Editorial

The 3rd Readership Survey

Thank you very much to everyone who took time to complete the 3rd Readership Survey for *PLA Notes*, which was distributed to 2032 people with issue 37, February 2000. In total, we received 352 responses from over 47 countries (see Box 1), a response rate of around 18%. Your responses are crucial to the development of *PLA Notes*. We hope that the series will continue to be an important way of sharing and exchanging information about participatory approaches to development as well as continuing to promote methodological innovation and good practice. We would like to share the analysis of the readership survey with you and suggest some initial ways of how to respond to some of your concerns and suggestions. The main themes presented in this feedback are the current situation, presentation and content and, finally, outreach and impact.

The current situation

PLA Notes is currently disseminated to 2570 individuals and institutions world-wide. Of these 87% are Southern subscribers, with 13% in the North. Since February 2000, the total mailing list has increased by 21%. Most respondents rated *PLA Notes* as 'essential reading' and the majority of readers share their copies regularly.

Box 1 Readership profile from survey respondents

- Of the 352 surveys received, 89% came from Southern subscribers with 11% from Northern subscribers. This reflects the real geographical distribution of the readership.
- We received responses from 47 countries, 21 in Africa, 10 in Asia, 6 in Latin America, 2 from the Middle East, 4 from Europe, 2 from Australasia and 2 from North America.
- Of responses received, 34% were from NGOs, 24% University/Research Institutes; 16% non-OECD Governmental organisations; 9% Community based-organisations; 4% OECD Governmental organisations.

Presentation and content of *PLA Notes*

PLA Notes is designed to be used by trainers, practitioners and others working in the field. We aim to keep the language simple and accessible on all levels and to provide clear accounts of practical methodologies in each issue. Most people feel that *PLA Notes* is well organised and structured, but some improvements have also been suggested.

Language

> *"What I like best is the graphic presentation of information and simple language which our technical staff can follow".*

Many of our readers use English as their second or third language. Therefore, it is important that we try to use simple, informal language. 92% of respondents felt that the language used in the Notes was clear and easy to understand, but it is important that we try to improve this standard. For example, "*More space in PLA Notes to field and support and consideration for publication to the people of developing countries who do not have good writing skills in English".*

Illustrations

> *"I'm always looking for participatory drawings, diagrams and ways of co-learning while keeping discussion focused within complex topics. Most articles are words!"*

Two-thirds of respondents felt that the amount of visuals in *PLA Notes* was 'sufficient', but just under a third felt that there were not enough. Many readers suggested including more diagrams, pictures, photographs and cartoons and to make them clearer with more explanatory notes. Some said that *PLA Notes* can sometimes appear too text focused, for example;. *"Illustrations or visuals are needed, especially in developing visual aids for farmers/clientele. Please include/encourage illustration from your contributors".*

Translation

> *"PLA should be developed in different languages and should be understandable enough to assist community leaders in rural areas e.g., chiefs; traal heads etc"*.

As it is currently produced in English only, *PLA Notes* excludes a large number of non-English speaking people who are using participatory approaches in their work. For example; "*Maybe the feedback – from Mozambique is weak – not because we don't want – language can be constraint".*

Translation is a key challenge for *PLA Notes*. From the survey, the most popular language for translation was French, closely followed by Kiswahili, Hindi, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic. Many other languages were also suggested for PLA Notes to be translated into. This list ranged from Amharic to Afaa Oromo, Cambodian to Chinese, Tagalog to Thai, far more in fact, than can be

noted here. Whilst we are unable to translate PLA Notes into every language suggested, it is exciting and encouraging to note that many respondents said that they were already translating the material independently so that the material could be used appropriately with local communities.

> *"We find in PLA Notes, a practical handbook for all staff of RCF. Every article is carefully studied, discussed, adapted, simplified and translated into local languages for our target groups. This way the people are carried along and they enthusiastically participate in programmes and initiatives with PLA Notes…"* The Rural Co-operative Foundation of Nigeria .

As well as translating articles from English, we are also aware that there are many experiences, projects, research and training programmes and networks in the non-English speaking world that cannot be shared through *PLA Notes* unless they are translated first. To maximise inter-regional learning and promotion of good practice in participatory approaches in a truly international sense, translation and possible regionalisation of the series needs to be addressed. We are currently exploring ways of translating *PLA Notes* into Spanish and French as a starting point, through our partners in the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network, with a view to developing a model which would enable local experiences within the region to be shared in those languages. Such accounts of participatory practice may then be translated into English. There is much to discuss regarding this issue but it is an extremely important area for *PLA Notes* to develop, particularly if we want to support information exchange on an inter-regional and international basis.

Authorship

> *"I have always been ready to share my experience with the rest of the world but that is only possible through my own hand written reports and posted to you, is that allowed? Please let me know"*.

82% of you felt that there is a 'good mix' of authors (practitioners, academics, North and South), but we would also like to encourage more southern and practitioner authorship. As to whether we would accept a hand-written, non-typed article for consideration in the *PLA Notes* series, the answer is an emphatic YES! Please send us your experiences. It is important that you think of *PLA Notes* as your way of sharing experiences, whether you have access to a typewriter, a computer or a pen.

Process

> *"I have the impression that sometimes authors put more emphasis on the tool used than on the process in which the tool has been used…"*

Many of you commented that *PLA Notes* needs to have more focus on the process, follow-up and impact of participatory approaches. As one readers says, *"we always hear about X,Y or Z PRA exercise or tool but where's the follow up?"*. Some readers felt that the articles could be richer in scope and suggested a summary of key ideas at the start of each article.

In response to these concerns, we have reviewed our Guidelines for Authors (see back inside cover, this issue) to encourage articles which address issues of methodological innovation or offer critical perspectives on participatory processes. For example, *"Put in some more critical voices from time to time. Sometimes the PRAISE gets to be a bit overwhelming. What of an analysis of people who tried to use PLA but failed – for valid reasons!!"*. Participatory research should be recognised as having its own problems and weaknesses. By sharing critical perspectives we can learn more. We are interested in articles that look specifically at the practical outcomes, impact and follow-up of participatory processes, and what can be learnt from these. We also strongly encourage articles with illustrations and other visuals written in simple, clear language.

Box 2 shows some more of your suggestions for improving and developing the *PLA Notes* series.

Box 2 Some of your comments regarding format and content

- *"I appreciate issue wise publication. The section on more general topics should be enlarged so that more articles can be published.*
- *Fine, except I get a little irritated if the 'theme' is not one of my interest then there's not enough for me and I have to wait for the next issue"*
- *"I like the informal manner – but still seems to be mainly research from those who publish – not so many practitioners. Quite okay, more best practices should be included"*
- *"Very clear, good to have feedback and info section at the back."*
- *"Sometimes I wonder if there could be more analysis."*
- *"Not enough consideration for feedback from readers. Feedback received from users and grass-root workers should be presented as they are actually doing the activity".*
- *"…be more process oriented. I'm getting really bored with the series, as there is almost no process in it – we always hear about the newest tool […] but there's no follow-up […] What about local people's own methods of discussion problem-solving and decision making. Do they really need all these elaborate methods of visualisation? I doubt it!*

Theme issues

"It would be more exciting if the PLA Notes balanced different disciplines instead of having each edition handling only one discipline… with sections addressing education, agriculture, health etc".

Table 1 Recent themes in order of preference

PLA Notes 30	Participation and fishing communities
PLA Notes 37	Sexual and reproductive health
PLA Notes 33	Understanding market opportunities
PLA Notes 28	Methodological complementarity
PLA Notes 35	Community water management
PLA Notes 29	Performance and participation
PLA Notes 32	Participation, literacy and empowerment
PLA Notes 27	Participation, policy and institutionalisation
PLA Notes 34	Learning from analysis
PLA Notes 31	Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Since 1996, most issues of *PLA Notes* have focused on themes and topics suggested by the Readership. These are popular as they offer exposure to different areas of work. However, some respondents felt that it would be more useful to have a more general issue. One reader suggested that the general section of each issue should offer a wider spread of articles. This is a good idea, and in future general sections, we will publish a better spread of articles that appeal to a broader section of the readership, whilst maintaining our thematic focus. Of the recent themes presented in *PLA Notes*, the most preferred were: *Participation and Fishing Communities, Sexual and Reproductive health, Understanding Market Opportunities* and *Methodological Complementarity* (see Table 1). Your preferred themes for the future are shown in Box 3.

Box 3 Future themes

The most requested theme for a future issue of *PLA Notes* was *Gender*, with *Land Use Planning* coming a close second. Other key areas suggested are *Health* (including Women and Child Health, Sexual & Reproductive Health), *Participatory Methods for Poverty Alleviation* (including Participatory Poverty Assessments), *Community Planning and Development* (with emphasis on how to manage community-based initiatives in a participatory way), *Agriculture, Natural Resource Management, Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation* (reflecting concerns about follow-up and impact), *Education and Literacy, Biodiversity and Conservation* and finally, more focus on *Training*.

Other themes you mentioned include: *Conflict Resolution; Emergencies and Refugees; Marketing/budgets and micro-finance; Institutions; Livestock; Governance and Democracy; Children and Young People; Population; Forestry;* and, *Communication*.

Our three most recent themes, *Sexual and Reproductive Health* (PLA Notes 37) *Participatory Processes in the North* (PLA Notes 38) and *Popular Communications* (PLA Notes 39) respond to some of your needs. This issue (PLA Notes 40) looks at participatory processes for better governance (*Deliberative Democracy and Citizen Empowerment*). Future *PLA Notes* themes will include PM&E, Children's Participation, Gender and Biodiversity but other areas you suggest will also be considered in future. Please send us your contributions on any of the themes you would like to see in *PLA Notes*.

We also try to respond to new opportunities and areas of information. For example, see the new *E-Participation* section in *In-Touch*, (this issue). A common suggestion for new features in *PLA Notes* is increasing interaction with readers through more regular readership surveys, a *PLA Notes* Readers' Club, and a Readers' forum, where readers' views are encouraged to increase regional sharing and networking (see Box 4 for more of your ideas). Furthermore, we now send out mini-surveys with all free subscription renewal letters. Readers renewing subscriptions from *PLA Notes* 40 have already sent back their completed questions about access to electronic media, email and the Internet.

Box 4 Readers' suggestions for future features

Allow more interaction with the Readership through:

- *Letters to the Editor* – to enable readers to express what topics they would like to see included in future issues and to give more informal feedback on issues arising;
- *Feedback Section* – expand to allow the *PLA Notes* audience a chance to share comments and views;
- *An expanded In Touch section* – to have more space for news on PLA and related activities; to include more training workshops and events, provide information and contacts regarding how to obtain grants; include more information on websites related to development; and,
- *Feature guest column* – to share informal feedback on previous articles, make recommendations and draw together key lessons; to accumulate a bank of information about on-going field work experiences and feedback regarding applying participatory methods, the 'how to do'.

Other suggestions include the following.

- To have more teaching aids in PLA Notes, such as posters, extension support material and booklets etc.
- To consider alternative ways of documenting processes
- To have a glossary of terms, a summary of key words and a list of acronyms at the start of each article to help readers select those which are most relevant to their work.

Outreach and impact

Around half of respondents stated that they use *PLA Notes* for practice, training and information purposes, for example: *"Initially I learned almost all I know about PLA from PLA Notes and have gone on to use it in 5-6 countries and train hundreds of people".* 25% said that they use it for research, 24% for networking and contact information and 29% for the listings section. Some respondents have also used it for advocacy and lobbying, radio broadcasts and sharing knowledge with the community. We do encourage sharing *PLA Notes* through photocopying articles and sharing individual copies, so that its information can reach a wider audience, as in the above example. The majority of respondents currently do this as a matter of course (see Box 5). We also encourage subscriptions to libraries and Resource Centres where information can be accessed and used by a larger number of people.

Box 5 Sharing the information

- From the data received, 39% of respondents share their copy of PLA Notes with more than 10 people and many of you photocopy articles regularly. If 39% of the entire mailing list shared their copy of PLA Notes with 10 or more people, this alone would lead to a potential readership of more than 10,000.
- Also, 49% of respondents stated that over 50 people have benefited from the PLA Notes (through training, workshops, networking etc.). This could potentially have an impact on 62,965 people.

Whilst open to some assumption, this demonstrates how *PLA Notes* is reaching a wider audience than the mailing list alone. More importantly, this is due to the activities of the readership itself, rather than through any specific activity developed by the team at IIED. However, over the past 18 months, we have increasingly focused our attention on how to get the *PLA Notes* to a wider audience, through presenting the information in both electronic and paper formats, in different languages, and through targeting new groups.

Electronic media

"The idea of internet based PLA Notes is quite good but faces drawbacks in the South where connectivity and service charges are prohibitive. In rural Kenya internet access is only a dream (as of now) yet many beneficiaries to PLA Notes live/work in such areas".

55% of respondents (from the South) stated that they did not have access to the Internet, although 32% of Southern respondents said that they did. Of that 32%, two-thirds would still require a hard copy of *PLA Notes*, even if these were available on the web. Very few respondents who could access the Internet said that they would not require a hard copy of *PLA Notes.* Currently, *PLA Notes* goes out in hard copy only, although we are investigating electronic means of publishing, for example, the *PLA Notes* CD-ROM. Many respondents stated interest in this way of electronic dissemination, as they may not have access to the Internet but do have access to a computer with a CD-ROM drive. Whilst we will be putting the *PLA Notes* on-line in the near future, the Internet is not a solution for everyone and we will also be maintaining hard copy distribution for those who prefer to, or can only, access the information this way.

Subscriptions

"On subscription charges – I would be willing to pay more to ensure that Southern readers get it for free".

Just under half of respondents felt that the subscription charges were 'about right', although 25% still felt that the subscriptions were 'too expensive'. The revenue received from Northern subscribers helps to support the free dissemination of the series to the South and we have recently introduced a two-tiered system of subscriptions for OECD subscribers, including an institutional and individual rate. We hope that the added revenue generated from this will continue to support and expand the southern dissemination, so that *PLA Notes* can continue to be accessible to its southern readers.

Conclusion

The 3rd Readership Survey will help us to develop *PLA Notes* through responding to your needs. Without your input, this development would be meaningless. As 'a voice from the field', its development is also guided 'from the field'. We hope that this information has been interesting and we welcome any feedback you may have,

so that we can start on one of your many recommendations: *to have greater interaction between the PLA Notes and its audience.*

Why is *PLA Notes* useful to you?

Box 6

"PLA Notes have made it clear that community participation is no longer a theory. It has given clear and practical examples of communities lifting their living standards by using locally available resources under technical guidance, facilitated by Government and NGOs. PLA Notes have been a source of material, a guide and a morale booster. It has chronicled the fact that dreams can become reality to those willing to work together regardless of community, class, education and other varying backgrounds".

Last but not least, we ran a competition for you to tell us in less than 100 words why *PLA Notes* is useful to you. There were many wonderful, interesting and insightful contributions and sadly, we are unable to publish them all. After much deliberation, we chose the above entry from Dr. J. Ochieng Manyonge from Kenya (see Box 6).

Dr. Ochieng Manyonge will receive a selection of publications from the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods programme. Once again, many thanks to those who contributed to the 3rd *PLA Notes* Readership Survey. We look forward to hearing from you again!

About *PLA Notes* 40

The theme for this issue, *Deliberative Democracy and Citizen Empowerment,* focuses on how to engage 'the public' in policy formulation. Currently, there is increasing interest from Civil Society in ideas regarding good governance, deepening democracy and citizen empowerment, particularly how to bring the public or 'lay' perspectives into areas where traditionally, the public has had little or no involvement. This issue draws together some key thinking around public participation, using a range of techniques known as 'Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes' (DIPs), including mechanisms such as Citizen's juries, Citizen conferences and the like. The majority of experiences with these processes has been in the North, although increasingly, these are being adopted and adapted in the South, as the review by Scoones and Holmes (this issue) shows. This issue is guest edited by Michel Pimbert and Tom Wakeford.

Michel Pimbert previously worked in agricultural research focusing on the agro-ecology of small farms and has conducted policy research on the links between biodiversity, livelihoods and cultural diversity. Currently a Principal Researcher in the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods (SARL) programme at IIED, Michel is involved in action research on the management of agricultural biodiversity in the context of localised food systems and rural economies. He also co-ordinates an international research programme on 'Institutionalising participation in natural resource management'.

Tom Wakeford taught and researched biology. He gradually became interested in issues of the democratisation of science and, in particular, citizen empowerment initiatives in both the North and South. He currently works on Citizen-governance of Biotechnology at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, and as an adviser on participatory technology development techniques to Action Aid in Brazil, India and UK.

This issue benefits from generous additional support from ActionAid and The Commonwealth Foundation. ActionAid works with over five million of the world's poorest people in more than 30 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Founded in 1972, ActionAid is now one of the UK's largest development agencies with over 120,000 supporters. The material presented in this issue of *PLA Notes* is complementary to the work of the Citizens and Governance Programme of

The Commonwealth Foundation, and in particular, their Civil Society in the New Millennium Project. For further information on their work in this area, please refer to their website at www.commonwealthfoundation.com

In this issue

This issue opens as usual with a selection of more general articles. In the first article, Joanna Busza et al. examine the dilemmas and challenges faced by a community development project in which participatory techniques are used with debt-bonded sex workers in Cambodia. This is followed by an interesting account by Garcia and Neyra on participation in the formal education sector, where participatory tools have been integrated into an Environmental Education course in Peru. Next, Georg Felber et al. present the potential of a Research-Action-Capacity building approach for malaria control activities in urban West Africa, looking at how the introduction and promotion of the use of insecticide-treated bednets for malaria control is being supported through a participatory approach. The last feature in the general section is written by Robert Chambers in memory of James Mascarenhas, who sadly passed away recently.

Regular features

In the *Tips for Trainers* section, Neela Mukherjee presents a set of generic guidelines for trainers, relating specifically to their behaviour and attitudes, how to deal with groups of participants with mixed levels of experience in participation and of the importance of self-reflection and criticism.

This is followed by the *In-Touch* section, which announces new training courses, events, reports and other sources of information. A new feature in this section is the *E-Participation* section, which focuses on electronic information resources for participation. Lastly, the RCPLA Pages provide a brief summary of the workshop proceedings from the recent RCPLA Network meeting, held in Cairo, September 2000, which looks at the challenges and concerns around information networking to promote participatory development world-wide. It also provides an update of the Institute of Development Studies Participation Group, UK, and UPD-Net, Uganda.

If you have any comments on this, or other, issues of the *PLA Notes*, we would love to hear from you. We will try to publish these in a 'Letters to the Editor' feature in the next issue. Happy Reading!

Notes

Analysis of Readership Survey by Laura Greenwood and Holly Ashley, IIED.

Petals and thorns: the dilemmas of PLA and debt bondage

1

Joanna Busza, Hom Em Xakha,
Ly Saranda Da and Un Saron

Introduction

Successful participatory activities rely on community interest and enthusiasm. The very involvement of participants is assumed to demonstrate their consent and the number of activities or rates of attendance often serve as process indicators for monitoring a project. Skilled facilitators try to reduce shyness and encourage active interactions between all the participants, attempting to draw out 'silenced voices'.

What if the community members do not control their daily movements? How can the principles of participation and ownership be maintained if community gatekeepers prevent people who would choose to be involved from attending activities, while they force others to do so? In such circumstances, can participation become a liberating and nurturing process, or does it actually result in collusion with coercion?

This article examines the dilemmas faced by a community development project working with debt-bonded sex workers in Cambodia. It outlines the ethical concerns that the project team has faced so far, and describes in detail what steps were taken to try to address the most important of these issues: that of consent.

When gatekeepers use locks

The district of Svay Pak lies on the outskirts of Phnom Penh and is one of the largest concentrations of Vietnamese sex workers in Cambodia. Approximately 300 young women live in over twenty brothels. Coming from a background of rural poverty in Southern Vietnam, they migrate to Svay Pak either independently or are trafficked by intermediaries. Upon arrival, between US$300 to $1000 is made available to their families or escorts, which the women then earn back within the brothel. Most work off their debt within a year, although additional debts for food, clothing, medical care and extra contributions to their families are often accrued.

Until the debt has been paid, a sex worker 'belongs' to the brothel and is expected to spend her time waiting for clients. The brothel managers retain strict control to the extent that the women are not free to leave their brothels without permission and are often prevented from mingling with other community members lest they defect to a more lucrative establishment. This fear stems from the fierce competition between brothels, which is complicated by numerous financial relationships of patronage and protection with the police and military. Frequent police crackdowns, which can result in extortion, arrests and temporary closures, reinforce a tense atmosphere in this small geographical area.

Despite a majority of the sex workers' coming to Svay Pak knowing and agreeing to the circumstances of their employment, the rare but notorious cases of escape or 'rescue' have solidified the managers' resolve to maintain restrictions. By not complying, a sex worker risks violent repercussions from managers, as well as harassment and arrest by authorities if she strays too far from the protection of the brothel.

Supporting a participatory development process among the Svay Pak sex workers, therefore, mandates not only an awareness of the limitations, but also careful manoeuvering to gain trust without threatening local power-brokers (brothel managers, police) in a way that could jeopardise access to the community.

The Lotus Club

In the mid 1990s, Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF) (Belgium/Holland/Switzerland) established a local community health association which opened a clinic in the middle of Svay Pak. Although its primary focus remains medical services, the clinic has also added outreach activities, peer education and life-skills training for the sex workers.

Under the auspices of the Horizons Project (a USAID-funded, global operations research initiative on HIV prevention and care), the Population Council began conducting participatory activities in the Svay Pak clinic in April 2000. In collaboration with MSF, the Horizons project aims to initiate, support and document community building and mobilisation among the sex workers of Svay Pak. Given the restrictive context, the primary emphasis of the project is to break down barriers of competition and

mistrust between sex workers by giving them the time, space and appropriate encouragement to interact with each other and begin to identify shared experiences and goals.

Specific objectives include improving self-esteem, increasing the women's mobility within Svay Pak and extending their social networks to create a local support structure. Regular group activities offer opportunities for participants to interact with other community members; identify, analyse and prioritise common needs and then begin to act upon those needs by designing and implementing small-scale interventions with assistance from project facilitators.

As a first step, *Câu Lac Bô Bông Sen* (The Lotus Club) was formed, taking its name from the fact that the women in Svay Pak refer to themselves as 'the women who sell their flower'. A private area in the clinic was designated as a safe space for the women, and a small group of sex workers took charge of the decor. Plants, curtains and floor cushions provide the setting for the participatory workshops held each morning. This project is still in its 'start-up' phase and sessions so far (community mapping, daily routines, life stories; see Figure 1) have addressed basic local issues while participants and facilitators get to know each other. This initial stage has been met with excitement and enthusiasm. Participants have shown increasing willingness to share personal experiences and practical tasks, such as mapping, with women from competing brothels. We receive frequent requests for additional sessions.

Does participation imply consent?

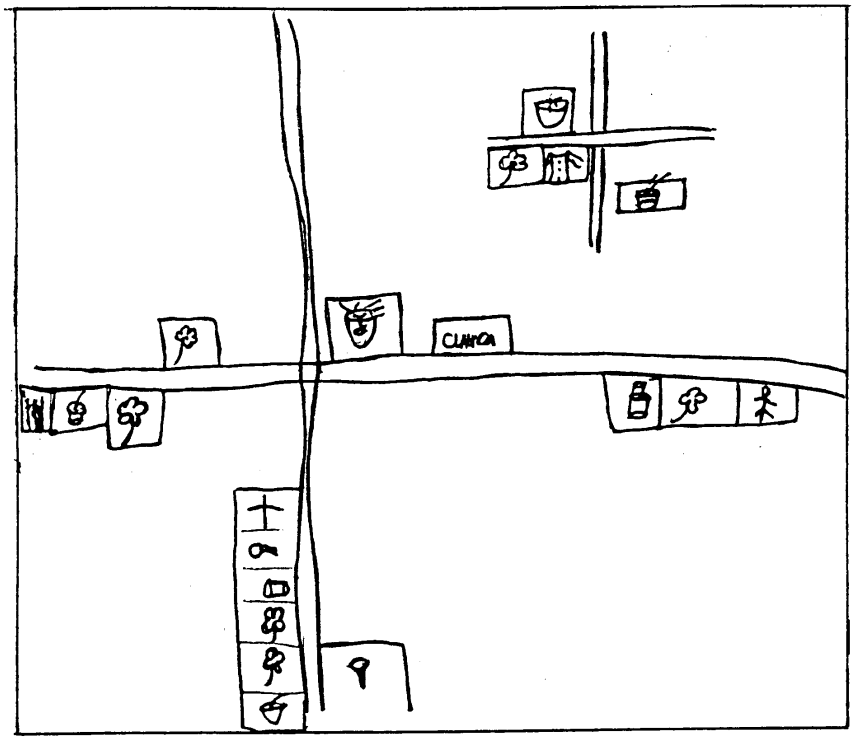
Despite early successes, all has not been rosy. Our biggest challenge has been trying to ensure that the women in all the brothels hear about the project and then have the opportunity to choose for themselves whether to participate, and how often.

Brothel managers currently permit only one to two women to leave work at a time. The project facilitators visit the brothel in advance, make a request for participants and then, in some cases, escort them to the Lotus Club and back again. Furthermore, which sex workers have the opportunity to join an activity often depends on the manager. Those women deemed more attractive, particularly popular with clients or more severely in debt, are least likely to be allowed to go 'off duty.'

Far more worrying to us, however, is that sometimes women who would rather not attend a workshop are being 'sent' by the brothel manager, perhaps as a gesture of goodwill to the MSF clinic. On several occasions, a participant has requested permission to leave a session early or has remained isolated from the group, choosing not to contribute. In at least one case, a sex worker has looked repeatedly at her watch and expressed distress at the possibility of losing clients during the time her manager had 'volunteered' her for the project.

We have tried to address this lack of choice in a variety of ways, including engaging with the brothel managers to continuously emphasise the purpose of the workshops. We also ensure that floor cushions, mattresses and

Figure 1
Mapping the local community helped to introduce the participatory process

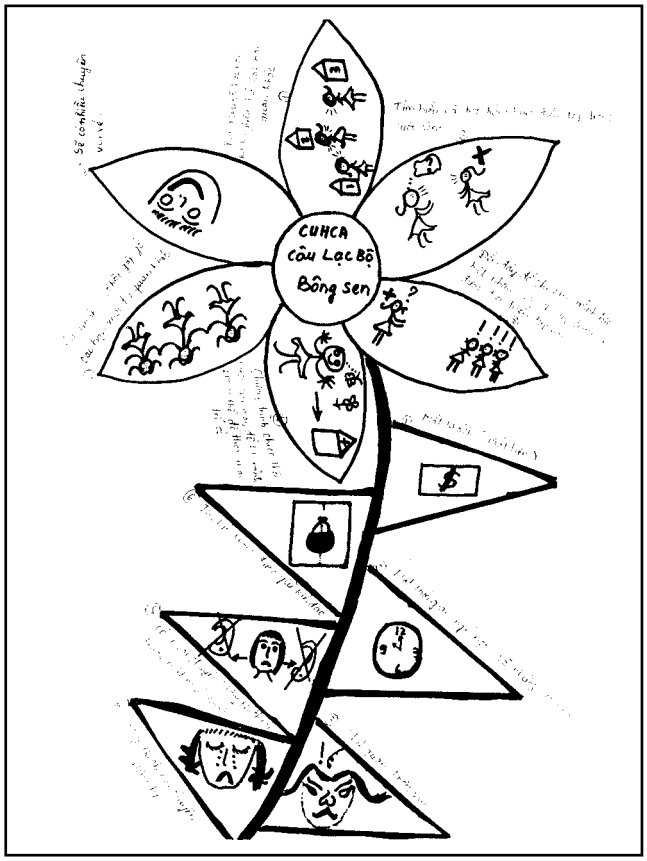


magazines are available at a slight distance from the activity so that women who feel uncomfortable, tired, or unwilling to participate can retire to this relaxation area. The facilitators acknowledge that 'being shy' can be a conscious decision and thus do not make sustained efforts to draw out quiet, unresponsive participants, although this would demonstrate good practice in other participatory projects.

Finally, we decided to explicitly confront the issue of consent through an interactive activity. Because this project is also a research study, informed consent procedures using standardised Population Council forms were already in place. Usually, the consent protocol consists of reading a prepared statement about the possible risks and benefits of joining a research project which a participant then signs for the record.

Given the restricted environment of Svay Pak, however, we felt the very concept of consent was unfamiliar and the existing process did not sufficiently allow for reflection on what participating in the project meant. As a result, we designed a workshop (see Box 1) that would let sex workers decide how best to explain project aims and objectives to their peers and explore the possible risks and benefits of bringing the project into their community.

Figure 2 Flower diagram presenting the benefits and risks of the project, as identified by sex workers during three workshops



Box 1 Flower diagram workshop

The goal of this set of activities was to engage sex workers in discussion about possible risks and benefits of participating in the project, thus facilitating informed consent. Each workshop began with a description of the new project and how the Lotus Club differed from the clinic's usual services. We focused on how the activities would serve as both action and research, including the eventual use of more quantitative, extractive methods such as questionnaires and in-depth interviews in order to enhance documentation. The women practised phrasing the information in terms that were meaningful to them.

We again adopted the image of a flower that the women frequently choose in sessions to represent themselves (see Figure 2). We passed out multi-coloured paper petals and thorns to each participant. First, the women considered what benefits they felt the project could offer them. They chose symbols or wrote a brief description on the petal cut-outs; each petal was then glued around the head of the flower to show what the group hoped could be achieved.

Petals

- Learn more about women in other brothels
- Get new information
- You will learn more about us and life in Svay Pak. We will learn more about you
- We can come here to 'ease our mind' and talk to someone
- Make new friends, have fun

Then the women turned their attention to the thorns, which indicated risks of the project. This proved much more challenging. In all three workshops, no one felt there were any real risks to their participation. The facilitators felt this was partly a reluctance to mention anything negative in case activities would be stopped. With some prompting, however, the women developed a list of possible adverse consequences, although they referred to these as risks for other women in other brothels, not themselves.

Thorns

- During the time spend participating, the opportunity to be with clients would be lost
- Loss of leisure time usually spent napping, relaxing, socialising
- Some (other) brothel managers might not be happy with sex workers who miss time with clients
- Talking about some topics in front of other women could be dangerous. If managers or other sex workers heard some of the information that was supposed to be confidential, it could be damaging

Finally, a role play exercise concluded the workshop. The facilitators pretended to be new arrivals in Svay Pak, asking their peers about the project: 'What is the Lotus club?' 'What if I feel uncomfortable about the questions that are asked?' 'Can I still go to the clinic if I refuse to be part of the group activities?'

After the workshops, all the participants' ideas and phrases were included in a new reproduction of the flower design (Figure 2). This visual will be used in an on-going process of ensuring comprehension and consent throughout the project.

Other ethical concerns

In addition to confronting the lack of personal freedom among participants, other dilemmas related to the local structures of debt-bondage are as follows in the section below.

Transparency

"I don't want the owner [brothel manager] to hear about this and I don't want them to ask me too much... I will say that I came here to study and read books and to learn more about health. I don't want to talk a lot because I don't want to have problems...".

Some brothel managers are happy for the women to attend the clinic for practical training or check-ups, but less likely to condone activities considered social, or worse, subversive. Yet fostering genuine community-building relies on open and co-operative relations with brothel management. As a result we tread a fine line in trying to remain honest about the aims of the project, but being conservative with our information. Some components, such as addressing issues of violence by managers or working toward empowering sex workers to refuse certain clients are discussed only with the women.

This highlights overall difficulties of working with brothel managers. Despite years of tentative trust-building between MSF clinic staff and the brothels and extensive outreach by project facilitators to explain the project and its potential benefits for the entire Svay Pak community, support remains lukewarm at best. Attendance at scheduled brothel manager meetings has dropped significantly. Some managers refuse to speak with project staff when they approach the brothel, although most continue to allow limited participation by their resident sex workers. Our response has been to circumvent restrictions rather than to challenge them directly.

Situating the project within a clinic and integrating community development with medical services has certainly helped to mitigate reluctance among managers. Health concerns are shared by the women and brothel managers alike as profits are highest when workers remain healthy, and additional pressure comes from the national '100% condom policy' which mandates monthly health checks of all sex workers. Thus, as mentioned, some women are able to use seeking care as an excuse for attending group sessions. Brothel managers also approve of specific health-related activities such as training on contraception, condom demonstrations and the introduction of a new protection method (the female condom).

Ultimately, all communities have complex and conflicting interests within them and we do not believe that they can all be reconciled in Svay Pak. Although we continue to try to improve our relations with brothel managers, we also acknowledge that we are explicitly taking sides by offering ownership to the sex workers, but that this is an unavoidable and integral component of the community building process.

Compensation

"Sometimes we are busy with clients or with something else, so we cannot come, so we have to refuse".

Even when a woman is not already with a client when invited to a workshop, her attendance risks the loss of income. Within Svay Pak there is considerable variation in incomes: some sex workers have large debts to repay, some find clients easily, others less so, still others are between debts, earning additional money to take back to Vietnam. How much a woman needs to work also depends on the brothel's financial status. Managers receive approximately half of all earnings, on top of debt repayment. With voluntary participation so difficult to ensure in any case, we did not want relative wealth to further complicate the women's decisions. The project should be available to all the women, not just those who can afford some leisure time.

We compensate each participant with $2 for a two hour workshop, slightly less than the earnings from one client. This decision is controversial, and can be seen as undue incentive to participate. It also makes the project more the domain of development workers, rather than located firmly in the hands of the community. We hope to slowly move away from this model as some women have already indicated their willingness to participate without payment or have suggested alternatives such as small gifts (cosmetics, stickers). Others, however, use the guaranteed income as justification for the time spent away from the brothel.

Confidentiality

"If I decide to say something, I will say it and what I say today is a true thing, so I don't care..".

Small incidents have cast doubt on our ability to maintain an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality during group sessions. One woman brought up that her brothel manager was cruel and violent. She later took a facilitator aside and whispered her fears that she had been too outspoken and that it could be dangerous for her complaints to be publicised. At the end of that session, staff initiated a brief group discussion about the importance of privacy, reiterating that the Lotus Club is meant to be a safe space for sex workers. Of course, we have no real control over what information passes back to the brothels. One manager, for example, insists on sending her sister along with the sex workers to keep an eye on things.

Working from the assumption that the sex workers can judge their security far better than we can, project facilitators ensure that participants set the tone and limits of all conversations. Although we would like eventually to move toward sensitive issues and in-depth analysis of the dynamics of Svay Pak, we consciously ask fewer probing questions and make less of an effort to involve reserved participants than PLA practitioners might do in other circumstances.

Conclusion

We are at the very beginning of what will hopefully lead to a sustained process of community building and collective action among the sex workers of Svay Pak. Ensuring ownership and genuine participation among a debt-bonded population is proving difficult and sometimes the principles of PLA seem compromised in this environment. We have found, however, that with vigilance and the willingness to experiment with various facilitation strategies, the potential benefits to the community are numerous and the challenges are not insurmountable.

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Horizons is a global research project implemented by the Population Council in partnership with the International Center for Research on Women, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Tulane University, New Orleans, US. It is designed to identify components of effective HIV/AIDS programmes and policies; test potential solutions to problems in prevention, care, support and service delivery; and disseminate and utilise findings with a view toward replication and scaling-up of successful interventions. This study, conducted in co-operation with MSF-Belgium/Holland/Switzerland, is entitled *Building Community Identity among Debt-Bonded Sex Workers in Cambodia*. The contact address for the project is as noted above.

Introducing PRA techniques in the learning of environmental education in Southern Peru

2

Sonia Gomez Garcia and
Jose Pizarro Neyra

Introduction

We have been using participatory approaches in our work in Environmental Education (EE) since 1994. We have adopted such techniques in the classroom in order to raise environmental awareness amongst young people in the 'Victor Mayuri' public school of Calana, in the department of Tacna in Southern Peru. The school is located in a rural valley near the coast where agriculture and tourism are the main economic activities.

Our project is called 'Asignatura Experimental de Educación Ambiental' (Experimental Course in Environmental Education) and is part of the official curriculum of our school, having been accepted by the Ministry of Education. The course involves two hours of interactive teaching-learning per week. This article presents some of the participatory techniques used in the project. These techniques have allowed the students to develop knowledge about economics, ecology, crop techniques and other such factors relating to the intricate relationship between mankind and nature. In summary, the main objectives of the project are:

- to show the benefits of a sustainable lifestyle to the students through their education;
- to improve their knowledge about the environment (information objective); and,
- to develop their capacity and skills regarding finding solutions to environmental problems (action and participation objectives).

The context

Calana is a rural town which has strong in-migration from the highlands of Southern Peru, a predominantly agricultural area. The migrants' mother tongue is Aymara, with Spanish as their second language.

Our students come from poor families and most of them have to work to help support their families. However they have valuable knowledge about their environment, which has been developed through daily life and their primary education (this involved forestry education for children between 8 and 11 years old in the rural zone as directed by the Ministry of Education in Peru[1]). Whilst we work in a formal school situation, most of our experiences with participatory methods are developed outside the classroom. The students we have been working with are aged between 12 and 16 years old. We decided to adopt participatory methods in teaching, since the experiences of others (such as Paolo Freire) have shown that more formal, traditional methods of teaching are not always appropriate. Such research has shown that more traditional teaching methods can lead to a poor interchange of information from and between the students, since they are often just 'fed' information, rather than actively contributing to it (this is known as 'banking education'). However, with the use of participatory techniques in the education sector, students are more involved and thus, have greater motivation during the entire session which is very important for the group reflections at the end of each session.

1 For more details, see work of Ceruti, 1993 cited in the notes section at the end of this article.

The techniques used in the project

The subjects on offer are taught using the students' own opinions and information, which makes them reflect on, and change, their behaviour, if it is not beneficial to the environment. The students are organised in groups so that in the class situation, they are able to learn more enthusiastically, benefitting from greater interaction with their peers and sometimes, they enjoy it so much that they think they are playing. In actual fact, they are sharing and verifying information related to the overall project; meeting the objectives of information provision and participation. The techniques used with the students in this project are discussed in the following section.

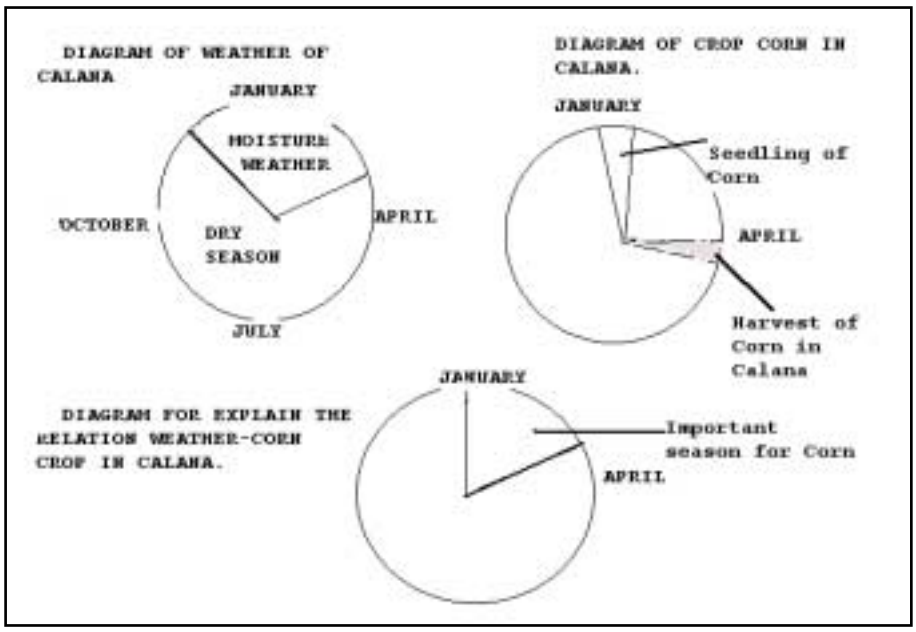
Participatory tools used in the classroom context

Socio-economic calendar

Method

The students draw a circle divided into twelve segments to represent the twelve months of the year on transparent film with different colours (see Figure 1). In the example above, the students have been divided into two groups: 'meteorologists' and 'harvesters'. The group of

Figure 1
A social-economic calendar of Calana, Peru



'meteorologists' marks the months on the circular graph on a transparent film according to the seasons (in Calana there is a dry season between April and November with wet weather in the other months). The group of 'harvesters' write on a second transparency to show the seasonality of the main crop of the zone (in this case, this is corn), marking a 'pie' (segment) on the circular graph to show the time of harvest (months of April and May).

Finally, all the students place the first and second transparencies on top of one another in order to study the similarities and differences between the weather and the time of the corn harvest. The use of transparencies is helpful, as it allows the diagrams to be placed on top of each other so that similarities and differences between each of the stages can be easily seen.

A variation of this technique is research into school-agriculture linkages, replacing the weather factor (from the above activity) with school activities. Using the information from the circular graph, the students develop a matrix on the board to show the relation between two factors (such as school activities versus corn harvest).This helps us, the teachers, to understand more clearly why students are not able to attend school at certain times of the year.

In the session shown in Figure 2, the pupils are interpreting the data from the graphs. Some of their interpretations of the results follow.

- *'The potatoes are cultivated all year round... this crop was not cultivated in the past with the same intensity... now, the potatoes provide our economy...'*

Photo by Sonia Gomez

Figure 2
Children analysing results from the social-economic calendar exercise

- *'The strong winds of August could affect the Plum, Damask and Vinegrap fruits harvested in summer. However in these months I am working in other things but the bad harvest of these fruits brings many problems for those who are living off these crops'.*
- *'The teachers do not allow us to miss school on certain days in the month when we must work. For example, in April* [beginning of the school year in Peru] *I am involved in harvesting the corn and I have difficulties with the usual attendance in school. I expect more consideration on the part of the teachers in the future'.*

From the experiences revealed through this technique, we, the teachers, also learned more about the pupils' situations and hence, became more aware of their circumstances. This has helped us to respond to their needs in a more flexible way, particularly when their outside work requires them to be away from school for a while. This exercise enhanced our understanding of the lives of the pupils.

Life Web

This is an adaptation of participatory technique proposed by the *Asociación Peruana para la Conservación de la Naturaleza*, an NGO which has an Environmental Education Programme in Peru. The aim of this tool is to get the student to reflect about the role of each part of an ecosystem and how they interact. The game is important for enabling the students to discuss the ecological equilibrium of any ecosystem.

Method

In the life web, the pupils take a part of a rope and stand in a circle around it. Each pupil assumes the identity of a natural resource (for example, crops, livestock, wild animals, the soil, water, sun, rain and other elements) to represent an ecosystem and all its parts.

In the next step, the ecosystem suffers 'changes' (i.e. the loss or replacement of elements in the ecosystem) which results in a new situation. When an 'element' disappears, the pupil representing it leaves the circle around the rope. The pupils then discuss the effect of this 'loss' on the other elements. They also discuss if other 'elements' of the ecosystem would also have to leave the circle as a direct result of this loss. The same process takes place when an 'element' is added to the circle. The implications of this are also discussed by the participants. Some of the students' conclusions from this exercise follow.

- *'In nature the cultivated plants are as important as the wild plants'.*
- *'Some insects which are useful for agriculture live in stones, soil and wild plants... we will not damage the home of these animals'.*
- *'Water is the most important of all the elements in Calana's agriculture... However, in a natural environment, the plants and animals resist more time without water than human beings.* [The pupil explains the life strategy of wild plants of desert].

The participation of the students in this exercise makes the study of ecosystems more 'real' as it enables them to discover the importance of each component through their physical involvement in the exercise. Since the pupils were physically involved in the change process of the ecosystem, they learn this subject more easily.

The letter

The use of a letter to improve writing skills is common practice in many schools of the world. In this case, students attempt to communicate with local authorities or important people within the community. This activity covers the project objectives of developing communication, participation and practical skills.

Method

To set it in context, this activity is linked to the organisation of an 'environmental forum' by the school, in which environmental issues and problems are discussed by the students. The forum encourages the participation of young people through working in teams. In their groups, students discuss issues around various environmental problems, such as the use of dangerous agrochemicals, the absence of sanitary services in the town, etc. The student working groups facilitate information exchange between one another through discussion, which often results in changes in their personal attitudes to certain issues. The final activity of the forum is to write a letter to a key figure or organisation within the community.

In their letter, each student writes a line about their own opinion regarding the state of the local environment and suggest some possible solutions. Afterwards, all the letters are sent to the Mayor of the District of Calana. Unfortunately, to date, no replies have been received from the Mayor or his colleagues to the children of Calana, indicating that he has taken on board their concerns.

Recovery of local knowledge

Traditional knowledge has been lost in the rural zones of Peru because western culture has modified the lifestyle of the people. For this reason, we have developed various techniques for the recovery and preservation of local knowledge within the education arena. The most important of these is called *'sopa de letras'* (which means 'hidden words' in English). This is basically an ethno-biological study. In this way we meet the project objectives of developing information, participation and practical skills.

In Calana, indigenous knowledge about local plants is mixed with the traditional knowledge of the in-migrants,

Figure 3 The school's bulletin *El Calanito*

who arrived in the area mainly from the department of Puno in the Andes of Southern Peru. In Calana, the pupils' knowledge of the properties and uses of plants in folk medicine, forestry and agriculture is very well developed. Some of them even came to school with a greater knowledge of indigenous biology and ecology than the teachers themselves! Therefore, we designed a matrix to present information such as the name of the plant, its market price, its medicinal properties, other uses etc. Animals have been studied in a similar way to obtain ethno-biological information.

Method

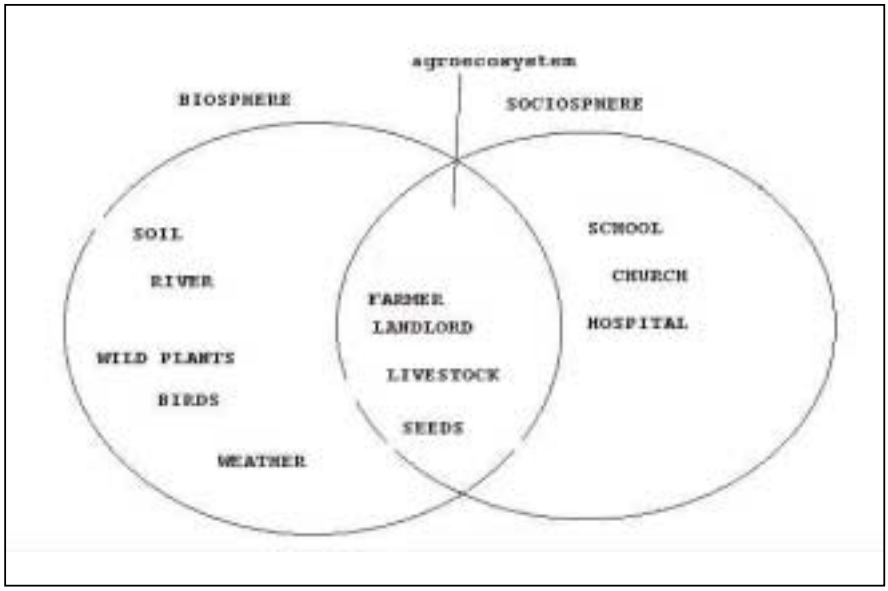
Each pupil constructs a matrix to show the properties of each plant/animal in question and the information from each matrix is then combined with all the others. The pupils form a master matrix and they also produce a final report which is published in the school's bulletin, *'El Calanito'* to present this information to a wider audience. This is the only publication produced in the town. The bulletin is sold at the equivalent of 30 US cents.

Sociosphere-biosphere diagram

This exercise has been developed using Venn diagrams (See Figure 4). The pupils talk about the origin of organisms in the world and then identify elements of the environment which are classified into three systems: Sociosphere (all elements made by man), Biosphere (natural elements) and the Agroecosystem (the linkages between man's agricultural activities and the environment).

The objective of this activity is to enable students to recognise elements of these groups in their daily rural lives. Some natural resources are considered to be commonly owned, for example, water, but other resources are thought to be the property of the land owners, such as the soil (certain families own most of the land in Calana). Another group of elements is clearer to define because, although it is a natural element, it is most likely to be the property of someone (e.g. crops and livestock). Figure 4 shows an example of the application of the technique. In the following session, the information generated by the diagrams is organised by the teachers and students into a list of elements which is written on the board for pupils. In this way, they develop better knowledge about their ecosystem and the power relations in Calana in relation to important natural resources and man's activities.

Figure 4 Sociosphere-biosphere diagram to explain the relationships between different parts of an ecosystem



Conclusion

The development of local knowledge about the environment in the classroom is very important for helping to solve environmental problems of the community (primarily agricultural issues). This is an important part of the project and, through the use of PRA techniques in the classroom, this can be achieved with pupils of school age. In this way, the families of students improve their knowledge about subjects related to the environment through interactions with the children who are able to share their learnings. As such, it is hoped that residents of Calana will learn to value a more sustainable lifestyle.

Through our experience with the Environmental Education project, the main conclusions of using participatory techniques in the classroom are as follows.

- We found them to be appropriate for use with the rural young people of 12 years and upwards that we have been working with in this project.
- The necessary requirements for working with these techniques are simple, although it is important to have teachers trained in the use of participatory techniques. At the moment, the school in Calana is the only educational centre of Tacna with teachers trained in participatory techniques specifically for environmental education.
- The students benefit more from learning about complex issues such as the environment through the use of participatory methods because both the classroom environment and the learning process are more entertaining, more interesting and democratic, with greater opportunities for students to voice their own views on the subjects being discussed.
- The disadvantages of using such participatory techniques in the teaching environment are that there is not much space to incorporate them into the development of formal school curricula and that, in order to manage these tools, the teachers need training in participatory techniques and also need to be open to their use as well as being enthusiastic and creative.

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Notes and references

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For further information, see Ceruti, Fiorella. 1993. *Practical Experiences with Environmental Education and Awareness Raising in Perú*. (pp.227-238) In: H. Schneider (ed.) *Environmental Education; an approach to sustainable development.* OECD, Paris.

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Lessons from malaria control activities in urban West Africa using a research-action-capacity building approach

3

G. Felber, N. Othingué,
N. Yemadji and K. Wyss

Summary

In the South, urban environmental and social management is often based on top-down approaches which use technologies and strategies not corresponding to the demands of the inhabitants and to their social, economic and ecological realities. This paper discusses how a community-based approach – Research Action Capacity-building (RAC) – can be valuable for malaria control and more specifically for the dissemination of insecticide treated bednets. Taking a bednet project in N'Djaména, capital of Chad, as an example, the article investigates the potential and the limitations of this approach for mobilising and strengthening sustainable activities and capacity-building at community level.

Introduction

In 1994 the Swiss Tropical Institute (STI) initiated a project 'Management of deprived urban areas by their inhabitants' funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (Wyss, 1999)[1]. The aim was to promote existing community initiatives, which are seen as especially relevant in contexts where basic social services provided by governments are inadequate or insufficient, as they are today in many countries of the South.

From 1997 onwards, one of the components of the project was the introduction and promotion of the use of insecticide-treated bednets (ITNs) for malaria control. The project was financed by WHO's[2] Training in Tropical Diseases Programme, as it was recognised that there is a great need to carry out research on the most efficient means to implement and sustain the use of ITNs for malaria control in urban settings where malaria is endemic (Lengeler et al.,1996)[3]. It has been shown that the use of ITNs reduce malaria transmission considerably. Several studies in Burkina Faso and other African countries revealed that a reduction of infant mortality of up to one third is possible through the correct use of ITNs.

Activities related to mosquito nets were launched with following aims:

- to introduce, promote and maintain the use of ITNs by using a participatory approach;
- to create and sustain commercial centres for sale and for impregnation of nets;
- to identify the advantages and disadvantages of using the 'Research Action Capacity-building' approach;
- to empower grass-root initiatives; and,
- to develop knowledge and capacities of the organisation and communication of local people.

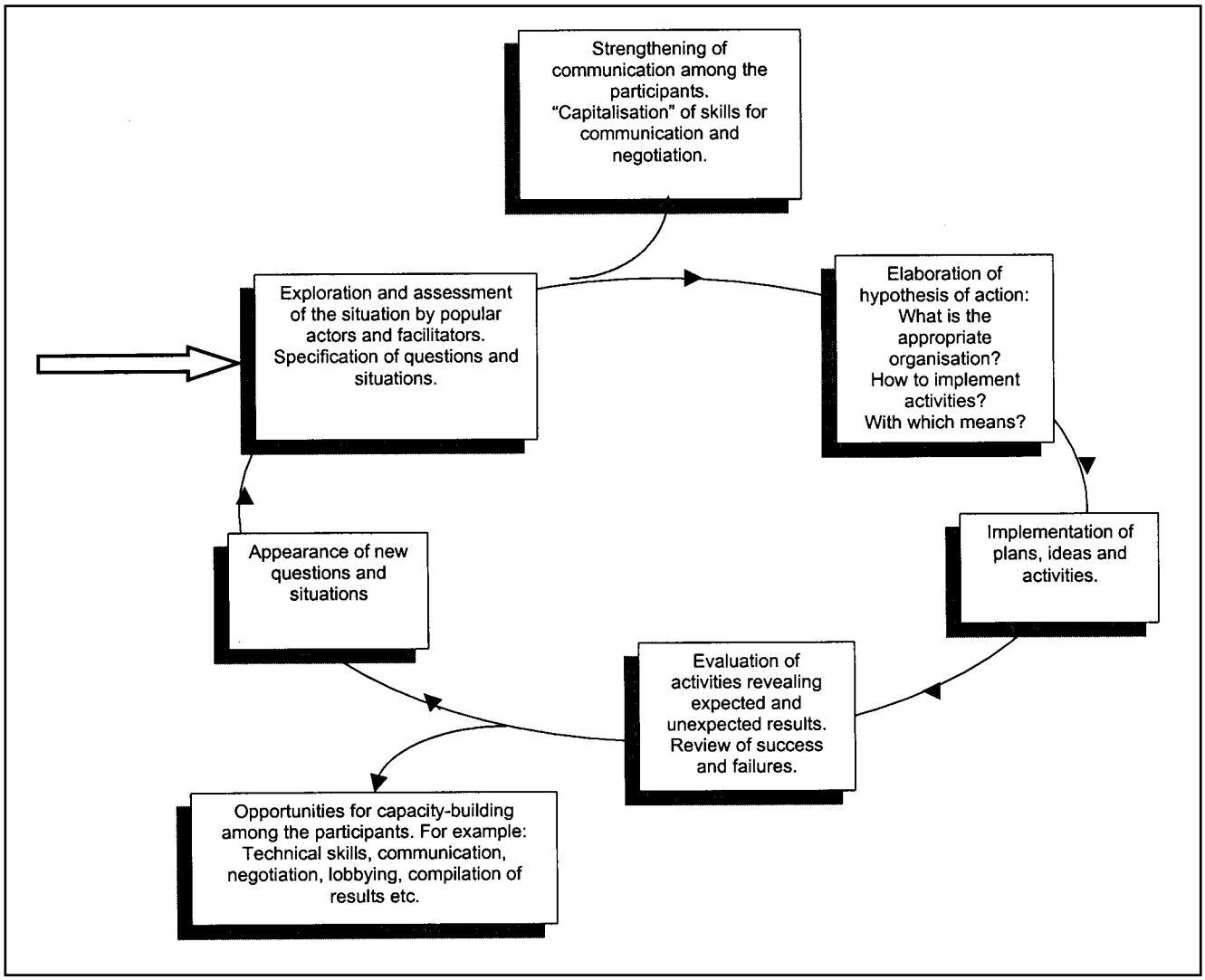
This paper discusses the potential of the RAC approach for mobilising and strengthening community-based activities and for capacity-building regarding the promotion of insecticide treated bednets. Furthermore, it reports what worked and what did not work during the setting up of net selling and impregnation centres.

Approach

A Research Action Capacity-building[4] (RAC) approach was selected as the conceptual framework for the promotion of insecticide treated nets (N'Diaye, 1994). In contrast to a top-down approach where project design and implementation are directed by outsiders, in the RAC approach, the people who are intended to benefit from the results control the research, planning, execution and the on-going evaluation, as well as the redefinition of the activities. There are many similarities between RAC and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) but there are also differences. The ideas, concepts and methods used by the approaches are those that encourage disadvantaged groups to take control of research and/or development activities being undertaken. RAC, in addition to obtaining the information, is primarily also concerned with enhancing local people's active participation in the research and development process. The RAC approach overlays elements of assessment with action, whereas RRA is often based on a two-step procedure; first making an assessment of a situation followed by implementation activities. Moreover, RAC puts capacity-building and acquisition of knowledge as the main focus of the process, not in the sense of providing courses or prefabricated models, but through the exchange of common experiences and value attributed to people's own creativity. Thus, RAC sees social change as the ultimate

1 For further information on the context, setting and main activities, visit http://www.urb.ch/
2 WHO – World Health Organisation
3 Note the recent initiative 'Roll Back Malaria' of WHO. Visit http://www.who.int/rbm/
4 'Recherche Action Formation' – French translation.

Figure 1 The Research Action Capacity-building process



goal. Both approaches may use tools such as visualisation techniques to enable local people to share and analyse their situation. However, in the context of the present case-study, regular meetings, group discussions and workshops were principally used.

Usually the RAC process starts with the exploration of people's own situations. RAC works experimentally, which means that ideas are formulated in the form of hypotheses of action and organisation. How to act? How to organise? Actions are carried out and evaluated, which then lead to a new assessment of the situation and to new hypotheses of action. Through the open structure of RAC and the circular process of research and action, all the participants have the chance to arrive at new perceptions and to acquire new knowledge.

Setting up net selling and treatment centres in N'Djaména

Partnership and collaboration at various levels were considered as crucial for the project in order to increase and strengthen relationships and exchanges of expertise in the field of urban environmental management. The development and sharing of ideas, concepts and activities between local people (associations), institutions (Programme Nationale de Lutte Antipaludique (PNLAP), University of N'Djaména) and an NGO (Swiss Tropical Institute) was a crucial part of the project. Nevertheless, the primary carriers of the project were three neighbourhood associations, active in the field of health and environmental management. Two of them were women's groups.

At the beginning of activities, the situation was assessed together with each association. University-based and popular researchers evaluated mosquito and net-related problems in their immediate environment by asking the following questions.

- Where do mosquitoes reproduce?
- What are the means of protection in use?
- How many people already know about ITNs?

The aim of this research process was to have greater knowledge about the actual status of the issue in question

and to help people to look clearly at their behaviour patterns and those of the rest of the community (Othingué et al., 2000, p. 171). The inquiry showed that malaria is perceived as an important health problem and that people contribute substantial resources to its treatment and prevention.

For members of the associations, the field research was a source of gaining knowledge about malaria transmission and the malaria prevention practices of inhabitants. The experience showed that basic knowledge about malaria issues helped association members to provide further information to potential clients and to pursue more convincing marketing strategies for ITNs. Further association members, involved the research, found how information about the immediate environment can be gained and how, subsequently, it can be structured for better assessment of the situation and for shaping planning actions.

There were different stages in the process of the establishment of the treatment and commercial centres and various problems to overcome. First, the associations worked out a proposal which included details on procedures selected, prices of services, indemnities for workers, location of the commercial centre, organisation of sales/promotion, administration of the centres, replacement of the stock etc.

Above all, economic issues were new for many of the associations' members. Women members in particular contributed useful information from their experiences with daily street commerce to the project, but in contrast to this small-scale activity, the establishment of impregnation centres needs a long term assessment. Planning is more complex if centres want to become economically sustainable. The principle of cost recovery was hard to achieve. Results of the first months showed the groups that the initial assessment had to be changed. In the beginning, prices of nets and impregnation were low, which led to low revenue being generated. In the course of time, associations tended to introduce higher prices, which promised higher incomes but the number of buyers decreased. Without going into more detail, this example shows the logic of the RAC approach, where failures are important experiences which push the actors to re-examine their hypothesis of action and reassess the situation. Hence benefitting from experience leads to the development of new insights around the issue, sometimes fundamentally changing action.

Another point, which made the groups rethink their procedure, was the problem of obtaining cheap ITNs which could be afforded by the local population. There is no industrial or local production of ITNs in Chad, so the groups tried different channels for supplying the nets, first in Cameroon and later in Thailand. One association even produced nets themselves, made from imported cloth, but this forced up prices even higher. So all associations changed to ready-made mosquito nets, although prices were still extremely high due to importation taxes. As a result, only the better-off parts of the population could afford the nets. The associations have not yet found a solution to the problem of high prices.

In the first months following the establishment of the centres, some dozens of ITNs and insecticide treatments were sold. However, it quickly became obvious that local residents were unaware of this new technology and the number of impregnations sold decreased. As a result, marketing methods became a very important part of the project. With the help of the facilitators, groups designed posters, advertised through door-to-door campaigns and organised radio broadcasts, in order to increase selling and treatment rates.

Over time, it became clear that the centres found it hard to be economically sustainable. The incomes of the centres were low and only small indemnities could be paid to the staff. So, the number of active group members started to decrease, as people had to earn a living elsewhere. This revealed a more general problem of voluntary associations, where it cannot be expected that people with very low incomes will be able to invest a lot of time in voluntary activities. The result was that people participating had strong personal financial interests around the centres, but the income from associations' activities was not enough to remunerate every member.

Another problem was caused by the organisational and administrative skills required for the adequate functioning of a commercial centre. Most of the associations had difficulty in sharing tasks between members, carrying out campaigns or administrating the money collected. By supporting the associations, most of these issues could be improved, for example by training in book keeping or opening accounts banking the collected money.

Even though it appeared that it might be difficult to sustain the centres run by the associations, nevertheless the RAC approach revealed the potential of the associations in identifying solutions for the promotion of nets and their treatment with insecticide. The associations generally structured the progress of activities and the process of learning and capacity-building themselves, instead of adopting pre-structured procedures and knowledge from outside.

Through regular meetings and workshops, the members of the associations had many opportunities to develop their capacities for communication and negotiation with institutional actors. Thus the RAC approach showed clearly that it has potential for:

- the empowerment of participants, including grass-roots

initiatives, for the management of the urban environment;
- acquisition and exchange of knowledge; and,
- 'capitalisation' of experience resulting in improvements of malaria control activities at local and city level.

Conclusions

The Research Action Capacity-building approach revealed that there are three strands of reasoning underlying the promotion of insecticide treated nets in urban contexts: technical, economic and social.

On the technical level, an innovation could successfully be introduced and adopted by the local actors organised within associations. Mutual research activities between members of the associations and the facilitators have shown that there is a demand from the residents for impregnated nets. After training on technical issues concerning impregnation, the associations were able to provide services of adequate quality. According to the RAC approach, when facilitators or specialists introduce new techniques – in our case, the impregnation of bednets with insecticide – these must be such that community groups can manage them themselves. In conventional projects, the transfer of knowledge and techniques is often one way and at one level; i.e. from specialists in the North to specialists in the South, with popular actors being excluded from the process.

On the economic level, the sustainability of selling nets and establishing impregnation centres was found to be very fragile. This was mainly due to the high prices of nets and impregnation services, making them too expensive for the majority of the urban population. This is particularly true in N'Djaména, as the economic conditions of the local population are very bad. Thus, economic constraints exclude the urban poor and most vulnerable groups from this technology. In order to redress this situation, efforts have to be made to find solutions for cheaper or subsidised ITNs as well as exemption mechanisms for the urban poor, i.e. finding ways to provide the technology to the urban poor without penalising them due to the high costs involved. For example, they could be offered reduced or subsidised net prices. At the institutional level, one aim could be the exemption of nets from importation taxes. However, through the setting up commercial centres, the members of the associations have developed knowledge in commercial thinking and management of micro-enterprises. Even if the centres remain unsustainable, these capacities and skills are very likely to benefit future activities.

On the social level, the RAC framework valued not only visible 'success stories', such as, for example, a high number of services and items sold in the case of the promotion of ITNs, but more importantly, skills and capacities in communication and negotiation. Thus, the activities initiated could strengthen the organisational skills of the associations in an important way, for example, negotiation with institutional actors (NGOs, Ministry of Health), new ways of reflection, knowledge about economic issues and about handling techniques and technologies. These skills can be very useful for further activities of the associations in the field of urban environmental and social management and also for personal activities of the members.

The project showed also how collaboration, partnership and communication between popular and institutional actors (PNLAP, STI, University of N'Djaména) govern sustainable management of the urban environment. Key events in the process of action research are the regular meetings and workshops at local, regional and international levels, with all partners and actors involved. They provide an efficient platform for exchange, discussion and readjustment of the activities, findings and consequences. More importantly, they create an interface for donors and organisations that can help with the solutions and initiatives of urban inhabitants.

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In memory of Jimmy Mascarenhas

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Robert Chambers

Jimmy Mascarenhas passed away on 5th January this year. He had been briefly in intensive care with a respiratory disorder. His family, Sheila, Adrian and Kiran, were with him. For the participation community, this is an immense and untimely loss.

Jimmy will be remembered as a great innovator and disseminator. While working with MYRADA in South India and later with OUTREACH, the NGO he started, his part in the discovery, development and dissemination of the methods and approaches of PRA was seminal. He and his team of fieldworkers in Gulbarga District pioneered participatory approaches for watershed management and conservation which were enormously influential. They were among the first, if not the first, to evolve some of the visual participatory methods such as watershed modelling, resource mapping, seasonal diagramming and matrix ranking. Jimmy initiated the practice of staying days and nights in villages as part of training. He and his team in MYRADA were at that time full of an enthusiastic excitement that bordered on disbelief that what was happening could be real and that it could happen not once, but again and again.

Later, establishing OUTREACH as a new NGO, demanded courage and determination. It was a difficult period when he worked immensely hard and made personal sacrifices to ensure that staff were paid and that OUTREACH survived and grew. Now it is a well-established NGO with a fine record, concentrating on women's groups and processes which enable them to federate and to manage on their own.

From the very early days of PRA Jimmy had the vision to see its potential in many fields and types of organisations. He made a distinctive contribution through introducing it in Government. As early as 1990, he worked with and trained Government staff in Andhra Pradesh, in the Drought-Prone Areas Programme and in Social Forestry. Later he engaged closely with Government on the huge participatory Watershed Management Programme. He trained many people in many professions, especially agriculturalists and foresters. In recent years, he had outstanding success with young lawyers, bringing them into direct contact with poor people. And he and OUTREACH had made much progress in exploring and developing participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Remarkable though Jimmy's influence and achievements were in India, they were perhaps even greater internationally. He was one of the hosts for the first South-South Sharing workshop in India in1992. Through OUTREACH, he later organised and hosted others. He conducted early PRA trainings in Nepal, the Philippines and elsewhere. It was probably in Southern Africa, in Namibia, Zimbabwe and so notably at Stoffelton in South Africa, that his charismatic inspiration in introducing PRA was most influential, sparking off almost explosive enthusiasm and spread of activity. Many people in many countries have been affected by him and by those he met and trained.

Jimmy had prolific and diverse experience and talents: a background in agriculture; ten years as the manager of a tea estate; a period with Anil Gupta at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, reinforcing his appreciation of farmers' knowledge and innovations; years as a field manager in MYRADA; and then creating his own NGO. As a trainer he had extraordinary ability. He was enormously committed, energetic and full of fun. His stamina was almost frightening. His trainings would go on to midnight and then start again with reflections at 6 the next morning. And he would carry all of us with him and could persuade even the most sceptical of senior participants. He was not to be denied. And there were other sides to him, like his love of music and singing which he shared with his musical family.

Jimmy influenced many of us in many parts of the world. The legacy of the good things he did will continue to grow and spread through those he touched and those they have touched in turn. It is tragic that he has gone so soon. Many of us have lost a dear friend and colleague. We must mourn his passing, and extend our deep sympathy to his family and to his colleagues in OUTREACH. But he would also want us also to celebrate. We can remember the good things in his life. Were he with us, this would be with a toast of his favourite, a rum and Thumbs Up (like coke). So let us raise our glasses and drink to Jimmy and give thanks for all he did and meant to so many, for the example he set, and for the inspiration which he spread. One of the best, one of the very, very best, was Jimmy.

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Overview – deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment

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Michel Pimbert and
Tom Wakeford

Introduction

Democracy without citizen deliberation and participation is ultimately an empty and meaningless concept. This understanding of politics, and many people's desire to supplement the representation they receive via elected politicians, is often the starting point for a growing number of experiments and initiatives that create new spaces for citizens to directly influence decisions affecting their lives. These approaches aim to allow greater deliberation of policies and their practical implementation through the inclusion of a variety of social actors in consultation, planning and decision-making. In the 1990s, such deliberative and inclusionary processes (DIPs) have been increasingly applied to the formulation of a wide range of policies in countries of both the North and South[1]. This special edition of *PLA Notes* focuses on participatory methods and approaches that seek to enhance deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment[2].

Box 1 Some features of deliberative and inclusionary processes (DIPs)

1. Deliberation is defined as 'careful consideration' or 'the discussion of reasons for and against'. Deliberation is a common, if not inherent, component of all decision-making and democratic societies.
2. Inclusion is the action of involving others and an inclusionary decision-making process is based on the active involvement of multiple social actors and usually emphasises the participation of previously excluded citizens.
3. Social interaction occurs. This normally incorporates face-to-face meetings between those involved.
4. There is a dependence on language through discussion and debate. This is usually in the form of verbal and visual constructions rather than written text.
5. A deliberative process assumes that, at least initially, there are different positions held by the participants and that these views should be respected.
6. DIPs are designed to enable participants to evaluate and re-evaluate their positions in the light of different perspectives and new evidence.
7. The form of negotiation is often seen as containing value over and above the 'quality' of the decisions that emerge. Participants share a commitment to the resolution of problems through public reasoning and dialogue aimed at mutual understanding, even if consensus is not being sought
8. There is the recognition that, while the goal is usually to reach decisions or at least positions upon which decisions can subsequently be taken, an unhurried, reflective and reasonably open-ended discussion is required.

Modified from Holmes and Scoones, 2000 and references therein. IDS Working Paper 113. www.ids.ac.uk

Several procedures, techniques and methods are used to include diverse actors in deliberative processes. They include citizens' juries, citizen's panels, committees, consensus conferences, scenario workshops, deliberative polling, focus groups, multi-criteria mapping, public meetings, rapid and participatory rural appraisal (RRA and PRA), and visioning exercises (see Wakeford, this issue). These approaches and methods can differ substantially in detail and have been applied to a wide range of issues and contexts, as the contributions to this special edition of *PLA Notes* testify. However, to varying degrees they all, seek to adopt the criteria of deliberation and inclusion shown in Box 1.

Reasons for the recent interest in DIPs

A number of interrelated social and political factors have contributed to the recent support for, and use of, DIPs in policy making, planning, service delivery and technology assessments.

Political changes

In many countries, representative democracy has been heavily criticised for its inability to protect citizens' interests. Marginalised groups in both the North and the South often do not participate effectively in such representative democracy. The poor are often badly organised and ill served by the organisations that mobilise their votes and claim to represent their interests. The crisis of legitimacy faced by institutions in the eyes of poor people (and a growing number of middle-income citizens) is now widely documented. Drawing from participatory

1 For the purposes of *PLA Notes* we adopt the definition of Northern countries as being those most industrialised nations that are members of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
2 Most of the contributions to this special edition of *PLA Notes* are based on presentations at a workshop held at IIED (UK) on 25 September 2000: "The Forgotten Human Right? Methods for participation and citizen empowerment in the North and South".

research in 23 countries the recent 'Consultations with the poor' report, prepared for the World Development Report 2001, concludes:

> *From the perspectives of poor people world wide, there is a crisis in governance. While the range of institutions that play important roles in poor people's lives is vast, poor people are excluded from participation in governance. State institutions, whether represented by central ministries or local government are often neither responsive nor accountable to the poor; rather the report details the arrogance and disdain with which poor people are treated. Poor people see little recourse to injustice, criminality, abuse and corruption by institutions. Not surprisingly, poor men and women lack confidence in the state institutions even though they still express their willingness to partner with them under fairer rules*[3].

Some countries, particularly in the North, are beginning to see DIPs as a way to democratise policy-making by moving beyond representative democracy and traditional forms of consultation to give the historically excluded a voice. The current concerns of donors for 'good governance' and the strengthening of civil society also contribute to increasing interest in the use of DIPs for policy making (see Cornwall and Gaventa, this issue).

Although there have been some notable Government initiatives (see Lenaghan, this issue), civil society organisations, in the North and the South, have been largely responsible for the growing interest in a wide range of participatory methodologies. Over time, these organisations have begun to take on a greater advocacy role, demanding that citizens' voices be heard during the formulation of government policies and the design of technologies to meet human needs in environmentally sustainable ways. These social actors also argue that DIPs have the potential to improve the quality of decision-making and increase the likelihood that policy formulation and implementation will be more legitimate, effective, efficient and sustainable.

Lack of trust in professional expertise and science

The growing public mistrust, cynicism and perception of declining legitimacy regarding professional and scientific expertise also partly explain the rising interest in DIPs. This is particularly the case in countries where the lack of trust in government institutions is associated with the growing link between the state and scientific expertise in policy-making. Western science plays a central role in determining much of the content and practice of service delivery (e.g. health care systems) and the design of technologies that make up the built environment in which citizens live, work and spend their leisure time. Science has thus become increasingly drawn into policy-making as experts (scientists, engineers, health professionals, urban planners…) make decisions about social, economic and environmental issues to provide policy-makers with options. This involvement of scientific expertise has tended to remove decisions from democratic politics, allowing instead more opaque technocratic decision making to prevail in many cases.

Trust in scientific expertise has been further eroded in the eyes of citizens because of the following.

- People in industrialised and post-industrialised countries no longer view science as representing certain knowledge (see Irwin, this issue). Citizens are faced with a wide range of opinions from experts and counter experts in major scientific controversies. This undermines the positivist view of knowledge with its claims that any group of experts faced with the same problem should arrive at the same conclusions. The public understanding of science has also been increasingly informed by radical critiques which present science as an *embodiment of values* in theories, things, therapies, systems, software and institutions. And all these values are part of ideologies or worldviews, with scientists immersed in the same cultural and economic conflicts, contradictions and compromises as ordinary citizens.
- Citizens feel themselves 'at risk' from science-based social and technological developments. For example, the recent crises in European countries over BSE and GMOs have seriously undermined public confidence in scientific expertise (see Irwin, this issue). This has been compounded by evidence of collusion between some key government scientific experts and the commercial interests of industry. Citizens are increasingly sceptical of scientific solutions when 'experts' have contributed to creating public health, social and environmental crisis in the first place.

In both the North and the South, solutions to overcome low public confidence in government institutions and scientific expertise have often emphasised a more deliberative and inclusive form of debate and policy-making. The value of formal science is recognised, but so is the importance of citizens' perspectives as alternative ways of framing issues (see Mirenowicz, this issue; Satya Murty and Wakeford, this issue; Sclove, this issue). Advocates argue that DIPs allow multiple perspectives into debates thereby generating better understandings of the uncertainties of science-policy questions (see Stirling, this issue). The potential of DIPs to broaden democratic control over the directions of science and technology is also emphasised in this context (see Cunningham-Burley, this issue).

3 Narayan, D. C., Chambers. R., Shah, MK & Petesch, P (2000). *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out For Change*. Washington, DC, World Bank. p.172

Uncertainty and complexity

The introduction of new technologies and *all* policy processes involves making decisions without being able to predict the effects of different courses of action. As the problems and systems dealt with become more complex and unstable, levels of uncertainty increase significantly. Environmental uncertainties and technological risks are particularly noteworthy in this connection. Environmental dynamics and effects are usually complex and long-term. Biophysical processes, such as climate change or interactions between GMOs and environment, are often characterised by non-equilibrium dynamics and high levels of instability. Predicting the long-term impacts of radioactive substances and their decay products on the living environment is beyond the power of existing science (see Wallace, this issue). The traditional approaches of risk management and cost benefit analysis are inadequate 'when we don't know what we don't know' and where 'we don't know the probabilities of possible outcomes'.

Given such uncertainty in the face of complexity, 'experts' are seen as no better equipped to decide on questions of values and interests than any other groups of citizens (see Irwin, this issue; Stirling, this issue). Perceptions of both the problem and the appropriate solution are value laden and differ enormously within society.

Advocates claim that the use of DIPs under conditions where there is uncertainty and ignorance can help:

- elicit citizens' values and views on desirable futures, whilst establishing spaces and forums for their debate and arbitration.
- generate new knowledge to inform social, environmental, economic and science policy through the interaction of diverse social actors, including local residents, citizens and divergent interest groups. Inclusive and participatory approaches may ensure that knowledge and policy processes more adequately respond to local realities as well as local definitions of well being and progress.

Human rights, social justice and empowerment

For advocates of DIPS, human rights, justice and democratic accountability are enhanced when the formulation of policies and the design of technologies involve inclusive deliberation. When conditions are enabling, citizen juries, scenario workshops and other participatory methods create a space for those with no or a weak voice to influence policy. Inclusive deliberation potentially allows men, women, the old and children to exercise their 'human right' to participate, -as citizens-, in decisions about society, the environment and the organisation of economic life. People are no longer viewed as mere users and choosers of policies and technologies; they become active 'makers and shapers' of the realities that affect their lives (Cornwall and Gaventa, this issue). Much of this argument draws its legitimacy from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This vision of deliberative democracy also resonates with longstanding political traditions in which direct citizen empowerment and action are seen as the central objectives of a just and free society that celebrates diversity, empathy and virtue.

At a more practical level, participation in policy-making and the design of technologies for the real world is also valued as an end in itself through its ability to empower participants through what they learn during deliberations. Citizens' values and preferences are often transformed during DIPs. This phenomenon does not just apply to citizen participants. DIPs can also provide an important learning experience for the participating policy-makers, bureaucrats and professionals, challenging their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour through debate and interaction with lay people and 'ordinary' citizens. This experiential learning, when renewed and rewarded as part of a larger process of institutional change (see Pimbert, this issue), is one of the pre-requisites for bureaucrats and professionals to work differently and go beyond their fears to share power in an age of increasing complexity and uncertainty.

Major issues arising in the articles

The 17 articles in the theme section of this issue of *PLA Notes* illustrate the range of situations in which deliberative and inclusive processes have been used to foster democratic debate and action. Examples reported from the South focus primarily on land use/tenure, livestock, wildlife, air pollution and biotechnology. Examples from the North emphasise issues such as radioactive waste disposal, health care, new information technology, drugs policy, biotechnology, genetic testing on human beings and urban planning.

A wider range of DIPs is more often used in the North than in the South

There are relatively few examples of DIPs other than PRA/RRAs being used in countries of the South. This remarkable difference between the North and South is reflected in this collection of papers. Southern examples include one account of a citizen jury on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in South India (Satya Murty and Wakeford, this issue) and an analysis of the use of PRA/RRA in deliberations on environmental policies in Chile, Zimbabwe, Mali, Madagascar, Guinea, India and Pakistan (Holmes and Scoones, this issue). The remaining articles focus on experiences in the North where the use of other methods for DIPs (e.g. scenario workshops, consensus conferences, focus groups) is more prevalent. The traditions of representative democracy in Europe, North America and Australia may explain these

differences. Scenario workshops, consensus conferences, citizen juries, deliberative opinion polls and other DIPs seem more prevalent in Denmark and Switzerland precisely because these countries have a strong tradition of integrating representative and direct democracy (see Andersen and Jaeger, this issue; Holmes and Scoones, this issue). Moves towards greater decentralisation and democratisation in countries of the South may create a new political climate that requires policy makers to be more accountable to the public they serve. These political shifts may encourage greater use of DIPs in southern contexts in the future.

The value of history

All the articles assembled here primarily focus on contemporary experiences with DIPs. There are few explicit references to previous moments in history when citizens directly engaged in deliberative decision making. And yet previous experience may help improve the quality of present day initiatives, whilst providing a historical perspective in arguments for and against DIPs (see Box 2).

Policy spaces created from above and below

Several examples of DIPs reported here have been convened by government agencies (see Delap, this issue; Irwin, this issue; Mirenowicz, this issue; Wallace, this issue). In some countries of the South, some of these processes have been partially initiated by international donor agencies working with the policy-making agency (see examples reported in Holmes and Scoones, this issue). In many of these cases the deliberative processes primarily fulfilled consensual and instrumental objectives. These are examples of DIPs constituting policy spaces created from above, and in which the state has substantial control over how DIPs are to fit into policy making and the design of technologies to meet human needs.

As convenors, the organising agencies determine much of the style and content of the deliberative process through choice of objectives, methods and tools, the allocation of resources and the scale of operation, and the links to the wider policy processes. This is also true for DIPs that have been initiated by organisations outside government policy-making bodies. Glasner (this issue) describes how a welsh citizen jury on genetic testing ultimately functioned as a technology of legitimisation for the commercial interests of the transnational pharmaceutical corporation that commissioned the jury process. Irwin (this issue) describes how a UK Government's much-heralded experiment in deliberative democracy ended up being condemned by its own Parliamentary committee as 'closer to market research than public consultation'.

Elsewhere – in policy spaces created from below – the debate about wider questions of ethics, values, and their links with issues of justice, morality and rights, is a striking feature of DIPs organised by civil society organisations, NGOs and radicalised professionals (see Cunningham-Burley, this issue; Sclove, this issue; Satya Murty and Wakeford, this issue). Whilst these latter examples of DIPs extend the frame of decision-making, they have relatively weak links with the formal policy process. Therein lies a danger that these democratic deliberations will simply be

Box 2 Learning from past experiences in deliberative democracy

Various citizens' groups have developed their own form of citizen participation in the formation of technology policy over the years. For example, E. P. Thompson's historical analysis illustrated how the Luddites of nineteenth century England sought to subject new technologies to a public trial, just as they had put food prices on trial in previous generations[4]. Far from opposing all new technology, recent studies have suggested that the Luddites were in favour of certain innovations as long as they did not threaten their quality of life[5]. As historian Steve Woolgar has put it, 'The conventional arguments that assert the Luddites to be irrational resisters to progress – because they mistakenly assumed either capitalism or machinery to be irrational – are based on essentialist notions of progress... The Luddites failed not because they misrecognised the machine [as their enemy] but because the alliance of forces arrayed against them was too great for their interpretation to prevail' [6].

Leading thinkers from John Dewey to Lewis Mumford made the need for direct citizen participation clear throughout the last century. Writing in the United States in 1909, Dewey pointed to the dangers that arose whenever experts become detached from the concerns of the public, or when the public is excluded from the process of long-term social planning. Unless both sides are engaged in continuous and mutually educative dialogue, neither experts nor citizens are, he suggested, capable of utilising the full range of tools available to them. He also proposed that experts could never achieve monopoly control over knowledge required for adequate social planning because of the extent to which 'they become a specialised class, they are shut off from knowledge of the needs they are supposed to serve'. When insulated and unaccountable, he argued, this 'cadre of experts' became not a public resource, but a public problem.

While accepting that citizens must often depend on experts for the gathering of facts and construction of scenarios, Dewey attacked those who dismissed the public's capability to participate in policy-making. He suggested that, given the prevailing culture of secrecy and propaganda, citizens had not been given a fair chance to fulfil their potential in this role. It was impossible to presume the quality of contribution citizens might make if balanced information were available. In the decades since Dewey wrote, citizens have shown themselves to be highly capable of understanding complex scientific and technical information.

4 Thompson, E. P. 1963 *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth, London

5 Sale, K. 1996 *Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and their War on the Industrial Revolution – Lessons for the Computer Age.* Addison Wesley, New York.

6 Woolgar, S. 1997 The Luddites: *Diablo ex Machina* in Grint K. & Woolgar, S. *The Machine at Work: technology, work and organization* Polity Press, Cambridge.

ignored because they are delivering the 'wrong message' or information that cannot be accommodated by bureaucratic decision making, major industrial lobbies and transnational commercial interests (see Pimbert, this issue).

Who frames the issue?

The extent to which assumptions behind issues can be challenged and new questions asked in DIPs is highly dependent on the choice of subject area or/and the particular way a problem is defined (see Irwin, this issue; Glasner, this issue; Mirenowicz, this issue; Wallace, this issue; Stirling, this issue). The initial choice of problems and definition of criteria drives the end results. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the multi criteria mapping example described by Stirling (this issue). Assessments of GMO in the UK were most strongly influenced by each participant's early framing of the debate. Many criteria chosen by the participants lied outside the scope of official risk assessments and for no participant is their whole range of criteria explicitly included in the formal evaluation process of GMOs in the UK. The 'sensitivity' of the early framing of issues and questions in DIPs emphasises the importance of ensuring that the entire spectrum of values and interests are represented. The extent to which organising agencies (or citizen groups) allow for flexible and open-ended 'framing' and definition of boundaries may ultimately prove to be a good indicator of their commitment to democratic values.

Resource constraints

Few of the papers assembled here discuss the amount of resources needed to facilitate different types of DIPs. Comparing citizen panels in Denmark and the USA, Sclove (this issue) argues that the costs of organising and running these events are relatively small when fairer and more democratic decisions can be obtained in the long run. However, the short-term costs of DIPs can be high. For example, the citizen juries described for the UK by Delap (this issue) cost between £5,000 and £30,000.

The time scale over which DIPs are run, and the demands on citizens' time, can make it more difficult for poorer citizens to secure their income and livelihoods. Women burdened with domestic, child caring and other tasks may find it difficult to engage in time consuming deliberative processes. Institutional and economic reforms that generate free time for citizen engagement regardless of sex, age and origin are identified as an important enabling condition for widespread deliberative and inclusive democracy (see Pimbert, this issue).

Facilitators of DIPs are a key resource too. The commitment of these facilitators is crucial and so are their skills in managing participatory processes, consensus building, allowing for creative dissent and conflict resolution. Helping normal professionals develop these new skills, and the corresponding enabling attitudes and behaviour, imply significant training costs and resource allocations to transform organisations in both the government and NGO sectors (see Pimbert, this issue).

Stakeholder oversight

Many of the guidelines for DIPs, such as those laid down by the Institute of Public Policy Research (Delap, this issue) and Citizen Foresight (Satya Murty & Wakeford, this issue), include provision for the process to be overseen by a stakeholder panel. The inclusion of stakeholders with a diverse range of interests on this panel can be an important means of ensuring the methodology is not captured by a group with a particular perspective or vested interest. However, for this purpose, for most DIPs it is crucially important to widen the concept of stakeholder to include those who are 'stake-less', having been marginalised by prevailing socio-economic forces. Only if there is a balance on any oversight body between those whose human rights are at risk and those with power, will it be likely to produce a process that is both fair and seen to be fair.

Evaluating DIPs

There have been few external evaluations of past attempts at DIPs and of their impacts on policy and practice. Wakeford (this issue) uses six evaluation criteria to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of experiences described here:

- diverse control;
- framing and scope;
- interactivity and interrogation;
- reference timeframe;
- transparency; and,
- empowerment and advocacy.

However, the need to rely on the supposed 'independence' of an external evaluator for legitimacy can be reduced if the kind of stakeholder panel described above is involved at an early stage. Each stakeholder has an interest in ensuring that the process is carried out fairly from their own standpoint. The combined contributions of stakeholders and the 'stake-less' should at least ensure that DIPs are run in a fair and balanced manner.

Attitudes to DIPs

However many criteria are laid down for their evaluation, DIPs rely on the fundamental attitudes of individuals engaged in both their design, execution and the carrying out of their recommendations. Just as teams of international observers monitoring the fairness of elections may have interests that make their approval or disapproval of an election result suspect, so facilitators and evaluators of DIPs can always attempt to use them for their own ends. In a world where the interests of a minority of the most powerful people and organisations conflict with the

well-being of the less powerful majority, this is perhaps the biggest challenge of all (see Pimbert, this issue).

Linking DIPs to broader processes of policy change

In their critical review of 35 case studies, Holmes and Scoones (this issue) argue that there has been little reflection on:

- how DIPs are located within broader policy processes; and,
- how citizens involved in participatory dialogues are linked to wider policy networks and the dynamics of policy change.

All the examples of DIPs reported here are necessarily only a small part of the policy process and many of them are one-off affairs. Few articles discuss how outcomes of these participatory events were used to influence advisory committees and technical bodies connected to policy making (see Satya Murty and Wakeford, this issue; Irwin, this issue; Holmes and Scoones, this issue). One option is for groups of actors to use DIPs when appropriate, as part of a larger set of activities aimed at influencing policy 'from below': campaigns, hidden resistance or direct civil action (see Wallace, this issue). Another option implied by the more positive aspects of the citizen jury experience in the UK (see Delap, this issue), is to combine formal bodies of representative democracy with the more bottom-up deliberative and inclusive methods and processes. This approach may be particularly effective at the level of local and municipal governments, where citizen participation and government accountability can be mutually reinforcing and supportive.

Reflections on how to integrate participatory approaches in decision making inevitably raise deeper questions about democratic governance as well as the political and economic conditions under which an active citizenship can flourish (see Cornwall and Gaventa, this issue; Pimbert, this issue). Conceptual and methodological innovations in these areas are more likely to emerge if both the framing of issues and boundary conditions are left flexible and open ended. However, general guidance for answering these questions in specific contexts can be found in documents such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the growing literature on environmental justice.

Conclusion

Three sets of challenges stand out for the theory and practice of DIPs.

- *Methodological innovations.* How can DIPs be used to further the self mobilising 'bottom up' processes of public participation and tie these in with more formal 'top down' processes of policy deliberation and decision making? Which methods are appropriate, when, where and in which sequences?
- *Preconditions for citizen voice and empowerment*. There is a need to better understand the conditions under which citizen voice can be realised in different contexts. This entails looking beyond political and social prerequisites to bridging the gap between citizenship, participation and accountability, fundamental as they are. Economic and technological conditions for democracy and citizen empowerment also need to be identified and promoted.
- *Ethics, values and intentionality*. Simply put, participatory methods such as DIPs can be used either for instrumental ends or for genuine citizen empowerment. Implicit or explicit intentions and underlying values always inform 'participation', the framing of issues, the form of any initiative and its operating principles. As citizens, we need to be clear about which values and intentions support *or* undermine a) the right to participate at all levels of the policy making process as equal partners regardless of sex or origin, b) the right to self representation and autonomy and c) the right to political, economic and cultural self determination (sovereignty).

These challenging questions are at the heart of serious and honest debates on deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment. We hope that this special issue of *PLA Notes* will encourage more critical reflection and practice in this area.

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A selection of methods used in deliberative and inclusionary processes

6

Tom Wakeford

Introduction

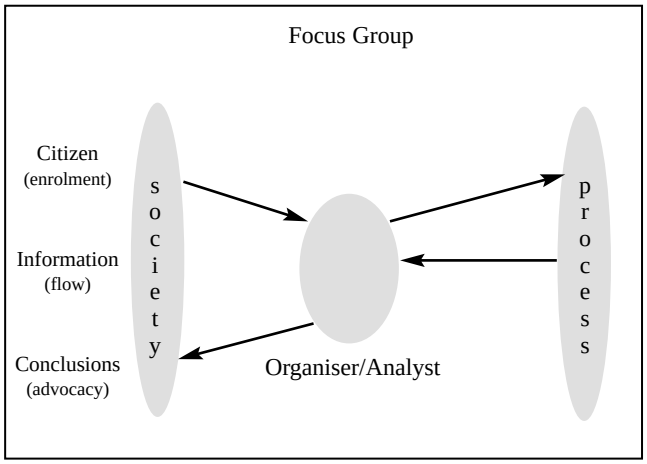
This section is intended to be a quick survey of some different deliberative and inclusionary processes (DIPs) that have been used to discuss issues involving a policy, scientific or technical component. It is by no means exclusive, and its Northern bias is an inevitable consequence of these processes having been undertaken almost exclusively in the North to date.

Many projects have focused on areas relating to science policy where there has been crisis of public confidence and a perceived gulf between scientists and citizens whose views are typically dismissed as being based on misunderstandings or ignorance. There is, however, a good deal of overlap with other participatory techniques developed for other purposes such as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (see Holmes and Scoones, this issue).

A typology

There is a large diversity within each of the four categories listed below (see Table 1). Some of the aspects of the diversity are explored in this section, while others are teased out in the more analytical section that follows.

Diagrams representing the balance of control between citizens, organisers and oversight panels in different participatory processes



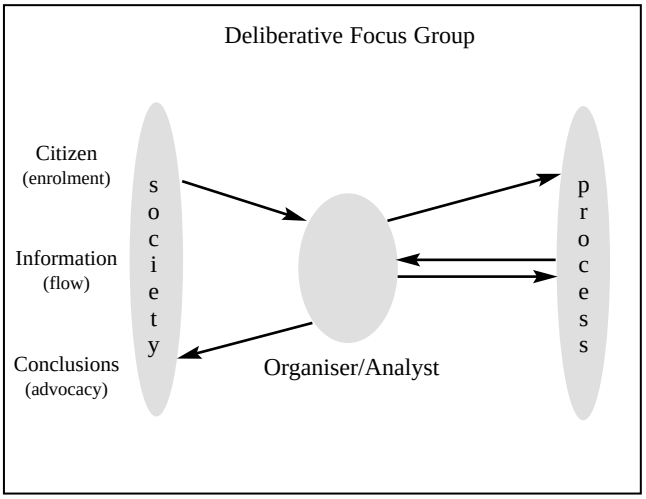
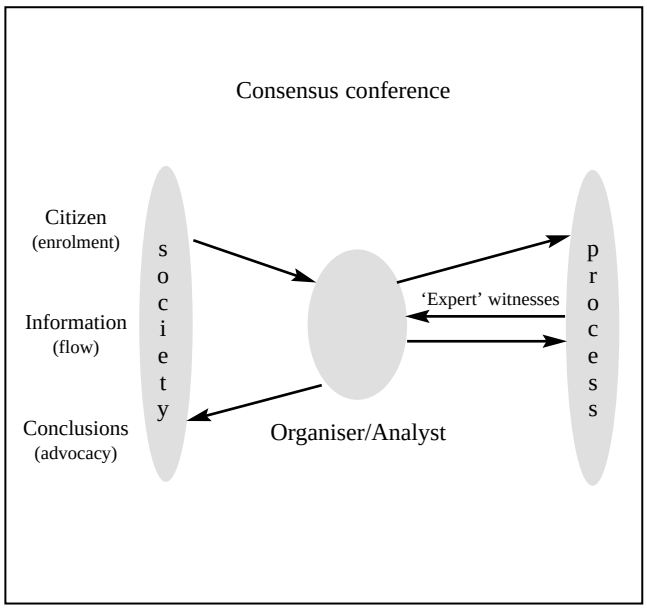


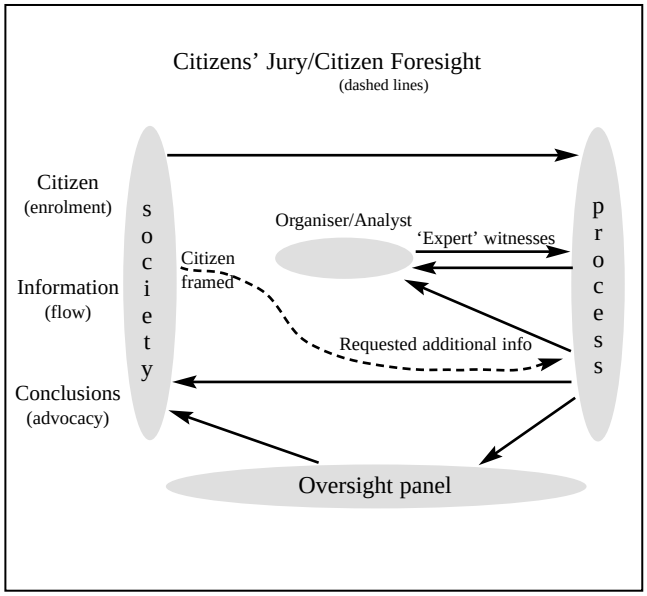
Table 1 Types of Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes (DIPs)

Category	Focus Groups
In brief	An extractive moderator-led discussion, in which views are subsequently analysed for the commissioning body.
Examples from PLA 40	Edinburgh Human Genetics (see Cunningham-Burley)
Description	A small citizens' discussion group in which people are allowed to express and explore their views in a supportive environment. Most widely used as an instrument of market research, but also as part of some participatory processes. Good at quickly teasing out citizen perspectives and concerns, but leaves all the power to moderate the discussion, analyse results and disseminate the conclusions to the organisers.

Category	Deliberative Focus Groups
In brief	As focus group, but may provide detailed briefing on topic and/or allow prompted discussion and limited debate.
Examples from PLA 40	Public Consultation on the Biosciences (see Irwin), UK Department of Health (see Lenaghan)
Description	Rather than allow citizens to reach conclusions purely on the basis of discussions between themselves, this method introduces certain amounts of oral and/or written information both during the meeting and sometimes before it. The content and potential bias of this information often becomes a matter of controversy. A trade-off emerges between the amount of time spent presenting information, and that citizens are given in which to discuss it.



Category	Consensus Conference/Panel
In brief	Citizens hear from pre-selected witnesses, and are allowed to form conclusions by consensus within a tightly pre-determined remit.
Examples from PLA 40	e.g. French Citizens Conference on Genetics (see Mirenowitz), UK Consensus Conference on Radioactive Waste (see Wallace), US Citizens' Panel on Telecommunications (see Sclove)
Description	Technique first developed by Danish Board of Technology, but has been transformed by governments and official bodies in different countries to serve different interests. Witnesses from a range of stakeholder groups present evidence and are open to cross questioning by citizens. Normally tied to particular government-driven agenda and timeframe. Aim for consensus and therefore disagreement among members of the panel or the recommendation of a diversity of options not encouraged.



Category	Citizens' Jury/Panel
In brief	As focus group, but may provide detailed briefing on topic and/or allow prompted discussion and limited debate.
Examples from PLA 40	IPPR-led jury initiative (see Delap), Welsh Jury on Genetic Testing (see Glasner), Indian Farmer Foresight (see Satya Murty & Wakeford)
Description	Similar to consensus conference, but dissent and controversy acknowledged and allowed means of expression. Panel of stakeholders agree on most aspects of methodology, such as witnesses to be called, rules of engagement. Involvement of commissioning body and/or stakeholders in implementing or advocating citizens' verdict. Jury drawn from a random sample of the electoral roll that is profiled to ensure appropriate socio-economic, ethnic and gender representation.

Category	Scenario Workshop/Citizen Foresight
In brief	Focus on future options and scenarios for the future development of technology. Specific issues to be discussed framed by citizens.
Examples from PLA 40	Swiss PubForum (see Mirenowitz), Danish Scenario Workshop (see Andersen & Jæger), UK Citizen Foresight (see Satya Murty & Wakeford).
Description	A participatory planning process to choose between different trajectories for technology. Varying different approaches including a workshop of different stakeholder groups (Denmark) and an adaptation of the citizens' jury (UK) in which witnesses are approved by stakeholder panel and open to interrogation by citizens.

Inclusivity and expertise

Though not themselves a method of citizen participation, multi-criteria mapping techniques, including the case study described by Stirling (this issue), can form an important part of DIPs, especially in the way that they increase the diversity of expertise used in deliberation processes, and the transparency about the assumptions on which experts base their analysis (see Box 1).

Box 1 Multi-criteria mapping

Example from PLA 40: Stirling

Imagine you are a witness to what at first seems a family squabble – but is really a serious long-standing disagreement about how life should be lived. The viewpoints and expectations of the participants obviously diverge: consensus seems impossible. While heading for the door, you might advise them to seek the services of a solicitor or family therapy.

Controversies in society can also be dominated by different viewpoints and expectations, but these are often unstated. Among the more popular methods to provide a 'fix' to these disputes are cost-benefit analyses, environmental impact assessment and risk assessment. Most of these techniques take the point of view of society at large and seek to derive the single best optimal solution. They purport to offer definitive answers for policy-makers in search of justifications for political decisions. Yet each number-crunched answer is underlain with unacknowledged subjective assumptions, which make these approaches inflexible and narrow in scope. The analysts' fix takes society back to square one by being just as open to disputation as the original controversy.

Multi-criteria mapping is not in itself a method of participation, but rather a device that allows researchers to create a 'map' of a controversy involving highly polarised disputants, with a view to improving the quality and transparency of debate.

The technique was developed as a systematic and transparent way of comparing policy options. It has the ability to tap into a wide range of perspectives and expertise and produce an overview that characterises, and potentially enriches, the debate. It does not attempt to foreclose deliberations by coming up with a single solution, but seeks rather to foster the exploration of alternative outcomes. It carves a middle way between highly technical, purely quantitative analysis, and qualitative, discursive approaches such as consensus conferences.

Ideologies of participation

As both Cornwall and Gaventa (this issue) and Archer (see Box 2 in Satya Murty & Wakeford) imply, underlying attempts at DIPs are always ideological assumptions about the role of participatory (or 'direct') democracy in decision-making. In Denmark, as described by Andersen & Jæger (this issue) direct citizen involvement has at least rhetorically become part of every decision-making process. By contrast, the UK culture of public consultation has become widely regarded as a means of legitimisation of pre-formed policies (Stirling, this issue) or even market research (Irwin, this issue). As the contrasting philosophies of, for example, Stirling and Glasner demonstrate, there is even a difference of emphasis among DIPs commentators as to the extent to which participatory democracy should replace expert-led decision-making. In their application, however, different contexts of application will demand different kinds of DIPs, but hopefully with the same over-riding principles (Pimbert and Wakeford, this issue).

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Bridging the gap: citizenship, participation and accountability

7

Andrea Cornwall and
John Gaventa

Introduction

Around the world, a growing crisis of legitimacy characterises the relationship between citizens and the institutions that affect their lives. In both North and South, citizens speak of mounting disillusionment with government, based on concerns about corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor and the absence of a sense of connection with elected representatives and bureaucrats (Commonwealth Foundation 1999).

As traditional forms of political representation are being re-examined, direct democratic mechanisms are increasingly being drawn upon to enable citizens to play a more active part in decisions which affect their lives. In this context, the questions of how citizens – especially the poor – express voice and how institutional responsiveness and accountability can be ensured have become paramount.

In this article, we explore some of these challenges. Repositioning participation to embrace concerns with inclusive citizenship and rights, we examine a range of contemporary participatory mechanisms and strategies that seek to bridge the gap between citizens and the state.

New contexts, new challenges

In many countries, measures to bring government 'closer to the people' through decentralisation and devolution have prompted shifts in approaches to service delivery that have widened spaces for citizen involvement. At the same time, the increasing marketisation of service delivery in many countries has introduced new roles for those who were formerly the 'beneficiaries' of government services. Users have come to be seen as 'consumers' or 'clients' and civil society organisations have become significant co-producers of what in the past were largely state functions. To some, these new roles are seen as welcome forms of partnership between the state, the market and civil society, while to others they suggest the danger that the state is off-loading its larger social responsibilities to private or non-governmental actors (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000).

Bridging the gap

In the past, there has been a tendency to respond to the gap that exists between citizens and state institutions in one of two ways. On the one hand, attention has been made to strengthening the processes of *participation* – that is the ways in which poor people exercise voice through new forms of inclusion, consultation and/or mobilisation designed to inform and to influence larger institutions and policies. On the other hand, growing attention has been paid to how to strengthen the *accountability* and *responsiveness* of these institutions and policies through changes in institutional design and a focus on the enabling structures for good governance. Each perspective has often perceived the other as inadequate, with one warning that consultation without attention to power and politics will lead to 'voice without influence' and the other arguing that reform of political institutions without attention to inclusion and consultation will only reinforce the status quo.

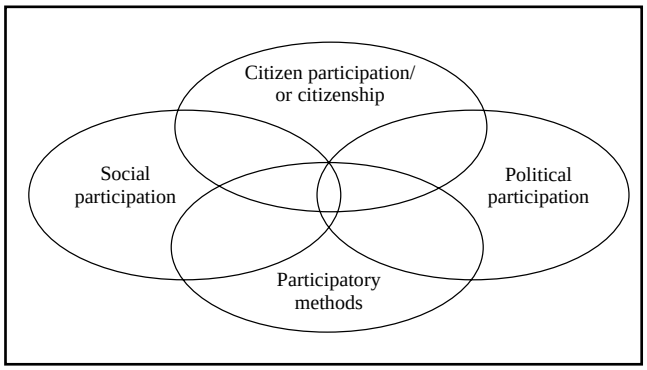
Increasingly, however, we are beginning to see the importance of working on *both* sides of the equation. As concerns about good governance and state responsiveness grow, questions about the capacity of citizens to engage and make demands on the state come to the fore. In both South and North, there is growing consensus that the way forward is found in a focus on *both* a more active and engaged civil society which can express demands of the citizenry *and* a more responsive and effective state which can secure the delivery of needed public services. At the heart of the new consensus of strong state and strong civil society are the need to develop both *participatory democracy* and *responsive government* as 'mutually reinforcing and supportive' (The Commonwealth Foundation, 1999:76, 82).

Re-positioning participation

Both social participation and political participation have carried with them a distinctive set of methods or approaches for strengthening or enhancing participation. Traditionally, in the field of political participation, such methods have included voter education, enhancing the awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizens, lobbying and advocacy, often aimed towards developing a more informed citizenry who could hold elected

representatives more accountable. In the social and community spheres, we have seen the development of a number of broader participatory methods for appraisal, planning, monitoring large institutions, training and awareness building. The emphasis here has been on the importance of participation not only to hold others accountable, but also as a self-development process, starting with the articulation of grassroots needs and priorities and moving towards the establishment of self-sustaining local organisations.

Figure 1 Linking approaches to participation



Engagement in social and community participation has inevitably brought citizens in closer contact with the institutions and processes of governance. Conversely, leaders of projects, programmes and policy research initiatives have increasingly sought the voices and versions of poor people themselves.

Where citizens have been able to take up and use the spaces that participatory processes can open up, they have been able to use their agency to demand accountability, transparency and responsiveness from government institutions. An informed, mobilised citizenry is clearly in a better position to do so effectively; the capacities built through popular education on rights and responsibilities also extend beyond taking a more active interest in the ballot box. Equally importantly, however, where government agencies have taken an active interest in seeking responsiveness and have not only listened to but acted on citizens' concerns, otherwise adversarial and distant relationships have been transformed. Clearly, this also holds the promise of electoral advantage. These moves offer new spaces in which the concept of participation can be expanded to one of 'citizenship participation', linking participation in the political, community and social spheres (see Figure 1).

New thinking about participation as a right

The concept of 'citizenship' has long been a disputed and value-laden one in democratic theory. New approaches to social citizenship seek to move beyond seeing the state as bestowing rights and demanding responsibilities of its subjects. In doing so, they aim to bridge the gap between citizen and the state by recasting citizenship as practised rather than as given. Placing an emphasis on inclusive participation as the very foundation of democratic practice, these approaches suggest a more active notion of citizenship. This recognises the agency of citizens as 'makers and shapers' rather than as 'users and choosers' of interventions or services designed by others (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000). As Lister suggests, *'the right of participation in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of basic human rights… Citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents'* (Lister 1998), (1998:228).

Building on this new thinking about participation, inclusive citizenship, rights and responsibilities, DFID's recent strategy paper *Human Rights for Poor People* offers important new directions for participation in development. Using the more insistent language of 'obligation' rather than the softer term 'responsiveness', it enjoins governments to honour commitments to citizens. Casting participation as a human right in itself, it situates the right to participate as basic to the realisation of other human rights: *'Participation in decision-making is central to enabling people to claim their rights. Effective participation requires that the voices and interests of the poor are taken into account when decisions are made and that poor people are empowered to hold policy makers accountable'* (DFID 2000).

At the same time, there is a growing recognition that universal conceptions of citizenship rights, met through a uniform set of social policies, fail to recognise diversity and difference and may in fact serve to strengthen the exclusion of some while seeking inclusion of others (Ellison 1997). With this has come a renewed emphasis on inclusion and on issues of social justice. In all three spheres of political, social and community participation, greater emphasis is now being placed on the involvement of those with least power and voice, with particular attention being paid to measures to address entrenched gender bias.

New spaces and places for citizenship participation

Such new thinking about citizenship, participation and rights raises the question of how to create new mechanisms, or spaces and places for citizen engagement. It also requires that greater attention is paid to the interface between citizens and the state, to the intermediaries who play an increasing role in bridging the gap and at processes that can enhance responsibility as well as responsiveness on all sides.

One area of innovation has been to extend the traditional places for citizen engagement from the episodic use of the ballot box. Conventional spaces such as public meetings and committees can be transformed when lent new powers and responsibilities, as user groups and citizen councils become actively involved in deliberation. Innovative processes taking place in public spaces where the majority of citizens spend their everyday lives involve more than a self-selecting few, opening up spaces for broader engagement. The use of PRA for poverty or well-being assessments, for example, offers ways of taking the consultation process to citizens in their own spaces. Legislative theatre performances draw together policy makers, service commissioners, providers and managers with community members to engage with the lived realities of everyday life and explore solutions to real-life dilemmas.

Another emerging space for the exercise of citizenship has come with the opening up, and indeed the levering open through citizen action, of formerly closed-off decision-making processes. On the one hand, in a number of countries enabling national policy has created a new imperative to consult and involve. In Bolivia and Brazil, for example, participatory municipal planning and budgeting, respectively, have national or state backing. In the UK, central government support for public involvement has led to a wave of innovation in consultation over a number of high-profile government schemes. The adoption of participatory mechanisms for project and programme planning has extended beyond the bounds of discrete initiatives, in some contexts, to on-going processes of citizen involvement in monitoring and evaluation through which citizens play a part not only in offering opinions but also in holding agencies to account.

On the other hand, the increasing use of participatory and deliberative processes have contested and begun to reconfigure the boundaries between 'expertise' and 'experience' (Gaventa 1993). As citizens are increasingly considered to have opinions that matter and experience that counts, government agencies have involved them more in the kinds of decisions that were once presented as technical, rather than acknowledged as value-laden and political. Nowhere is this more the case than in the opening up of public expenditure budgeting to citizen engagement, as has been the case in several municipalities in Brazil. At the local level, a growing emphasis on the co-production and co-management of services has also served to create new spaces for citizen involvement, as the 'owners', and to some extent the 'makers and shapers', rather than simply 'users and choosers' of services.

In other contexts, pressure placed on governments by civil society organisations has forced open spaces through demands for responsiveness and accountability. Perhaps the most notable example of this is the work of MKSS in India, whose public hearings on recorded public expenditure have named and shamed officials and exposed graft to audiences of thousands of citizens (Goetz 1999). Numerous other examples exist where NGOs have sought to intermediate between government and citizens through the use of participatory mechanisms for enhanced service responsiveness and accountability; for example in the growing move for citizen involvement in local health service management.

In areas characterised by uncertainty, the use of mechanisms such as citizens' juries offers an important new dimension: moving beyond eliciting opinions from citizens towards a process in which views are aired and defended, in which contrasting knowledge and versions are weighed up and interrogated, before 'judgements' are sought. These processes offer a valuable corrective to the tendency found in some participatory processes of simply gathering people's views, rather than providing opportunities for exploration, analysis and debate.

At the same time, citizen involvement in processes where the emphasis has been on mutual learning and new courses of action has helped mould new forms of consensus, bridging differences of interest and perspective within communities as well as between community members and statutory or non-statutory agencies. This, in turn, has helped create better mutual understanding and with it, the prospects for enhancing relationships that were previously characterised by mistrust, suspicion and distance.

Making participation real

Forms of participation run across a spectrum, from tokenism and manipulation to devolved power and citizen control. As the uses of invited participation to rubber stamp and provide legitimacy for preconceived interventions grows, citizens are becoming increasingly sceptical. A recent report by the Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power in the UK for instance warns of 'phoney' participation, in which power relations do not shift, and in which rhetoric is not reflected in reality.

In this context, making participation real raises a set of complex challenges. A key challenge is building confidence in the willingness of agencies to hear rather than simply to listen, nod and do what they were going to do in the first place. Where the use of participatory methods for consultation has often been most effective is where institutional willingness to respond is championed by high-level advocates within organisations. Where such 'champions' exist and where they can create sufficient momentum within organisations, the processes of invited participation that they help instigate can make a real difference.

New public management strategies emphasise incentives for change from within. One important incentive is to be 'championed' as a model for others to follow, as an example of good practice. Equally, recognising and rewarding changes in practice can have significant ripple effects. By creating spaces within bureaucracies in which responsiveness is valued, wider changes become possible.

Yet, as we suggest earlier, such changes are only one part of the story. The best-laid plans for public involvement can falter where citizens express disinterest and where cynical public officials simply go through the motions with no real commitment to change. Citizen monitoring and other forms of citizen action can help force some measure of accountability. To do so effectively, however, requires a level of organisation and persistence that is often beyond many communities who are involved in consultation exercises. Building the preconditions for voice and enabling citizens to actively take up and make use of available spaces for engagement calls for new combinations of older approaches to social, community and political participation.

It is in this that some of the most exciting challenges for a new generation of participatory processes reside: in ways of building more deliberation into consultative processes; in participatory rights assessments that enable people to recognise and articulate their rights; and in moves that turn the tables on processes to gather 'voices' to enable poor people to engage in analysing the policies and institutions that affect their lives, as a starting point for changes that will make a difference.

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Notes

This note borrows from material prepared for a project with Anne-Marie Goetz, et. al. 'From Consultation to Influence: Bringing Citizen Voice and Client Focus into Service Delivery' (forthcoming).

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Focus groups and public involvement in the new genetics

8

Sarah Cunningham-Burley,
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Introduction

The 1990s has been called the 'decade of the consumer' and the rhetoric of listening to the public, whether as users, voters, interested lay people etc., looks set to continue. It would be disingenuous to think that such attempts to involve and engage the public in a range of issues which may concern them, whether that be local health care planning, transport policies or debates and regulation around new genetic technologies, are entirely vacuous.

However, we should be sceptical. We must be aware of the interests of those involved, and wider context within which such a trend has developed. It is only then that we may be able to mobilise effective involvement and build a truly participatory democracy which informs science policy and health care practice.

The new genetics has spawned renewed efforts to generate public debate around some of the social and ethical issues involved and to promote further the public understanding of science. Such endeavours must be understood at least partly to do with science's own attempts to promote itself, its activities and its view of the world through stressing the benefits of science and the value of scientists' own expertise. The rapid development of new genetic technologies and their application in the health care arena have perhaps made concerns about the acceptability of science more pressing, in the light of an ever sceptical public. The spectre of eugenics, discrimination and other abuses mean that scientists must engage in issues of public concern and they take on that responsibility quite visibly through the media as well as within the regulatory process. But, we must reflect on that very process and how it may serve to maintain professionals' power. In relation to the new genetics, scientists' expert status extends beyond their area of technological expertise to include consideration of social and ethical issues, the very area where public debate is also considered important. They are in a privileged position within any debate about the impact of the new genetics, which can seriously limit the extent of public involvement.

The way in which the public is viewed in much discussion around lay involvement in the new genetics also contributes to an undermining of their potential contribution. The 'deficit model', which regards the public's understanding of science as inadequate and that their lack of technical knowledge means they are unable to comment on relevant issues, still prevails, despite the serious challenge from social scientists. Such a view tends to focus on the public's lack of knowledge, especially about the technical details of genetic science. And it is technical knowledge which is considered most important in averting eugenic abuse. The rhetoric goes *'If only the public understood genetic science better, then they would not be so worried about its potential abuse'*. If such a view underpins attempts to consult and involve the public, then those with technical expertise will always be listened to more and the concerns of the public can be disparaged, managed or ignored.

How can we challenge this dominant view of the public and develop the nascent attempts to engage with it? There is scope to work within the existing frameworks and the current consultative process. For example, the Medical Research Council, the Wellcome Trust and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics have all conducted public consultation exercises. Social scientists and others have also been involved in developing ways of involving the public through citizen's juries, consensus conferences, surveys, internet conferences and voting, public debates, and focus group research to give some examples. However, all such attempts must openly reflect on the way in which the public is being viewed, the role of 'experts' in the process, and on how the very method of consultation may reinforce particular stereotypes. All such attempts should carry a commitment to acting upon rather than simply improving lay people's knowledge and opinions.

Focus groups to promote effective involvement

Let's take one example of how we might promote effective grass roots engagement, the use of focus groups. These are a much-maligned method of research and consultation and certainly their use within market research can reinforce a rather passive view of consumers

or voters. This has served to belittle an approach which has a greater potential when used in other contexts. Academic sociologists have used focus group research to investigate lay views and experience of a range of issues, including the new genetics. Their approach prioritises active involvement and dialogue among the participants in discussions: this can give substance to lay knowledge in all its diversity and move concerns well away from narrowly defined technical expertise. Research carried out in Scotland employed this method to study lay views of the new genetics (see Box 1).

We chose focus groups because we felt that they would enable discussion and debate, encourage participants to talk about issues they may not usually think about and because they allowed us to bring a diverse range of people into the research process. We felt that the group discussions were potentially empowering, as people were able to express, but more importantly explore, their views in a supportive environment. Our approach to the focus groups meant that issues relating to fundamental concerns about the context of genetic research and associated health service practice could be discussed:

Box 1 Focus groups looking at the social impact of genetic technology

The use of focus groups to investigate the 'Social Impact of the New Genetics' led us to reconsider the value of the method both in terms of accessing lay knowledge and in promoting lay participation in the public sphere.

Our research involved interviews with scientists, clinicians and journalists; an analysis of selected written media coverage, including the specialist professional press; and focus group research with a range of population groups or publics. This took place over two years and nine months and gave us access to a broad range of perspectives on the social and cultural impact of the new genetics. Our intention to reflect the diversity of publics, rather than to be representative in a more traditional sense, meant that we usually engaged with existing groups (for example, support groups or community groups). Groups were therefore small and participants usually known to each other. We did not want simply to search for differences in participants' accounts in terms of class, gender or ethnicity, but sought to understand the way in which people's social location more broadly influenced their views. Therefore we interviewed 20 groups: six who were directly affected by a genetic condition (e.g. people with disabilities, parents of children with Cystic Fibrosis); four with a professional interest in genetics (e.g. nurses and public health medicine specialists); five with an indirect link to genetics as their lifestyle or condition has been associated with genetics (e.g. gay men and a support group for people with experience of heart disease); and five other community groups/friendship networks (e.g. elderly people attending a day centre, and a group of Chinese students). No payment was made to group members to attend, although a financial contribution was made to one of the groups for the hire of a room in their building (the organisation was a charity which promoted independent living for people with disabilities). The participants were engaged as actively as possible in the research process. The project was explained in detail and feedback was offered via reports. The work was conducted recursively, and the analysis was fed back to later groups to enable deeper and more pertinent theorising. In the later focus groups we developed techniques to enable detailed exploration of issues raised in the earlier sessions.

Philosophical and existential questions were asked, and group members reflected on services, practices and policy. This did not involve asking participants to give accounts of, or 'imagine', their courses of action as consumers of genetic services. Instead they were asked to comment on the social and ethical issues raised by genetic tests and services. This allowed for a wide ranging discussion and did not put participants in an uncomfortable position by expecting them to disclose their personal views on sensitive subjects such as abortion.

The interaction between participants meant that ambivalence and ambiguities were expressed and discussed in detail. Views were challenged and moderated; and unique, shared knowledge was revealed.

These focus groups highlighted the powerful pressures existing to delineate professional expertise and lay ignorance. There was a strong resistance amongst lay people and professionals alike to recognise that the accounts in these focus groups constitute a form of expertise which places a positive value on their opinions and experiences. Invariably, when the groups were being set up, people expressed anxieties about their lack of relevant knowledge. A lot of reassurance was required to convince people that they would be able to talk about the new genetics whether or not they felt they had high level of technical proficiency in the subject. People were also highly sceptical about their involvement in policy making, arguing that their views were not considered to be important. This lack of confidence and history of exclusion means that, within the present structures truly inclusive and meaningful debate about the new genetics, would be very difficult. The processes of decision-making about funding and clinical application need to be revised if they are to become publicly accountable. This would require significant shifts in power and the creation of many more democratic fora.

Our experience of conducting these focus groups has led us to relate the research method to wider issues of participatory democracy in a more concrete fashion. We have begun to ask how do we create these fora and do focus groups help? As a direct result of our commitment to actively involve lay people in public debates and policy discussion about the new genetics, we organised a public discussion about some of the issues raised by our research at the Edinburgh International Science Festival 1997. This event 'The Public Image of the New Genetics' involved a short panel discussion about the trustworthiness of geneticists, the role of the media and the level of public understanding of genetics, as well as the public's role in decision and policy making, followed by contributions from the audience. The event was open to the public and research participants were invited to attend. Although this gave people who might otherwise have been silent an opportunity to express their views in public, it also highlighted the ease with which professionals can dominate public discussions. In addition, it showed clearly (as did the focus groups) that there is no resolute public opinion about the new genetics (or any other issue for that matter). This suggests that processes which can deal with the inevitable ambivalence which a wider range of lay people will express and the diversity present in different publics, need to be developed. Moreover, open contestation of expert knowledge should be a feature of all democratic processes.

we did not have a narrow remit simply to find out lay views on one narrow issue such as genetic testing. This approach proved effective: we found that the participants in the groups had a range of highly relevant knowledge, what we have called 'lay expertise'. This involved a sound understanding of the context of scientific developments and the limits of scientific approaches, as well as experiential and cultural knowledge of the likely impact of new genetic technologies. While a few people had direct experience of genetic related health concerns, all participants were able to discuss concerns about discrimination, definitions of disease and quality of life and the tensions around individual choice and collective issues. Importantly, our research told us that we should not be searching for straightforward answers to the complex questions which the new genetics poses. Public involvement should not be relegated to simple for or against arguments. Rather, the exploration of ambiguity, ambivalence and tensions should be the central aim of attempts to promote public engagement in the new genetics. This will generate much more meaningful debate and hopefully policy and practice that is more sensitive to diverse concerns.

In order to generate truly participatory methods of involving the public in important decisions about genetic science and its health care applications, the divide between expert and lay knowledge must be eroded. This means that the consultation process must be guided, not by those who have a vested interest in protecting their own expertise, but by citizens' themselves. New alliances between social scientists and communities can be forged, which collectively may challenge existing power structures. There is a chance now that this can happen; the rhetoric of listening to the public can be used to develop methods and approaches which encourage participation from diverse publics as well as from marginalised groups. Devolved governments may encourage this process as we all work towards developing a new civil society and a more democratic science.

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Notes

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Citizens' juries: reflections on the UK experience

9

Clare Delap

Introduction

Citizens' juries have become established in the UK in a remarkably short space of time. They are an approach to public participation which appears acceptable both to policy makers and to people in communities. The enthusiasm with which those in both central and local governing bodies have supported citizens' juries will be viewed with some cynicism. For example, are they being used to avoid more challenging ways of communicating with local communities? Do they have any influence on policy? Can citizens' juries really be independent?

This article will give an overview of the approach as it has been adopted in the UK. Then, using examples from two citizens' jury processes in Scotland, it will examine how citizens' juries can enable local people to make a difference to policy, but only if they are run an open and public manner and if they address locally relevant issues.

Citizens' juries in the UK

Since being introduced to the UK in 1996 over 100 citizens' juries have been held on issues ranging from health care rationing, to education policy to taste and decency on television[1]. The citizens' jury adopted in the UK is based on German Planning Cells and American Citizens' juries[2] and has many similarities to approaches in other parts of Europe. The use of juries in the UK can be distinguished from the adoption of similar methods in other countries in three ways.

- *Widespread interest in the approach in a relatively short period of time.* Perhaps because the approach builds on existing traditions within UK consultation, or because it fulfils a need of some public bodies, the citizens' jury has seen a very high level of interest and use.
- *Particular interest among local government and local health authorities.* These bodies have commissioned or run the vast majority of juries reflecting their concerns about existing approaches to consultation and their own accountability.
- *A high level of diversity in the way the approach is put into practice.* The approach described below has been adapted in a variety of ways to suit local needs and concerns. Those within public bodies attempting to involve the public often stress the need to 'own' the methods they use.

The concept of the citizens' jury has clearly struck a chord with certain policy-making institutions in the UK at a particular time. The idea was first introduced when the legitimacy of unelected health authorities and the democratic deficit in local government was causing particular concern. Juries also represent a policy-oriented process: they have been designed to feed into the actual decisions being taken by public bodies. The agenda for the jury can be structured in a way which is independent and open to citizens' views but which is focused on the concerns of policy makers. This means that this is not a method led by citizens, in a truly bottom-up sense, but one which is extremely useful to policy-makers. Another reason for the interest has undoubtedly been support from central government: the Labour administration's enthusiasm for new approaches to public participation has been instrumental in encouraging the use of citizens' juries and similar methods.

Features of a citizens' jury

As in all deliberative approaches, the basic principle of a citizens' jury is to invite a group of randomly selected citizens to consider a matter of policy. Participants are offered time to discuss their ideas and information to help them reach conclusions.

In the approach followed by most practitioners: 12 to 16 local people are selected to match a rough cross-section of the local community. Various recruitment methods can be used, one being to write to a random sample from the Electoral Register advising them of the jury process and inviting their participation. From these responses, the actual jury is recruited. In some instances, it may be necessary to 'top up' the jury using other recruitment approaches or, in some instances, use alternative recruitment methods where the likelihood of people being on the Electoral Register is small.

1 The figure may be nearer to 200 but up to this point there has not been a complete record of all UK juries.

2 Professor Peter Dienel at the University of Wuppertal pioneered the use of 'Plannungszelle'. See Dienel, P. 1997. The American Citizens' Jury was developed at the Jefferson Centre for New Democratic Processes under Ned Crosby. See Stewart et al. 1994

A jury will sit for between two and a half days and four and a half days, depending upon the complexity of the question and subject matter. Jurors will be asked to address a question or questions on an important matter of policy or planning. Typically, there will be two moderators working with the jury to assist them in exploring and examining the question from all dimensions. The jurors will work in plenary sessions, small groups, pairs and individually to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute fully to the process.

Jurors are also fully briefed; receiving evidence and cross-examining witnesses. They will discuss the issues fully with witnesses and amongst themselves. They have an opportunity to ask for further information and to call their own witnesses. At the end of the event, jurors draw together their conclusions and recommendations and present them to the commissioning body. The jury proceedings are compiled in a report to which the commissioning body is expected to respond.

Citizens' juries have a number of features:

- participants are selected or recruited, rather than accepting an open invitation to a public meeting;
- information is offered to participants who are given the opportunity to scrutinise different viewpoints and options;
- participants are given time to reflect on the questions at hand; and,
- the jurors are expected to develop a shared view of the question/s they have been asked to address. The momentum of the process, including the style of moderation and the way the agenda is structured reflects this objective.

Case study – citizens' and 'stakeholder' juries in Scottish Social Inclusion Partnerships

In Spring 2000, the Scottish Executive commissioned pilot Citizens' (or people's) Juries and 'Stakeholder' Juries in two area-based Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) in Scotland. This was part of a programme attempting to 'encourage community capacity-building and a further shift in culture among public sector bodies to more effective community involvement in decision making' (Clarke et al. 2000). Two organisations were commissioned to prepare, run and evaluate the pilot juries.

Stakeholder juries

This exercise pioneered an extension of the conventional jury method. A 'stakeholder jury' was introduced to ensure that the results of the citizens' jury were taken forward into concrete action. This brings together representatives from a range of organisations able to act on jury recommendations. They discuss each citizens' jury recommendation and reach their own conclusion. The two juries then meet at a third event where the policy decisions are discussed. As we shall see in some circumstances this process is one way of increasing the momentum to act on the results of public consultation.

Two processes

Two SIP areas held pilot jury processes consisting of a 'citizens' jury, a stakeholder jury and an 'inter jury forum'. The juries in area A looked at drugs policy; focusing on improving the quality of life for individuals and communities affected by drugs. A group of randomly selected citizens examined the issues, heard from a range of witnesses and reached a set of conclusions (following the approach described above). Then a small group of local 'stakeholders' met to discuss their conclusions, including senior representatives from the health authority and trust, managers in local government and the police as well as representatives from community organisations. They questioned representatives from the citizens' jury and then worked through each of the jury recommendations to produce their own conclusions.

The Area B juries were asked to examine how to encourage participation by local people in the community. Jurors were selected from local communities. The stakeholders who then met to examine their conclusions represented local voluntary organisations, local employers and representatives from various council departments.

Reactions to the process and outcomes

Both sets of juries produced results which were seen as useful contributions to drugs policy and local participation respectively. Each jury considered the issues from a range of angles and while the stakeholders did not implement each citizens' jury idea, they were certainly considered. The exercises were evaluated to assess the effects on participants and on policy. The people's jury members or 'jurors' in both areas A and B were generally very positive about their experiences. They told interviewers that they had gained a lot from taking part particularly from exposure to different viewpoints. One juror commented that the most positive aspect was "*the opportunity to voice your own opinion, particularly about local issues*". Others commented on what they had personally learned and about how their own opinions had changed particularly for the jurors looking at drugs policy: "*before I thought put them all behind walls but now I know drug dealers are people with families… there is someone behind the stigma*". Area B jurors had a less powerful reaction to the questions they were asked to look at but that being given the chance to have an input into local policy-making was seen as very valuable.

There were marked differences between the two areas in the attitudes taken by local agencies, the outcomes of the two stakeholder juries and the reactions to the juries by the stakeholders.

In area A, stakeholders were positive about the event. They felt they had been given the opportunity to talk about areas of joint concern with other agencies. Several said the process had changed their relationships with other bodies. One described the jury as "*Direct and effective communication between those who control and influence* [these policies]". All of the stakeholders in area A were confident that positive changes would happen as a result of the jury process and could name direct changes they were making as a result of the jury. There was support both amongst local stakeholders and participants in the citizens' jury for a six-month follow-on meeting to see how drugs policy and co-ordination was being improved[3].

In area B the stakeholders were generally less happy about the event. In the interviews following the juries, they questioned the relevance of the topic under discussion and were doubtful that the policies of their organisations would change as a result of having taken part. Some commented that the nature of the event was too combative and that they were being asked to commit too much time to it. Others said that the stakeholders present were not senior enough to make commitments to action. While many said they would take the jury recommendations into account, they could not say how they would influence their work. The agencies in area B did not support local press involvement in the process. This is something we discuss below.

The evaluators could conclude that a jury process had worked well in one area according to juror and stakeholder reactions and that it had produced an impact on local policy. But in the second area, while many jurors felt they had benefited from taking part in the process, the issue under discussion was felt to be too remote and most of the local agencies involved did not find that it had or would influence their work in any substantial way.

The effects of citizens' juries

These very different experiences of citizens' juries illustrate a number of issues which are pertinent to the general experience of juries in the UK. While citizens' juries have clearly been successful in building trust and in establishing new relationships, they are expensive and time consuming mechanisms and the mixed reactions among the participants in the Scottish pilots demonstrate a number of points.

- *Jurors are enthusiastic and committed participants.* In most citizens' juries, being invited to have a say is highly valued by the participants who enjoy the debate and take their responsibilities extremely seriously. The Jurors in the Scottish pilots testified that taking part had contributed to their own understanding and development and to their sense of belonging to a community.
- *Local ownership is extremely important*. In the above examples, the process in area A was a lot more successful primarily because of the way the jury topic was chosen. Drugs policy had been selected by community groups in the Social Inclusion partnership and jurors clearly found it of great importance to their own lives. In contrast, the topic chosen in area B was not a burning issue for local people and it was difficult for the jurors to link it to their lives. Community involvement was not something any of the stakeholders felt responsible for and it was easier for individual bodies to avoid committing themselves to action.
- *Choice of subject.* Many issues are clearly not appropriate for citizens' juries and choosing a relevant, action-based question which community groups have helped frame is essential.
- *The commitment of local policy makers must be established from the beginning.* If local agencies do not 'buy-in' to the process from early on, they are much less likely to take the outcomes of public participation seriously. One of the SIP organisers described how one of her main roles had been to continually keep a range of agencies involved in the process and to ensure that senior representatives were on board.
- *Holding juries demands a great deal of organisational capacity.* This kind of deliberative exercise is extremely time consuming and expensive. A lot of commentary on citizens' juries has stressed the high levels of commitment from commissioning bodies.
- *The process must be open to wider public scrutiny.* We can see how easy it is for local agencies to avoid taking action when presented with the conclusions of citizens' juries and other public consultations. If juries and similar approaches are to encourage a public dialogue, there must be an opportunity for wider scrutiny of the process, the findings and decision-makers' responses. Local media coverage is one way of encouraging the wider involvement of the community and of holding decision-makers to any commitments they make. Another is to build in follow-on events and meetings with as wide a community involvement as possible.

Conclusions

Citizens' juries are a useful approach to add to the participatory toolkit as they can be acceptable to public bodies and to the people to whom they are accountable. However they must be open to scrutiny about control, ownership and the real commitment of those with

3 The follow-on meeting is being convened and assessed at the time of writing. The Scottish Executive will publish the results later in the year.

decision-making power. Citizens' juries provide a link between policy makers and citizens. This connection is perhaps lacking from some purely bottom-up approaches to participation. The examples in this article show that, if used inappropriately, the jury process can have little relevance to local communities and their needs. However, if the jury question is set in partnership with local groups and the process has support from local agencies, it can provide an independent community input into decisions which affect the public.

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For further information on citizens' juries, particularly regarding the origins of this method, please visit the following website:
http//www.jefferson-center.org/citizensjury.htm

Rights or rituals? Why juries can do more harm than good

10

Peter Glasner

Introduction

Citizens' juries have been developed in both Europe and the USA as a means to improving public involvement in policy decision-making, particularly in the area of local government. While citizens' juries are only one of many inputs into the policy-making process, they may, through confidence building, encourage more active citizenship. For some, the great strength of citizens' juries is the opportunity they provide for informed deliberation. However, a closer look at a citizen jury in action in Wales (UK) suggests that this may be overstating the case.

The Welsh citizens' jury

The Welsh Citizens' Jury, organised by the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care, was held in Cardiff in November 1997 and addressed the following question:

> *'What conditions should be fulfilled before genetic testing for people susceptible to common diseases becomes available on the National Health Service (NHS)?'*

This was an attempt to extend and develop the jury model in a number of ways. First, its members were chosen to represent a much larger population, the Principality of Wales, than had been the case on previous occasions in the UK, when they were selected from the local authority or similar constituencies. Second, the commissioning body was a large transnational pharmaceutical corporation which had given no commitment to act on any recommendations the jury may provide, but which had commercial interests in the area. Instead, a list of detailed recommendations was submitted by the jurors in person to the Advisory Commission on Human Genetics in London. Third, the focus on genetic testing required the jury to be briefed on the medical, scientific and technical background of genetic testing, in addition to the structure of the NHS and the mechanics of jury procedure. However, both the objectivity of this process and how it may have interacted with the resources brought to it by individual jurors, are open to question. The following offer important lessons.

- *The role of 'local' knowledge.* One of the key issues which is said to underpin the democratising credentials of the citizens' jury approach to decision-making is the input from lay members of the public. The proponents of the process in the policy arena see the jurors themselves as providing the lay input when they evaluate the 'evidence' in arriving at their recommendations. But, there is also a growing recognition that the knowledge brought to the process by the jurors themselves cannot be overlooked. Any juror, when faced with expert opinion, does not evaluate the knowledge claims in isolation from his or her experiences and perceptions. Arriving at a set of recommendations may constitute more a process of renegotiation of knowledge claims than a competent or incompetent evaluation of expertise as implied by the concept of 'judging the evidence'. Little or nothing was known, for example, about the resources brought to the Welsh Citizens' Jury by the jurors themselves, except when they chose to share these with each other during the event.

- *Terms of engagement and framing.* There is a danger of ignoring the power of experts to set agendas, define boundaries of discourse and impose assessments of risks and hazards. One important element in the terms of the engagement process centres on the 'gate-keeping' role of the Steering Committee in deciding what preliminary information is made available to jurors. The kind of background information used to provide the lay members with a balanced account of the scientific and technical knowledge needed to discuss the topic is very important. Much of this is written by actors in the public debate and it is normally impractical to include all aspects of an issue. Selection by interested parties is inevitable. This is particularly so with the selection of witnesses by the Steering Committee in Wales, which singularly omitted to provide any witness from an ethnic minority (for example sufferers from thalassaemia[1]), or those opposed to genetic testing.

- *Pseudo-expertise.* The jury was often presented with pseudo-scientific speculation rather than evidence-based

1 A specific single gene inherited disorder to which some ethnic groups are particularly susceptible.

knowledge so that the 'halo'effect of certain kinds of expertise can be seen to justify a wide range of responses to jurors' questions, many of which lie well outside the witness's areas of specialisation. In the Welsh case, one medical expert often gave opinions (for example about the organisation of the NHS) far removed from his specialisation of paediatric medicine. While legitimately based upon his personal experience of hospital and NHS Trust work, they did not reflect the primary reason for his participation. In the Welsh Citizens' Jury, it was also clear that the scientific and medical witnesses downplayed the role of human agency in the production of knowledge, presenting scientific 'facts' in abstraction from the socio-political context of their creation.

- *The jury and 'rituals of precision'.* The experience in Wales suggests that transposing the jury model from the courts may only serve to highlight the jury's ritual and symbolic nature. 'Rituals of precision' contribute to the legitimation process. In particular, these concern the emphasis on procedures; the segregation of the jury from witnesses and public, the interrogation of witnesses, the serving of a subpoena on new witnesses, the use of expert evidence, the process of decision-making about a verdict, and delivering the outcome and any subsequent action. These, along with other similarities between legal and citizens' juries, provide the necessary *ritual* elements in establishing the legitimacy of the outcomes, be they legal verdicts or political decisions. In the Citizens' Jury in Wales, most of these procedures inadequately mimicked those found in a court of law. The jury members often lunched with witnesses and were able, when going out for a break between sessions, to interact with observers. Witnesses were asked to make a presentation before answering questions, rather than being closely interrogated about specific issues. The jury did wish to see witnesses who had not been asked to attend by the Steering Committee (particularly a representative of any major religious denomination), but for practical, organisational reasons, were unsuccessful in their attempt. Experts were called but some were accorded greater status than others and one was asked to both introduce and conclude the event. The moderator orchestrated the discussions of the jury to encourage a high degree of consensus about the outcome. The Recommendations were drafted by the organisers, based upon the jury members' discussions and published after their agreement as to wording. The sponsors, while known to all the participants, must be seen to stand aside from the process until the end, when they agree to act on the Recommendations. This at least has the symbolic effect of being 'sentenced'. Unfortunately, in the Welsh case, the sponsors had not entered into any such undertaking prior to the event, and were therefore not bound by the jury's recommendations.

- *Representation and typicality*. A market research organisation was employed to choose the Welsh jury in an attempt to ensure the necessary independence from the sponsors and organisers required to establish the integrity of the process. It developed a multi-stage methodology which could be considered fairly robust in principle. However, it transpired that only one juror had experienced post-18 full-time education, seven had left school at the minimum age, relatively few claimed to be in full-time employment, none wished to be considered as native Welsh speakers, one was a Welsh resident but not a British citizen and none appeared to come from the many, well-established ethnic minority groups. As a result, it was never likely that the Welsh jury would be representative of the Welsh nation, even in some very loose sense of typicality, thereby largely eroding one of its key democratising principles.

- *Representation and difference.* One key aspect of representation which appears to be missing from discussions of the development and application of the jury process is the need to give weight to gender, disability and ethnicity. Women's experiential understandings of the issues are particularly heightened in relation to the new genetics, since many of its applications relate to genetic testing and the reproductive process. Similar comparisons can also be made with disability, whether impairment stems from illness, accident or genetic inheritance, and the two come together in the increasing tendency to terminate pregnancy on the grounds of foetal handicap. Ethnic minorities with specific single gene inherited disorders such as thalassaemia or sickle cell anaemia are also very much more focused on the issues. The Welsh jury, while able to bring some of these resources to their deliberations, only briefly addressed these issues, suggesting that the importance of 'representation' in this case may be more symbolic than real.

Together, these shortcomings may have contributed to reducing the value of the Welsh jury approach to involving the public in the decision-making process. In more general terms, wider issues, such as the role of the jury as an additional constituency in a pluralistic, decision-making process of health policy formulation appears not to have been given sufficient thought.

Key actors may establish juries as part of a sophisticated public relations exercise. User involvement becomes a *technology of legitimation*. It can also become a token in the armoury of more powerful champions (in this case the National Health Service or the multinational pharmaceutical company) translated as 'playing the user card'. This suggests that an important role for juries may be educational and consultative rather than the promotion of active citizenship.

Also, through its symbolic tokenism and rituals of precision, the jury approach appears to sit rather too comfortably within the relations of production that exist between government regulatory authorities, multinational pharmaceutical and biotech companies and the health services, while giving the appearance of developing a critical challenging perspective. The case study of the Welsh citizens' jury raises important questions of social control disguised as democratic emancipation.

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Farmer foresight: an experiment in South India

11

D. Satya Murty and Tom Wakeford

Introduction

The Farmer Foresight project was an attempt to apply methods of participative technology assessment in the South, building on the *Citizen Foresight* methodology already developed in the UK (see Box 1). The climax of the project was a citizens' jury, which took place on a farm in B G Kere in the state of Karnataka, India, between the 6th and 10th March 2000. B G Kere is a small village in a dryland area of the Chitradurga District. It is 230km north of Bangalore, the state capital, and contains a high proportion of marginal farmers and landless people.

Box 1 Citizen Foresight

The first applications of the Citizen Foresight methodology examined the future of the UK food system during the summer of 1998, before the controversy over GM-food reached its recent heights. The core of the process was a deliberation on the 'pros' and 'cons' of genetically modified foods by a panel of twelve randomly chosen UK consumers[1].

During the spring of 1998, twelve randomly selected British citizens were brought together at ten weekly meetings to hear evidence, ask questions and draw up conclusions. Members of the panel interrogated expert witnesses from academia, government and the food industry on the way our food is grown, processed, regulated and presented to consumers. This report presents their final conclusions.

Having been charged with discussing the future of the food system, panellists themselves set out the subjects that they thought were most important. They decided on a range of possible options, together with criteria by which they could be assessed. Once they had received evidence both resulting from an expert seminar and directly from witnesses, the citizen panellists themselves decided on the subjects they would like to cover in their report.

The selection and facilitation of the citizens' panel were conducted in accordance with guidelines laid out by the IPPR[2] (see Delap, this issue), with three major exceptions as follows.

- The panel met during ten three-hour sessions rather than over four seven-hour sessions. The meetings took place in the function room of a local pub. Both these features were designed to allow the panel to integrate deliberations into their normal working lives.
- Extra witnesses could be called at the direction of the panel when they wanted additional evidence on a particular subject.
- The citizens' deliberations were informed not only via witnesses but also by an expert panel who responded to requests for advice using a framework based on multi-criteria analysis (see Stirling, this issue). This allowed various options for the future of the food system to be analysed according to a range of criteria, rather than just one.

Because of these *Citizen Foresight*'s modifications to the IPPR methodology, we generally referred to the randomly-chosen participants by the more generic form 'panel' rather than 'jury'.

A key element of the IPPR Citizens' Jury methodology was the overseeing of the project by a Stakeholder Panel, which included the key interest groups and oversaw the project to ensure proper balance (see Pimbert & Wakeford, this issue). The panel was composed of citizens from a suburb of Brighton, East Sussex. The electoral ward used contained a population that had voted in line with the national average at the 1996 local elections. Two thousand questionnaires were distributed to named individuals on the electoral roll, who were offered £150 for their participation in the ten weekly deliberation sessions.

The panel met in the function room of a local pub, on ten consecutive evenings. They received evidence from four principal witnesses, who the stakeholder panel agreed, to represent a balanced view. Having heard all the evidence, the panel was then asked to draw up conclusions in the form of a report. This was typed up by the facilitator and amended by the citizens' panel at their final meeting.

Conclusions

While the Citizen Foresight process has yet to be fully assessed, preliminary evaluations by the citizens' panel failed to suggest any bias for or against genetic biotechnologies in the project's methodology. The most common suggestion for improvement by the participants was that they would have liked even more time for discussion.

Some of the most striking features of the Citizen Foresight process include observations that:

- the report by the citizens' panel was more hostile to genetically engineered foods than those reached by the Science Museum's consensus conference on plant biotechnology in 1994;
- the panel felt fully informed in making their recommendations and were highly aware of the different dimensions of risk;
- the panel displayed a thirst for critical perspectives on conventional assumptions – both scientific, economic and environmental;

1 Wakeford, T. (1999) *Citizen Foresight: The Future of Food and Agriculture*, Genetics Forum, London.
2 The Institute for Public Policy Research

- the panel was sceptical of the vested interests of all the participants in the Citizen Foresight process – including stakeholders, experts and organisers;
- having framed the options and assessment criteria for their discussion, the panel focused on producing conclusions that would have direct policy relevance – using the witnesses as resources to this end; and,
- rather than merely learning about the issues, many members of the panel appeared to feel empowered by their deliberations, asking to be involved in follow-up exercises, even on a voluntary basis

The *Citizen Foresight* exercise was influential in guiding the UK government's own recent consultation[3]. The members of the citizens' panel were invited by government to meet the Minister of State to tell him directly of their verdict. Their conclusions also formed a feature-length news item on national television, thus raising the standard of the debate beyond mere scare stories and hype[4].

The Karnataka jury was made up of 14 small and marginal farmers, together with expert witnesses who presented evidence for and against the new biotechnologies and the other observers and participants[5].

Other social actors in the process included:
- University agricultural/ecological scientists and biotechnologists (e.g. Indian Institute of Science);
- Commercial biotechnology corporations (e.g. Monsanto India);
- ActionAid and other development NGOs (e.g. Deccan Development Society);
- Farmers' Union representatives (e.g. KPKS – Karnataka's state-sponsored farmers' union); and,
- State and National Government (e.g. Department of Agriculture, Karnataka; Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi).

The ActionAid team attempted to adapt the citizens' foresight technique to a developing world context. The new method incorporated three key elements.
- The relative advantages of a range of scenarios, such as different technological pathways, should be compared from a variety of technical, social, economic and political perspectives.
- The composition could include people drawn from all over a village, region or country (or, in principle, the world) thereby giving a jury a degree of significance for a range of societal scales.
- Rather than looking at local livelihood issues and policies, the jury should give at least as much of their attention on regional, national or global issues, depending on where the relevant decisions are taken.

Having heard four days of evidence on the possible future role of biotechnology in farming, a jury of eight female and six male farmers gave their verdict on the following question: *"Would you sow the new commercial seeds proposed by the Indian Department of Biotechnology & Monsanto on your fields?"* The results were: 4 yes, 9 no, 1 invalid ballot paper (by secret ballot).

Figure 1 A small farmer casts her vote at the end of the citizen jury's deliberations on the pros and cons of using genetically modified crops (GMOs)

Context of participation

Just as political and economic systems are subject to capture by a narrow elite, so are systems of knowledge and innovation. In the South, this is perhaps most obvious in agricultural communities[6].

Knowledge

The jury demonstrated the competence with which farmers, many of whom had not finished basic schooling, or were even illiterate, could discuss often highly technical issues to which they had no previous exposure, such as genetically engineered crops. They achieved this by carefully eliciting from each witness the information relevant to their livelihoods. Rather than attempting to build up a basic knowledge of genetics, they asked whether the 'new seeds', as they called them, could address their needs, such as returning organic matter to their soils, and reducing their susceptibility to rapidly changing market prices for their harvested produce.

3 Office of Science and Technology, Allan, B. et al. (1999) *Public Consultation on the Biosciences: Report of the Advisory Group to the Office of Science and Technology, Office of Science and Technology*, London. MORI 1999 *Public Consultation on Developments in the Biosciences*, Department of Trade and Industry, London.
4 *Daily Express* 1999 More pressure for firmer control of GM food, 5/3/99:24, Express Newspapers, London.
5 Full details of jury methodology described in *AgroIndia* (Special Issue) April 2000, Bangalore, India.

6 Baumann, M. *et al*. (1996) *The Life Industry: Biodiversity, people and profits*. Intermediate Technology, London.

Having interrogated the witnesses and discussed the issue among themselves, the jury was asked to vote on whether they found the Bt cotton seeds[7] acceptable to be planted in their fields immediately. Their nine to four vote rejecting the seeds was not simply a negative response. It was supplemented by a wide-ranging list of demands as to what action should be taken by the government and transnational corporations as a precondition for their new seeds to receive greater acceptance.

The sophisticated way in which scientifically untrained citizens were thus able to develop a sophisticated critique of 'official' knowledge mirrors previous anthropological work such as the recent study of the use of indigenous knowledge by sheep farmers in Cumbria, UK in the aftermath of Chernobyl (Wynne 1996)[8], the analysis of medical biotechnology by lay focus groups (Cunningham-Burley 1998)[9] and policy work such as Citizen Foresight – Genetic Forum's citizens' jury on GM food (Genetics Forum 1999)[10].

In contrast to Citizen Foresight, in which UK citizens with no connection to the food industry discussed its future, Farmer Foresight had the advantage that all the participants were experienced agriculturalists. The citizens' jury method was thus used to reverse the power relations between those conventionally regarded as experts and those dismissed as ignorant and in need of educating. This reversal has been especially marked because agricultural genetics is an area, like economics, which is highly technical and normally immune from public scrutiny. In the Karnataka jury, it was obvious that farmers knew far more about the practicalities of agriculture than any of the witnesses.

Hierarchy and self-censorship

It was clear to Kannada-speaking observers that social hierarchy was a factor in the way different members of the jury contributed to its proceedings. Those of high social rank felt far less inhibition in contributing to the proceedings than did those from low castes.

The Karnataka jury aimed for a cross-section model, but ended up over-representing the more prosperous farmers. One of the causes was that ActionAid India's local contacts were keen to provide their key resource people with the presumed national and international exposure that the jury was thought to provide, rather than the poorest farmers known to them.

Among the poorer jurors, those who had been in contact with development NGOs were more vocal than those who had not. Although the rapport-building exercise did go some way towards building the confidence of jurors of low social rank, any future juries should ensure that someone who is professionally trained in the empowerment of marginalised groups should spend at least a day with this fraction of the jury so that the disparity due to social rank is eliminated.

The gender balance of the jury's composition, being a majority of women, was meant to reflect the fact that women carry out the majority of agricultural labour and are key repositories of knowledge and techniques. The social composition of the jury was more problematic. While the IPPR's citizens jury methodology, along with that employed in the UK *Citizen Foresight* exercise, aims at getting a symbolic cross-section of society, there are also arguments that such fora should be used for the exclusive participation and empowerment of the poorest and most marginalised and that if they do not, the interests of the articulate middle classes end up prevailing.

In the future ActionAid aims to address this issue, possibly by increasing the proportion of poorest and most marginalised jurors to around two thirds. There could also be scope for periodically sub-dividing juries into smaller groups that were women or low caste only, for example. Issues of gender equality and women's empowerment should also continue to inform the selection of witnesses and facilitators.

Governance from local to global

ActionAid's aim in carrying out the Farmer Foresight process was to bring 'the perspectives of the developing world's farmers to national and global debates about the pros and cons of GM crops'. This was based on a belief that 'rural people in the Third World have a democratic right, and sufficient knowledge, to judge the issue for themselves'.

The crucial stage that should follow on from the jury reaching their conclusions is that appropriate intermediary individuals and channels exist to act between the jury and those with the power to create change. NGOs have a role to play and can better inform their campaigns and lobbying with the jury's insights. The results of the jury had a significant impact in global media and lobbying arenas. However, the process was not conducted over a long enough time-scale that it was able to bring pressure on national and state governments, which are the most significant forces in the lives of India's rural poor. Recently some citizen participation initiatives have experimented with regional and national 'learning groups', which directly engage social actors in taking the results of the citizens' conclusions forward. ActionAid India is looking at similar structures to take forward the results of its present round of citizens juries.

7 Bt Cotton seeds are a variety genetically modified by Monsanto and include genes from a bacteria called Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt). The bacteria had previously been used for biological control in organic agriculture, but Monsanto claims it can provide pest resistance to its hybrid cotton seeds.

8 Wynne, B. & Irwin, I. (eds) (1996) *Misunderstanding Science*, Cambridge University Press.

9 Cunningham-Burley, S., *et al*. (1998) *The Social and Cultural Impact of the New Genetics*, ESRC & University of Edinburgh.

10 Wakeford (ibid).

Process of participation

Framing

One important element of the citizens' jury is that jurors are provided with information that allows them to compare and evaluate whole scenarios, each scenario being the logical product of a series of interdependent values, assumptions and predictions (see Box 2). Especially in the case of a controversial technology such as Bt cotton, a wider understanding of the inter-linkages between biotechnology, corporate control and local power structures is far more likely to be achieved by taking a scenario approach than by merely asking a jury to say 'yes' or 'no' to a particular technology. In Karnataka, these scenarios comprised of two starkly different technological trajectories for agriculture: one based on GM seed and continued chemical use, the other on saved indigenous seeds, traditional technologies and organic methods

Despite this aim, an aspect of the jury that did not work as well as planned was the juror's framing of key questions for witnesses and the building of different possible future scenarios for agriculture. Partly due to a misunderstanding in the facilitation of the opening session and partly because of over-ambitious time-tabling, there was little opportunity to ensure the witnesses focused on the jurors highest priorities, as had been achieved in the UK *Citizen Foresight*.

In retrospect it would have taken at least a full day with a specially trained facilitator to carry out a proper scenario-building process of this sort. Other similar projects are perhaps less methodologically ambitious in that they simply present jurors with four different pre-formed scenarios that represent practical alternatives at the policy level[11]. The facilitation of citizen deliberation encourages jurors to consider these different scenarios, modify and rework them as part of their own scenario-building process.

Language and power

The contributions made by the different jurors appears to bear out David Archer's insights (see Box 2) into the way in which hegemonic knowledge systems affect peoples' worldviews. Farmers who had worked with Green Revolution techniques used the language of risk, modern agronomy and economics, whereas illiterate farmers using traditional techniques and supported by NGOs promoting appropriate technologies, talked of traditional seeds, natural cycles and gender-relations. As Archer concludes, the only way around this is to seek to empower a community to build up their own analysis, so that they can contextualise this with other knowledge systems to which they will inevitably be exposed.

11 Pimbert, M.P.(2000). *Localised Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Local Livelihoods* (unpublished), International Institute for Environment and Development, London, UK

Box 2 Reflections – David Archer, ActionAid

1. **The framing of the debate.** There has been a lot of reflection on the explicit ways in which the framing of the debate can be quite manipulative. This includes the way hypotheses are put or issues are constructed for people right down to who speaks within a particular debate and the amount of time each speaker has. I just wanted to emphasise the implicit framing which takes place. This is very much about the institutions that are involved, the dynamics behind the scenes and who identifies with the different institutions. There is a whole range of implicit framing that goes on and which people aren't necessarily aware of. We are usually unaware of this ourselves and the power relationships mediated by those implicit framing devices.

2. **The need for a long term education process.** One-off interventions where the space is created or defined by an external institution are inadequate to create a sustained, democratic space for reflection and analysis of local issues. You actually need to have a much longer on-going process. One of the very few ways in which you can galvanise people to come together over a sustained period of time is through something that goes broadly under the umbrella of an educational process. Getting people together for a one, two or three year process is certainly worthwhile in my experience. We have people who come together three days a week and sometimes five or six days a week for two hours at a time. That's when you've got the space and time to be able to do a level of detailed political analysis which enables people to think and act for change. This is particularly true if you make it an internal process with a facilitator who comes from the local community, rather than set up a something constantly mediated by the external agency. There are a whole range of new problems which arise when you've got something called an education process, with different assumptions and expectations coming in. But as long as the focus within that educational process is maintained on the analysis of power relations then it can become very interesting.

3. **Thinking about knowledge.** A lot of the early work in REFLECT and in PRA was premised on the glorification of local knowledge. By working through REFLECT we now recognise that of course no knowledge is purely local anyway. People's knowledge bases are a huge combination of things which they have drawn locally but which are also massively influenced by hegemonic or dominant forms of knowledge that entered the community through one means or another. Actually, peoples' approach to a problem is not in any way pure or straightforward in applying local knowledge to a situation. The key thing is to give people confidence in their own capacity to systematise whatever sources of knowledge they have and to come up with their own analysis. As long as people have got the confidence in developing their own analysis, drawing on whatever sources of knowledge are available to them, then they are in a stronger position to critically contextualise or deal with new forms of knowledge from outside. One of the weaknesses of most of these participatory processes has been to knock people down into local level analysis. One of the major challenges is to ensure that all analysis brings in the national and international dimensions. REFLECT has recently been engaged in very exciting work in the field of numeracy. Adult numeracy sounds like a very boring thing. But numeracy is increasingly now focusing on the analysis of budgets, the analysis of prices and the analysis of statistics. This is enabling people locally to generate their own statistics and critically analyse local budgets. People learn to contextualise things like locally generated statistics and budgets in the national context, using mathematics or whatever.

The analysis of budgets, prices and statistics is thus becoming a way of making some micro/macro links. This is particularly exciting.

4. **Tensions between participation and campaigning styles.** A major area of REFLECT's work focuses on education campaigning, strengthening national coalitions and alliances on basic education. I think that as we move into this sort of campaigning, we have to explore some of the fundamental tensions that arise between the campaigning mode of operations and the principle of participatory approaches. And that issue surfaces again and again. One case that was particularly illustrative for me was a recent participatory video project in Bangladesh. Some local communities trained in the use of video. Eight people from four different communities were trained in the use of making their own videos on a whole range of issues. They were specifically asked to make a video on education. Each community made some very interesting videos about one hour long. But nobody could be bothered to look at them. If you wanted to watch them and if you wanted to influence government policy you needed much shorter, sharper things. This led the group of people who'd originally promoted that process to edit the videos down to 10 minutes each. The shorter videos were then used for various campaigning purposes. Now it seems to me that if we talk about the issue of framing debates, then in many cases the issue of editing is actually more powerful. You can edit one hour and come up with ten completely different meanings and purposes. Anybody involved with editing videos knows the immense power associated with that process. So, when you are working in campaigning mode, how do you actually ensure the validity or the ethical engagement with the original participatory process? How do you respect the participatory process throughout and not actually reach a point where you are manipulating it for your own campaigning ends? I think is a key issue.

Stakeholder control/legitimacy

A major tenet of both the IPPR citizens' jury (www.ippr.org.uk) and citizen foresight methodologies is that they should be overseen by a Stakeholder Panel, which includes the key interest groups and oversees the project to ensure proper balance. This is a powerful, though time-consuming, way of attempting to overcome the criticism, often made of PRA exercises, that they risk capture by the organisations that undertake them.

In Farmer Foresight, agro-chemical corporations, in the guise of Monsanto, were keen to gain credibility by being involved. Government, however, was far more wary of becoming fully engaged in the process, as were some international agencies and pro-GM scientists.

Impacts and the future

Accountability of corporations

Given the approach underlying the citizen jury model of maximum inclusivity in its oversight and ActionAid's global strategy of 'encouraging corporate accountability and social responsibility', the involvement of the private sector was a key component of the Karnataka jury.

As one of the largest corporations in both global and Indian agriculture and with its major interests in GM crops, Monsanto was clearly an important stakeholder and witness in such a process. They were approached early on in the jury preparations. The company has been subject to sustained criticism for their development of products seen to be damaging to the livelihoods of small farmers such as hybrid seeds that cannot be kept for future years. Even the Rockefeller Foundation, themselves a leading developer of GM crops, accused the company of risking 'removing the benefit from biotechnology' by rushing ahead with technologies such as Terminator[12]. In a statement in June 1999, its president encouraged Monsanto to develop 'participatory approaches' that increased their 'accountability and transparency', 'strengthened farmers' own decision-making'", treated them 'as equal partners in a dialogue' and most importantly recognised that 'the poor have a right to decide for themselves'. Along with its decision to halt the development of terminator technology, Monsanto's involvement in the Indian jury should be seen in the light of these criticisms.

The witness Monsanto provided – a former academic researcher into biological pest control methods, Dr T M Manjunath – avoided using his company's name throughout his presentation, saying he was present to discuss the technology, not the company. He lapsed away from an equal engagement with farmers and towards public relations, telling them they must either 'spray', 'pray', or use his companies GM cotton seeds.

As Director of Research and Development at Monsanto India, Manjunath also provided a point by point response to the jury's conclusions. Its high-handed tone is in stark contrast to the open and equal dialogue called for in Rockefeller's statement. However, the very act of making a detailed response demonstrates that Monsanto views the process as legitimate despite the vote against their seeds and most of the conclusions being hostile to their present investment strategy. The company's response also exposed many of the normally hidden assumptions that underlie their work in the South.

Their stated position clearly falls short of both respecting the knowledge of Indian farmers and of satisfactorily responding to their legitimate demands. This gap between Monsanto's global rhetoric and the reality of their policies for Indian farmers has been clearly demonstrated by the jury process. While the Indian farmers rejected the technology without many more years of trials, in which they themselves wanted to be participants and evaluators,

12 Terminator is a technology that forces farmers not only to buy seeds every year rather than save them, but that also ties them to the same company's chemicals, which become a genetically encoded requirement of the crop. For more details,see www.rafi.org, www.grain.org and www.monsanto.com

Figure 2 Research Director of Monsanto (India) presents evidence to citizen jury members, Karnataka, India

Monsanto has subsequently won approval from the Indian Department of Biotechnology and begun the release of its GM cotton for trials across India. It has also claimed it is assisting poorer farmers by attempting to fund environmental information centres run by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

National and global policies

An important factor in the impact of the jury on UK and global debates about GM crops and food security for the poor and marginalised was the fact that ActionAid chose to appoint a respected development institute (IIED) to provide an evaluation of the jury. This, along with Monsanto's considerable involvement, helped pre-empt possible criticism that ActionAid had somehow got the result it wanted by rigging the process.

For campaigners in ActionAid, the jury result, together with a report and video produced a few weeks later (Wakeford 2000), were extremely useful in that they provided renewed legitimacy to its International Food Rights Campaign. Having shown that farmers at the grassroots, in a country in which it does more work than in any other of its 30 country programmes, supported the main tenets of its campaign, it could lobby, campaign and advocate caution with regard to GM crops with more confidence.

In response to the jury, both BBC Radio 4 and BBC World TV made the jury a key feature of a half-hour long programme devoted to the controversy surrounding GM rice. During the TV programme, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation, the funders of this 'Golden' Rice research, were forced to defend their position in the light of the jury's findings. The UK government-funded Overseas Development Institute (ODI) also felt it necessary to respond to the methodology and findings of the jury (see http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/intro.html).

The future: juries and empowerment

In India, the jury highlighted the need for large development NGOs to examine the ways in which they can make sustainable agriculture a real option for poor and marginal farmers. This requires not just their traditional best practices to be valued, but also for them to be empowered to overcome the constraints on their livelihood from, for example, tiny land-holdings, disappearing water-harvesting structures and endangered traditional seed varieties. Unless juries are linked to wider empowerment processes that make the juries' recommended course of action a realistic choice for the poor and marginalised, then they risk being little more that a convenient propaganda tool for distant campaigners.

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In brief… 12

Telecommunications and the future of democracy
Preliminary report on the first U.S. Citizens' Panel

Dick Sclove

U.S. science and technology institutions and decision-making processes stand out among industrialised nations for systematically excluding lay citizen voices. The ordinary argument for ceding judgement and influence to elite representatives of the *producers* of science and technology, while excluding everyone else who will be affected, is that lay citizens have neither the competence nor passion to be involved.

On April 4th 1997, a 15-member citizens' panel, representing a cross-section of the Boston area (USA), issued a call for protecting personal privacy on the Internet, mandating community involvement in telecommunications policymaking and returning a percentage of high-tech corporate earnings to communities and non-profit organisations. This was the first systematic attempt in the United States to solicit informed input from ordinary citizens, including six who had never previously used the Internet, half of whom had also never used a computer, on the complexities of current telecommunications and technology policy. Innumerable doubters contended that a participatory process invented in Denmark (where, as the stereotype would have it, 'everyone is white, tall, blonde, educated, affluent, and civic-minded') could never work in the United States. Americans are too apathetic, too ill-educated and too different from one another. For instance, a project director at the (now-defunct) U.S. Office of Technology Assessment insisted that the agency had tried repeatedly to involve ordinary citizens in its report review processes, but that citizens simply refused to participate.

This Citizens' Panel decisively proves the sceptics wrong. All 15 members attended both the preparatory background weekends and the final forum. The panelists listened closely and asked one astute question after another. Indeed, because the background weekends had effectively brought the lay panel 'up-to-speed' on telecommunications issues, their questions were sometimes more technical than the experts' testimony!

Given the chance, our Citizens' Panelists competently assimilated a broad array of written and oral expert and stakeholder testimony, and then integrated this information with their own, very diverse life experiences to reach a well-reasoned collective judgement. Their conclusions pass a 'reality test'; they are more grounded in the daily experience and concerns of everyday people whereas expert conclusions usually are not. To me, this stands as strong evidence for both the need and practicability of democratising U.S. science and technology institutions and decisions across the board. Our relatively low budget, compressed time schedule, and steep learning curve for a first-time U.S. event led to a number of weaknesses which future US emulations should easily overcome.

- There was not enough time and staffing to support adequate consultations between the project director and the project steering committee (a diverse group of knowledgeable stakeholders chosen to help ensure impartiality in the organisation).

- The expert panel was reasonably well balanced between academics, industry, government and public-interest groups. But as a rule of thumb, I believe that there should be a minimum of three very different expert opinions presented on each contested issue. On at least one sub-issue, computers in schools, we fell far short of this ideal. Our lay panel heard three very similar, upbeat presentations by outspoken proponents of computers in education and not a single off-setting critical perspective. There is, of course, no way to know if the lay panel would have reached different conclusions had they heard a more balanced set of experts.

- The budget for this pilot Citizens' Panel was about U.S. $60,000. European consensus conferences have typically cost U.S. $100,000 – $200,000. Some of the latter, larger costs reflect the fact that the European versions have been nation-wide and have thus needed to include reimbursement for participants' travel and lodging. I estimate that a nation-wide U.S. Citizens' Panel would cost on the order of U.S. $300,000 – $500,000. That's a lot of money, but still trivial compared with the expenditures and social impacts that are at stake in major technology policy decisions.

- Lacking government sponsorship or a budget to pay expert honoraria, we were unable to secure a commitment from most of our expert witnesses to attend for two days. Thus we had to omit a key component of the Danish consensus conference methodology: the lay panelists' open cross examination of all the expert witnesses assembled together on the second day. Our process seems to have worked reasonably well without this step, nonetheless it was an unfortunate omission. Cross-examination gives the lay panel a chance to play off expert witnesses against one another and thus to take their own knowledge and judgements to a higher level of integration.

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The full text of the Citizens' Panel report and additional background information is available from the Loka Institute web page at www.loka.org

Scenario workshops and urban planning in Denmark

13

Ida-Elisabeth Andersen
and Birgit Jæger

Denmark's culture of participation

Denmark has a strong tradition of integrating both representative and participatory (or 'direct') democracy. By law, local authorities have to make a plan for any change in a local area and this is sent out for a local hearing among the citizens before the final decision. For example, in 1996, when Copenhagen was the European Cultural City of the year, all citizens, associations and enterprises were asked for their ideas.

There are deep historical roots to the strength of Denmark's integrated political processes. Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872), a clergyman, philosopher and teacher, founded 'Folk high schools', where adults participate in life-long education and empowerment. These were further developed by political philosopher Hal Koch, who believed that active and engaged people were better citizens. In 1984 a public referendum was held in which Danish citizens rejected nuclear power. The active social movement that resulted in this technology assessment by the whole population was one of the factors that led to the formation of the Danish Technology Board in 1986 by the Government.

Scenario workshops

The focus of Scenario Workshops (SWs) differs from that of most consensus conferences and citizens' juries that focus on society's use and regulation of technology. Like the Citizen Foresight approach (see Wakeford, this issue), SWs start with a commonly recognised problem and then look for solutions.

The Scenario Workshop is a local meeting that includes a dialogue among four local groups of actors:

- citizens;
- policy-makers;
- business representatives; and,
- experts.

The core of the Scenario Workshop is a presentation of possible future developments in the area. These so-called Scenarios have been formulated in advance and describe different ways of solving a problem. They have to be different with respect to both the technical and organisational solutions described and the social and political values embedded in them.

In the workshop, the scenarios are used as visions and as a spur for discussion. The criticism of the Scenarios by the participants linked to knowledge from their own experiences form the basis for the visions and action plans that they then develop. The aim is to form a basis for local action, but the Scenario Workshop furthermore serves to gather knowledge about which visions the participants have on the given topic. It also clarifies their attitudes to the presented Scenarios and their preconditions.

Workshops under the auspices of the Danish Board of Technology are usually part of a larger project. Here the participants' visions and attitudes towards new technology constitute a bank of ideas and a basis for the further discussion and assessment among experts and politicians. Furthermore, visions and attitudes are communicated to a broader circle of citizens, so they can carry on the debate among those who are likewise affected by the development.

The topic of the Workshop should not be too narrow. It should deal with assessment and choices between different types of technology. Furthermore it is important that it lies within the participants' sphere of action, i.e. that there is an opportunity for influence and that all decisions have not already been taken. It must be a topic which is relevant to society and where there is consensus that local action is a necessity. The exchange of professional insight and users' experience must generate new knowledge.

The Scenario Workshop is a particular type of meeting, which follows a certain set of rules. During the Workshop there will be time for brainstorming, discussion, presentation and time for voting. The work shifts between plenary and group sessions. The format and ground rules of the Scenario Workshop are there to ensure that everyone gets their say, that all ideas can be tabled for discussion and that the work is aimed at an action plan.

The Workshop typically lasts two days, and goes through three phases.

- Criticism phase
- Vision phase
- Realisation phase

In the criticism phase, the task is to criticise the Scenarios, both positively and negatively, from one's own experience, knowledge and viewpoints. The Scenarios are images of different possibilities for the future. This is not about making predictions and the task is not to choose between the scenarios, preferring one to another, or to assess which one is more probable. The Scenarios are meant to inspire criticism which can assist in the generation of new visions and action proposals. Participants are allowed to extract the modules or elements which they want in their own vision for the future, and combine them with other elements.

On the basis of the common knowledge derived from the criticism of the Scenarios, the vision phase focuses on developing the participants' own visions. In the realisation phase, the task is to devise an action proposal which can implement the chosen visions. The work is conducted in theme groups so there is the opportunity to work in depth with a preferred theme and formulate a number of action proposals. In order to realise the visions, a range of obstacles will present themselves, a stage which it is important not to overlook. For example, such obstacles can be financial, organisational, political or technical.

The 'vision realisation' proposals of the theme groups are discussed in plenary with a view to clarification and prioritisation. At this stage, action proposals for a final action plan are developed. In the final plan, those proposals which have been prioritised are described in detail, along with assigning responsibility for action.

The Danish Board of Technology have used the method in a larger subject area regarding *Ecologically Sustainable City and Habitation Type* and in the project *Library of the Future*, where the aim was to develop visions and proposals on the use of information technology in the public library. Our experience with the case of the Ecologically Sustainable City follows in the next section.

Case study: ecologically sustainable city

This scenario workshop was developed within the context of the Rio de Janiero Earth Summit in 1992 and was aimed at building on a broad, political consensus concerning the need to develop and transform cities and urban communities in a way that was ecologically sustainable. As it developed, it became clear that the project was dealing with an extensive process of societal transition that could not take place overnight. The project had to consider the whole technical infrastructure for energy, water, wastewater and solid waste management, as well as daily life, habits and values of all the actors involved, including residents.

This multitude of issues is what we, as citizens in a technological world, are often confronted with. The problem focus of the scenario workshop method, together with its emphasis on local problems and local solutions, makes it necessary to handle multi-technological and even non-technological problems. Scenario workshops have a broad and open approach and are thus well suited for handling local problems. They are open to citizens' visions on innovation and technological design.

One project team was faced with the task of organising a project that could provide for:

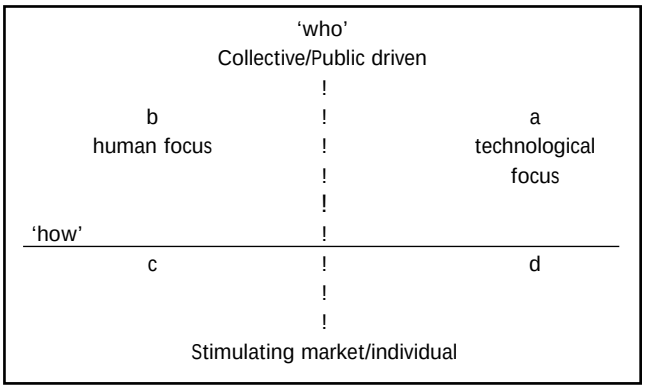
- the creation of new knowledge on locally existing visions, barriers and opportunities to realise visions;
- the production of policy proposals: who must do what to accomplish the changes required; and
- a more qualified debate based on an increased exchange of experience and knowledge; this was regarded of great importance, if changes were to stabilise over time.

To fulfil these aims it was not sufficient merely to consult engineers and other technical experts. Local actors had to be consulted to get the knowledge and experience required. It was assumed that the meeting of a variety of social actors, from different places and sectors in society, would create new ideas on visions and barriers and produce proposals for sustainable urban development.

The scenarios described a day in the life of a certain family in year 2010, portraying four different kinds of life in future housing areas. They described alternative ways of solving urban ecology problems in residential areas and individual houses. The scenarios were presented as visions, not predictions, with names (see Box 1 and Figure 1):

a. block of flats;
b. low-rise high-density housing area;
c. people's solar house; and,
d. intelligent house.

Figure 1 Two dimensional representation of four urban ecology scenarios (a,b,c,d)



Box 1 The use of evocative scenarios

The scenarios are written as simple, engaging two-page narratives of daily life that virtually anyone can easily understand. To give the flavour of a typical scenario, here is the opening passage of the first future scenario (individuals/high-tech) from the original Danish scenario workshop on sustainability.

"Mr. Knud Hansen is on his way home from work. Five minutes before reaching the house, he rings the kitchen on his mobile phone to ask the freezer to transfer a ready-made eco-meal to the microwave oven. It is his turn to cook today. The meal will be ready by the time he walks in the front door. At the same time he turns on the heating. Today he took the car to work, but he often works at home sitting in front of the computer screen. This can sometimes be a fairly lonely existence when none of the other members of the family are at home. Personal meetings with business connections are still important, and he and his family also use the car for journeys to and from some of their many leisure activities. One of the things they all go to is folk dancing on Wednesday evenings."

Each two-page future scenario narrative is followed by a succinct analysis in which the basic concept of 'environmental sustainability' is broken down and presented in terms of simple, subsidiary criteria (such as kilowatts of electricity consumed per person per day, kilograms of solid waste recycled per person per day, litres of grey-water reused per person per day, and so on).

All four scenarios represented urban ecologically sustainable solutions in the sense that they fulfilled the criteria for saving resources and non-pollution, which were officially agreed upon for Denmark for 2010. They were different with respect to both the technical and organisational solutions described in each vision and with respect to the social and political values embedded in them.

These scenarios were presented inside a two-dimensional cross (see Figure 1.). The first dimension centres on who will be acting and the second on how they will act. In the 'who' dimension, the question is whether the local authority or the market is to be the catalyst of development. Who will be carrying out the individual activities: the local authority, individual households, or somebody in between? In the 'how' dimension, the question is whether a focus on technology will provide the answers or whether people must solve the problems themselves. For example, will the necessary savings result from the creation of a programmable water tap or from changed habits?

Scenario workshops were conducted in four local communities during 1992. The criteria for choosing communities were that there should be some positive effort and experience regarding urban ecology, and that the four places should be of different size and different scales of urban development. Each participant took part in two workshops with 20-25 participants.

First, there were stakeholder-group workshops, where participants from the same stakeholder group, but four different localities, met. The task was to develop visions using the scenarios as a prompt. The cross local dialogue provided new knowledge on barriers to change and new ideas on visions, both to participants and to organisers. Reports from the first workshops were used as input for the next round; i.e. local workshops arranged in the four local communities. At the local workshops, participants were split into theme groups, according to experience and interests. The task was to agree on a common vision and produce local action plans for energy, water and waste.

The results from these workshops were evaluated and fed into local political debate. The outcome was a report and a national plan for urban ecology, which was presented at a public conference in January 1993. Subsequently this was partly implemented by the Danish Ministry of the Environment.

Since 1993, the Scenario Workshop method has been 'exported' to a range of projects under the EU Commission, the Value/Innovation Programme, DGXIII. The aim has been to create a connection between research and development activity and the needs of society. The Danish Board of Technology has been part of these projects. There has been a significant development and publication of material. Scenario Workshops have been conducted in many countries and a comprehensive network has been developed.

Discussion

The results from the project have played an important role in the Danish debate on sustainable housing and planning during the years following the conference. An evaluation among all participants shortly after the project showed that the experience had been an important learning exercise and paved the way for better dialogue at local level. However, the long-term changes in the four communities have not been monitored.

In contrast to citizens' juries and consensus conferences, where lay people are the core participants, in scenario workshops, citizens are just one group of stakeholders that interact with a number of others. Each group comes with its own expertise and contributes its experience drawn from local activities. This is a necessary reaction to the planned and regulated conventional top-down approach to community planning and encourages the engagement and participation of many citizens. In our experience, the scenario workshops tended to bring people together who did not normally engage in dialogue, even though they lived in the same place.

What may be more difficult is creating a national level impact from just working in four local areas. Scaling-up such a process requires large amounts of time and money. It also requires the organisers to document and present the results to policy-makers in a structured way. Furthermore, information organised thus can then be used for lobbying purposes, in order to raise the interest of the media and politicians in such local level initiatives. It works best if there is a 'customer' at local, national or international level who needs the results and wants to use them. Yet the 'product' for the customer is not easily described and its result cannot be predicted in advance.

Above all, the success of the scenario workshop has been to empower citizens to get involved at an early stage of the design and selection of criteria for developing new technologies. The major challenge, as with so many participatory techniques, is to make the politicians listen to the outcome.

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The Danish consensus conference model in Switzerland and France: on the importance of framing the issue

14

Jacques Mirenowicz

Introduction

In Spring 1998, a Swiss and a French official institution each organised a national deliberative technology assessment (TA) procedure based on the model of the Danish consensus conference. In May 1998, the Swiss Center for TA organised a 'PubliForum' on 'Electricity and Society'. A month later, the French Office Parlementaire d'Evaluation des Choix Scientifiques et Technologiques (OPECST) organised a 'Conférence de Citoyens' on 'Genetic modification in agriculture and food'.

In each country, this procedure, the first of its kind organised at national level, came as a major surprise for different reasons. Although France worships the notion of citizenship, hence the expression 'Citizens' conference', it is an extremely centralised state, in which decisions on technological development are usually taken by the so-called 'technocracy'. The French civil nuclear programme to produce electricity provides an insight into how powerful this technocracy is.

On the other hand, Switzerland has developed a sophisticated system of democracy at all levels. The idea of adding a consultative process to reach yet another consensus on an issue of public matter, albeit on science and technology, therefore appeared unnecessary to most observers of Swiss political life. Hence the word 'PubliForum' was preferred. The referendum on genetic engineering, which took place in June 1998, gives an idea of the level of direct democracy Switzerland has reached.

Despite differences in these two countries' democratic institutions and traditions, both the French OPECST and the Swiss Center for TA nevertheless felt the model of the consensus conference could improve public debate on science and technology. However, in comparing the two initiatives, this paper shows that the democratic content of consensus conferences is highly dependent on the initial framing of the issue.

The Swiss PubliForum on electricity and society

The paper argues that the way the organisers of the PubliForum on electricity and society framed the issue sets a model to be followed. The Board of Directors of the Swiss Center for TA named a steering committee comprising ten stakeholders to supervise the PubliForum with a balanced representation of private and public interests with regards to electricity in Switzerland.

This committee defined eleven topics for deliberation and asked a professional journalist to write fact-sheets on each one of them. Then it checked the neutrality of these sheets before sending them to the citizens two weeks before the first preparatory weekend.

The eleven topics covered by the fact-sheets were :

- technology assessment;
- the nature of energy;
- the different types of electric factories;
- the structure of the Swiss electricity market;
- the relative annual contribution, in Switzerland, of the different means of producing electricity (nuclear energy, fossil fuel, hydroelectric power, others);
- a forecast of the demand for electricity in Switzerland;
- the liberalisation of the electricity market;
- the efficient utilisation of electricity;
- the politics of energy in Switzerland;
- an outlook on the different technologies to produce electricity (including from renewable energy); and,
- criteria for judging the solutions for the future of the structure of the Swiss electricity production system.

The sheets cover the whole technical, economic and political contexts within which electricity is produced. The citizens were also presented with criteria, albeit broad, to help them choose between the options at stake. Thus, not only the range of options was presented to them, but also the means of dealing with this choice.

During the preparatory weekends, the citizens had access to documentation published by different lobbies. Furthermore, an academic summarised 30 years of controversy in the politics of energy and an ex-director of the Federal Office of Energy presented the structure of the electricity production system in Switzerland. At the end of the public hearing, during which the 27 citizens heard evidence given by 20 experts, they presented their conclusions in nine chapters of their report. The chapter

headings of this report are noted below.
1. Electricity and the environment
2. Radioactive waste management
3. Ethics
4. Energy saving
5. Renewable forms of energy and alternatives
6. The liberalisation of the electricity market
7. External cost
8. Taxes on energy
9. International co-ordination.

Some key characteristics of the report

Chapters one and three introduce the issue, chapter two makes a special case of radioactive waste management, chapters four and five investigate energy efficiency and alternatives, whilst the remaining four chapters explore the general economic framework within which the citizens came up with recommendations.

It is particularly noteworthy that the citizens introduce their report with the clearly defined goal '*to satisfy the long term demand in energy in a sustainable way*' which gives coherence to the entire report. In setting this goal, the citizens put themselves in a position to exercise their right to choose amongst different energy options. In terms of the goal and criteria selected by the citizens, neither the use of nuclear energy nor that of fossil fuel are satisfactory. Therefore, neither of these energy options are acceptable to the citizens at the end of the day.

In their introduction, the citizens also take full account of the upcoming liberalisation of the electricity market and the associated freedom of choice it leads to. Having explored the economic structure of the electricity market, they conclude it drives Switzerland away from sustainability. Consequently, their report explores mechanisms that can favour an optimal use of electricity and research investments in technologies that use renewable forms of energy to produce electricity.

Chapter four lists a series of recommendations to save energy. For example, funding private industries to help them acquire the financial ability to develop innovative energy saving products; giving citizens the ability to financially support such projects through new innovation grants; and finally, promoting information on such possibilities.

In chapter five, the citizens say how shocked they are by how little is invested in research on the use of renewable forms of energy. Having reached some understanding of the causes behind this imbalance, they ask for this investment to be increased. They then further explore the state of the art of several technologies that use renewable energy to produce electricity: hydroelectricity, geothermal power and photosynthesis, as well as ways to improve the storage and transport of electricity.

Criteria by which to judge this PubliForum positively

By bringing together technological, economic and political factors which all influence electricity production and use, this procedure allowed citizens to define a goal, that of the sustainable long term production of energy, which enabled them to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of a range of options to produce electricity. The procedure also enabled them to take into account the economic constraints that weigh on these options and pull society away from those which can help reach the goal they gave themselves.

The French 'Conférence de Citoyens'

The French Citizens' conference did not follow the model set by the Swiss. The OPECST gave the responsibility of supervising the conference on 'GMOs in agriculture and food' to a steering committee of seven civil servants, including six researchers. This group put together a press file but did not have time to send it to the citizens before the first preparatory weekend. The steering committee recruited eleven experts, most of whom were researchers directly involved with GMOs, who were each to give a one-hour course on one of ten topics. Citizens were lectured on the following:
- evolution of crop production during the last ten years;
- industrial techniques to prepare and process food;
- principles of nutrition;
- basic elements of genetics;
- plant breeding and transgenesis;
- national and international legal context;
- environmental issues;
- health issues;
- agricultural issues; and,
- food sector issues.

A part of the French scientific élite directly involved in GMO research gave an intensive course to the citizens. Gene technology was presented as a central inevitable fact, rather than as one option amongst many to produce food. The 13 citizens heard no less than 28 experts give evidence. At the end of the public audition, the citizen panel presented their conclusions in a report made up of five chapters.
1. Health
2. Economy
3. Environment
4. Law
5. Politics

Some key characteristics of the report

There is no introduction to the report. No goal is defined. At one point, the citizens express their support of GMOs '*so that the country will not lag behind other countries*' and their endorsement of that industry, so that France would remain competitive. The citizen report asks for

more research on ecological risks to be carried out and demands that no large-scale dissemination of GMOs takes place before reassuring data is produced. Until potential risks for human health are better assessed, a minority of citizens recommends the introduction of a moratorium on the commercialisation of GMOs.

The citizens further require that risk analysis be performed by 'competent and independent experts' working in public laboratories and conclude that '*the Government must increase its funding of public research in France*'. Here, it should be recalled that most of the individuals who lectured the citizens were civil servants working in national research centres all affected by cutbacks in Government funding of public research.

Criteria by which to judge this PubliForum negatively

Unlike the PubliForum on electricity, the 'Conférence de Citoyens' focused on gene technology in the food sector and largely ignored other means of food production. Moreover, neither were the economic and political factors, which influence the issue, discussed in depth.

The citizens were thus not encouraged to explore the range of choices that exist in farming. The issue was framed in such a way that there was little space for the analysis of other constraints citizens should take into account, so as to support a more ambitious goal. Instead, the process tended to focus on the concept of national competition. Citizens were not given the chance to reflect on the vices and virtues of food production options within an understanding of the economic structure that may result in the outcomes driving society away from the common good.

At this stage, if one agrees with this analysis, a question emerges. Was the Swiss success the outcome of a more sophisticated democratic tradition? Was the French failure the outcome of a technocratic arrogant attitude? Since no other consensus conference has taken place on electricity, it is possible to answer this question by taking a look at the other consensus conferences on GMOs which were recently organised at national level.

Nine consensus conferences on GM in crops and food between 1994 and 1999

Between November 1994 and June 1999, no less than nine Consensus conferences took place in the industrialised world. The nine consensus conferences on GM were: UK (November 1994), New Zealand (August 1996), Norway (January 1997), France (June 1998), Australia (March 1999), Denmark (March 1999), Canada (March 1999), New Zealand (May 1999), and Switzerland (June 1999).

Franziska Schwab, of the Swiss Council of Science, discusses in a report whether the Swiss PubliForum on GM constitutes a special case or whether it falls in line with the other cases which took place on this subject. This author notes that all nine reports appear '*surprisingly homogeneous. Since they are the outcome of the same procedure, the fact that they are similarly conceived is not surprising*', she argues. '*What is more surprising is that the contents of the reports are similar*', she concludes.

This conclusion is disputable. If different consensus conferences are framed in a similar way, why should it be surprising that their outcomes are similar? On the other hand, what appears surprising is that, despite the success of the first PubliForum, the Swiss Center for TA did not follow the model it set and chose, rather, to frame the PubliForum on GM crops and food as elsewhere in the industrial world.

The Swiss TA named a steering committee of fifteen members with a balanced representation of stakeholders with regards to GMOs in Switzerland. This committee asked a journalist to write fact-sheets on nine topics. The committee could not agree on the neutrality of the sheets on three topics: environment, health and economy. Thus, each camp produced its own view on these topics and the file was sent to the citizens before the first preparatory weekend.

The nine topics of the fact-sheets were as follows: technology assessment; ethics and genetic engineering; security, utility and ethics: criteria for assessing the products derived from GMOs; what GMOs can be found in shops? where are the GMOs? law and politics; GMOs and health; GMOs and the environment; and the economy of GMOs.

During the first preparatory weekend, three experts further instructed the citizens on the basic principles of genetics, on the legal state of affairs of gene technology in food production and on ethical issues. After having heard 18 experts during the public audition, 28 citizens drafted their report in the following six chapters:
1. research; 2. ecosystem; 3. health; 4. ethics; 5. economy; and 6. law and application.

Some key characteristics of the report

The chapters are very broad, similar to that of the French report described earlier, with a chapter specifically devoted to research. There is no introduction to the report. GM appears as a central issue to be dealt with, independent of a general goal.

- The basic scenario of the report, regarding research, is close to that of the French example.
- There is a need to remain competitive in the international market thanks to Research & Development (R&D) which favours gene technology.

- There is a need to assess the risk related to the consequence of this R&D.
- It is impossible to trust researchers from the private sector to provide neutral recommendations and there is thus a State duty to fund researchers working in the public sector in order to fulfil this task.

The citizens were not led to think in terms of choice between different options to deal with today's agriculture in the context of a specified goal. The procedure did not help them to compare and reflect on the existing options. They were not encouraged to tackle the GMO issue within an understanding of what vision of the common good could frame their reflection.

Why did none of the nine conferences on GMOs follow the model of the first PubliForum ?

Part of the answer is that the PubliForum on electricity was in fact unusual. Consensus conferences tend to follow a classic TA framework, which aims at examining the pros and cons of isolated technologies in terms of their general social and economic consequences. Hence, the question should be reversed: what made the first PubliForum possible? The answer is: the topic, in two ways.

At one level, intense campaigning on the system of electricity production has taken place over the past 30 years. During this time, a lot of options and scenarios have been elaborated and explored. Moreover, the threat of global warming on future generations and, perhaps, of climate change, which arises as a result of the consumption of fossil fuel, is now clearly established. Radioactive waste management also appears to be one of the trickiest socio-technical issues industrialised societies face. By contrast, gene technology is suddenly taking everyone by surprise and has not yet caused any obvious environmental damage.

But the topic helped in a deeper way: the fact is that electricity is not a technology, but a product; a technical product, but a product all the same. Hence, electricity as an issue is not equivalent to gene technology, but to food.

Conclusion: the model of the first Publiforum to gene technology can be applied to any technology

The concluding hypothesis here is that it is possible to organise any consensus conference on the model of the PubliForum on electricity. It is indeed possible to frame any issue around a product in order to display the various means to produce it. A consensus conference bringing into play genetic engineering along the lines of the first PubliForum, would be on 'Food production and Society'. Such a framing has already successfully been put together in the Citizen Foresight model. Here are glimpses of why this could prove useful.

When citizens or social actors are invited to take part in a deliberative TA experience, it does not appear worthy to simply expect them to be good students who learn technical lessons from experts. Rather, what can be of tremendous help is to understand how their values and representations will weigh on the acceptability attached to the technologies which are at stake in the procedure. By bringing their values and representations into play, instructed citizens, in the course of a well-framed consensus conference, are likely to conceive one or several ambitious goals and to come up with imaginative propositions in order to reach it or them.

A consensus conference framed around food production could, for instance, lead citizens to come up with a goal such as sustainable agriculture or local food security (meaning not the absence of toxicity but the ability of populations to produce their own food). In order to choose from the various ways of producing food, the questions would be : which of them should prove better at achieving this or that goal? And if the most favoured options for those purposes are more expensive, then the citizens are likely to try to find out economic mechanisms that could promote these options in the way they could promote the use of renewable forms of energy to produce electricity.

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The issue of framing and consensus conferences

15

Helen Wallace

Origin of consensus conferences

The consensus conference, at least in the form currently practised in countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands, and, to a lesser extent, in the UK, is an enquiry involving 10-16 citizens who are charged with addressing a socially controversial topic after meeting an expert panel in the subject. However, the concept was originally developed in a different context.

In 1976, the United States Congress became alarmed at the rapid increase in health care costs. In response, the National Institutes of Health established a new mechanism to identify and assess the safety and efficacy of new medical technologies. These 'consensus development conferences' generally focused on a specific technology, such as magnetic resonance imaging or dental implants. The conferences were exclusively composed of experts and, after three or four full days of deliberation, would produced a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the technology in question, including full references, an assessment of the quality of the data available and an explanation of the way in which differences of opinion were resolved. The model became widely used, not just in the US, but in European countries, such as Sweden and the Netherlands. By 1995, over 100 medical consensus conferences had taken place in Europe, including ten in the UK and a similar number in Denmark, France and Finland.

In the mid-1980s, having observed the success of the American model both in the US and in Denmark, the Danish Board of Technology decided to adapt the technique in order to 'bridge the gap between the general public, experts and politicians'. The terms of the adapted technique required that a panel of non-expert citizens was asked to enter into an 'open and unbiased dialogue' having been provided with the 'best available knowledge'[1]. Their final report was intended to inform decision-makers.

The introduction of so-called 'lay' voices into the consensus conference procedure has changed its character markedly. The format, combining lay investigation with expert testimony, has been used 13 times at a national level in Denmark, but only once before in the UK. In general, the lay panel is asked to reach a consensus, though this requirement has been applied more (e.g. the UK) or less (e.g. Denmark) strictly in different nations.

The procedure of the consensus conference will continue to be refined and improved. However there are limitations to the extent to which, at least in its original format, it can be considered a form of deliberative citizen participation, according to the criteria commonly used[2]. To take three examples, participants:

- must rely on the range and characteristics of the experts presented to them, rather than being able to call for extra or different perspectives;
- are *not* generally presented with knowledge from one expert which is then contradicted or critiqued by another expert, (which would resemble debates on controversial issues in real life);
- have limited input into the format of the deliberations (excludes: agenda, house rules, moderation and decision-making procedures);

Despite these concerns, consensus conferences have clearly become a popular form of public consultation and are likely to continue to evolve.

Radioactive waste

Radioactive waste has been produced by the nuclear industry in the UK for about 50 years, initially as a by-product of nuclear-weapons production and later through the development and use of nuclear power. The nuclear industry has claimed throughout this period that nuclear waste can be safely isolated underground. There is a link between the past and future expansion of the nuclear industry and the claim that nuclear waste can be safely 'disposed of' underground.

However, no underground 'repository' for long-lived, high-level radioactive waste is yet operational anywhere in the world. In 1997, following an extensive planning inquiry, the UK nuclear waste disposal company, Nirex, was

1 Grundahl, J. (1995) *The Danish consensus conference model* in Joss, S. & Durant, J. (eds) Public Participation in Science: The Role of Consensus Conferences in Europe. Science Museum, London.
2 Renn, O. *et al*. (1995) *Fairness and competence in citizen participation.* Kluwer, Dordrecht

refused planning permission to build the first stage of a nuclear waste dump near Sellafield in Cumbria. Evidence showed that the dump would leak, contaminating underground water supplies and ultimately the land, rivers and sea with radioactivity.

Environmental groups, including Greenpeace, saw this as a vindication of their long-standing position that there was no solution to nuclear waste and that there should be no further use of nuclear power or nuclear weapons. Those on the pro-nuclear side of the debate, on the other hand, adopted the position that they must work harder to win over public opinion. In particular, they decided to involve the public in order to reach a 'consensus' on the issue of a solution to the nuclear waste problem, whilst at the same time avoiding any impact on the UK's on-going nuclear activities. Once the problem had been 'solved', the way would then be open for the construction of new nuclear power stations.

The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee undertook an extensive inquiry into the management of nuclear waste. Whilst giving evidence, Greenpeace was criticised for saying that we would not necessarily accept the outcome of a public 'consensus' process and that we would still be likely oppose any attempt to build a new nuclear waste dump. One of Greenpeace's concerns was that a national 'consensus' on policy was unlikely to be acceptable in any case to those living near a proposed nuclear waste dump, or to the future generations whose environment would be contaminated. Obviously no consensus would be sought or reached with them!

The framing of the 1999 consensus conference

In 1999, a UK National Consensus Conference on Radioactive Waste Management was organised by a consultancy (UK-CEED). It was funded by the Office of Science and Technology, Nirex and the Natural Environment Research Council. At an early stage Greenpeace, amongst others, pointed out that the current (and long-standing) debate was between those who advocated nuclear power but wished to see the nuclear waste problem 'solved' before new nuclear power stations were built, and those who believed nuclear waste presented intractable intergenerational problems, and for this reason (amongst others) advocated an immediate or phased exit from nuclear power.

Any 'consensus' process, beginning from the viewpoint that 'the waste exists, we must solve the problem', would inevitably skew the debate towards the pro-nuclear establishment, by leaving the key question '*should we be making nuclear waste at all?*' outside the frame of the conference.

Key to avoiding this problem would be:

1. including the future of nuclear power and nuclear reprocessing in the framing of the debate; and,
2. making clear at the outset that the panel did not necessarily need to reach a 'consensus' or 'solve' a problem that many believe to be in any case intractable.

The conference in practice

In theory the framing of the Consensus Conference was opened up to be as wide as the panel wished. They were free to choose witnesses and questions, and were informed that they did not necessarily need to reach a consensus. The panel put much effort into studying what can be complex technical issues and produced a clear and interesting report (which incidentally agreed with the pro-nuclear side on some issues and the anti-nuclear side on others). This paper does not attempt to evaluate the process as whole, but to highlight (informally) a few issues relating to the framing of the debate.

First, it was clear from talking to the panel afterwards that they did feel quite strongly responsible both for finding a solution and reaching a consensus on the issue of what to do with existing nuclear waste. To anyone experienced in writing a joint report, this is unsurprising: it is time-consuming and difficult to broaden a tight remit and always difficult to take a minority view (although one member did so). Although the panel asked questions outside this remit, agreeing on a joint solution was the reason they felt they were there. A number of the panel clearly disliked being told by environmental groups that there was no solution to the problem they had agreed to come and help solve.

Another major problem with the remit arose: on its questions about the future of nuclear power, the panel interviewed three consultants, all of whom were pro-nuclear. The panel themselves found this frustrating and had been unaware that this would be the result of their choices. This was part of an overall strategy they adopted to avoid pro- and anti-nuclear groups as far as possible and rely on 'independent' consultants as witnesses. It is unclear why they were not advised that this was likely to result in evidence largely from those working for the nuclear industry.

The Conference was therefore rather unsatisfactory, in that the existing public debate was partially excluded by the framing of the process itself. Whilst this was obviously a problem from the point of view of an environmental group, it also left the key political difficulty (how to identify a new site) un-addressed, should the search for a new nuclear waste dump begin again sometime in the future.

Other problems with the consensus conference process as practised in the UK are reflected in other contributions to this issue (e.g. Glasner, Mirenowicz) including the following.

- *Biased briefing:* The briefing weekend for participants did not include anyone who questioned the need for continued reprocessing. Admittedly this was because one key participant dropped out at short notice, but no effort was made to overcome this bias in the information that had been provided.
- *Scope:* The citizens were not provided with any information or framework that could have allowed them to build a case for an alternative trajectory for the nuclear industry that would be anything other than a mild reform of the course already set by government .
- *Empowerment/Advocacy:* The organisers did not use the conclusions of the albeit flawed process to engender a wider critical public debate. Instead they used the conference's conclusions to bring premature closure in the way described by Glasner (this issue).

Where there has been an existing long-standing debate with opposing views, public involvement can be generally welcomed by all sides as a 'good thing'. However, such involvement does not take place in a vacuum and control over the framing is critical.

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Participation and governance in the UK Department of Health

16

Jo Lenaghan

Introduction

For me, the biggest challenge in participation is getting the insights we generate to contribute to positive change.

I have spent the last year as a civil servant in the UK Government's Department of Health, trying both to develop participatory approaches and to have them taken on board by civil servants and ministers.

In many countries, including France and Germany, the state authorities responsible for health usually undergo some form of election from local citizens. When deciding what to spend money on, or where to locate hospitals, there is therefore usually some form of democratic accountability. In the UK's National Health Service, by contrast, health authorities are appointed by ministers in the central government.

Under the Conservative government, there was a move, as has been discussed in Cornwall & Gaventa (this issue), towards a 'user/chooser' model. Under this patient-as-consumer approach, the Thatcher/Major government's initiatives centred around giving patients a stronger voice via such mechanisms such as the NHS charter, while a lot of accountability and responsibility was devolved to the local level. It was therefore local officials rather than the Health Minister who were typically in the firing line when things went wrong.

A classic case of this devolution of responsibility was the case of Child B, where a ten-year-old girl from Cambridge was refused a particular treatment for her leukaemia that cost around seventy-five thousand pounds. What was interesting about the case was not just the issue of deciding whether it was a good use of limited resources, but that it was the chief executive of Cambridgeshire Health Authority, Steven Thornton, not the Health Minister, who went on the TV and radio to defend the decision.

Since coming to power in 1997, the Labour government has tried to reclaim that central accountability and combat the 'lottery of care', whereby your chances of treatment on the NHS for some conditions depend on where you live. There is also an increasing realisation that in a health care system with limited resources, it is not so much a case of taking right or wrong decisions, but going through a process that has transparency and legitimacy.

One of the problems with the 'user/chooser' model in the NHS was that it lead to a tendency for resource-allocation to be overtly influenced by the more vocal patients' groups. Multiple sclerosis is a classic example of this. It is a terribly debilitating condition and treatment costs around ten thousand pounds a year. At the same time less dramatic diseases, especially of the elderly, get less resources, partly because there is less lobbying on their behalf.

In response to these dilemmas, governments risk trapping themselves in a private research mode, where they carry out large numbers of opinion surveys and focus groups that are commissioned and held privately, with the results never becoming open to public debate. The new freedom of information laws may make these findings quietly available to those people who know where to get them from. However, this does not normally create public pressure that could persuade the government to act on the insights such processes create.

Most of the pioneering of citizens' juries and citizens' panels in the UK was in relation to health policy, so the Department has been able to tap into work carried out by organisations such as the Institute for Public Policy Research, some of which is described in the article by Clare Delap (this issue).

Perhaps the best known example of public participation by the Department of Health was the recent consultation of health users and UK citizens as part of the preparation of a long term plan for the NHS. Traditionally civil servants would provide advice on which ministers could act, but the government decided it wanted to develop a more inclusive approach. Previous reforms under the Conservatives, such as the internal market, had generated huge resistance by those who were charged with implementing it. In planning its reforms, Labour decided to include all possible stakeholders in the health service, including doctors, nurses, ancillary staff, chief executives, patients' groups and so on. To involve these groups, they

set up Modernisation Action Teams to organise different aspects of the plan.

The wider public involvement strategy began with the distribution of twelve million leaflets, which asked the public what their three top priorities were for spending the additional money as promised by the government. Although this was largely seen as a PR exercise, it did produce half a million responses. When analysed, this provided hard evidence about the additional priorities for healthcare identified in the survey that ministers might not otherwise have considered.

Following the leaflet campaign, the department commissioned a public opinion survey on people's perceptions of, and priorities for, reforms. Finally, we held two public fora: one in London and one in Leeds, where a hundred people, recruited to match a sample of the general public, were brought together for one day to discuss their priorities. The hundred were split up into six groups along the lines of the Modernisation Action Teams referred to above, to whom, along with the Health Minister, their conclusions were fed back at the end of the day.

The political context demanded that this whole process had to be carried out within a three to four month period, which led to the loss of a lot of the richness and depth of peoples' insights. But what did come out was that there was a whole range of softer issues that politicians had largely ignored, especially to do with quality of care. For many people this did not just mean the technical quality of an operation, it meant being listened to; talked with rather than talked at. These perspectives were quite influential and the new NHS Plan, published in July 2000[1], has a whole chapter devoted to patient empowerment. The proposals contained within it could potentially work towards a health service, where the voice of patients and citizens are stitched throughout the service, from the bottom to the top.

Another government reform introduced the new National Centre for Clinical Excellence, an expert body made up mostly of doctors and other medical professionals. Under the government's plans this would work in parallel with a citizens' council that actually looks at the value judgements behind decisions taken; those decisions related to issues such as quality of life. In this way it may be possible to build citizen and patient voices into decisions that are going to be taken everyday, which can feed into national strategic choices.

What perhaps has not been realised yet is that people need time to build up preconditional capacities in their communities. The drive for speed from government leads to real problems for patients' groups and communities that want to become involved. On top of that there is the widespread cynicism about the extent to which the government really wants to listen, or is capable of it.

The challenge is two-fold. On the one hand, governments have to learn to listen to the public and involve them in public policy debates and solutions, and demonstrate change as a result. But on the other hand, those promoting public involvement must understand, and to some extent accept, the pressures of decision making and develop models that can be used within realistic time frames and budgets. At the moment much practice is based on ideal research conditions, with years of evaluation and an increasing distance from practical application of the results. Overall, however, I believe that in the UK, there is now a real opportunity for the public to be involved in the shaping of public policy.

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Notes

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1 The NHS Plan Department of Health. See: www.doh.gov.uk/nhsplan/htm

Inclusive deliberation and scientific expertise: precaution, diversity and transparency in the governance of risk

17

Andy Stirling

The 'bolt-on' approach to participation

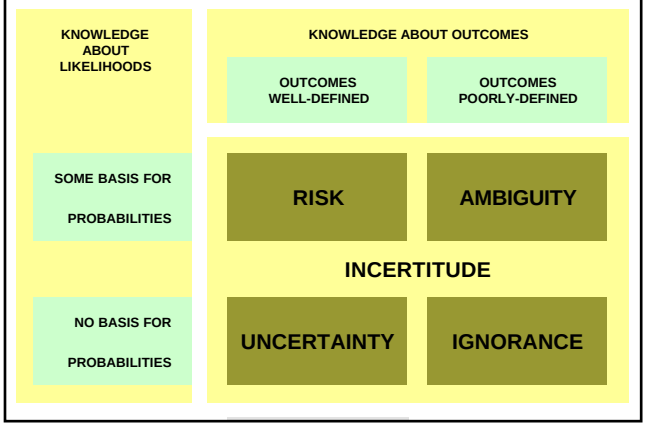
There is growing interest in many industrialised nations in more 'deliberative and inclusionary processes' (DIPs) for the governance of technological risks. This increasing interest is motivated by diminishing public confidence in traditional expert-based and quantitative approaches. The mainstream response in academic and policy circles is to explain this diminishing public confidence in social and cultural terms, rather than through examining existing limitations in expert risk science. Public concerns tend to be regarded as a problem in their own right and attention is often focused specifically on those methods which can help to reach consensus, rather than reflecting comprehensively on the resulting outcomes themselves. Hence, public participation is often approached purely as a matter of democratic process, rather than being equally about the limits of expertise and rationality and so about the quality of the outcomes of decision-making processes. As a result, greater inclusivity is too often seen simply as a 'bolt-on' to the 'real' business of expert scientific assessment.

Problems in expert risk science

By focusing on problems of risk governance that lie 'out there' in society, movements towards more inclusive deliberation may reduce friction with powerful institutional and disciplinary vested interests. This raises the profile of participation in key risk policy debates at the levels of global trade, regional harmonisation and national regulation. However, it does not challenge the privileged status of expert-based, 'sound scientific' approaches to risk assessment. This is remarkable because, despite wider concerns over democracy and communication, these approaches suffer from a number of internal limitations and contradictions, such as for example, the denial of surprise and the neglect of diversity which are explained below.

First, there's the question of 'surprise'. The business of risk assessment basically requires that we can do two things: identify the complete range of things that might happen (the 'possibilities' or 'outcomes') and assign a probability to reflect the relative likelihood of each outcome. The risk that is experienced in any given case is then usually represented as the sum of all the different possibilities, weighted by their respective probabilities. One obvious problem with this is that it doesn't take account of surprise. As can be seen from Box 1, the same logic that defines the condition of 'risk' also defines the conditions of 'uncertainty' and 'ignorance'. These apply in situations where the probabilities may not be fully quantifiable (in uncertainty) or where even some of the possibilities themselves may not be definable (ignorance). Under these conditions, the techniques of risk assessment are, by definition, not applicable.

Box 1 Risk, uncertainty, ambiguity and ignorance[1]



There are plenty of practical examples of the importance in risk assessment of surprises born of this type of ignorance. For instance, there are the recent topical cases of stratospheric ozone depletion, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) and endocrine disrupting chemicals. In the absence of knowledge of their chemistry in the stratosphere, CFCs were thought to be particularly benign products – the ozone hole was therefore initially not just considered unlikely, it was entirely unanticipated. Prior to recognition that 'mad cow disease' is transmissible to people, the very possibility of vCJD disease was unexpected. The crucial issue with endocrine disrupting chemicals is not their *degree* of toxicity, but recognition of

1 This model draws on work in: Loasby, B. (1976) *Choice, Complexity and Ignorance: an inquiry into economic theory and the practice of decision-making*, Cambridge; Smithson, M. (1989) *Ignorance and Uncertainty: emerging paradigms*, Springer, New York; Wynne, B. (1992) *Uncertainty and Environmental Learning: reconceiving science and policy in the preventive paradigm*, Global Environmental Change, 111-127; Stirling, A., (1998) *Risk at a Turning Point?*, Journal of Risk Research, 1, 2, 97-110.

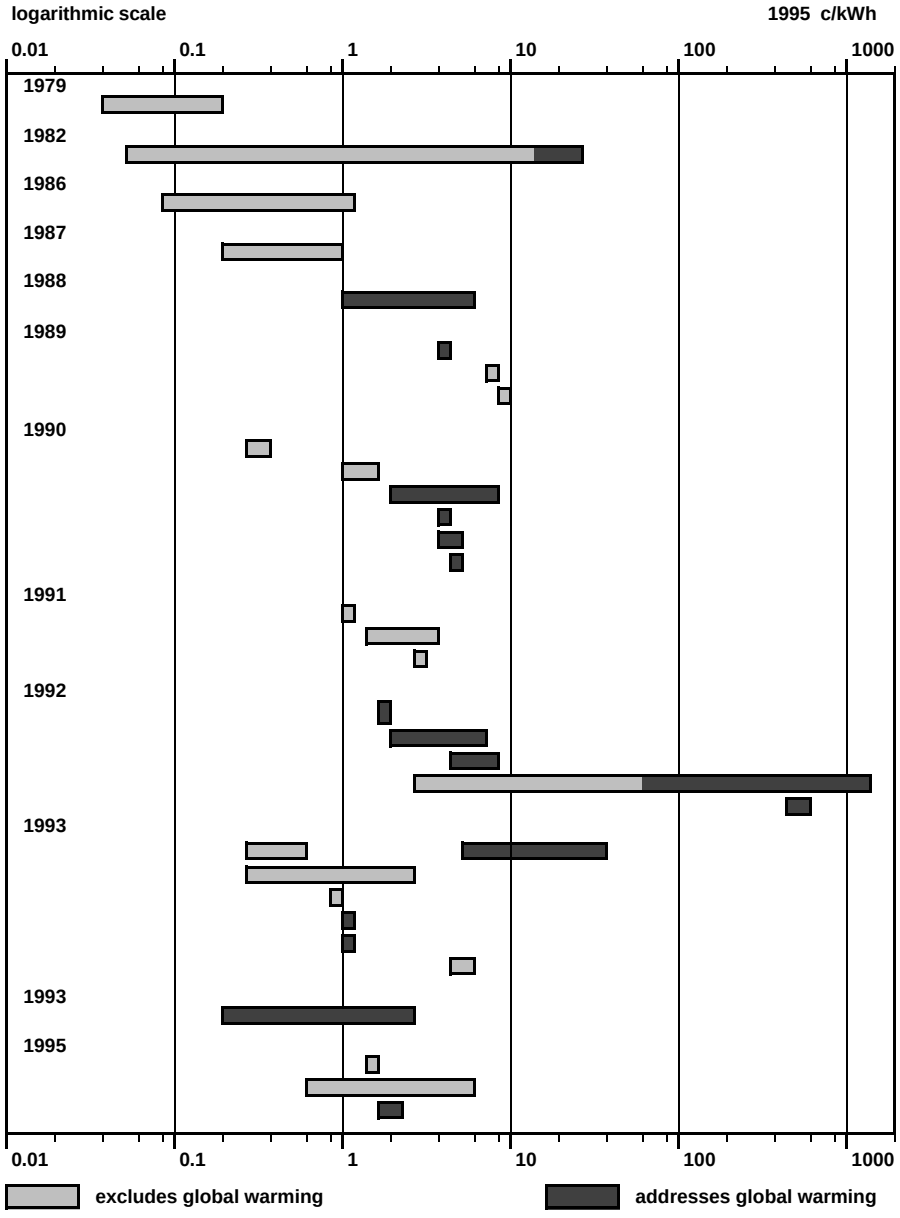
an entirely *new mechanism* of toxicity. Such cases are not just mistakes – where risks were simply assigned probabilities that were too low. Rather it is the case that the sheer possibilities of such technology-related hazards were initially unforeseen. Expert-based and quantitative approaches to risk governance continually understate the relevance of ignorance and surprise.

Second, there's diversity. Conventional risk assessment is usually aimed at delivering discrete, prescriptive judgements concerning the safety or acceptability of a given technology. The results are often expressed with impressive confidence and precision. Yet, each individual study will require the adoption of certain subjective 'framing assumptions' concerning a large number of different questions. For example:

- How to define the system under appraisal?
- How to weigh different types of economic, environmental and health effects?
- What balance to strike between present and future interests?
- How to compare different social, geographical and environmental distributions of impacts?

As illustrated in Figure 1, different, but equally 'reasonable', framing assumptions routinely lead to risk assessment results varying. The resulting ambiguity can have profound implications for the governance of different technology or policy options.

Figure 1 Variability in risk assessment results – an example from the energy sector [2]



(32 major studies of risks from modern coal power, expressed in monetary terms per unit output)

This ambiguity cannot simply be dismissed as methodological inconsistency or institutional bias. It reflects basic problems in rational choice theory, which, along with probability theory, is the major source of intellectual authority underpinning the 'science' of risk assessment. In short, it has been proven from first principles within rational choice theory itself that there is no way definitively to compare and combine different subjective preferences in a plural society[3]. Aspirations that risk assessment can somehow transcend the array of subjective assumptions and come up with single definitive answers in the assessment of risk are not only difficult to fulfil in practice, they are fundamentally meaningless, even in principle. The apparent precision evident in much conventional risk assessment is therefore misleading. To conclude, expert science is necessary for the rigorous assessment of risk, but it is insufficient on its own.

2 This chart is taken from Stirling, A. (1997) *Limits to the Value of External Costs*, Energy Policy, Vol.25, No.5.
3 Arrow, K.,(1963) *Social Choice and Individual Values*, Yale University Press, New Haven; Kelly, J.,(1978) *Arrow Impossibility Theorems*, Academic Press, New York.

An additional imperative for inclusivity: precaution

Recognition of these problems can be identified as a 'precautionary' critique of risk assessment. This raises a large number of implications which are the subject of an increasing body of literature[4]. The main point to be discussed here is that this analysis provides a clear justification for the inclusion of broader perspectives in the process of risk assessment. This is different from the usual arguments for inclusivity; for example, in terms of democratic principles or viewing public involvement as being useful only in as much as it can be an effective way of alleviating public concerns around a particular technology.

This 'precautionary' argument for inclusivity introduces a number of key issues which might otherwise be neglected.

- First, public misgivings over existing approaches to risk governance reflect some appreciation of these problems of surprise and diversity. With regards to this, broad-based lay understandings are sometimes more sophisticated than narrow expert perspectives that neglect ignorance and incommensurability. Therefore, enhanced inclusivity offers a way to make the governance of risk more robust, as expert views are complemented by lay perspectives, which results in a broader-based representation of the issues in question.
- Second, it is important to ensure that a full range of options, effects, perspectives, priorities and assumptions have been taken into account during the appraisal of the issue in hand. The key difference between 'ignorance' and 'uncertainty' in Box 1 is that with uncertainty we at least have a better handle on the possibilities. By bringing in a more diverse array of options, effects, perspectives, priorities and assumptions, we therefore convert at least some part of our ignorance into uncertainty. In addition, the divergent bodies of knowledge of different interest groups and lay constituencies can offer an important source of mutual critical review and quality control. The full inclusion of socio-political dissent in the governance of risk is a basic principle of analytical rigour.
- Third, even the most 'soundly scientific' of appraisal processes cannot provide a definitive basis for policy prescriptions. Therefore, the only truly meaningful objective in this business must lie in the systematic and transparent exploration of the way in which the scientific expertise delivers different answers under the priorities and value judgements associated with different public perspectives. Seen in this way, an inclusive deliberative approach, such as the one described later, offers the means to validate these alternative framing assumptions.
- Finally, increased inclusivity means acknowledging that different decisions may be made in different contexts. This contrasts with conventional risk governance, which aims to generalise, rather than account for a range of diverse views. Such diversity can bring a further source of rigour into the process. This is because both ignorance and incommensurability have one commonsense response. Whether 'we don't know what we don't know', or 'we cannot agree on how to frame the problem', one solid piece of advice is to avoid putting all the eggs in one basket. By pursuing a number of options in parallel, rather than seeking one 'best' course of action, we gain resilience and flexibility in the face of real world complexity and maximise the chances of effective social learning in the governance of risk. This diversity is another robust consequence of greater inclusivity.

A multi-criteria mapping approach[5]

One of the issues that recurs throughout this issue of PLA Notes is a desire for DIPs that allow representation of the widest possible range of perspectives. One way to address this in the field of risk assessment, whilst acknowledging the parallel 'precautionary imperative' discussed above, is offered by the 'multi-criteria mapping' (MCM) method.

In a project funded by the transnational food firm Unilever overseen by a 'Round Table' of widely divergent 'stakeholder' groups and conducted in collaboration with Sue Mayer of Genewatch UK (a non-governmental organisation concerned about genetic modification technology) the MCM technique was applied to a comparative appraisal of the use of a genetically modified (GM) crop (oilseed rape) in the UK. This pilot study took place over a period of fifteen months, involving two researchers in some six person-months of work during 1998-9, a period of intensive conflict on this issue in the UK. Using a specially-developed quantitative computer-based tool, the MCM approach draws on some simple, well-established methods from the field of multi-criteria decision analysis. Basically, this involves approaching appraisal using as many criteria as necessary to characterise the different outcomes, assessing these using whatever techniques are most appropriate and then assigning numerical weightings to each criterion to reflect subjective judgements over the relative importance of different issues. However, rather than using these methods to seek a definitive aggregation of expert perspectives, as is usually the case with these techniques, the MCM approach uses them to help explore precisely how the assumptions, priorities and value judgements

4 For example; O'Riordan, T., Cameron J., (1994) *Interpreting the Precautionary Principle*, Earthscan, London; Fisher, E., Harding, R., (1999) *Perspectives on the Precautionary Principle*, Federation Press, Sydney. Raffensberger, C., Tickner, J. (1999) *Protecting Public Health and the Environment: implementing the Precautionary Principle*, Island Press, Washington.

5 This section draws on research reported in Stirling, A., Mayer, S., (1999) *Rethinking Risk: a pilot multi-criteria mapping of a genetically modified crop in agricultural systems in the UK*, SPRU, University of Sussex. A summary can be downloaded from the web at: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/gec/gecko/refs.htm

associated with different public constituencies relate to the available scientific and technical information.

Involving twelve leading actors from all sides of the GM crop debate (representing key government, academic, industry and non-governmental organisations), this pilot MCM study generated quite a rich body of information. However it should be noted that this was not an exercise in the direct participation of the public, of the sort that is described in this issue of PLA Notes. Rather it was an attempt to explore the relationships between technical assessments and different public perspectives, as represented by different interest groups.,

A basic set of six agricultural strategies was defined by the researchers for the purposes of ensuring comparability. These were:
- organic farming;
- integrated pest management;
- conventional intensive farming; and,
- a series of three different GM policy frameworks.

The participants were then free to add an unlimited array of further options and define these as they wished. The result was a further 18 agricultural strategies, including many interesting aspects routinely excluded from conventional regulatory appraisal of GM crops. Then, a total of 117 criteria was defined by the participants for the evaluation of these options. For no participant (not even government and industry) do current regulatory processes address all their criteria, defined through this process.

Sets of numerical scores and weightings were elicited from participants in intensive individual interviews and revealed interesting information concerning the technical evaluations and value judgements associated with different perspectives. Particular care was paid to the documentation of uncertainty. This was achieved by asking participants to justify performance assessments for their options under both optimistic and pessimistic assumptions. The horizontal bars in Figure 2 represent the ranges in the final performance rankings that resulted from this process. The left hand end of each bar shows the result for 'pessimistic' assumptions, the right hand end of each bar shows the result for 'optimistic' assumptions.

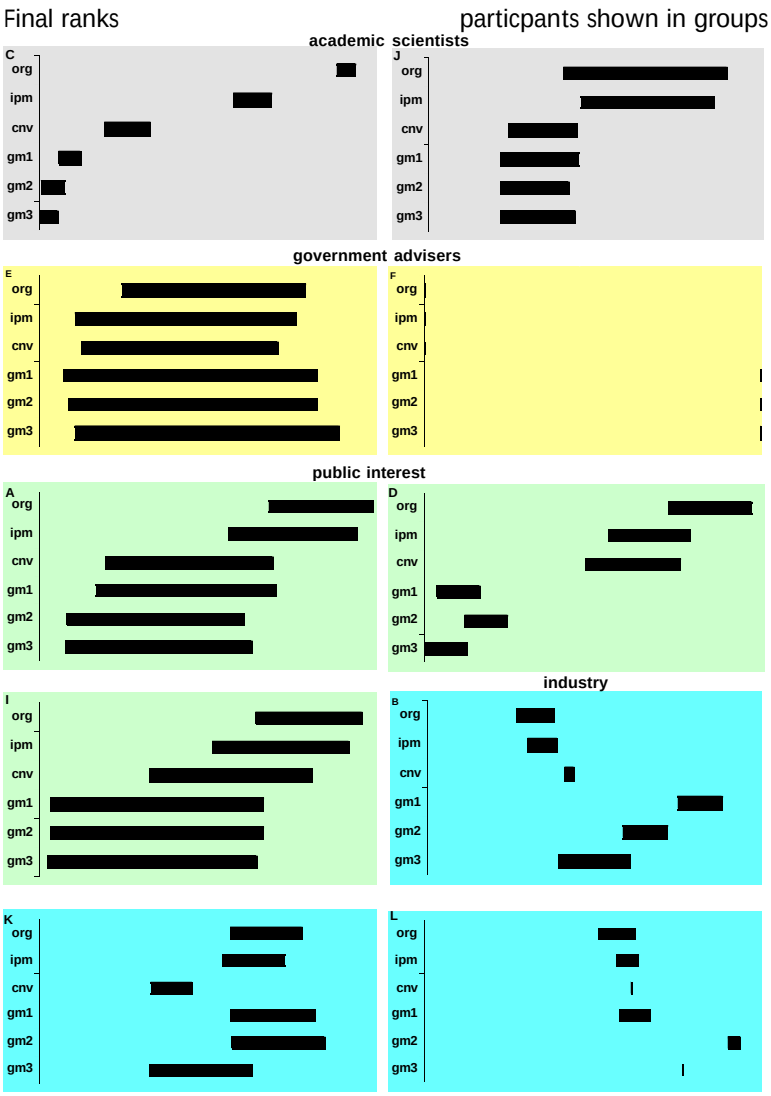
These results were then subjected to extensive 'sensitivity testing', which involved systematically varying the weighting assumptions and seeing the overall effect on results. Based on this process, the results were subject to further deliberation by participants before they settled on final values which accurately reflected their positions. Together with the qualitative information gathered concerning the definition of options and criteria and the way that participants characterised pessimism and optimism in scoring, the 'multi-criteria map' shown in Figure 2 documents the enormous diversity evident in participants' perspectives. The explicit attention to options, criteria, scores, weights and uncertainties helps substantiate the nature and practical implications of divergent framing assumptions. In the absence of such a 'mapping' process, these would remain concealed in the often-tacit variability between different studies, such as that illustrated in Figure 1.

Although not aimed at yielding a single prescriptive recommendation, the study did reveal a series of interesting regularities spanning the picture as a whole. For instance, organic farming emerged across a diverse range of perspectives as being quite unequivocally superior to GM strategies in environmental terms. Perhaps more surprisingly, although subject to disagreement, organic farming also tended generally to display the strongest performance under all criteria taken together across the range of perspectives. Such a finding is automatically excluded where regulatory appraisal neglects public attitudes and concentrates simply on whether a particular GM option is 'acceptable', rather than on which of a wide range of agricultural strategies might be 'preferable'. A similarly revealing picture emerged concerning the relative performance of voluntary and statutory regulation of GM crops, with only government advisers favouring the former option (which was at the time the government's preferred course of action). Such findings are all the more robust for being based on a process specifically designed to highlight differences, rather than to encourage convergence or the engineering of consensus.

Beyond these kinds of directly policy-relevant issues, the MCM study also produced a series of findings concerning the nature of divergent social attitudes in this area. First, it was clear that, although different understandings of the technical uncertainties are important, these are not the dominant factor distinguishing divergent perspectives. Likewise, the differences between perspectives were only partly explained by the assigning of different 'weightings'. Instead, the principal areas of difference were found in contrasting assumptions over what issues to include in appraisal, how these should be framed and prioritised and how the performance of different options might best be characterised and measured.

This said, it is interesting that when careful attention is paid to the detailed implications of the uncertainties acknowledged under individual, sometimes quite entrenched, perspectives, the highly polarised nature of the debate over GM and non-GM strategies begins in some ways to break down. For instance, organic farming is revealed to perform as well as any GM option under one biotechnology industry viewpoint (K in Box 3). Likewise, under one anti-GM viewpoint (I in Box 3), it is conceded that certain GM strategies, at their best, might

Figure 2 A multi-criteria map of the performance of six agricultural options – ten stakeholder perspectives, grouped in four constituencies



Each chart shows the ranges in option performance rankings on an arbitary subjective linear scale, running from low performance on the left to high performance on the right

perform as well as certain non-GM strategies at their worst, thus highlighting the importance of other, often neglected, contingent factors.

Another point of convergence between otherwise highly disparate perspectives was a common acknowledgement of the importance of diversity. Rather than simply highlighting a series of different 'best' options, the MCM study also focused attention on the diverse mixtures of options favoured under different viewpoints. There seems to be widespread appreciation on all sides of an otherwise highly polarised debate that ignorance and incommensurability can be well addressed by not putting all the eggs in one basket!

This pilot MCM exercise goes some way towards addressing the precautionary imperatives for greater inclusivity in the assessment of risk. It provides for unconstrained consideration of diverse options, criteria, priorities, performance evaluations, uncertainties and framing assumptions, whilst retaining a practical focus on policy-usable results. However, it also displays a series of limitations. The quantitative part of the methodology assumes a utilitarian approach under which trade-offs can be made between conflicting considerations. Fundamental matters of principle are addressed only in qualitative inputs, for instance by excluding certain options. Only a relatively small role was played by group deliberation among the actors involved. Inclusion was restricted to specialists from different 'stakeholder' groups, rather than involving lay members of the public. As with any DIPs exercise, there are questions of representativeness and legitimacy.

Each of these issues are currently being addressed in a number of initiatives for the further development of the MCM process. Any judgements over the evaluative implications of such issues should be informed by considering the wider implications of the precautionary imperatives for increased inclusivity. It is with this final subject that this paper will conclude.

Some precautionary implications for increased inclusivity in risk deliberations

The GM pilot study described here illustrates one way in which the need for wider inclusivity in risk governance might be addressed in practice. However, though greater inclusivity may potentially address these imperatives, this is far from being guaranteed. Indeed, in some respects, certain forms of inclusive deliberation may be at least as problematic as conventional risk assessment itself.

One key lesson that has been drawn here concerns the value of *breadth* and *diversity* in the appraisal of risk. Whether participatory or expert-based, an appraisal process can be relatively broad or narrow in a number of ways.

- How many options are considered, with what variety of definitions?
- What range of criteria are employed in evaluating these options and how are these characterised?
- How thorough is the exploration of the uncertainties and possible contingencies that affect performance judgements?
- To what extent does attention focus on individual options or diverse mixtures?

Finally, of course, there is the breadth of the socio-political interests and cultural constituencies that are represented in the process. As in any appraisal, inclusive deliberation processes may be implicitly framed in a number of ways such as to restrict the activities of those involved. For instance, by excluding uncertainties or the consideration of alternatives, any deliberation can easily become as constrained as expert-based risk assessment.

A second conclusion concerns the *plural* and *conditional* nature of appraisal results. Moves are currently being made in a number of countries, and at international levels in areas such as the EU, to complement existing scientific advisory committees with similar bodies for eliciting stakeholder viewpoints or ethical expertise. The purpose of such bodies is often simply to interpret the results obtained by the conventional risk assessment process. Significant though this is, it goes only part of the way to addressing the precautionary critique. It has been shown here, for instance in Figure 1, how subjective framing assumptions permeate the science in a complex and pervasive fashion. Divergent public interests and values cannot therefore be adequately addressed by 'bolting on' inclusive deliberation at the end of an expert-led process or by *ad hoc* inclusion of a few 'lay members'. Nor can the complexity of these perspectives be fully captured by simple mechanisms such as the 'weightings' of multi-criteria analysis. The relationship between expertise and wider public deliberation needs to be far more multi-faceted, directly engaged and symmetrical. In particular, both expert and public deliberation should avoid single prescriptive recommendations.

Third, there are issues relating to the role of *dissent* and the relationships between an appraisal process and the wider socio-political *discourse* of which it is part. There are tendencies, both with expert-based and deliberative processes, to see appraisal as a 'black box' for resolving complex issues. Conclusions are variously justified by appeals to the authority of expert rationality, to participatory theory or to democratic principle, depending on the particular case. Indeed, some of the key perspectives on public deliberation sometimes imply that such processes may be seen as substitutes for the messiness and inconvenience of political conflict. This can lead, for instance, to an enormous, and somewhat artificial, significance being attained by discussions over 'statistical representativeness'. The implications of the present paper, by contrast, are that we might see a more humble relationship between the appraisal process and wider socio-political debates. Here, the main objective is not the engineering of expert or public consensus. Rather, the aim might be to achieve as much transparency as possible in the presentation of dissenting views, such that third parties may systematically audit the practical implications of different perspectives for the available science. Some deliberative processes can be even more opaque in this regard than conventional risk assessment.

Finally this leads to an issue that is continually raised in relation to public participation, concerning the supposed conflict with other forms of political action and existing provisions for representative democracy. Such concerns diminish if appraisal takes a precautionary form. If it is broad-based and unconstrained, systematically documenting the implications of a full diversity of dissenting perspectives and making these transparent to wider socio-political discourse, then 'precautionary deliberation' may actually serve to strengthen democratic accountability and constructively inform other forms of political action. Although offering only one way of attempting to address these precautionary imperatives, the MCM approach described here at least illustrates that such an approach is practically feasible and can deliver meaningful and useful results in a complex and controversial area in the governance of risk.

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Notes

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Citizen engagement in science and technology policy: a commentary on recent UK experience

18

Alan Irwin

Science, governance and the 'mad cow' crisis

The publication in October 2000 of the Phillips Report on BSE ('mad-cow disease') marked a low ebb in UK science–public relations, but also a possible turning point. Among the various, diplomatically-worded criticisms made by this official inquiry, one major identified problem concerns the relationship between governmental reassurances of safety and the declining public trust in such statements. As the report concluded, the government did not actually lie to the public about the risks. However, it was so preoccupied with preventing an alarmist over-reaction that it undertook a major campaign of reassurance. As a direct consequence, *'[w]hen on 20 March 1996 the Government announced that BSE had probably been transmitted to humans, the public felt that they had been betrayed. Confidence in public pronouncements about risk was a further casualty of BSE'* (Phillips Report, 2000, p.xviii). It would appear that at the heart of government activity in this area, and especially of the communication of risk, was a *'consuming fear of provoking an irrational public scare'* (ibid, p. 264). In the case of BSE, this fear of public response led to a characteristic denial of risk and a very British concern among officials not to 'rock the boat' when presenting public information.

Whilst it might be tempting to consign this unhappy episode in science-public relations to history, the initial response to the other great British risk debate of the 1990s, namely, genetically modified (GM) foods, demonstrated many similarities in its treatment of the general public. Thus, Prime Minister Tony Blair was widely criticised in February 1999 for his attempts at reassuring citizens about the safety of GM food. As one tabloid newspaper reported, Blair was 'frustrated' that the 'potential benefits of GM food are being ignored in the escalating row'. The depressing implication was that very little had been learnt from the BSE case in terms of the need for more than blanket reassurances when dealing with public concerns. Once again, a complex area of scientific, social and ethical debate was being dealt with in an apparently arrogant and high-handed manner. At the same time, and as in the BSE episode, the public's legitimate questions over risk and technological development were dismissed as irrational and ignorant.

Whilst the BSE and GM food cases suggest a difficult relationship between science, the public and policy-making, a series of governmental publications and initiatives has attempted to establish a more open and accountable basis for future activities. The Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Robert May, published new guidelines on scientific advice and policy making in 1997 and these have recently been amended. In 2000, a new code of practice for scientific advisory committees was proposed which stressed the need for an 'inclusive' approach, for effective communication with the media and the wider public, for transparency and for high standards in working practices. Such governmental moves suggest a growing belief that public confidence in decision-making can only be maintained through a more accountable relationship between science, policy and the wider public. As Sir Robert May is quoted in the Phillips report... *'My view is strongly that... the full messy process whereby scientific understanding is arrived at with all its problems has to be spilled out into the open.'* (ibid, p. 265)

Such moves towards greater transparency in decision-making are undoubtedly overdue. However, they also raise larger questions about the best role for public groups within scientific and technological decision-making. Greater openness may be a worthy objective but it does not in itself create a more active public engagement with such important issues as food safety and technology development. Whilst scientific advice is an essential element within decision-making, the case can also be made that such experts are not necessarily best-placed to make ethical and social judgements over, for example, the need for GM food or the desirability of new technologies. As the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution put it back in 1998: *'When environmental standards are set or other judgements made about environmental issues, decisions must be informed by an understanding of people's values. Traditional forms of consultation... are not an adequate method of articulating values'* (RCEP 1998, p. 105).

Put bluntly, it is only right that those who will be directly affected by technological decisions should have a say in their making. Equally, one positive lesson from the BSE saga is that wider consultation and discussion could actually improve the quality of decision making (Irwin 1995).

At this point, we move from questions of greater public *accountability* to those of public *engagement and democratic participation*. As a recent report from the House of Lords on 'science and society' puts this: *'Today's public expects not merely to know what is going on, but to be consulted; science is beginning to see the wisdom of this, and to move "out of the laboratory and into the community"... to engage in dialogue aimed at mutual understanding.'* (House of Lords 2000, p.37). The remainder of this paper is concerned with the form such dialogue might take and the wider issues raised. As one immediate comment on this, it is potentially very significant that the 2000 Government white paper on science and innovation policy considers such issues under the heading of 'Confident Consumers'. Whilst the importance of public dialogue is still emphasised, the framework has become primarily economic in character.

In practical terms, both the Royal Commission and the House of Lords Select Committee have outlined a number of possible routes to public consultation in this area. Options as raised by the Royal Commission include focus groups, citizen's juries, consensus conferences and deliberative polls. Other possibilities for gaining active citizen participation and engagement include stakeholder dialogues, internet debates, local and national consultations and consultative panels. Most of these have already been tried out either in the UK or nations such as Denmark and The Netherlands (and, increasingly, across the world).

Despite these different forms of consultation, common issues can be identified. The Lords report was particularly keen to distinguish between 'market research exercises' (designed to improve policy makers' understanding of the public) and 'public consultation exercises' (which engage directly with the public at large). Whilst this can seem a minor distinction, it can have great significance (as we will see) for the form of consultation adopted and its procedural basis. Secondly, practical experience and social scientific research (Irwin and Wynne 1996, Satya Murty & Wakeford, this issue) suggests the value of a deliberative rather than a 'snap shot' approach to public consultation. When confronted with complex technical issues (for example, alternative methods of food production or the ethics of xenotransplantation) people need to time to ponder, to talk matters through and consider different arguments. A third issue concerns the ownership and control of any exercise: are members of the public free to select questions and evidence as they consider relevant or have these been pre-selected?

To these general issues and questions can be added the treatment and presentation of scientific evidence within public consultations. One implicit assumption within the institutional handling of BSE was that the public was incapable of treating technical questions in a mature and balanced manner. Rather than revealing the 'messy process' involved, government departments offered a carefully packaged account designed to reassure and avoid awkward questioning. Of course, this approach backfired when legitimate scientific doubts could no longer be suppressed, but this experience has not necessarily dissuaded other governmental bodies from attempting to sanitise the presentation of scientific evidence to the public. One important test of any consultation must therefore be its willingness to acknowledge uncertainties and areas of contention within scientific discussion.

In order to explore some of these issues in practice, we can briefly consider one important UK initiative in 'science and democracy': the Public Consultation on Developments in the Biosciences (PCDB). Conducted between 1997 and 1999, this government-led consultation aimed to engage with the public about the 'biosciences' (including xenotransplantation, animal and human cloning, GM food, and genetic testing). The exercise broke new ground in governmental consultation with the public over scientific issues. However, and as I will discuss, it was also marked by a series of assumptions about scientific democracy which restricted its openness to public concerns and questions.

Consulting the public

In November 1997, the Science Minister announced his intention to hold a public consultation exercise on bioscience issues. The main purpose of the exercise was to identify and explore public hopes and concerns but also to feed these into the policy process. In June 1998, an advisory group to the consultation was appointed with membership from a range of bodies including the Green Alliance, Wellcome Trust, a key industrial company, a research council and a supermarket chain.

Right from the start, this body was confronted with challenging questions concerning the form and focus of the consultation. At least one member of the group queried the feasibility of maintaining a broad coverage across the biosciences as a whole. Shouldn't issues like GM food be kept apart from medical applications? Could anything useful be concluded about public assessments across such a range of different issues and contexts? Certainly, previous exercises like the Citizen Foresight

consultation and Lancaster University's *Uncertain World* report had kept a much narrower focus. For the new exercise, government officials were keen to focus on generic issues and to consider in particular the operation of advisory and regulatory bodies.

Immediately, we can identify the institutional framing of this exercise and its significance. The consultation was designed to feed into the policy process in a very direct fashion. As later became apparent, it was essential for the civil servants involved that the exercise should inform a major policy review of biotechnology regulation which was being simultaneously conducted. On the one hand, this imposed a very tight time-scale on the project since final results would be needed by April/May 1999. On the other, it gave the consultation an enhanced status, especially when one of the familiar criticisms of public consultation exercises is that they often have only limited practical relevance. However, it soon became apparent that government was providing more than a broad framework for the exercise and a time-scale. In October 1998, the Minister also established a number of specific aims for the initiative.

- What is the level and nature of people's awareness of technological advances in the biosciences?
- What issues do people see arising from these developments in the biosciences and how important are these compared to other major scientific issues?
- What is the extent of people's knowledge of the oversight and regulatory process in the United Kingdom and Europe?
- What issues do people believe should be taken into account in any oversight of developments in the biosciences?
- What information should be made available to the general public from the regulatory system and about advances in the biosciences?

There are a number of aspects of these questions that deserve our attention. First of all, it is important to note that they were set by government rather than by those being consulted, and as such, they closely mirror the concerns of officials rather than (necessarily) public groups. Secondly, they assume that 'scientific' issues are separable in the public mind from other, perhaps larger, issues (e.g. the need for rapid technological change or the quality of existing food and healthcare provision). Thirdly, they emphasise knowledge and information as if they can be discussed apart from wider questions of institutional legitimacy and public trust. Fourthly, they seem to assume that there is indeed a general awareness of the biosciences as a distinct category: actually, most members of the public initially expressed themselves as quite unfamiliar with such topics. Overall, the Minister's questions emphasise the point that the agenda for this consultation was being set by government (and, to a limited degree, the steering group) rather than by the wider public. In that way, the exercise does indeed seem to fall into the Lords' category of 'market research' rather than 'public consultation'.

Two further characteristics of the biosciences exercise reinforce this point. There was great concern within the initiative that the scientific content of briefing materials should be beyond reproach. Whilst this emphasis on 'getting the facts straight' seems very laudable, it does assume that 'scientific facts' can and should be removed from public debate and questioning. Rather than adopting the citizens' jury and consensus conference approach of experts undergoing direct cross-examination (so that the public set the agenda), such matters were centrally pre-determined. Whilst the Phillips report emphasises the 'messiness' of science-policy relations, the biosciences consultation sought to separate the 'hard facts' from 'public opinion'.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly for the conduct of the exercise, it was considered essential that the exercise should generate both qualitative and quantitative data. Accordingly, the consultation consisted of both a series of generally lively focus groups and over a thousand statistically-coded individual interviews. Such an approach immediately raises questions as to whether the public could be consulted on such a complex and unfamiliar range of topics in what was essentially a questionnaire format. Certainly, the quantitative phase allowed no opportunity for personal reflection or for informal discussion. The major justification offered was that quantitative data was essential if the study was to be taken seriously by Ministers and other observers. The government-led nature of this exercise was again very apparent. By this stage, and despite its billing as a 'public consultation', the initiative had become a sophisticated social research project designed to tell government what the public think.

The results of the consultation were published in May 1999 alongside the Government announcement of a new regulatory structure for biotechnology (MORI 1999). Among the key findings were:

- 'that the public believe advances in human health represent the biggest benefit to arise from scientific developments';
- 'the vast majority of people (97%) believe it is important that there are rules and regulations to control biological developments and scientific research';
- 'The main issues people say should be taken into account when determining whether a biological development is right or wrong are whether people will benefit from it and whether it is safe to use';
- 'The thing that people most want in relation to the biosciences is more information on the rules and regulations'.

The professional quality of the exercise was undoubtedly high (especially given the time constraints). However, and as the Lords noted in their report, the framework was 'closer to market research than public consultation' (House of Lords 2000, p.37). Whilst the initiative was a significant step forward from previous institutional practice, its democratic limitations are clear. Thus, the research ethos of the exercise meant that civil servants and members of the advisory group did not meet directly with any members of the public since this would contaminate the data. Whilst the avoidance of contact might be justifiable in professional research terms, it did prevent any real dialogue between scientists, policy makers and the wider public. Rather than being able to speak for themselves, public voices were channelled according to the needs and constraints of the policy process. It is, meanwhile, very hard to say whether public groups would have reached similar or different conclusions had the exercise been conducted in a 'citizen led' and more democratic manner.

Conclusion

What general lessons for citizen engagement with science and technology emerge from this discussion?

- That it is not sufficient simply to call for 'scientific democracy'. Instead, it is necessary to consider carefully the *form* of any initiative and its *operating principles*;
- That there may indeed be a significant difference between *public consultation and engagement* and exercises designed to improve *policy makers' understanding of the public*;
- That there are particular advantages to forms of dialogue which allow members of the public to *set their own agenda* and also to *reflect* upon their own and others' views, especially when issues are both unfamiliar and complex;
- That public groups are capable of treating *scientific information* in a considered and responsible fashion. However, consultation should be allowed to open up and challenge areas of science rather than simply treating them as sacrosanct;
- That, based on the qualitative phase of the biosciences consultation in particular, it seems clear that members of the public can bring a range of relevant and useful *observations, questions and opinions* to policy debate once proper deliberation has been allowed;
- That, whilst this initiative was undoubtedly valuable and important, it only represents a *first step* towards citizen engagement and dialogue in the UK. Further experimentation and critical reflection are now essential.

In the wake of BSE, openness, democracy and the maintenance of public confidence have become standard terms within UK science and technology policy. The next few years will reveal whether 'public dialogue' is a serious political goal or simply a convenient slogan.

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Participatory environmental policy processes: experiences from North and South

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Tim Holmes and Ian Scoones

Introduction

Given the growing range of actors concerned with environmental issues, the increasingly contested nature of environmental problems and the importance of building trust around decision-making, a more participatory approach to environmental policy processes is often required.

But what sort of participation and for whom? Despite there being many claims made about the importance of participation in policy-making, there have been few attempts to assess actual experiences. In a recent paper (see details below), we set out to try and review the range of approaches for encouraging more inclusive forms of deliberation around environmental policy processes, drawing on experiences from both the 'North' and 'South'. The focus was on those approaches where space for citizen participation has been created 'from above', usually, but not exclusively, by government agencies.

A set of approaches, known collectively as Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes (DIPs), were explored in different settings through 35 case studies from both the North and South. A selection of these are shown in Table 1. Some of the key lessons are summarised below.

- While there has been an important emphasis on the development of participatory methods and tools in both northern and southern settings, there has been much less reflection on how these are located within broader policy processes and how those involved in participatory events are linked to wider policy networks and processes of policy change.

- Who is included and who is excluded in participatory activities often remains obscure. While different approaches to 'representation' are used in the cases examined, the question of whose voice is heard is less often discussed. Broader questions of who *convenes* the process and who *frames* the questions are therefore key.

- Processes of deliberation are inevitably bound up with power relations. Ideal forms of communication are rarely realised, especially if issues are contested and the stakes are high. Much of the discussion of participatory policy processes focuses on the achievement of consensus, while issues of how to deal with dissent, dispute and conflict are less fully examined.

The review highlights how DIPs are clearly not the 'magic bullet' to solve the dilemmas of public participation in policy making processes. They must be seen within the broader context of policy processes: where policy change emerges from a variety of sources; where non-linear, often incremental processes dominate; and, where power relations and political interests are key. Creating a space for more inclusive deliberation from above is potentially one route towards more informed and effective decision-making, reflective of diverse perceptions and rooted in trust based relationships.

The review also emphasises how DIPs may be appropriate in some settings but not in others. Seeking the appropriate combination of approaches and linking these to wider processes of policy change is therefore vital. In-depth deliberation is important where multiple framings of environmental issues exist. Teasing out and making explicit the core assumptions and underlying premises of particular position, whether emerging from scientific or lay understandings, is a central feature of deliberative processes. In environmental decision-making, values, ethics and moral questions are important, making moving from a technocratic approach to decision-making towards a more inclusive form essential. This is particularly relevant where trust is thin on the ground. Therefore DIPs may be a useful starting point for building the necessary trust in decision outcomes and addressing the scepticism of public perceptions around formal, expert-based institutions. Yet, this may not always be possible. Where the stakes are high, where positions have become entrenched and where interest group politics dominate, the opportunities for open forms of communication are often severely constrained.

Too often DIPs have been 'one-off' events, separated from the wider policy-making process. Therefore, it is important that such processes are embedded in effective institutional contexts. But this also suggests many challenges. Relations of power within policy-making bureaucracies may result in limited opportunities for other voices to be heard.

Table 1 Cases of DIPs in environmental policy-making[1]

Case Study	What objectives?	Who is included?	The procedure and methods used
Innovative Development for Air quality in Santiago, Chile	• To make a highly complex environmental problem manageable • To operationalise a plan that is legitimate and effective • To get the mutual commitment of the citizens and government • To produce a metropolitan plan and enable participative management/implementation of this plan	• Different participants at different stages but in total: Government officers, NGO members, consultants, university researchers and citizens. [About one half of the instrumentsincluded in the plan came from the citizens proposals]	• Action mapping and initial proposal • Participative formulation of plan towards participative management, including a follow up conference • Methods focused on representatives and citizens attending a variety of workshops with discussion in small groups
Land tenure policy change in Madagascar and Guinea	• Use of RRA to inform policy decisions at the national level regarding Land Tenure policy and national resource management legislation	• Direct participation of citizens in information production	• National Academics, development workers and Government staff involved in conducting case study RRAs, trained and facilitated by LTC Wisconsin University, in different regions and presenting findings to multiple government and NGO stakeholders at a number of regional workshops. In Guinea, those in the RRA teams were only Government staff – process had more policy impact.
Wetland management policy development in Pakistan and India	• To assess current impact of protected area policies on local communities • To revise management plans in the light of interaction between local people and outsiders • To initiate dialogue on policy reforms needed	• Direct participation of citizens in information production	• PRA training for, exercises conducted by, government and World Wide Fund for Nature staff. Appraisals completed in villages in National Parks in both India and Pakistan. Public deliberations on reforms in wetland management regimes
Malian gestion de terroir process	• Teams of facilitators bring different stakeholders together to reflect on local land use (within the 'terroir') and to develop plans for improvement • Series of negotiated land use plans, communities trained in natural resource management, maybe agreed investment in natural resources.	• Pastoralists, farmers, GT team members, (local government to limited extent)	• PRA etc. But the major criticism is that the frame for deliberation is set beforehand – critical in that the bounded space of the 'terroir' may be biased against pastoralists, and may in fact not be the most relevant unit for anyone in livelihood terms. The objectives are also criticised as fairly predetermined and bureaucracy biased: maps of the terroir delineating what resources are to be used for what.
Zimbabwean Environmental Management Bill	• Aim to unify and modernise array of colonial and post-colonial NR legislation-overlapping, contradictory, located in different ministries. To be done through participatory workshops, hearings etc. • Single coherent piece of legislation setting out rights and responsibilities of different stakeholders	• NGOs; environmental lawyers; unclear to what extent communities	• Those involved criticised organisation of the consultative procedures: notification of meetings, time to prepare formal responses.
Citizens Panel in Switzerland	• Locating a waste disposal site in the Canton Aargau	• Representative sample of people from potential site communities	• Citizens of twelve communities which offered potentially suitable locations for the waste disposal site were asked to take part in a citizen panel and met regularly over six months. Citizen's panel involves: Random sample of population, four committees established, introduction of issues, conflicting interpretations and different options, group and plenary discussions, evaluation of options, recommendations produced, discussion of recommendations by committee representatives in a 'supra-committee', final recommendations to media and public officials

1 Further case studies and more detailed information can be found in the full review. See Notes section at the end of the article.

Long established traditions of non-participatory styles of decision-making are not going to be changed overnight. Opening up spaces for participation may be the current vogue and may indeed respond to certain political and bureaucratic imperatives of the moment, but this will have limited impact without the emergence of more reflexive institutional forms which are genuinely responsive to new ways of thinking and acting.

As our review shows, political and organisational contexts make a big difference to the potentials of a more participatory policy making process. Where open debate, the acceptance of conflict and dissent and the encouragement of consensus and compromise are encouraged as part of a wider political and organisational culture, opportunities for effective participation are more likely. But equally these conditions are the exception, with the most common situation being that DIPs are used in an instrumental manner to further the existing remits of organising agencies.

The review emphasises how different phases of a policy making process require different approaches. Early on (particularly where the issue at hand is new or highly controversial), there is a need to open out the debate and encourage multiple perspectives (technical, moral, ethical etc.) to be aired. Many DIP methods aim for consensus-based decision-making. While this may be desirable, it may not be possible given the range of diverse perspectives and interests associated with environmental decisions. Where controversy is running high, conflicts must not be ignored in the vain hope that deliberative consensus will somehow emerge, but need to be addressed head on. Conflict negotiation and consensus building therefore need to be seen as two sides of the same coin.

While the review of the case studies offers a rather equivocal message about the prospects for participation in policy making, both North and South, this does not mean that there are no potentially longer-term benefits. Currently DIPs are seen to be often simply responses to perceived implementation and legitimisation problems by organising agencies, with little evidence shown of any intention (or indeed opportunity) to change in the short term. In the longer term, however, subtle shifts in the framing of debates may emerge, new actor networks and coalitions may be built and the capacities of participants may be strengthened through engagement with such processes. But such optimism must be qualified. In many settings – for example where aid flows dominate policy making, where 'civil society' is weak, or where a technocratic scientific establishment holds sway, a suitable caution must be added.

But contexts do change. The rapid pace of technological change shows no sign of abating: this will result in new forms of environmental risk, with uncertainty continuing to be a central feature of environmental decision-making. Across the world there is a growing concern about the links between environmental and livelihood/lifestyle issues among a wide range of actors, with new coalitions of interests forming that break down conventional barriers and categorisations. With this comes new ways of identification with issues and so, new understandings of citizenship, where concerns about livelihoods, environmental change and technological risk are central. In turn, with this comes a healthy scepticism about conventional forms of expertise and a demand for access to decision-making and policy-making institutions. In such changing contexts, then, participation in environmental policy process will become a basic requirement, not an add-on extra. It is our prediction, therefore, that the early experiments with DIPs over the last decade or so as discussed in the review will therefore likely expand, deepen and intensify. We hope that the lessons emerging from the review will assist in continued honest and reflective assessment of this important emerging experience.

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Notes

The full version of this paper is available from IDS (IDS Working Paper 113: 'Participatory environmental policy processes: experiences from North and South', 1999). It is also available on the web site http://www.ids.ac.uk (see Environment Group pages).

In brief... Who's framing who?

Some experimental evalutation criteria for DIPs

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Tom Wakeford

At the workshop that led to this edition of PLA Notes, several contributors noted how few independent evaluations there had been of past attempts at DIPs. To an even greater extent there have been few attempts to critically compare different DIPs. To attempt this at all with incomplete information is perhaps foolhardy, especially since I bring my own biases towards the DIPs of which I have most knowledge. But as editors we believed it too important a task to be shrunk from. We hope readers, especially those who have been part of the DIPs analysed here, will take the following analysis in the spirit of heuristic debate.

The table below summarises the analysis, and is followed by a short section dealing with each criterion.

Table 1 Comparative evaluation of DIPs

Evaluation Criterion	Best practice	Weaker performance
Diverse Control	IPPR Citizens' Juries	Welsh Gene Testing Jury
Framing and Scope	Danish Scenarios	India Farmer Foresight
Interactivity and Interrogation	Citizen Foresight	UK Gov. Biosciences
Reference Timeframe	Swiss PubliForum	UK Dept of Health
Transparency	None	UK Consensus Conference on Radioactive Waste
Empowerment and/or Advocacy	UK Dept. of Health	Edinburgh Focus Groups

Diverse control

All the areas of science and technology chosen for the use of the DIPs described above have been fairly or extremely controversial. It is therefore critical that the process is under the control of representatives of organisations with different vested interests on the topic concerned. This avoids the need to defend the assertion, which was a hallmark of the UK Public Consultation on the Biosciences, that the Government was providing unbiased information about biotechnology to those involved in their deliberative focus groups. Irwin (this issue) touches on these and other issues relating to control.

High: IPPR Citizens Juries

Delap's article shows how, when carried out according to their guidelines, the IPPR citizens' jury methodology ensured that all parts of the process were agreed by a diverse array of stakeholders. Where possible, it is also desirable to have a funding source with vested interests in favour of conflicting trajectories for the technology.

Low: Welsh Gene Testing Jury

Although ostensibly overseen by a mixture of academics and commercial representatives, the citizens' jury conducted on genetic testing and discussed by Glasner (this issue) was essentially under the control of one funding source (a major pharmaceutical company) and was not overseen by a single opponent of genetic testing.

Cunningham-Burley and colleagues (this issue) highlight the importance of looking beyond participation techniques that are explicitly 'organised' by analysts. They suggest a move towards a model where citizens instigate and design the process without it needing to be done 'from above'.

Framing and scope

The way in which a participatory process is allowed to extend its scope beyond a particular technology to examine broader issues, whether they be alternative options or social justice perspectives, is critical to the extent to which it empowers people is merely used to legitimise established power structures and their chosen technological trajectories. Even the way discussions are framed by information, witnesses or questions provided can have an important influence on the extent to which citizens have the opportunity to develop their own visions for the future. The paper by Wallace on the nuclear waste consensus conference highlights the way in which inadequate framing may have brought about a result diametrically opposed to that which might have occurred had the participants been allowed to begin from different framing assumptions and hear a broader range of evidence.

High: Danish Scenarios

The discussions described by Andersen & Jæger (this issue) involved a series of pre-formulated yet contrasting scenarios for the future of a particular area of technology. Participants could discuss their visions and attitudes to the presented scenarios and suggest preconditions to their adoption. By providing options, rather than a blank slate, their method provides an easily applicable approach that avoids the complete pre-framing of the subject by the organisers.

Low: India Farmer Foresight

In India, two scenarios comprised of two starkly different technological trajectories for agriculture, one based on GM seed and continued chemical use, the other on saved indigenous seeds, traditional technologies and organic methods. Satya Murty and Wakeford (this issue) describe how the scenario aspect of the jury, the juror's framing of key questions for witnesses and evaluation of different possible future scenarios, did not work as well as planned. Partly due to a misunderstanding in the facilitation of the opening session, and partly because of over-ambitious timetabling, there was little opportunity to ensure the witnesses focused on the jurors' highest priorities. In retrospect it would have taken at least a full day with a specially trained facilitator to carry out a proper scenario building process of this sort.

Interactivity and interrogation

Closely related to the framing of an issue is the extent to which citizens are allowed to interrogate the sources of information they receive, or are merely the passive recipients of written briefings and expert testimonies.

High: Citizen Foresight
The Citizen Foresight process (see Box 1 in Satya Murty and Wakeford, this issue) began with a brainstorm about the possible future options for agriculture that allowed citizens to also determine the criteria by which these options would be assessed. They then interacted with witnesses from academia, government and the food industry. Less than a fifth of the time they had with each witness was spent listening to a presentation, the vast majority of the period being spent on discussing among themselves and interrogating the witness. Citizens were also given the opportunity to request further witnesses on subjects that they did not feel had been covered in sufficient detail.

Low: UK Government Biosciences
Irwin (this issue) describes how the twenty participants in each of six workshops around the UK were briefed using prompt cards by executives from the market research company MORI. Apart from feedback at the end of the process, citizens had no opportunity to question the information with which they had been briefed, or to steer the course of the discussion in a direction other than that determined by MORI. Nor could they ask for additional information as the MORI executives had no facility for calling for witnesses or further briefings.

Reference timeframe

The ability of citizens to reach conclusions that look beyond immediate needs, working within political or economic constraints, to examine long-term risks and opportunities is an important consideration in DIPs processes, especially those that deal with a range of scientific and technological issues.

High: Swiss PubliForum
Mirenowicz (this issue) describes how the citizens in the Swiss PubliForum remarkably introduce their report with the clearly defined goal 'to satisfy the long term demand in energy in a sustainable way'; a goal which gives its coherence to the entire report.

Low: UK Department of Health
Two public one-day fora were set up by the Department of Health: one in London, one in Leeds, in which a hundred people were brought together for one day to discuss their priorities for the National Health Service. As Lenaghan (this issue) describes, the timeframe was implicitly restricted to immediate priorities rather than an examination of long-term issues, such as investment in preventative medicine versus research into hi-tech treatments such as gene-therapy.

Transparency

If stakeholder groups, especially those whose vested interests incline them to oppose citizens' conclusions, do not have a clear unambiguous record of what went on in DIP events, they will inevitably be tempted to undermine the credibility of the exercise, however professionally it has been carried out. There are various ways of documenting DIPs, including audio-visual recordings and interviews with various actors within them.

Medium: Citizen Foresight
The whole deliberation process was video-recorded with a single camera left unattended on a tripod at the side of the room. One stakeholder who was suspicious about a possible bias in the hearings watched all 30 hours of tape and pronounced themselves satisfied that the citizens had not been unfairly influenced. A weakness however, was that the project failed to raise enough funds to have an evaluator sitting in on the process watching interactions that might have been too subtle to be caught on video.

Low: UK Consensus Conference on Radioactive Waste
Whatever the intentions of the funders (a UK government research council and radioactive waste disposal authority), this consensus conference, described by Wallace (this issue), was not initially presented in way that was transparent or accessible. The briefing weekends were not open to scrutiny by those opposing nuclear waste disposal, and the close affiliation to the nuclear industry of various supposedly 'independent' experts were not made clear to the participants when they were choosing from whom they wanted to hear evidence.

Empowerment and/or advocacy

Just as important as holding a participation process, is the use of the results to influence change, either by the participants themselves (empowerment) or on their behalf (advocacy). This is perhaps the most frequently neglected element of participatory methods, yet without it, the exercise does little more than gather information, while raising expectations of participants that some change might occur.

High: UK Department of Health (National Health Service)
The Department of Health's use of a nation-wide questionnaire, a MORI survey and two public fora may have been flawed in terms of many of the above evaluation criteria, but it succeeded in providing an input for some viewpoints from citizens that had not been taken note of until then. As outlined in Lenaghan's (this issue) contribution to this volume, it enabled civil servants sympathetic to participatory methods to use their results to successfully lobby for policy changes.

Low: Edinburgh Genetics
Despite the richness of its insights, the Edinburgh study described by Cunningham-Burley and colleagues (this issue) was not used either for the direct empowerment of the citizens to bring their conclusions to policy-makers, nor were the results taken up on behalf of the citizens by campaigning organisations. Focus groups are particularly difficult for direct empowerment of the citizens involved as they are usually not themselves even aware of the conclusions that have been reached.

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Reclaiming our right to power: some conditions for deliberative democracy

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Michel Pimbert

Introduction

Deliberative and inclusive processes (DIPs) are increasingly being used in the North and the South to give the historically excluded a voice in decisions. Some of these methods and processes include citizens' juries, consensus conferences, scenario workshops, multi-criteria mapping, participatory rural appraisal, visioning exercises and deliberative polling. Many of these 'participatory' processes have been developed in an attempt to supplement conventional democratic processes, moving beyond traditional forms of consultation. Whilst DIPs have at times been misused or abused in the rush to scale up and spread the new innovations, these approaches nevertheless offer much potential to expand the active involvement of citizens in shaping the decisions that affect their lives. But *how* and *under what conditions* can the democratic potential of these approaches and methods be enlarged to include more people and places? This paper critically reflects on these questions, offering both reformist and more radical proposals for the mainstreaming of deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment.

Enabling policies, organisations and professional practice

Decentralisation policies such as the Law of Popular Participation in Bolivia generally offer a more enabling context for deliberative and inclusive processes in decision making. The democratic potential of decentralisation is usually greatest when it is linked with the institutionalisation of local level popular participation and community mobilisation. These dynamics can be complementary in encouraging more widespread DIPs, – one working from the top down and the other from the bottom up. Similarly, the participatory budgeting pioneered by several municipalities in Brazil offers a model of how citizens can more directly influence municipal spending, – funds for whom, on what and where (see Box 1). By fostering more debate and oversight over public spending, participatory budgeting can enhance trust between citizens and local government. As such it is an important institutional innovation for more deliberative forms of democracy and citizen empowerment in both urban and rural contexts.

Box 1 Participatory budgeting in Brazil

Municipal governments elected to power in several Brazilian cities in the 1990s introduced a participatory budget. This basically allowed the views and priorities of citizens to be incorporated in the design of annual budgets and public spending priorities. Participation is usually promoted by a team selected from the municipality. The team has direct contacts with the population and also carries out information campaigns to raise the awareness of citizens about their right to participate in the design of the budget. The team organises meetings in the different neighbourhoods to facilitate people's selection of their own development priorities and representatives. The citizens' delegates are included in the process of budget design and approval in order to guarantee that the demands of the localities/neighbourhoods are taken into account. The methodology for incorporating participation into the budget planning is evaluated and updated every year.

The government invests in projects which communities have identified as their priority needs. Given a citizen's right to have information and make demands on the State, government agencies have to consider the feasibility of any request. If a citizen request is judged non-feasible, the state agency has to demonstrate why this is so.

In several municipalities, popular participation in this initiative has exceeded the government's expectations and has increased annually. Participatory budgeting has changed public spending priorities, reducing inequalities in places. The improvement of the quality of life in some of the municipalities has been evident, as it is the first time that the local government has taken into account the needs of the poorest sectors of the population. Participatory budgeting has not only meant a much greater involvement of citizens and community organisations in determining priorities but also a more transparent and accountable form of government.

However, decentralisation does not always equate with increased democratic participation. It does not necessarily break power structures or lead to a redistribution of resources, but may only result in de-concentration with a transfer of power to another level of the bureaucracy.

Widespread citizen participation and use of DIPs in policy processes and in the design of technologies and services does not mean that government bureaucracies and other organisations (private, NGOs…) have no role. Health professionals, engineers, architects, urban planners, scientists all have specialist knowledge that can usefully feed into citizen deliberations and more inclusive forms of

participation. But the deliberative process and the political negotiation over what constitutes valid knowledge in a particular context (see Box 2), deeply challenge bureaucracies and professionals to assume different roles and responsibilities. In particular, existing bureaucracies and professionals will often need to shift from being project implementers and deliverers of standard services and technologies to new roles that facilitate local people's analysis, deliberations, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation. The whole process should strengthen local groups and institutions, so enhancing the capacity of citizens to take action on their own. This implies changes in organisational cultures and the adoption of new professional skills and values.

Box 2 Knowledge and power

"Contests for knowledge are contests for power. For nearly two centuries that contest has been rigged in favour of scientific knowledge by the established power structures. We should ask why scientific knowledge has acquired the privileged status that it enjoys, why it is that scientists' endeavours are not seen to be on a par with other cultural endeavours, but have come to be singled out as providing the one and only expert route to knowledge and guide to action. We need to confront the question of what kinds of knowledge we want to produce, and recognise that that is at the same time a question about what kinds of power relations we want to support – and what kind of world we want to live in… A socially responsible science has to be a science that does not allow itself to be set apart from, let alone above, other human endeavours. In our interactions with the world, we are all involved in the production of knowledge about the world – in that sense, there is no single group of experts" (Kamminga, 1995).

However, the adoption of a participatory culture within organisations and changes in professional attitudes and behaviour are unlikely to automatically follow when new methods are adopted or suddenly become fashionable 'out there'. Many scientists and professionals will need to learn new communication and facilitation skills to usefully engage in citizen juries, scenario workshops and other DIPs. But training of agency personnel in participatory principles, concepts and methods must be viewed as part of a larger process of reorienting institutional policies, organisational cultures, procedures, financial management practices, reporting systems, supervisory methods, reward systems and norms (IIED-IDS, 2000). In both government departments and other organisations, the challenge for top and middle management is to design appropriate institutional mechanisms and rewards to encourage the spread of DIPs and other participatory methods within the organisation (see Box 3). Without this support from the top, it is unlikely that deliberative and participatory approaches that enhance citizen capacities and innovation will become core professional activities.

Box 3 Transforming organisations for deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment

Key actions for reformers working for more accountable organisations (local and national government, NGOs, private sector) include the following.

- Diversify the governance and the membership of budget allocation committees of public sector planning, services and research institutes to include representatives of diverse citizen groups. Establish procedures to ensure transparency, equity and accountability in the allocation of funds and dissemination of new knowledge
- Encourage shifts from hierarchical and rigidly bureaucratic structures to 'flat', flexible and responsive organisations
- Provide capacity building for technical and scientific personnel to foster those participatory skills, attitudes and behaviour needed to learn from citizens (mutual listening, respect, gender sensitivity as well as methods for participatory learning and action)
- Ensure that senior and middle management positions are occupied by competent facilitators of organisational change, with the vision, commitment and ability to reverse gender and other discriminatory biases in the ideologies, disciplines and practices animating an organisation
- Promote and reward management that is consultative and participatory rather than verticalist and efficiency led. Establish incentive and accountability systems that are equitable for women and men
- Provide incentives and high rewards for staff to experiment, take initiatives and acknowledge errors as a way of learning by doing and engaging with the diverse local realities of citizen's livelihoods in urban and rural contexts
- Redesign practical arrangements, the use of space and time within the workplace to meet the diverse needs of women, men and older staff as well as their new professional obligations to work more closely with citizens and other actors (time tables, career paths, working hours, provision of paternity and maternity leave, childcare provisions, mini sabbaticals, promotion criteria…)
- Encourage and reward the use of gender disaggregated and socially differentiated local indicators and criteria in monitoring and evaluation as well as in guiding subsequent technical support, policy changes and allocation of scarce resources.

A reality check: where is power concentrated today?

Enabling government policies, organisational change and professional reorientation are all necessary preconditions for the widespread use of DIPs in the social construction of reality *by* and *for* citizens. However, at this time in history the 'power to define reality' rests less and less with governments and professionals engaged in planning, service delivery and in the design of technologies to meet human needs for food, health, shelter, energy and culture. Globalisation in its present form induces huge power differentials as a small minority of economic actors seek more control over markets, technologies, policies and institutions, imposing a one-dimensional homogenising reality on diversity. Of the top one hundred economic entities of the world, 51 are corporations and only 49 are states. The top 200 transnational corporations (TNCs) are

responsible for about 25% of all measured economic activity in the world. Since the early 1990s, in the United States, average corporate profits have increased by 108% and the compensation packages of Corporate Chief Executives have increased by a massive 481%. During the same period, average annual wages for workers have risen only 28%, barely keeping abreast with inflation. In 1960 the combined incomes of the richest fifth of the world's population were 30 times greater than the poorest fifth. By 1991 it was over 60 times and in 1998 the UN's latest figures estimate it as 78 times as high.

Powerful TNCs use a variety of official and unofficial instruments to impose three basic freedoms central to the neo-liberal credo of international competitiveness and comparative advantage: freedom of investment, freedom of capital flows, freedom of trade in goods and services (George, 2000).

TNCs rely on unofficial, non-transparent and discrete bodies to influence governments and opinion makers like.

- The European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) made up of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of 47 of the largest European TNCs. The ERT works closely with the European Commission and individual heads of states, often writing some of the Commission's most important 'White Papers' (Europe Ink, 2000)
- The TransAtlantic Business Dialogue (TABD) composed of CEOs from North America and Europe. Through regular dialogues with top politicians and international agency leaders, the TABD strongly influences international trade negotiations. It also maintains permanent expert committees on a range of topics including standard-setting for goods and services so that products may be freely sold in all markets.

As an official organisation, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is particularly responsive to the demands of TNCs for internationally binding rules in favour of total freedom of trade in goods and services. With little or no public oversight, corporations actively shape WTO negotiations on the liberalisation of trade on goods, agricultural products and intellectual property. Areas such as health, education, culture, the environment, and energy are also corporate targets under the emerging General Agreement on Trade in Services. The decisions of the WTO's 'Dispute Resolution Mechanism' (panels of trade experts, meeting behind closed doors) are enforceable through sanctions and apply to all 136 member-countries, both developed and developing. This is where WTO's greatest power lies: during the first four years of its existence, the rulings of the dispute settlement body have generally upheld corporate interests over those of people and the environment.

Corporate led globalisation is increasingly disempowering many more citizens on an unprecedented scale, both in the North and the South. Increasing job losses, fractured livelihoods, economic marginalisation, fear and anxiety about the future are all induced by the drive for comparative advantage and international competitiveness *via*:

- Relocations of industry and services, often from countries with higher labour costs and regulatory standards (environmental, working conditions) to countries with lower ones
- Mergers and acquisitions, with post acquisition rationalisation
- Deployment of new cost and labour saving technologies (computers, robotics, automation, biotechnologies) in the restructuring of manufacturing, agriculture and, increasingly, service sectors such as banking, insurance, airlines, accounting, retailing and hotels
- Reductions in public sector spending and privatisation
- Spread of a culture and vision emphasising the inevitability of the neo-liberal agenda, the public has to accept that There Is No Alternative (TINA syndrome)

Transformation for deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment

Whilst clearly important and necessary, it is not enough to merely view the institutionalisation of DIPs and participation as an expansion of *political* democracy to include more people and places in shaping the policy process, technologies and institutions. An analysis of how power is increasingly exercised and mediated today suggests that the issue of *economic* democracy is fundamental for change. Widening *economic* democracy is now a key overarching condition for the mainstreaming of participation and DIPs in *this* globalising world.

In practice, leveling the economic playing field for participation calls for *mutually reinforcing* and radical structural reforms. Among these the following merit closer attention.

- A guaranteed and unconditional minimum citizen income for all. A Citizen Income is based on the notion that the productive capacity of society is the result of all the scientific and technical knowledge accumulated by previous generations. This is a common heritage of humankind and all individuals regardless of origin, age or sex have a right to benefit from it, in the form of an unconditional basic income. An equitable distribution of the existing world product would allow each person on earth to benefit from such a basic income. Apart from offering a measure of security, a Citizen income would allow people to find more time to engage in civic affairs and deliberative processes.

- A reduction of time spent in wage-work and more equitable sharing of jobs. This is about finding ways to a) ensure that wage-work is more evenly distributed so that everyone can invest in other activities, *outside the wage economy*; b) defend the rights associated with wage-work; c) change the sexual division of labour so that men do as much unpaid work as women; and, d) move towards a post-wage society and introducing new rights delinked from wage-work. An important goal here is to free up peoples' time for self chosen and autonomous activities, whilst ensuring freedom from economic necessity.

- The re-localisation of plural economies that combine both subsistence and market oriented activities. Several mutually reinforcing enabling policies have been identified to bring about such transformation for diversity, decentralisation and democracy (see Box 4). The environments where people live will need to offer more individual and collective opportunities to engage in many different activities outside, and unmediated by, the market, wage work and commodity production. Moreover, these environments must be designed to provide the structural means by which citizens can manage their own affairs through face to face processes of deliberation and decision making.

Box 4 Policy reversals for diversity and localisation

- Reorientation of the end goals of aid and trade rules such that they contribute to the building of local economies and local control, rather than international competitiveness
- Reintroduction of protective safeguards for domestic economies, including safeguards against imports of goods and services that can be produced locally
- A site-here-to-sell-here policy for manufacturing and services domestically and regionally
- Localising money such that the majority stays within its place of origin and helps rebuild the economies of communities
- Local competition policy to eliminate monopolies from the more protected economies and ensure high quality goods and services
- Fund the transition to more localised economies and environmental regeneration by introducing taxes on resources and on speculative international financial flows (US 1500 billion dollars is traded every day on foreign exchange markets alone. Most of it is purely speculative and has nothing to do with the real economy)

Sources: Hines, 2000; ATTAC, 2000

Conclusion

Perhaps more than ever before, the growth of democratic participation in the North and the South depends on expanding spaces for autonomous action by civil society as well as on a process of localisation and reversals that regenerates diverse local economies, technologies and ecologies. The unprecedented imbalances of power induced by corporate-led globalisation challenge us to engage with these conceptual and methodological frontiers. Now is a time for bold and extraordinary initiatives to ensure that participation does not become a forgotten human right in this century.

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PRA/PLA training

Neela Mukherjee

Introduction

Most trainers have their own style of training and their unique selling propositions. Depending on the trainer, there are considerable variations in the way PRA/PLA training workshops are conducted with regard to objectives, coverage, fieldwork, topical emphasis, style and ways of learning. With regards to PRA/PLA training, some training tips based on formal and informal feedback from different quarters are described below.

Sometimes 'writing' has the edge over 'talking'

In any training-workshop, some participants are shy and rarely express their views in public. Sometimes participants from hierarchical organisations attend training sessions with their senior colleagues and often feel reluctant to articulate their views in front of them. This is particularly true of participants from governmental organisations and donor agencies. The trainer needs to be aware of such situations and identify the possible constraints to communication that exist within the groups concerned. One simple way to overcome this is to suggest that participants *write their views on pieces of paper*, whether anonymously or otherwise. This method has been effective in workshops conducted in China, India, Vietnam and Bangladesh and has helped participants to express their views more effectively. The other method used in these situations is *small group discussions*, with mixed groups of participants. This can help to create space for participants to overcome their inhibitions. Depending on levels of hierarchy existing within the set of trainees, the writing method can be combined with the small group discussion method for influencing attitude and behaviour.

Preaching and practising by trainers

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that PRA/PLA involves value-based training. Many participants view the trainer as a role model and any deviation of the trainer from this perspective may affect the image of the trainer in trainee's mind. It may also affect the desired 'change' envisaged through the training course. This puts considerable responsibility on the trainer to practice those values which s/he 'preaches' during the training event itself. It is very important for the trainer to have time for self-reflection; that they are aware of their own limitations and biases and hence, can seek ways of overcoming them. Many participants would like to see a 'perfect' trainer in order to imbibe the ways and practices of the trainer themselves. Any deviation from that risks scrutiny and judgement by the trainees and consequentially, may affect the end-results of the training.

Pitching training at an appropriate level

In heterogeneous groups pitching training at an appropriate level can often be challenging. To start with a rapid training needs assessment can be useful in enabling the trainer to identify levels and kinds of training required, followed by a reality check. If most participants are more experienced and demand training to be pitched at a higher level, then those participants with less experience are put at a disadvantage and may often require special care and attention. However, if only a few participants are more experienced than others, the training can be pitched at a level with which many are comfortable. This has the added benefit of the more experienced participants being able to share their experiences, if useful, with the rest of the group.

Catching up with the latest

There is considerable hard work to be done by trainers behind the scenes. Field results are continuously pouring in and trainers need to keep abreast of the latest developments. Acquiring knowledge of innovative practice, learning ways and methods for practical solutions, self-reflection, updating skills etc., can help a trainer to perform better. Such activities help improve performance and are essential pre-requisites for sustaining the worthiness of a trainer.

Cultural compatibility and conflict resolution

A PRA/PLA trainer needs to appreciate cultural diversity and it is important to explore 'do-s' and 'don't-s', especially in different cultures. Understanding of cultural parameters helps a trainer adjust to the new environment and ultimately perform better. In any training for participants from different cultures, a trainer should respect cultural diversity and provide relevant training inputs. Participants from different cultural backgrounds generally like to learn about relevant PRA/PLA experiences relating to their own cultures. Hence, the trainer needs to

prepare an inventory of case studies from different regions to enable better absorption of the concepts and practice of participatory approaches by the participants themselves. When individual perspectives differ widely, skills in consensus building and conflict resolution often prove handy for any trainer, as conflicting perspectives are quite common in multi-cultural scenarios.

Peer group sharing as a method

For improving participation and quality of training, a trainer can encourage peer group sharing and presentation of field experience. Facilitating such peer reviews can be done in such a way that group learning becomes more meaningful. When each group shares its own experience and findings, the trainer can put it in a comparative framework so as to enable inter-group and intra-group comparisons. Peer group sharing is an effective tool for comparing and contrasting lessons from field experiences, both on an individual and group basis. In a learning process, participants' motivation levels often rise when they relate their field experience back to others. From this process, they can draw out key lessons, identifying what they have contributed to or which important points they may have missed. Furthermore, this also acts as a deterrent for those participants who consider themselves to be 'expert', as they face queries from other groups of participants.

'End-of- training' evaluation

Evaluation by participants at the end of the training course is an important way of finding out what they thought of the training. Often such sessions are done in a haphazard manner and not much time is devoted to reflection. Such evaluation can be more constructive and meaningful if adequate time is spent on practical assessment of the training programme itself along with sufficient focus on how to follow it up. Many of us, as trainers, are interested to hear good things about the training. However, an evaluation framework generally proves to be more effective, including plans for future action and ways for overcoming constraints. Such post-training feedback is more meaningful when broadly structured around its strengths, limitations, assessment of the trainer and course content, areas for improvement, scope for applications of the training etc. Though a staggered training programme in PRA/PLA is more effective, funding constraints and lack of time often force training to be a 'one-off' event.

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