improvement” within the organisation.

The “Whole System of Stakeholders” Benefited from the “Praxis of Events and Ideas”

There was a recursive learning/development process within the whole system of stakeholders. In each stage of the research the flow of events and ideas was reconceptualised through the process of critical collective reflection. My personal
understanding, the awareness of government agents and nomads was improved
during the process of action and reflection as an integrated system. Taking into
account Bawden’s (1991) typology of improvement arising from action research, the
improvements among the government agents and nomads can be identified as
follows:

a) The understanding of all stakeholders was improved

During the first phase of fieldwork I became aware of the enormous heterogeneity of
views among the nomads about the situation, and later I experienced a similar degree
of heterogeneity among the various government agencies. It was in this phase of the
research that I became aware of the tremendous gap between the viewpoints and ways
of viewing the world that were held by the two sides. There was a lack of
consciousness within each of the two groups but by far the greatest lack of
understanding was between the two groups. In the meantime I became conscious of the
dominance of my personal tacit beliefs and values that were constructed by my
background as a change agent from the government side. Among the many things I
learned from the people in this “real university” was that solving these issues doesn’t
needs sophisticated theories and methodologies critical self-consciousness, and the
competency to listen to the people and understand, their way of understanding and
their practical theories about their own situations.

The nomads become increasingly conscious of the significant differences that existed
in the “language” that they used to describe the qualities and quantities of their life-
styles, and the language that the officials used when referring to them (these differences are summarised in Table 5.1). There was also increasing awareness among the nomads, that their own attitudes to the government and to the role it played in their livelihoods, was changing. As an ethnographic research, I was very conscious of the need to validate my interpretations of what was being said, and I was rigorous to re-assure myself of this through constant re-iteration in conversations, and triangulation with the literature whenever possible.

The understanding of the government agents, about both the nomads and the research methodology, was improved through the research process adopted in the second and third phases of the research.

In the second phase of the research, the action research team had an intensive period of critical conversation and reflection on past experience and was confronted directly with the social reality of nomadism which eventuated as a result of their previous development activities. This was accomplished through taking the officials to the nomads. The flow of events and ideas introduced to these practitioners through the process of critical reflection influenced their understanding of the situation and its complexities. The process of this phase was facilitated by me in such a way that practitioners became aware of this issue from the epistemic level.

The outcomes of this phase showed how techno-scientific thinking and the formal organisational vision within which the practitioners act and decide are responsible for the generation of a one way flow of knowledge and single loop mechanism of decision making toward local peoples and natural resources. This was the major reason we decided to shift our focus onto the government's viewpoint toward the
process for change and improvement in organisational context in order to improve their understanding of the practice through organisational learning. The learning of the researcher and co-researchers about the problematical situation is considered the fundamental base for the improvement of a given situation and is not separable from any physical changes.

b) The practice of the stakeholders was improved

In both the second and third phases of the research, a significant shift was recognised in the actions and the practices of the practitioners toward the situation that they were confronting. Referring to the nomads as the source of knowledge, appreciating their views through the processes of observation and explanation and participating with them in the processes of improving the situation were examples of changes in the second phase of the research. What we all recognised in the second phase of the research was that this change should be accommodated in a broader area and in its organisational context, otherwise it would be unsustainable or lost. In the third phase of the research we were witness to how practitioners a) decided to do their task in a participatory manner with local people, b) demanded, from the deputy minister, more room for themselves in the current top down decision making processes, and c) decided to continue this process of experiential learning through a regular meeting for reflecting and learning for their experience and informing their formal organisational body.

It was during this time that I gained the competence to be an facilitator among divergent groups and view holders. I learned that putting the people and their needs
first is based upon our listening to them not their listening to us. Though I theoretically accepted this, in the early stages of the research it seemed strange listening to all the nomads, old and young, men and women, children, talking about their understanding and perceptions, their desires, their needs. However, when I began to practice and actually gained valued knowledge and insight from the nomads, I became enthusiastic about listening. This listening ability was encouraged by the openness and the genuine hospitality offered to me by the nomads. I learned to speak and teach what I have in my mind to others. I became aware of myself as a systems practitioner.

“Systemic Competence”

This approach changed my way of seeing and interpreting the world and gave me the competency to see the world as an integrated whole, not separate parts and the competency to act with the whole. I came to see my actions as part of the whole, not separate from it.

My understanding of the complex research situation and its associated methodologies has emerged since my arrival at Hawkesbury. The educational environment at Hawkesbury which encouraged being and learning within an ill-defined situation and the process of the research field work and associated reading contributed to a dramatic improvement in my understanding of the situation and, more importantly, in changing ways of thinking about the situation.
According to Salner (1986) "systemic learning" requires "... a certain way of thinking that is independent of the content of systems concepts", she argues that systemic learning requires competence at the epistemic level: "For general systems learning, with its emphasis on structures rather than on content, epistemic competence may be the most critical competence of all" (Salner, 1986:232). In other words,"...to use systemic ideas cognitively, one needs firstly an epistemic flexibility" (Bawden and Macadam, 1991). Salner (1986) also uses the cognitive developmental model of Perry (1970) and links it with above mentioned idea. She argues that epistemic development could be categorised in three broad areas: a) "dualism" within which the knowledge is in the external world and could be right or wrong; b) " multiplicity" within which all people are right and there are multiple absolute truths; and c) "contextual relativism", which arises out of the frustration encountered in the last stage. Salner tells us that in this stage the learner's awareness increases the importance of the context in defining truth and values when he/she is faced with the issue of selection out of multiplicity. "Epistemologically, this third stage is dialectical and interactive in that it does not look for truth either in the world (as a dualistic thinker does) or in the self (as the multiplistic thinker does), but in the interaction between self and world that results from committed, or we might even say existential, action in the world" (Ibid:226).

Based on this literature, now I realise how I passed through these stages as I was confronted with the nomads' dilemma. In the first step I wondered (as a dualistic thinker does) "Who is right or wrong, nomads or the government?". "What is the solution for nomadism, the nomadism or settlement?" When I started to read the theoretical literature and other relevant literature about the nomads and their
background with the State I was confronted with a range of perspectives toward nomads and their dilemma. This issue became more crucial when I started my first field work. Different agencies, different groups of nomads and professionals had different perspectives and different opinions about the situation. In this stage, as a multiplistic thinker, I was in the difficult situation to trying to contextualise different realities.

What helped me to make sense out of the frustration and complexity in that uneasy situation was: a) to see the situation as the different constructs of different stakeholders; b) conceptualising the state of affairs in its settings and context; c) looking at the situation within a wide range of relative possibilities and not for a black and white picture of truth. Instead, searching for a better alternative which suited the ill-defined context and all of the stakeholders, I recognised the value of d) using theory as an guide to inform action in a dialectical manner.

I was introduced to systems science and systems thinking theoretically before starting the first phase of research, but during the research I found that “systemic competence” is not a knowledge or even a skill; a competency is not a theory. During this research a shift happened and the theory became a competency. Now, this competency is part of my being which underpins my understanding and dealing with any situation.

**Researching with Nomads and “Becoming a Nomad”**

Although modern life is eliminating the nomadic lifestyle, this research and its complexities led myself and my family to follow a nomadic way of life during my studies. In physical terms, we migrated between the southern and northern hemispheres for four years just as the nomads migrate from summer to winter quarter.
Intellectually, I have had to wander too, between Northern and Southern quarters. In the Northern quarter, there are the paradoxes between the events and practices of the governmental departments and the nomads; in the Southern quarter, there are paradoxical intellectual theories, concepts and ideas of academics. There is the enormous paradox of unequal distribution of wealth and resources between the Southern and Northern quarters. There is the paradox of integrating the languages, thought processes, cultures of divergent ethnic groups - nomads, Iranian and Australian - into my own being/into our beings. Like the nomads, my family and I are confronted by fundamental paradoxes and changes in our world.

The praxis of the nomad, who migrates between summer and winter quarter, staying in neither, is in the Being of the nomad him/herself. The praxis is based on the movement itself. In this way, my being is the praxis of the dialectical relationship of my learning and living in paradox.

The nature of nomadic life and this thesis was cyclic rather than lineal as is a traditional thesis and the life of settled people. In the way the nomads travel from place to place with the cycles of the seasons, the chapters of this thesis evolved according to the changes that occurred during the processes of the research. The next chapters of this process is migrating to Northern quarter and continuing this never-ending cycle of learning.
Like the nomad whose life is based on uncertainty and change, my research was based on unpredictability and change. I was confronted with the uncertainty of situations and influenced by ill-defined events and multiple theories. In the way the nomads do not know what the pasture will be like in summer or winter quarter before their arrival I did not know what events or ideas or people would influence my research. My strategy for my research and coping with the unpredictable and uncertain situations was the same as that of the nomad. I followed the way of flexibility in an ever-changing situation - adapting and changing according to ongoing events and needs. As a strategy, this was not far from the sort of approach that nomads have used for millennia.

**CONCLUSION**

The story of the research, its development and making sense of its process/content and reflection on applied methodology can be considered as the main contributions of this research to the body of knowledge. These contributions include:

a) contribution to the understanding of the nature of the nomadic dilemma and the way it is rooted in the inability of the mainstream view to recognise the complexity of the problems facing the nomads due to failure to acknowledge their perceptions;

b) contribution to the development of a new approach of action research for change in the way that an organisation (FRO) can deal with the nomadic community;
c) verification of the value and usefulness of AR as a methodology for both understanding and addressing such problematical situations in similar circumstances; and 

d) research and development as the process of personal development and learning for the researcher and all stakeholders.

It would have been quite unrealistic, given the limits of these particular projects, to have expected major and permanent changes in the way the complex issues of nomadic pastoralism in Iran are approached by the various stakeholders involved. Yet there was certainly evidence provided that the methodologies that were used in the course of these inquiries have the potential to enrich the endeavours to improve the problematique involving the nomadic pastoralists with respect to the sustainable development of their welfare concurrently with the integrity of their rangeland environments.

And certainly the research was conducted within the spirit recently articulated by Robert Chambers (1994) of the need for: a) new methods and approaches to development to allow interaction between practitioners and local people; b) changes in the attitudes and beliefs of scientist and practitioners to “see things the other way around”, and c) new strategies for institutional change and action research in organisations for “learning to learn, and learning to help in participative (to which we would add, systemic) ways.”
The process and outcomes of this research show how these three targets are highly integrated. Based on the outcomes of this research I argue that, to develop new strategies for a participatory and systemic institutional change we need to see things differently, and, in order to see things the other way around, we have to explore and generate methodologies which allow interaction between practitioners and local people and this will not happen unless we facilitate organisational learning.

SOME METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

A difficulty of this type of research, which is profoundly grounded in a specific situation, is that the underlying intellectual position is inconsistent with conventional generalisation of outcomes or recommendations. Nevertheless generalisation can be made about the potential of the research process and implications for further practice.

These implications focus on further research and development and target the government as (a) the main responsible body for change and improvement among the local communities and within the international environment, (b) a formal organisation which has some difficulties within its organisational structure.

Arising out of the experience of this research, it is supported that, in order to improve the government and its role in the management of the bio-physical world for economic purpose and improving the quality of nomads' lives the government should make three major and interrelated changes as follows:
A) carry out a major review of current government perspectives and understanding of local people’s roles, natural resource management and the interrelationships between these;

B) reconstruct government relationships with local people in such a way that they become more compatible with the local people’s values and characteristics in order to generate an holistic, effective, and desirable natural resource management system;

C) establish a relationship between academics and practitioners in which relevant theory informs the action of practitioners and both are informed by the process of critical reflection keeping in mind the important of giving priority to local people’s agenda.

A) Change Needed within Current Government Perspective

Natural resource degradation, production shortfalls and lack of equity among the nomads are affected by the interventions which have previously been seen as solutions to perceived problems. During the process of this research it became apparent that our desired outcomes are based upon our way of perceiving the problem. In other words, our idea of betterment influences our views of what is desirable in a given situation.

Since the government is responsible for each of these areas, both ethically, and officially, and because the government has both political and economic control over the resources, my arguments focus on the changes needed within the government as the major role player in this settings. The government of Iran is influenced by a number of external and internal constraints. Externally these include the international political and economic policies of the current world order and other governments. Internally, they include the demands of the
population for increased social services through particular rules. In addition, the government has its own agenda based on its Islamic revolutionary ideology and the experiences of the last fifteen years in dealing with foreign and domestic affairs. What I suggest here implies no contradiction with the current dominant ideology-law in contemporary Iran. I believe that what is needed to improve the situation is facilitating a critical learning environment to enable the government agents reflect on their ideas and experience in such a way that enables them to consider:

- the huge cultural, socio-economic and living diversity among local people;
- the complexities which exist within the situation;
- the long term perspective rather than short term;
- the quality of life rather than some quantitative figures and indicators.

**B) Reconstruction of a New Platform for Relationship**

Many of the greatest conflicts in Iranian history have been related to including or excluding nomadism in the wider social and political system. Nomads were excluded from government in the last fifty years due to the infrastructure changes among State and market. Now, the security of the national economy, ecological sustainability, political stability and the well-being of nomads relies on a new 'system' of relationships and organisations. According to a broader holistic view, nomadism as a socio-economic issue and, more importantly, an ecological one, cannot be neglected any more and is a top priority which should be addressed by new strategies. These strategies, should be designed to:

- restructure the electoral roll to include nomads as a mobile community and cultural group to have a particular representative in parliament;
• support local community organisations to handle nomad issues locally and act as an effective intermediary organisation.

These two suggestions are included in the existing constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (see appendix 4), but even after seventeen years they have not been implanted.

C) Establishment of a new a Relationship Between Academics and Practitioners

The other main recommendation of this section is that systems of research among academics and systems decision-making among practitioners needs to shift in order to:

• make a close relationship between academics and practitioners in the process of research and development;

• put the nomads’ agenda first and give priority to local people’s needs and views.


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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1
DEFINITIONS

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 3
THE ARTICLES WHICH HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED BASED ON THIS RESEARCH

APPENDIX 4
EXISTING CONSTITUTION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN AND THE AREA OF THIS RESEARCH
APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

Note: Based on commonly occurring words or phrases in the thesis, this definitions has been compiled from technical sources such as dictionary or those cited in thesis.

Action Research  A Methodology which has dual aims of action to bring about change in community or organisation and increase understanding on the part of researcher and client. Action and research serve each other in a dialectical manner.

Holism  A way of looking and conceptualising the world with this proposition that every things is connected with every things else and that the whole is different from the sum of its parts.

Paradigm  A coherent and interrelated pattern or model of concepts, values, methods at a given time that scientists use to explain their observation and action (Kuhn, 1962).

Pastoral Nomads  Pastoral nomads constitute a social type which in this thesis defined by three major characteristics including; dependence on animal husbandry, spatial mobility with family, and strong social organisation based on kinship.

Problematical Situation  A systemic definition of problem, which consider a set of circumstances consisted of; people, their physical and biological environment, political, economic, social, historical context, structure and process of decision making, and relational climate, in the process of describing the discomfortable situation.

Reductionist  A Paradigm of inquiry that focus on parts to understand and explain an issue and put back them together to explain the whole. This logic rests on the premise that the sum of the parts equal the whole.

Systems thinking  Conceptualising the complexity and dynamism of the world in terms of holism, focusing in relationships and settings rather than parts, emergent properties, hierarchical structure, and communication.
APPENDIX 2


Note: Critique on process and out comes by intellectual society has been sought through writing eight papers which were presented in international conferences and congresses.

The presentation of two papers at the Conference of Development and Nomadism in 1992 was an attempt to introduce the action research method and systems thinking to the nomadic issue and discuss its implications on nomadism and natural resource management. Another paper was presented at the Thirty-Seventh annual meeting of the “International Society For the Systems Sciences” (1993) to reflect on problem identification based on the systems thinking approach. Two paper made specific contributions to the body of knowledge on action research methodology for extension and rural development. Another paper was on the learning organisation aspect of this research (phase three) and its outcome in terms of vocational education. A paper on the application of systemic action research on holistic natural resource management was accepted by the Fifth International Rangeland Congress in Salt Lake City, Utah 1995. And finally, a paper was accepted to raise the issue of NGOs and development in rural Iran at The Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Center for Iranian Research and Analysis” held in Ohio, USA in 1995.
Paper NO 1

ACTION RESEARCH AS AN APPROACH TO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AMONG IRANIAN NOMADS

Mohammad H. Emadi, R.J. Fisher, Robert Woog

[Revised October 1992]

Abstract
The Government of Iran has placed considerable resources into the provision of services to nomads and to their economic development. Underlying this program are a concern with the preservation of rangelands as a valuable economic resource (nomads are seen as major factors in rangeland degradation) and a concern with the provision of services, especially of a welfare nature, to nomads. Unfortunately, the Government's efforts in these directions have not been particularly successful. Active nomadic support for government initiated activities has been limited.

This paper argues that the relatively limited achievements in nomadic development stem from the fact that policies are developed on the basis of government perceptions of the nature of the issues confronting nomads rather than on the basis of issues of concern to the nomads themselves.

In post-revolutionary Iran, the government has made very substantial efforts to address nomadic issues. The underlying philosophy of the revolution emphasised equity in terms of access to resources and quality of life. While planned strategies and objectives have been changed, application is being limited because of the ineffectiveness of established bureaucratic structures. Approaches to nomadic development have continued to be dominated by centralised planning and concern with technological problems (animal husbandry, range carrying capacity, water resource management, health and hygiene). Social programs such as improved education and literacy and the establishment of cooperatives and Nomadic Islamic Councils remain goals. Nevertheless, reductionist scientific/technological research has failed to take account of the complex interacting parts of the nomadic lifestyle and environment. Centralised planning is unable to take account of the diverse range of nomadic situations and perceptions.

What is needed is a means of identifying the differing perceptions of nomads and various government agencies and a strategy for negotiating policies which meet at least some of the legitimate needs of all parties. This paper acknowledges the differing perceptions of various "actors" and suggests a strategy for negotiation and collaborative action.

The starting point for collaboration has to be overt acknowledgement of the different perspectives that each of the parties bring to a planning process. Joint strategies will have to accommodate these differences in such a way that useful and acceptable activities result.

The paper reports on fieldwork by one of the authors (Emadi) carried out as an attempt to explore the differing perspectives. The fieldwork is the first phase of ongoing PhD research. The next phase of fieldwork will attempt to implement a collaborative approach to problem solving and "situation improvement" through a form of participatory action research. The intellectual position behind this work, in terms of which observations and interpretations are made, is based on the theories of appreciative systems and action research.
Paper NO 2

The Research-Development Relationship in Nomadic area: 
An Opportunity for Contextual Science

D.B. Russell, M.H. Emadi and R. J. Bawden

Paper Presented for International Conference
"Nomadism and Development: Survival Strategies & Development Policies"

Isfahan, Iran, 1-6 September 1992

Abstract

This paper argues for a contextual grounding for research and development (R&D) in nomadic area. The history of science reveals many examples of how science has failed to recognize its context. So, what is context and how does one recognize it? It would be all too easy to answer these questions by simply adding social and political insights to the science equation. (What is necessary is that we look at the bigger picture!) Almost always, the bigger picture is nothing other than more of the same.

The general thesis of this paper is: Given that R&D is designed to bring about change for the better for a nomadic community, how is our understanding of R&D developed and how is our understanding of 'change' constructed. More specifically, we are proposing what we believe to be a critical distinction based on the perceptions and actions of the researcher. In what we are calling first-order R&D, the researcher remains outside the system being studied. The espoused stance is that of objectivity and while the system being studied is often spoken of in open system terms, intervention is performed as though it were a closed system. Perception and action are based on a belief in a real world; a world of discrete entities that have meaning in and of themselves. In contrast to this tradition we want to stress the need for a second-order R&D in which the espoused role and action of the researcher is very much part of the interactions being studied. How the researcher perceives the situation is critical to the system being studied. Responsibility replaces objectivity as an ethic and perception and action are based on one's experiential world rather than on a belief in a single reality 'real world.'
Paper NO 3

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AMONG IRANIAN NOMADS: METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATION FOR EXTENSION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Mohammad H. Emadi and Robert A. Woog
Faculty of Agriculture, Horticulture and Social Ecology
University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury

Presented paper for Australia-Pacific Extension Conference
Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia 12-14 1993

Abstract

This paper is based on research with nomadic people in Iran. The paper will show that fundamental assumptions behind a technology driven and basically bureaucratically hierarcial approach to extension is flawed. The flaw lies in compartmentalisation of the issues for which technical solutions are sought, while neglecting culturally held human learning components and the systemic complexity of such work.

Research findings will be discussed in terms of the limitation of conventional extension approach in culturally and technologically complex situation. The potential of participative collaborative theory and associated methodology in such situation will be examined.

The relevance of a development approach, informed by systems methodology and people centred development, will be discussed. Finally the improvement brought about by a collaborative action research approach will be presented.
Paper NO 4

SYSTEMIC ACTION RESEARCH AMONG IRANIAN NOMADS: LEARNING TO DEAL WITH PRAOLEMATIQUE.

R.J. Bawden and M.H. Emadi

Paper prepared for International Society for Systems Sciences
(Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting)
July 5-9, 1993, U.W.S.H Australia

ABSTRACT

Despite the huge amount of resources being spent, conventional development approaches have not benefited resource-poor nomads of Iran.

The underlying theme of this paper is that the current approach to development activities needs to shift from conventional empiricism, with its linear logic and power relationships, to models which endeavour to establish systemic and mutual recognition and accommodation of change among client and the researcher as facilitator.

This is the story of one attempt by a researcher among Iranian nomads and government agencies to bring a systemic action research and development approach to the process of inquiry and change as the appropriate methodology for systemic ways of improving a complex problematical situation.

The findings illustrate how certain narrow perspectives among different department of Governments actually increase tension between the nomads and government. It goes on to explore differential responses to change among both parties following the intervention of the researcher.
COACHING REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONERS: A NEW APPROACH TO
VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Paper presented at “International Seminar on Technological Education” 23-25 May
1994, Tehran Iran

Mohammad H. Emadi, Robert A. Wog, and Robert J. Fisher
Faculty of Agriculture, Horticulture and Social Ecology
University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that vocational education must move away from the traditional
approach of passing on knowledge and skills to developing competency in a learner.
The teaching learning process associated with this approach is one based on
developing action and reflection strategies that address the complex real situation
from which the learner comes and is expected to return to on the completion of the
training program.

Observations and recommendations in the paper are based on findings from a
workshop conducted in Iran during August, 1993. The workshop was conducted
jointly by the Forest and Range Organisation of Iran (F.R.O.) and the University of
Western Sydney, Hawkesbury.
TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER OR ISSUE MANAGEMENT; A CASE STUDY WITH IRANIAN NOMADS

Mohammad H. Emadi and Robert A. Woog


Abstract

This research aimed at identifying problems associated with the pursuit of a grazing nomadic life style. It is also as part of broader strategies aimed at evaluating and re-conceptualizing extension theory and practice, and as such the findings are generalised beyond the reported case study with Iranian nomads.

The paper will present the perception of problems from a traditional point of view, then it will contextualize the problem to illustrate different viewpoints which are expressed as a problematical situation and finally will discuss the methodological challenge involved in researching situations where there is a complex ecological-social interaction. The limitation of a predominantly technology-based approach will be discussed. The propositional theme of the paper is that development and extension needs to shift from conventional empiricism which is imposing the idea of policy makers and experts through the "technology transfer model" - to "issue management models" which endeavour to establish mutual recognition and accommodation of change among client and the change agent.
Appendixes

Paper NO7

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION (NGO’S) AND DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL IRAN: AN EXPLORATION

Mohammed H. Emadi and Simon Combe

Paper Presented for " The Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Centre for Iranian Research and Analysis (CIRA) " April 7-9 1995, Ohio State University.

Abstract

In the context of increasing concern at the pace and direction of rural development in the so called ‘third world’, increasing interest in recent years has focused on the activities of indigenous Non-Government Organisation (NGO’s) and their possible role in the process of rural change. While some contributors have been extremely enthusiastic about the sector and have suggested that in many ways it might be the primary developmental conduit for the 21st century. Others have been impressed suggesting for example far from being a conduit for development, the sector is little more than a future venue for the penetration of the imperialist ‘west’ into the ‘east’. However, despite the fact the volume of material presented on this topic in recent years, relatively little attention has been focused on the activities of NGO’s in Iran the role they have to play their in rural areas. As a result, the potential for exploring the unique characteristics of the sector in the process of development in rural Iran - if any exist- has been to a large extend ignored.

The aim of this paper is to explore the nature of the indigenous NGO sector involved in rural Iran and the potential issues related to the growth of their activities. Among the questions it addresses are:

- what are the parameters of the NGO sector within the Iranian context and how has it evolved over the years;
- what is the nature of the set-ups of organisations within the sector active in the process of rural change;
- what are the nature of the services provided by the sector and for whom are these services provided; and finally,
- what has been the nature of the debates, if any, concerning the role of the sector in the process of development in rural Iran and what are the implications of these debates on development policies currently being developed by the State.

The method adopted by the authors in preparing the paper has involved the inductive analysis of primarily qualitative data collected in Iran by one of the authors during field work for a Ph.D. thesis on the application of methods associated with Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the development of nomads in central Iran and by another in India and Australia for his Ph.D. thesis on the role of indigenous grassroot voluntary agencies (IGVA’s) in rural India.
PAPER NO 8

"SYSTEMIC ACTION RESEARCHING" AMONG IRANIAN NOMADS

Mohammed. H. Emadi and Richard. J. Bawden

Fifth International Rangeland Congress
(Salt Lake City, Utah, July 23-28, 1995)

Abstract

Efforts to improve the natural resource status of Iranian rangelands, has traditionally been attempted through the use of technology transfer and centralised planning. This approach has not been considered successful generally, and particularly not in the nomadic areas. There have been calls for the adoption of more holistic perspectives as a foundation for more effective strategies for sustainable improvements in the situation. This paper, which is drawn from the doctoral studies of one of the authors (M.H.E), reports one on such attempt involving the application of an holistic research process which integrates "action" (practice) with "research" (theory).

Reflections on field experiences in Iran, including endeavors involving officers from the Iranian Forest and Range Organisation (FRO) allow the claim that "Systemic Action Research" is an appropriate approach in the search for more holistic, participative strategies for the management of those natural resources utilised by the nomadic pastoralists in that country.
APPENDIX 3

THE ARTICLES WHICH HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED

BASED ON THIS RESEARCH
On the trail of Iran’s nomads

A PhD student is developing a sustainable, social and economic future for the dwindling nomadic tribes of Iran.

For thousands of years, nomadic tribes have been wandering the rich pasture lands of Iran’s western and northern mountains. All the Iranian dynasties until 70 years ago were established by the nomads and the political structure and hierarchy was based on the tribal system.

But since Shah’s time the nomads have been losing power while facing pressure to change. They have been blamed for ecological degradation of pasture and for causing problems when they move to towns, while at the same time they are an underprivileged class.

But under modern pressures the tribes are dwindling and, according to UWSH PhD student, Mohammed Hossein Emadi, they are gradually abandoning their colourful traditions to settle in Iran’s towns.

Problems arising from this traumatic change have occupied Mohammed’s research efforts over the past four years.

With a background in agriculture and rural development in Iran, Mohammed came to UWSH seeking new ways of resolving social problems - the answer he found is a combination of action research, systems analysis and critical thinking.

Mohammed’s work in Iran had three stages: 1) Ethnographic research living with a subgroup of the Qashqai tribe in the Zagros mountains to understand their way of life and issues; 2) Bringing together nomads and government officials in an action research team on a local level to address the issues, and 3) Conducting workshops with government officials on a national level to tackle the issue through the application of learning organisation theory.

He has concluded that the Iranian government could resolve many problems with the nomads by abandoning top-down decision-making in favour of listening to the nomads at a local level.

Mohammed said the nomads have a unique tribal culture and migrate between summer and winter quarters with sheep and goat herds.

“We found that every nomad family has its program for settling down, which is different to other families and the government’s strategy,” said Mohammed.

The action group had shown that progress could be made if the government listens to what nomads want, while the workshop helped to educate officials in alternative solutions.

Mohammed said one solution was for the government to allow wealthier nomadic families to buy out the pasture of poorer families, giving each group a more sustainable future.

He said most nomads realised they had to change and were ready to settle down; the subgroup he worked with had shrunk from 32 families to 20 over four years.

Mohammed said the old nomad lifestyle had been in balance with Iran’s ecological, social and political environment.

“No the harmony is broken and it is difficult for the nomads and the rest of the community. But the nomads are being unfairly blamed - they did not cause the problem, they are the victims.”

Mohammed is convinced UWSH was the right choice for his PhD work, because it gave him, as well as skills and knowledge, “a competency to cope with the situation”.

Mohammed Hossein Emadi, right, at a Nomadic School
The nomads, who have a proud 2500-year history in Iran, are caught in a conflict between ancient and modern ways - and the women are pushing the process of change

By HARRY DILLON

If the government provided clean and comfortable shelters, the nomads would move into tents on their own, seeking a better life. But before long, the family begins to grow and their tent becomes too small. The nomads are forced to move again. They need a new tent, but it is too expensive and they cannot afford it.

The nomads in Iran are members of the nomadic pastoral tribes. They live on the open land, where they raise their sheep and goats. They live in tents, which are easily transported from place to place. The nomads are nomads, and they are proud of their way of life.

The nomads are a hardworking people. They work hard to make a living, and they are proud of their work. They are also proud of their culture and their traditions. They are a proud people, and they are proud of their history.

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APPENDIX 4

SELECTED PARTS OF THE EXISTING CONSTITUTION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Note: These parts are related to the peoples' participation, government policy, and natural resource management

GENERAL

Article 57

The powers of government in the Islamic Republic are vested in the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive powers, functioning under the supervision of the absolute wilayat al- 'amr and the leadership of the Ummah, in accordance with the forthcoming articles of this Constitution. These powers are independent of each other.

Article 58

The function of the legislature are to be exercised through the Islamic Consultative Assembly, consisting of the elected representatives of the people. Legislation approved by this body, after going through the stages specified in the articles below, is communicated to the executive and the judiciary for implementation.
Article 6
In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the affairs of the country must be administered on the basis of public opinion expressed by the means of elections, including the election of the President, the representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and the members of councils, or by means of referenda in matters specified in other articles of this Constitution.

Article 7
In accordance with the command of the Qur'an contained in the verse ("Their affairs are by consultations among them" [42:38]) and ("Consult them in affairs" [3:159]), consultative bodies - such as the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the Provincial Councils, and the City, Region, District, and Village Councils and the likes of them - are the decision-making and administrative organs of the country.

The nature of each of these councils, together with the manner of their formation, their jurisdiction, and scope of their duties and functions, is determined by the Constitution and laws derived from it.

Article 19
All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; and color, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege.

ENVIRONMENT

Article 50
The preservation of the environment, in which the present as well as the future generations have a right to flourishing social existence, is regarded as a public duty in the Islamic Republic. Economic and other activities that inevitably involve pollution of the environment or cause irreparable damage to it are therefore forbidden.

COUNCILS

Article 100
In order to expedite social, economic, development, public health, cultural, and educational programmes and facilitate other affairs relating to public welfare with the cooperation of the people according to local needs, the administration of each village, division, city, municipality, and province will be supervised by a council to be named the Village, Division, City, Municipality, or Provincial Council. Members of each of these councils will be elected by the people of the locality in question.

Qualifications for the eligibility of electors and candidates for these councils, as well as their functions and powers, the mode of election, the jurisdiction of these councils, the hierarchy of their authority, will be determined by law, in such a way as to preserve national unity, territorial integrity, the system of the Islamic Republic, and the sovereignty of the central government.

Article 101
In order to prevent discrimination in the preparation of programmes for the development and welfare of the provinces, to secure the cooperation of the people, and to arrange for the supervision of coordinated implementation of such programmes, a Supreme Council of the Provinces will be formed, composed of representatives of the Provincial Councils.
Law will specify the manner in which this council is to be formed and the functions that it is to fulfil.

Article 102
The Supreme Council of the Provinces has the right within its jurisdiction, to draft bills and to submit them to the Islamic Consultative Assembly, either directly or through the government. These bills must be examined by the Assembly.

Article 103
Provincial governors, city governors, divisional governors, and other officials appointed by the government must abide by all decisions taken by the councils within their jurisdiction.

Article 104
In order to ensure Islamic equity and cooperation in chalking out the programmes and to bring about the harmonious progress of all units of production, both industrial and agricultural, councils consisting of the representatives of the workers, peasants, other employees, and managers, will be formed in educational and administrative units, units of service industries, and other units of a like nature, similar councils will be formed, composed of representatives of the members of those units.

The mode of the formation of these councils and the scope of their functions and powers, are to be specified by law.

Article 105
Decisions taken by the councils must not be contrary to the criteria of Islam and the laws of the country.

Article 106
The councils may not be dissolved unless they deviate from their legal duties. The body responsible for determining such deviation, as well as the manner for dissolving the councils and re-forming them, will be specified by law.

Should a council have any objection to its dissolution, it has the right to appeal to a competent court, and the court is duty-bound to examine its complaint outside the docket sequence.
PASTORALISTS, PARTICIPATION AND POLICY: AN ACTION ORIENTED, SYSTEMIC AND PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PASTORALIST NOMADS, GOVERNMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN IRAN

Mohammad H. Emadi

PhD Thesis

School of Agriculture and Rural Development
Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture
University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury
1995
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Declaration

I hereby certify
that the work embodied in
this thesis is the result of original research
and has not been submitted for a higher
degree to any
other university
or institution.

(s) Emadi

M. H. Emadi
May 1995
Academic research has its place in analysing and understanding what is happening, but the most important contributions now will come from those who engage in practice and who find things to do and ways to do them that work.

(Robert Chambers in Beyond Farmer First, 1994)
This study focuses on the relationships between nomads, the government and the natural resource base of Iran as a problematical situation. The research approach adopted was action-oriented with an emphasis on the process of development through the integration of theory with practice in a critical learning system designed to improve the situation and emphasising the significance of systemic thinking and acting.

The underlying rationale for the approach is that the relatively limited achievements in nomadic development and natural resource conservation to date stem from the fact that policies are: (a) based on a reductionist viewpoint and analysis, which separates theory from practice, and neglects the diversity, complexity and recursiveness of the different dimensions of nomadic life; and (b) developed on the basis of government perceptions of the nature of the issues confronting nomads rather than on the basis of shared concerns with the nomads themselves. The central argument here is that the current approach to development activities needs to shift from a conventional paradigm to one which is more holistic and participative as a foundation for more effective strategies for understanding and improving relationships among nomads and government. The philosophical foundations of this work lie in: a) holism and b) constructivism. There were three phases of fieldwork which, when taken together, represent what might be termed a system of systemic research methodologies.

The first phase of the fieldwork (Chapter 4 and 5) was an attempt to explore the problematical situation from the point of view of particular group of nomads and government agents. The outcomes of this early ethnographic stage of research revealed, not only a non-coherent, but also a paradoxical, situation within and between all parties.
with respect to views toward legitimate changes and *betterment* outcomes. Also identified was a huge gap between understanding, adjustment strategies and ways of understanding. The outcomes revealed the complexity of the current situation as perceived by the nomads themselves, the unease of the nomads at their present situation and the lack of any signs for improvement in future trends as they saw them and finally an essential need for an improvement as expressed by all stakeholders.

The second phase of research turned to an action-oriented approach (Chapter 6 and 7) to establish the process of conversation and mutual recognition and accommodation of change among "clients" and the researcher as facilitator to help each group of participants (nomads and government) to understand their own position and worldviews, to help each group of participants to recognise and appreciate differences in their positions, perceptions, and to establish a framework for action and improving the situation within which each group could benefit in a reciprocal manner. Among the outcomes of this (second) phase of the research, were clear agreements between different government agents about their organisation in terms of understanding and capacities to react toward the problematical situation.

Finally the focus turned to the process of changing organisations. The third phase of research (Chapter 8), focused on the *learning organisation* as a strategy to improve relationships. The aim of this task was to introduce *systemic thinking and practices* as ways of knowing which complement, integrate and indeed transcend, both the technoscientific thinking and methods of the government agents, and the indigenous, experiential knowledge and practical wisdom of the nomadic pastoralists.

Throughout this journey, I, as part of learning system, have come to major personal changes and understandings which are presented in Chapter 9 as critical reflections on my research praxis. The recursive nature of the research, both in terms of relationship between theory and practice and also its three phases, is reflected in the structure of the thesis.
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### Chapter V

**Two Different Systems of Meaning: The Perceptions of Nomads and Government Officials**

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**Photo Essay One**

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CHAPTER VIII

ORGANISATION LEARNING

(THIRD PHASE OF RESEARCH)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR  Action Research
FRO  Forest and Range Organisation, under Ministry of Jihad-e Sazandegi, (Tehran, Iran).
IREP  Integrated Range Evaluation Plans, designed by Faculty of Natural Resource, University of Tehran, Karaj, to evaluate the natural resources as a base for SSRMP.
MJS  Ministry of “Jihad-e Sazandegi”, (Campaign for construction) responsible for rural development.
NGO  Non-government Organisation.
ONPI  Organisation fro Nomadic People, under Ministry of Jihad-e Sazandegi, (Tehran, Iran).
PAR  Participatory Action Research.
PBO  Plan and Budget Organisation, under Office of President, (Tehran, Iran).
SHCNI  The Secretariat of the High Council for the Nomads of Iran, (Tehran Iran).
SSM  Soft System Methodology.
SSRMP  Small Scale Range Management Projects, designed by FRO to succeed rangemangement and apply its lessons elswere.
TOT  Transfer of Technology Model
UWS-H  University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, Richmond. NSW, Australia.
It is hard for me to recognise and acknowledge all the contributors to my learning process during the course of my PhD Studies. The contributions people have made, in most cases, emerged as part of an evolutionary process. While I single out a few people for particular mention, my gratitude and indebtedness is for all.

Special thanks to Richard Bawden, Professor of Systemic Development, and chairperson of my PhD supervisory panel, who laid the main intellectual antecedents for the development of this research over the last five years. His contributions elevated my being from the pedestrian practitioner level to that of an “ever critical learner”. He introduced me to experiential learning and systems thinking approaches as the oyster, which during the course of research, produced a pearl of praxis as the source of wisdom. I especially appreciate the loyalty, support and patience given me during this last year, when he had the most painful struggle of his life.
Acknowledgements

I want to thank Dr Robert Fisher and Dr Robert Woog, both as members of supervisory panel and as my major mentors and colleagues over the last five years, they accompanied me during two of my field visits in Iran, contributed experientially to this work and its outcomes. Thanks for their support, comments and dependability.

I need to mention my special appreciation for the contributions of David Russell, Roger Packham, Roger Roberts and many of my post-graduate colleagues, particularly to Lin Waddell, for help during the process of editing this thesis. Thanks for who they are and who they are becoming.

On the Iranian side, I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Ghareghani Bonko for their loyalty, hospitality and charity.

And many thanks to the Deputy Minister of Rural Development and Director of FRO of the Iranian Government, Mr Fallah. Without his initial interest and continuous support, there would have been no significant improvement in working relationships between the nomads and government. Credit is also due to the Department's senior managers, Provincial Directors and District Officers of FRO and ONPI for their support during field work.

Finally, above all others, I am in debted to my wife Fatemeh and my children, Reza, Zahra and Amin for their support and patience, especially during this five years period of transition for us a family, a debt which can never be adequately repaid.
I am beginning my preface with the story of the research and its characteristics. My personal story, including my background and involvement in this research will follow.

**STORY OF THE RESEARCH**

This thesis is a *story of development*, of an *approach to development*, through systemic action research, which has as its focus the improvement of relationships between nomads and government agents, through a participative approach, with regard to natural resource management and technology in Iran. The research is a novel approach to the situation and is set in the context of what is referred to as a *Hawkesbury approach* which combines theory and practice in a *critical learning system* to improve the situation.

The basic tenet is that the situation concerning the relationships between nomads, the government, land and technology in Iran will not be optimally improved through mainstream research with its dominant world views of development.
This work started as a dream for a legitimate change in the quality of life of Iranian nomads. Informed by a theory of *action research*, the process of inquiry proceeded, in a participative way, to follow a never-ending flux between ideas and experiences. This dynamic lead to the development of a *praxis for improvement*. Under such circumstances, theories are generated in reflective practice rather than being *learnt for application*. The intention of the researcher is to involved in the problematique as a *systemic critical thinker*, helping to improve the problematical situation as a *creative, participative activist*.

So this thesis is concerned as much with research into methodologies of change through participation as it is about nomadism in Iran. It is part of a broader reframing of development, in an attempt to suggest approaches and examples that may be relevant beyond the case of nomads in general, or Iranian nomads in particular.

There is a clear mutual link between the researcher’s background, interests and world view and the flow of the research. On the one hand the research process was influenced by my interests/concerns and on the other, the research influenced my views toward the world and my future career. This will be discussed in the next section.

**RESEARCH AND THE RESEARCHER**

I am beginning this section with my personal story because my research reflects both my background and my future career. I begin with my academic background and how it influenced my views on rural development.
Academic Background

My B.Sc. (University of Shiraz, 1985) was in the field of Animal Science. There I learned a way of looking at the physical and biological systems of life, specifically those involving water, soil, vegetation and animals. I did not learn how to put this knowledge and skill into a social context, nor how to address the everyday problems faced by farmers in rural development.

During my subsequent work in rural development (1980-83), I became aware that this “technological lens”, which I had developed through my academic background, influenced my views of the situations I faced. As an intellectual framework it was quiet inadequate for investigating and understanding the social aspects of rural development and its associated complexities.

In my Master’s course (University of Teheran, 1986-89), I wanted to integrate my growing interest in social phenomena with my agricultural, scientific background. Study in the field of agricultural extension appeared to offer this opportunity. During the first three semesters, I studied subjects concerned with the psychological, sociological and educational aspects of the human being. This study, which was based on a reductionist and quantitative approach, benefited from the diffusionist theory which asserts that it is possible to transfer scientific knowledge and technology directly to the user. I found it very difficult to integrate the scientific, biological and social aspects of situations in practice, until I started my research.

The best opportunity for me was the research process involved in preparing the Masters thesis, which continued for three further semesters. The research goal, which I selected
personally, was to compare Iranian progressive farmers with ordinary farmers in terms of their access to various extension services and their socio-economic characteristics such as land ownership, literacy, size of family and level of social welfare. This research was conducted among three hundred outstanding farmers in sixteen farming areas in 21 provinces. They were selected by the Ministry of Agriculture as the best producers, and their activities included a range of activities such as bee keeping, dairy-ing, dryland farming and crop production.

Arising out of this quantitative and objective research, I noticed significant correlation between the access of both groups (progressive and common farmers) to the extension services and their socio-economic stature and social welfare. I discovered how the socio-economic characteristics of selected farmers played a fundamental role in their superior productivity. More important was my own critical learning in relation to development through the process of research. Despite the original question of the research and its quantitative findings, the major developments in my personal learning were:

- Seeing how the socio-economic and bio-physical dimensions of rural life and agricultural activity are entwined together.
- Seeing the superficiality of conventional extension which considers agricultural development to be simply based on transferring technology and which neglects the complexity of the social reality and its interaction with agricultural activities.
- Seeing how the new technology absorbed by progressive farmers can decrease the equity and expand the gap between different social groups.
- Most importantly, seeing how the process of this type of objective, quantitative research can ignore the contribution of the people to the research, presenting only some
quantitative figures and results to confirm or disprove the hypothesis, without going in
depth or looking at the system as a set of interconnected variables.

Personal Experience in the Field of Rural Development

My experience in the field of rural development could be categorised in two periods. (a) My
eyearly experiences began right after the revolution in Iran and which continued for three years
(1980-83). These activities started firstly with land reform activities. Then I was involved with
the establishment of rural councils, followed by my activities at the national level as the
coordinator of newly established rural councils. (b) Later, during my Masters course (1986-
89), I worked to establish rural co-operatives. In this section I will show the influence of these
activities on the development of my thinking and interest in this area.

Land Reform and Establishment of Rural Councils

My work in land reform, as my first experience in the field of rural development, mainly
involved exploring the land tenure system, evaluating land ownership in rural areas and
redistributing the agricultural land among the agricultural labours and resource poor farmers.
Establishment of rural councils was considered as a means of participation for rural people in
the management of villages and also as a suitable local organisation for data-gathering for the
above mentioned mission.
This work in resource re-distribution and local organisation was a complex and difficult task especially because of the critical importance of land to rural people. Not only is land their most valuable resource for production and income, but it is part of a very complex social context. This complexity of the land “system” was new for me as an urban-based, formally educated, young and revolutionary person.

The campaign of land reform ended after two years. In general, it was not considered a success. As a result of this intense two year task, I came to see that, while the land is the most important source of income to rural people, its redistribution was not enough to necessarily improve the quality of life of resource poor farmers. Even when they had land they lacked both the financial resources and the organisational structures to utilise their new resource for their collective benefit, as the government’s program, which focused on land ownership by cooperatives, envisaged. My experiences had taught me that credit, money and access to tools, labor and knowledge, were all required together.

Co-ordinating and Supporting ‘New Established Rural Councils’

The experience from this task led me next to work at the Center for the Co-ordination of Rural Councils (CCRC). I joined a voluntary movement (non-government organisation) which was established after the revolution, called Jihad-e Sazandegi [Campaign For Construction], which subsequently became the Ministry of Jihad-e Sazandegi (MJS), responsible for rural development. My desire in this task was to resource and empower the poor people through organising them.
We worked very hard as a team in a quite democratic environment, without any defined theory or blueprint. However, we increasingly had the problem that the policies we set, which was based on the fieldwork experience, were handed down in a centralised, top-down manner. Moreover, at the same time that the voluntary new established agency, Jihad-e Sazandegi was becoming financially dependent on the state, the government was becoming more hierarchical and rigid due to the post-revolutionary crisis. Because they were faced with much civil unrest and were needing to establish more control, they became non supportive of the democratic councils.

In spite of the effect of the shift in the political and economic situation which happened after a period of struggle in the power structure of the revolutionary regime, I came to a conclusion. The conclusion I reached, after nearly two years in this work, was that this centralised top-down approach tended to ignore the cultural, social and geographical diversity that exists in Iran, and that the process of development was, therefore, still very inadequate.

*Establishment of Rural Co-operatives*

Three years later, when I started my master’s degree at Teheran University, I was asked by my colleagues to work in a newly established department within the Jihad-e Sazandegi now called Ministry of Jihad-e Sazandegi. It was called The People’s Participation Unit. My third experience in the area of rural development was in the establishment was and development of rural co-operatives.
My belief in people's role in the process of desirable development, and my continuous struggle for this belief, led me to accept this responsibility. The task was to establish co-operatives based on the needs of the people. We managed to establish a structure within the Ministry of Rural Development that furthered research on the economic and social needs of the rural people themselves. Then we were able to formulate policies reflecting the immediate and long term needs of the people which could be covered by the establishment of co-operatives.

In spite of the limitations of various governmental policies and strategies, we were able to encourage the establishment of co-operatives in the production and marketing of agricultural goods and handicrafts. These co-operatives were involved in such diverse activities as grape production, carpet weaving and silk production and processing.

At that time, I could see that we were able to achieve some of our goals. However, there were obstacles to establishing socially and economically successful co-operatives. In my opinion these were:

- Governmental structure and legislation were not supportive of our new task. Co-operatives needed more financial support from the government and needed official recognition.

- In order for our new model to be acceptable to the rural people, we needed to make a distinction between our model and the old model of co-operatives that the people
remembered and did not prefer, because it had been imposed and had been ineffective during the time of Shah.

- The regulations for the running of co-operatives required that people from the local community manage the co-operative. Unfortunately it was impossible to find an appropriate person to do the management. In these cases, the persons selected were not able to do the job and many difficulties ensued.

- The rules and laws of the co-operatives were based on models developed primarily in Great Britain. Many of the rules, laws and customs applicable there, were not compatible nor adaptable with the local communities we were working with.

I came increasingly to realise that my academic knowledge and ways of thinking did not help me understand, let alone solve, the complex social and economic issues which were so entwined together in the rural development arena. I could see that the participation of clients in the processes of change was an essential factor in successful rural development practices and I could envisage the need for organising people, redistributing resources and economic improvement as one system. All factors overlapped with one another and needed to be addressed through an integrated approach. Although conventional development practices addressed these areas separately, through my first hand experiences I could see that this was ineffective and was in fact often counter-productive to achieving rural development goals. Something new was needed. As a result of this logic, I came to Hawkesbury, having heard of its novel approach to development thought systemic research and learning.
Coming to Hawkesbury

At the Faculty (now School) of Agriculture and Rural Development at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, I hoped to find a new way of thinking about rural development and the complexities I had observed. I wanted to further my interest in systems and I felt that I needed a new effective way to do this. I was also thirsty for a new strategy for involving the people in the processes of change necessary for their betterment.

The flexible educational approach at Hawkesbury offered me the opportunity to meld the biophysical and socio-economic aspects of reality together in development work. It also offered me the tools to find ways to motivate people. The Hawkesbury approach, with its experiential and systems-based learning paradigm, claims to facilitate a new way of learning which affords students new ways of coping with complex situations. The Hawkesbury approach to education differs radically from traditional agricultural education and research in different ways:

- Its goal of education is to encourage students to generate appropriate knowledge themselves through the process of action research as a methodology used for research and development, where action research is a participative experiential process where people work and learn together in a way which allows them to make sense out of their experience as a basis for an action to change their situation (Bawden, 1990).
Preface

- It strongly supports the integration of holistic philosophies and systems thinking into both its educational system and research practices, in order to improve the study relationships and complexities.

- It strongly encourages learners and researchers to be autonomous and to work collaboratively together to facilitate more effective ways of communication through active participation.

When I started my study at Hawkesbury, I was interested in the field of extension. However, due to the combination of my personal experience and the Hawkesbury flexibility, I soon expanded this area of interest. I found that nomadism and its associated issues in Iran was a very good subject to undertake because of the complex interrelationships between people and both their bio-physical and socio-cultural environments. Firstly, there was the issue of natural resource degradation that is fast becoming a natural disaster in Iran and for which the nomads are being blamed. Secondly, there was the issue of the poor economic and social situation of the nomads themselves. The first point is a focus of national concern with natural resource degradation. This second point was both the concern of the post-revolutionary government and my own concern as an activist wanting to help people.

The Hawkesbury approach to research and development, does not encourage its students to have any blueprint to begin their research. What was clear in my case was that the situation between the government and nomads needed to be improved and that this improvement process must take account of on the needs of the nomads the sustainability of natural resource management and the role of government in both.
The government in this situation is not only the owner and controller of the natural resources, but also the source of development policies. Necessary improvements relating to both ways of managing the resources and the social welfare of the nomad community, would need to be incorporated into government laws and regulations. It was very important not to ignore the critical role of the government in the process of action research.

The Phases of the Research Process

The different stakeholders of this research would therefore include nomads, different governmental agencies and myself as the researcher.

In the first phase of the research, I explored the viewpoints of the different stakeholders through six months of ethnographic research. I became aware of my own viewpoint through the process of self reflection. Creating awareness of the gap between the nomads and the government was not enough by itself, however. I was looking for an action-oriented approach to improve the situation.

The second phase of research was based on the results of the first phase and shifted toward an action-oriented approach, which included the establishment of an action research team of representatives from nomads and all the government agencies involved in nomadic issues. In the event, I chose an approach which combined both ends by adopting a more or less conventional action research (AR) approach to work with agents from relevant government
departments who in turn, would be encouraged to practice a Participatory action research (PAR) approach based on the objective of encouraging much greater participation of the nomads in the quest for improvements in their situations. Thus an action research team was formed comprising local officers of different government departments concerned with nomadic issues with the researcher as facilitator. The team was faced directly with a problematical situation, as perceived by a range of the stakeholders including representatives of the nomadic communities. The action phase of the research included actions to broaden the perceptions of the government agents as well as actions to practice novel participative researching approaches to development. The outcome of the second phase of the research included the improvement in the understanding of the researcher, small group of nomads and the governmental representatives from the situation and from each other. There was also improvement in their practice toward the situation of the local level.

The third phase was to conduct a workshop among all provincial officers of the Forest and Range Organisation (FRO) at the national level. The purpose of this workshop was to implement the findings of the second phase of the fieldwork in the organisational context. The outcome of the third phase of the research was a significant change in the FRO and its officers’ understanding of the local people and their participation in natural resource management at a national level.

In summary, a chronological map (Figure 1), represents the action research processes and the development of this research. The dialectical relation of theory and practice through the research, over time is demonstrated.
Figure 1. Chronological map of action research and development of thesis
Research Constraints and Benefits

In this section I will briefly discuss both the constraints and benefits I experienced in my research. I was constrained by time, my unfamiliarity with the complex new methodology, the context of my research subjects, a lack of information about the area as well as personal constraints such as my poor ability to communicate effectively in English. These continually interacted with one another.

Time Constraints and the Never Ending Action Research Cycle

I was hampered by the constraints of time. Action research is highly time consuming, not only because it involves field research, but also because of its methodological characteristics which are a) cyclic and process-oriented and b) collaborative and participative. This research required three separate periods of fieldwork. This involved over 60,000 kilometres of air travel to and from Iran and hundreds of hours of travel to find the group of Qashqai nomads with whom I lived and worked. Substantial emphasis on institutional building with governmental agencies, facing them with each other and with nomads, also consumed a considerable amount of time. This aspect of the research itself took over a year. In none of the phases of the research did the methodology guarantee the result. The cyclic nature of the research did not offer propositional answers upfront. A mutual learning process was the only guide to the next
stages of the research. The process of research involved the continual flux of action and research interacting with and upon each other. I lacked experience with this experiential type of research, which was a new process to me.

Constraints of information

In the context of the research itself inadequate data, basic figures, documents, and the dominance of second-hand information about Iranian Qashqai nomads, particularly in the area of development, hampered my research efforts. The mobility and remoteness of the nomads was a difficulty in obtaining first-hand research and information.

Personal constraints and difficulties

My personal background as a developmental practitioner and agriculturist potentially affected my conceptualisation of the research and interpretation of the data I collected. My experience as a developmental practitioner was within the governmental bureaucracy, which meant that I had a bias toward a bureaucratic way of conceptualising the issue of nomads. It was a very important part of this research that I came to understand how my interpretation of the data could be influenced by the viewpoints I had unconsciously acquired as part of my work for the government. I also came to realise that my academic training as an agriculturist, trained in classical research methods, created another bias affecting my interpretation and collection of data.
While recognising the biases my background engendered, it also provided ways of liaising between the government and nomads. My background in the government meant that I could understand that perspective on the issues involved and my academic background provided me with some tools to begin relating to the natural resource degradation and difficulties faced by the nomads.

*The constraint of language*

English, and my competency in it, was a major difficulty for me. My usual language is Persian. I am also fluent in Farsi and Arabic. In my own language, I am a writer. I have written a book and many articles. None of this did me any good here. As I was studying in Australia, most of my reading was in English covering a wide range of topics from philosophy, sociology, psychology, management and systems. These areas were new to me and I had to cope not only with new concepts, but with the nuances of the English language for which my many years of formal study of English did not prepare me.

Writing was particularly frustrating, for I could not express fluently the outcomes of the action research process. Involved in this was the necessity to present my information in a new theoretical framework and also to express it in what was for me, a different logic of presentation. I find English to be very *prosaic* and *linear* where Persian is more *poetic* and *cyclic*, and much more appropriate to the systemic nature of the research that I have been conducting! In addition, I found the Persian language particularly suited to the presentation of my research. We normally use many proverbs and poems as metaphors in our presentations,
both verbal and written. I found this to be helpful to the expression of the complex cycles and
dynamics of this research. In English, I did not have these metaphors to draw upon, and they
are not commonly used in academic writing. But the worst thing of all, is that the entire
evaluation of my academic work rests on my ability to express fluently in this English language
which I find so difficult and limiting.

Benefits of This Process

Despite all these constraints, there was strong, continuous support by my colleagues and peers
for this process of research. The benefits of this research process far outweighed the
constraints. The benefits of this type of research are its flexibility and openness. The
environment of Hawkesbury, with the emphasis on autonomous learning and collaboration
among the students, staff and colleagues, provided the context for my personal enthusiasm in
this research. This unique combination also helped me to keep on track, to not be daunted in
the face of the many difficulties and constraints that I faced during the time of research.

My research and experience at Hawkesbury has been a turning point in my life. It not only
changed my viewpoint on research, but changed my very being. It changed my way of seeing
and interpreting the world. This approach has given me the competency to see the world as an
integrated whole, not as separate parts and it has given me eventually, the capability to act
with the whole. I came to see my actions as part of the whole, not separate from it. It
increases my ability to see and deal with the complexities of life, in both my personal situation
and in my professional career, which are no longer separate from one another.
Preface

During this period of time, I learned so many things. Among the many things I learned in this “real university” from the people was that solving these issues does not require sophisticated abstract theories alone, but to sit and listen to the people and their practical theories too.

I no longer separate the theory and actions of my life from one another. I no longer want to sit comfortably behind my academic desk thinking theories without action. I want to do development activities with theory and action informing each other. It is important for me to act freshly in each situation that arises, not from ideas that are stale, or held as a commodity to be drawn on. Learning is, to me, this praxis between the flux of ideas which come to me continuously and the actions I do in my everyday life situations. I now see myself, in every aspect of my life, as a critical ever-learner, who not only wants to learn more, but more importantly to learn things in different ways, and will not close the file of learning even after finishing the PhD.