Pluralism, Tenancy and Poverty: Cultivating Open-Mindedness in Poverty Studies*

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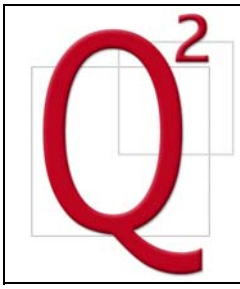

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Renting land is a multi-market transaction which fascinates social researchers, including new institutionalist, marxist, anthropological and other types of researchers. The act of renting land in or out is both an intentional choice, and a fluctuating part of the class structure which distributes resources. In this paper deep divisions among theorists will be shown to have implications for poverty studies. In particular, the neoclassical and new institutionalist economists, who theorise tenancy differently from political economy, find that they have to build bridges with political economy before they can embark on linking their research to the anti-poverty agenda. The specific bridges mentioned in this paper are: measuring productivity in a disaggregated way; discussing power explicitly; allowing for regulation in models of empowerment; drawing upon other disciplines' research for contextual detail; and using a relational approach to poverty rather than a residual approach. The paper arrives at these substantive points through a methodological lens. The methodology is described in this section, and later sections develop the argument. Given that theoretical pluralism already exists in this particular area of development studies, it proves a good sowing-ground for cultivating an approach to poverty analysis that is theoretically pluralist.

In the rest of this introduction, I will introduce the 'realist approach' that illuminates the pluralist method, and then note some differences with competing approaches to doing development studies (relativism and idealism in particular).

The paper then introduces pluralism in social research and moves into the specific area of Indian tenancy debates. Section 2 covers choice, power, and measurement. Section 3 examines the comparability of theories in the study of tenancy; and Section 4 mentions some of the limits to theoretical pluralism. I conclude in Section 5.

1.1 Methodological Pluralism

Critical realists like Sayer claim that it is possible to have knowledge of social structures even though that knowledge is both fallible and limited. Social knowledge is fallible because of the complex interrelation of the real structures with the diverse meanings of those structures to today's society. Knowledge is also likely to be limited in scope, since human knowledge cannot simply mirror or correspond to reality. Critical realism does not merely essentialise or reify 'the real', but recognises that its existence places limits on the capacity to know - particularly when we are trying to know about the social world. Baker, Fryckenburg, and Washbrook, to take three examples, are realists in their analysis of the history of southern India (Fryckenberg 1965; Washbrook 1973; Baker 1976). The critique of *peasant essentialism* was also based on a realist approach arising in political economy (Bernstein 2001). Realists look for evidence about the world, but carefully distinguish that evidence from the world itself, ie from reality.

A realist also questions the essential attributes of a named thing. Scientific realism is the specific form of realism which questions the naming of things since names cannot easily make direct reference (by correspondence) to the thing-in-the-world that one wants to refer to (Sayer, 2000). Things like tenancy institutions are more differentiated and nuanced than words can say. Of course essentialism would simplify analysis. In a sense words always essentialise or reify 'things'. However there are good arguments for contextualised, locale-specific research (non-reifying research). Realists argue that 'models', like ideal types, tend toward being irrealist. By making explicit the differences between realism and irrealist social science, progress can be made in inter-disciplinary research on poverty today.

Several social scientists' works (Berger & Luckmann, Roth, Harré, and Sayer) help to illustrate this picture of a realist view of the complex social system. Berger and Luckmann,

writing in 1966 long before the 'cultural turn' in sociology, argued that society itself is pluralist yet that society is also real:

> "It is important to bear in mind that most modern societies are pluralistic. This means that they have a shared core [symbolic] universe taken for granted as such, and different partial [symbolic] universes coexisting in a state of mutual accommodation. The latter probably have some ideological functions, but outright conflict between ideologies has been replaced by varying degrees of tolerance or even cooperation." {Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 142}

Roth (1987) in a detailed study of how social science can come to grips with a pluralist approach to knowing about society (ie a pluralist epistemology), reconfirmed the Duhem-Quine claim that all hypotheses in science are coloured by prior theoretical frameworks. These frameworks reflect the inherent social, historical and local grounding of the researchers' choice of language and discourse. Habit, in other words, colours our choice of theory. Roth argued that this does not demolish the possibility of rational choice between theories. In this he opposed the relativism that began to overwhelm some postmodern methodologists. He argued in favour of a conscious approach to theory. His work supports meta-theorising (assessing competing theories), as does the work of Bhaskar on meta-critique (see Olsen, 2003, for a summary; Archer, *et al.,* 1998}.

Harré's essay 'When the Knower is Also the Known', (Harre 1998) also argues that the expert social scientist is embedded in society and is part of a system which includes the 'object' or subject of their enquiries. This essay from a well-known realist appeared in a book that contains essays by Bryman, Williams, and Layder (Bryman 1998; Harre 1998; Layder 1998; May 1998). By being part of the social system, Harré argues, the observed must use a self-reflexive consideration of the political impact of their social science. In Harré's view the observer is no longer neutral. The value-neutrality of theory is one of the tenets of empiricist social science which realists have carefully questioned (Olsen, 2003). For instance, poverty research has an underlying value-orientation which gives poverty a negative connotation. In examining the causes of poverty, some causes, e.g. excessive inequality, must also be judged undesirable. In tenancy research in India one implication is that a careful choice between 'caste-based' and 'class-based' interpretations of inequality must be made. Using either framework, or both, has implications for the future of caste and class.

Apart from these general statements about the need for holism in social science, numerous development studies specialists have also advocated the combination of qualitative data with other types of data. Among the vocal proponents of mixed-method research are Mikkelson, Hulme, Jackson, J. Harriss, and Kanbur (Mikkelsen 1995; Hulme 2000; Harriss 2002; Jackson 2002; Kanbur 2002; Hulme and Shepherd 2003). Jackson, for instance, argues that social and anthropological research should not be separated from economic research. The idea of synergy between disciplines, particularly when aiming for policy-relevant findings, underlies the whole "development studies" project.

However some realists have expressed doubts about the feasibility of triangulation when it includes survey data. Lawson (1997) argues that nothing more than descriptive statistics can be useful, since anything more sophisticated or analytical rests too heavily on the categories into which people, cases, and variables have been coded. Sayer (1992) also argued against combining qualitative (intensive) and quantitative (extensive) research in one study. In his view the two techniques were too different to mix easily. A revised realist position argues that survey data are inherently qualitative (Olsen, 2003, 'Time', in Downward, *et al;* also argued by Bryman, 1988), and that therefore methods are always being mixed when survey data are used. The main difficulty then is in making sense of survey data results given that their categories may be relatively crude, or too homogenous across a large population domain.

An illustration of methodological pluralism is given in Olsen (2003, in Carter & New, eds.). A discussion of triangulation and its epistemology is provided by Flick (Flick 1992).

Under a revised epistemology, the qualitative and quantitative findings can be reconciled. The two types of methods can be part of one larger project. A team may be needed, rather than a single researcher. Whole disciplines, where peers review and integrate findings across different research techniques, also reflect methodological pluralism writ large.

1.2 Theoretical Pluralism

Methodological pluralism often implies theoretical pluralism. At least two types of theoretical claim can be found in social science: 1) causal claims which have explanatory content; and 2) interpretive claims which focus on what actions mean to agents. With methodological pluralism a deeper, richer content is offered to causal explanations. Alternatively a qualitatively-oriented researcher might embark on a causal analysis for the first time (instead of merely using hermeneutic or social-constructivist approaches). In combining theoretical with interpretive claims, one is likely to draw upon at least two disciplines, as well as the two data types, e.g. when combining history and economics one might use documents and survey data. *Theoretical pluralism involves looking closely at possible explanations of puzzling outcomes using a range of claims from at least two social-science disciplines.*

Theoretical pluralism is found in the tenancy literature. By defining and advocating theoretical pluralism and two specific techniques that underpin it (suspension of judgement; bridging between theories) this paper moves debate forward in specific ways.

Methodological pluralism was advocated by a number of authors, who however warn against relativism. Roth, for instance, argues that: "methodological pluralism is not tantamount to saying 'anything goes'. We should be methodological pluralists in the social sciences, I maintain, because it is in the interest of *both* freedom and knowledge to do so." (Roth 1987) Lawson also focused on human freedom as the aim of economic research (Lawson 1999 1999). Roth's argument was built around a substantive study of the work of J.S. Mill, leading to the focus on freedom as process within which "inquiry may be regarded as a kind of self-regarding activity" (*ibid.: 97)* Roth refers here to reflexivity, which other experts in the philosophy of social science also advocate. For instance, Hacking (a specialist in the areas of induction and social representation) argues that:

> Systematic and institutionalized social sciences have their retinues of statistical data and computer analyses that work with classifications of people. It is taken for granted that these classifications work in the same way as those in the natural sciences. In fact the classifications in the social sciences aim at moving targets, namely people and groups of people who may change in part because they are aware of how they are classified. {Hacking, 2002: 10}

In case there were doubt that researchers have influence on, and are part of, the world they research, the case of India's caste reservation policy may illustrate the point. 'Reservation' of jobs for low-caste or non-caste people was intended as an egalitarian social policy. Hindu and dalit researchers may well identify with one or another caste, so using a caste-based analysis incorporates them(selves) into the analysis, whilst using a class-based analysis does as well. International social scientists make these links evident, by being non-caste for the most part. Sometimes it is clear that a researcher links up their self with the 'workers', the 'landlords', or other caste groups that are being studied. These links occur at least on a class basis, and perhaps on the caste basis. Non-Hindus, merely by existing, challenge the basic Brahmanical Hindu myths of ritual purity and caste ranking. The review of Bihar's caste/class structure over time by Frankel illustrates the point (Frankel 1989). Reservations that aimed to improve

the social position of dalit people (who are said in Hindu ideology to 'rank below' the Hindu castes) were extremely controversial in Bihar. Even to comment on them engages an author unavoidably in controversy. To avoid these categories would imply another value stance.

Thus it may be difficult for social scientists to avoid ethical implications arising out of their self-reflective research. Meta-critique helps to enable well-informed choice of theories. Ignoring important theories is unwise, and methodological pluralism helps in the analysis and utilisation of competing theories. The rest of this paper will illustrate these points.

1.3 Avoiding Essentialism

Some historical background is useful before we examine the recent changes in India's land-rental market. In the case of India, debate has raged since well before Independence in 1947 concerning the role of tenancy in economic development and inequality. Regarding British colonial rule, a contrast of *zamindari* landlordism with *ryotwari* tenure became central to explanations of the diversity of relations between workers, farmers, landlords and the colonial state. Under *zamindari* tenure the colonial rulers dealt with just a few large landlords each of whom had huge holdings, whilst in areas under *ryotwari* tenure there were more numerous local *ryots*, or farmers, who had relatively smaller holdings. Both *zamindars* and *ryots* paid annual sums to the colonial rulers whilst in turn renting out some parcels of land to smaller tenants; under *zamindari* rule *ryots* paid their fees to the *zamindar*. Thus land rental has played a role in the distribution of income for centuries in the Deccan plateau and some other parts of South Asia.

The *zamindar/ryotwari* contrast can be used to illustrate a debate between realists and other researchers which this paper aims to explore. According to realists there are core aspects of each historical tenancy system which historical researchers try to grasp and re-explain. These core aspects might include social structures like class, the power relations leading to British domination, and the local caste structures underpinning the main avenues of political power. These deep structures, however, also have meaning to people and they can only be interpreted through a transitive (ie interactive) process which is different from their intransitive prior existence. According to critical realists, *zamindari* rule would have a mixture of linked transitive and intransitive elements. The transitive domain has an ontology even more complex than the ontology of the intransitive domain. The transitive domain includes the current construal of *zamindars* and landlords: should they be perceived in class terms? in caste terms? Clearly there is scope for interpretive differences of opinion. Differences of opinion among social scientists today must be added onto the differences of viewpoint of the actual participants in these systems. Sayer (1992) argued that the communicability of scientists' discoveries today implies a need to bridge the discursive differences not only among the participants, and among experts, but also between 'lay' and expert understandings of such a system. At the time. Thus instead of simply essentialising tenancy systems, such as *zamindari* rule, realists would recognise the inherent complexity of the task of description.

Sayer argued that social science's complex object itself decrees considerably hermeneutic complexity and difficulty {Sayer, 1992}. Sayer took a pragmatic view of epistemology, and in this he is followed by numerous other supporters of qualitative research (Lawson, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Harding, 1999). Sayer's view is called 'realist' because he nevertheless admits a prior, partly intransitive existence of the systems which are being studied (Sayer 1997). The systems are real.

I now turn to the analysis of land rental in India in recent decades (see Figure 1).

2: Indian Tenancy Research

2.1 Review of Literature

<Figure 1 goes here>

In India, renting in land for a cash rent is on the rise and sharecropping is on the wane, but 8% of arable land is still rented in (Sharma 2000), mainly by poor and marginal farmers from those with more land than they wish to manage directly. The 8% figure for India is sure to be an underestimate, since the threat of land reform has created an atmosphere within which landowners try to avoid giving details of tenancy to outsiders. Evidence from recent national datasets does show, convincingly, a shift away from sharecropping and toward fixed-rent tenancy among those who do report their land rental.

On the one hand contemporary tenancy transactions are seen by some economists as optimal choices which avoid the use of standard labour-market contracts, e.g. (Bardhan 1984; Skoufias 1995). For a competing school of economic thought, the indirect management of labour by landlords is part of a pattern of control and manipulation which may have perpetuated the poverty of large numbers of households in India {Bhaduri 1983; Singh 1995; Brass, 1998}. According to this political-economy analysis, renting land out is done by powerful households who prefer to arrange (some) cheap labour this way rather than through the casual or permanent labouring contract. The overlap between these two schools of thought is considerable.

The regulation of land markets has long been a central concern of policy makers. It has been argued that making the tenure of tenants more secure would assist in the growth of agriculture, and that policy in this area could be anti-poverty and pro-growth whilst promoting tenancy itself. Is tenancy an anti-poverty strategy of landless families? or does tenancy reflect a desperate attempt to avoid unemployment by poor people whose returns are implicitly below subsistence, and who face discrimination against them in other markets: the market for their produce; the market for credit for production; the market for their labour? In particular, is it possible that the tenants are exploited in a masked way, as the political economy school has suggested? The debate has raged since the 1950s, with slightly changing foci: in the 1950s land reform was central to the debate; in the 1960s aggregate productivity of different farm sizes; in the 1970s the freeing of bonded labourers and reduction of usury through state banking were prioritised; in the 1980s the effect of interlinked markets upon market equilibria were explored, and efficiency of markets was central to the debate at that time; and in the 1990s tenancy institutions were deconstructed both through principal-agent models and through historical analysis to reveal their changing nature and their heavy impact upon economic outcomes.

Another useful breakdown of the literature on tenancy would divide it into disciplinary perspectives. Indeed there is a huge global literature on tenancy from anthropological, historical, geographic, social, political, and economic perspectives. (A brief Appendix lists some recent works in the area of tenancy from each of these disciplinary viewpoints. The overlap in the *substance* of their discussions is evident from a glance at this bibliography. For instance the change from communal forms of land management toward private property in African contexts has been examined from each of several disciplinary orientations.)

What is striking is how are theories and empirical research on the subject of tenancy differ (Figure 1). Debates on tenancy within one theoretical school tend to be somewhat narrow and intra-discursive, referencing other work within that school. However there are also studies which cross boundaries and refer to work of two or more schools.

If we take a focused look at debates about tenancy and poverty within India from 1960 to 2003, we find that three disciplines are central (of which two are the subject of this paper): economics, political economy, and the sociology of gender and tenancy. I will leave the latter

area for the moment,[i] and focus on four main schools of thought, summarised in Figure 1, which have some surprisingly large overlaps in their substantive coverage.

The four schools are political economy (often Marxist, hence the label MPE), formalised political economy (using mathematical models; abbreviated FPE), neoclassical economics (involving market equilibrium with given sets of rational agents operating under constraints; NCE), and new institutional economics (especially principal-agent theory and related models; NIE). It may be useful to refer to these schools as MPE, FPE, NCE, and NIE respectively, although it is important to note that authors move between them and that only specific *works* can be identified as fitting mainly within one school.

The schools are described briefly here.

NCE arose with the Marshallian marginalist framework (circa 1870; Dow, 2002) and is oriented toward modelling the market-wide implications of rational individual choice. Prices, interest rates, productivity are the main outcomes of interest to this school. The NIE school has arisen since about 1980 as a more in-depth analysis of choice under conditions of uncertainty, limited information, and transactions costs. Most NIE studies are grounded on concepts familiar from NCE: demand, supply, income, profit, and utility in particular. However the NIE recognises that demand-supply models appear rather simplistic and determinist compared with the underlying institutional complexity. An institution, according to NIE, is a set of rules or norms for contracting in a specific area of human life, e.g. marriage. These institutions were not explicitly or empirically central to NCE.

Marxist political economy arose, too, from works written in the late 19th Century. MPE begins from a conceptual framework centred upon class, and proceeds to analyse the trajectory of capitalist development. Its sweep is broad so that prices become an explanatory factor rather than an outcome. Outcomes of interest to MPE are the political power of certain classes, a changing class structure, and the interrelations of regions or nations with each other and with their working classes.

Formalised political economy, here labelled FPE, takes a modelling approach to the class actors, placing ideal types into a mathematical model and manipulating that model. FPE has drawn from both NCE and MPE resources. An example of FPE in the poverty literature is Braverman and Kanbur's analysis of urban bias (Braverman 1987). They provided a mathematical appendix following a detailed argument on the causes of rural poverty in a context where rural and urban classes interacted with government policy and with market outcomes.

For instance in recent years works by Brass, Byres, Bernstein, and Bhaduri arise from the Marxist political economy school (Bhaduri 1983; Bhaduri 1983; Bhaduri 1986; Brass 1986; Byres 1998; Byres 1998; Bernstein 2001). Bhaduri and Basu have published works in the FPE school, and Swaminathan also constructed an argument along the borders of FPE and MPE (Bhaduri 1977; Bhaduri 1983; Basu 1984; Bhaduri 1986; Swaminathan 1991).

Braverman, Stiglitz, Srinivasan, Besley and others have written neoclassical analyses of tenancy (Stiglitz 1986; Braverman 1989; Srinivasan 1989; Srinivasan 1989; Besley 1995; Stiglitz 2003 (orig. 2002))

Finally, work by Bardhan, Genicot, and others use a new institutionalist approach (Bardhan 1985; Hoff and Stiglitz 1998; Genicot 2002; Stiglitz 2003 (orig. 2002)). Each school has a different ontology. An ontology is a theoretical schema of the types of object that exist in society. Within the NIE ontology, tenants and landlords make decisions and influence each other as well as influencing major economic outcomes. The politics and social aspects of the underlying society are more prominent in the political economy writings, whilst the numerical

measurement of outcomes such as average productivity, labour's real wage and the degree of risk are more prominent in the NCE and NIE writings.

<Table 1 goes here>

We can take the four schools of thought described in Figure 1 and rephrase them as explanatory claims which may (pairwise) be complementary, competing, or incommensurate. I list several such claims below without attempting to resolve those tensions here.

Theory 1: tenancy contracts can be explained in terms of landlords' attempts to better utilise their land resources and tenants' attempts to better utilise their labour resources and bullocks (NCE; (Sen 1964; Sen 1966; Skoufias 1995); Skoufias, 1995)

Theory 2: Tenancy contracts represent an optimal solution to a game-theoretic problem of simultaneous rational choice of landlords and workers. (NIE; Srinivasan, 1989; Genicot, 2002).

Theory 3: Tenants are used by landlords who try to efficiently extract surplus labour and to realize its value in the crop market; therefore one explanation of blocked technical progress is landlords' preference for retaining attached labour using usurious credit (MPE; Bhaduri, 1973, 1983, 1986).

Theory 4: Capitalism has a capacity for uneven development, including different levels of technology and labour productivity even within pockets of a single locale; these pockets of uneven development are best seen in class terms; they are explained in terms of the profit motive of the landowning class (MPE; (Singh 1995); Brass, 1998).

Theory 5: Tied labour including tied tenants in North India reflects the tendency in capitalism toward deproletarianisation (Brass, 1996); deproletarianisation is a proximate cause of poverty of labourers amidst plenty; antagonistic social class relations are the root cause (see Brass, 1996, 1996; Singh, 1995 and (Singh 2003); and Bhaduri, various, but also (DaCorta 1999)); MPE)

Theory 6: Multiple interest rate equilibria are possible (Basu, 1984), and they may reflect antagonistic contracting that cuts across markets (Bhaduri, 1977), in turn also reflecting differential collateral valuation (Swaminathan, 1991) and/or differential resources of the principal and the agent in each contract (FPE).

Theory 7: Markets with multiple equilibria may have inefficiencies due to the dual market structure ((Stiglitz 1986; Hoff and Stiglitz 1998; Stiglitz 2003 (orig. 2002))NCE). Market efficiencies in one market may spill over into another so judgements about the efficacy of a given regulatory intervention are complex (Braverman and Kanbur, 1987; FPE).

Theory 8: Tenants do not easily provide full information to landlords concerning their production-related activities. As a result, moral hazard and transactions cost issues arise which are best represented using game theory or principal-agent theory (NIE); in such theories two agents voluntarily contract using rational choice to maximize their utility (NCE).

Theory 9: Rationally optimizing tenants or other labourers may choose to accept a bonding or labour-tying contract (Genicot, 2002; NIE) or a crop-tying contract ((Olsen 1996); (DaCorta 1999)).

A further summary would go into the household labour supply question and would engage with the packet of rights in land known as 'ownership'.

The important point is that there is overlap between the substance of several of these theories. Social relations and inequality help shape the contracts and the market opportunities, which in turn shape the shifts in household welfare and class power. Whilst MPE phrases these changes in social terms, NIE and NCE have tended to phrase them in methodological individualist terms. (They portray households as if they were individuals.) Given that both approaches have much to offer, a depth ontology may help researchers to unite and link these diverse theories.

2.2 Measuring Productivity

Productivity concepts in general refer to the aggregate output of joint production. The labour of workers is combined with capital and land to create a joint product. Researchers attribute the value of the product, as realised in a market, to inputs of labour, land, capital, or 'total factor productivity' e.g. technology. The measurement of productivity is more contested than one might think.

In the tenancy literature the crop yields were the focus of early paradoxes: Sen (1964, 1966) showed that small farmers had higher yields than large farmers in India. However in terms of labour productivity, these farmers worked until their marginal product had fallen below the local wage. Sen's model was neoclassical and assumed a diminishing return to labour at the margin. Later research decomposed productivity into productivity of land, returns on capital investment, and productivity of labour. However for tenants, records are rarely kept of either the produce of their rented plot separate from other plots they own, or of the returns to individual workers (whose time is not recorded, since they are not doing waged labour) who cultivate the rented plot. Indeed the returns to unpaid household labour are an untold story in the context of tenancy. Calculations of productivity in the aggregate tend to mask important details.

Walker and Ryan, for instance, showed that certain villages in the ICRISAT panel study had more tenancy than the others, and that their farms had lower aggregate productivity ((Walker 1990); see also (Skoufias 1995)). However Walker and Ryan did not distinguish the productivity of the owned-land plots from the rented-land plots. In India, well irrigated land is more likely to have tenants on it and therefore we might find a higher productivity of land among tenants if disaggregated data were available. However that does not tell us the distribution of the proceeds of that production. In Punjab, recent micro studies show that immigrant workers who rent land from farmers have low yields, use manual power rather than diesel-driven plows, and receive extremely low returns to their labour (Singh, 2003). For poverty studies, disaggregated analysis of both productivity and the returns to labour (in kind and in cash) are needed. Few studies of tenants have this level of detail. Therefore reviews at State and national level tend to speculate about the role of tenancy in agriculture (Jain 2000; Sharma 2000; Kaul 2001).

2.3 Choice and Power in Tenancy Literature

The research in the 1980s was bifurcated into studies of choice versus studies of power. The choice theorists often had demand-supply models of each market in the background of their models, even when these models had turned the corner toward analysis of institutions under imperfect information. Srinivasan's model canillustrate the choice orientation of such models in the NCE and NIE schools. I will then contrast such models with the political economy analysis of power. Srinivasan (1989, in Bardhan, ed., 1989) developed a mathematical model to simulate the actions of a sharecropper toward their landlord once a bank or other alternative credit source enters the scene. Srinivasan wrote (page no's in brackets):

> If sharecroppers are otherwise identical, then the extent of the incidence of bonded labour contracts will be determined by the distribution of non-agricultural income. (204). . . By closely monitoring the sharecropper's activities and enforcing a bonded labour contract, the landlord avoids default by the sharecropper. (208) . . . The sharecropper obviously will choose the creditor and the amount of credit so as to maximize his lifetime expected welfare. . . (Srinivasan, 1989: 211)

In this model, inequality arises in the distribution of non-agricultural income, but otherwise worker households, denoted 'he', are homogenous. They have no caste or other social attributes. Bonded labour arises voluntarily in the context of inequality; bondage is a free choice to which sharecroppers adhere (if they are poor) even in the context of competing lenders. Srinivasan's model is a response to other models of the rural credit market such as Bhaduri (Bhaduri 1983).

Srinivasan draws an interesting policy implication:

> Since, in the above model, the choice of a bonded labour contract is voluntary, it will be chosen by the sharecropper only if it yeidls him a higher lifetime welfare compared with borrowing from the lending institution. Under such circumtances, the policy of banning bonded labour will be unenforceableor, if forcibly implemented, will *reduce* the welfare of the sharecropper. {(Srinivasan 1989), page 215}

The interesting assumption here is that the distribution of income is fixed. It acts as a determinant of outcomes but is not affected by outcomes. In such models, which are static models, there is no feedback; the world is seen as a closed system. Deterministic choice models are idealised and do not adequately reflect the real world in which choices have implications. Models like that of Braverman and Stiglitz (1989) seem better than Srinivasan's if they allow for dynamic interplay of classes, but nevertheless the choice models seen in economics tend to denude the 'players' of their social context.

The models seen in political economy, whether formalised or not, always have a specific locale and time-period underlying their details. Instead of the universal 'landlord' caricature, political economy authors tend to show a competition for power between specific classes. Each class is seen as a social object, rather than being anthropomorphised. Bhaduri (who came close to doing neoclassical theory in formalising his model) had classes acting in their own collective interest, affecting other classes, and being reacted upon by those classes. The four classes mentioned were landlords, merchants, farmers, and workers. Thus Bhaduri's model (1983) was more complex than the bilateral game theory models of new institutionalist economics. However in Bhaduri's models, landlords loaned money, since in the northeastern region to which he was referring that was the actual situation. In other parts of India, notably in southern areas, landlords are less specialised in lending money. They may lend to their workers, but tenant farmers are more likely to borrow from merchants (ie merchant caste; merchant class in Bhaduri's terms; Olsen, 1996). The complexity of class structures can be taken into account in non-mathematised approaches to the study of interacting market behaviours (Olsen 1993). Credit markets, land markets, labour markets and crop markets have all been seen as linked in this literature.

But there is a fundamental difference between studies of choice which omit all mention of power, which are methodological individualist and which deny the existence of social classes and other social structures, and studies of power which in a few cases also deny the possibility of free choice. Brass's work on the deproletarianisation thesis (1996) perhaps illustrates the determinism of a marxist structuralist approach to causation. This approach to unfreedom is the polar opposite of the choice theories. A dualism has emerged: choice vs. power-over;

voluntary choice vs. unfreedom. Brass would argue that even if they vouched for making free choices, workers might still be (really) unfree. Whilst realists would agree with the possibility of false consciousness, a problem of logic arises if a structurally deterministic model is presented as an *alternative* to a choice model.[ii] Neither deterministic model has space for empirical testing. Bhaduri's (1986) and Brass's (Brass 1993) marxist models run the risk of being as idealised, as closed-system, as faulty and as untestable as the models they wish to criticise.

However, dualisms are less than helpful. Numerous pieces of excellent empirical research have focused upon *both* power and choice, with good effect. The addition to literature created by these studies is to make each of these mechanisms an operationalisable topic for empirical study. Power: how to measure it? Outcomes? Usual social relations? Patterns of resources? Wealth trajectories? All good ideas. Choice: How to measure it? Less work has been done in this empirical area. However it is possible to ask people to describe their choices, their strategies, even their habits. This may be a good area for further research.

An improved approach to the linkages between choice and power is desirable. Research like that of Genicot (2002), which *models* choice, leaves us tantalised but no closer to an empirical research programme linking cognitive frameworks, explicit choices, subjective preferences, and actions. Genicot showed that a paradox of unfree labour arises when specific types of worker, such as poor tenants, choose to be bonded. It is promising that new institutionalist economists like Genicot take such an interest in the limitations to freedom that arise from 'mutually advantageous labor-tying agreements' (Genicot, 2002: 105). It would be ideal to consider choice as a proximate cause of outcomes. Choices are in turn motivated consciously by reasons, but outcomes are also mediated and caused through structured social relations. The real causes are more extensive than choice alone, as all agree.

2.4 Criteria for Judging Between Theories

Empirical hypothesis testing is just one possible criterion for testing theories; an alternative approach is to compare theories in substantive terms. Two examples illustrate.

The evidence used to 'test' a theory are often coloured by assumptions that underpin that very theory. Those who measure productivity in the aggregate tend to presume that the distribution of the realised proceeds of production is fair. They either cannot test for inequality of outcomes, but only look for potential Pareto-optimal gains, or they simply do not look at inequality. However 'risk', which plays a part in the models, has been subject to detailed operationalisation and testing. Hypotheses are drawn up on the assumption of risk-aversion, and these empirical predictions are compared with the findings of panel data studies such as the ICRISAT data.[iii] Whilst the risk-aversion assumption is not tested, the implications of risk-aversion for farmer behaviour are tested. However the tests (particularly in mathematical models) are biased toward approval of the basic framework of the theory.

Table 1 summarises how idealist and realist researchers might look at theory-testing. Three types of criteria are possible which go beyond empirical data to test hypotheses. The three types of criteria are: Commensurability; whether theories have their own epistemologies which close out challengers; and referentiality. The table also suggests how a relativist might approach the comparison of theories; such a relativist might take a *laissez faire* approach and not wish to make judgements between theories at all. Few researchers take this viewpoint.[iv]

The ideal-typical modeller might wish competing theories to be formalised or simplified before they would be commensurate enough to compare with an existing theory. In contrast realists would hope for commensurate concepts to refer to common things, even if the theoretical expanations were different. In this sense, realists care about the ontology of each theory.

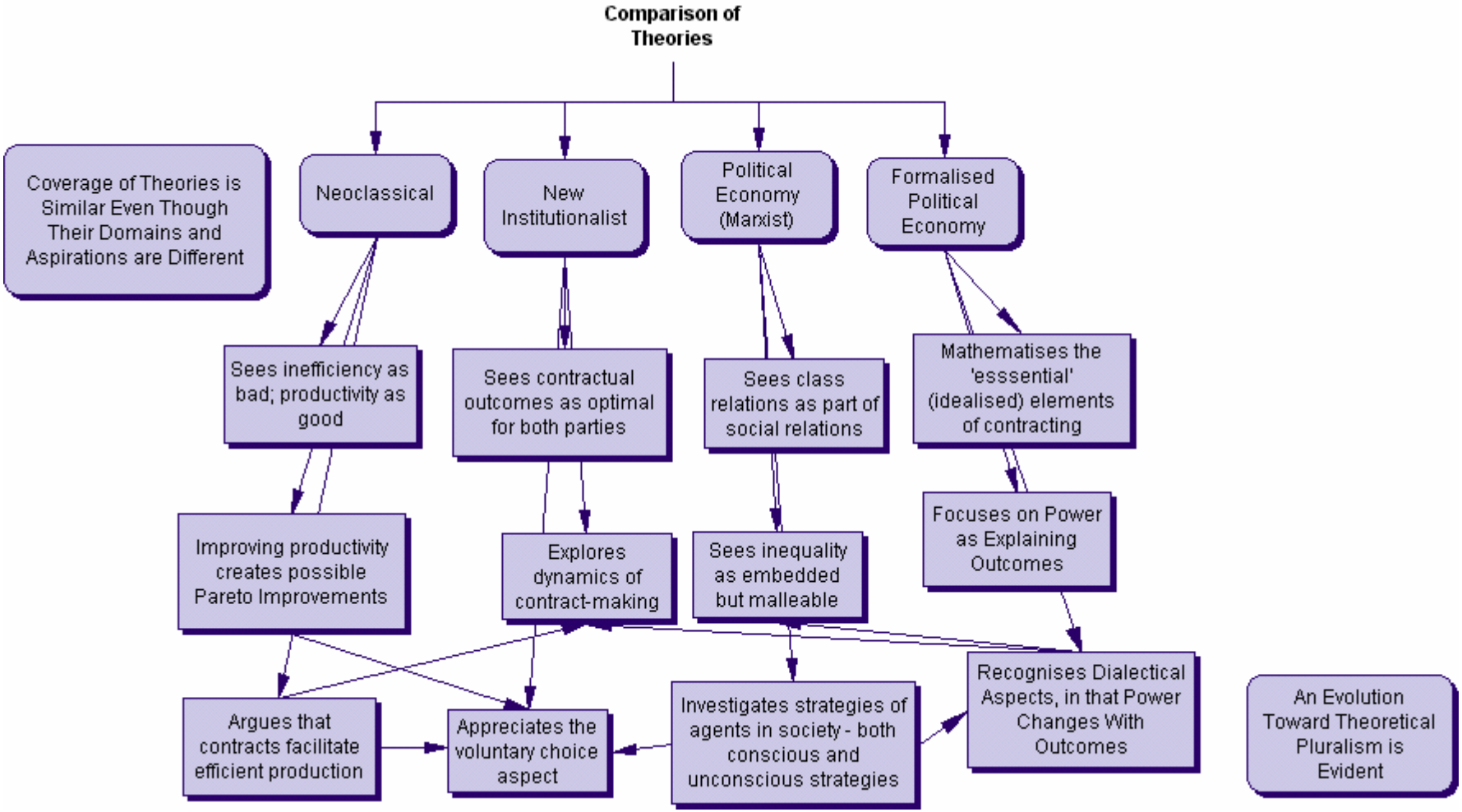
Table 1: Three Approaches to Theory Testing in Pluralism

	1) Idealist	2) Relativist	3) Realist
Commensurability	Theory A is incommensurate with theory B. Without formalisation, we cannot know whether theory B is good.	Theory A is not comparable with theory B and both can be good.	Theory A is only partly commensurate with theory B. Without empirical evidence, we cannot know whether theory B is better.
Epistemology, or knowing whether it is true	We can make decisive arguments showing that theory A is better than B if B is formalised in a way consistent with A.. These arguments are deductive proofs. Data must correspond to the objects in the deductive proofs.	Theory A and theory B must each be judged from within by their own standards of proof or evidence. A fully relativist epistemology notes that the evidence for each theory is framed and gathered within the discourse of that theory.	With evidence we can argue for B being better, but our arguments are fallible. Specifically, the measurements are theory-laden, our thoughts are discursively socialised, and our knowledge is often flawed and incomplete because reality is so complex.
Referentiality	Theory A works upon stylised facts that are definitely true, too. Theory B has unobservables and is therefore weakened a priori. Statements about unobservables need to be specified better to make them refer to measured factors, e.g. 'risk'.	Theory A simply refers to different things than Theory B.	Theory A and theory B both refer to the same complex world, but (like the seven blind people feeling an elephant) they perceive it differently.

Realists have also expressed concern when social scientists have incompatible epistemologies (Walby 2001). If each discipline's criteria for truth are radically different, how is social science to progress toward shared knowledge? No reconciliation is possible if the epistemic criteria are embedded within specific theories. As Row 2 of Table 1 shows, there is a danger of verificationism if each theory is permitted to construct its own epistemology.

In the rest of this paper specific debates and themes from the tenancy literature are used to illustrate the theoretical pluralism that is found among some of the best writings of this literature.

Figure 1: Pluralism in the Indian Tenancy Literature



3: Commensurability of Theories

In Table 1 I described how important it is to have commensurate concepts in order to make social researchers work together resolving differences of interpretation. In this section I describe waysof increasing commensurability of theories of tenancy.

3.1 Complementarity of Explanations

In Table 2 aspects of three theories of tenancy are described.

Table 2: Aspects of Competing or Complementary Theories

Exemplar: →	NIE: Srinivasan (1984)	MPE: Bhaduri (1986)	FPE: Basu (1984)
Explanations (an example)	Productivity gains influence the choice of contractual form	The class of landlords attempts to extract surplus because that is its nature	Imlicit threats influence the submission of a less powerful actor into a contract
Content:	Pareto-optimal improvements are good ; choice is ever-present; rising productivity can solve the problem of poverty	Ideology masks the real evolution of class relations; landlords benefit from most changes; inequality is being perpetuated	He offers a formal model of inequality in social relations; outcomes are explained by constrained optimization
Actors:	Landlords; workers who can be tenants (Stylised)	Historically situated people who work the land; landlord families	Buyer; seller; farmer with land; worker without land (Stylised)
Self-verification:	Formal modeling tends to very itself	Lacks hypothesis testing	Formal modeling tends to verify itself
Self-testing:	Empirical testing presumes the categories are observable, or tests events caused by underlying mechanisms	Conditional predictions were based on a model, and the outcome was falsified by events, implying that the suppositions were not applicable (Bhaduri, 1986)	No empirical research is presented with the model
Unobservables:	Risk (which is in the theory) and power (which is out of the theory)	All social objects are seen as potentially describable in the abstract	Power and utility

There are few incompatibilities among the theoretical claims listed earlier. However the literature does reveal some rejections of others' paradigms. I will briefly discuss two of these cases.

Stiglitz (1986) attacked MPE in general for having an unoperationalisable concept of class power at its heart. Bhaduri in turn argued that neoclassical theory was faulty and could not explain either its value stance, which was implicit, nor its avoidance of power issues. The

underlying argument in both cases is about collective action. Stiglitz felt that MPE wrongly depended upon constructive state action and/or wrongly accused landlords of anti-social collective action. Bhaduri, on his part, argued that economists as a group perform an ideological function of masking the mechanisms that perpetuate inequality and poverty. This important debate had several commensurate concepts at its heart: class, power, landlords, the state, inequality, and poverty.

Today both sides might agree that adverse incorporation through notionally free choices can bind tenants into disadvantageous labour-market or credit-market conditions. Both authors would be interested in evidence of crop-tying and discriminatory sale prices received by tied farmers. The research agenda continues, and the debate of the late 1980s was very constructive.

Another struggle over interpretation, less explicit but very revealing, appears in a comment made in the chapter on tenancy in Walker and Ryan (1990). They claimed that caste divisions increased productive efficiency, and that for others to claim that tenancy led to economic polarization and rising inequality was 'clearly rejected by these facts' (Walker & Ryan, 1990: 193). Instead, they argued, longer-term tenancy contracts reflected the tenants' commitment to and skill in farming. Short-term contracts occurred where the farmer was not very good at farming. (Their research ignored evictions.)

Like Stiglitz (1986), they wished that facts could adjudicate between theories. Realists call the recourse to 'facts' empiricist. It is empirical in referring to evidence, but furthermore this habit becomes an –ism, ie an ideology or an epistemology, when the facts are taken as not being socially constructed. It is impossible to have desocialised facts about inequality. The Walker and Ryan book is revealed as being rather simplistic in its ontology as well as in its refusal to admit India's growing inequality.

Both examples illustrate the bridging that is done by researchers who know their competitors' work well. Bridging discourses are a special type of discourse.[v] They break the rules or boundaries of Theory A in order to make headway into the realm of Theory B. In doing so, the bridging discourse creatively changes or challenges Theory B. The complementarities of the Stiglitz/Bhaduri debate and the Walker & Ryan comment illustrate discursive bridging. They are temporary moments of contact between diverse academic discourses.

3.2 Idealist Models and the Weaknesses of Testing

In Table 2, column 1, I suggest that new institutionalist modeling tends to be self-verifying. Whilst testing of predictions is potentially possible, it is rarely done. There is a danger, common to all theories and reflected in the rest of Table 2, that empirical tests will verify their hypotheses precisely because they work within their own terminology.

An example from MPE can be used to illustrate self-verification. A theory of caste-based differences could be tested using caste-based data. Another researcher could use class-based data and show class differences. Only a pluralist study which allows for caste, class, and class-by-caste differences could adequately test either or both theories' predictions. Theoretical pluralism is thus crucial for hypothesis testing. Pluralism is likely to take us beyond ideal-type models.

3.3 Operationalising the Unobservables

In Table 2, several things are listed as unobservables. Actually these 'things' are evidenced by outcomes or events which contingently result from them. Most unobservables are thus indirectly recordable. The difficulties with observability are two. Firstly, to look for the thing one presumes it exists. This is the danger of essentialism. Secondly, most mechanisms work

contingently, not necessarily. Therefore outcomes are only sometimes evidence of a given cause.

Fleetwood summarises a realist position on unobservables in economics as follows (Fleetwood 2002):

> Economics . . . aims to provide powerful explanations and adequate theory-laden "descriptions" of the observable and unobservable socio-economic structures and causal mechanisms that govern the flux of events observable in the real world. (Fleetwood, 2002: 44).

This quote usefully highlights the observability of *events*, in principle, versus the difficulties with observing underlying social structures and institutions. Fleetwood's constructive engagement with the empiricists Boylan and O'Gorman (1995) provides the groundwork for distinguishing good description from good observation. Descriptions, according to realists, may include abstractions which refer to structures even though the underlying observations are only indirect reflections of the structures. Clearly a programme of careful operationalisation is called for.

3.5 A Substantive Illustration: The State and Empowerment

One apparent area of agreement between some new institutionalist and all the political economy authors is that the role of the state can be probed for positive synergies. Braverman and Kanbur argued, rather defensively, that studies of intervention need to allow for the 'second-best' nature of all interventions in markets. Institutionalists now argue, more positively, that regulation and norms shape all markets. State regulation, even if carried out under federalism as in India, inherently underpins all market action (Harriss-White, 1999).

There may be benefits of state regulation for poor people. This position was put boldly by Stiglitz thus:

> Many of the items that were not on the Washington Consensus[vi] might bring both higher growth and greater equality. Land reform itself illustrates the choices at stake in many countries. . . The sharecropping system itself weakens incentives. . . Land reform, done properly, peacefully, and legally, ensuring that workers get not only land but access to credit, and the extension services that teach them about new seeds and planting techniques, could provide an enormous boost to output. But land reform represents a fundamental change in the structure of society. (Stiglitz 2003 (orig. 2002)): 81)

Stiglitz's main theme in this book was that the policies suited to one country do not necessarily suit another, particularly when state power is lodged in a structure of elites which differs from place to place. He argued that some IMF staff were too universalistic in their assessment of policies vis-à-vis state power. Stiglitz's position in 2002 was a change from his 1980s view that the power of elites was unobservable (Stiglitz 1986) and that the political economy school paid far too much attention to governance and too little to market (dis)equilibria (Hoff and Stiglitz 1998). For instance even as late as 1998 he was concerned with bribery resulting from subsidising borrowers. Hoff and Stiglitz (1998) argued that wealthy borrowers would be queueing for cheap credit and would make side payments to bankers. In either case, Stiglitz's focus on the state is a clear break from his earlier neoclassical work (Stiglitz 1981): the banks in the Hoff and Stiglitz study were stylised state banks.

Other research in India also led toward an empirical finding that the state plays a role in empowering people through good governance or legal changes. For instance, Banerjee *et al.*

showed that the state government was able to improve productivity as well as distributive equity by giving tenants more secure access to their plots (Banerjee 2002). Their study used both a theoretical model and empirical data from West Bengal.

4: Advantages and Limitations of Pluralism

So far this paper has shown that commensurability and discursive bridging help to make pluralist research possible. A suspension of judgement is needed as a temporary way to make two theories commensurate in some areas. Careful operationalisation, such as disaggregated measures of productivity, is then needed. The pluralist is then in a position to compare two theories without tending to validate their *a priori* preferred theory. In this section a few comments are made on the advantages and disadvantages of this form of pluralism.

4.1 Relational Approaches to Poverty Studies are Preferred

The studies reviewed above were of two broad types. One type uses an individualistic framework, anthropomorphising households as if they were rational people, and examines the rationality of their decisions. In this context poverty is a characteristic of person/households, and poverty's causes are either hidden or reside in the person's inadequate resources. The inadequate nature of such rational choice theories for the study of poverty is evident. P. Agrawal's model of dynamic moral hazard problems between transacting parties illustrates this type (Agrawal 1999).

The other type of study sees households in dynamic relation to each other, socially grounded in groups like castes and classes. In these studies, the structures of society interact with the intentional agency of actors in society. Agents include persons, households, and the state. Structures include caste, class, or simply the landholding size structure, among others. These dynamic models are difficult to put into mathematical format (Sayer, 1992). However they offer explanations that are rich in historical and social background. They also help to place poverty in its social context. As Green argues, poverty is in part defined by the non-poor (Green, 2003, mimeo, GPRG). It also reflects ongoing social relations in which the characteristics of the poor are a backdrop for what it means to be non-poor. Relational studies of poverty examine the meanings of poverty not just the income-related aspects of poverty. By contrast, residual approaches to poverty often use continuous variables in survey data to separate out the poor from the rest as if they were a separable, distinct group. The political economy models in this paper take a relational approach to poverty.

Even without a Marxist or class basis to theorising, however, relational approaches are excellent because they give a well-rounded analysis of the impacts of policy. Changes in the lives of poor people are connected to changes in the lives of others, and vice versa. For instance, Maxwell and Wiebe see dynamic links between resources, poverty, and land tenure (Maxwell and Wiebe 1999). Their model, which includes simulation of the recursive link between production, remuneration and consumption, moves in an interdisciplinary manner toward seeing market behaviour as embedded in society. Embeddedness of market transactions in social relations has been advocated (as a general perspective for socio-economics) by Granovetter, Bourdieu, and others (Le Velly 2002).

4.2 Creativity Arises from Pluralism

The pluralism of the tenancy studies, particularly when they cut across theoretical schools, has led to considerable creativity. In attempting to measure what is difficult to measure, institutional economists have moved the study of risk and choice onward. Similarly, both before and after being challenged to quantify 'power', economists like Bhaduri have been explicit about which outcomes are seen as indicating that one group has power over another group. Future research might pick up on collective action (power-with) instead of focusing

purely on power-over. In general the field in which power, capabilities, adverse incorporation, and coercion are studied is a rich field for the analysis of poverty.

Creativity in social science often involves solving problems of measurement or conceptualisation. By placing theories at odds with each other and trying to resolve the resulting tension, theoretical pluralism has led to some excellent interdisciplinary research.

4.3 The Danger of Undisciplined Research

The danger of theoretical pluralism is that it might be seen as having no boundaries. Empirical research might have to cut across seven disciplines (see Appendix 1). Local studies would have to be integrated with larger-scale studies, and human geography (omitted from Appendix 1 for simplicity) would have to be linked to the other social sciences. How is a researcher to focus on a limited field or research question?

The use of two or three disciplines, or theories, as the primary focus of a particular project, would give a 'disciplined noticing' and attention to detail whilst admitting some theoretical pluralism. The wise research team will know that a focused set of research questions is important. However, limiting one's theoretical basis to a single theory has been shown to be a weakness. In Table 2 I expressed this problem as the 'seven blind people feeling an elephant' problem. Each person, with their own standpoint, gets a different finding (it's hairy, it's hard, it's skinny, it's fat, it's round, it's flat). Talking to one another, they can reach a more rounded conclusion (it's an elephant).

4.4 A Weak Form of Epistemological Relativism Has Advantages

In this paper, pluralism was advocated, and judgemental relativism was rejected. In other words, whilst paying attention to different theories one should not simply accept that each theory is true in its own terms. Instead, judgemental rationalism has been suggested for developing arguments about which theories or theory one prefers. The rational part of this approach is the conscious setting out of criteria for choice of theory. This ambitious project is not pursued here, because it reflects an epistemological relativism that offers complex multiple criteria for good theory.

Kuhn's work on paradigms is seen by some as a rationale for judgemental relativism. In other words if one paradigm is going to supercede another, then it must be shown to be good in its own terms. According to this view, it would never do for the criteria set by an old theory to be used to judge a new theory. By virtue of its newness, the new theory sets its own epistemological criteria. This position is known as the 'strong position' in the philosophy of knowledge.

Instead, this paper recommends a 'weak position' in which it is recognised that theories are constructed in specific social milieus. The weak position does not advocate a complete abstinence from cross-cutting criteria for truth. Instead, the weak position taken by realists is that arguments for the goodness of theory might have a combination of criteria. These could include having a moral basis (Sayer, 2000), an ontological basis (Fleetwood, 2002), an aim of communicability (Kvale, 1996), and a basis in empirical testing (*cf* Olsen, 2003, in Downward, ed., 2003). Full weight is not given to empirical testing, because of the Duhem-Quine paradox that empirical tests tend not to falsify underyling theories. In addition rejection of theory because of a failed empirical tests often does not work. Either the theory might be bad but the test still not fail – because the test is grounded in the concepts that comprise the theory, such as risk; or the theory might be good but the test fail due to contingent factors (Sayer, 1992). Realists have added a considerable, weighty set of criteria to the falsification criterion and this paper has opened up this agenda by comparing the rational choice theories of economists with several political economy theories of tenancy.

5: Conclusions

In this paper I have surveyed an area of research which illustrates the benefits of methodological and theoretical pluralism. In section 1 the dangers of 'essentialism' were mentioned, although in general a realist position is taken here. In section 2 I reviewed the choice vs. power debate in the theorization of tenancy. I showed that several authors cut across borderlines, used bridging discourse, and tried to integrate or challenge competing theories. Power and poverty issues are taken up by all four schools of thought on tenancy. Choice and freedom, too, have been the subject of research in political economy as well as in neoclassical economics. Productivity and its measurement create an interesting area for further operationalisation work, since disaggregated measures of remuneration and productivity are needed if tenancy is to be linked empirically to poverty outcomes. In section 3 issues of commensurability were examined. I showed that both economic theories and political theories of tenancy moved toward an analysis of state action, aimed at helping people. Land reform and the rights of tenants have been subject to particular scrutiny. Where a topic links two theories, both theories deserve attention (e.g. class trajectory theory and moral hazard theory). Indian government regulation was shown to be integrally related to the moral hazard issues, market conditions, tenants' outcomes, landlords' right to evict, and other important facets of the link between tenancy and anti-poverty policy. In section 4 I reviewed some strengths and limitations of theoretical pluralism in general.

At an intuitive level it may be obvious that crossing disciplines is enriching. Bridging the quantitative-qualitative divide leads to a challenging empirical agenda, which has not yet been fully explored. For instance, the subjective views of the agents who do land rental (tenants; landlords) may differ on the interpretation of basic categories (caste; contractual obligations; productivity; coercion; and freedom).
In addition the views of unremunerated household members may be taken into account. Qualitative research on the meanings and felt implications of tenancy is relevant for assessing poverty impacts. Adverse incorporation through tenancy, in particular, is likely to have a gender- and age-differentiated impact in worker households (Olsen, 1998, chapter in (Brass 1998)).

Roth summarises the benefits of a holistic qualitative approach thus:

> Methodological pluralism represents an attempt to speculate about the nature of rational inquiry in an intellectual landscape where the usual and expected landmarks have been removed. . . Methodological pluralism would promote both intellectual inquiry and human freedom. [It] promotes intellectual inquiry because the social sciences, unlike the natural sciences, presently contain many competing theories. . . This situation should be viewed as an encouragement to research and not as a hindrance to it. (Roth 1987) 96-97}.

Roth would appreciate qualitative research on contracts as real social institutions.

Hypothesis-testing is one of the missing traditional landmarks to which Roth refers. The problem is not that hypotheses cannot be tested; they can. The problem is that theories in themselves form the roots of the tree of the test (as the Duhem-Quine thesis convincingly argued). To "test" theories should imply rationally comparing theories, not just using their data and their empirical hypotheses to test their predictions. Ironically Popper, who is often misunderstood, was aware of this complexity of testing. Dow describes how an oversimplified Popperian testing was used in earlier (e.g. 1980s) neoclassical economic practice. Dow argues that

> The 'Duhemian Problem' is particularly difficult in economics; the complexity of economic phenomena and questions about the empirical basis of the discipline make empirical testing an extremely complex affair. (Dow, 2002: 102-103).

Combining qualitative insights with primary survey data as seen in Banerjee *et al.* (2002: pages 255-265 in particular) may be extremely useful in development economics. Banerjee's study, like Bardhan and Rudra's long before, quantifies the frequency of new, interesting qualitative causal mechanisms such as the respondent's belief about "whether it is difficult to evict an unregistered tenant" and the tenants' report of whether they or their parents had ever been threatened with eviction (Bardhan 1984).

In conclusion, it is good to avoid a bifurcation in which development economists develop mathematical models which others do not understand or read. Layder warned against ignoring models that might appear idealist or ideal-typical. Instead, he argued, it is important to uncover what those models are trying to achieve, and to analyse that attempt in its social context.

Layder wrote:

> The mistake inherent in ... an [anti-pluralist] view is the assumption that all general theory is a kind of abstract story-telling which bears no significant relation to the 'real' empirical world. The view that general theory is too abstract and remote or that it is simply plain invention misses the point entirely. The point is to understand what it is that such theory does attempt to represent. Subsidiary questions are: How does it do it? . . . etc. (Layder, 1993: 202) (Layder 1993)

Glossary

constructivism: A school of thought focused centrally on qualitative analysis of how social concepts and even 'things' are socially constructed.

deduction: A mode of analysis in which rules or laws generate predictions for individual cases.

epistemology: A theory of truth, or a set of criteria for knowledge; also the theory of knowledge and theorising about what it means to know or understand.

essentialism: A specific claim, often implicit, that things which are labelled must perform and act in accord with their labels; often erroneous and certainly abstract.

hermeneutics: the study of meaning; the analysis of intended vs. received meanings.

induction: A mode of analysis in which detailed records of events are used to generate general or abstract statements which are true, based on that evidence.

ontology: A theory of being, a theory of existence, or an interpretation of the nature of things. Examples of ontologies include atomism; metaphysics; realism; depth ontology; etc.

operationalisation: a way of measuring something, usually using a variable to represent a concept, whilst the concept represents an aspect of reality. Qualitative indicators also operationalise things.

pluralism: Theoretical pluralism involves looking closely at possible explanations of puzzling outcomes using a range of claims from at least two social-science disciplines. Methodological pluralism refers to using techniques from both the survey method and the qualitative methods tool-kits.

Popperian empiricism, or critical rationalism: a way of seeking to achieve warranted theories by testing them, using falsification of hypotheses. Those claims not falsified are temporarily accepted [not confirmed].

post-structuralism: an approach to science which argues that the linguistic framing of knowledge claims makes them immune to objective testing, and that as a result qualitative analysis is likely to be superior to survey data; the categories used in surveys are thought to be too rigid.

realism: A theory of being which argues that not all that exists can be known simultaneously or perfectly, thus separating existence from record-keeping.

retroduction: A mode of analysis in which events are studied with respect to what may have, must have, or could have caused them. In short, it means asking why events have happened as they did.

triangulation: A mode of analysis which uses a mixture of evidence of different types from different sources.

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Appendix 1: Disciplinary Approaches to Tenancy

The following annotated list indicates the types of research being done on tenancy in seven disciplines. Please note that the objects of study of these disciplines overlap considerably. The list omits the studies of India referred to in the main paper.

Development Studies (multidisciplinary and inter-disciplinary research linking tenancy to basic problems of poverty, food security, and the evolution of rights) (Ellis 2000; Sawadogo and Stamm 2000)

Politics (analyses of the political scene integrating land use and rights in land with the evolution of social power of different groups, either in or outside the state) (Frankel 1989; Frankel 1989; Brass 1998; Das 2001a; Sanyal, 1998)

Political Economy (analyses of the integrated socio-political structures underpinning trajectories in the class structure within capitalism) (Harriss-White, 1981, 1999; Singh, 1995; Brass and van der Linden, 1998, Olsen, 1993; Bhalla, S., 1999)

Economics (analyses of the interaction of demand and supply in markets and of rational choice among market actors in a commercialised or part-commercialised environment) (Li, Rozelle et al., 1998; Otsuka and Quisumbing, 2003; Kochar, 1997; Braverman and Stiglitz; Nghiem & Coelli; Agarwal, P., 1999; Gavian and Ehui, 1999; Gavian and Fafchamps, 1996; Yao, 2002; Takane, 2000; Smith, Stockbridge and Lohane, 1999)

Anthropology (the analysis and interpretation of conceptualisations and meanings of institutions and social relations related to the use of land) (Das, 2001b; Salamon, 1993; Peters, 1997; Singh, 2001; Harriss, J., 1982; Gyasi, 1994)

History (the analysis of historical evidence regarding transformation in land markets, lineage and tenure over time in specific locales) (Bagchi, 1992; Dertilis 1992; Wilson, 1998; McCall, 1996; Kanter, 1995)

Sociology (the analysis of social tendencies, patterns and agency in connection with land tenure, rights at inheritance and rights of use, gender and patterns of labour use on operated (as well as owned) land) (Grigsby, 1996; Fortmann, 1996; Ganjanapan, Gray & Kevane, 2001; Hakansson, 1994; Agarwal 1984; Agarwal 1994)

References for Appendix 1

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[i] There is not enough space to cover this approach in any depth; see for instance Agarwal, 1994; Rahman, 2000; Gaiha, 1998; Kevane and Gray, 1999.

[ii] Critical realists are interested in false consciousness and the connection between truth and progress. Other scientific realists avoid being explicitly concerned with human freedom or progress, but still argue for a transcental realism that is not empiricist (Williams, 1998).

[iii] Recent work on measuring risk-aversion using experiments has not reached the tenancy literature, to my knowledge. However the variable 'risk' used in regressions in Skoufias' 1995 work is perhaps a case in point.

[iv] Please note that this 'relativist' is an epistemological relativist to the point of refusing to make meta-judgements across theories. The same phrase, 'epistemological relativism', has also been used in a much weaker sense in the debate about realism. Fleetwood describes the weak and strong versions as follows: "Both critical realists and causal holists accept *epistemological* relativism (i.e., one can only know things under socially and historically relative descriptions); but critical realists explicitly reject judgmental relativism (i.e., that any theory is as good as any other), cf. Lawson (1996: 59, 243)", Fleetwood, 2002: 35. Column 2 of Table 1 refers to judgmental relativism. For further clarification see Harding (1999).

[v] A discourse is a set of norms or assumptions for speech and other communicative acts. A discourse usually consists of a tendency to combine metaphors, analogies, assumptions, dualisms, and category labels in specific ways.

[vi] A synthesis of neoliberal and neoclassical thought favouring free markets.