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June 2000

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Participatory development

A growing awareness of the failures of conventional development approaches in meeting the needs of resource-poor people has led to the exploration of alternative methodologies for investigating resource management issues, and planning, implementing and evaluating development activities.

Participatory approaches, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), offer a creative approach to information sharing, and a challenge to prevailing biases and preconceptions about rural people's knowledge. Advocates of participation argue that the production of knowledge and the generation of potential solutions should be developed with those whose livelihood strategies form the subject for research.

The methods used range from field-based visualisation, to interviewing and group work. The common theme is the promotion of interactive learning, shared knowledge, and flexible, yet structured analysis. These methods have proven valuable for understanding local perceptions of the functional value of resources, processes of agricultural intervention and social and institutional relations. Furthermore, participatory approaches can bring together different disciplines, such as agriculture, health and community development, to enable an integrated vision of livelihoods and well-being. Participatory approaches also offer opportuntities for mobilising local people for joint action.

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an umbrella term for a wide range of similar approaches and methodologies, including PRA, Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Learning Methods (PALM), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Farming Systems Research (FSR), Méthod Active de Recherche et de Planification Participative (MARP) and many others. The common theme to all these approaches is the *participation* of people in the processes of *learning* about their needs, capabilities and visions, and in the *action* required to address them. The refinement and application of participatory learning and action in research and development is an area of special emphasis within IIED's Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme.

The resource centre for participatory learning and action at IIED

The Resource Centre at IIED is an information delivery service, providing practical information and support on participation in development.

The Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) collection includes materials on all major aspects of participatory approaches (PRA, PAR, MARP etc.) from around the world, with an emphasis on Africa, Asia and South America. It includes more than 2,000 documents and features material in more than 10 languages. The PLA collection is also available on-line on our website at http://www.iied.org/resource/, and on CD-Rom.

The major participatory collections are kept up-to-date through direct collaboration with partner organisations, such as the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) network. This initiative brings together 15 organisations from Africa, Asia, South America and Europe who are committed to information sharing and networking on participatory approaches (for further information, see the RCPLA pages in *PLA Notes*).

The Resource Centre offers document delivery services, consultancy services providing technical advice on all aspects of information management, and is open to visitors by appointment.

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PRA at IDS

PRA and other participatory methodologies are also a focus for the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This group of researchers and practitioners are involved in sharing knowledge, in strengthening capacity to support quality participatory approaches and in deepening understanding of participatory methods and principles. It focuses on south-south sharing, exchange visits, information exchange, action research projects, writing and training. Services include a Participation Reading Room with a database detailing materials held, which is also accessible via a website at http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip
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The editors encourage articles to be co-authored by all those involved in the research or development project. This ensures that everyone's contribution to the development process is fully valued and acknowledged.

BE VISUAL!
We welcome visual accounts of experiences with participatory approaches. Please send us posters, drawings or cartoons for inclusion in *PLA Notes.*

Also, please send details of any relevant publications, forthcoming training sessions, and networks, which may be listed in the *In Touch* section at the end of the journal.

Guidelines for authors

The principal aim of the *PLA Notes* series is to share current experiences, critical perspectives and methodological innovations among practitioners of participatory learning and action approaches to development.

The Editors would like to hear of recent experiences and current thinking around participation, and are seeking frank accounts of experiences in the field (or in workshops) looking at the practical outcomes of participation and what can be learned from these. Articles considering issues of power in the participatory process and impact of participation itself, are particularly welcomed.

The Editors particularly favour those articles which contain one, or all, of the following elements:

• an *innovative* angle to the concepts of participatory approaches or their application;
• *critical reflections* on the lessons learned from the author's experiences;
• an attempt to develop new methods, or innovative adaptations of existing ones;
• consideration of the processes involved in participatory approaches
• an assessment of the impacts of a participatory process on the livelihoods of the target community.
• potentials and limitations of scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches

Furthermore, the Editors encourage articles to be co-authored by all those involved in the research or development project. This ensures that everyone's contribution to the development process is fully valued and acknowledged.

STYLE
Articles should be legible, preferably typed, with clear copies of any drawings that are to be included. The use of short sentences and paragraphs and simple language is encouraged. The Editors reserve the right to edit and amend articles for publication in *PLA Notes.*

LENGTH
Maximum: 2,500 words plus two full-page diagrams. We particularly encourage short articles reflecting experiences that are 'hot from the field'. If references are mentioned, please include details but they should be kept to a minimum. Where used, reference should only be made to completed and published materials that are accessible to *PLA Notes* readers.

PHOTOGRAPHS
These should have captions and the name of the author clearly written on the back.

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If you are sending a disk, we use Word 6 for Windows, but can read most other word processing packages. Please note that articles may also be sent to the Editors by Email. Please provide an original 'hard' copy of the printed article. Please submit articles to:

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Editorial

Welcome to this issue of *PLA Notes*. As many of our readers will be aware, *PLA Notes* has now been produced for over 12 years and during this time, has reflected the growth and development of participatory methodologies.

In an era where participatory approaches have often been viewed as a panacea to development problems or where acquiring funds for projects has depended on the use of such methodologies, it is vital to pay attention to the *quality* of the methods and the *process* of participaton. Whilst *PLA Notes* is still a series with a methodological focus, it is important to emphasise issues of power in the process and the impact of participation, asking ourselves who sets the agenda for participatory practice. It is only with critical analysis published in *PLA Notes*, that we can, as a group, further develop our thinking around participatory learning and action.

Theme issue

The special theme for this issue is *Participatory Processes in the North* which presents a variety of case studies where participatory techniques have been used in a range of sectors and contexts, the key linkage between them being their location in the 'North'[1]. Participatory approaches have been increasingly adopted in northern countries, influenced by the long history of participatory practice in the South.

The Guest Editors for this issue are Charlotte Flower, Paul Mincher and Susan Rimkus. Charlotte Flower is currently working as the Participatory Methodologies Adviser for Oxfam's UK Poverty Programme, which seeks to address poverty and social exclusion in the UK. Charlotte has a PhD in forestry and a background in forestry research, with overseas experience in Nepal, Cameroon and Namibia. Paul Mincher is currently the Project Co-ordinator of the Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action at The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and offers support to the RCPLA Network[2]. Trained as a marine biologist, Paul spent six years using participatory methodologies in natural resource management in the Philippines. Susan Rimrus works as the Instructional Support Program Planner for Teaching Support Services at the University of Guelph, Canada. Her main interest is teaching in a participatory environment which recognises the students' capacity to offer something to the learning environment.

In this issue

As usual, this issue opens with a general selection of articles. In the first article, Thackwray Driver and Axel Kravatsky discuss a participatory project which, in their words, 'went wrong'. Through critical reflection, they raise issues regarding how projects using PLA methodologies to make changes can get stuck in predetermined outcomes from the outset.

In the second article, Kees Blok presents a training project which focuses on training professionals to develop skills in facilititation of participatory processes. The article concentrates on attitudes required for good facilitation and uses what occurs 'here and now' in the training sessions as a staring point for reflection on interaction and attitudes.

Next, Laura Greenwood reviews the recent Francophone Exchange for participatory development. This review summarises the main issues raised by the participants and the mission statement '*La Declaration de Dakar'*, which was a key output from the meeting.

Regular features

In the *Feedback* section, C. O. Izugbara presents an interesting piece about the behaviour and attitudes of field workers. The author describes how problems regarding the conduct of fieldworkers can also arise in the case where they share the same ethnicity as the communities with which they are working. Drawing from his experience in work around behaviour and attitudes, Somesh Kumar provides an interesting response to the issues raised, including discussions about the insider/outsider dynamic, treatment of key informants and how to develop a good relationship with a community with which you are working.

The *Tips for Trainers* section for this issue has been prepared by Françoise Coupal of Mosaic.net International, Canada, and shares an exercise which can be used to form teams based on criteria which are established by the participants themselves.

The In-Touch pages at the back of the issue publicise new and relevant materials and training events. The *RCPLA Pages* in the *In Touch* section provide information about the forthcoming RCPLA network meeting in September, along with updates and news from RCPLA members in Uganda, Nepal, Thailand and the UK.

Happy Reading!

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[1] For the purpose of *PLA Notes*, this is defined as the membership of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
[2] Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network. See the *RCPLA Pages* towards the end of this issue for further information.

Participatory learning and action or Participatory acting?

1

Thackwray Driver and Axel Kravatzky

Prologue

PLA Notes encourages practitioners to share information and experiences 'in the field', emphasising innovation and timely reporting on recent activities. While this is a useful function, we believe that in many cases, self-reflection (one of the supposed mainstays of PLA approaches) can only come with the benefit of longer and more sustained hindsight. In this article we reflect on a participatory project that took place over two years ago: a project that in many senses we felt 'went wrong' and one that we have thought and talked about quite a bit since.

PLA is a family of methodologies that is supposed to enable stakeholders to learn and to take action for positive change. There is a danger, however, that a project using participatory methodologies can get stuck in 'theatre play', where the stakeholders, including PLA practitioners, take up roles that are well rehearsed and where the outcome has already been written into the script. With the benefit of hindsight, this is exactly what happened in the project described below. The process which we will describe contributed only to personal development, but not to systemic transformation.

Act One: PLA – Tantalising expectations

In late 1996 the Sustainable Economic Development Unit (SEDU) at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago, was contracted to evaluate the 'partnership approach' that UNDP had developed with two NGOs in the North East of Trinidad. Using this 'partnership approach' UNDP had funded a number of different projects in the region, mainly via the GEF Small Grants programme, such as developing a small loans scheme, the training of 'eco-tourism guides' and the construction of a community radio station.

UNDP argued that this was a new and innovative approach and one worthy of study. The objectives of our research project were to both evaluate the extent to which UNDP's investments in the North East region had contributed to 'sustainable human development' and to enable the organisations to learn lessons from their experiences to enhance their future work. Given these objectives, the four-person project team proposed a participatory methodology: a proposal actively supported by the Resident Representative of UNDP.

The partnerships between the NGOs and UNDP was very young and it was clear to the project team that the desired effects of the projects could not have been achieved in time periods of 1-2 years and certainly could not be 'tested' or 'confirmed' by field evidence. Nevertheless, the Resident Representative of UNDP was adamant that, as well as playing a role as enablers of organisational learning, we should also evaluate the role of the 'partnership' in fostering 'sustainable human development': a concept he defined by referring us to a jargon laden UNDP document outlining a series of 'principles' for 'sustainable human development' (UNDP, 1996). The key principles were detailed in an alarmingly wide ranging set of 14 objectives, stretching from 'promoting organisational forms that encourage people to realise their full potential' to 'reducing poverty and increasing equity'.

With these instructions in mind the project team met and developed a workplan. Given our concerns about evaluating the project's impact on 'sustainable human development' in the region we decided that we should concentrate our efforts on an evaluation of the 'partnership approach' itself. The principles of 'sustainable human development' included a number of objectives relating to development of institutional capacities (UNDP, 1996) and it was here that we decided to focus our attention. It was clear to us that the primary aim of our project was to facilitate learning among the partnership members (according to Resident Representative, 70% should focus on learning) and that traditional evaluation (for accountability purposes) would only play a small role in the project. As the UNDP Resident Representative was not only funding our project, but was himself one of the two major players in the partnerships, we sought his direct feedback on our proposed workplan.

Act Two: Unresolved conflict sends players back to the trenches

At first, our meeting with the Resident Representative of UNDP seemed to go fairly well. He was supportive of our approach, the use of participatory methods and the emphasis on learning. However, the meeting took an unexpected turn when we raised the issue of evaluating projects that were only in the initial stages of implementation.

We had thought that the Resident Representative may have been unhappy that our approach concentrated only on the 'capacity building' elements of UNDP's definition of 'sustainable human development' and that we would not be able to evaluate the impact of the projects on, for example, reducing rural poverty in the North East of Trinidad. As it turned out, the Resident Representative became extremely angry with us for daring to suggest that it was possible that the projects were not having a positive impact on all elements of 'sustainable human development'. The Resident Representative's perspective seemed to be that if the 'partnership approach' was 'working', then, by definition, it had to be fostering 'sustainable human development'. The meeting ended on a very angry note, with the Resident Representative instructing us to 'go and do the work and write-up the results'. From that point on it was clear that he had withdrawn his sponsorship of the project and that he just wanted us to get the project over with and submit a report.

A few days later we had another surprise. UNDP requested that one of the team members be replaced by somebody else with 'more experience of participatory methods'. The team refused to accept this request from UNDP, especially as the person they suggested be replaced was actually the most experienced PLA practitioner in the team (though he had not worked in Trinidad and Tobago before this project), and the person UNDP suggested as a replacement had no specific PLA experience (though wide work experience in Trinidad and Tobago). The team did, however, agree to add a fifth team member (not the person recommended by UNDP) who had wide fieldwork experience in Trinidad and Tobago.

These two incidents had a serious impact on team morale. We decided that we should simply go through the paces and carry out the planned participatory sessions in accordance with our workplan. At least then we could say we had done the project, submit a report and get paid.

Act Three: PLA as evasive action

Going through the motions was not always as easy as expected. It soon became apparent that the major partner NGO, or more specifically, the charismatic leader of the NGO, simply did not want us to be there. In initial meetings he re-iterated his opinion that there was 'nothing we could tell them that they did not already know'. We tried to explain that our role was to facilitate reflection and learning, so as to further develop the partnership and distil lessons for others. This message did not seem to be heard by the leader of the NGO. Throughout the project, the leader of the NGO, and his closest collaborator/sponsor within UNDP, attempted to alter our workplan and to disrupt the process through both subtle and not so subtle means. The tensions between the project team and the NGO and UNDP were played out in the familiar realms of 'insider and outsider' and of class, generation, gender and race.

Despite all of these problems we pressed ahead and, with much difficulty, we managed to hold meetings with a number of different groups who had been formed around specific projects, as well as with the National Steering Committee of the GEF Small Grants Programme and other NGOs in the area. In these group sessions we used the 'basket of PRA techniques' we had brought along with us, including Venn diagrams, timelines, participatory mapping, ranking exercises and other familiar participatory tools.

The sessions themselves went well and project team members felt comfortable in the familiar PLA environment. Participants in the sessions produced a series of posters capturing the issues discussed in the group meetings and we had some output on which to base a report. This initial report was circulated prior to a second meeting of all the 'stakeholders'. At this second meeting, which was attended by all stakeholders expect UNDP and senior management of the partnerships NGOs, all the posters from the various sessions were put upon on the walls of a local school and their contents discussed by all the participants. This meeting produced a further set of posters, which formed the basis of our findings and recommendations in a final report.

Despite all the difficulties, we had got through the process and produced some tangible outputs. Even more encouraging was the positive evaluation we received in a final feedback questionnaire from workshop participants. It confirmed that we had achieved a 'participatory' evaluation in which those who were engaged learned.

Predictably, neither the UNDP, nor their partner NGOs, were happy with our final report. Despite the fact that we based our conclusions on the posters constructed in the final group meeting, we were told that our report painted too negative a picture of the major NGO and its work in the area. At a final meeting with UNDP, members of the GEF Small Grants Programme Steering Committee and representatives of senior management of the NGO, we were asked to 'massage' the data presented in the report to also reflect the views of the players who did not participate in the final workshop (i.e. UNDP and the senior management of the major NGO). The revised version was accepted without further comment and we suspect that it has now found a secure space alongside other scripts on UNDP's shelves.

Epilogue

We are confident that the play we describe here is familiar to other PLA practitioners and players in the development industry. Participatory methodologies are usually presented as a way of defusing conflict through the promotion of participation. However, the literature says little about the conditions under which learning that transforms relationships can be achieved. Learning for transformation needs to avoid the path of least resistance, which simply involves the acting out of well-rehearsed roles.

Practitioners of participatory approaches need to take a more realistic view of transformation: one that sees transformation not as a linear crisis free process, but one that allows for and indeed expects crisis and conflict in the journey of transformation. The major insight from our own experience is that, as PLA practitioners, we need to go beyond the confident handling of particular techniques and develop our specific capabilities to manage our role as facilitators and consultants. Only in this way will we be able to manage the process in a way that achieves the transformation potential that participatory methodologies hold.

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Changing professional attitudes
Complementing use of participatory techniques with attention to the 'here and now'

2

Kees Blok

Introduction

The *Proyecto Capacitación Profesional en Gestión de Recursos Hídricos para Uso Agrario (Proyecto CGRH[1])* conducts training sessions for professionals working in irrigation management transfer programmes to help them develop facilitation skills for participatory processes. The course focuses on the knowledge and skills required for developing a facilitatory role for supporting communication with water users. Its main aim is, however, helping participants to define and adopt certain professional attitudes that are required for successful facilitation. The course encourages its participants to discover, through experience, their own personal style of facilitation.

In this article, I would like to share our progress in, and ideas about, helping participants to work on their behaviour and attitudes. I will give a summary about learning and teaching 'attitudes', followed by a presentation of two of the exercises we use in teaching our participants about attitudinal change. In conclusion, I describe the challenge, both for trainers and professionals working with rural communities, of complementing the focus on participatory techniques with equal attention to the interaction between workshop participants themselves.

Changing attitudes

Many of the problems we – participants and trainers alike – face in facilitating participatory processes do not stem from a poor application of participatory techniques but from the way in which we interact through body and speech. This is something that often goes by without being remarked upon, although hardly ever unnoticed. When we communicate, we not only transmit a message; we accompany this with implicit information about how we see ourselves, and about how we see others. These views are based on our attitudes. Attitudes are not permanent, but they are very stable. They are both the result of a lifelong learning process and the norms and culture of the society in which we live. In Peru, development workers often assume the role of 'problem-solver' in front of the rural population and usually the rural population assume that they have this role. This is frustrating when, for instance, a development worker has gone to a local community with the mandate to assist its members in resolving their own problems.

Let us illustrate this with an example from the Projecto CGRH course on analysis of farming systems, conducted in northern Peru.

Shortly after the workshop's introduction, the facilitator asked one of the participants: "Don Antonio, why don't you grow more plots with products that you could sell in the market?" The question takes Don Antonio a bit aback, as the engineer does not explain why he needs the information. Moreover, he is asked neither which crops he cultivates at present, nor what difficulties he faces in this. While Don Antonio contemplates the question, the facilitator comes up with a announcement on what he perceives as Don Antonio's lack of enterprising spirit: "Don Antonio, you fail to make use of the market's opportunities".

At this point, Don Antonio would like to mention that the mill owners make him sow a large part of his terrain with rice, as a means to repay the debts he has accumulated with them; that he doesn't have enough family labour to extend his cultivated area; that the irrigation water that is essential for his secondary crops often arrives very late; that...etc., etc. O, how difficult it is to explain all this to someone who hardly knows the zone; to someone who appears to be in a hurry, as in less than two minutes he is already suggesting changes in Don Antonio's way of farming. Instead of expressing all his experience, Don Antonio resorts to an answer that is used very often, although it is hardly an answer at all: "Yes, yes, mister".

Our professional performance consists of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Improving performance implies a need to work on all three aspects. While the facilitator in the above example knows what facilitation is and how to apply it, his inner (and by no means uncommon) urge to be a 'caretaker' of the people's problems prevents him from adopting a truly facilitatory role. Our courses, therefore, offer learning opportunities for knowledge, skills and attitudes, and for integrating the three in hands-on practice.

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[1] The 'Project for Training of Professionals in Water Management for Agricultural Purposes' is an inter-institutional initiative by IPROGA (a national organisation for the promotion of irrigation management transfer), IMAR (a group of NGOs aiming at management transfer of the Chancay Lambayeque irrigation system), CEDEPAS (an NGO working with mountain communities) and SNV, The Netherlands Development Organisation.

The process through which we learn attitudes is fundamentally different from learning knowledge (by reproducing it) and from learning skills (by applying them). Learning attitudes is a highly social process, in which:

• we need to see the benefits of changing a specific attitude, in terms of improved effectiveness in our social interactions;
• we need to identify with, and imitate, a positive example;
• we need time, dedication and a supportive environment; and above all,
• we need to have a positive feeling about ourselves in order to free the energy for working on our attitudes.

Attitudes are personal property and, as such, can only be changed by their owner. Therefore, participation in activities concerning attitudes is voluntary, although we will ask participants who 'opt out' to observe the activity and share their observations with others attending the course. Up to now, all our trainees have participated keenly.

In our training courses, we finish the day with about an hour of reflection. Initially, reflections focus on the process of learning new knowledge and skills, but by the third day, we change the focus towards reflections on personal attitudes. The members of the facilitatory team participate in the reflections along with the participants; in order to emphasise that working on one's attitudes is a life-long and continual process. Generally, we use a number of methods for facilitating reflections, two examples of which follow in the next section. With each method, we will describe the objective, the desired interaction, the required steps, alternatives, an example and tips for use.

Nicknames

Objective   To introduce, in a very 'light' manner, a focus on one's personality
Interaction Each participant feels accepted by other participants for his or her personal style
Method   Choosing nicknames based on observed behaviour during the past few days

Step 1: Ask each participant individually to prepare a nickname for each member of his or her working group based on their behaviour. We usually have three parallel working groups.
Step 2: The working groups have a meeting in which the nicknames are exchanged and during which the group has to reach consensus about the names finally selected. The final choice may be one of the options contributed by the members, or a new and better option identified through open discussions. The person receiving the nickname decides whether to accept it or not. Nicknames are written on cards but not yet put on the participants' lapels.
Step 3: The working groups identify which positive attitudes are highlighted through the nicknames and identify what is the possible pitfall if the participant over-emphasises this good quality. Again, the person under discussion has to recognise himself in the descriptions and approve the use of the nickname in the plenary.
Step 4: In a plenary session, each working group member is introduced in turn. Participant A introduces B, B introduces C, etc., until the final member introduces A. The introductions cover the nickname (now written on stickers or cards and attached to the participant to which it refers), its motivation, the quality or qualities expressed in it and the possible pitfall. Each person gets applauded.
Step 5: Ask participants to express how they feel about the exercise. Finally ask whether they would like to continue to work on attitudes the next days as well.

Alternatives
A possible sequel to this activity is asking participants to think about how their life's history has led them to become what they are. Ask them to prepare a five-minute description of their life history, which they will be asked to present in turn during the workshop. This additional step can best be introduced by one of the facilitators giving his or her life history.
In our last course, participants adopted this activity as their 'thermometer' for change – i.e. as a way of monitoring changes in behaviour and attitude. Every fifth day, they would repeat the exercise in order to ascertain whether their personal development continued. They exchanged suggestions about issues requiring each participant's attention.

Example
One of the members of the Proyecto CGRH team was branded 'Tarzan' for his ability to improvise at the last minute. He always finds a 'liana' to swing by. Nevertheless, relying heavily on this ability also has led him to be weak on planning. Through his life history, he told us that having to face heavy responsibilities at an early age combined with the positive example of his uncle has led him to this confident style.

Tips for use
1. This is an introductory activity and generally the participants will choose nicknames with a positive connotation. In case of a tense atmosphere among the participants, this may not always be the case. Therefore it is important to insist on the constructive use of nicknames. Better still, organise an activity to concentrate reflection on the tense atmosphere in the group if this situation persists.
2. Some nicknames are heroic, while others appear dull. Give special attention to those participants that appear to be less pleased. Help them to gain self-esteem through their life history, or in the plenary, highlight the moments in which they successfully evade their pitfall.

Dilemma Museum	
Objective	To let participants identify ethical values that underpin their attitudes and to guide them towards using these values as a resource for resolving personal dilemmas
Interaction	Increasing willingness to discuss personal issues. Respect for and understanding of choices different people have to face and their outlook on these choices.
Method	Analysing personal dilemmas with the help of a colleague

Step 1: Start with a plenary brainstorm about values. Instead of trying to define this tricky concept, suggest that participants give examples of possible values.

Step 2: Explain the complete procedure in a plenary session. Emphasise that not all will succeed in resolving their dilemma but that it is sufficient to reach a better definition of their dilemma, without resolving it.

Step 3: Ask participants to form pairs of their choice. In pairs, both work out – on a flip chart – a dilemma that they face in their work or in their personal life. For this, they provide a short description of the dilemma and identify the two options between which they cannot choose. Below each option they describe the considerations in support of that option. In a final step, each will identify which personal values underpin these considerations.

Step 4: Participants put their flipcharts on exhibition in the plenary meeting hall, while all are invited to visit the museum. In this museum there is no guide, but participants are encouraged to discuss the 'pictures' on exhibition.

Step 5: In a plenary session, participants are asked to express how they feel about the exercise. Ask whether some succeeded in resolving their dilemma.

Alternative

To get into the 'mood', we have been introducing this activity with a meditation exercise (controlled breathing from T'ai Chi). We have explained participants that we do this to bring them closer to themselves and to help them reach their values more easily.

Example

One of the members of the Proyecto CGRH team was in doubt about the right moment to intervene in the field exercise included in the course in which participants had to facilitate a meeting of water users. His options were either to intervene early on, or to allow the participant – through much sweat and doubt – to discover his or her best way of facilitating. He liked option 1 as it would assure the success of the meeting and maintain the enthusiasm of its participants, while option 2 was supported by the knowledge that a participant has to make errors in order to learn. The Projecto CGRH team member then identified which values, in his view, underpinned the arguments for each of the two options. Values underpinning option1 were compassion and perfection, while option 2 was underpinned by perseverance, a long-term outlook and, again, by perfection.

Tips for use

1. This activity requires the group to have worked on attitudes and to have reached a fair degree of cohesiveness.

2. In the brainstorm of values, often one or two negative values will be mentioned. Include these but explain that these are the 'negative' of another value and that in the following exercise we only use positive values.

3. The facilitator(s) join in this activity. Moreover, they can resolve situations where one or two participants remain left over in the forming of pairs.

4. If participants do not form pairs through not having personal affinity with any other members of the group, this should be reflected upon, as it says something about the interactions in the group of participants.

Conclusion

Through my own experience, I have learned that changing one's attitudes is an important prerequisite for adopting the role of a facilitator of participatory processes. Attitudes exist in us and only become visible in the way we interact. Methods, such as the two described in the previous section, are useful ways to give workshop participants a procedure by which to work on attitudes, but fail to make direct use of the interactions taking place during the training course itself. It is important to use the interactions that occur 'here and now'. Doing so is far more important than any method to approach issues concerning behaviour and attitudes, but requires considerable facilitation skills.

Many of those seeking to improve their skills in facilitating participatory learning and action approaches tend to rely heavily on methods and techniques. Nevertheless, the ability to support attitudinal change in participants includes an ability to intervene in the 'how-s' and 'why-s' of interaction in the meeting place. For example, *"I notice that we are all very restless – why is this?" "Why is it that this working group always is debating in raised voices?" "Why did you choose to neglect the suggestion of the participant on the third row?".*

In the tips for use given in the two methods presented previously, we suggest that problems that arise when applying the methods be used as starting points for reflection. With each method, we have described the

desired interactions next to the desired objectives. Deviations from the intended interaction could trigger a reflection on other interactions and, through this, on attitudes as well. A third way in which we support the participants to reflect individually on attitudes is by providing personal feedback, and by encouraging mutual feedback among the participants.

Using what occurs 'here and now' in the training sessions as a starting point for reflection on interaction and attitudes remains a challenge. As a team, we frequently debate how we perceive the interactions taking place and coach each other in developing and placing the right interventions at the right time. Though this is not easy, it certainly is inspiring.

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Notes

Acknowledgements

Review of the Francophone exchange meeting on participatory development in Francophone Africa

3

Results and strategies for the future

compiled by **Laura Greenwood**

Participatory development in Francophone West Africa has been considerably developed and practised in the region during the last 10 years, primarily through the spread of the Méthode Active de Recherche et de Plannification Participatives (MARP) methodology and associated network. During this time, a great many community based groups (CBOs), local and national NGOs, government agencies, research and academic organisations etc., have adopted participatory methodologies in their work. However, whilst there has been much spread in the adoption and dissemination of participatory methods in practice, there has been little development to support the exchange of information and experiences oriented towards good practice and learning between institutions and individuals involved in participatory development in Francophone Africa. This has resulted in a lack of analysis of participatory practice, duplication of effort and often, non-systematisation of good practice[1]. In an attempt to address this situation and to facilitate networking and the exchange of information, a regional meeting was convened to provide Francophone practitioners the opportunity to meet and share their experiences around, and to discuss ways forward for, participatory development.

The Francophone Exchange was co-organised by IIED-Senegal – Programme du Sahel and La Fondation Rurale de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (FRAO) with financial support from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) – UK. This regional meeting was held on 25th-28th April 2000 in Dakar, Senegal and provided the opportunity for practitioners to reflect together on the experiences and results of participatory practice to date, drawing from their own varied experiences, and to identify strategies and challenges for participatory development in the future. One of its principle aims was to try to systematise methods, share innovation and enrich documentation around the use of participatory methods in the Francophone world.

The exchange bought together around 70 practitioners from primarily Francophone West African countries[2] including representatives from farmer organisations, community groups, NGOs, government and bi-lateral agencies such as the UN. The event itself was structured around plenary and working group sessions. There was also a Share-Fair running from the second day onwards, to enable delegates to present and exchange information about methods, work in practice, publications and information services relating to participatory development in their specific contexts.

The objectives of the Exchange were:
- to identify the issues and challenges of participatory approaches in the context of Francophone Africa;
- to evaluate the experiences, strengths and weaknesses of participatory approaches in Francophone Africa; and,
- to develop mechanisms to establish a close and sustained collaboration between those Francophone institutions involved in participatory development.

The meeting was structured around the three themes: current practice in participatory development in Francophone Africa, strategies for the future and an exploration of the mechanisms required for better collaboration between institutions involved in participatory practice.

Current practice in participatory development in Francophone West Africa

Drawing on the ten years of experience of participation in the region, a wide range of varied case studies regarding current practice around participatory development in the region were presented. Through this, and the material presented at the Share-Fair, several critical issues were raised; such as, for example, how participatory methods be can scientifically validated. It was agreed that participatory methods have more strength when they are combined with other methods; that definitions of participation are very broad and experience based, and that organisations practising participatory approaches must also adopt them as part of their organisational structures and procedures.

Mechanisms for exchange between practitioners

Whilst there was considerable experience in the use of participatory methods at the meeting, it was acknowledged that there was a 'gap' in terms of supporting such good

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[1] *Le Développement Participatif en Afrique Francophone: Bilan et Stratégies pour le Futur* – overview information about the workshop. FRAO/IIED 2000.
[2] Countries represented at the event included: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia.

practice. This was due to a lack of established mechanisms and structures for exchanging experiences between institutions and individuals which would enable them to draw from a wider range of experiences of participatory work in different contexts, countries and sectors.

In this context, academic/research organisations were discussed in some depth and one of the key roles identified for them was to act as intermediaries to facilitate information exchange, for and between practitioners in the region in order to support participatory practice. Over and above the role of research/academic organisations, roles were identified for practitioners at all levels in identifying ways for better inter-institutional learning and for establishing sustained collaboration in working practice between stakeholders in participatory practice. Issues such as translation and documentation in local languages, optimising the use of Information and Communications Technology, and institutionalisation of annual meetings for practitioners such as the Francophone Exchange, along with support for information activities in terms of funding, were emphasised as very important areas to develop. Suggested outputs included the following.
• Creation of a journal for participatory development in the Francophone world.
• Exchange visits between practitioners.
• Establishment of a database of practitioners and other information about participatory development.
• Establishment of links at organisational and national levels to develop a critical mass of support for participatory approaches.
• Creation of focal points (organisations) to support this process.
• Reinforcing networks and inter-network relationships.
• Better communication and better dissemination/ publication.

Resources required to support the outputs suggested above were not discussed in depth in this forum – frankly, there wasn't the time. However, this is not a wish list, but rather a starting point; a basis from which to work and further develop ideas with the renewed commitment and enthusiasm from all the participants present. In addition, key roles have been identified for the conference organisers, FRAO and IIED-Senegal, to act as catalysts to support the development of these outputs in collaboration with other organisations in the future.
.
An interesting point to come out of the meeting was the acknowledgement of the practitioners as *consumers* rather than *producers* of information, along with a tacit agreement that quality information production must be encouraged and in addition, that documentation creation be supported at the grassroots level in particular. The flip side to this is, of course, ensuring that grassroots communities can also *access* information in an egalitarian way, but importantly, that there is information to access in the first place. The strength of participatory development is that it is established and developed through local knowledge and working with local people/stakeholders, and thus, there must be mechanisms established to facilitate the sharing of information at this, and other, levels.

What are the strategies for the future of participatory development in Francophone Africa?

Obviously, the strategies for the future of participatory development is a very broad subject. However, in this meeting, four key points were raised. First, there has been a change of emphasis. Originally, participatory approaches developed on the periphery of development strategies, yet through their potential to truly involve and empower local people in their own development, they have been heralded as a successful strategy, and as such, have moved to the centre of development strategies. Second, there must be greater concentration on the impact of participatory approaches, particularly at the grassroots level and particularly in the long term. Whilst there is a huge amount of literature regarding the 'how to' in participation, there is less concerning the impact of it, and this is a key issue to discuss with regards to future strategies. Third, in this, the 'information age', new communication and information technologies offer many exciting opportunities for information exchange. However, Africa as a continent is lagging behind due to technical problems and access to hardware, reliable energy supplies etc., which in itself raises issues around the equality of access to information. New technology provides an extremely important communication channel to support participatory development and as such, must be integrated into the debate around participation. Fourth, the institutionalisation of participation is a key issue when discussing future strategies, in terms of comprehensive adoption and recognition of the methods and the development of a critical mass of support for them. It was acknowledged that a long-term vision is required. It is also important to think about how participatory approaches can change the structures of our organisations.

A key output from the Francophone Exchange was the construction of a statement of intent entitled '*La Declaration de Dakar*'. Key points from this mission statement are summarised in English below.

La Declaration de Dakar

Discussions during the course of the workshop as well as the materials on display at the *Share – Fair for Participatory Methods* prove that much progress has been made. At the same time, the participants recognised that certain challenges remain, the analysis of which have led to the formulation of a certain number of statements and recommendations to guide future work in the area of participatory development.

Regarding the development of national and transnational[3] frameworks

The participants of the meeting stated that:
- Heterogeneity in situations from one country to another and the lack of linkages in communication between them creates remarkable regional distortions in terms of participatory development in Francophone Africa.
- These distortions justify the urgency of the development and the reinforcement of collaborative frameworks between institutions on both national and transnational levels, of which the aim is to engage in reflection, to support the development of new methodologies and to reinforce methodological convergence in the field of participatory development.

As a result of these statements, the participants made the following recommendations.

National frameworks of collaboration
- To identify and evaluate needs regarding institutional support and to reinforce organisational capacity necessary to start this process within three months. The findings will be submitted to IIED-Senegal and FRAO.
- To expand the limits of participation from the national framework level and to take into consideration exchange mechanisms including the grassroots level.

Transnational framework of collaboration.
- To create a transnational framework of inter-institutional collaboration.
- To give a mandate to IIED-Senegal and FRAO to finalise the conceptualisation of this framework and to steer its early development.
- To create working groups around central themes such as documenting the impact of participatory processes, extension of ICT[4], the development of methodological innovations etc. FRAO and IIED will have the responsibility of defining the terms of reference, encouraging the participation of stakeholders and facilitating and identifying working group co-ordinators.

Regarding the impact of participatory approaches

The participants of the meeting at Dakar have recognised that, despite advances attained so far, the reinforcement of experience will depend largely on their capacity to document and to show the impact of participatory approaches in the improvement of the living conditions of local people. To this regard, it is recommended that a mechanism be established which will allow the identification and measurement of the impact of participatory approaches in the Francophone African context. To establish such a mechanism, the participants propose that the Sahel Programme of IIED should be the main co-ordinator of this activity. Therefore, IIED-Senegal is requested to engage with this activity as soon as possible and to involve organisations present (or not) at the meeting to develop terms of reference for a programme on the evaluation of the impact of participation in Francophone Africa.

Regarding the methodological 'starting point'
- Some decisive steps have been taken regarding the conception and the diffusion of participatory methods.
- It is necessary to validate individual and collective experiences which show areas of common strength and complementarity.

Through this workshop, there is a call to decompartmentalise institutions and to facilitate methodological renewal. It is suggested that FRAO and IIED could help the production of concepts with greater reference to current practice in participatory development. Proposals for such must be completed by the two institutions by the next meeting.

Regarding information and communication technology (ICT)

The essence of ICT is one of the major concerns of these last two decades. Radio, television, telecommunications (fixed and mobile), electronic networks, notably the internet, are no longer merely simple support structures or neutral technologies for the diffusion of information. They are not only transporters, but also producers, of information, and as such, play multiple roles.
- Liaison role (between individuals, groups and communities).
- Development role (of ideas, of culture and of causes).
- Advocacy role (becoming aware of and moulding public opinion).
- Organisational role (establishment of networks etc.).

These different functions make ICT not merely an important issue in the debate but also a key parameter in the exercise of all political, intellectual, cultural and economic power. Taking control of these powerful tools is required in order to promote participatory development. With this perspective, the workshop participants propose that FRAO, based on its experience, initiates a reflection of the use of ICT, so that it is not seen just as a 'fad' but as a set of real tools to further develop methodological and conceptual approaches to participatory development.

Regarding publications and the dissemination of information

The participants recommend the creation of closer linkages between FRAO and IIED-Senegal on one hand and between the institutions and other organisations attending the workshop on the other. Recommendations include the following.
- To face the difficulties related to the collection and diffusion of information, a greater link between the RCPLA[5] Network and the communication work of FRAO is recommended. For practical reasons, FRAO and IIED-

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3 'Transnational' in this context means international, but more precisely, cross-border, and not subject to any one nation's laws or rules.
4 Information and Communications Technology.
5 Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network. See the *RCPLA Pages* at the end of this issue of *PLA Notes*.

Senegal must reflect on mechanisms required for better communication between their different networks.

• Regarding the dissemination of information in newsletter format, co-publication of an information bulletin on participatory development is suggested. Furthermore, IIED-Senegal, FRAO and other organisations, which have higher capacity for publishing materials, can share this initiative. It is suggested that FRAO and IIED-Senegal reflect on the practical modalities concerning format, regularity and languages of diffusion for such a journal.

• In the first instance, a website relating to the meeting will be created and housed at FRAO and will provide access to all the papers, to the journal and to additional information.

• It is also recommended that the papers prepared by the participants be edited and widely disseminated. IIED-Senegal and FRAO, as well as other institutions, are invited to find resources necessary for such an output.

Completed at Dakar, Senegal, April 28th 2000
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Notes

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Thanks to Simon Ferrigno, IIED-UK, for helping with the translation of *La Declaration de Dakar* and to Nazneen Kanji, IIED-UK, for valuable comments regarding this review. Please note that, at time of going to press, the Declaration of Dakar was still in draft format, and this is only intended to provide readers with a general overview of its contents.

Overview – participatory processes in the North

4

**Charlotte Flower, Paul Mincher
and Susan Rimkus**

Introduction

This special edition of PLA Notes focuses on participatory approaches and processes in the North. Historically, the majority of articles in this journal have primarily focused on participatory practice in the South or the so-called 'developing world' or on sectoral themes. So looking at Northern experiences per se is a new area for the *PLA Notes* series.

We believe this to be significant for several reasons.
- It seems that experiences from Southern participatory practice (in particular Participatory Rural Appraisal) are filtering back to Northern countries through returning ex-patriot development workers and cross-visits/exchanges with southern practitioners which encourage South-North learning.
- Beyond communication of particular approaches, there has been relatively little assessment of innovations, experiences and impacts in Northern practice in order to encourage more debate in the North on the value of participatory processes.
- Northern development agencies working in the South (and in particular their ex-patriot Northern staff) are often de-linked from practice in their home countries, yet they are adopting participatory approaches in their work in the South. This is an area where they should derive some moral legitimacy. For example, a returning field worker may have a wealth of experience in participatory methodologies in the Southern context, but may not have any experience in his/her own country in the North.

Box 1 The 'North' and the 'South'

It is important to consider what we mean by the 'North'. The terms North and South have been widely adopted within development language but as with other alternatives for describing the developed and the developing worlds, these are not without imperfection. However, for the purposes of *PLA Notes*, we adopt the definition of Northern countries being those within the OECD group, thereby those most industrialised nations [1].

Within the majority of Northern countries, people benefit from established and solid governments, a long history of welfare states and generally successful democratic structures in governance. For the majority, economic living standards and social welfare are good but poverty remains – the so-called 'South in the North'.

Sadly such deprivation may also be increasing. For example, research from the UK Treasury show that the number of children in relative poverty in the UK has trebled in the past three decades [2]. It is also now recognised that poverty does not solely exist in economic terms – but also in terms of social exclusion. This is not just about the lack of money but also about the lack of engagement in societal processes and ultimately, the lack of mechanisms to facilitate such engagement. People may well have access to financial state benefits, for example, but they are still excluded from decision making at different levels (especially for certain groups such as ethnic minorities and refugees) which have direct influence on their lives. Whilst national or regional elections occur once every four or five years, the globalisation of economies are further eroding the control of people on aspects of their own lives.

The transfer and spread of participatory processes

Participatory approaches to development in the North are certainly not new and have been rooted in the development of adult education as an emancipatory tool since the late 19th century:

'Indeed, social purpose adult education has a long and distinguished history of involvement in civil society from the work of the National Council of Labour Colleges and the Workers' Education Association in the UK, to that of the Highlander Centre and the Antigonish Movement in North America...to the Study Circles of Sweden and Denmark [3] *'.*

The developing philosophies have been centred on the concept of learning from experience and an acknowledgement of the pluralist knowledge that results from individual experience and perspectives. But this has not developed in isolation. The influence of the Brazilian, Paulo Freire, has been enormous over the last twenty years; his work was framed within the context of poverty in the South and has been important in developing links and

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[1] Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development.
[2] UK Treasury. 2000. Quoted in http://news.bbc.co.uk/low/english/uk politics/newsid_512000/512761.stm
[3] Johnston, Rennie. 1998. *Adult learning in civil society - exploring roles for adult educators?* Paper presented at the 28th Annual SCUTREA Conference, Research, Teaching and Learning: making connections in the education of adults, University of Southampton, UK http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/000000728.htm

solidarity between poverty in both North and South (see Box 2). PRA developed out of this philosophy of empowerment and the inherent ability and right of those in poverty to fully participate in fighting poverty and oppression. Most of the development of this approach has been in the South, and more recently it is being introduced into community development in the North to add a methodological voice to an existing strong philosophical foundation. Some examples of these have been documented in past issues of *PLA Notes* and have emerged particularly in the health sector (for example, see Batchelor, Kim. *Introducing participatory methods to HIV prevention workers in the Southwest United States. PLA Notes* 37: February 2000. pp.81-82).

Over the last few years, participatory approaches have certainly been increasingly used in the more affluent Northern countries and this has occurred for a variety of reasons.
- Across much of the North, centre-right governments that dominated during the 1980s and 1990s have been replaced with centrist and social democratic-orientated governments with more pluralistic rhetoric and programmes.
- As Helen Poulsen (personal communication) states, *"Furthermore, the political and economic crises of the contemporary welfare state, increasing inequality in the North, combined with the 'rolling back of the state' makes bottom-up, participatory, community-focused approaches from the South seem increasingly relevant.[4]"*
- Combined with frequent failures of previous approaches to community development and anti-poverty measures,

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[4] Helen Poulsen, Cambridge Education Consultants, Demeter House, Station Road, Cambridge CB1 2RS, UK. Email: hp2@mm-camb.mottmac.com
[5] Warburton, Diane, 1997. Participatory Action in the Countryside: A literature review. Countryside Commission, Cheltenham, UK. 57pp. p.51.

the continuing disempowerment and poverty of many marginalised groups within communities has prompted many groups to re-think the way they work.

In many countries, local and regional government is opening up its policy apparatus with the increasingly fashionable 'stakeholder involvement' and is working more in collaboration with the community/voluntary sector. Many of these programmes are seeking to tackle the multiple causes of social and economic decline through more 'bottom-up' approaches and increasingly involve communities and the voluntary sector in government-led programmes. As a result, catch phrases such as *empowerment, participation, social inclusion and exclusion* are growing in popularity in policy formulation.

But, it would appear that there is only a limited amount of practical information and skills available on participatory development in many countries. Participation *"…has become mainstream in principle but not universal in practice"* as concluded one recent study of the UK[5]. Where practice has become more participatory, one of the key questions remains as to whether these processes are bringing substantial improvements to the lives of local people?

Major issues arising in the articles

The eighteen articles in this themed section come from many Northern countries and illustrate the range of sectors in which participatory approaches have been used. Some describe 'classic' participatory tools and techniques (see Foss & Aune and Ross & Coleman, this issue), others describe other processes taken directly from southern practice and tested in a northern context (see Lopez and Dart, this issue). Chakoian's article will bring instant recognition to anyone working in natural resource management in the South and adopting a farmer-to-farmer approach in their work. Examples of participatory evaluation are also included (see Foss & Aune and Eckman et al., this issue). A number of the articles address the issue of community planning processes (Harper, Naylor et al. and Gillespie et al., this issue). Walker and Cavanagh describe reflective methodologies and both Gant and Garthwaite outline the combination of community arts and video as empowering techniques that enable communities (either of interest or neighbourhood) to express their needs and ideas (this issue).

Many of these examples illustrate new approaches to using participatory techniques; others highlight the intense similarities and parallels between development work in the South and North.

- **PLA being used by excluded people.** One of the criticisms of PLA methodologies is often in the way that it is used; control *can* be very much in the hands of the facilitators or practitioners. The articles by Nicholls & Watson, and Ross & Coleman (this issue) provide very powerful illustrations of how two groups of extremely

excluded people, mental health service users and teenagers, used PLA to reflect, analyse and propose solutions and begin to make those happen. Both these groups are frequently considered incapable of making personal decisions, let alone decisions to do with service provision or their communities. They note, as do Garett & Stokes and Foss & Aune, working with drug addicts, how self esteem and confidence amongst community members involved have improved considerably through being able to engage with decision makers – not only being 'heard' but also engaged in dialogue.

- **Change in practice.** The process of empowerment described above is not limited to the most excluded. Foss & Aune and Dart describe the use of participative techniques in evaluating projects and programmes and show that the impact of these approaches is not just a relevant and effective evaluation, but also a change in motivation, with a notable gain in confidence of those involved, along with a greater understanding of what they are involved with as professionals.

- **Time.** One of the many lessons from development work in the South is the need for time – and this seems to be no different in the North. Hosaka's description of participatory urban development in Japan (this issue) details a process that took many years and considerable commitment from the professionals concerned so much so that they moved in and lived in the project area themselves.

- **Balancing action with process**. Given all that has been said about cynicism with decision makers and the time needed to see a development process really establish itself, it is important to develop trust and respect between partners and actors within the process. As Naylor et al. describe, it is important to balance the need for short-term action in response to a perceived need with developing a long-term and sustainable process. Much of the regeneration work to date has seemed superficial to many residents and communities and they look for long-term commitment from partners. However, the opposite of this is the need to avoid quick solutions to a problem, when very often communities want to see some sort of tangible outcome in the short-term.

- **Values.** The example from Japan (Hosaka) and the article by Gillespie et al. in Scotland illustrates the use of traditional and cultural values in development work. They have developed on what is there and what is strong and positive within a culture, as well as going outside the professional sectoral boundaries that often restrict looking at problems to merely dealing with the symptoms.

- **Community strengths**. Likewise, using what is positive and good within a community, such as the Neighbourhood Treasures in Ross & Coleman. and the emphasis on the skills and values of immigrant women in Calgary in the paper by Lopez reinforces the capacity and confidence of the community to become involved in their own development.

- **Ownership and expression of the community vision and people's views.** It is often assumed that, due to the developed nature of Northern countries, people are well-informed. However due to exclusionary forms of communication (consultancy reports are a typical example of this), marginalised groups and individuals often find it hard to access information regarding on-going processes. Likewise, the outputs of grassroots participatory processes are often difficult to articulate with other groups.

This has been highlighted in a number of the articles; basically trying to avoid the 'another report for that dusty shelf' syndrome. Gant talks of Community Arts techniques creating a product that the community recognises as its own. The use of video by Garthwaite and stories with Australian farmers and extension officers (Dart) are other examples of this. This work builds on a heritage of participatory communications in the North, for example, see the participatory communications initiatives in Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada from 1967 onwards and the present day initiatives in Newfoundland[6].

Many of the articles in this issue are also attempting to use modern information technology to overcome these barriers. At first this may not seem appropriate, but for some members of society it may be an accessible route into the process. Reports in the British press recently indicated that for many Muslim women, the Internet was opening up their access to information from their own homes. In Northern Ireland, Naylor et al. describe a rural scene with isolated farm households where the Internet has also opened up their access to information. It is not obviously accessible to all, but it has potential as one of many different ways to inform people and enable them to participate in decision-making debates.

- **Diversity.** One of the criticisms of the 'quick fix' solutions to participative approaches is that they are not truly representative and how do they provide access for the unheard voice? This is addressed in the article by Gillespie et al. in remote rural Scotland: taking a bus out to remote areas to provide feedback to communities, holding meetings, but also telephoning people, putting notices in the post to all households, knocking on doors etc. Similarly in Walsall, UK, Gant describes talking to people in the street, in shopping centres and in bars. This is equally as important and difficult to do in an Indian village as it is in an inner city area in Europe and requires exactly the same commitment to ensure that 'the silent' are heard.

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6 See http://www.nf.sympatico.ca/ryakuga/history.html ,
http://www.snowden.org/fogo.cfm and
http://www.web.apc.org/~ryakuga/ryakuga.html for further information.

- **'Developmental tourism'**. People in deprived areas in the North talk about the 'shiny cars' in their estates that come in during the day and leave by evening. This situation is no different to the set of biases that PRA practitioners try avoid in the South, whereby the project and government Land Rovers whistle in to a village and whistle out a few hours later, the professionals within returning to their own reality and carrying with them their own set of perceptions and prejudices.

- **New applications**. The articles in this issue illustrate the huge scope that PLA methodologies have, from personal through to community development. The experience of the WALKWAYS project in Walsall (see Garratt & Stokes) is a fascinating therapeutic use of participatory techniques, facilitating the personal development of very troubled young people.

Eckman et al. outline the use of participatory approaches in health and safety issues in industry. This is a really interesting innovation and has huge potential for development in labour relations and safety issues in industry the world over. The use of participative processes in business and industry is developing under the 'creative management' banner, but many of the principles to participation are very similar.

Threats and opportunities
Moving beyond methods
The terms 'participative techniques' cover a wide range of different approaches in the Northern context and the definition of participation itself is very broad, as illustrated in the variety of methods presented in the articles of this special issue. Many of these techniques are 'rigid' almost prescriptive ways of carrying out an activity, like a formal dance. Planning for Real follows a procedure, Future Search the same and Citizen's Juries and Panels are also very structured in their approach. They are all pooled together under the banner 'participative' but are very different in content, approach, and in the manner and level of participation. In terms of criteria such as who participates, who sets the agenda, who uses the information generated and who takes the process forward, they differ considerably (see Harper this issue).

This is not a criticism of the techniques themselves, but the expectations that the word 'participative' creates amongst different actors. Politicians will say they have empowered communities through the use of these participative techniques; whilst the marginalised and excluded might be extremely cynical about that. The danger is that 'consultation fatigue' (Harper) sets in, and both sides will become cynical about all participative techniques as well as

the process and even maybe the reputation of those involved. The 'more of the same' that Harper refers to is not so much 'more of the same tools' but 'more of the same rhetoric'; people are consulted but do not see their views and opinions reflected in what actually happens.

The opportunity, of course, is to use all these techniques creatively and effectively, pulling together a range of different activities that engage with different communities and individuals in a way that is comfortable and accessible for those individuals. Some may prefer the formality of a set piece, others the informality of sitting in a local café carrying out a matrix ranking exercise of issues in their community, while their children play in the crèche nearby.

Capacity building and support systems
Given the politics of the North, there is a huge demand for a rapid change and this in turn has generated a huge demand for training that is extremely difficult to meet. As Inglis suggests in his paper, there are many trainers who have very little experience with PLA methodologies and they do not provide a very good service. Poorly trained practitioners provide a poor outcome and people will not try participatory approaches again after a disheartening experience. The question is, therefore, can that demand be met, especially at the moment, as the only training available is by a handful of consultants. Experience has shown elsewhere that one important contributing factor determining how practitioners use and develop PLA methodologies is the type of training that they received or indeed, the way they were first introduced to it[7]. It is important that there are networks of practitioners available to foster and facilitate learning and reflection so that people can develop their skills, and the tools can be developed appropriately for different sectors and areas.

An example of one such network is the Walsall PRA Network. Within the network itself, there are only three or four members who train, with both the experience of using PLA methodologies in many ways and the training skills and experience to facilitate good capacity building (Eleanor Chell[8], personal communication). The network provides those using participatory approaches in Walsall with a wide net of support and it is no accident that there are three articles from Walsall in this issue (Gant, Garett & Stokes, Nicholls & Watson). The Editors did question the inclusion of three articles from one town, but in addition to their being very different in content and interesting in their own right, they have added value because they illustrate the impact of the Network and how the way of working within statutory bodies is changing.

At one end of the diverse range of stakeholders are the statutory bodies' workers themselves. They are very important stakeholders in the equation and their impact on the process needs to be clearly understood. In Northern Ireland, Naylor et al. found it important to ensure that councillors and other decision-makers were not involved in many of the community meetings because they willingly or

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[7] 'Reflections on PRA and Participation in Kenya; feedback from the Pathways to Participation consultative meetings'; July 1999, IDS and Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK).
[8] Eleanor Chell runs the Walsall PRA Network; she can be contacted at theelectricpalace@hotmail.com

otherwise tended to lead the discussion. Inglis emphasises the need to ensure that professionals and decision-makers are trained in new ways of working to ensure that they change policy and practice to facilitate active involvement of communities in decision-making processes.

From the margins to the mainstream

As participatory practices become more accepted by institutions, issues of scaling up and mainstreaming emerge. The challenge is how to develop processes that work at the local level that also feed into and engage in processes on a larger scale. Many of the articles attempt to tackle this in terms of facilitating the community in setting the agenda with statutory bodies. The challenges that face them are many; for example, how to ensure commitment to the process from all partners, how to engage the (often cynical) community, how to make the process on-going and sustainable etc.. They rightly stress the need for time, capacity building and the use of a range of appropriate participative tools. As Naylor et al. describe, it is beneficial to balance a few high profile, achievable and tangible outcomes in the short term with good quality capacity building and development of sound mechanisms for shared decision making in the long-term. Capacity building at both the community level and within the statutory organisations is important (see Inglis).

Seeking diversity

Another aspect of diversity is within the communities themselves or how they are defined. The articles in this issue feature a great many actors; farmers, young people, workers, women etc., each defining their issues and needs. We should not forget the power relations within communities themselves, which can be mediated by gender, for example (Helen Poulsen, personal communication) and, whilst this is often an issue addressed in work in the South[9], it is more seldom considered in the North. It seems, in the UK anyway, that despite three decades of equal opportunities legislation, the many government schemes to tackle poverty are still not gendered in either their analysis or strategic approach.

Participatory methodologies provide an ideal and suitable approach for this reason. In Caldwell's article (this issue), participatory appraisal techniques allow the men and women, boys and girls to articulate their views and ideas to each other in an open and non-judgemental process.

For this reason, PLA should provoke long-term dialogue and engagement, both between and inside communities and their support systems, and such approaches must not be seen as solely as a commodity to bought and implemented in a short period of time.

Conclusion

Ultimately, participatory approaches will be judged by their impact at different levels; on individuals, organisations and services and the environment. The authors have shown a variety of positive qualitative and quantitative impacts in using participatory processes and approaches both in the short-term and over a number of years. For this, approaches cannot be divorced from the context in which they are embedded.

We would like to end with an analogy; that of the regeneration of a particularly valuable tree, kiaat, which grows in the savannah woodlands of southern Africa. Because the timber is so valuable, the kiaat resource has been heavily depleted, but despite best efforts, it has proven almost impossible to replace lost trees with the usual forestry solution of tree planting and plantations. This is to do with the way kiaat regenerates in nature and its particular adaptations to the harsh, arid environment that it grows in.

Natural regeneration only seems to occur sporadically, and on investigation, it seems that as it needs a particular sequence and combination of conditions – no fire for about 10 years, sufficient rain for the first few years, good seed year, etc., and as these things only coincide once every 50 to 100 years, a window of opportunity for regeneration is only available during that interval. Some of these conditions can be managed – you can try and protect it from fire and disturbance for a few years, but others can't be, such as rainfall, for example. Good participatory processes are a little like this – you cannot regenerate it or create it with a technical fix (plantations) but can create conditions in which it can happen, be aware of the conditions that are operating and recognise and provide the necessary support when needed. However, as with so many organic processes, much is down to 'muck and magic'!

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Acknowledgements

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[9] See for example, World Neighbors programme partners in Nepal. *Helping NGO staff (& then community groups) analyse reproductive health & gender issues.* In: *PLA Notes.* 37: February 2000. pp.31-37).

Settlement planning through linking people

A participatory approach of the Kitagata project in Japan

Mitsuhiko Hosaka

Introduction

The Kitagata Project was one of the pioneering cases of participatory settlement development in urban low-income communities in Japan. In recognition of the achievement, the Architectural Institute of Japan awarded a prize of honour to the City of Kitakyushu and an independent planning team, the Wakatake Planning Institute, in 1994. The points cited were:

- efficiency in implementing an improvement project for a large-scale low-income settlement;
- the role of planners as an intermediary between government and people, facilitating their partnership in the process of environmental upgrading;
- innovative attempt for house design reflecting 'a joy of living collectively'; and
- organisation of a series of participatory activities in planning and implementation.

However, the Project's participatory approaches have not been documented much in the past.

Meanwhile, there has been a notable change since the mid 1990s in the urban context of Japan. Community workshops are increasingly held as a planning technique. Several local authorities tend to create a system of financially assisting local communities in engaging private consultants for settlement development proposals. Many of such latest attempts can be found rooted in the Kitagata project. This paper briefly introduces the background, processes and methods of community participation in Kitagata.

Buraku communities in Japan

Buraku means a small settlement in Japanese, but it also refers to an area where socially discriminated people live. According to an estimate, there are some 6,000 Buraku settlements all over the country that house more than 3 million people. Families originated from Buraku communities were unduly discriminated against for hundreds of years in terms of occupation, residence, marriage and living conditions. The prejudice still persists and occasionally, there are incidences of implicit or explicit social segregation and harassment against Buraku people.

Since the 1920s, a strong nation-wide movement has been organised by Buraku people for their own human rights protection and liberation. In 1955, the Buraku Liberation League (BLL) was established, consisting of community-level organisations of Buraku people, federated at the prefecture and national levels. BLL declared that it should be an integral part of the overall liberation of Buraku to claim improved housing and common amenities in their settlements. In 1969, the Government admitted its responsibilities to resolve the Buraku issues and a special time-bound law was enacted to facilitate the improvement of designated Buraku areas. The Law and subsequent series of legislation specified, among others, that local projects for Buraku settlement improvement would receive the central subsidy equivalent of two-thirds of municipal spending and that municipal authorities could issue local bonds for relevant projects under liberalised conditions.

The settings

Kitagata, a large Buraku community of 4,100 people, is located in Kitakyushu City in southern Japan. It is currently served by a good transport link from the city centre, and its living environment has been much improved. Until recently, however, it was a poor, congested, low-lying area with very narrow roads and little public space along a river (see Figure 1). There were no squatter residents. A majority of people lived in rental apartments on private land. But 58% of the total 1,920 housing units in the area were identified as substandard by official criteria.

Largely speaking, there were four major socio-economic groups in the area. The first consisted of those employed by the city authority as field manual labourers such as in garbage collection. The second group was specific to Kitagata. There are publicly operated horse race and cycle race fields adjacent to the area. Many local residents were engaged in various types of small jobs connected to race and lottery operation. The third was local entrepreneurs and their employees. A majority of them were small contractors and construction workers. The fourth group was those living on social welfare grants from the local government. Employment of the first and second groups was considered as a gain from the Buraku movement, as the local government was amenable to providing job opportunities preferentially to residents in Kitagata.

The Kitagata community repeatedly requested physical improvement of their environment. However, it was not until 1982 when the City's Advisory Board stressed a need

Figure 1 The Kitagata area before the Project

for a comprehensive programme for the area, that the local community and the government reached a consensus to initiate a large-scale project. In June 1983, twenty-one local representatives of neighbourhood associations from Kitagata and surrounding areas formed the Kitagata Area Environmental Improvement Promotion Council (hereafter known as 'the Council'). The City recognised the Council as the only representative body of people for the project. The BLL local branch was not formally represented at the Council, in order to secure local political balance, but a majority of the Council members belonged to BLL.

On the other hand, the City Government engaged a planning consultancy team from the Wakatake Planning Institute to work with people and formulate a redevelopment plan. Mr. Youkou Hatakenaka and two younger colleagues from Wakatake rented a small house in the area and started to live there. This was in August 1983, and Hatakenaka's resident work in the area continued for six years. At first people were suspicious. The team visited communal places, talked to people and tried to get recognised. People often had casual conversation in small lanes and public baths and the team met and exchanged views with them at these places. On various occasions, the team clarified its position, listened to people's desires and anxieties, and encouraged them to participate in community meetings and planning workshops (see Box 1).

Box 1 Community workshop modules developed by Wakatake

The community workshop is a tool for consensus building. It is not a formal meeting, but is arranged in such a way that every participant enjoys, contributes, plays and understands. In principle, every household should participate. If the area is too large, planners will organise a model workshop for representatives of various neighbourhoods. Then these leaders will each organise a similar workshop in the respective neighbourhood, assisted by the planners. Based on the experience in Kitagata and other areas, the Wakatake Institute developed modules of workshops. The following is a more or less standardised process currently practised by the Wakatake team in various settlements.

WORKSHOP 1: Slide show
Good development initiatives in other areas, as well as issues involved, are introduced.

WORKSHOP 2: Town watch
After groups walk around their own area, they discuss 'what in this community do we like, why?' 'What in this community do we hate, why?' They map and list the attractiveness and problems identified (see Fig.2).

WORKSHOP 3: Work out a future image
Each group identifies the future goals based on the outcome of last workshop. Put illustrations, pictures and statements on a map. Make presentations.

WORKSHOP 4: Discuss alternatives
Compare two alternative plan proposals prepared by planners (workshop conductors). Discuss in groups whether their wishes have been incorporated; what are the advantages and disadvantages of each plan. Hold consultation with planners and city officials present. Select by vote which plan is relatively better.

WORKSHOP 5: Examine a proposal
Planners present an elaborate plan based on the alternative selected at last workshop. A larger scale map (normally 1/1000) or model is used for discussion. Participants examine how their individual houses are being dealt with. Groups are organised by neighbourhood (normally 15 households each) and should consolidate their comments.

WORKSHOP 6: Approve a plan
Planners present a revised proposal. Review the proposal. If OK, approve by consensus. Then planners will finalise the plan for official sanction and implementation.

Figure 2 Workshop findings: Narrow street corners used for chatting and festivals; Self-built elevated corridor providing space for drying laundries as well as shade underneath
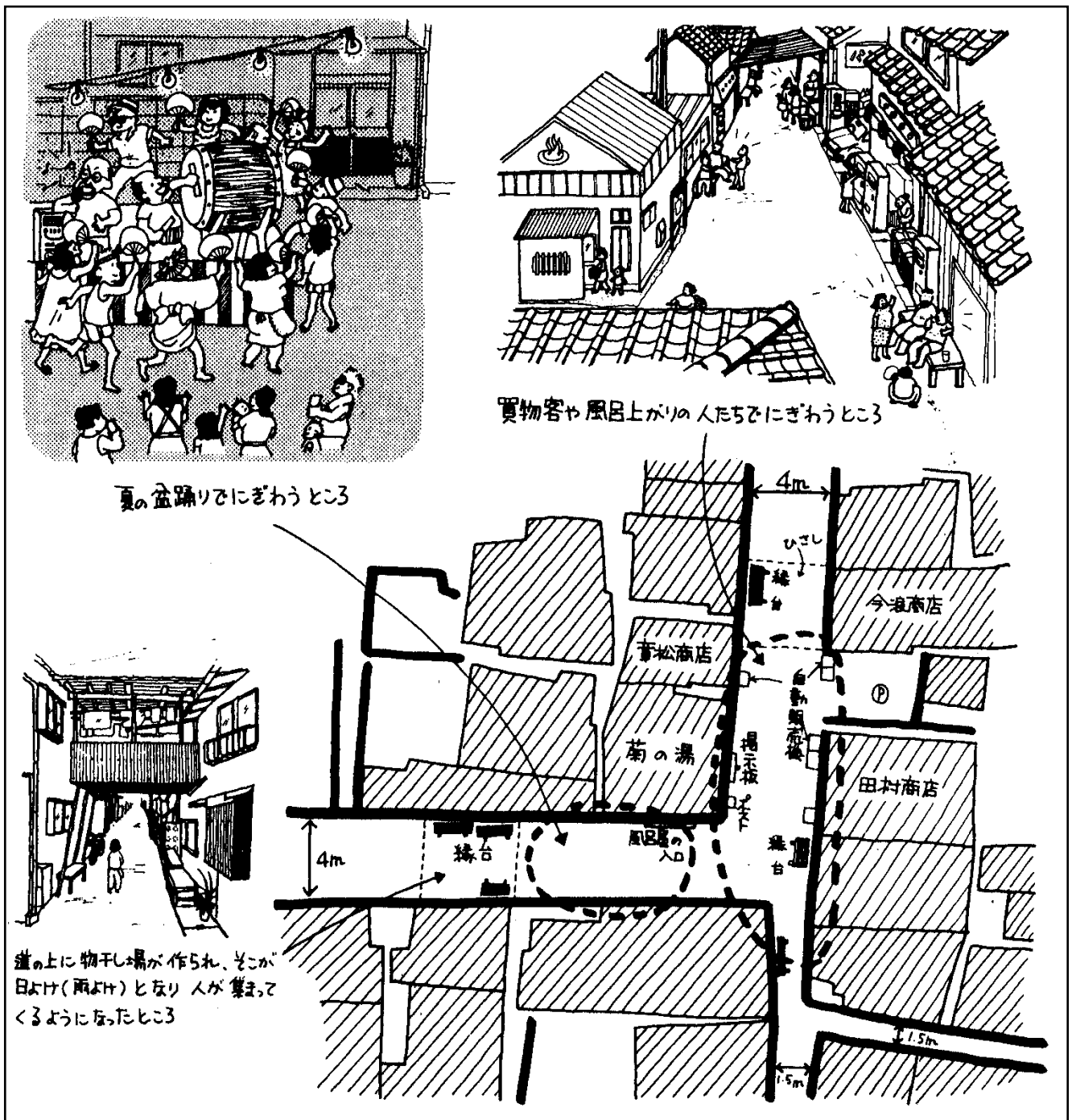
Planning

The first planning task was to organise a series of awareness-raising workshops in five sub-areas. The purpose was to get the concept of a Buraku improvement scheme understood. In some workshops, however, the number of planners (Hatakenaka's team and city officials) exceeded

[1] This is a participatory exercise in which participants are led along streets of their own community, with pens, paper, cameras and tape recorders, to try to collectively discover from a 'planning point of view' things they like to maintain and things they want to change in the town.

that of local residents. It showed considerable mistrust on the part of people in the city administration: in the past, plans had been proposed one after another and shelved. It was understandable that people were less interested in participating in government-initiated exercises. Hatakenaka and BLL members prepared for an event called 'Kitagata labyrinth exploration'. Leaders identified courses for the 'town watch'[1] and made arrangements for games to be organised at various spots along the courses. Local organisations of women, young and elderly people were involved in making traditional tools for games such as bamboo horses and straw sandals. More than 400 children

and adults participated in this walking exercise, and they discovered the attractiveness of the old town space. It was significant because people felt themselves to be discriminated against and hence confined to sub-standard living environment, losing self-confidence as a result.

Meanwhile, the planning team undertook a physical survey of the area and interviewed local residents. They compiled the results for people to understand easily. These were presented at meetings of the Council. Issues and problems of the area were reviewed and identified at these occasions and shared among the representatives sitting in the Council, the local government officers and planners. Broad strategies for improvement gradually emerged.

The planning team then encouraged the leaders of the Council to conduct workshops in their own sub-areas. The purpose was for local people to review the observations expressed by planners and the Council. Moreover, it was expected that the Council would be made a genuine and active partner through these actions. This time, the number of participants was greatly increased. It was evident that people sensed that the government was now determined and serious.

However, it was still essential to maintain a good communication flow between the local leadership and residents in general, as every family was not present at the workshops. Therefore, the planners decided to issue newsletters. It was agreed that the planning team would prepare text and layout while the Council would be responsible for supervision, correction and distribution of the newsletters. It was expected that, through this process, the local leaders in the Council would have face-to-face interaction with the residents, leading to the establishment of self-motivated leadership. Kitagata, being a settlement which is discriminated against, the literacy rate in the area was relatively low. Thus, to aid comprehension of all residents, professional jargon was avoided and simple words was used in the newsletters. Beginning with the publication of the newsletter, a new relationship was developed: the planners became 'assistants' in the overall planning and management of the Council. More than 100 meetings and workshops were held for and by the Council with assistance from the planners.

A questionnaire survey was administered by the Council on the individual families' willingness to join an improvement project and their plans to dispose of their properties. Based on these initial views expressed by people, Hatakenaka's team worked out the first draft plan of improvement. The plan proposed a combination of strategies in which some sites would be upgraded while public housing would be placed on other sites undergoing redevelopment.

Hatakenaka expected that the authorities would soon release the draft for discussion by the residents. Then an interactive process for plan making through partnership

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Box 2 Participatory housing design

The word *moyai*, linking people and sharing with each other, was traditionally used in the local community of Kitagata. This concept was reflected in its physical neighbourhood pattern as well as the social relationship between individuals and the community. In order to maintain this quality, it was not enough to provide a well-designed house plan ensuring continuity of life style, but it called for a new planning paradigm that would allow the space creation and control by the dwellers even on public rental housing.

Through workshops and discussions on house design, people regained the spirit of collective work and self-control. For example, at first they demanded a meeting hall rather than open space in the building. After several discussions, the consensus reached was for them to construct a meeting place after the building is completed. At the initial workshops, people gathered as 'guests' and demanded their claims, while planners and officers were the 'hosts' and answered their questions. This gradually changed. People became an active proposer of new ideas. During the construction, people often went to the site, watched excitedly, offered foods to workers, and 'supervised' the work. It was as if they had acted as a client of an owner-occupied house.

Physically speaking, a basic unit consisted of three bedrooms with 6 *tatami* mats, a dinning-cum-kitchen, a bath and toilet. The plan was flexible enough to be adjusted to the individual family's needs. Some units had a 3-square metre free space, the location and use of which were decided by the dweller. Semi-public external space was kept as much as possible, to promote interaction among the residents.

Roji (small lanes) and *kado* (front yards of individual houses facing the lane) were found to be essential elements to sustain the *moyai* relationship in the original community. Hence design efforts were made for resurgence of *roji* and *kado* in the walk-up public housing. The individual balconies were connected with corridors, placed comfortably on the south side.

Outside the entrance of each unit was there a half-enclosed space of 10-25 square metres. In order to make the distinction between public and private spaces even fuzzier, a sliding door was used for the entrance, and the entrance space was directly connected to the dining room. There was some legal difficulty in installing sliding doors, but the City's Building Bureau applied regulatory conditions very flexibly to accommodate the workshop results. A few years after the completion, one can observe a variety of use of the above spaces. Alteration and creation of space and of space use are continuously evolving[2].

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2 Adapted from: Y. Endoh and S. Yokoyama, "Treasure of *Roji* culture", *AT* June 1993, in Japanese, pp.35-43.

would have started immediately. However, in reality, the city hall spent seven months examining the draft in detail in terms of its consistency and how it could be implemented from various sectoral points of view. The Council, with Hatakenaka's advice, sent the mayor an official request for early release. The city officials felt that the draft required careful scrutiny, as once people agreed, it had to be immediately sent to the central government for subsidy application.

As soon as the draft was officially released to the public by the city authority, the planners organised a number of presentation sessions with residents groups. These were to sound out responses from people. Hatakenaka initially prepared and showed a planning map of 1/1000. People wanted one on a larger-scale, indicating the names of individual house owners on the map. The whole area was broken into 10 units and in each of these, an evening workshop was conducted. In most cases, meeting places were full of participants. Newsletters also publicised the draft plan.

After a planning map of 1/500 was prepared, another series of workshops was organised. People were keen to have a closer look at how their dwelling units were being dealt with. The rate of attendance was certainly improved, and participants' opinions became more specific. Many in the proposed redevelopment site were concerned about the level of compensation for their existing land and house since the local government would purchase the individual land and house for clearance purposes. A large number of people wanted their houses to be left intact. It was agreed to take full note of these wishes in the detailed planning, unless the locations of the properties in question were required for basic infrastructure improvement. A revised plan (1/500) prepared after the workshops was raised on a notice board in each of the 10 area units, and a 'consultation corner' was opened in the community centre of the area. Hatakenaka's team and city officials in charge were always sitting in this corner for a week in order to respond to questions and suggestions from people on the revised plan.

House design

In 1987, Professor Y. Endoh[3] was invited to co-ordinate a survey on the living pattern in the area. In the course of the survey, a word expressed by an old woman caught the survey team's attention. She said, *"We used to have a moyai well to get water"*, or *"I would take a bath through moyai"*. *Moyai* is not a very common Japanese word, but it means linking people and doing things together. This showed the culture of sharing and helping each other as a

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[3] Dr. Yasuhiro Endoh is currently a professor of architecture and planning at Department of Urban Environmental System of Chiba University, near Tokyo. He is a well-known practitioner of participatory methodologies in urban community development, and worked with a number of local authorities and community groups (http://www.comnet.tu.chiba-u.ac.jp/)

Figure 3 Public housing completed with *moyai* concept

life style in Kitagata. For example, narrow lanes that used to be considered as an indicator of substandard settlement conditions were found to be an essential element for people to plant flowers, talk and play, and care for neighbours. The planners decided to make *moyai* the key concept in their design policies.

Endoh's team of architects prepared a model of multi-family dwellings at the scale of 1/50, and organised community workshops. People actively responded and offered suggestions to the model. One concrete example, which was borne out of the workshops, was the introduction of common corridors on the southern side of the building. This was intended to emphasise the function of traditional small lanes as a space for interactive activities among neighbours. This function was now to be taken over by common corridors on upper floors. It was very unique that a multi-family house had a corridor on the south with the advantage of sunshine and breeze.

The participatory housing design process had been introduced to a small number of co-operative housing projects in Japan. But the Kitagata case was the first application in public housing. Residents to be rehoused in the area were invited to become project participants (namely future dwellers). They discussed their housing needs and preferences at workshops with architects and city officials. There were often thrilling debates between designers and people and also among the people themselves.

In August 1989, the community finally agreed to the layout of the first dwelling units and worked out a policy to allocate the units among the participants. Families with handicapped and aged members were given preferential rights to selection. Those who had a propensity for cleaning were allocated units on the ground floor and asked to be maintenance managers. Perhaps, the *Moyai* principle traditionally cultivated in discriminated communities was revived through the participatory exercises, resulting in collective formulation of such self-governing rules.

Settlement management

Efforts were made to award construction contracts related to the Kitagata Project to local contractors in the area. In 1993 the implementation of the Project was completed (see Figure.3). The Council was now concerned with the maintenance of the area. The City again formally engaged Hatakenaka. This time his major task was to encourage people to think about maintenance and management. For example, there were some new public housing flats where the dwellers did not know each other, as they originated from five different neighbourhood associations in the project area. Hatakenaka and Endoh organised an open-air slide show under the stars, using a public open space in the estate. This event led to monthly study sessions of residents reorganised for each multi-family building in order to discuss the maintenance of common space and buildings. Besides the physical construction work, social and economic programmes in the field of adult literacy classes, a job information service and employment mediation and city-wide human rights education were also implemented by the city government. According to the latest survey on the living pattern of Kitagata in September 1999, the people's satisfaction is much higher in dwellings borne out of the participatory process than in conventional public housing.

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Notes

Another group that may be interesting is the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights-Japan (ACHR-Japan). A small group of planners and researchers, including the author, concerned with community participation in urban low-income development and experience sharing with other countries. Their web site is as follows (an English page is yet to be prepared):
http://www3.itakura.toyo.ac.jp/projects/achrj (please note that you may need a Japanese language plug-in for your browser to view these pages).

For more details on ACHR, please refer to the RCPLA Network pages.

Urban youth as community planners and leaders

Exploring their potential with Urban Community Action Planning for Teenagers (UCAPT)

6

Laurie Ross and Mardi Coleman

Introduction

In Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, a growing number of teenagers are challenging the public's negative portrayal of urban youth by becoming active neighbourhood participants and decision-makers. Urban Community Action Planning for Teenagers (UCAPT), an urban, Northern adaptation of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and participatory action research (PAR), provides primarily low-income teenagers with neighbourhood problem-solving and planning skills. UCAPT integrates indoor and field-based exercises, where young people learn community-based development (CBD) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) techniques. Using these techniques, teenagers:

- explore meanings of community;
- analyse the current status of their community;
- investigate causes of community problems and origins of community strengths;
- prepare visual analyses and representations of community data through maps;
- brainstorm and strategise about possible avenues of change;
- develop action plans;
- explore partnerships with government and non-government organisations and agencies; and,
- implement, monitor, and evaluate their action plans.

As a result of UCAPT, teenagers gain a new understanding of their role in neighbourhoods, feel more connected to their community and are transformed into community activists, planners, and leaders.

Teenagers as community activists and planners in Worcester, Massachusetts

Worcester, Massachusetts is an older industrial city of 164,000 people. The poverty rate is 15.3 %, and 29% of the city's families are single-headed households. Twenty-five percent of the city's youth under 18 live in poverty, compared to a statewide rate of 13.2%[1]. In some of our youth-related community development work, we have learned the following from teenagers living in low-income households.

[1] Figures are based on 1990 Census and 1997 DET data.

- The biggest problems they face are: 1) gang violence, often drug related; 2) after-school fights; 3) inadequate safe space and programmes; 4) smoking – marijuana and cigarettes; 5) teenage pregnancy; 6) lack of jobs for 14-15 year olds; 7) violence; 8) problems with schoolwork; 9) peer pressure; 10) money for college; and 11) relationships with boyfriends, girlfriends, friends, and family.
- Drug deals, vandalism, and fighting impacts their sense of security in and connection to the neighbourhood. Teenagers who do not feel secure in their neighbourhoods experience a chronic sense of worry and stress that permeates other areas of their lives.
- Teenagers living in poor neighbourhoods are aware that the overall health of their area is substantially below resource-rich neighbourhoods. These inadequacies extend to housing, street and sidewalk conditions, city services such as rubbish collection, police and fire protection, the amount and conditions of green and common spaces such as parks, and quality and/or quantity of institutions such as schools, medical clinics and childcare facilities. Teenagers interpret these disparities as a form of injustice. This sense of injustice leads to the belief that the city and larger community does not care about them or what they do.
- Teenagers want to participate meaningfully in their communities and to showcase their talents and skills. One young male focus group participant was particularly moving in his worry that without programmes, no one will ever know he exists. He went on to say that *"there should be more sports, if not sports, then arts and crafts, if not arts and crafts then the arts. People want to make it big, they want to get recognised, but they can't do it without programmes."*

Neighbourhood conditions worsen as teenagers, without seeing many other options, may be enticed into gangs, violence, neighbourhood destruction and drug-related activities. These activities contribute to the larger community developing a negative impression of teenagers and their neighbourhoods.

Despite the important relationships we see between teenagers and communities, teenagers have few avenues to voice their opinions constructively about what happens in their neighbourhoods. Younger teenagers cannot vote in elections. Youth and community organisations rarely have

mechanisms to incorporate young voices in decision-making. Unique is the organisation that includes young people on their board of directors or on an advisory committee. The public school's goal is to produce responsible adults, yet teenagers have few chances in school to prove that they are responsible[3]. Many communities treat teenagers as problems to manage or control rather than as a source of knowledge and energy.

Through UCAPT, we have discovered many benefits when teenagers are actively engaged in the planning process. Teenagers who use UCAPT to create neighbourhood action plans gain new problem-solving skills, community respect, a broader view of themselves as active community members and an enhanced sense of control over themselves and their environment. Teenagers who use UCAPT to design their own programmes create activities that are more likely to suit their needs and be attractive to other teenagers. When teenagers implement their own action plans, the community at large also benefits because neighbourhood conditions improve.

How does UCAPT work?

UCAPT is a participatory, systematic community development approach that shares some basic assumptions with participatory rural appraisal (PRA).
- Local knowledge – community members have knowledge and information about local problems, but they need help organising this information.
- Local resources – community members have resources (time, money, connections with local government, family, organisations, etc.), but these resources need to be mobilised.
- Attracting outside help – outside resources are available, but they need to be defined in the context of community-identified priorities[4].

Through four phases of data collection and analysis, teenagers collect rich information about community needs, strengths, resources, and the barriers that prevent a community from realising its vision for itself. Teenagers use neighbourhood walking tours and neighbourhood treasure hunts to begin to think about their area in a different way and to see it through the eyes of a community planner. In this way, they get a sense of the neighbourhood's strengths and weaknesses. They keep journals to reflect on their neighbourhood experiences. They also conduct focus groups and key informant interviews to get different perspectives on neighbourhood issues. In order to establish a prioritisation of community problems, the teenagers conduct pairwise ranking excercises and other ranking techniques. Teenagers and other residents then use this information to develop action plans based on community-identified problems, analyses of underlying causes and community-generated solutions. Because UCAPT assembles and then systematically narrows large amounts of data, this information helps the community to create an action plan. Therefore UCAPT acts like a funnel for community-based information management and action (see Figure I).

Figure I UCAPT as a funnel for community-based information
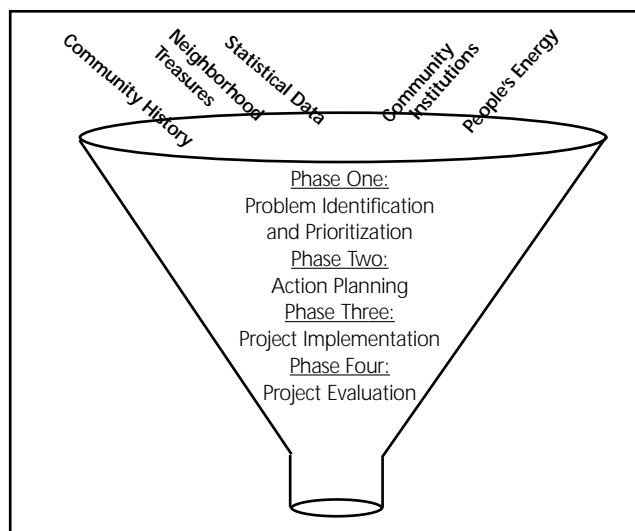
UCAPT case studies

We present two UCAPT case studies drawn from examples of Worcester teenagers. These examples highlight the roles of teenagers in action.

'Teen inspirators, on the move', Oak Hill Community Development Corporation

In the spring of 1996, Worcester's Oak Hill Community Development Corporation (CDC) embarked on a three-month Community Planning Initiative (CPI) using UCAPT. One of the most unanticipated, yet exciting outcomes of the CPI was the formation of a teenage group – Teen Inspirators, On the Move (OTM).

Twenty teenagers, both male and female, ages 11-16 from diverse racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds met weekly to plan activities for themselves and their neighbourhood. They used UCAPT techniques of mapping exercises, journals, neighbourhood treasure hunts, community interviews, ranking exercises, and felt board decision-making exercises to collect and analyse information about their neighbourhood[5].

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[3] Public schools in the United States provide 12 years of guaranteed instruction to all young people in the country, and are publicly funded.

[4] Ford, R. (1992). Sustaining development through community mobilization: A case study of participatory rural appraisal in The Gambia. Worcester, Massachusetts: Clark University.

[5] The Felt Board Exercise (Ross and Rocheleau 1995) allows teenagers to put the neighbourhood knowledge they acquire from their journals and walking tours to work on actual community planning. They create and use felt icons to represent community features. Then they create and recreate their neighborhood using felt. Once they create a felt map of their actual neighbourhood, we ask what they would like to change. With the felt, they are able to move houses, trees, and to create ideal neighbourhood. The Felt Board is an excellent planning tool because it allows teenagers to simulate different decision-making outcomes. For more information on the Felt Board, see, Ross, L. and D. Rocheleau. (1995). Land use feltboard. In Slocum, R. et al. (Eds.), *Power, Process and Participation: Tools for Change* (pp. 132-137). London, England: Intermediate Technology Publications.

While on the neighbourhood treasure hunt, the teenagers searched for the actual treasures of their neighbourhood. Interesting architecture, beautifully maintained yards, teenager-friendly stores and safe places to 'hang out' topped their list. They also explored potential treasures (for example, neighbourhood problems such as abandoned lots that could be opportunities for change).

One such potential treasure proved to be Banis Park, a small park located at the corner of two busy streets in the neighbourhood. They found the park to be in a state of decline. The swings were broken, the fence was damaged and the park was littered with broken glass and other rubbish. There were no benches and no shade except along the fence that surrounded the park. Additionally the park had become a location for drug deals. Community members viewed the park largely as a liability to the neighbourhood but the teenagers saw it as a potential neighbourhood treasure.

The Teen Inspirators OTM used UCAPT to engage nearby residents, park users and city workers about the possibilities for Banis Park. Mapping exercises generated hundreds of ideas for the park. Focus groups and interviews narrowed down the list. A park planning party held at Banis Park was a community-building planning event that combined a barbecue with discussions about the future of the park. Although it took almost two years to gain approval for the plan, acquire endorsement from key city agencies and raise the necessary funds for the rehabilitation, the Teen Inspirators persevered and prevailed. The collaboration between the city, community groups, several non-governmental organisations and a university, and enabled the Teen Inspirators, OTM to raise $60,000. In June 1999 the renovated Banis Park was reopened (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2 Teen inspirators
at the Banis ground breaking**

Photo: Kristina Allen

As a result of the teenagers' hard work, the support of Oak Hill CDC and the systematic, participatory community development approach of UCAPT, a group of teenagers, who had previously seen themselves without a community voice, were able to transform a neighbourhood problem into a true community treasure.

University Park Campus School SPARCS students use UCAPT action planning to 'trashform' their neighbourhood

Over the past year, ten 8th and 9th graders (13-15 year olds) at the University Park Campus School in Worcester, Massachusetts who are part of the Students Participating and Acting to Reinforce Community Spirit (SPARCS) programme, have used UCAPT to develop a long-term strategy to address the problem of rubbish in their neighbourhood. They began to recognise the seriousness of this problem during the Problem Identification Phase of UCAPT in the autumn of 1998. The group is now calling themselves 'the Trashformers' and is committed to involving neighbours, community based organisations, and city officials in their efforts to clean up the neighbourhood. They want to show the larger community that young people do care about the neighbourhood, and they want to be recognised for their efforts.

To create their action plan, the Trashformers realised that they needed additional information. First, they refined their definition of the rubbish problem, in terms of what types of trash most concerned them. Then, they interviewed family members, neighbours, and business owners about rubbish in the neighbourhood. These interviews provided students with an idea of how the problem has changed over time, its causes, and people's ideas for solutions. While these interviews gave the students a starting point, they recognised that in order to convince city officials about the extent of the problem and their dedication to the issue, they would need to collect more systematic data. They decided to collect three types of information: actual amounts of trash throughout the neighbourhood, people's perceptions of the problem, and endorsement of possible solutions. Students broke into two groups to collect this information.

To collect data on actual amounts of trash, one group developed a trash data collection and ranking system. First, this group decided what types of rubbish concerned them, for example, paper litter, recyclables, and large items such as sofas and car parts. After experimenting with different versions, they designed a five-point system to rank the amount of rubbish in a given area. A ranking of 1 represented no or little rubbish, and 5 meant the area was extremely dirty. On neighbourhood walks, they would take maps and mark the number that corresponded to the amount of trash on a given part of the street (they also brought rubbish bags to clean up the garbage once they ranked it). Once they had the ranking of the streets on paper maps, they could enter it into their Geographic

Information System (GIS). Other important neighbourhood features, such as trashcans, fast food restaurants, stoplights, and institutions, could also be entered into the computer.

In order to collect neighbourhood perception data, the other group developed a survey. This group wanted to be sure that most residents shared their concern about the rubbish problem. Additionally, they recognised that, before attempting to implement any solutions, they would need community endorsement and support of those solutions. Without community approval and involvement, the students knew their efforts would, at best be ignored, and, at worst, undermined by the larger neighbourhood. Thus, they included questions on their survey to allow residents to rank possible solutions. These surveys were administered to all students and their parents in the school. They were also administered at several key locations throughout the community.

Both groups are now close to completing their data analysis. They will begin to develop strategies to address the problem. Then they will present their findings and recommendations to City Council, the School Committee, and other community-based organisations. Over the course of this year, the Trashformers have gained important data collection and analysis skills. They have learned about the challenges inherent in systematic, valid data collection. They have also discovered that there are private and public organisations that share their commitment to make neighbourhoods more healthy – and that these organisations are willing to help young people who are serious. UCAPT helped these students to become neighbourhood experts and leaders and gain knowledge and skills needed to strategise for community change.

Final reflections

We have discovered great rewards and some significant challenges working with teenagers in community planning. While much of this short piece has focused on positive aspects, we want to discuss a few of the more difficult aspects of this work. One of the most challenging issues when working with young people is to know where the line is between offering guidance and directing the process. We struggle with how much do we give or tell the teenagers and how much do we let them learn on their own. Additionally, because this line changes at different points of the process, this issue becomes even more challenging.

Another difficulty is convincing teenagers that they really can make change happen. Many young people have never had their voices heard; thus they do not believe that UCAPT will be different. We try to address this by asking for their input often – and changing the course of direction when the teenagers feel it is necessary – even when, or especially when, these changes were not part of the master plan. For example, with the Trashformers, we never would have anticipated they would have wanted to conduct a survey.

Yet, when they offered their rationale for the survey, we said 'fine', and began working with them on survey design.

One final issue is that UCAPT requires a great deal of time and organisational support. Whether the process is introduced into a school or an out-of-school programme, the institution that takes on this programme must believe that teenagers can be in charge of a planning process. If there are adults who will feel the need to take the process over, the organisation should seriously consider whether UCAPT is an appropriate programme. Because one cannot anticipate when going into the process what the primary issues are going to be, the organisation and project leaders have to be flexible. Some weeks, the group may need to visit other neighbourhoods or have access to telephones. Some weeks they may need to work on the project for 20 hours, other weeks only one or two. Time, flexibility, and dedication to the participatory process are absolutely essential to ensure success with UCAPT.

We know we will be able to work through these challenges. Others in Worcester are beginning to take notice of UCAPT[6]. Discussions are underway to introduce UCAPT to the city's Community Schools programmes. Due to young people's stated interest in community-service, a city-wide, summer youth programme is also considering ways to bring UCAPT into its offerings this year. These additional opportunities to explore the possibilities and benefits of UCAPT will allow us to think of ways to address the challenges and ultimately bring more young voices to the decision-making table.

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Notes

Staff involved in the project include: Jody Bird, University Park Campus School Project Coordinator; Ricci Hall, Donna Rodrigues, Richard Ford and Gil Pontius, the SPARCS steering committee; and Antonio Gonzalez and Ian Newton, the GIS instructors for the project.

[6] For more information on UCAPT, please see Ross, L., Coleman, M. and Hall, R. 1999. *Students, Schools and Neighbourhoods: A SPARCS Action Curriculum for Community Change.* Clark University: Worcester, MA.; and Ross, L. and Coleman, M. 2000. Urban community action planning inspires teenagers to transform their community and their identity. *Journal of Community Practice.* 7:2.

Consultation or active participation?
Community arts and participatory appraisal workers working together to really involve local people in decision making

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7

Kate Gant
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Introduction

For sometime now I have been enjoying using the metaphor of a 'tool bag' to describe my approach to how I have used Community Arts as a tool to engage local people in effective consultation work. Community Arts is a term used to embrace work, which involve groups of people doing creative activities together. These activities cross art forms, so include the visual arts and crafts and performing arts, and can be anything from a community festival to a book, from a dance to a video, from a mosaic to a mural. The list is endless; what is important is the process. Fundamental to Community Arts is the belief that we are all creative and so can all participate in arts activities. So Community Arts workers use tools and techniques which encourage participation by valuing people's creative skills and providing opportunities for people to gain confidence, find their voice and work together to create something extraordinary. I strongly believe that good Community Arts practice enables people to be fully involved in a process that values local people's existing skills and knowledge and enables them to voice their feelings, opinions and aspirations; work which enables people to see and explore visions of the future and make a creative statement or product, and which can be used to continue the debate with others.

Over the last few years I have been involved in consultation work, which has resulted in arts workers working with local people to develop ideas, visualise plans and go on to put them into practice. Recently work in Blakenall in Walsall, UK, has led me to not only review the tool bag but also the tools I use.

The Blakenall project

I was asked to be part of a team of people involved in developing Walsall's[1] application for New Deal for Communities, a Government Regeneration initiative which would bring millions of pounds of new investment in to one of the most deprived areas of the town. The area within Walsall selected for the application was Blakenall and, according to official statistics, it is one of the poorest, most unhealthy and least well served areas of the town. In the past, Blakenall has missed out on many of the previous Government funded regeneration schemes. Despite

[1] Walsall is a town of about a quarter of a million people, 6 miles north of Birmingham, in the UK.

suffering from being labelled as having 'problems', the communities living in Blakenall have maintained a strong community spirit and identity.

The work in Blakenall had to happen in a very short time space; it was the start of a longer consultation process. An application for New Deal Status had to be submitted to the Local Government Office. If it were accepted, there would be another nine months of consultation work to develop a plan, which would then be implemented over a ten-year period.

My remit was to develop innovative ways of consulting with local people to involve them in defining a natural community (Blakenall, was in the eyes of the funders too large an area) and to identify key issues.

The first task I was expected to lead was a stakeholder event. Fine, this fitted in well with my tool bag approach as we could use lots of different ways of involving people on the day. But was the process just about consultation or was it about developing the foundations of real involvement and supporting communities to develop the skills and capacity to really make a difference?

Why should we expect local people to suddenly drop everything, say 'thanks for thinking about us' and attend an event? An event which, we soon realised, would be dominated by agencies and organisations well used to bidding for external funds in the new regeneration game. Clearly agencies were going to be crucial and they were going to have to work together to deliver services that local people needed. However, they shouldn't lead the process. We needed to go out to meet local people, value their experiences and listen to what they had to say. We needed to stop and rethink the approach.

Reviewing the tools in the tool bag!

So if my task was to really involve local people ,what tools did I need to use and how should I use them?

I had seen and used Participatory Appraisal techniques before and had seen people thriving and growing by being involved in the process. I had been impressed with the quality of the debate generated through this approach but, at times, felt frustrated at how the process and the content

of the debate could be communicated to others. I felt that Community Arts provided some answers and, as a member of Walsall Community Arts Team, I had previously worked with people to enable them to produce art products that they were be proud of and which made a strong statement about a local issue. Too often, however, I have also seen the desire to gain a creative product take over and arts workers having to be directive to gain a quality end result. I felt that bringing the two tools together would enable a strong creative process to happen with the added value of gaining a visual product that could be used to continue the debate and really influence the final decision. This process would enable people to: reflect on what the key issues were; be inspired – 'why can't we change things?'; and so, really work together to make a difference.

Working together using both tools would not only involve local people living in the area in determining the key issues but would also take things one step further. It would enable people, not usually involved in community activities to create documentary evidence that would directly influence the final decision and enable the debates to be continued beyond the initial two-week consultation process.

Community arts workers and participatory appraisal workers working together

In order to combine the two approaches, I decided that I needed to bring together a team of people who had a number of different skills. The new team was made up of workers from Walsall's Participatory Appraisal Network who were also experienced detached youth workers, and arts workers from the Round Midnight Theatre Company[2] who had skills in video production and in recording peoples' stories.

The new team was brought together. We decided that we wanted to give local people an opportunity to draw their community. This would mean not only drawing the boundary to their natural community, but also would provide them with an opportunity to be recorded and have their say about anything: the good things, the things they wanted to keep and the things they wanted to change.

We needed a starting point: we had limited time and couldn't talk to everyone who lived in the proposed area. The general way to get people together is to hold open-access public meetings. These are fine for people who have an interest in the issue being discussed or see the possibilities, but would they be really accessible to everyone? Thus, to engage as many local people as possible, we decided that, as well as holding public meetings; we would go to local people. Therefore, we worked with local community activists to identify popular

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[2] Round Midnight Theatre Company, made up of associate workers from Walsall Community Arts Team, specialises in using drama techniques to encourage and support people to tell their own story.

community events or activities. Places where people would be, activities run by local people who would be willing to invite us to go along and to start off the debate. A bingo night and a very popular youth night at a local community centre were chosen.

The process started well. We went to each event and local people were pleased to make their mark, draw a map of their community and have their say on camera! We were told moving stories about life in Blakenall, particularly about how people had worked together to make a real difference. Local people then told the team where else to go, who else to talk to. This was very important, as local people were leading and directing the consultation process. The team went to the pubs, the shops, street corners, schools, community groups etc., and repeated the exercise.

However, the process wasn't easy. It was essential that the workers were used to working in unusual places and that most of them had worked in the area before. We were concerned that local people would feel uncomfortable and threatened. But no – people wanted to talk and were pleased to be involved.

At the end of two weeks, we had a very clear picture of local people's views. The geographic boundary, identified by local people wasn't a neat one that followed ward boundaries or existing Local Committee or Resident Group boundaries. The maps, people's comments and a video of the process were presented to a group of local representatives who had been tasked to make the final decision and identify the geographic boundary. The information gave them the confidence to propose a truly natural neighbourhood and the determination to continue involving local people in the on-going participatory consultation process.

Conclusion

The Blakenall project was developed in partnership with local people; a new team was put together and work with local people was carried out, recorded and presented within a two-month period. We would have liked longer time to involve local people in how we presented the key issues and over a longer time period local people could have gained new skills, particularly in the video element of the project.

Both tools, Participatory Appraisal and Community Arts have their inherent value. Clearly Participatory Appraisal enables people to participate in an open debate, to have their say and actively determine key issues. Community Arts also attempts to give people the tools to be confident participants and then go on to help communities discover, develop and use their creative abilities, through the arts, to express themselves and to find their voice. It is the interplay between the two which enables both workers and participants to see things differently, to think laterally and to come up with new answers and discover new solutions.

As Edward de Bono states, *"It is not possible to look in a different direction by looking harder in the same direction"* (The Use of Lateral Thinking, Edward De Bono).

In my opinion, combining the two tools resulted in an additional injection of creativity. Working together and producing a visual end product meant that workers looked at things with fresh eyes and were more critical about the process of involving people, more determined to be inclusive and to be transparent, and more prepared to go to places to meet people rather than expecting people to go to them.

The video proved to be a more powerful statement than a written report. It was a visual statement which people couldn't, and didn't want to, ignore it. People did use it, to reflect on the key issues and I saw it being used straight away to literally take the debates raised in the pubs and on the street corners to other forums. For example local people used the video to raise some critical issues about access to community facilities. I saw these were listened to, taken seriously and acted upon in order to change things.

The issues raised were not all doom and gloom. One of the most important things that came out of the work was local people's strong sense of pride and identity, a key factor for workers from outside the area to hear.

Walsall Community Arts Team and Walsall Participatory Appraisal Network are now working together to continue this work. They are developing new and innovative approaches to participatory decision making, finding ways that enable local people to take the lead, voice their opinions, gain new skills and produce an arts product that can be used to continue the debate.

This is important work and confirms that it is the way you combine and use the tools in your tool bag that gets results!

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Notes

Workers involved in the Blakenall project were from Walsall Participatory Appraisal Network (contact Eleanor Chell, Tel: + 44 (0) 1922 477 499); Round Midnight Theatre Company (Tel: + 44 (0) 121 440 8188); and Walsall Community Arts Team (Tel: +44 (0) 1922 653114).

PLA as a tool in participant process-orientated evaluation in the field of drug prevention psychiatry in Norway

Nina Foss and Liv Aune

Introduction

Participatory Learning and Action approaches in Norway have developed during the last five years, initiated by people who experienced such ways of working in the South. The experience of participatory approaches as a tool of empowerment in the Southern context made us want to learn more about it ourselves and to try it out in the fields where we worked in the far North. Participatory approaches in Norway, as far as we know, have mainly been used in the health, community, education, and youth work sectors. The work is still on a rather small scale, and only a few people are trained – but these approaches of working together with people are creating much interest amongst other groups.

The growing interest runs parallel with strong governmental directives towards participation and empowerment from the patients ('users') in the health and community sectors, and towards more process-orientated and creative learning throughout the educational system. Our experience with PLA in these fields has so far shown great potentials for creative learning, dialogue and empowerment.

The context for Norwegian PLA work

People, of course, still live in places, but increasingly have their social relations connected to work and close family – and often also to people who live far away – rather than those living close by. Much of our time and energy is associated with professional life. Elderly people say that television also has reduced social relations and the care between people in the communities. So the sense of belonging and responsibility is changing; from being of use and responsible for others as a community – towards responsibility for one's own life and the ones who are close (e.g. Gullestad 1997, Foss 1994). So the ways of living together and thereby kinds of problems encountered differ from those of the South. This is a different kind of poverty. We do share, however, the need for empowerment, attitudes and tools that can help us facilitate dialogue, analysis and choices for action with and between people.

The way of working described in many examples from the South, where participatory projects work with whole communities, does not fit well into the present Norwegian reality. If you invite inhabitants in a community to a public meeting, to discuss the future of the community for example, it is likely that only a small number of people will show up. The people who do attend are mostly those that have particular interests, are educated or are known to be very active in the community. The people who usually do not speak up, will not participate to get their say.

When we started working with participatory processes, we applied them to fields where people experience common problems or interest areas. Our aim has been to facilitate bottom-up processes, to empower those without a 'voice' and create dialogue between different stakeholder groups.

The drug psychiatry project in Oeksnes

People who battle with drug abuse combined with psychiatric problems are a group of people who 'fall between two chairs' (a Norwegian expression) in the health care system. They cannot easily be put into one category, but can be supported from the drug-helping systems, psychiatric health care and social services. The people who work in all these systems (the helpers) find it very difficult to relate to, and help, this group of people. The relationship between helpers and users is characterised by mistrust on both sides and helpers often try to avoid this user-group. The users are extremely vulnerable in terms of social relationships. Many face anxiety and loneliness on a daily basis and have problems relating to others when not under the influence of drugs. They often withdraw and use drugs when these relationships get difficult.

The Oeksnes area, which has a population of 2500, is located in the coastal region of Vesteraalen in northern Norway. The community is based on fishing and related industries. According to surveys, problems with drugs and alcohol are increasing in the region. There is also a group of approximately 15 persons categorised as having severe drug/psychiatric problems in the community. The project in Oeksnes is aimed at specifically reaching out to people with combined drug/psychiatric problems, although also aims for a wider outreach to other parts of the community (Project-description, 1996).

Initially the project had two aims
• Creating participation and empowerment among the users.
• Creating more flexibility and co-operation within the health/social services.

The project, funded by the national Department of Health, started in 1996 and ended in December 1999, although the participatory process it initiated continues.

From participatory projects to participatory processes

This has never been a 'PLA' project. Participatory approaches have been included in the project to facilitate process-oriented, participant evaluation. The evaluations have been organised as action research (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995, Hart & Bond 1995, Stringer 1996) – aiming at facilitating the participants' own analysis, planning and ongoing evaluation of the process. PLA-tools have been used in three phases of the evaluation: evaluation of the pre-project phase, evaluation mid-way and finally by the end of the project period.

Planning group – and meeting place

Attitudes, also central in participatory work, have strongly guided the ways of working of the project. The professionals in the project have tried to 'hand over the stick', to sit down, listen and learn, and to believe that people can do it. Right from the start, the users have been central in planning and developing the processes. The first planning group, organised in the spring of 1996, consisted of four persons; the project leader, two participants with long histories as users of the health care system, and one former drug addict, who is now working in the social services. In addition two of them were active in the local users' organisation for people with drug/alcohol problems. Persons with experiences as users dominated the planning group.

I emphasise this, because power-imbalances in the relations between helpers and patients have always been strong. The standard way of user-participation in health planning in Norway has been allowing one or two user representatives to join a majority of professionals. In this project, power relations were made more equal by letting the users outnumber the helpers. Later in the process, an advisory group for the psychiatric system in the community was organised. Here the helpers and users were represented in equal numbers.

The first planning group agreed that creating a good meeting place was an important factor. They worked on finding a suitable place, preferably away from the health care buildings. They wanted it to be physically and socially their own. At the same time they worked on how and who to recruit into the project. Initially they chose to invite a few people into the meeting place and from there, build on the networks that already existed. This extended the user group and the meeting place has been the nerve centre of the project throughout the process.

Evaluation of the planning and start – by the planning group

Liv Aune and myself were asked to take responsibility for the evaluation process. We accepted this but with the premise of trying out participatory methodologies as a way of working. Project staff (one with user-experience) had joined us in a three-day PLA-course, so they knew about participatory methodologies and also knew us. We had little experience, but were inspired, though a bit nervous, when we started. We had read that PLA approaches were developed specifically to develop dialogue and analysis with people who usually do not speak out, people at the bottom of local hierarchies (e.g. Chambers 1994, Pretty et al. 1995). The group of people we were going to work with, were definitely not the ones who normally set the agenda in the local community – they were in trouble, and stigmatised as difficult, hopeless and unstable.

In the first round of evaluations we organised telephone conversations with the project leader, Mr. Lathi, set up PLA-sessions with the planning group and did participant observation at the new meeting place.

The first report was mainly built on the PLA meeting with the planning group. We asked the open question (planned from readings and conversations with the group), and used visualisation tools to inspire discussion, analysis and priorities. The evaluation was intended to sum up what had happened so far, and make analysis and priorities for the future work. The report was to be used in applications for funding to go on with the project for a three-year period.

The PLA meeting was organised as follows.
• Hopes and fears connected to participating in the project (Hopes/fears – Delphi).
• What has happened so far? Important events, persons involved (Historical timeline).
• Aims for the project (Matrix-scoring).
• Who participates in the project, cooperation, influence (Venn-diagram).
• How do you want it to be in the future (Venn diagram).

The report, compiled by the planning group, documented the work completed to date and priority activities for the future, and placed emphasis on the participants' personal development ('getting oneself back into life', as one of them put it) to create a flexible meeting place and equal relations among the participants. Before finishing up, the report was sent back to the participants in the meeting place and the planning group for discussion and comments. The project was successful in obtaining further funding for a three-year period.

Midway evaluation

When we came back to facilitate the mid-term evaluation eighteen months later, our main aim was to create a discussion among the users of the meeting place. In addition, we wanted discussions with the original planning

group, and among the now formalised steering group for the project. This ruling group was part of the organisational structure, which was requested as part of the funding requirements. It consisted of representatives from the health care system, the administrative side, politicians and users. In addition to holding PLA meetings in all three groups, we conducted open interviews with users, helpers and participants in the public social/health system. From our point of view, this evaluation was the most important for the process. It should sum up, analyse and, if necessary *redirect* the ongoing project primarily from the users' points of view, but also from the people on the professional side.

In good participatory spirit, we wanted to organise a general meeting between the users and helpers, but the planning group considered this to be premature. The users were ready to meet with us, but the relationship with the helpers-system was still based on mistrust. The vulnerability among the users and in the project guided the way we conducted the meetings.

PLA meeting with the users

The meeting took place in their meeting-place, on one of their scheduled Tuesday evenings. None of us knew how many would show up, and we were happy when as many as 14 people came (including the three helpers). After a couple of hours of chatting, smoking and drinking coffee, we started the more formal PLA session. We split into two groups – working separately, each with one facilitator but each with the same questions and tools.

This time we asked:
• What is the project?
• What activity goes on – and who participates in what? Including activities that have ended, and activities you want to start (Activity-sun)[1]
• Who is participating (Venn-diagram)?
• What are the aims for the project now (matrix-score)?

The most striking thing about this meeting was the atmosphere, the analysis and involvement in discussions of the users. They found it interesting to visualise and see for themselves the many varied things they were actually engaged in. People compared the visualisations, which were explained in plenary by members of that group. The project leader commented that usually people do not sit down and get into serious discussions but this time they were able to engage in the tasks for four hours without getting restless and withdrawing – it was extraordinary. So our belief in participatory ways of facilitating dialogue and empowerment was strengthened.

The resulting report is quite detailed but central themes of the evaluation included: facilitated discussions around informal socialising, trips, evening courses, adult schooling and the workplace – with about 30 people involved in different ways (see Figure 1). The evaluation concluded that the project was heavily influenced by the users, although

little was known regarding the healthcare/social system regarding the project. Important aims were to keep the 'being together, caring for each other' aspect going between the people, to secure the continuation of the processes in the project after the three-year period, and to improve the quality of life for the participants.

Figure 1 Venn Diagram showing who participates in the project by participants at the meeting place
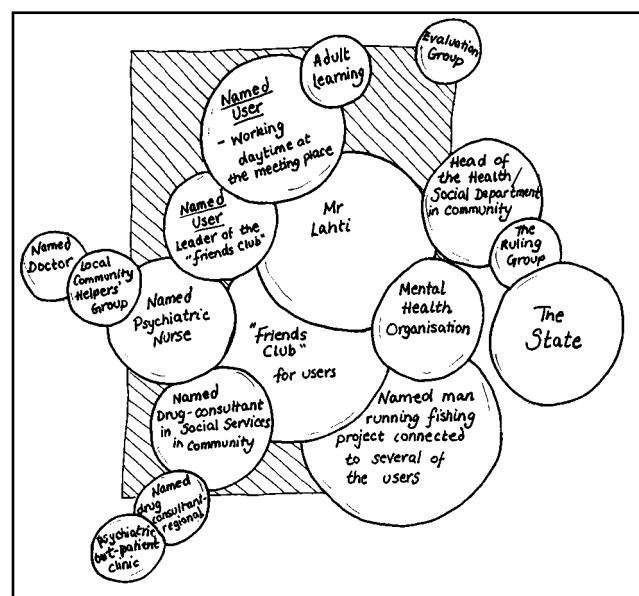
We also conducted a participatory meeting with the ruling group, participants of which came mainly from the administration and health care system, to establish to what degree they thought they influenced in the project. We asked similar questions as in the user group, who participates in the project, who has got influence, and who co-operates with each other.

Both diagrams showed a project where the users had much influence, but the last diagram showed a detailed illustration within the professional system and less detail on the user side. In comparing the diagrams – the participation and power from the users in the project was evaluated as important – but each of the groups actually knew very little about the other. The discussions showed a project that was clearly two-sided, one part focusing on the user-group and the other aimed at changing attitudes and ways of working in the helpers-systems. The project leader came out as being an important mediator between the two groups.

Throughout the facilitating process, our main aim was to empower the users as evaluators and planners. The group is, however, not used to this way of working – and some of them found it difficult to join into a process like this. Several of them did not show up in to the meetings and did not want to talk with us. We had problems in getting hold of users who were more critical towards the project. We have

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[1] A visual tool similar to a flow-diagram, but a bit simpler.

started wondering if PLA tools (or maybe our way of using them) are creating more consensus than actually exist in the groups. The tools demand that people join into groups, working out common visualisations, or developing priorities together. This is a positive aspect in my point of view, but maybe the focus on shared visualisations and group dynamics can hide disagreements?

The evaluation at the end of the project period

'We need to evaluate ourselves forward' one of the users told me in an open interview. One of the common problems in evaluations is that participants will evaluate what has happened, and not use the experiences to plan for the future. A lot of evaluations, once finished, are put aside and do not help to further guide the process. In this process, each time we tried to focus on how to move on, as well as to evaluate what had happened so far.

The final evaluation days in Oeksnes were conducted in April 2000. We worked intensively for three days – facilitating PLA meetings, interviews and visits. The users were asked to evaluate the aims of the project and how far we had reached the different goals they set up in the midway evaluation. The highest score was given to the work on 'user-participation' and to creating a good meeting place.

The users

In open interviews most users stated that the project had been important to them as individuals. It was possible to come when you wanted, meeting people you knew, you could be yourself. One could drop out in periods and then be welcomed back. There were not helpers supporting you all the time, but it was possible to get help when needed. Some users were more critical towards the way of running the project – especially regarding the conflicts between the helpers and some of the users. Some were also critical about the lack of information about what was going on in the helpers' systems.

The helpers and administrators

The last round also showed that Mr. Lahti, the project leader, had put a lot of effort into attitude and behaviour change in the helpers' system. He had got funding for a series of seminars for professionals in different helper positions (and for some of the users) and was working towards improving the relationships between the different sectors.

In the last evaluation, we also focused on getting information about the economics of the project. In Oeksnes there is now one group working to figure project costs in relation to what has been saved from the health/social service budgets. As far as we know, this empowering and flexible process will show cost-reductions in the social welfare system in the long term (see Results section which follows).

One of the users criticised us for talking too much with the people higher up this time – a critique that is legitimate. We did spend more time with people higher with this evaluation, as we felt a need to get a clearer idea of what was going on in this side of the project. The project has, as far as we can see, developed as two sided, with the project-leader as the only one with a full overview.

Results

From the analyses and evaluations made by users, health care, social services workers and administrative personnel connected to the project, it has been important in the following ways.

The users, with support from the project staff, have created a meeting place that they consider to be their own place and around 30 attend the meeting place on a more or less regular basis. Here they can feel free, be themselves and meet friends in a safe and equal social setting. It has become easier for them to get help when they need it as the helpers in the project are also present and they function as mediators between the users and the rest of the care system.

At the time of the mid-evaluation, about 20 of the users were in some kind of work or school, but most of them still relied on the social services. Of these, nine were employed as a direct consequence of their participation in the project. Several of the users have also got help to get their own house.

People in the administration and helpers system of the community have accepted less control in this project than they would usually. Their evaluation is that this project has motivated them to work for more user-participation and empowerment in the future. The people working close to the users during the three years, however, have more subtle experiences. They feel that user-participation, working for greater equality and negotiation with the users, is very demanding and challenging – but still the only way to go forward.

The social welfare office reports a lowering of costs towards the user-group, which more than covers up the costs of running the project. The police reports show a clear decrease in the number of arrests among the group during the project period.

The project has been very influential in providing a new organisational model for the public services in the community. Flexibility within and between the services and more participation from the inhabitants are the central aims in this on-going process. The former project leader now has a central role in the reorganising process.

Difficulties, however, have occurred on different levels. There have been fluctuating conflicts between user-groupings. The helpers have had disagreements on if, how and when to intervene among the users. There has been

opposing interests within the health/social services, not everybody supporting the project and the project leader.

Lessons learnt

Throughout the evaluations, the users found having a special meeting place, the contact with Mr. Lahti and the availability of help as most important. The helpers experienced that user participation is necessary and fruitful, although not easily achieved. The process has received a lot of publicity as an empowering project for a widely stigmatised group. It has also influenced the on-going reorganisation of the administrative and political system in the community.

A participatory approach in this project has been one of many ways of working. We feel that PLA approaches have made a more user-participant analysis and evaluation of the processes possible. Attitudes that are important in participatory work, e.g. listening to and learning from participants, the belief that people can do it themselves, etc. have underpinned each stage of the project. Participatory techniques have been used in processes, to aid us to think, discuss, evaluate and plan together with different participants. We, as outsiders, have had roles as facilitators in the evaluation – not being directly involved in the project work at any time. We have learnt a lot from both the users and from the helpers in the project, not so much from failures, but rather from experiencing the potentials in this way of working together with user-groups.

The chance to facilitate process-oriented evaluations over three years has been important for our way of introducing PLA into Norwegian contexts. We believe that PLA attitudes and tools have important contributions to empowerment processes in the sectors we are familiar with. PLA methodologies challenge our ways of thinking and acting towards people. We have just started, and will continue experiencing and evaluating each other and ourselves forward.

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Notes

Nina Foss is educated as a trained nurse and social anthropologist. Since autumn 1999 she has been working in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Tromsoe. The five years before, she lived in Melbu, working partly as a teacher in nursing education and partly doing research on psychiatric patients living in small communities in Vesteraalen. She took up participatory methodologies, inspired by Liv Aune, in 1995. She has worked with PLA-tools in health and education, as tools in process-oriented teaching, and in action-oriented participant research. She also runs seminars/courses in PLA – often with Liv Aune.

Liv Aune is educated as a biologist. For the last ten years she has been working at the community-office in Melbu in Vesterålen. The office is a centre for co-ordinating both voluntary and public work in the community; engaging people, co-ordinating organisations, summer festivals etc. and has a secretariat function in the local elected peoples' organisation. She adopted up PLA methodologies in 1995, and has developed the tools in Norwegian contexts of local communities, projects, planning and evaluation in different sectors. She also runs courses in PLA for a variety of groups, mostly connected to local community development and health.

9

The use of the qualitative research methodology tool 'Participatory Appraisal' with Mental Health Service Users, as a method of consultation and community capacity building

Jeanne Nicholls and Katie Watson

Introduction

In this paper we will explore and explain the choice, methodology and appropriateness of Participatory Appraisal (PA) as an accessible method of community consultation with Mental Health Service Users and Carers, i.e. local residents who either use or care for people who use the mental health services in the Borough of Walsall[1], UK.

Training in Participatory Appraisal was offered and delivered to service users in order for them to facilitate community consultation at a specific event. This one day event aimed to explore key issues of concern to inform the revision of the Mental Health Strategy in the borough; it was devised by users and titled '*Have Your Say Day*'. Funding was made available through the Health and Social Services Joint Finance Budget.

We will outline the key components for success, our findings and the outcomes. Furthermore, we will highlight significant elements that need to be taken into account when such a process is used with service users and carers.

Background

The Borough of Walsall, in the West Midlands, UK, is a culturally diverse area of high social deprivation. In recognition of the deprivation, it became a Government Health Action Zone in April 1999.

One area of current revision is the Borough's Mental Health Strategy. In line with good practice, service users' views were sought on current service provision. The way in which this was to be carried out was not defined.

Since there are no singularly recognised methodologies for gathering such views, it was suggested that the research tool of PA be used in this capacity. It had previously been used successfully within the Borough with socially and economically marginalised groups, particularly women.

In order that the consultation could take place, there was discussion and explanation of the proposal. Following this, the service users and the two authors agreed that PA was the most applicable methodology to facilitate consultation by service users with service users.

Process

A series of meetings was held to discuss these proposals. These were supported in terms of time, resources and transport and took place at eight service sites around the Borough in order to maximise service users opportunities to participate. A service user representative, selected by peers, facilitated the meetings. In all, approximately 150 service users and some carers were involved. Much of the information that was gathered at these meetings informed planning for the day. Each meeting also provided the opportunity for expressions of interest in the training and in attending the day itself.

Participatory appraisal as a methodology

PA (adapted from Participatory Rural Appraisal) is, as readers of this journal will be aware, a qualitative research tool devised for use mainly within developing countries, with a significant body of research highlighting its value in community development (Holland and Blackburn 1998).

Service Users Network
of Walsall Mental Health Services
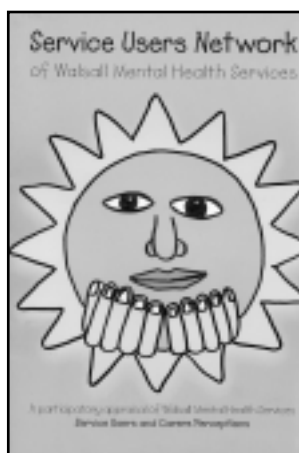
Participatory appraisal training for mental health service users and carers

First course

An initial 'Training the Trainers' five-day (one whole week) course was held in December 1998. This was for carers, users and professionals, in order to encourage all three groups to share their learning together and learn from each other. As Chambers noted, PA can provide a valuable opportunity to bring together policy makers, local workers and local people which can reduce 'the gulf' that often exists between them. (Chambers, in Holland and Blackburn 1998).

This training was accredited through the National Open College Network (NOCN) and participants were awarded a certificate to demonstrate their level of competence.

The outcomes indicated that PA training had value for service users and carers, and could be a useful tool for consultation. Therefore it was decided to run a second training course for

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[1] Walsall is a town in the Midlands area of the United Kingdom.

a further group of service users and workers. This has provided a nucleus of PA-trained users and workers involved in the mental health services of the Borough.

Recruitment

The project including training and consultation, was based upon user-led involvement and thus required a user to take on the role of co-ordinator, with appropriate support, resources and involvement from the two agencies employing the authors. The co-ordinator disseminated information about the 'Have Your Say Day', and the PA training opportunities. Recruitment and the training followed.

Second course

Initially a one-week (five days), training plan was outlined. However, during site meetings, the service users said that the week should be split into two, to make the training course more manageable. They also felt that a shorter week would be less stressful than a whole week's concentration. In addition, it was suggested that there would be a higher attendance and more commitment if the week were split into two sections. The week was therefore divided into a sequential 2-day course, followed by a 3-day course. Their predictions proved correct, attendance was 100% and all participants found the course worthwhile and valuable.

'Have your Say Day'

This event took place at a Service site[2], where users felt that most participants would feel comfortable and at ease. 48 people attended. Transport, refreshments and lunch were provided. No places were offered to professionals, as it was to be run by and for service users. The two authors and the PA training facilitators were also invited to attend. In addition, a Social Services Planning Officer attended to outline Government guidance on proposed changes in service provision.

Consultation on the day was facilitated firstly by a theatre workshop, 'Christine goes to the Doctor', performed by Women in Theatre (a local theatre group). This initiated a lively whole group debate on communication and set the tone for the day. The day ended with a relaxation session. This was in keeping with service users' stated aims of the day being 'fun' and not 'stressful'.

The theatre workshop had provided the catalyst for large group discussion on issues which were important to the participants. Some of these issues were followed up in small groups, facilitated by a PA-trained service user or worker. Participants chose which workshop to attend. The user representatives had previously discussed and devised workshops which would cover the issues participants felt to be of most concern.

The workshop subjects were:
• access to services and liaison between services;
• carers;
• out of hours/crisis support;

• information on resources; and,
• transport

There was a re-gathering of the large group at the end of the day to share the information disclosed.

It had been agreed that collation and subsequent dissemination of the information gathered back to the service providers and policy makers, was to be the responsibility of the Service Users Group. This would be via the formation of a network within the Borough. The group, with appropriate support and resources would prepare a presentation and report. The analysis and compilation of the material for this report has now been completed and will be distributed to relevant agencies and interested parties.

Key findings

Our hypothesis had two elements:
• PA could provide a useful method of user-led consultation; and,
• it could provide an opportunity for a previously unheard voice to be heard.

As well as achieving the above, it was seen that PA improved the self-esteem of participants and stimulated an interest in further education, training and/or employment.

The findings are discussed below in two categories; those that were anticipated, and others that were not:

Anticipated

PA is an accessible and transferable tool for enhancing consultation and involvement with mental health service users and carers. It can help users and carers develop confidence in using the approach, with the support of the locally established PA Network. The membership reflects the diversity of experience and skill available in the Borough.

Service Users will receive accreditation (through NOCN). There is also the opportunity to be paid (commissioned) for future work. This is in-line with the NHS[3] Payment for User Representation (West Midlands Partnerships for Mental Health, 1999).

Unanticipated

Not only did PA prove to be a useful and effective tool in investigating the efficiency of service delivery and informing service planning, but also more surprisingly, it was reported by service users to have a 'therapeutic' effect. One person said that the course had offered him new and exciting opportunities to interact with service users and professionals in the wider mental health field. He felt that the training had given him the confidence to contribute. At

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2 A venue that is used to provide mental health services
3 National Health Service, UK.

a recent conference where he had met nationally known figures, shared a discussion with a consultant psychiatrist and other professionals, he commented that six weeks previously neither he or his mother could have imagined him taking part. He said, "*I enjoyed being able to participate and contribute.*"

This seems to be because the work involved promotes the opportunity to be involved and offers inclusion for marginalised individuals and groups. The PA training course participants were a mixed group of carers, users and professionals, all experiencing the same challenging process in a non-hierarchical environment. It is an equitable form of training where no one person was seen as the expert, holding all the information. Everyone present had knowledge to offer and new skills to learn. All participants felt included and involved and contributions were equally valued.

Whilst PA had been used in the Borough with a variety of professionals, residents and community groups, we have found that by acknowledging and respecting the different cultures of professionals and local residents, PA is accessible to and valued by service users.

A further unanticipated outcome of the project is the growth of the users' network beyond the parochial boundaries into the regional and national stage. This has provided an appropriate platform and widened their knowledge of services and the potential for their involvement across the country.

Outcomes

These include the recognition that:
• PA can help combat social isolation and exclusion through providing appropriate training opportunities. An example of this was the experience of one service user for whom the PA training week provided a means for breaking his social isolation. His quality of life was limited through his inability to leave the house and interact with others.
• Participation in basic PA training can provide increased self-esteem and confidence, as was demonstrated by another service user's experience. He had been a higher education lecturer before his illness and following the training and consultation day, he has found the confidence to begin to re-use his academic title of 'Dr.'. He said "*I got out and dusted down my old briefcase to use again*".

Participants have the confidence to lead consultations, as opposed to relying on professionals. It was said by one service user that "*users to users would be more honest*" as services could not be jeopardised by any criticism. It also provides an opportunity for them to set the agenda for the consultation, and to discuss those areas of service delivery, which are of greatest concern.

However, the project demonstrated that the issues raised were those that the service providers were also interested in examining. In fact, to their surprise, not only were problems discussed, but also potential achievable solutions were identified and prioritised. One of the aims of the project was to provide participants an increased feeling of inclusion and involvement in the process of developing services and identifying local needs. This was achieved. A service user said "*We are being listened to now*".

There was better understanding between users, carers and professionals, and friendships formed. This was in part because the training was equitable and inclusive. It has impacted on the workers who participated as much as the service users themselves. A worker said, "*the training had challenged* [his] *previously unrecognised preconceptions about service users*". He reflected that "*everyone in the group had an equal role because everyone had something relevant to contribute*".

There was a sharing of knowledge and skills. For the workers, who did not work in specialist mental health services, there was 'an increased understanding of and insight into the service users' perspective'. Service users had expressed interest in undertaking further training or educational opportunities. However, for some participants, undertaking the one-week course was enough for now, and they welcomed the space to use the knowledge and skills they had already learnt. One service user said, "*For now I am content with what I have learnt*" and he will try to consolidate and share his new skills.

Increased confidence in some has led to them expressing an interest in seeking employment. One example of this is that on completion of the training, one service user had developed sufficient confidence both to seek and obtain employment as a mental health support worker. This had followed on from a period as a voluntary worker. The trainers and other participants had provided him with useful information and encouraged him.

The PA training week was reported by participants as 'hard work', 'tiring', but at the same time 'fun'. Importantly the participants did not regard it as being 'stressful', a fact which was reflected in their 100% attendance throughout the five days course. In fact several participants stated that the courses should be longer in future.

Conclusions

The skills and information that service users have gained through their involvement in the project, and increased links to others regionally and nationally have highlighted the potential that PA training has for community capacity building. Additional knowledge that service users have gained is brought back to share with others, thereby increasing local capacity for change and development. The impact has been an increased service user representation on local planning groups, and greater discussion and

willingness to share information on local service changes. The flow of information is now a two way process.

Next steps

The service users are looking to progress this work as detailed below.
- The establishment of a service-user representative network.
- PA mentor scheme to offer support when using and developing skills.
- Dissemination of the findings to relevant agencies and interested groups.
- Membership of Walsall PA Network.
- PA is extended to provide the means for it to be used as a consultative tool by service users at all service sites.

It has been agreed that following on from the success of this one-day event, at least one more such day will be held at another service site in the Borough.

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Using participatory appraisal as a means to assist person-centred planning in the lives of young drug users

10

Daren Garratt and Caroline Stokes

Introduction

In our work, we are delivering interventions and support to drug users in a number of situations, be it in schools, informally on the streets or in a more on-going, intensive one-to-one relationship with clients. We have found Participatory Appraisal techniques invaluable in this work, both when working with groups and individuals. It is a process of learning with principles and aesthetics that we firmly support in that it *'enables local people to move to the centre of decision-making processes, and to actively contribute their knowledge of local needs and appropriate solutions.'* (Harris, Sellers & Westerby, 1997).

As an approach, it is also perfectly in line with our organisation's own 'client-centred' philosophy, which states that:
- Young people are OK;
  it's their behaviour, in some instances, that is not acceptable to self and / or others.
- Young people can change;
  if they are willing and support is available.
- Young people have rights;
  to respect, equality, support and confidentiality.

(adapted from the Principles of Group Treatment as outlined by Eric Berne, 1972)

Therefore, when working with young drug users, we feel it is essential to work with the individual and whatever issues they *choose* to present; we do not define them by their actions. Drug users are probably the only minority within our society whom it is still acceptable to discriminate against institutionally. Policy and legislation *should* ensure that agencies work equally with *all* individuals regardless of gender, race, politics, culture, religion, sexuality, and physical ability/size/appearance or lifestyle choices. Policy and legislation *should* ensure that as a member of an oppressed or disadvantaged minority, you are entitled to the respect, choice and level of service provision you deserve... unless you are a drug user. Drug users are forever being denied access to adequate support because they are 'unreasonable', 'unreliable' and 'have brought it upon themselves'. By applying a client-centred approach to our work with drug users, we aim to redress this cultural prejudice and provide a credible alternative to the 'pull yourself together' mentality which still, unfortunately, largely prevails.

When we first came into post nearly three years ago, our remit was to deliver drug and alcohol information and support in a 'detached youth work' context. This means that we take our service 'out' to young people in pubs, clubs, parks and estates, ever mindful that we are operating on *their* terms, territory and time. We have found participatory appraisal (PA) ideal as a means for collecting and imparting information within this arena. However, as our project has become an increasingly credible and effective source of drug intervention, the way we use PA has also evolved, especially when working with problematic young drug users.

As with alcohol, people 'use' drugs for a myriad of reasons ranging from relaxation through hedonism to self-medication. To try and highlight specific examples would, we feel, run the risk of media generalisation; trust us when we say there are as many reasons why people use drugs as there are people. In UK, of the estimated thirteen million 'adults of working age... (who)... will have used drugs at some time'[1], the Government estimate that 'the minority of illegal drug users – between 100,000 and 200,000 – become addicts'(HM Government, 1998). That is approximately 1% of the potential drug taking population. In order to truly 'help' this minority of problematic drug users, we have initiated a more 'holistic', or needs-led, approach to our work. Our own practice has revealed that by the time a young person refers to us with a 'drug problem', there are at least four other additional 'problems' that they are having to deal with. We have, therefore, discovered a need to be prepared to facilitate change by encouraging our clients to prioritise their issues, offering interventions when and if appropriate. PA has provided us with perfect tools to realise this.

When a client chooses to work with us, good practice dictates we establish a negotiated, inclusive 'contract' which outlines client and worker rights and responsibilities. It does not dictate the amount or regularity of sessions, as this is part of the client's negotiated responsibility, but an initial 'review' point will be agreed. However, a hypothetical example of a contracted, six-session programme with a client may be structured like this:

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[1] ISDD (Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence) *'Policy, Action, Trends'* Website

- Session one would involve an assessment; establishing contracts with clients, explaining what we can, can't, and won't do, and formulating that essential initial 'relationship'. Semi-structured interviews would be used to gather information about 'where the client is at', why they have attended our project, etc.

- If the client is comfortable with what we offer and attends session two, we may then begin to incorporate more formalised PA techniques into the programme. Spider charts are an ideal way to encourage a client to consider some of the many 'issues' they are currently having to deal with. These can then be ranked in order to assist the client in identifying what they consider to be the most pressing of the issues raised. The facilitator and client could now have a more practical idea of what types of support and interventions might be required. The facilitator can then focus more specifically on the client's drug use by introducing a modified version of the causal/impact diagram, aimed at supporting the client in identifying the costs/benefits of their drug taking. If the perceived 'costs' of an individual's actions far outweigh the 'benefits', this may allow the facilitator to introduce concepts of *risky behaviour* (i.e. possible 'risks' to physical, mental or social well-being as a result of drug-related activity) whilst encouraging the client to question some of the choices they are presently making. A flow-chart can further reinforce the implications and effects of the risky behaviours the client is engaged in.

- Hopefully, by session three, the worker/client relationship has developed enough trust to support a more intensive use of PA tools. Timelines, for instance, can be used to identify behavioural 'triggers'; that is, the client may begin to see a pattern to their behaviour, highlighting not only *when and why* certain choices were made in the past, but also *how* similar triggers might be identified and avoided in the future.

Some practitioners might be surprised to see the timeline introduced so late into a PA exercise when, alongside mapping, it is often one of the first tools used when consulting with a community. However, the difference between using this tool to change one's own life as opposed to changing the life of a community is vast; the community is something 'out there', but dealing with one's 'own world' needs a particular bond with the practitioner. It is from this that a trusting relationship emerges and supports the premise that individuals have the *capacity* to change. This, unfortunately, is something that many young people termed 'disaffected' or hard to reach have long failed to believe. Therefore, it is essential that the facilitator and client are not only comfortable and relaxed in their relationship with each other, but also with whatever additional support mechanisms are available to them, as it is impossible to pre-empt the different sorts of sensitive issues that might arise.

To round off, the client may be encouraged to reflect upon the issues that have arisen over the last three sessions and talk about / write down possible solutions which they feel could improve their lives. These can then be ranked in an impact/implementation matrix (see Figure 1), according to whether the client feels their ideas would have a *high, medium or low impact* on their lives, and if these suggestions would be *easy, middling or difficult to implement.*

Figure 1 Impact/implementation matrix

	EASY	MIDDLING	DIFFICULT
HIGH			
MEDIUM			
LOW			

Ideally, all suggestions should end up in the HIGH/EASY category, as these provide the client with concrete strategies to work towards. Therefore, over the space of sessions four – six (and sometimes longer), the facilitator can support the clients chart how these progressions could be achieved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this brief article was intended to demonstrate not only the flexibility and versatility of PA as a research technique within communities, but also as a 'therapeutic' tool for supporting young people with problems. Through the incorporation of PA exercises into our work, we have witnessed our clients not only begin to understand and make sense of their own issues, but also identify possible interventions which can assist the necessary change of lifestyle that many of them so desperately crave. With on-going support, we believe that this process of change which has been initially facilitated through PA, can result in these 'disaffected' and discounted individuals becoming reintegrated in mainstream adult society, widening the scope for a *'new professionalism…*(which)*… recognises the power of personal choice, the prevalence of error, and the potential for doing better in this thing called development'.* (Chambers 1997)

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Notes

Daren Garratt, is a full time drugs worker at W.A.L.K.W.A.Y.S. (Walsall Youth Projects), and was one of the two Walsall workers who were first trained in Participatory Appraisal at Hull University in 1996. Since then he has gone on to train his project partner Caroline Stokes, who in turn, facilitated a P.A-based 'Personal Development' project at Cradley High School in Dudley. This project was managed by Dudley Council's Community Lifelong Learning

Unit, and contributed toward Dudley Youth Service receiving a glowing OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) report. Daren and Caroline have also co-ordinated or proposed three community-based PA initiatives within Walsall; In April 1999, the W.A.L.K.W.A.Y.S drugs team initiated the PA needs assessment of drug issues and services for Willenhall (South) Federation of Community Services. The workers are about to embark upon a 3-month PA needs assessment for East Health Action Zone, as well as formally setting out their plan for conducting a Borough-wide 3 year PA needs assessment research project around stimulant users.

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East End health action participatory appraisal for East End health strategy

11

Christine Caldwell

Introduction

East End Health Action (EEHA), the local Community Health Project, in Glasgow, Scotland, has a reputation for operating within the principles and practice of community development and health. The Project was approached by the East End Social Inclusion Partnership[1] Health Strategy sub-group to identify a possible means of developing the East End Health Strategy.

East End Health Action had initiated similar work in 1996 with the development and production of the East End Health Plan and the methodology used for this was based on a Vision Workshop and Stakeholder Analysis approach. Although this is an effective way of engaging participation, East End Health Action, wishing to avoid being repetitive in its approach, was looking for something different and innovative and began to investigate a unique technique known as Participatory Appraisal.

Further investigation revealed that there were a number of other organisations like Oxfam and Development Focus in Brighton who were using PA in the UK. Initial discussion and negotiation with Oxfam began in order to formalise the idea of using Participatory Appraisal in the east end of Glasgow. What little the Project knew about PA was soon greatly enhanced following several meetings with Oxfam's UK Poverty Programme Development Worker for Scotland who introduced the Project to how the tools and techniques of PA, used mainly in developing countries throughout the world, could be transferred to the east end of Glasgow.

Agreement was then reached with Oxfam to provide training and continuous support to the project, which proved to be extremely important and was appreciated throughout the training process.

In recognising the enormity of the task facing the Project, EEHA soon discovered that the Project staff team was not in a position to carry this out alone. Therefore, the Project identified other development workers from a range of disciplines, such as, for example Greater Glasgow Health Board, Calton Child Care (local childcare service provider), the Social Inclusion Partnership Team, Reidvale Adventure Playground (local service) and two community representatives, and invited them to participate in the training. Everyone agreed to this unique request and 'The Team' was born.

The wheels were then set in motion for Oxfam and Development Focus to work with EEHA in assisting us to set short, medium and long-term objectives in relation to the Social Inclusion Partnership Strategy and outline timescales (using a timeline tool) for the process. Although this work was very time consuming, it was extremely valuable in assisting the Project to focus on its objectives and how they related and were interlinked. This was an essential step in this type of work

Once the objectives, timescale and process had been formalised, the Project was given the task of working with a number of agencies and organisations across the east end to recruit community and agency representation to the process. This was a huge task, with initial contact with local people and organisations being made by telephone to explain what the Project was attempting to do. Following this, a more detailed letter was sent outlining the process and asking the organisations to assist us in identifying people they knew who would wish to participate and who could also gain something by doing this.

The agencies and the identified community representatives were very receptive to the idea and the innovation of the method made this much more appealing. Therefore, there was never really any difficulty in securing participants. However, like most other projects, there is always a reserve list, in the event that nearer the time, someone could not participate.

Once the local people had been identified, staff arranged to meet people informally, over a cup of coffee, so as to put a 'face to a name', to discuss the procedure further, to outline what the Project hoped to gain from this exercise and allay any anxieties people may have had. Once completed, a full list of participants was collated and preparation for the forthcoming Focus Groups started. This took the form of two Focus Group Workshops per week focusing on the identified key issues for children and young people, for example:
• supporting positive parenting practices for parents with young children;

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[1] Social Inclusion Partnerships are a Scottish Executive designed response to social inclusion in local areas. The partnerships are made up of representatives from LAs (councillors), Health Boards, Housing bodies, Police, local business representatives, a representative from the voluntary sector and from community organisations.

- supporting the impact of family conflict on young children;
- supporting safe play opportunities for local children;
- the development of child health policies;
- reducing the impact of territoriality;
- reducing the impact of chronic addiction;
- supporting positive parenting practices (both in the parenting of adolescents and for young people who are parents); and,
- the development of health policies.

These issues had been identified by the SIP health strategy sub-group, but the work they did was based on a wide variety of community consultation responses including the East End Health Plan which EEHA had helped to facilitate.

Two specific children's workshops were planned solely for the children to look at the safe play issue. This worked exceptionally well with the children, as there was plenty of 'hands on' practical exercises such as mapping out on the floor the area where the children played.

The workshops were carefully thought out and planned in great detail by the Team, right down to the accessibility of the venue for local people, transport and crèche arrangements and a financial reward for the local people who participated and, at any given time, at least two staff members from East End Health Action were present for consistency and continuity.

With everything now in place, the workshops could begin. The overall process of the Focus Group Workshops went well and the team had the luxury of adapting to any situation as it arose, with the tools and techniques of PA allowing us to do this. People participating in the workshops felt comfortable with the tools, once they got into the way of using them to their full potential.

As part of the approach, we built in a way of identifying what women and girls felt about certain issues and what boys and men felt about certain issues. We did this by splitting the small discussion groups along gender lines so that when we were discussing issues like parenting or territoriality we got a gendered perspective.

We also often split people up dependent on their age, so we would keep the younger people apart from the adults a lot of the time and we often kept the workers in a separate group so that their perspective could come through.

This gave us very strong sense of the different outlooks of the different groups. For example the young men had a very different approach to parenting than the young women. The young men saw their role as being about providing for the children and the family in very material ways, whilst the young women were more focused on

caring for the children and loving and supporting them, providing more emotional support. Often the workers had a very different point of view from the local people and these differences sparked off very interesting debates in the feedback sessions.

The team did sense some slight apprehension and hesitation initially, due to this way of working being completely new to some people, and if one technique just did not work for the group, this was very quickly addressed and another method was found. Throughout the Focus Groups, Oxfam again provided the Team with support to review the process which was extremely important and worthwhile both for EEHA and Oxfam and helped to keep us focused.

After six weeks, lots of flip-chart paper, 'post-it' notes[2], some wonderful photographs, exhausted staff and participants, the workshops were completed. With so much valuable information and in many shapes and forms, our next mission was to decide what to do with it all.

The first obvious step was to collate all the information and provide a report and, with so much of the process so far, this was going to take time. Secondly the Team wanted to engage the wider community in the process and outcomes of the Focus Groups to verify and add their own thoughts and views and were fortunate to be allocated time at the East End Community Conference to do this. The conference was being organised primarily to get community views on how community representation on the Social Inclusion Partnership should be organised and supported so the verification of the health strategy work was actually very relevant.

The verification at the conference involved the whole Team carrying out a shorter version of the Focus Group workshop (45 minutes instead of three hours) but we still managed to complete this and gain not only verification for what we had already done but also some additional information on each issue.

Once all the information had been gathered, community representatives and the Team presented a selection of the workshop findings to the Social Inclusion Partnership Health Strategy sub-group. The Focus Group workshops had produced enormous amounts of information which was too vast to present on the one night but would be reflected in the report, therefore the selection was based on ideas and views that arose several times and which were seen by the community as being particularly important.

The community also indicated to the Health Strategy Group that they were committed to and hoped that all the information collected would be acted upon. They did recognise, however, that some of the issues were long-term and therefore required a long-term process of planning and action. The commitment of the local people who were involved has continued throughout, with representatives keen to participate in local strategic forums, particularly the

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[2] Small pieces of coloured paper with an adhesive edge running along one side, so that they can be easily stuck to maps, charts etc.

Health Strategy sub-group, that has the responsibility of progressing action on each issue as identified by the local community.

On reflection and from discussion with the participants involved in the Focus Groups, this particular piece of work proved to be a great success. I believe that this is the result of the dedication and skills of the Team, the commitment and local knowledge of the community, the support from other colleagues to the process, including Oxfam and Development Focus and last, but by no means least, the innovation of Participatory Appraisal.

A great deal of thanks is owed to so many people for making this happen (you know who you are) and to say that Participatory Appraisal is the way forward for true and meaningful community participation and community development.

Christine Caldwell, Co-ordinator, East End Health Action, 35 Springfield Road, Glasgow, G40 3EL, UK. Tel: +44 (0)141 550 7334

The most significant change approach for monitoring an Australian extension project

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**Jessica Dart with Geoff Dysdale,
David Cole and Mark Saddington**

Introduction

Between May 1998 and May 1999, I was involved in facilitating the implementation of a novel approach to project monitoring referred to as *The Most Significant Change* approach across an Australian extension project. As far as I am aware, this approach had never been attempted in Australia before. The purpose was two-fold: to collect data about the impact of the project as a whole; and to promote organisational learning within the project team. The Most Significant Change (MSC) approach is participatory, in that all the project stakeholders are involved in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded. Essentially the process involves the collection of stories of change, emanating from the field level and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by project steering committees.

This article describes the MSC approach and highlights some experiences gained during a 12-month trial with the Target 10 Dairy Extension Project. It is suggested that this approach constitutes an appropriate and credible process for monitoring change, helps to promote organisational learning, and can be inspiring for those involved.

Background to the project

The Target 10 Dairy Extension Project was initiated in 1992, with the aim of enhancing the viability of the dairy industry through programmes that profitably increase consumption of pasture by cows. It operates across four regions of the State of Victoria in Australia. In 1996, the project focus was broadened to include other areas that were of high priority to the industry. Information about these areas (grazing management, business, dairy cow nutrition, soils and fertilisers and natural resource management) is extended to farmers through courses, discussion groups, newsletters, comparative analysis, field days, focus farms and demonstrations and other media. The organisational structure under which the project operates is complex, having both public and private stakeholders and partnerships with the University of Melbourne and the dairy industry. The project also has a number of steering committees at the regional and state level. These committees are all chaired by farmers, and are comprised of farmer representatives, extension staff, university staff and representatives from the local dairy industry.

Taking this organisational complexity into account, it is vitally important that time is allocated for the various stakeholders to enter into a meaningful dialogue about what is happening in the field, and whether these experiences represent the sort of outcomes that are desirable. It is also important that projects under this organisational structure are able to demonstrate that they have the capacity for reflective practice, organisational learning and the ability to capture and interpret evidence of changes that they are trying to achieve.

Since 1992, the Target 10 dairy extension project has completed extensive benefit-cost analysis and individual programmes have been evaluated against their objectives. However, in 1998 there was still a feeling that some of the project impact and outcomes were not being captured. It was agreed to trial some unconventional forms of monitoring and evaluation and one of these 'experiments' was to implement a 'story-based' approach. After introducing the story concept to key project stakeholders, an agreement was made that the approach would be implemented across the whole project for a period of one year. While many sceptical voices were heard at the start of this 'experiment', there is now growing enthusiasm for the approach, which is still being practised well after the one-year trial period and now, several other extension projects across Australia are adopting modified versions of this approach.

The Most Significant Change (MSC) approach to monitoring and evaluation

The MSC approach was developed by Rick Davies through his work with a savings and credit project in Bangladesh in 1994 (Davies, 1996). It also goes under several other names such as 'the Evolutionary Approach to Organisational Learning', 'the Narrative Approach' and also the 'Story Approach'. Unlike conventional approaches to monitoring, the MSC approach does not employ quantitative indicators, and, because of this, is sometimes referred to as 'monitoring without indicators'. The main three steps as described by Davies (1996) are:
- establish 'domains of change';
- set in place a process to collect and review stories of change; and,
- hold an annual round table meeting with the project funders.

In the Target 10 case, three additional steps were added. Firstly, as staff were unsure of the sort of stories required, an additional process referred to as the *taste test* was developed prior to establishing the domains of change. Secondly, for the approach to evolve to meet the regional requirements, a reference group was established consisting of regional champions and myself. Target 10 management also requested a secondary analysis of the stories *en masse*; therefore a sixth step was added which involved a secondary analysis of the stories. The resulting steps were as follows.

- *Taste test* and become familiar with the approach
- Establish four 'domains of change'
- Establish a learning set, that includes *champions* from each region
- Set in place a process to collect and review stories of change
- Hold an annual round table meeting for the project funders to review the stories
- Conduct a secondary analysis of the stories *en masse*.

The following sections describe the above steps as they were implemented across the Target 10 project.

Step 1 – 'Taste testing' the process

During early attempts to initiate the process, it became apparent that staff and committee members were not sure what sort of stories were required and asked me for guidance on the length of the story, the subject matter and the form it should take. In line with the evolutionary ethos of the approach, I felt that the project stakeholders themselves should determine these things. Staff were understandably nervous about putting pen to paper with so little guidance, therefore I developed a 'proforma' (Box 1) to help collect the stories. Then I held a pre-trial workshop in which we *taste tested* the approach with the whole project team, which consists of over 43 extension staff and managers.

Step 2 – Establishing the domains of change

Domains of change are loose categories of change used to distinguish different types of stories. For example, one of the four domains used in Bangladesh was *Changes in People's Participation*. Davies (1996) suggests that unlike performance indicators, the domains of change are not precisely defined but are left deliberately fuzzy; and it was initially up to field staff to interpret what they felt was a change belonging to any one of these categories. In the case of the Target 10 project, the domains of change were established using the Delphi technique (Cary and Salmon, 1976) and involving over 150 stakeholders of the project. Delphi is a form of interactive (postal) surveying that utilises an iterative questionnaire and feedback provides participants with an opportunity to revise earlier views based on the response of other participants, until some desired level of consensus is reached. Part of my rationale for using the Delphi approach was concerned with balancing the need to have ownership of evaluation and in terms of addressing *felt needs*. During wide consultation

with the project staff, it was put to me that developing the domains of change in an analytical manner, without widespread consultation could have led to a lack of ownership and the feeling that the evaluation was being *done to them*, rather than *being done by them*.

The domains of change chosen for monitoring the Target 10 Dairy Extension Project were: changes in on-farm practice, changes in profitability or productivity, changes in farmer decision-making skills and any other significant types of change.

Step 3 – Establishing a reference group

A reference group was established to capture learning, to encourage the adaptation of the process to local conditions and to co-ordinate the process. The reference group comprised four extension staff, representing each of the four project regions, and myself. These extension staff volunteered for the role of co-ordinating the story collection and selection in their regions and were referred to as the 'monitoring champions'. This group of people formed the main *learning cell*. Modifications to the process were discussed and decided upon during communication with these individuals. In some cases, we decided to test an idea in one region, before recommending the practice to the other regions.

Step 4 – Collecting and reviewing the stories of change

Collection of stories

In June 1997, all staff and committees (comprising of farmers, extension staff and representatives from the university and local industries) were supplied with blank proformas and encouraged to generate stories concerning what they considered to be significant changes (see Box 1). However, as very few stories were generated using this method, I encouraged staff to share the stories verbally during the meetings. These impromptu stories were later recorded and transcribed. For some people, this was their preferred form of storytelling; thus each region decided to purchase a tape recorder and to record stories at staff meetings and regional committee meetings. However, others continued to write the stories onto the blank proformas; and so the mode of initial recording was left to personal choice.

Structure of the review process

It was decided at an early stage of the implementation that the MSC approach should 'ride on the back' of the pre-existing project structure. This was considered to be an important point, as stakeholders did not want to schedule any additional meetings. My initial proposal for the story selection design was a copy of the Bangladesh structure, within the limitations posed by the pre-existing Target 10 hierarchy. The idea was for the stories to be collected primarily by staff, based on their own experience, or second hand from farmers and other stakeholders. The storytellers were to nominate the appropriate domain for their story. At

staff meetings, participants were to review all the stories collected over the month and to select four, one for each domain, that represented the most significant change from their perspective. The four selected stories were then to be sent to the corresponding regional committee meeting. As these committee meetings were held every three months, the idea was that 12 stories (four from each of the monthly meetings) would be sent to the respective regional

committee meeting. Each of the four project regional committees was then to select four stories (one from each domain) to send to the statewide committee. They in turn would select a further four stories at each state-wide meeting, that would be sent to an annual round table meeting with the funders of the project. This proposal is illustrated in Figure 1 and the flow of stories is graphically presented in Figure 2.

Figure 1 Proposed steps and feedback loops of the MSC approach as implemented across Target 10 Project
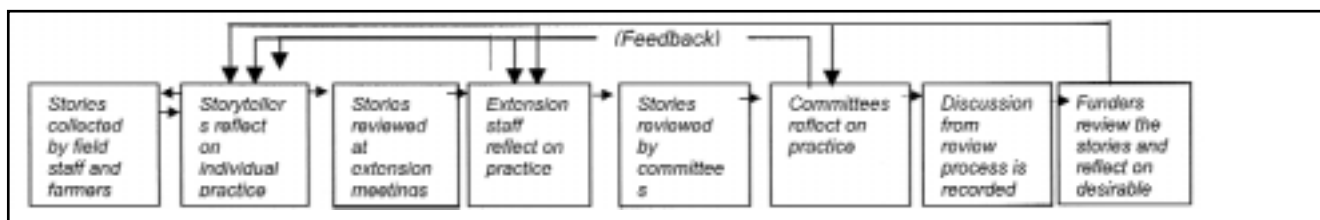
Figure 2 Diagram to represent an idealised flow of stories for a 3-month period across the Target 10 project
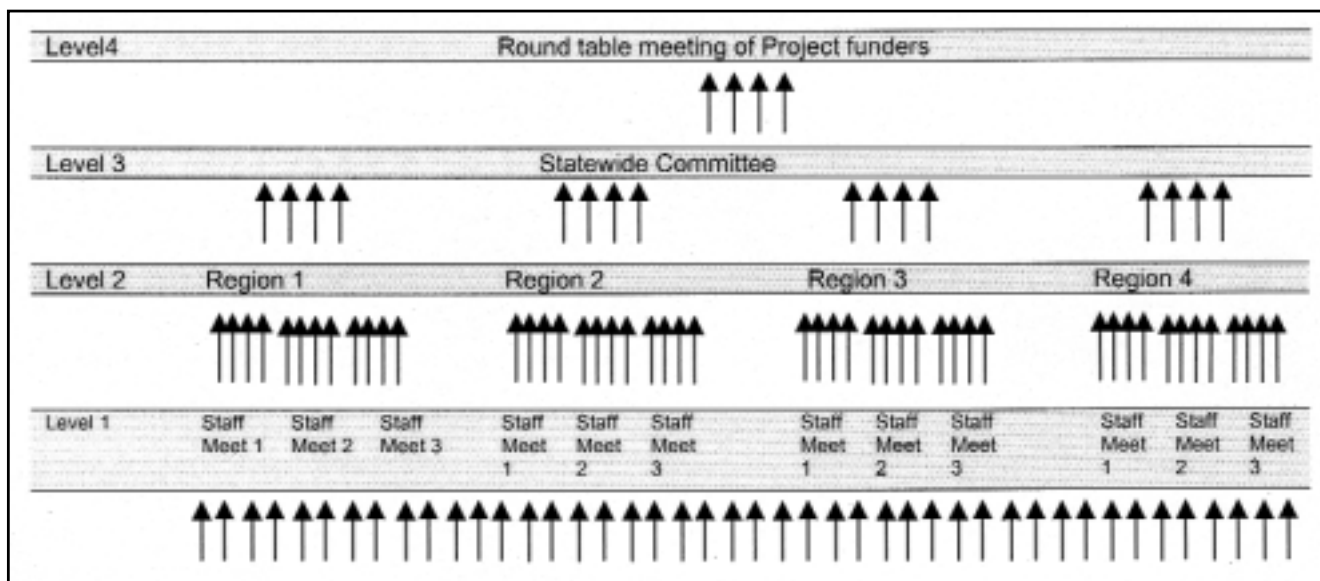
In practice it was found that the first level of selection, planned to be at monthly staff meetings, was problematic in that:

• not all regions had monthly staff meetings, and the committee structure varied considerably;
• project staff were keen to include stories directly from the committee members;
• collecting stories at every monthly staff meeting was too frequent; and,
• some felt that the stories should be selected by the regional committee members, rather than at staff only meetings.

As a result, in most cases the selection process began at the regional committee (Level 2, see Figure 2), and thus occurred at three, rather than four hierarchical levels. Each region developed its own system of selecting and collecting stories, depending on the existing committee structure. The only condition was that all regional committees should submit four stories to each state-executive meeting (Level 3, held every two/three months) and that they should document how they had selected these stories (see Figure 2).

Selection and feedback process

The stories were selected at meetings using a facilitated process. The titles of the stories were written on a white board under the respective domains. When all the stories had been read out, all the stories within one domain would be considered together. The facilitator would then ask a series of questions to prompt discussion before moving on to a vote by a show of hands. Each committee member was given one vote for each domain. When the vote was done, if there was no consensus, then further discussion was facilitated until an agreement had been reached as to which story should be selected. Occasionally no agreement could be reached, therefore either two stories were selected, or no story was found to be suitable. The idea was to come to an agreement as a group. As well as selecting a story, the committee members were also asked to state why the story had been selected over the others. Much of the discussion revolved around explanations of why they thought one story was particularly valuable or particularly misleading. This discussion was recorded on tape, or by a note taker.

The various committees were required to document which stories they selected and what criteria were used. The idea was that this information would be fed back to the project stakeholders on a regular basis so that they could learn from the previous round of stories and interpretations.

Step 5 – Annual round table meeting

At the end of the 12-month trial period a round-table meeting was held with eight participants who were considered to be funders or 'key influencers' of the Target 10 project. The round-table meeting took the form of a facilitated group discussion in which all participants were asked to give their reaction, in general, to the stories. They were then asked to nominate certain stories as being the most representative of the sort of outcomes that they felt were valuable. Box 2 gives an example of one of the stories that were selected with the feedback comments attached to the bottom of the document. The comments were taken from the transcript of the discussion at the statewide committee meeting and round table meeting respectively.

In addition, a booklet was produced containing all the stories that had been selected by the statewide committee meeting over the period of the year. Each story was accompanied by the interpretation of the storyteller, comments from the statewide committee meeting, and comments from the funders (see Box 2). Thus the reader of the document can make a judgement on the story, and also have access to information about how the story was valued by the project committees and funders of the project. The booklet also detailed an outline of the MSC approach, and the findings of the secondary analysis of the stories. Approximately 350 copies of the booklet were distributed to project stakeholders.

Step 6 – Secondary analysis of the stories

In total, 134 stories were collected, transcribed and entered onto a database. Of these stories 77% were generated by project extension staff, 13% directly by farmers and 10% by other collaborators (industry and university representatives). At the request of the project, I conducted an additional step of analysing the stories en masse, the findings of which were included in the booklet *Target 10 Evaluation Stories* and circulated to all stakeholders. This analysis was done by examining the origin of the stories, the main themes, and differences between the stories that were selected and those that were not.

Fine tuning the process

It would be misleading to suggest that the MSC approach was implemented smoothly and easily across the project. At various stages in the 12-month trial, problems arose and where possible these were addressed. As the process was an iterative one, it was possible to modify each 'round' on the basis of feedback provided from the previous 'round' of stories. The main problems that arose were associated with the time needed to run the process and the confidentiality of informants. Some people also disliked the competitive aspect of the process, feeling disillusioned when their stories didn't get selected. It was also noticeable that the response to the MSC approach differed between the four regions of the project. Further research is currently being conducted into the organisational conditions that are likely to impede or enhance the success of this approach.

About 10% of all stories collected concerned some element of 'bad news'. Feedback from the statewide committee suggested it was extremely beneficial to read and discuss stories that were associated with negative outcomes. Because of this, eight months into the process, a fifth domain of change was added named 'lessons learned'.

Including this as a domain implied that each region was obliged to submit one story about lessons learned for every statewide review.

Findings

Describing the 'results' of this process is a difficult task. The first problem is that there is never a 'final' outcome, as the aims of the process are to:
• move *towards* a better understanding between all the various project stakeholders as to what is occurring for the individual farmer clients;
• to explore and share the various values and preferences of the project stakeholders; and,
• to gain a clearer understanding (as a group) of what *is* and *is not* being achieved by the project and to clarify what they are *really* trying to achieve, so that the project

can move *towards* what is desirable and move *away* from what is undesirable.

Secondly, unlike conventional evaluation approaches that tend to reduce the complexity of the client experience into numbers and averages, the MSC approach attempts to keep an element of the 'rich picture'. Therefore, it would go against the ethos of the approach to dissect the stories and summarise them in the name of the 'final results'. The 'final results' of this process are really the feelings and the judgements that are made when reading the stories and deciding whether they represent the sorts of outcomes that the reader finds merit-worthy for a project such as this.

Impact of the MSC approach on the project

After the 12-month trial of the process, I conducted a meta-evaluation (evaluation of an evaluation) into the impact of the MSC approach on the project (as part of my PhD research). The data consisted of a facilitated discussion with the project funders, 10 semi-structured interviews with committee members and staff and an internet survey sent to all project staff (Dart, 1999). The findings of this meta-evaluation revealed that those who participated in the process viewed the 'experiment' as a positive learning experience. Staff who participated in the process felt that they gained a better understanding of impact and a more fully shared vision between all the project collaborators. There is also evidence that the stories were used to improve extension practice, either to improve planning of extension activities or actually using stories to help explain a point to a farmer or to another member of staff. An unexpected outcome of the process was that for some, the process boosted their morale, especially through hearing how their work had contributed to positive outcomes in farmers' lives. One respondent commented that the stories *"motivated, encouraged and invigorated us. Negative feedback was also very useful. It was really good to get positive feedback directly from farmers. Really great and rewarding to have 'my name' mentioned in a story"*.

The process of collecting and analysing stories saw farmers, collaborators and extension staff sitting together at committee meetings discussing and interpreting qualitative data, making evaluative judgements and negotiating about what constitutes a significant change. Feedback from the project committees suggested that learning also occurred in terms of increased skill in conceptualising and capturing impact; over the year the storytellers became better at capturing impact and responding to the suggestions that were provided in the feedback from the story review process.

Conclusion

The MSC approach appeared to provide useful, engaging accounts of how farmers had been affected by the project interventions. But without underrating the power of the MSC approach to produce data that contributed to describing the impact of Target 10 project, it is suggested that the most significant impact lies in the intangible area of organisational learning. There have been noticeable improvements in terms of gaining a richer and more shared understanding of what has been achieved as a project and what is valued as a positive outcome by the project stakeholders. The fact that practitioners are actually using the findings of an evaluation to improve their extension practice is also encouraging. The project has elected to continue using the MSC approach since the 12-month 'experiment' ended, and the project funders unanimously voted to continue to be involved in the annual story review process. Currently, other extension projects in Australia are now adopting modified versions of this approach.

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Articulating the rural voice – a case study from Northern Ireland

Gareth Harper

Rural networking

The Rural Community Network (NI) – (RCN) is an independent, voluntary organisation for rural communities in Northern Ireland. As such, it has a unique and distinctive role in rural development in Northern Ireland. It is committed to a community development and networking approach to planning and development of local communities in order to address poverty, social exclusion, equality and reconciliation issues. It promotes civic society where citizens play an active part in the planning, decision-making and implementation processes within their own communities and within wider society. It seeks to build linkages between participative and elected democracy and to build respect for diversity within and between rural communities.

An integral part of this work is RCN's involvement in organising and facilitating consultation exercises with rural communities across Northern Ireland. Amongst other issues, in the past RCN has consulted on regional planning, rural housing, rural health care and rural transport provision. Such exercises help to inform RCN's policy responses to Government. They enable RCN to accurately and effectively articulate the voice of rural communities at the policy level ensuring that rural issues remain on the policy agenda.

'More of the same'

A clear message emanating from these most recent exercises is the consultation overload experienced by many groups and the decreasing interest among community groups around the 'more of the same' consultation exercises. Such exercises are characterised by their extractive nature and by the recurring failure on the part of policy makers to engage in actual consultation on the ground and to feed back on inputs. Additionally these 'more of the same' exercises start from the presumption that people have gathered in a room for a public meeting and do not take into account physical and social barriers to involvement, such as access to transport and lack of confidence/capacity. In an effort to counter this and to ensure that the voice of rural communities is adequately heard in the change process, RCN embarked upon a six-month feasibility study which examined the potential use and benefits of participatory research techniques to policy change and conflict resolution.

The feasibility study was undertaken in the context of the new political and institutional arrangements stemming from the Belfast Agreement (changing Regional Government Structures, the development of a Civic Forum and changing local Government structures). In addition the feasibility study represented a practical response to the increased emphasis on community development, civic participation and social inclusion imbedded in recent policy documents – see for example *'Shaping Our Future'* (Department of the Environment Northern Ireland, Regional Strategic Planning Framework for NI, {December 1998}).

Conflict resolution and policy change
Conflict resolution

The initial research looked at a range of participative techniques available and used in UK and abroad; these included PRA, Planning for Real, Future Search and Citizen's Juries. The research confirmed that the use of participative techniques cannot resolve conflict per se and because of this, it is important that they are not presented as some kind of panacea that can be used to resolve conflict situations. Misuse of the techniques can lead to expectations of potential achievements being raised unrealistically. Many other factors have to be considered and thus have an impact. For example, foremost in any conflict situation, there is first a need to recognise that a problem exists and once identified what the key issues are (is action needed to tackle an issue or is the conflict situation based on a clash of personalities?). Most importantly there must willingness on behalf of the parties involved to work together towards developing a programme aimed at resolving the identified conflict. The use of participative techniques does however represent a mechanism through which the following can be achieved.

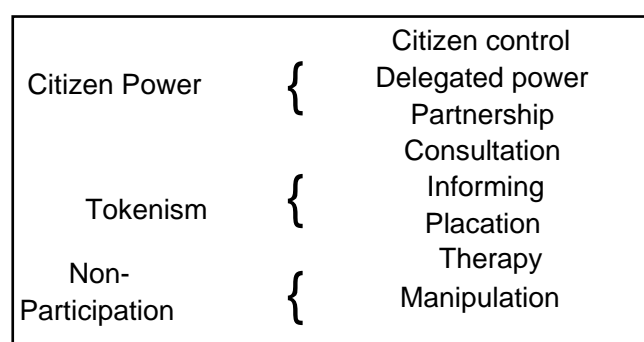- As a stepping stone, participative techniques can begin the process of resolution by helping to bring people together.
- Skills transferred to the community (inherent in participative techniques) can help to provide the confidence and capacity to engage in participative processes enabling people to develop pro-active measures which may lead to the development of programmes aimed at reducing community division;

For the purposes of this time-bounded study, it was decided that it would be unfeasible to explore this topic in a meaningful way. The key finding emerging from the feasibility study in relation to conflict resolution was that whilst participative techniques have a valuable contribution to make in this type of process, they are restricted by the complexities surrounding conflict.

Policy change

As a starting point to examining the potential benefits of the use of participative techniques to policy change it was felt that there was a need to establish a baseline against which their usefulness could be measured. Initially this involved identifying the location of current consultation procedures in relation to Arnstein's Ladder of participation[1]. The ladder helps to explain what is meant when we talk about participation or involvement and poses the challenge – is it possible to move one step higher on the ladder?

Citizen Power {	Citizen control Delegated power Partnership
Tokenism {	Consultation Informing Placation
Non-Participation {	Therapy Manipulation

Arnstein's ladder identifies three key levels of participation. The lowest rung of the ladder is characterised by manipulation and is classified as non-participation. Citizen control is identified as the optimal position and represents full citizen power. The nature of current consultation procedures, characterised by tight time-scales, extractive information gathering and only limited information, locate them within the consultation rung of the participation ladder. However consultation represents an acknowledged level of participation and as such its value should not be underestimated. Consultation represents an important foundation upon which to build towards increased participation. On the back of these initial findings a qualitative survey was undertaken in order to evaluate current perceptions of existing consultation procedures.

Key factors contributing to consultation fatigue

The findings of the feasibility study identified the following as the key factors contributing to consultation fatigue.
• Techniques used are boring – more of the same exercises.
• Techniques used are extractive – one way process only.
• Little or nothing gained from the experience – no capacity building.
• Limited prior information – restricting the ability of participants to make informed submissions.
• Perception that the policy makers do not listen to the community input.

• Failure to recognise relevance of proposed policy to the local situation.
• Consultation for consultation's sake – consultation exercises are often little more than 'rubber-stamping exercises'.
• Usual suspects constantly turning up for meetings – not actually reaching those most excluded.

The study also identified the following as those who traditionally are most excluded from participating in consultation exercises:
• Women;
• members of the protestant community;
• travellers;
• long term unemployed; and,
• farmers.

In moving the feasibility study forward, a seminar was organised to identify the weaknesses in the way in which consultation processes had been organised and facilitated in the past, gauge the usefulness of various consultation techniques and to work-up measures to improve the way in which consultations are undertaken.

The seminar identified several issues as being the key weaknesses in the way in which consultation exercises have been organised in the past.
• Consultations, to date, have not been deep enough – those who take part are cynical of the process, many are disempowered by the barriers we have identified (the jargon and lack of prior information), not to mention the fact that they fail to engage those groups which are most excluded.
• Policy makers have not been seen to engage directly in consultations – in the majority of cases, policy makers don't attend consultations.
• Present consultation methodologies are not sufficiently robust – they have a narrow base of respondents, they currently lack feedback and accountability, there is a dearth of experimental techniques.
• There is a limited number of key facilitators.
• There is limited awareness of the differing consultation techniques which currently exist.

Consultation practice – the way forward programme

Taking account of these limitations, the feasibility study concentrated on establishing a practical way forward to help to widen and deepen the consultation process. The report highlighted the need in the future to;
• encourage full and meaningful participation and engagement across all community divisions and sectors;
• actively seek the engagement of policy makers in consultation processes; and,
• develop ways in which consultation methodologies can be enhanced;

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[1] In *Participation Works! 21 Techniques of Community Participation for the 21st Century.* New Economics Foundation, 1998, London.

- collate and disseminate information on consultation processes; and
- 'Skill-up' facilitators, making them proficient in the use of these techniques and subsequently to transfer these skills to others in the community.

In June 1999 on the back of this feasibility study, RCN received confirmation of funding for an action research programme aimed at addressing some of the issues raised above. The main outcome from the programme will be the development of a comprehensive facilitative consultation manual. The resulting 15 month Programme, 'Consultation Practice – The Way Forward', which is funded under the Community Based Actions measure of the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, (EUSSPPR) involves investigation into, and the identification and testing of, the most appropriate mechanisms through which maximum engagement in consultation processes can be encouraged.

The feasibility study confirmed long-held suspicions about the shortcomings of consultations as they have been carried out in the past. From a very practical perspective, RCN felt it important to develop a programme aimed at redressing these issues to ensure that it continued to deliver on its mission, to provide an effective voice for, and support to, rural communities, particularly those who are most disadvantaged. The Way Forward Programme thus aims to deepen and widen the consultation process allowing for full and meaningful participation and engagement across all community divisions. The partnership nature of the programme is designed to encourage the involvement of policy makers, initially in the development of the programme and ultimately to actively seek their direct engagement in future consultation processes. In addition, the programme will begin to redress the shortage in the availability of skilled consultation facilitators, through providing training for up to 20 individuals in the proficient use of the facilitative consultation manual.

The manual itself will be designed to provide facilitators with a menu of traditional and innovative consultation techniques which the facilitator can choose the most appropriate for use in any given consultation situation. It is likely that this menu will include details and instructions on the effective use of techniques such as Participatory Appraisal, Citizens Juries, Planning for Real, Future Search, Visioning, Facilitative Leadership etc. and will signpost other innovative techniques. The manual will present various alternatives to the pre-advertised public meeting and may include suggestions on holding consultation events, in local pubs, in office canteens at lunchtime etc. In this sense the manual will not be prescriptive but will present a range of options from which the skilled facilitator can select, adapt, and mix and match to suit the particular requirements of a consultation event.

It is planned to test the effectiveness of the manual through a series of 'live' policy consultation exercises. If you require any further information or are interested in working with the Consultation Practice Partnership in identifying appropriate/possible 'live' policy case studies please contact the author.

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Participatory planning in Northern Ireland: the 'learning community' approach

Rachel Naylor, Nick Mack and Lesley Baillie

Introduction

Northern Ireland is a society deeply divided along politico-religious lines. It has seen very little participatory planning. Governed by 'direct rule' from London for the last 25 years, it has no democratic local government equivalent to 'parish councils'. This 'global' situation may be changing with the creation of a new provincial assembly and moves towards new local government regions. However, it has been largely left to civil society to make up for the social exclusion from the planning process which is part of this 'democratic deficit', although there have been some statutory attempts to consult with the public on specific areas, notably a Department for the Environment regional plan. Whilst there are numerous civil society organisations, including hundreds in rural areas, most have never assisted local communities to engage with strategic planning. Many of these organisations still need to address social exclusion, including exclusion on politico-religious grounds, in terms of their own work.

This article introduces an approach towards enabling citizenship called the 'learning community'. It describes the new tools used to facilitate participation and learning, including the 'local website'. It discusses what we have learned from the experience of piloting the approach in rural County Down (a region in Northern Ireland). The work is part of an action research programme being carried out by the Rural Development Council for Northern Ireland (RDC) and Queen's University Belfast funded by the European Union LEADER II programme in collaboration with Ballynahinch, Drumaness and Spa (BDS) Community Group and community based organisations in other areas.

The approach

The 'learning community' tries to draw the community into a strategic planning process which is empowering, inclusive, builds a sense of community and is sustainable. It is also ongoing, reflective and collaborative. The approach recognises that such a process is meaningless if people in the community have no opportunity to influence wider decision-making. It aims to link into the development of a new institutional tier in Northern Ireland, in which communities, politicians and professionals can develop partnerships in regional level planning.

It is important to note at this stage that 'exclusion' in the Northern Ireland context refers to exclusion from social, economic and political processes, not only due to reasons of poverty, gender, disability, ethnic group or sexual identity but also associated with politico-religious belief. The 'community you come from' is a distinct marker of identity. 'Two communities' are generally recognised: a community with predominantly Protestant and Unionist[1] sympathies and a community with a mainly Roman Catholic and Nationalist[2] allegiance, although the picture is of course more complex than this. Most people live in 'single-identity' areas. Activities that aim to involve both communities are termed 'cross-community'.

The tools

To address social exclusion and to promote participatory learning throughout the planning process, we developed a broad approach, which included: the development of a core planning and support group, continuous and effective promotional work, 'active reflection' workshops, a broad-based questionnaire survey, focus groups, a concluding 'Search Conference'[3] and a Launch Day. Alongside implementation of the plan itself, the exercise can help to establish a community action group or forum, inform local town planning and feed into the District Area Plan to ensure engagement with the wider decision-making process.

Active reflection workshops target those least likely to participate due to marginalisation[4]. The aim is to create the space, support and opportunity for participants to reflect on their own experience of life. Empowering arts-based approaches are used to capture snapshots of these experiences and participants define a set of action points to take to the formulation of the action plan at the search conference. 'Issue-based' *focus groups* are organised to encourage imaginative discussion around key themes linking to sustainable community development. Again, each focus group presents a 'piece' of the final action plan in preparation for the final 'Search Conference'.

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[1] In favour of continuing political union with Great Britain.

[2] In favour of the unification of Ireland.

[3] Based on the Search Conference idea, developed in Britain and Australia and adapted in Sweden (Gustavsen 1998).

[4] Many people can be considered historically marginalised from decision-making and so lack a sufficient sense of empowerment or responsibility for shaping local quality of life. The range of people who find it difficult to respond to the ideas and possibilities of local community development and who might be addressed by this approach is substantial.

The *questionnaire* is a tool used by, within and for the community. The survey provides an opportunity for a larger number of people to contribute to the process and engages those who would prefer to participate from home, in writing and/or in an anonymous way. The survey results are included in the search conference process in order to develop priorities.

The *search conference* draws together the focus and active reflection groups, with the common goal of building a full action plan, including indicators to measure progress against established goals. The participants work on an equal basis as co-contributors on behalf of the whole community. All discussion is practically focused and is expected to lead to action. The *launch* presents the action plan to the wider community, including local authorities and businesses. It demonstrates wide ownership and interested organisations or individuals are invited to identify parts of the action plan they feel they can contribute to from their own activities and resources. In particular, the core group and the local council should be able to identify aspects they can contribute to. The value of now working together to achieve goals is explained and discussed.

The focus group work and search conference may pave the way for other action and networks to be developed. *Inquiry groups* may be formed if focus groups decide they do not know enough about a particular issue from which to define an action point. A *forum* might be established of search conference participants to discuss ways of implementing the plan, using the same basic 'rules'. Such a forum could foster continuous community involvement.

Promotion is an integral part of the process to make people aware of the project and to encourage them to engage with it.

The learning community in Ballynahinch, Drumaness and Spa

Ballynahinch (*island town*) is a historic market town with a population of approximately 5200 and a Protestant majority. Drumaness is a nearby former linen mill town of 1700 people, predominantly Roman Catholic. Spa is a dispersed, mainly Protestant, farming settlement of about 1600, neighbouring Ballynahinch. The BDS area has a mix of private and social housing. There is an expanding population, local agricultural, retail and light industrial employment and commuting to work. The area is considered to be relatively deprived[5]. Some residential areas and all schools are 'single identity' and there are social tensions relating to sectarianism which lead to the involvement of a police 'mobile force' on a regular basis. At the same time, there is a wealth of community regeneration activity.

[5] According to the Robson Index which combines indicators chosen to cover a wide range of areas including health, education and income into a single deprivation score for a geographical region. A region can be as small as an enumeration district (there are 3729 in Northern Ireland). However, the indicators are derived from the 1991 Northern Ireland Census and so are becoming progressively out of date.

Figure 1 shows how the elements of the approach fit together over time
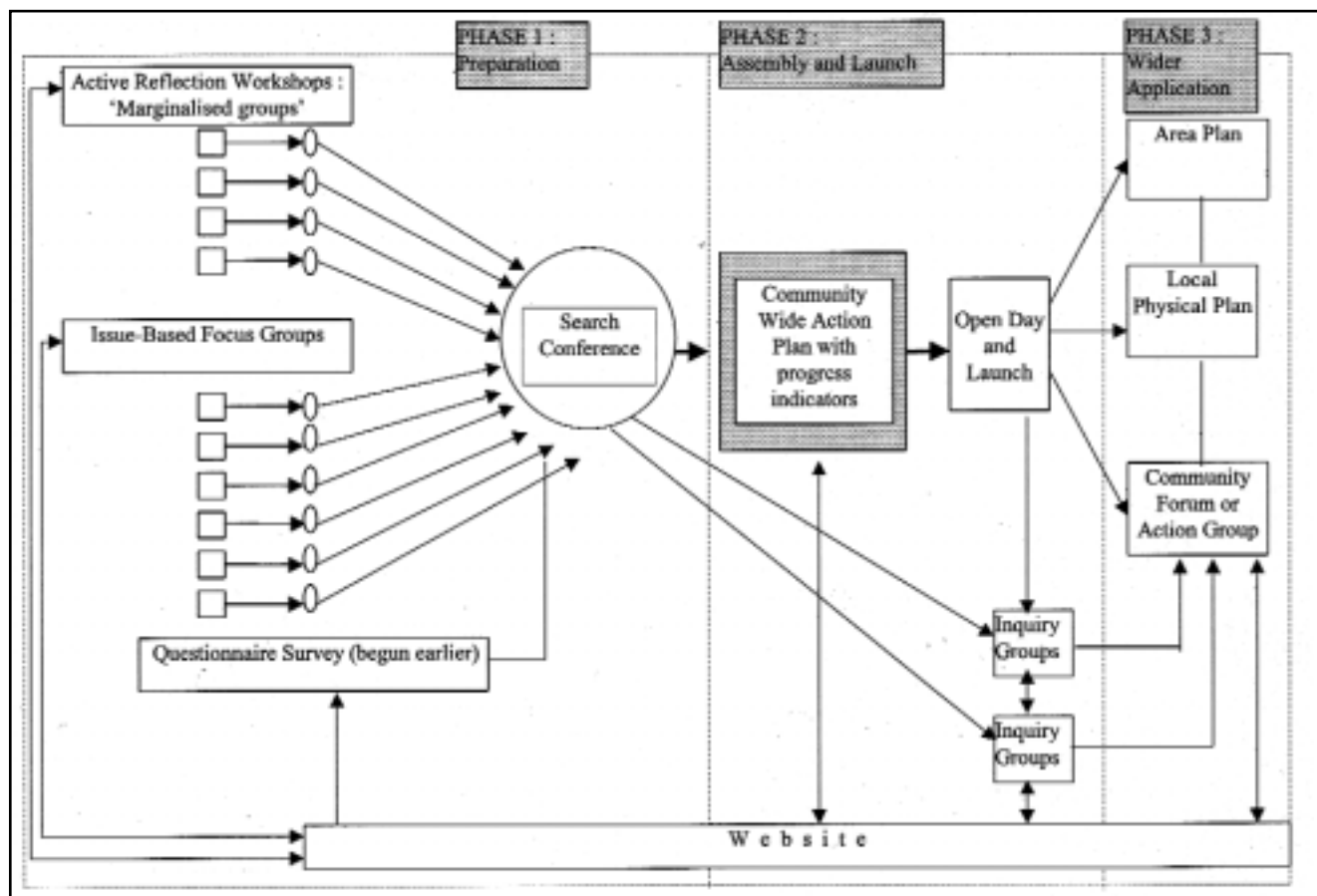
The area does not have one clear centre where people travel regularly for work, shopping or leisure. Given the dispersed location of the communities, the social divisions and this lack of a clear centre, this presented key challenges in terms of communicating the process and bridging social exclusion. It also presented an opportunity to move forward in terms of building inclusion and learning within the community about the community.

In order to pilot the 'learning community' approach, the RDC first contacted the BDS Community Group as a key gatekeeper and facilitator to working with the community in the Ballynahinch area in early 1999. A core group of volunteers from the community, who were interested in forwarding the process, was established. Three of them undertook an orientation on facilitation (organised in conjunction with a parallel process in nearby Newcastle).

The goals of the exercise in BDS were to:
• establish a clear and inclusive community action plan for the area;
• maximise ownership, support and interest across the communities in the development of the plan;
• ensure opportunities for all sections of the community to contribute to the plan *and* to its implementation;
• facilitate clear and understandable roles for the implementation of the action plan for all local organisations who wished to be involved;
• use the exercise to inform local town planning for Ballynahinch, Drumaness and Spa and the District Area Plan; and,
• identify and include indicators enabling an annual review of progress against the plan and new community planning over time.

A broad community questionnaire was designed and delivered by the BDS Community Group, with assistance from the RDC and analysis by Queen's University. Seven focus groups were held, involving more than 200 people, including sessions with senior citizens, mothers of toddlers, a youth group, a community-police liaison committee and a housing interest group. Participants from statutory agencies and other key players were kept informed of progress but were not directly involved in the focus groups, as it was felt that this might inhibit the articulation of the community viewpoint and shift the balance of power in the discussions. The approach was flexible. In some cases participants were invited to discuss the issues in the evening at a neutral venue (for example, the housing interest group was invited to the sports centre). Transport and childcare facilities were offered. In others, the facilitators went to groups of participants in cases where the participants would have found it difficult to give up time in the evening. Facilitation and recording was provided by community development workers from neighbouring groups through a local community network. One community development worker was taking part in order to learn about the process for replication in his group. Active reflection was undertaken through photography. Disposable cameras were provided to young people, who took 'their view' of life in BDS and provided captions as a commentary on the images at a facilitated discussion evening on the pictures. The photographs and captions were made into a display for discussion at the search conference.

Participants enjoyed the focus groups which made use of mind-mapping exercises, anonymous voting by 'sticky dots' as well as discussions. They talked about the main issues affecting them and drew up action points on those themes. Participants in the focus and reflection groups remarked on how much they had learned about what was happening in their local area and about the differing perspective of fellow participants. Some of the group participants were surprised to think that what they were doing was important enough to be recognised and could make a difference. They initially wondered whether the community had the 'right' to discuss and draw up action points, and whether telling agencies how to serve the community 'was what the community were supposed to be doing'. A sense of purpose and responsibility was built through the focus and reflection groups.

Representatives from most of the focus and reflection groups attended the search conference. A large room was used as the venue, in which the original flip-chart sheets recording the focus groups and the active reflection photographs and captions were presented. Again, no 'officials' were present and an informal atmosphere developed. In the introduction to the conference, people were reminded that they were 'experts' on their own situations and were at the conference as community representatives, in order to draw up a major action plan. In preparation for the conference, the main issues and action points prioritised at all the focus groups had been distilled into main thematic areas: childcare and health, the environment and consultation, traffic and parking, community safety and community facilities.

After an 'ice-breaker', the conference got underway with a short presentation on the main issues in each of these areas. Participants were then asked to move to one of five tables. Each table was designated for one issue. A facilitator sat at each and recorded the action points, indicators of progress and desirable timescales decided upon. The results from the survey were also distilled into the five main themes and provided information at each of the theme tables. At time intervals, participants were reminded by the co-ordinating facilitator that they could move to other issue tables they felt they could contribute to or they could stay with the planning group they were currently involved with. Throughout the conference, the facilitators worked to encourage equal participation and that dialogue remained focused.

At the end of the search conference, each facilitator reported back on the main action points, timescales, which community group, statutory institution, local authority or business each point concerned and indicators according to theme. They were discussed by the participants and slight

Table 1 Summary of the main action points of the BDS community plan

Issue	Action point: what and how?
Consultation and participation	• Encourage collective community discussion through search conference every 8-12 months. • Statutory agencies should form more cohesive approaches to action and include public participation in planning, including young people. • Community should develop on-going forum for issue raising with statutory agencies, local authorities, business etc. and maintain website as a dialogue point.
Community safety	• Reduce vandalism to cars, street crime, destruction of property, assault by young people through increasing *community* policing, education on these issues and parenting classes. • Reverse perception of Ballynahinch as a 'no go' area on Saturday nights through persuading the media to report in a less sensational way. • Reduce joy riding and illegal driving through forming enquiry team to talk to courts about sentencing policy, police traffic branch etc.. • Raise awareness and profile of Community-Police Liaison Committee programme. • Deal with drink and drugs abuse through checks on age of drinkers by licensees and other measures.
Traffic and transport	• Increase use of car parks and more car-parking spaces for disabled persons' use. • Improve road safety through measures to reduce speeding and increase pedestrian crossing points. • Improve public transport through changing timetables, increasing routes, introducing frequent minibuses.
Community facilities	• Inform community about community group committee membership meeting times and aims, to avoid secrecy and encourage openness. • Improve and make safe places to walk in Ballynahinch and Drumaness. • Hold events in Ballynahinch square involving the community in planning.
Environment	• Initiate zero tolerance of litter through more bins and investigating possibility of traffic wardens also becoming 'litter police'. • Prevent flooding by listening to the community's reports on *when* and *where* it happens.
Childcare and health	• Improve ease of getting appointments at the doctor's surgery, the attention and time given to patients and the attitude of surgery staff through a meeting with surgery staff and the appointment of a community representative on the surgery committee. • Get part-time crèche at the shops by approaching the *Supervalu* supermarket manager. • Secure more affordable childcare through encouraging schools to follow the example of one primary school in setting up a nursery.

changes made. These were compiled as an action plan by the BDS Community Group and launched a few weeks later in April 2000 to the public and to statutory agencies and other key players involved. The process is now entering the third phase (see Figure 1). A summary of the main points from the plan is provided in Table 1.

Website: using the global for the local

The participatory planning website was an idea that developed in the course of the project. It was developed in response to some of the key challenges that presented themselves in continuous reflection on the process. These were that the process needed alternative publicity, that younger people and farmers were not participating in the process and that setting up a community dialogue on the issues in a rural area was difficult where there is no one centre which most people travel to on a regular basis. The planning website itself was widely publicised, in particular through secondary schools in the area, where all children have the opportunity to learn internet skills. There is growing on-farm usage of the internet due to farm IT development programmes and it was hoped that many farm families would also have easy access. Promoting

access to people without home, school or business access was a concern. A computer and telephone line were provided in the public library which offered free access via the internet to the website. Training for the librarians in how to access the site and to support other first-time users to participate was also supplied.

The BDS website evolved from a simple site with a greetings page and request for comments to be added to the page (which were screened to make sure nothing offensive was posted on-line) to encourage a community dialogue. When the young people had participated in the active reflection, some of the photographs were scanned in, with captions, to stimulate discussion as well as interest. Finally an online version of the questionnaire was designed and added to the site for 2 weeks. The process was very much a self-taught learning exercise and numbers of visits to the site were not counted until the last two months, when 50 visits were recorded.

In a parallel process at Newcastle, the website attracted some negative comments from agencies who had misunderstood the intention of the site and complained that it portrayed Newcastle in a poor light. Agencies were

assured that the site had not been registered with search engines[6]. The aim here was to facilitate a way in which the community could 'talk to itself'. This is using the 'global' facility for the advantage of the 'local'.

Conclusion and learning
The experience of the process so far has shown the following.
- Continuous and creative promotion of the process is vital to its success. In BDS, press releases on progress were sent to the press regularly and the website was launched with a press conference in Ballynahinch library. Posters were displayed in a variety of venues including doctor's surgeries, mobile libraries and shops. Bookmarks were printed to promote the website in particular and made available in the BDS office, leisure centre and presented in library books. Information letters were sent out to schools and community groups. This multi-media promotion strategy attracted and maintained focus on the process.
- To create space for the community and particularly the more disempowered to express their views, statutory players are not involved in the production of the plan, although they were made aware of it. A website has potential to be a key part of a participatory planning process when access issues are addressed. To ensure maximum impact, a website needs to be set up and publicised from the start of the process. Keeping the website regularly updated is crucial to the promotion of dialogue but can prove time-consuming.
- A participatory planning process needs to be ongoing, reflective and flexible to allow for mid-process change and innovation (the introduction of the website was one such innovation).
- Continuity, momentum and focus must be maintained. There is a need to remind participants at every stage that their work is part of a process. There is a tendency for people to get so involved in their area of interest and discussions that the wider process is forgotten and the part of the process they are involved with at that moment becomes an end in itself. At the same time, it is important that people feel they have achieved something at each stage so that a sense of 'closure' is experienced.
- The core group needs to consist of wide cross-section of the community who are involved in the planning of the process from the start and who are encouraged to be involved in the ongoing co-ordination.

Making the process both ongoing in the long-term and capable of influencing wider decision-making processes remain key challenges. There are threats to the future of the process due to the short-term nature of funding for community groups and projects in Northern Ireland. The future of the BDS Community Group development worker and office is in question because of a lack of funding. Without on-going support the future of the 'learning community' may be diminished. However, the commitment of the BDS Community Group committee members will

ensure that the process does not halt and many elements of the action plan and questionnaire survey results have been immediately incorporated into funding bids which should prove strong, given the clear, wide community backing. The local further education college is taking on the website to continue as a focus for community dialogue and learning. Small community interest groups have agreed to take on part of the action plan and at the public launch of the action plan, key statutory and strategic players expressed interest in looking at the parts of the action plan that the community has suggested they take on board.

In BDS, the process to date has built interest and a sense of community and has achieved full cross-community participation. It has addressed aspects of social exclusion and the democratic deficit. It is now going on to tackle particular problems identified during the first two phases of the process, including the lack of recognition by agencies of the community voice, community violence and environmental and health matters. Looking to the future of the process, as part of the action plan itself, the community has decided to commit itself to assessing progress against the plan, and replanning accordingly, on an annual basis, at a search conference, as a learning community. It has also committed itself to establishing a long-term forum for on-going issue raising with statutory authorities and other key strategic players.

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[6] When designing websites to advertise products or a place for tourism or development purposes, the aim is to register the site with 'search engines' – software to help people find sites of interest, using keywords. The website designer selects keywords which people are likely to search for and attaches them to the site pages so that it is easily found by those using the search engine.

Community documentaries and participatory video

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Al Garthwaite

Introduction

Vera Media is an video production and training partnership set up in 1985 in Leeds, Yorkshire, in the North of England. It now produces a wide range of commissioned documentary and drama productions, mainly for education, arts, public and voluntary sector organisations.

Vera Media also produces an increasing number of participatory, or community, video documentaries, and it is this participatory video work that will be presented here. We find this an excellent way to involve, develop and empower a wide variety of women's, youth, older people's and generally socially excluded groups, including those from ethnic minorities. In order to achieve this, both the process of producing the video, and the eventual product, have to be of high quality.

The process

Active participation is essential. Group members learn to operate the equipment themselves. A primary objective is the development of their control over their own work.

Individuals involved in such projects learn technical, creative, artistic and other skills, which lead to greatly increased self-confidence. Technical skills involve operating the camera and external microphones, setting up a tripod and perhaps lights. For women especially, who have been traditionally excluded from technology, this can be a very powerful experience. Creative/artistic skills come into play when people compose a picture through the lens, frame it, perhaps dress a set, make and gather props.

Our productions often involve people filming their own communities. This process allows them to learn a great deal about their area, their neighbours and to take an overview of the place which they may not before have had: geographic and sociological skills. Communication skills, both verbal and written, are vital in filming, as is teamwork. Participants have to work together to produce a good video. Through this, the values of planning, reliability, punctuality, organisation and effort are highlighted. Any film making requires people to be imaginative, to take quick decisions when things go wrong and to take the initiative.

To film in certain locations, or to interview people, permission must be asked, and asked appropriately. Most of our productions involve participants interviewing people they see as being in authority positions – adults, local shopkeepers, community police officers, a housing manager, a lecturer, politicians. Being in front of the camera is an unnerving experience for many people. For young people, and those who feel disempowered, to be the powerful ones behind the camera, asking questions of an adult and a professional who is, at that moment, more nervous than they are, is a reversal of roles that can lead to huge changes.

Of course we don't tell people about all this in advance (except for funders). It would be off-putting, sound difficult and perhaps beyond their reach. People, especially young people, are attracted to video projects because they sound fun. This is how it should be – and if the project's not fun, they'll leave. We find that participants stay.

The product

It is essential that the end product looks good, and has an audience. This is what we find participants want. They are not interested in producing out of focus, overlong, wobbling, inaudible material that no one wants to see. Initial sessions with groups rapidly prove this point. A member of *Vera Media* is with the participants throughout the process, guiding ideas, helping to plan, co-ordinating the action and suggesting framing and shots. The group views the filmed material before editing, deciding roughly what to keep, what to throw out etc. Even if they cannot participate in the edit suite, this means that when they look at the edited version, it is still their video, not something alien.

We always organise a public showing of the video after completion. Sometimes, this is as part of the Leeds Film Festival. The video is shown at a city centre cinema, with all the participants, their families and friends, invited guests and the general public. We send out press releases and get publicity in the local press and media. At other times, we organise a special event, again in the City Centre, perhaps with a Member of Parliament to give certificates to the participants. It is common also to hold a screening locally. Where children are involved, we arrange for screenings in their schools. Participants all receive a copy of their video, and other copies are available for sale.

The screening of the video gives it a wider significance, which often affects the whole community. Leeds is a city of contrasts; the centre and some suburbs are very affluent, while others are among the most disadvantaged and deprived in the UK. For people in these communities to see a positive and constructive view of themselves and their area presented on the big screen in the city centre, and to see an audience impressed with their work, is immensely encouraging.

Vera Media in action

Some recent examples of our projects illustrate some of these issues.

Changing lives

Our funding brief was to choose young people aged 16-18 in an area of Leeds and create a video which looked at how the group saw their lives and their area. We made contact with two groups of Bangladeshi 16-18 year olds, a girls' and a boys' group. The groups were not allowed to work together, and the girls were not able to go outside to film – they had to stay in the women's centre. However, both groups agreed that the film should be edited so that this was not apparent.

When we arrived for the first session with the boys, we (two white women) asked various questions about their lives and attitudes, aiming to bring out what was important to them on which to begin to plan the content of the video. Not surprisingly, the boys asked who we thought we were to ask this. What gave us the right, and why should they tell us? So the equipment stayed in its cases while we talked about ourselves, our upbringing, our own conflicts with the religion we were brought up in, the expectations our parents had of us, how we had conformed and how not. This broke the ice: the boys saw the point of the exercise, gained trust, and by the session end, had begun to plan and structure their ideas. Interestingly, the girls were more trusting from the start: gender bonding?.

The resulting video falls into sections. As the boys could go out and about, with the girls we spent a long time constructing an elaborate set in their centre, so that the imbalance was redressed. Both girls and boys were edited, superimposed on moving backgrounds of the streets, parks, shops and houses of the area, as well as the dressed set, while they comment on the environment, religion, the position of girls and women, their attitudes to jobs and marriage, their ambitions and plans.

The video was first shown at the 1998 Leeds Film Festival. Coaches brought boys and men, and girls and women, separately to the cinema, and the two groups sat separately, with an audience of the general public in the balcony. Since then the video has been widely shown within the education sector, as well as for fundraising for the Bangladeshi centre, and is seen as a success. Some of the participants decided to go to college to study media as a direct result of being involved in the video – before, they'd been resigned to 'traditional' Bangladeshi jobs in shops or restaurants.

Given the chance

With a similar funding brief, we heard of a group of young tenants of a supported housing project on Leeds' Gipton estate. This estate had been the subject of a television series, which portrayed it as full of criminals. The tenants were desperate to present another side to the picture, to show that although its residents may have problems, they are trying to make something of their lives. We were told that the television series had made people on the estate physically ill. Employers had refused to consider anyone with an address on the estate and generally, people were prejudiced against. Making the video, which included one young tenant's poetry, was empowering and positive for the participants, and the showing at Leeds Odeon Cinema, followed by 60 estate residents jumping to their feet, clapping and cheering, was one of 1999's most moving experiences. Leeds City Council's Director of Housing was in the audience: he wrote a very complimentary letter afterwards. Again, press coverage was excellent. The participants felt their aims were achieved.

Since then, the video has been shown at events including a national conference for local government arts officers, and a training course for middle managers from companies throughout the city. On these occasions, young people from the Project have introduced the video to all those present, and talked about its production and how this has built their confidence and determination to succeed. This has given the participants access to a middle-class and professional world that was previously closed to them. The experience of presenting to such audiences, and receiving positive feedback for the work they have produced, is in itself highly empowering. Some have since gained qualifications, and moved on from supported into regular tenancies. Six months on, the supported housing project founder and manager described the whole video experience to us as 'The best thing we've ever done'.

Hamari Dosti (our friendship)

Dosti is a multi-faith group for Asian women from all over Leeds suffering social isolation and discrimination which may have led to mental health problems. The group asked *Vera Media* to run a video project with them, to illustrate the activities of the group and its benefits to the participants. We worked during regular group meetings over 12 weeks, including an outing to Leeds' Tropical World, to the shops, and a celebration of Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights. The resulting video was shown at the Leeds Film Festival among several other community films. At this event, members of the groups introduce their film and answer questions afterwards. One previously shy and quiet group member sprang to her feet, came to the front and addressed the audience for over 5 minutes about making the video, the group and how confident she now feels having been a part of the film-making.

Since then, the video has been shown at the group's annual general meeting, been used in fund raising, and been shown by the participants to their families. This last is very important as in some cases, the women are not held in great esteem at home, so being seen filming and filmed, talking about their work, has brought them considerably more respect, and importantly, self-respect.

Heydays

Older people don't always show interest in video, but we did work with an open-membership arts club of people with an average age of 75, who meet weekly at a local theatre. Here, they participate in a wide variety of arts activities, taught by qualified tutors and have the chance to gain qualifications. The members wanted to highlight the value of such a club, where older people not only have the chance to meet and engage in interesting and mind-expanding activities, but also where they are treated with respect, their work critically evaluated, and their continued learning and development taken seriously.

This group didn't want to be involved in operating the camera. Unfortunately, pressures of time and a low budget did not allow us time to run preparatory workshops which might have encouraged some into production. However, they had strong views on what should be filmed, what they wanted to say, and how they wanted the video to look. When it was shown around the region, a small group came out each time to present it, and answer questions. They described it as 'our video' and thanked *Vera Media* for helping them make it.

Conclusion

Outcomes from successful video projects, then, involve individuals and whole communities becoming more confident, gaining self-esteem and pride and presenting themselves with confidence and spirit to the outside world. We are also seeing continuity. In 1990 ,we worked with a multi-cultural girls' group to make a drama-documentary '*I Want To Be an Astronaut'*. This won prizes at a national young people's festival and was shown extensively in Leeds. We are still in contact with most of the ten group members. One is studying media at university, another made a video with our help three years ago about the women's peace camp where she was living and we have just completed a participatory video project with a third, a young black youth worker in a particularly deprived part of Leeds. This project involved 20 teenage mothers and other young people, all of whom will come, with other community members, to its first showing at a well-attended and prestigious event which marks the launch of 'Breeze 2000', Leeds' arts festival for young people.

And the cost? It's not cheap. But quality does not come cheap. At first, we made videos for virtually nothing, on borrowed equipment and without paying ourselves. This could not continue. Today it is easier, but not easy enough.

I personally spend more time on writing funding applications than I do getting out and about to make videos. But that's another story…

Participatory video, then, has many strengths, and can make a lasting impact as part of a whole process of community empowerment. For the individual participant, it is an enjoyable way of learning a number of skills; technical, artistic, creative and communicative. It imparts skills that assist employability and build confidence, such as teamwork, using initiative and dealing with people – especially people in authority – outside the participant's own immediate circle. In this way, it is like other arts activities. However, with a video project there is a lasting product at the end, the video itself, which can be shown over and over again, in many different contexts, providing an on-going process of building confidence, and perhaps changing lives. Videos have been used to raise funds, to illustrate to people in power the conditions under which people are living, to highlight abuses of power and of good practice, and to show ways in which communities are fighting back and working to improve their lives. Such videos take their audience into places and allow them to meet people they would not otherwise see or come across.

For communities which lack cohesion, self-esteem and even visibility, the experience of seeing their area and/or issues portrayed constructively and with dignity on screen can bring about a profound change in consciousness and confidence. Watching videos illustrating people with whom they identify suggesting or taking action to improve their lives moves an audience from passive complaint to active engagement and involvement in change.

Making, and seeing, a participatory video has been, for the many people and communities with whom Vera Media has worked, a first and significant step in their taking control over their lives.

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Notes

NETWORKING newsletter, produced by Vera Media from 1990-2000, has a number of articles on this subject from, among other countries, Bangladesh, India, South Africa, Tanzania and Thailand as well as the UK. Contact Vera Media for copies and contacts.

Sowing seeds of sustainability with Dùthchas

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**Sine Gillespie, Meg Telfer and Vanessa Halhead
on behalf of the Dùthchas team**

Background to the Dùthchas Project

The Dùthchas Project was set up in 1998 by a partnership of public agencies, to address issues of sustainable development in some of the most remote and fragile communities of the Scottish Highlands and Islands on the north west periphery of Great Britain. Dùthchas is funded under the EU LIFE Environment Programme as a demonstration project, which may have the potential to transfer to other areas.

The aim of the Project is to develop local strategies and actions for sustainable development, based on the collective knowledge of the local people and the public agencies and that this information/involvement would be generated through the use of participatory methods. Dùthchas has three pilot areas in the Scottish Highlands and Islands – North Sutherland, Trotternish in Skye, North Uist in the Western Isles. The project is founded on the principles of participation and partnership. It involves all of the people living within the three pilot areas, along with governmental and non-governmental agencies, twenty-one in total, who are 'partners' in the project. This article provides an account of the first part of the Dùthchas project as facilitated and experienced by the local project workers.

Selecting the Scottish Communities to go forward under the Dùthchas Project

There are many distinctive features which contribute to the uniqueness of northwest Scotland. The natural world here is outstandingly beautiful in the perpetually changing patterns of land and sea, of mountains and lochs. It is no surprise that globally endangered birds find sacred sanctuaries here or that discerning cultural tourists discover brilliant outdoor holidays in the region – but what of the people who make their homes here?

Traditionally, local people here have survived by working the land and harvesting the sea. This area has been home to the 'Gaels' for at least 1,400 years and their native tongue, Scottish Gaelic is still spoken by many of the people who live here today.

The economy of the area is rural, based on 'crofting'[1] and fishing, and the population has been increased through in-migration to the area. However, the region has suffered from lack of investment and we are distant from important services. Furthermore, our infrastructure is sub-standard and unemployment is high, whilst primary commodities like food, petrol and energy are very expensive. Tourism is our prime economy but it scarcely offers seasonal security for local people. All of this affects us in the worst possible way, by diminishing our population through the out-migration of young people from the area. Therefore, it is our challenge to address all of the features that make up sustainable societies, which is what we have been doing with the Dùthchas Project. The three pilot areas of Dùthchas (North Sutherland, North Uist and the Trotternish Peninsular) were selected following a wide consultation process of public meetings and negotiations with agencies and had been identified as particularly 'fragile' for sometime.

'Dùthchas'

Dùthchas is a very old word from Scottish Gaelic. It speaks of an empowered people with a strong identity who cherish their inheritance, have a proper say in their own destiny and who carefully consider future generations. In other words, this is precisely what the Project is aiming for – strong, sustainable societies. Yet, how can a process of involving communities in the sustainable development of their local areas be started?

Creating partnerships

Communities can become more powerful on their own, but they need support at a national level. If you can imagine a big dispersed family, that is what Dùthchas is. The twenty-one project partners are responsible for bringing their knowledge of opportunities back home, but also for taking the ideas and needs of the communities out to the policy makers. Each partner represents a different agency, each with a specific responsibility to the Dùthchas communities. The partners also have staff at local level, who sit on our local advisory groups.

Tapping in to the well of local knowledge – 'divide but don't rule'

The project established local advisory groups which meet about four times a year to steer the local Dùthchas agenda. These local groups are made up of people who, in equal numbers, represent the local communities and the partner

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[1] A special form of land tenure based on small scale holdings within a 'township' with access to common grazing land

agencies. It would be wrong to assume that these groups govern the project, because that would be against the concept of *Dùthchas*. From the beginning, one of our main goals has been to maximise the potential for the participation of the whole community.

How are we doing this?

Although local people selected the pilot areas as 'cohesive' communities, they were too large to look upon as single units. So they were divided into 'sub-areas': four in the Trotternish peninsula, six in North Uist and eleven in North Sutherland. This was our starting point for zooming in to the local level. It took the management team almost a year to arrive at this point. A lot of hard groundwork had been done to prepare for this day to ensure the support and involvement of all of the many players needed to make this a success. Now we were ready to embark upon 'The Initial Review' of the project. This would involve the harvesting of local views and would later form the foundation for the *Dùthchas* strategies for sustainable development in the pilot areas.

Equipping ourselves with new skills

By October 1998, the project staff, all local people, were in post. This has been critical to the harnessing of local good will and involvement. As soon as the local staff assumed their duties, the whole *Dùthchas* team began an intensive period of training. This broadened our understanding of sustainability, and gave very practical training on how to facilitate community involvement.

Open public meetings

The first technique we used to derive community views was to hold open meetings, in each of the sub-areas, to which everyone was invited. As people came in the door to the meeting, they were asked to record, by means of a dot, where they lived on a wall map. They were also asked to record their age group and sex on a separate wall chart. Everyone was given a name label, which also had a coloured dot on it, for sticking to their jacket. This would later indicate in a random manner who would become grouped with whom. On each table there was a map of the immediate community, as well as pens and 'post-it'[2] stickers. Once in their seats at tables, each person was asked to undertake a simple exercise by identifying with pens and colour-coded 'post-it' stickers the following:
• three things that they liked and valued about their community;
• three things that they disliked about their community; and,
• three ideas or changes that they wanted to see for the future well-being of their area.

There was no conferring in this exercise and we did not record who said what. The object was to look for as broad a range of views as possible. After a period of time, all participants were asked to place their 'post-it' stickers onto the table map. Each group then appointed a spokesperson who reported the ideas for change back to the whole meeting.

Figure 1. Dùthchas project co-ordinators facilitating public meetings

Photo: Project Staff

Action plans

Thereafter, each group developed an action plan, working through the most popular ideas that had come out from the mapping exercise. The action plan demonstrated how individual ideas and knowledge might be drawn together to design a way forward for a number of ideas. Some of our action plans identified some good ideas. For example, one idea was to get the rock for a much needed breakwater to shelter the Uig Pier from the construction of a tunnel through a nearby rockface, which would thereafter replace a dangerous bend on the road connecting three crofting townships. On one occasion only six people turned up to a meeting, but they produced some of the best action plans of the Project to date. The *Dùthchas* action plan process posed the following questions.
• What is the idea?
• Why is this needed?
• Where on the map is this needed?
• What knowledge already exists on this idea – (a) locally and (b) elsewhere?
• Who from the communities could be involved – (a) locally and (b) elsewhere?
This information provided a starting point for taking ideas forward.

Focusing on everybody

The meetings were open to all members and ages within the community – well, everybody over the age of ten to be precise. All of the publicity for the project emphasised the socially inclusive aspect of it. The staff worked hard at breaking down barriers. For example, some people have an aversion to the word 'meeting' and there is the problem those who are so accustomed to hearing their own voices

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[2] Small pieces of coloured paper with an adhesive edge so that they can be stuck on to maps, charts, etc. with ease.

almost exclusively at public meetings that they tend to dominate over others. Instead, the staff focused on making the meetings all-inclusive by working hard to encourage attendance and by use of the participatory methods described.

Getting the word out

In order to publicise the project, the staff of *Dùthchas* opted for colourful posters. This is a busy world, and your meeting stands at least a chance if your poster is at least seen! We also tried to word the posters in a friendly way in order to encourage those people who don't usually go to meetings to attend. We also used the media by placing adverts in local newspapers, participating in radio and TV interviews, and through taking advantage of local Gaelic broadcasting stations. What was even more useful was to put a word of encouragement in people's ears when they were filling your car up with petrol, selling you milk and bread, or picking your children up for school. In rural communities, the chances are strong that you know the people. And that can work for you, and against you.

Knocking on doors

We also did live community interviews with the members of the public in each of the sub-areas. We went to places where we would be sure of finding a captive audience, for example in shops, petrol stations, schools, youth clubs and nurseries. In addition to this, we knocked on people's doors for spontaneous interviews. The exercise conducted was to ask people the three specific questions as outlined for the open meetings: three things that they liked; three things that they disliked and three ideas for change. In the beginning, we also developed action plans, as described above, during these live interviews. However, this was found to be time consuming, impractical and unfeasible, given the time *and weather* available for the research. Winter surveys in North Scotland have their problems! Everyone who was interviewed by the staff was recorded according to their age group, sex and the mapped location of their homes.

Trekking and tracking

At an advanced stage of the research, the staff assessed their work in terms of geographical and age representations. At that stage, we were able to identify any gaps and to further pursue additional interviews in an attempt to fill them. Many good interviews were done on the 'phone, by asking the questions in the morning and 'phoning back at night for the answers. In the meantime, of course, the pile of information from the communities was growing. Things were getting exciting, and all too quickly, the information was translated into a medium suitable for display at exhibitions.

Feeding back all of the good ideas in their own words

The next step was to hold a travelling exhibition to display all of the information gathered to date, in a transparent and entertaining way. This was an important way of sharing individual views with the wider community, as well as using the occasion to heighten awareness of the role of local agencies in the project. The agencies had also been busy recording their own views about the *Dùthchas* areas and these were part of the exhibition as well. Interestingly, much of the agency input on strengths, challenges and ideas was mirrored by the community's input. The exhibition was also used as an opportunity to ask people to cast their votes on the collective ideas being displayed. An important function was that the exhibition showed, through all the information on display, 'an increased confidence in the area' and the '…pride and awareness of our culture and traditions' from the community.

A travelling exhibition

A travelling exhibition was needed in order to visit all of the individual communities in these large and dispersed areas. To set the travelling exhibitions off to a good start, and confirm the good work done by our communities, we invited the Government Minister for Rural affairs in Scotland to Trotternish. This ensured the attendance of senior staff from the partner agencies, as well as all of the communities, and the Minister's enthusiasm ensured the continuing support of for the work.

The project workers in Sutherland had a stroke of genius. Their exhibition was clearly going to be a monumental task. They had a huge territory to cover, with 11 'sub-areas'. Scratching their heads, they came up with the idea of hiring 'Magnus the Arts Bus'. This bus was a highlight of community life in Sutherland during the winter of 1999. People crammed into the bus to cast their votes and share in the fun, and Magnus ventured into communities where no bus had gone before!

Asking people to vote on ideas

We tried to get people to vote on the many ideas on display by listing all of the ideas that the communities had presented on posters. They were asked to vote on the ideas for their own area. Each person was given 10 sticky dots with which to cast their votes. Votes could be cast in any way that they wished and was not private, but in full view of other people. We thought later that this might have been a mistake, as individuals were sometimes influenced by the voting of others. Popular votes were for improved slipways and roads, a youth cafe, an upgraded community centre, a new surgery etc. For our exhibition, we included artwork from local schools, fossils and museum artifacts, local crafts, books and tapes by local artists etc. in an attempt to boost community confidence. For example, an art piece might be accompanied by the dialogue – 'I like *Sollas* [the place I live] because my Mum can let me out for the day without worrying about me.' (i.e. This is a safe community).

Making a film of their story

To go with the exhibitions, an audio-visual tape-slide presentation of the three *Dùthchas* areas was specially commissioned. Each of the three scripts was prepared locally and told of each community's values, challenges and ideas. The tape has since been made into a video. The colourful and moving use of local voices, music and pictures is perhaps one of the reasons that this is amongst our favourite outputs. In just 20 minutes, the listener gets a powerful essence of the *Dùthchas* story and the issues that the community faces on a daily basis. The video has a message for all rural communities on the fringe – no matter where in the globe they are. A paper version of the video was also printed and circulated to every household in the three areas – 'what we value about our place'.

Reflections to date – what we've learned so far

By the time the exhibitions were over, we were all exhausted! The 'Initial Review' had taken just over five months of hard work, but how effective had we been? One thing we all knew was that we were learning fast. We were frustrated by how quickly we had to get to the exhibition stage. All of us would have liked more time to take the survey to even more people. However over 300 people had been directly involved in each area and project timescales required that we move on. But what had the experience taught us thus far?

This kind of work is time consuming, and needs concentration. For the meetings, you have to be well organised. Sometimes, we found that our participatory 'exercises' irritated some people. For example, a frequent cry was 'Not more 'post its'!'. Sometimes people preferred to do an exercise collectively and we found that it was helpful to ask people what they themselves felt comfortable with. We had to be prepared for difficult questions as well. Sometimes, we encountered cynicism, and learned neither to respond with cynicism nor to be 'thrown' off course by a dismissive or difficult comment. When someone makes challenges on a subject you do not know, we found that it was possible to turn it around by inviting them to part with their own knowledge. *Dùthchas* is all about sharing knowledge for our mutual benefit. When you spot someone who is really clued up on a particular topic – make a note of their strengths and their telephone number – and ask them to come on board.

The last thing you want is to be wishy-washy by merely enduring these meetings. You are there to gather ideas and boost confidence, but you have to stand back as well. You must be participatory and demonstrate a genuine interest in what is going on and it is important to thank everyone for coming. We always felt remorseful if we had forgotten to acknowledge people's efforts. We also found that we had to give people an idea at the end of an evening what was going to happen next.

As well as community meetings, we found that much information came from the door-to-door interviews. Not everybody has their ideas articulated in their mind ready to be shared in plenary sessions. Some will take longer, and a bit of coaxing, for their true feelings to be shared. Some don't perceive themselves to be the meeting-going kind. There might be an assumption that they themselves have nothing to contribute – people said this to us again and again during interviews. The interviews offered the opportunity for people to put across their views at an intimate level without having to speak out at a meeting. Also, some preferred you to write their thoughts down, so we did. You have to go with the flow, and some of the best comments of the whole survey came from people with whom we shared cups of tea during door-to-door interviews!

This is only the first chapter in the *Dùthchas* story. If you want to learn what we did with all the information gained or how the communities shaped it into creative, inspired and well-informed strategies and projects for the sustainability of their areas, or if you want to see the video and read the reports, you could contact us at the Project office.

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Notes

The project has eight members of staff: Vanessa Halhead, Project Manager; Issie MacPhail, Project Officer; Wilma Chestnut, Administrator. Project Workers: Sine Gillespie and Iain Macdonald (job share) – The Trotternish peninsula, Meg Telfer and Kerry Conlon, (job share) – North Sutherland, and Caitriona MacCuish, North Uist.

Farmer-centred extension education

The educational venue of pasture walks in Wisconsin USA and the role of the facilitator

Lynn Chakoian

Introduction

A relatively young extension agent is talking with an older agent; the older agent is widely known for his leading role in promoting pasture walks and grazing groups. The new agent finally says, *"I think I'm going to give up on these pasture walks, not going to do them this year. They just turn into a social gatherings, I don't see the value"*. Of course the young agent still has to prove to administration that he is effective in working with farmers and he has concluded that pasture walks are not getting him where he needs to go. He finds it difficult to quantify the results and frankly, probably thinks there often are not any positive results to be quantified. The older agent sighs in disbelief. This is a common sentiment that has come round yet again.

What *happens* on a pasture walk? What is taught? What is learned in the farmer-to-farmer exchange? What gets implemented? These questions are hard enough to answer in the most controlled venue, but are just the more difficult to discern in a free forum of a pasture walk. Yet I would maintain, from my experiences with some very successful walks, that this forum provides lessons that farmers can readily apply to their own farms. Some of the reasons for this should be obvious. The farmers are walking the fields and pastures of a fellow farmer. As they walk, they talk about what has been happening in the field, changes in the animals, weather, all the other factors that lead to the situation as presented. It is all completely real. As we travel from one discussion point to the next, themes begin to emerge. A problem in one pasture is often similar to or connected in some way to the next pasture. The farmers reach for experiences from their farms to comment and lend insight. It gradually becomes clear what needs to be done, sometimes even in a priority of needs, from most urgent to the least. The discussions typically cover topics from grazing patterns, to field size, to availability of water, to cow health, to supplemental feeding and so on...all triggered by the fact that we as a group are walking these fields and talking about what is happening.

In this era of qualitative research, I observed that farmers change their management based on the discussions. This is how farmers make decisions – they walk their fields. They may do small experiments to see if changes will help, and then they walk their fields to see what is happening. They make numerous observations, keeping in mind that the farm as a system has to fit together as a whole: for example, 'if I do this it will affect that and I won't have money for this or time for that other thing I thought might help'. Simple answers just don't apply to the situations these farmers face, and on a pasture walk there is opportunity to discuss the complexities that one decision might precipitate.

Another obvious reasons that pasture walks are unique and work well is the relationships that the farmers develop with each other and the professionals that attend pasture walks. They trust each other after a while, they get to know each other's farms, the constraints, the unused opportunities and the style of the farmer as a risk-taker or as more conservative. As a group, they are all in the same basic situation with weather, prices, and vendors and they try to help each other keep costs down and profits up.

This points to the general applicability of farmers' groups to help each other be more competitive within a shifting context of markets and environmental conditions. The knowledge gained in this venue can be applied to many agricultural contexts. There are also important lessons to be gleaned regarding the role of facilitators in the farmers' group which has wider applicability than just the context of the State of Wisconsin USA, or the farming methods unique to dairy and beef operations.

Role of the agent/facilitator

Two agents in the study, Fred and John, worked extensively with grazier groups. They were similar in their approach to assisting the farmer groups. First, they did not see the group as 'their' group; leadership came from the farmers and extension was there to assist. If extension did not participate, the grazier group would continue. Second, they saw their role as organising discussion and debate, not being the centre of debate or the final 'expert' opinion in discussions. Third, there was some agreement that experiential knowledge is good, but can be counter productive if a single experience becomes 'fact' and people begin making decisions based on a single observation.

When theories emerged and the farmers were curious enough to pursue research, the agents helped to set up some experimental plots on graziers' farms. The agents also tend to retain the history of the group and bring previous observations to bear on the moment in hand. It was not

uncommon to hear statements like, *"this is very similar to what we saw on Bill's farm last month..."*. The most important characteristic of the agent is the ability to listen respectfully to farmers and not assume that technical knowledge and expertise is necessarily important to the discussion. Scientific definitions and systems analysis have little to do with the activities of these groups and to suspend those assumptions and biases is a prime task of any agent interested in working with this type of group. This is not as easy as it might sound, as I found out in my own experience of Bill's pasture walk, the story that follows. Bill's pasture walk took place in June in Fred's county. This walk was good in many ways, but provides some clearer than usual insights because of the way the discussion unfolded and developed during the course of the walk.

Starting with the farmer's questions

A key to Fred's methodology on pasture walks is to start with the farmer's questions. After the group is assembled and attentive, Fred will usually say something like, *"OK, what is the question here"*. Then the host farmer is in a position to layout what history he thinks is relevant and what his pressing problem is in that context.

My initial reaction to this process of starting with the farmer's questions was scepticism. I was taught in my technical/scientific education that you have to ask the right questions to get the right answers. What if the farmer's questions missed the point? After a process of arguing with myself about this issue it became clear that if you are going to be 'farmer-centred', the farmer's concerns and sense of the situation *has* to be the starting point. John put it best, during a group interview of the agents in the study, after hearing my reaction to Bill's walk (See Box 1):

Box 1

John: *One of the things you know that I think...I think this example here, and I see a lot of this...maybe the guy didn't have the right questions when he started out. A lot of cases they don't, but you or I can't make him ask the right questions, but when it is all said and done, with you there and me there, the group of his peers there, few strangers, few friends, neighbours, whatever [. ..]. If nothing else, if nothing else happened out of that whole thing in the next week or month or two, this guy might start thinking [...] At that point he begins to think about…ask the question, "Why am I doing this? Why?" And sit down and look at it and begin...and it's a slow process, I mean I think we've seen a lot of this over years as this whole thing evolves. You don't solve the problem in an hour and a half pasture walk.*

Answers to individual questions are often trivial

Often the answer to a question posed on a pasture walk is relatively trivial. The real work on a pasture walk is when the group transforms from chaotic voices reacting to questions, to a chorus that sees patterns across the farm fields and what those patterns mean to the farm operation as a whole. The following excerpt from early in Bill 's pasture walk (see Box 2) shows how the initial comments can be quite diverse and chaotic in nature:

Box 2

Bill: *This area here is today's pasture and they don't seem to be very satisfied with it. I gave them a little bit of clover last night to keep them milking, but they don't seem to want to eat this and I'm wondering should I keep them in here and make them chomp it down more. There seems to be stuff left to go so that's why...*
Hal: *There's more undesirable plants here...as compared to where we were a little bit ago...*
Bill: *This here didn't get burned...*
Hal: *We've got milkweed and goldenrod and they're not going to eat these, these are basically toxic, right..*
Fred: *Can be.*
Hal: *Or can be toxic.*
[Small discussions]

Fred: *Well OK Bill 's question is, should he keep his cows out here. What's the groups' consensus?*
Don: *He can't afford to waste the land.*
Don's dad: *He can't afford to lose to the bulk tank either though.*
Ron: *Feed 'em this in the winter.*
Distant farmer voice: *Get some horses.*
Don's dad: *No, No, No*
Don: *He could burn it down.*
Don's dad: *That wouldn't help you today, you burn it down and then graze it tighter.*
Ron: *Your talking about getting rid of that stuff aren' t ya.* [Thatch layer]
Don: *The soil might not be deep enough to have the same type of pasture you have over there.*
Ron: *You've got to get some seed back under there?*
Fred: *This stuff has been pastured for a long time so I should encourage you to try to get whatever species you want to encourage, spin it on or dribble it on...what's the idea...*
Don's dad: *When you see goldenrod and all that it grows on pretty poor soil...and there ain't enough even to grow a pasture...*
Ron: *Pick the flowers first..*

So is this a fertility problem, a grazing management problem, a problem readily solved through managed use of fire, or a thatch problem, or...? Everyone seemed to have an answer that differed and had some small amount of truth in it, but the important moments came later when patterns between stations started to emerge and the group could focus seriously on how Bill could improve his pastures given his particular opportunities and constraints. Box 3 shows how the conversation became more cohesive at the end:

A system emerges

A larger vision did emerge from this chorus of voices. Early on they were single voices in conflict or competition for attention, but by the end it was clear what Bill had to do to develop his pastures. I think he was thinking that burning was a positive activity, but even on that pasture he needed to graze it more intensively or the thatch and prevalence of less desirable species would be a continuing problem. There were even demonstrations of the solution of fence shifting to keep the cows confined and eating at the edges. In fact he decided to not have the group go to the last station because he knew what the group would suggest there; it was clear to him.

The process on this walk was a shift from 'answering' the questions to discovering the patterns on the farm from the farmer's perspective. These patterns then suggested the system that was at work: under-grazing, that led to thatch and undesirable species, that resulted in difficulty establishing clover or other milk producing forages. Once the group established this cycle, the possible solutions were clear and, given Bill' s constraints, solutions were offered. This system and the solutions unfolded in a gradual way over the course of the walk and it was a satisfying process for Bill; he was quite pleased with what he learned on the walk.

The system was not a scientific appraisal of his farm. It grew out of the group walking the land and addressing his questions. This is the major difference between the conventional agriculture mind-set and that found in grazing groups. These farmers do not want to be presented with an aerial photo and a master plan for pastures and rotations. These farmers will make incremental changes in management and paddock size as they see feasible within their system, not because an 'expert' has analysed the farm and come up with a system to lay on the landscape.

Conclusions

This type of venue for education of farmers could be applied to many areas of agriculture in the North or South. This would lead to various levels of complexity that are not covered in this discussion of pasture walks, but this individuality should be expected since each group and farm has unique characteristics. Overall though, in this complexity, it is essential to have a sensitive, listening facilitator to help the group stay together and discover consensus. This requires that the facilitator have a great deal of trust in the participating farmers, and take a position of not judging farmers on technical/scientific grounds, but rather being a co-learner on the walk, a co-discoverer.

I would submit that none of this is easy for technical people. I resisted the farmer's questions as a knee-jerk reaction, even though I had studied the concepts of being 'farmer-centred' for years. There are strongly ingrained prejudices that happen in technical education and these must be overcome if agents and other specialists are to interact in a respectful and productive way with these kinds of farmer groups. The work of farmer groups need to be understood on their own terms without judgement and technocratic bias. In this way farmers can share meaningful information with each other and learn appropriate solutions to their unique problems and challenges.

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REFLECT in Canada: pebbles in the sand

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Desiree Lopez

Introduction

Pebbles in the Sand is an English as a Second Language (ESL) Literacy programme that was initiated by the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) in July 1999. The President of CIWA's Board of Directors (1999-2000) brought the REFLECT Mother Manual[1] into the agency in order to examine the potential effect the REFLECT methodology could have on addressing the needs of multi-barriered learners. The REFLECT Mother Manual was developed by ActionAid UK in order to increase the literacy and empowerment skills of men and women facing disparity.

CIWA identified the need to find and implement a non-traditional programme to meet the unique needs of new Canadian immigrant women with only up to six years of education in their home countries. This population was identified as having multiple barriers in accessing mainstream programmes and services, which are offered to new Canadians in order to assist them with the integration process. Such barriers include a lack of literacy and ESL skills, having multiple children under the age of 10, family conflict, severe isolation, cross-cultural parenting issues, low economic status, lack of support systems etc. When you do not share the language of the host culture nor have a way of gaining those skills, these barriers become so prohibitive that mainstream service delivery is no longer an effective solution. Therefore development of an appropriate programme needs to reflect and support these issues.

Adapting the REFLECT approach

After reviewing the REFLECT Mother Manual, a proposal was written to Alberta Learning (a funding source from the provincial government) to secure funding to run a pilot project which would test the adaptability of the REFLECT methodology in an ESL, urban Canadian environment. The participatory, community-based approach was embraced by the pilot facilitators and the adaptation process began. Two pilot classes were set up in two different communities. Classes were held in public libraries and 24 women participated in the pilot study. The information gathered from the study, was documented in the *Pebbles in the Sand Manual* – a manual that is being used internally in order to

train new facilitators, in conjunction with the REFLECT Mother Manual. Table 1 outlines a few of the basic issues identified by the Canadian facilitators

The ESL component of the programme was the biggest issue regarding adaptation of the REFLECT approach. We adopted the strategies and ideology behind REFLECT but the skills we were dealing with were completely different, since ESL literacy and first language literacy are two very different areas. Participants for *Pebbles in the Sand* came from various countries (Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, Eritrea, etc.). Their fluency in the language of facilitation (English) was often very low, and the skills and experience they possessed in regard to ESL varied greatly. Ethno-specific and culturally diverse classes were held in order to determine the effect of the first language in class. In mainstream ESL classes, English becomes the dominant language and the use of the first language is often prohibited. *Pebbles* attempted to find and identify the positive and negative aspects of using both the first language and English in class. Most ESL professionals believe that allowing the use of first language in class will slow down the process of acquisition, or result in a lack of fluency. In addition, no curriculum was set and participants were in charge of developing their own materials and having input as to the direction of the class, as is done in REFLECT literacy circles. Community development was a challenging aspect of the pilot study. As with every aspect of the classes, participants were approached in order to develop community-based change that would be lead by participants. The stress of integration, being in an urban environment and having participants from many ethnic communities, were all 'bumps in the road' regarding the implementation of community development initiatives.

Participants were facing so many issues in terms of their daily needs that they contributed more ideas than action in the classes. Therefore, facilitators adopted an approach that would start a community development process from the very development and implementation of the classes themselves. In addition to extensive outreach with mainstream agencies, immigrant-serving agencies, cultural associations, women's groups etc., the community in which a particular class was held was asked to provide resources, support services for participants, referrals to the classes, youth programmes etc., to help participants attend the classes. By involving the community from the start,

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[1] Archer, D. and Cottingham, S. (1996), *REFLECT Mother Manual – Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques.* Actionaid, UK.

Table 1 Outline of basic issues facing the Canadian facilitators	
REFLECT	**Pebbles in the sand**
Rural/Urban culturally homogeneous environment	Urban multi-cultural environment
First language literacy	Second language literacy
Native facilitators	Canadian facilitators
Homogenous culture	Homogenous/heterogenous classes to be mainstreamed into a Canadian, multi-ethnic environment
Community development related to participatory rural appraisal techniques	Community development related to having basic needs met/development in community of residence/connection to mainstream services
Internal evaluations	Evaluations from funders/community stakeholders/participants etc.
No language assessment	Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment (CLBLA)
Community/village as literacy circle	Participants must be recruited
No travel for literacy circle/weather is expected (If you are a native to Calgary, for example, you expect, and are prepared for, temperatures of -30 in the winter. Weather is an issue that new immigrants from tropical climates often find isolating)	Issues of transport/weather
Strong support system in place (in terms of family members, community members, etc.)	Lack of support system/often severe isolation –(many immigrants come with no family and are often isolated from their communities. Immigrant women in particular are often isolated because they are lacking the language skills to link them to members of the community)

facilitators were better able to assist participants stabilise their lives, reach a point where they were ready to participate in their communities, and ultimately be mainstreamed into programmes aimed to assist with integration into Canadian society.

The pilot project lasted 9 months and was a huge success. The *Pebbles in the Sand Manual*, developed by the CIWA, documented the outcomes of the pilot project and is now used, in conjunction with the REFLECT Mother Manual, to train facilitators for the programme. The pilot programme was successfully funded to run as a programme for the 2000–2001 period with support from Alberta Learning, C-CALA, and PanCanadian. Thanks to this, many more immigrant women in many more communities will be able to access *Pebbles in the Sand* classes, which will assist them in solidifying their roles as leaders in their families and their communities.

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'Naming the Moment' A participatory process of political analysis for action

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Chris Cavanagh

Introduction

Practitioners of participatory and emancipatory methods of education in Canada owe a debt to the struggles of people in 'Southern' nations who have resisted and who continue to resist the many forms of oppression that sustain the global inequalities of wealth and power. A principle source of inspiration for these practitioners has been the abundance of popular education methods (e.g. Freirian literacy techniques, community animation and training methods, popular theatre skills and much more) and theories that find their genesis in third world liberation struggles.

As with much else in popular education, Paulo Freire's philosophical and pedagogical ideas can be found warming the heart of many different applications of popular education. These ideas include what is no doubt familiar to many readers of this journal: the non-neutrality of education, the dialectic of action-reflection-action, problem-posing methods, liberating pedagogy, literacy that enables people to read the word *and* the world and much more. One application of these ideas that has met with success in Toronto, Canada, is Naming the Moment – a participatory method of identifying and analysing issues in order to decide how to act on them.

It is a tricky matter to write about Naming the Moment without doing injustice to some aspect of it. Like examining a crystal, each facet that you look at reveals a new aspect, and Naming the Moment is constantly developing and changing according to the unique circumstances of its use.

Essential to Naming the Moment is a democratic self-reflective and critically creative process that results in constant adaptation and change and, while it may seem to have a chameleon nature, there *are* some important constants, although these have less to do with actual techniques than with ideals of social justice, solidarity and emancipatory processes of learning.

Naming the Moment, at its best, combines a critical (and dialogic) understanding of both the structures of our world (political, economic, environmental, cultural, etc.) and the fluid movement of forces that act to sustain those structures in hegemonic equilibrium. Naming the Moment resists rigid certainties and creates space for creative understanding of the constantly changing world. Understanding that, when shared through dialogue, including drawing, and popular theatre and storytelling, allows for relationships that resist the tricky ways in which people and groups have been trained to often collude in their own oppression.

Naming the Moment advocates and necessitates alliances across many sectors (from labour to community to academia) and between different social movements. It is a multi-cropping practice of story-sharing, skills building and democratic dialogue that is simultaneously theory and practice.

The now out-of-print book *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action* (Jesuit Centre for Social Faith & Justice, Toronto, 1989) describes the process as having four phases: the naming of ourselves, the naming of the issues, analysing the issues and, finally, planning and taking action. One proviso about these phases is to beware the tendency to view them as a linear process, moving from step one to step four. They are better understood as recipe ingredients that need to be mixed in proper measure and with respect to the uniqueness of local conditions.

Most recently, the Catalyst Centre, a popular education group based in Toronto, Canada, has begun a new project called Seize the Moment that aims to contribute to the continued growth of Naming the Moment and popular education in general. A recent initiative has already begun to conceptualise a five-phase re-vision of Naming the Moment. I will talk more about this later.

Some history

Naming the Moment followed the road back to Canada that many international development volunteers and workers took from the 1970s onward. It was in Latin American critical literacy and development work that a number of Canadian educators encountered the variety of popular education methods being used to enable communities to better resist the many oppressions that are yet with us (if not intensifying).

One popular education method encountered was conjunctural analysis. As applied by some popular education organisations, this was a collective means of conducting political analysis for action. Two dynamics proved important here: the movements of forces within

society and the learning logic of action-reflection-action. What is unique about Naming the Moment is that it acknowledges that all people have experience that gives them the potential and the right to engage in this kind of analysis, and in so doing, people can become actors in changing their world, and not merely 'acted-upons'.

There are two ways in which it is important to recognise the meaning of 'popular' in popular education. First is the choice that popular education makes to take the side of the oppressed, recognising, as Freire has argued, that no education is neutral. Second is the power of the process of action-reflection-action. When applied to the way in which people learn, this affirms that the starting point for all learning is action – people live in the world and act all the time. Nobody enters a relationship or a process as a blank slate. We all have experiences that have shaped us and upon which we rely to explain the world to ourselves. In order to change the world in which we live, especially when it comes to resisting oppression, we must reflect upon that experience, analyse it critically for strengths and weaknesses and, finally, bring our reflection to bear upon new action which in turn will need to be reflected upon.

As conjunctural analysis made its way into Canada, the importance of social location asserted itself. Who was doing the analysis for whom? The educators who returned with the news and learnings about popular education were, predictably, relatively privileged individuals and, while no-one escapes participation in relations of oppression, it was important to be self-conscious about the stakes involved for returned Canadian volunteers and popular educators to be advocates of and participants in social justice movements. It was quickly obvious that before any popular education process could begin in Canada, there were questions that needed to be posed about who was involved in the work. Naming the Moment incorporated this as the first phase: Naming Ourselves.

The four phases
(with another on the way)

In a nutshell
As mentioned earlier, the four phases are not necessarily meant to be followed in a linear fashion. There is often much back and forth movement necessary in order to ensure a democratic and participatory process. Naming the Moment allows for, and encourages, much negotiation of meaning. Ideally, there is at least some work done in the beginning about 'naming ourselves'. Practically speaking, this can mean something as simple as introductions, but this can go much further into some sharing of personal and/or community histories, a critical look at both who is present and not present (especially regarding race, class, gender, ability etc). Having conducted some 'naming' of ourselves, it is then important to share some information (often stories of one kind or another) in order to identify key concerns or issues. This creates the need to decide which issues are

important enough to warrant collective critical analysis. Should it prove that one of the issues has to do with who is missing then a re-visiting of Phase One might prove necessary. Once a democratic (and critical) process has identified key issues, deeper analysis can be applied and finally the question of 'what to do about it' must be posed and action steps discussed (if not agreed upon).

A well-used handout
Naming the moment: phases and questions

The process of political analysis for action, or Naming the Moment, moves through four phases[1]:

Phase 1 – identifying ourselves and our interests
• Who are 'we' and how do we see the world?
• How has our view been shaped by our race, gender, class, age, sector, religion, etc.?
• How do we define our constituency? Are we of, with or for the people most affected by the issue(s) we work on?
• What do we believe about the current structure of Canada? About what it could be? About how we get there?

Phase 2 – naming the issues/struggles
• What current issue/struggle is most critical to the interests of our group?
• What are the opposing interests (contradictions) around the issue?
• What are we fighting for in working on this issue – in the short-term and in the long-term?
• What is the history of struggle on this issue? What have been the critical moments of the past?

Phase 3 – Assessing the forces
• Who's with us and against us on this issue (in economic, political, and ideological terms)?
• What are their short-term and long-term interests?
• What are their expressed and their real interests?
• What are the strengths and weaknesses of both sides?
• What about the uncommitted?
• What actors do we need more information about?
• What's the overall balance of forces?
• Who's winning and who's losing and why?

Phase 4 – Planning for action
• How have the forces shifted from the past to the present?
• What future shifts can we anticipate?
• What 'free space' do we have to move in?
• How do we build on our strengths and address our weaknesses?
• Whom should we be forming alliances with? In the short-term and long-term?
• What actions could we take?
• What are the constraints and possibilities of each?
• Who will do what and when?

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[1] From *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action* (Jesuit Centre for Social Faith & Justice, Toronto, 1989)

Some examples

So what does it all look like when it actually gets applied?

Naming the Moment requires some form of gathering. It is about collective learning and therefore necessitates bringing together a variety of stakeholders. These gatherings take time: a series of eight three-hour workshops is typical; but a day or two-day long meeting can accomplish a great deal. As mentioned above, each application is unique according to the combination of participants and the circumstances that define the need to conduct such a process. As the design is negotiated, it usually includes a range of techniques, from fairly conventional large and small group discussions to the use of many popular education techniques such as popular theatre sculpturing (creating silent tableaux with workshop participants' bodies), collective mural making, drawing, simulation games, political weather reports (a drawing technique to analyse important trends) and a variety of types of timelines, to mention but a few.

An example that illustrates some of this well is the Naming the Moment workshop series that ran from May 1991 through October 1992 and which we called 'Recovering Stories of Resistance'. Each year, Naming the Moment focused on a different aspect of social justice struggle. In the spring of 1991, when a community was invited to discuss what the important upcoming themes concerning social justice were, someone mentioned that plans were well underway to 'celebrate' the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas. This was critically discussed and it was agreed that this was not a moment of celebration for the millions of indigenous peoples of the Americas for whom Columbus' arrival marked the beginning of centuries of genocide and oppression. We decided to 're-frame' this 500th anniversary to examine the struggles of indigenous peoples to preserve their cultures and their lives. This required building new relationships with Native peoples and engaging in much mutual learning.

The 1991-1992 workshop series included eight monthly workshops plus a variety of additional activities planned during the workshops including a puppet production of the 'Ojibway Prophecy of the Seven Fires', participation in the October 12, 1992 demonstration in Toronto, Ontario, celebrating 500 years of resistance and survival of indigenous peoples worldwide. This series found its origin in a special meeting in early 1991 to name the issues that some activists felt would be important in the coming year. Someone noted that the preparations for the celebration of the quincentenary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas was well underway. It was decided that this would be a good opportunity to use Naming the Moment to reframe this 'celebration' of the beginning of European conquest of the Americas as a moment to reflect on the lives and cultures of Native peoples. The negotiations of the workshop series began in earnest. As Deborah Barndt, founder of the Moment Project, writes in *Revisiting the Boats and Canoes: Popular Education around the 500 Years*:

'Initially, some of us had imagined working our way through the 500 years, starting with 1492, and marking key events along a linear path, left to right. Our Native colleagues suggested however, that we start the process in the present, in the personal lives of all of us, then move back to the roots to understand both how we got here and where we might go from here.' (Convergence, Vol. XXX, #1, Toronto, Ontario, 1992).

It required months of building better relationships with representatives of various Native peoples' organisations, at the end of which there existed a highly imaginative design incorporating both Native (e.g. talking circles, storytelling teachings) and non-Native (e.g. collective murals, popular theatre) methods of dialogue, information sharing, critical analysis and collaborative action. This included using, as a conceptual frame, the two-row wampum treaty belt, *Kuswentha* (a beadwork belt that was made with a unique pattern to represent various types of agreements) – a co-existence agreement between 18th Century Dutch settlers and the Haudenoshaunee (People of the Longhouse or Iroquois – a confederacy of five Indigenous nations). This led to the creation of a mural exercise which invited participants to take photographs of themselves and place them on one of two parallel lines; one of canoes and one of tall ships. This brought on an immediate contradiction typical of the complexity of identities in the 20th Century. Some African-Canadian participants expressed discomfort about putting their pictures on what were images of slave ships, whilst some Native participants felt that their mixed heritage made it nonsensical to simply place their images on the line of canoes. This led to a highly critical and mutually informative dialogue about our many identities and the different stakes involved in self-identifying for each of us.

'Naming the Moment' today

This is merely the briefest taste of a long and creative process. While the Moment Project no longer exists, the 'Naming the Moment' process has continued to be applied across Canada and elsewhere in the world. Founded in 1986, it has spread and, no doubt, been adapted to local circumstances wherever used. It has been used for community analysis, coalition building, anti-racist change, organisational development and strategic planning.

Currently, the Catalyst Centre in Toronto, Canada, has revived some of the elements of the Moment Project. It is calling its project 'Seize the Moment' with the intention of drawing on many practices around the world that are participatory and critically minded in order to continue to build the democratic processes of dialogue that 'Naming the Moment' is one example of. Catalyst is currently concentrating on looking at the question of the participation of peoples with disabilities in social movement work. This has provoked the need to re-examine the 'four phases' and Catalyst has begun to conceptualise a 'five phase' process that would include a new 'Phase 1'. This

crucial phase, which has existed implicitly until now, would name more explicitly the need to establish pre-conditions for democratic participation of all peoples (especially people with disabilities). This has important implications for the types of interpretation support that is made available, the location of gatherings, and the solidarity of all people with the struggles of people with disabilities.

In keeping with the constantly self-critical nature of 'Naming the Moment', 'Seize the Moment' promises to develop some powerful tools to strengthen this popular education practice for the benefit of all practitioners who are committed to social justice.

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Imagine

Perry Walker

Introduction

My favourite quote of the millennium so far comes from Charles Leadbetter's new book, 'Living on Thin Air'. If the key to the eighteenth century is Adam Smith, he says, then the key to the twenty-first century is Delia Smith[1]. This is because recipes, together with the way that Delia packages and promotes them, are the way in which knowledge is codified. It can then be passed on to millions, whereas cooking was previously passed on mainly from mother to daughter.

In the field of participation, PLA approaches to development provide one such recipe, or set of recipes. The purpose of this article is to describe what I think is another emerging recipe. In this article, we describe the whole process, then illustrate the various stages and finally review its strengths and weaknesses.

'Imagine' is our version of 'Appreciative Inquiry'. Taking each component in turn:
• Appreciation is recognising the best in people or the world around us; affirming past or present strengths, successes and potentials; and perceiving those things that give life to people and organisations;
• Inquiry is concerned with exploration and discovery; asking questions to understand; and, being open to new potentials and possibilities.

Appreciative Inquiry works from a set of assumptions which are presented below.

1. In every society, organisation or group, something works. The tendency at turning points or crises is to look at what is not working and start problem solving. At these times, people become demoralised and feel that life is hopeless. By recognising the current difficulty and learning from previous successes, people feel competent again and become willing to address the issue.

2. The act of asking people questions influences them in some way. Asking questions, about how they see a situation and how they would like to see the future, helps people build up a picture of that future. It also helps them to focus on the possibilities of the future rather than trying to right the wrongs of the past.

[1] A well-known celebrity chef in the UK, famed for her television cookery programmes and cookery books.

3. People have more confidence to journey to the unknown future when they discover and carry forward the best of the past. By doing this, they know how to repeat their successes.

Imagine has three stages:
• Understand – choose questions that draw out the best of the past;
• Imagine – use the best of the past to imagine what might be; and,
• Co-create – form partnerships between organisations and individuals to take projects forward.

What happens in practice is that Imagine starts with a group developing appreciative questions. Next, they use those questions to talk to a wider group. Then they develop their answers into 'provocative propositions' – challenging statements about how the future should be. Finally, these propositions are presented to the wider group of people who need to be involved in making these propositions come true.

Understand – developing appreciative questions

During 1991 and 1992, Bliss Browne, a priest and banker, planned a pilot study that would discover what gives life to Chicago and provide significant leadership opportunities for youth. This led to Imagine Chicago, the inspiration for Imagine projects in Britain. 1993-94 saw both city-wide and community-based pilot projects. City-wide, 50 young people were recruited and trained as interviewers. They interviewed about 140 citizens, identified as 'Chicago Glue'. Bliss Browne had earlier asked a group of 50 13-year olds if they thought they would live in Chicago when they grew up. Six of the kids raised their hands. She then asked if they thought they could make a difference. Pretty much the same six hands went up.

So Bliss and her colleagues worked with the young people to show that their questions in the interviews could make a difference. In one case, four out of seven groups chose crime as their topic. Bliss asked what effect questions about crime would have. One kid said, *"I'd know all the things to be scared of"*. Another said, *"The policeman would feel bad because he'd be reminded that he wasn't doing a very*

good job". So Bliss was able to suggest that taking community safety as their topic would be more positive.

Finally, she asked about the effect of the kids sending a thank you letter after the interview.
Brown: *How would the policeman feel?*
Young people: *Pretty good.*
Brown: *What would happen if you had a problem a month later and wanted to talk to him?*
Young people: *He'd want to listen.*

Box 1. Shows the main questions that they asked

Box 1 Questions the young people asked

• Thinking back over your Chicago memories, what have been real high points for you as a citizen of the city?
• Why did these experiences mean so much to you?
• How would you describe the quality of life in Chicago today?
• What changes in the city would you most like to see? What do you imagine your own role might be in helping to make this happen? Who could work with you?
• Close your eyes and "imagine" Chicago as you most want it to be a generation from now. What is it like? What do you see and hear? What are you proudest of having accomplished?
• As you think back over this conversation, what images stand out for you as capturing your hopes for this city's future?

The questions need careful crafting. As we saw above, 'The act of asking people questions influences them in some way.' Change the question and you change the effect. One of the questions developed by a church in Ohio was: *"If you were a non-Christian but someone alive to the spiritual values of life, what would you find most attractive about the church?".*

The members of the group developing the questions tried the questions out on each other and then on two people outside the group. As a result, they decided to turn the question round to put the emphasis on what the church should do rather than on the attitudes of the non-Christian. It became: *"If we were really keen on attracting non-members who are alive to spiritual values, what aspects of our life should we highlight?"*

Understand – using the questions

The New Economics Foundation (NEF)[2] worked with Age Concern London, UK, on their contribution to the *Debate of the Age*, which is about our future in an ageing society. Age Concern wanted a group of young people, who could be the decision-makers of tomorrow, to draw on the experiences of older people to develop their vision of how they want to grow old and the society they want to grow

old in. They also wanted to communicate that vision to today's decision-makers.

Box 2 shows one of the questions that a group of four younger people evolved in the first stage, followed by a couple of the answers from nearly fifty older people (aged from 50 to over 90) in the second stage.

Box 2 A younger person's question and two older people's answers

What do you enjoy most about living in London?

"I'm a more patient person and certainly more contented. I'm more philosophical."

"It's the range of things you can do that I like .....being able to make friendly conversations with people .....proper conversations, not rushed .....time to break down the barriers, time to be with older, younger and disabled people and a listening ear."

We also ran an event for the London Borough of Hackney for 40 15-year olds, on Hackney's energy in the year 2050. Before the event, we arranged interviews for them with assorted specialists. This worked very well. At the event, the young people themselves provided the knowledge-base through their interview reports, which made them much more positive than had they simply been talked at.

Imagine – developing provocative propositions

In January, we were involved in a project to find out what makes people feel 'At Home in Waterloo'. Waterloo is a very mixed area of London. There are many people who are homeless, living on the streets and a lot of council housing. There is also the rail terminus for the Channel Tunnel and the South Bank arts centres. The project entailed ten people (residents, formerly homeless people and homelessness agencies) conducting appreciative interviews with a range of people across the local area. The questions they asked sought to find out what people think is best about Waterloo and what they would like to see in a vision for the future of Waterloo.

Through this process eight key issues were identified and from these, four Provocative Propositions were created. One of the Provocative Propositions said:
'*Today's Waterloo is an interdependent community where everyone is valued, accepted, listened to and recognised as having a special contribution to make. People accept the responsibility to treat others, especially those who are*

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[2] A UK-based non-governmental organisation that aims to put people and the environment at the centre of economic thinking. It works on issues such as participation, community indicators, community finance and globalisation.

normally excluded, in this way. The wider community's activities seek to include the excluded'.

The proposition is illustrated by the following quotes from the interviews.
"Here you can live. Some places you can't. Whether you are white, Chinese, black or Asian, everyone gets on. It's known for it round here".

"Being on the streets means that there is often nobody for homeless people to talk to as 'normal' people ignored them or were frightened of them. When someone out of a crowd says 'Hello' and asks them how they feel then that makes them feel normal again".

"One Christmas Eve, waiters from a banquet in the South Bank brought large turkeys and trifles on silver salvers to the Bull Ring. That was a great day!".

Returning to case of the church in Ohio mentioned previously, the working group there read the notes of their interviews and came up with 17 themes, which were slowly reduced to 12. Each person then chose the three stories that had most inspired them. This led to a first set of provocative propositions. These were tested by asking: 'What deep need is this proposition seeking to meet?'. This led to a final list of six propositions. Their focus was not on the internal life of the church but on its relationship with its wider community. This was to the surprise of the facilitator, Charles Elliott, author of an excellent book on Appreciative Inquiry[3], The example below illustrates this, as well as showing how propositions develop.

One story was about a woman in her late thirties who was involved in a very messy divorce and who wandered into St Luke's in desperation. A church helper found her sobbing and silently held her as she sobbed. The woman found this spontaneous, unquestioning acceptance by a stranger one of the deepest, most god-revealing moments of her life.

Two of the initial propositions, which might have owed something to this particular story, were that:
• St Luke's exists primarily for the people outside it. In all our activities, use of resources and proclamations, we honour that fact; and,
• St Luke's is an ark which shelters people who have been damaged and by accepting them unconditionally, re-equips them to live and to love.

One of the final propositions was:
• St Luke's is inclusive. It comprises people at different stages of their spiritual pilgrimages and sustains, nourishes and encourages them all. We recognise that it is in the meeting of people's deepest need, inside and outside the church, that we are often enabled to make

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[3] *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry*, Charles Elliott, International Institute for Sustainable Development, Winnipeg, Canada,1999. See especially the comparison with PRA in chapter 11.

progress in our own journeys and for that reason we give a high priority to a corporate life of reflective service to those around us.

The propositions were presented in place of the readings and sermon in the parish communion. Everyone received a copy, with two stories for each proposition. This they read, then in groups of six picked out the two propositions they liked best. If all the members of a group disliked one of the propositions, however, they could veto it by holding up a 'torpedo card'.

Co-create – involving more people in action

The American church, like most churches, is used to cutting its coat according to its cloth. But someone who had originally resisted the whole Appreciative Inquiry approach declared this 'old way' to be 'redundant'. Instead, the church launched Appreciative Inquiry based fund-raising for their outreach programme, such as work with HIV babies. This involved engaging donors in an appreciative approach to their own community. They asked them questions such as 'What do you care about in this community?' to help potential donors to share their vision of a community that cared for its most needy and most neglected.

Since 1995, Imagine Chicago has seeded the appreciative approach by forming partnerships with over 100 community organisations, schools, communities of faith and cultural institutions. An example is the Urban Imagination Network. Six state schools and five Chicago museums are working to improve student reading comprehension.

Strengths and weaknesses

The strengths, illustrated by Imagine Chicago in particular, are the following.
• It is good at dialogue between generations.
• It is good for giving direct access to decision-making groups, such as for example, young people who can't normally get near them.
• It emphasises the positive, which counteracts cynicism and promotes action.
• It roots this dialogue in institutions that can act.

The weaknesses apply particularly to our attempt to evolve a model or recipe that is easy for others to pick up and use. We have successfully developed workshop formats for generating the questions and the provocative propositions. The interviewing has generally gone well, although we would like to find ways of encouraging interviewers to be more conversational (so 'interview' is not the ideal word) and to concentrate on drawing out stories. We have not succeeded in 'rooting the dialogue in institutions that can act'. With both Age Concern London and Imagine Waterloo, we organised conferences at which the interviewers and interviewees presented their findings.

These conferences were a good deal more participative than usual. But they failed to give the audience the experience of appreciative inquiry that enthused the people who took part in the earlier stages.

We didn't always manage to convince people that appreciative inquiry is not about looking only at the good and ignoring the bad. This is illustrated by a comment from one of the younger people involved in the Age Concern project.

" But at its worst, Appreciative Inquiry did slip into a type of therapy-speak, a deliberately saccharine way to address the world. There are always going to be times when accentuating the positive doesn't give the whole picture, when individuals want their lives to be seen in the round for better and for worse".

In another excellent book on appreciative inquiry[4], the approach of one of the contributors to this difficult issue is described. She asks the client to 'remember that if people hold in their mind what is wrong, they also hold in their mind what should be present to make it right'. Getting this across repeatedly in different ways is quite a challenge.

Imagine at work

I end with another quote from the younger person from the Age Concern project. It shows how rich the experience can be.

"The best part was certainly meeting and listening to the older people, all of them lively, interesting and great fun. I don't know how typical I am in not having had much close contact with older people... So it was a new experience to hear about the lives and views of these people. What they had to say was rooted in their own experience and eminently realistic".

The biggest lesson was not to stereotype. Each older person has a different set of wants and needs. Against expectations, older people can be more imaginative and flexible than younger generations.

Conclusion

The experience has given me a far more optimistic view of the future. I could mention several individuals who were memorable, but the last one I saw can stand for them all. Alice is 92 and a great grandmother. She has glaucoma and walks with a stick. Her life has included internment with her small children in Hong Kong during the war. More recently the loss of her sight caused her to cut back on voluntary work – she gave up serving in a charity shop when she found she had to ask customers what the prices were. She is full of good ideas (my favourite was adoptive grannies on call for isolated young mothers) and sceptical about politicians. She lives independently and cooks her own meals and the last I saw of her she was setting off for the bus stop on her way home – still enjoying life and still in control.

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Notes

'Imagine' is one of the techniques in '*Participation Works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st century*', available from NEF. For further information, please contact NEF on the above telephone number or email info@neweconomics.org

NEF co-ordinates the UK Community Participation Network. Contact Julie Lewis (Julie.Lewis@neweconomics.org) for details. An Appreciative Inquiry network is co-ordinated by Anne Radford, 303 Bankside Lots, 65 Hopton Street, London SE1 9JL, UK. Tel: +44 (0)7000 077 011 Fax: +44 (0)7000 077012; Email: AnneLondon@aol.com

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[4] *Lessons from the Field*, edited by Sue Annis Hammond and Cathy Royal, Practical Press, Texas, USA, 1998, ISBN 0-9665373-0-0. Chapter 8 describes how The Mountain Institute in Nepal has combined appreciative inquiry with PRA.

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Worker-led participatory research and evaluation
Lessons from the real world
Reflections of the SREPP participants

Compiled by **Anne K. Eckman,**
Tom McQuiston and Tobi Mae Lippin

Introduction

In 1997, four U.S. union health and safety training programmes entered into a three-year, multi-union learning-action-research collaborative, the Self-sufficiency Research and Evaluation Pilot Project (SREPP). The initiative sought to build the research and evaluation capacities of the participating unions' hazardous materials trainings, funded by the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

SREPP offers a new model of participatory learning and action in the area of worker health and safety. While there are important examples of participatory action research within this field, these projects have focused on single worksites; they have also tended to start with a stakeholder labour-management model. By contrast, as a multi-union collaborative initiative, this project has sought to foster participatory learning *across* programmes and workplaces from a union-centered perspective. This project also builds upon the recently expanded role of workers in many health and safety training programmes. Over the past decade, programmes have increasingly embraced a peer training model in which workers serve as the primary health and safety trainers. By expanding the trainers' roles to include evaluation, this project has sought to institutionalise a new base of worker-produced knowledge for improving health and safety.

During the last of SREPP's four training workshops, participants reflected on their experiences in the project through a series of participatory activities. What follows, after some background to the project, are the words of SREPP participants about what it takes to learn about and do participatory evaluation in the context of union-based, worker-led health and safety training programmes.

Pending further grant funding, the original SREPP partners will be joined by a new cadre of union health and safety training programmes in learning about and adopting worker-led evaluations in their programmes. The project facilitators and potential partners are exploring a number of workshop structures to best support future training in light of the supports and barriers encountered during the pilot project.

We invite others to contribute experiences and insights as we embark on this next phase. We have learned in SREPP that collective learning within and among programmes is vital to building solidarity necessary to realise safety and health for all workers.

About the self-sufficiency research and evaluation pilot project (SREPP)

The participants. Each of the four participating union health and safety training programmes selected a team of two to five worker trainers, along with one or more staff persons and programme evaluators, to participate in the project. The same core group of team members attended all four training workshops. Worker trainers had all led trainings for union health and safety training programmes. Most worker trainers and programme staff had little or no prior programme evaluation experience.

The process. At its core, the project consisted of a year-long process of workshops coupled with team-based pilot evaluation projects through which participants learned and applied participatory research methods. Prior to the workshops, the project facilitators consulted with partner organisations to assess their programmes' experiences with evaluation. Throughout the process, the project facilitators worked in partnership with worker trainers from PACE[1], as well as PACE staff and the Labor Institute, to develop health and safety-specific evaluation workshop curricula grounded in the experiences and politics of worker health and safety.

Workshops. SREPP participant teams attended four three-day workshops to expand participants' knowledge and critical analysis of evaluation in real world contexts, including labor-management relations, workplace dynamics of how health and safety change occurs, the different needs and perspectives of programme stakeholders, and how budget and time constraints affect evaluation choices. The workshops also provided opportunities for teams to plan and advance their evaluation projects, and for people from all participating organisations to build relationships and a learning community.

Each training workshop curriculum was designed to work in tandem with the development and implementation of team-based evaluation projects. The focus of each workshop was as follows.
• Workshop One – Exploring research and evaluation issues
• Workshop Two – Gathering and analysing data
• Workshop Three – Developing meaning and reporting findings

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[1] Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union.

- Workshop Four – Sharing team-based evaluation projects and developing lessons learned

The workshops used a method called the Small Group Activity Method developed by the Labor Institute. In this method, small groups of participants worked together to complete activities using simulated cases, participants' own experiences and easy-to-read factsheets. A workbook with these experiential learning activities and factual reference materials provided the backbone for each of the four workshops.

Team Projects. Each team engaged in activities to design and implement their own team-based pilot evaluation projects between May 1998 and May 1999. While all teams engaged in evaluation projects examining their union's hazardous materials health and safety training programme, each team tailored its evaluation to its programme's particular goals and concerns. See Box 1 for the range of Team projects.

Box 1 Team Projects

Single worksite
School District – Short survey and focus group (AFSCME)
Municipality – Pilot individual interviews (AFSCME)
Oil Refinery – In-plant labour-management refinery team use of 'Charting How Your Programme Works' and monitoring new safety and health initiatives (PACE)

Programme-wide (Multiple worksites)
Worker Understanding of Systems of Safety – card sort focus groups (PACE)
Workplace Impact – phone interviews (UAW)

Week-long training conference
Quick feedback to evaluation participants about their rating of training quality – survey (UAW)

What we learned

Teams of people in different roles should be involved in evaluation

1. *The job of evaluation belongs to staff, worker trainers, and workers.* Everyone involved in a programme should be involved in its evaluation. And everyone involved in a programme should be involved in using information learned from the evaluation.

2. *Participants involved in evaluation need to understand the importance of their role.* It is important that the people who participate in an evaluation understand the purpose of the evaluation and why their input matters. It is also important that evaluation participants receive feedback about the evaluation findings to which they contributed.

Evaluations should be useful to and used by all involved in a programme, at all stages of a programme

3. *Evaluations are not about collecting information to be filed away and gather dust.* Evaluations are not just for collecting information. Evaluation project teams need to ensure that information is shared and used by all who are involved in the training programme.

4. *Evaluation should be part of a programme's continuous cycle of learning.* Evaluation needs to be incorporated throughout all stages of the health and safety programme, the beginning, middle and end, as opposed to occurring only at the end. Findings should be used to continuously improve training programmes.

Planning an evaluation includes considering its users and identifying supports and barriers to carrying out the programme

5. *An effective evaluation must consider its users and identify supports and barriers in its planning.* First and foremost, an evaluation should identify what type of information is needed, who will use it, and what the programme's goals are. An evaluation plan should identify what supports and barriers may impact on the programme, and account for these as the evaluation plan is developed.

6. *'Charting How Your Programme Works' enables you to identify realistic objectives in a specific time frame.* Charting is a highly adaptable, participatory, visual process that can be used in a broad range of evaluation-related activities. Some of these applications include assisting teams to define programme goals, develop curriculum, develop project time lines, and identify project outcomes, evaluation priorities and indicators to measure their achievement.

Selecting, developing and using the 'right' evaluation designs and methods can be challenging

7. *There are diverse evaluation methods for diverse situations.* Different evaluation methods (i.e., surveys, focus groups, etc.) can be used to satisfy different evaluation needs.

8. *Developing simple unbiased evaluation tools/instruments is more difficult than originally perceived.* It is difficult to develop simple, clear and unbiased evaluation instruments and questions.

9. *Being persistent – keeping at it – leads to success.* It takes a lot of time, effort, flexibility and persistence to overcome logistical barriers to carrying out an evaluation.

Union health and safety training programmes share a common pool of knowledge . . .

10. *Union health and safety training programmes share a common pool of knowledge and experience.* Unions share more similarities than differences in health and safety

philosophy. Unions confront similar problems and can provide meaningful and constructive feedback to each other.

How we learned and changed
We learned or changed through the following.

Sharing and critically reflecting on each other's experiences both within our teams and among different unions. Shared experiences were especially rich because of the diversity of people and programmes who participated. While learning from others' experiences was key to every area of learning, the following aspects of sharing were particularly highlighted.

- *Sharing a diversity of perspectives and roles within teams.* Working in teams of worker-trainers, union staff, and evaluators helped participants understand and value the importance of involving multiple people in different roles in evaluation. It also helped to identify how evaluation can be useful to all involved in a programme.
- *Sharing experiences among partner teams over time* was important to learning that union health and safety programmes share a common pool of knowledge and experience. Sharing strategies and experiences about the barriers and supports faced by different team-based evaluation projects also provided support for actually implementing evaluation projects and encouragement that persistence could lead to success.

Participating in interactive, hands-on, experience-based workshop activities and using workbook materials was identified as important to learning about participatory evaluation. Particularly useful activities included:

- sharing our training programmes to identify similarities among programmes;
- exploring the effects that evaluations can have on people and programmes;
- considering different reasons for doing evaluations;
- identifying different programme stakeholders and their information needs as part of developing an evaluation plan;
- learning different methods of evaluation through 'trial and error' activities where participants designed and conducted interviews, surveys and focus groups during the workshop; and,
- working through sample scenarios faced by a 'made-up' union provided opportunities for participants to strategise how to deal with real-world issues in designing and carrying out an evaluation. These included multiple stakeholders with different information needs and levels of buy-in, analysing sample evaluation data and communicating findings to different audiences.

Using the process of 'Charting How Your Programme Works'. Charting was a vehicle for participants to clarify underlying assumptions about programmes, to sharpen desired programme outcomes, and to link programme outcomes and evaluation activities. Key elements in charting include first identifying long-term outcomes, then identifying mid-term steps toward that outcome and the supports and barriers that may affect arriving at it and finally, detailing the short-term steps and actions that need to occur.

Carrying out team-based evaluation projects and critically reflecting on the process. Conducting a team-based pilot evaluation project provided experience in applying the workshop learnings. Project teams gained experience in involving people in different roles in evaluation and in developing evaluations useful to different people within a programme. It also helped participants deepen their understanding of the strengths and limitations of different research methods. At each workshop, project teams reflected on the supports and barriers they were facing in carrying out their evaluations; this regular sharing facilitated learning among teams about real-world challenges and potential strategies for carrying out evaluations.

Supports and barriers to doing participatory evaluation
Project teams identified the most significant supports and barriers they faced in doing participatory evaluation. Participants found that each of the following could be either a support if it was present or a barrier if it was not.

Meeting with and learning from other team members and other organisations.
The ability for participants to get together to learn from others within their teams and from peers within other organisations engaged in similar efforts, provided crucial support for doing participatory evaluation. The training workshops provided a focused and dedicated place where all project team members were able to meet, reflect on what had happened and plan for their next implementation steps. Sharing within teams and gaining input from SREPP facilitators also provided important ideas and inspiration for how to carry projects forward. Teams also needed on-going access to each other between workshops in order to carry out their team-based evaluations. The team that had been funded to fully implement a demonstration project had a history of communicating through conference phone calls along with resources to support those calls and other meetings in person. However, other teams sometimes had difficulty meeting to plan and move projects forward between workshops. Lack of time, difficulty in communications (i.e., no access to e-mail or financial support for conference phone calls) and/or geographical distance all made it difficult for these teams to meet.

Building skills through training workshops and ongoing access to project facilitators.
The workshops provided critical technical information and the opportunity to practice learning new skills. The workshop materials and contact with the project facilitators also provided important technical assistance as projects were implemented, although what facilitators could do from a distance was also limited.

Time necessary for participants to attend workshops and to implement their evaluation projects between workshops.
Lack of time was the over-riding barrier faced by most participants.

- *To attend workshops.* While all participants were able to attend all workshops, several had difficulty securing time off from work to participate.
- *To implement project evaluations.* Only one team was specifically funded to implement a demonstration project. Many members of other teams had to implement their team project on their own time, after work. Especially when evaluation project work was not made part of a paid job, competing priorities interfered with participants' abilities to devote as much time as they would have liked to their project.

Organisational support for participatory evaluation greatly influenced the supports and barriers participants faced.
Optimal support included time and logistical support for participants to implement their evaluation projects. Organisational support ranged from allocated staff time and workers' paid leave to carry out their evaluation projects, to long-distance and conference phone calls, to in some cases, data-entry assistance. Where evaluations were site-specific, the support of employers and the local union was also important. When there was inadequate support, participants faced difficulties in implementing their projects.

Our emerging model of worker-led, team-based participatory evaluation

At the close of three days of reflection on their experiences of learning and doing participatory evaluation, participants identified what they saw as key elements and characteristics of worker-led, team-based, multi-union participatory evaluation (SREPP). Our model seeks to:

- Build a community united in a shared commitment to the rights of all workers to safe and healthy workplaces.
- Actively involve workers in all aspects of evaluation.
- Be a collective effort – within and among partner organisations – that draws upon each other's insights, strengths, and experiences to learn and carry out evaluation.
- Understand evaluation as a process of continuous learning, rather than being an end product. Evaluation is an ongoing process that should be woven throughout health and safety training programmes.
- Provide important ways to measure and document programme successes.
- Recognise the importance of identifying programme values and goals to guide evaluations.

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A seven year northern training journey

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Andy Inglis

Introduction

After working for 10 years in the 'South' for various international NGOs, bilateral agencies and the UN (FAO), I made the decision to become self-employed to try to bring innovative participatory approaches being used in the 'South' to the 'North'. I wanted to do this because I was feeling increasingly uneasy and hypocritical about being part of what appeared to me to be a one-way PRA crusade, as if civic life the 'North' was already participatory enough and there was no room for improvement in public consultation and community empowerment practice there. I also increasingly felt that the participatory methods would be particularly effective in reducing what I saw as the democratic deficits in my own country, Scotland.

So seven years ago I started a 'Northern' training 'journey' which started in Canada (see *PLA Notes* 19, February 1994) has taken me all over Scotland and also to Albania, Austria, England, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, New Zealand and Wales. So far I have designed and facilitated over 40 Participatory Appraisal (PA) training workshops and managed and facilitated over 100 on the ground PA events in the 'North'. This article is a reflective summary of my training journey: where I was in the mid-1990s, where I am now and where I would like to go in the future.

Where I was....

The journey got off to a slow, uphill start. When I first began telling people about the participatory approaches being used in the 'South' and how I wanted to start training people in them in Scotland, there was some positive interest, but mainly scepticism and often opposition. This was because of a combination of different factors, which included the following.
- Officials and in-country social change professionals were not interested in how things were done elsewhere.
- The approach of the established public consultation profession, not the market research profession, but those within public relations (PR) and planning who called themselves public consultation experts. Their way of working was (and still is) very reaction-management and conflict-resolution based: smoothing the way, overcoming/undermining opposition to proposals – and the way they lead public officials to believe this is all there is to public consultation.
- Officials felt threatened by the concepts involved (especially the perceived lack of 'control').
- In-country social change professionals felt threatened by the concepts involved (especially the onus on reaching and meaningfully involving people who were not activists or in established community groups).
- Those who were explicitly racist and did not want to see any similarity between the 'North' and the 'South' and were very uncomfortable about comparisons.
- Having to compete against established packages such as Planning for Real, Future Search, etc.
- Being immediately associated with the promoters and practitioners of participatory approaches who appeared to officials as only being subversive and a source of opposition and criticism.

So I quickly found myself looking for partners, anybody who would take PA seriously or find it politically difficult to reject. Most of the initial demand for training was from postgraduate (mainly MSc) students from the 'South' or with international career aspirations, development consultants and forestry and rural development NGOs that I was in contact with for other reasons. To ground the training and build the confidence of participants (and to further my own agenda of proving to others its appropriateness and effectiveness for the 'North'), I insisted that each training workshop had local real life assignments built into them. Local people from these assignment locations were invited to be training workshop participants (free of charge) and they were usually local activists.

A typical PA training event I was designing and facilitating in the mid-1990s had the following characteristics:
- was run over five consecutive days (the maximum amount of time most people were prepared to take off/give up);
- was based in a university;
- included 'real-life' assignments for the workshop participants to design and facilitate; and,
- had 20-30 participants, mainly postgraduate students and NGO workers/officials, with the other participants made up of researchers/academics, community activists, local and central government officials and consultants.

A typical PA training 'real-life' assignment in the mid 1990s had the following characteristics:

- was focused around forestry or woodland management; and,
- was conducted for an NGO or community group.

Where I am now....

After 30 of these workshops I realised there were some recurring experiences and features that I wasn't happy about.

- Most of the local community activists who came to the workshops were finding it very difficult to understand the need to be (and when it came to the assignment difficult to be) objective, neutral, effective facilitators. I found myself thinking that many of them had a very dysfunctional role in terms of wider community empowerment, and wondered about the ethics of giving them these powerful methods.
- Professional researchers and academics were more difficult to train than others – they would typically come with a lot of theoretical baggage, preconceptions and arrogance – and I became increasingly aware and uneasy of what they would use the approach and methods for. As participants in the assignments they were not focused or disciplined enough, often had and revealed their own agendas, were not always honest with local people and as assignment clients they were disconnected to and not trusted by service deliverers.
- The majority of social change (in Scotland usually known as 'community education') professionals seemed to be very stuck in their ways, and were less open-minded than other workshop participants to working in different ways to engage with local people – I found them to be less open minded than technically trained professionals (e.g. architects, planners, engineers, foresters, etc.).
- NGOs were finding it difficult to understand that participation was a means of empowering, not educating, people and some of them appeared to be trying to follow the dysfunctional 'Southern' NGO model of acting on the ground as if the government doesn't exist, and no real interest, capacity or commitment to follow up on outcomes.
- I was becoming increasingly unconvinced that individuals being trained ex-situ (away from their colleagues and managers) was a worthwhile exercise - how often did individuals going back to non-supportive environments really use the new approaches and methods they had learnt, and was there not a better way to facilitate institutional capacity building?

Fourteen of the first 30 workshops had been open to anybody who paid. I gradually came to the conclusion that the vast majority of my growing worries and concerns emanated from these 'open-to-anybody' training workshops, as there was no follow-up monitoring or management systems to ensure effective and ethical practice. In particular I was alarmed that there were:

- officials and academics apparently only coming to learn about PRA/PLA/PA so they could criticise, argue against, and prevent it being used by their organisations; and,

- consultants coming to trainings to immediately set up as trainers themselves, even though they had no experience or obvious competence as practitioners.

Reflecting on these earlier workshops, I wonder if there were times I was too polite. For example, I wouldn't tell people straight to their face, "*look for goodness sake, don't even think about using these methods/working with the public*", etc., etc.. I would generally ask the whole group to be honest and ask themselves if they had the necessary personal skills and aptitude, but not the specific individuals I was concerned about.

However, one thing that stopped me doing this was a concern that after only five days I could be wrong about somebody, and while it was relatively easy to get a perception of who would be a good or bad practitioner, it was impossible to tell who would be good, effective trainers. For instance, I have seen great practitioners who are terrible trainers and somebody who was a terrible practitioner in the workshop go on to be an immediately apparently successful trainer.

I often wondered if I should have named names, and said "*watch out*" by email or whatever when I saw people who I had trained that I had worries about advertise themselves as trainers, but the shareware ethos of the approach and times stopped me. I am now changing my mind on this and now I do say something when this happens. Box 1 is the text of an email I sent recently in response to a request from an 'open-to-anybody' workshop participant to borrow/buy some of my training materials:

BOX 1

Dear XXXX

I don't normally lend out or give copies of my training materials. I think I have only ever done it once or twice, to people I felt comfortable and confident about, i.e. people who had I felt shown a genuine interest, had had enough experience as practitioners, had indicated that they had the potential to be good trainers/managers and had displayed an aptitude and discipline for PA type work.

It is my strong opinion that you did not have/display any of these in the time you were at the training workshop, and I am actually quite distressed to hear that you are going to be doing some PA training. If you have gained the work on the basis of being trained and proficient in PA, then it would have had to come from a lot of experience you have gained, plus significant personal and professional changes that you have gone through, since attending the training course.

To be frank I would have been surprised if you had become a proficient practitioner by now, but I feel very uneasy that you are considering training others – sorry to be so blunt but I feel it's my responsibility to be honest with you.

Furthermore, last year I stopped doing 'open-to-anybody' training workshops in universities. Now I try to do most of my training work for institutions with resources, mandate

and commitment and a history of delivering services and/or change. These are mainly local government departments, because they have a clear mandate and statutory responsibilities for democratic public consultation and facilitating sustainable development.

A typical PA training event I facilitate now has the following characteristics.
• has five days training, but is made up of two phases of 2/3 days (this allows more public officials to get permission and find the time to attend);
• has a real life assignment for the training host ('service delivery') institution;
• is based in local authority or local service delivery agency headquarters; and,
• has 10-20 participants, consisting mainly of local government officials, local people (activists and non-activists), NGO workers/officials and/or central government officials.

Therefore three groups have disappeared since the mid 1990s: post graduate students (the previous largest group), consultants and undergraduate students. The NGO section is greatly reduced, the local government section is much bigger and there is a new category – non-activist local community members.

While I had reservations about training dysfunctional local activists, I was keen to build local capacity by training local people who were not activists to be PA facilitators. I have now trained over 30 'real people', mainly by recruiting them through local work providing agencies for the unemployed and paying them during the training (one of the adverts was for 'fieldworkers' and one young man (who became a good PA facilitator) turned up thinking he was going to be picking rhubarb for a week.

The real life assignments now have the following features:
• the client is usually the training host;
• they cover a wide range of topics and issues, from community wide to single sector processes;
• they have a direct link to a service deliverer with follow-up resources who is aware of, is committed to, the process; and,
• is mainly done with or for a local government department or service (see Figure 3 for current training assignment clients).

Figure 3. Assignments in the mid-1990s

Community activists 10%
Local NGOs 10%
Community groups 35%
Local government 5%
National NGOs 40%
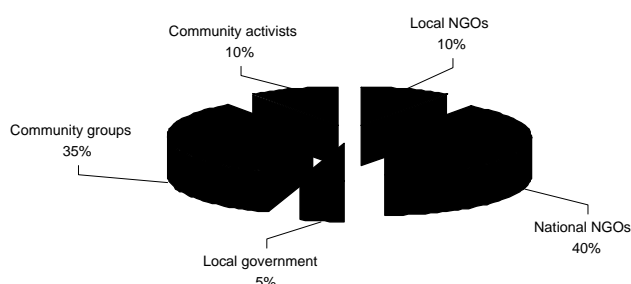
Now, in my 'real organisation' training workshops, if any participant causes concern or doesn't seem to be able to be an effective practitioner, the managers are there during and after the training to limit any damage and prevent any misuse of the approach/methods etc.. Having worked with many different departments and professions, I much prefer to work with the technical implementation type departments such as park managers, transportation managers, and service delivers such as housing officials and recreation officials rather than youth workers, community education professionals, etc. because they have less baggage.

Where I am trying to go in the future....

My thinking about the social change bigger picture in the 'North', of which PA training and other forms of capacity building is a part, is that participatory approaches should be used more for improving governance and enriching and adding value to representative democracy ('democratising democracy') rather than being used for research or initiating civic social change movements. Box 2 presents a campfire analogy to show who I think participatory approaches should be used by to increase the chances of achieving sustainable social change and development.

BOX 2

There are several ways to start and maintain a fire in order to cook a meal on a campfire. Some fires will burn longer and hotter than others, depending on the equipment and fuel you use.
1. If you build a fire with just paper (researchers) and matches (participatory approaches, concepts and theories) you likely won't be able to cook a meal.
2. If you build a fire with paper (researchers) and kindling (NGOs) and matches (participatory approaches, concepts and theories) you might be able to cook a meal.
3. If you build a fire with paper (researchers) and kindling (NGOs), logs (government officials) and matches (participatory approaches, concepts and theories) you will cook a meal.
4. But you can also start a fire using these new fangled fire starters (participatory approach practitioners), logs (government officials) and matches (participatory approaches, concepts and theories) and you can cook a meal and no kindling or paper is required.

I now have the following training policies/objectives.
• To continue to not do 'open-to-anybody' training workshops and only do training for real organisations/institutions with a management structure and feedback/monitoring mechanisms.
• To minimise the work I do with universities and research institutions.
• To reduce/minimise training of academics, community activists and NGOs (especially pressure groups).
• To continue to try to find workshop participants through government local employment agencies ('job centres') and paying people to do the training and the real life assignment.
• To increase the amount of training I do for local government.

- To try to maximise the chances of sustainable changes within a single department/service by training senior managers and back-up administrative staff as well as on the ground facilitators, and by providing with mid-to long-term technical support/back up.
- To try to work more and if possible always include elected representatives (councillors, MPs, etc.) as well as officials in training events.
- To continue to insist on a minimum of five days training. I have read that there are those who feel that this is too short a time. My experience after over 40 workshops is that if a participant has 'it' ('it' being composed of a mixture of common sense, confidence, motivation, being a 'people person', etc.) and wants to understand and use the concepts and methods involved, five days is more than enough. If they don't have 'it' and/or don't want to understand and use the concepts and methods involved, then there is no difference if the workshop lasts for five days, five weeks or even five months.

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Feedback

Using participatory research techniques to investigate local notions of malaria in a Nigerian community: focus on field-workers' conduct and behaviour

C. Otutubikey Izugbara,
with a response from **Somesh Kumar**

Feedback is a forum for discussion in *PLA Notes*. It features articles which raise common concerns or challenges in fieldwork or training together with a response from another practitioner of participatory approaches. Letters and articles are welcomed for this section, as are your comments on any of the issues raised by *Feedback*.

Introduction

Through a study of local knowledge of malaria among the Ngwa of south-eastern Nigeria, useful insights are emerging about the critical implications of the conduct and behaviour of fieldworkers with regards to the quality of information and data gathered in a participatory study. This article describes some of these insights and comes to the conclusion that practitioners of participatory research methods must conduct themselves in culturally responsive ways if they are to successfully generate information and also grasp where and how the information fits into the entire process of sustainable development.

The study

In 1997, I conducted a detailed study of local notions of malaria among the Ngwa of south-eastern Nigeria. Six trained Ngwa-speaking field assistants helped me during the study. The study took place in a Ngwa community known as Avo. Avo is a hamlet in the Ntighauzor Amairi Autonomous Community of the Obingwa Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. Located 24 kilometres north-west of Aba[1], Avo has a population of 550 persons. Four small patrilineages in total make up the Avo hamlet.

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[1] Aba, a town in Ngwaland, is one of the most popular centres of commerce in West Africa.

[2] See Izugbara 1998 for the findings of this study and their implications for sustainability in healthcare delivery

Methods and gaining entrance into the community

Brainstorming and group interview sessions were the major tools used in the study. These enabled us to achieve a focused understanding of the complex socio-cultural context of malaria-related beliefs amongst the community. In addition, individual interviews were held with some key respondents (for example, traditional healers, members of the community who were already ill, adults, relatives of sick people etc.), and these complemented the two techniques mentioned above. All discussions and interviews were recorded on audiotapes. Copious explanatory notes were developed from reviewing these tapes with fieldworkers. All members of the research team were Ngwa-speaking. This reduced the problem of gaining entry into the community, removed the need to use interpreters and facilitated the process of learning the views of the community itself. Our awareness of the local culture and values within the community made them accept us more readily[2]. However, during the course of the study, certain issues concerning fieldworkers' conduct emerged and it became clear that the good behaviour and attitudes of fieldworkers is vital to ensure the success of a study using participatory methods. In this paper, I would like to share this experience with all those interested in the use of participatory research methods. I expect the issues raised here to make researchers who use participatory research techniques aware of the importance of watching their conduct and behaviour, whilst involved in fieldwork among local people.

Behaviour in the field – why it is important

The way in which researchers go about the task of getting information from local people has far-reaching implications for the success of their study. This was discovered during our fieldwork among the Ngwa. During our stay in the field, we noticed that local people expected to be treated with the utmost respect before they were prepared to co-operate with the fieldworkers. In particular, elderly members of the community were often unwilling to talk to us when they thought that we had ignored the local norms

governing interactions between the young and the elderly. The Ngwa, like most African people, take serious exception to young people probing and testing the intelligence of the elderly. So it was only when we humbly, cautiously and courteously interviewed or questioned them that they talked freely. In many instances, our requests for clarification on certain issues were also misconstrued. The reply of one elderly male participant, when we asked him to clarify some information, is revealing enough.

"I am ready to talk to you provided you will not interrupt me. I will talk first, then you ask questions later".

Generally, adult males preferred requests for clarification to come only after they had finished discussing their views.

The behaviour of fieldworkers while holding interviews with 'key' respondents is also crucial. During our study, we interviewed local healers as key respondents in the community. These discussions provided much of the information required to bridge the gap between theory and practice in health-seeking behaviour. However, for such discussions to be fruitful, fieldworkers must consider carefully how they conduct them. Our experience in the field showed that only when fieldworkers appeared ready to listen to and learn from local healers did they get more in-depth information. A key learning here is that researchers need to be humble and patient and that they must maintain an open mind in order to benefit fully from the richness of local peoples' indigenous knowledge.

How researchers behave toward, or treat, key informants, is another critical issue. Key informants should not be given special treatment in the presence of other members of the community. This is very important so as to avoid causing envy and bad feeling amongst the community towards certain members. For example, two community members generated bad feeling amongst the community because one of our key informants had boasted about an electronic watch that the research team had presented to him. Evidently, community members had started to feel that key informants were getting more than necessary from the research. We had to step in to avoid things getting out of hand. To resolve this problem, we held briefings with key informants and advised them to consider their selection as a service to their community and not as a position of privilege. We also explained to community leaders that our act of giving presents to the key informants was to encourage them to keep to time and to do their jobs effectively.

In the field, researchers must also try to bridge social gaps between them and the study population as much as possible. We achieved this by socialising with the people and by getting involved in the social activities of the community's daily life. Villagers were very pleased to see us come to their church, play games and drink with them. This developed into a genuine interest of the local people in the fieldworkers/research team. They wanted to know everything about us: the types of food we ate or did not eat; who helped us in preparing food; who we bought things from; whose compound we slept in; which church we would go to next time; whether or not we were married; whether or not we also suffered from malaria; what we thought about malaria ourselves; how long we were to stay with them; whether we had done the study elsewhere, etc. So, before long, we had become popular topics of local gossip, as well as recognised faces in local bars and drinking corners. Local people also gave appropriate nicknames to field workers. Furthermore, local young men and even married men of authority in the community reportedly made advances to female members of the research team.

I also received reports that some male members of the research team were wooing young girls in the community. The male head of one of the patrilineages (Ubakala) told me, in confidence, that he had had reports that one of my field assistants was wooing his daughter. However, it was inappropriate for this relationship to continue and I promised the male head that I would speak to my field assistant regarding his behaviour. To summarise, we found that the active involvement in the local social life and the resulting close association with the people were instrumental in sustaining their goodwill and co-operation toward the research team during the study period.

After barely two weeks in the field, the people were coming to us of their own free will with as much information as they felt to be crucial to the study. There was also a general sentiment that it was up to them to ensure the successful outcome of the study. Community members who just wanted to know what progress we had made and to make sure that certain vital points had been well noted paid visits to us on a daily basis. We rewarded such visits with free palm wine, which we made sure was always available. Callers also went home with gifts of kola nuts, handkerchiefs, etc. These gestures went a long way in securing the good relationship essential for successful community participation and involvement in the study over the period.

Many readers may now be thinking that a team contract would have avoided some of the issues discussed so far. However, whilst a team contract was developed with the research team in order to guide our behaviour and attitudes in the field, many of the issues that have been discussed here did not arise when the team contract was established. This was primarily because the research team, along with the community, were members of the same ethnic group, the Ngwa and hence, there was less of an outsider/insider dynamic. However, this experience has taught me the importance of good behaviour and attitude of researchers in the field wherever they have come from and has led me to suggest other means for improving continual critical self-awareness for future work. For example, 'daily evaluations' where pilot assessments are conducted in order to identify possible problems as well as daily comparisons of the quality of information elicited by different field workers.

Conclusion

Awareness of the usefulness of participatory research methods in current development initiatives is growing fast. However, as our fieldwork amongst the Ngwa shows, the manner, conduct and behaviour of field workers in a participatory study have critical implications for the quality of the information generated. To conclude, researchers who do not conduct themselves in culturally responsive ways may not have the opportunity to understand local ideas and views, let alone relate them systematically to the current emphasis on ensuring sustainability in development agendas.

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Acknowledgements

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Izugbara, C. O. (1998) *Perceptions of malaria among the Ngwa of South-eastern Nigeria: implications for sustainable health interventions*, South-South Journal of Culture and Development

Response from Somesh Kumar

In the article, C. Otutubikey Izugbara has raised the vital issue of conduct and behaviour of field workers in participatory research. Attitude and behaviour has been a prime concern of PRA practitioners world-wide (Kumar 1997). In fact during the initial stages of the evolution of RRA/PRA, the methods were given most importance, but with its development, practitioners have realised that attitudes and behaviour are even more important than the methods themselves.

Insiders versus outsiders

In this study the members of the research team belonged to the same community and knew about the local culture and values. As the author pointed out, this had the advantage of the team being more readily accepted by the community. However this can prove to be a disadvantage, particularly if things are taken for granted and in-depth probing is not done. I have experienced that the local people tend to tell more things to outside facilitators than to insiders, unless

this concerns more sensitive information. Generally whenever insiders ask local people to depict or discuss something, the common reply is *'you are from the same place and know it as well'*. However, they are eager to explain the same issues to the outsiders.

People need to be respected

It is not only the elderly, but also other sections of a community which may be sensitive in most cultures and may feel ignored if they are not given due importance in the participatory process. They also expect to be treated with respect and don't like to be interrupted too often. If questioned on the same items repeatedly (during triangulation) or questioned in a way that makes them feel that they are not being trusted, they may become resentful. However, questioning and in-depth probing is an important aspect of facilitation. Only when the participants have completed what they wanted to say or depict, should clarifications be raised, and raised in such a way that it is clear that those questioning local people are clarifying certain points, rather than doubting what they are being told in the first place.

Frequent interruptions may also disrupt the stream of thoughts of local people. In this particular case, the local people were confident enough to speak out but in most other situations, they may simply withdraw from the process. Therefore, the author is correct when he highlights the importance of listening. In fact, listening is the essence of any participatory work as it reflects the importance you attach to the local people.

Special treatment

The author has also brought up the issue of how to treat key informants but there is no uniform solution. The local situation and context will determine how the key informants should be treated. The team has to be very clear on the implications of the way the key informants and others in the community are treated. In connection with a *PRA Training of Trainers* workshop organised by NIPRANET (the Nigerian PRA Network) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID), we stayed in Aukpa-Adoka village, Benue State (Kumar 1999). Although the participants were from Nigeria themselves, most of them did not know the local dialect in the village. We asked the village elders to select a few interpreters from the community and also decide how they would be paid for their work. This was quite successful. In appreciation of the hospitality, time and co-operation of the villages during our stay with them, we thanked them and presented the chief with two footballs for the village children at the final debriefing/farewell ceremony.

In fact it is not only key informants who matter. The place where you stay during the fieldwork and the people with whom you interact on a regular basis can also have implications on whether some section of the society will get involved in the study. This is particularly relevant in stratified societies.

Rapport with the community

The author has also highlighted the importance of developing good rapport with the community which is fundamental to any participatory research. Participating in the social activities of a community has proved to be a simple and effective way of developing good rapport with the local people. PRA practitioners have used '*do-it-yourself*' as the effective way of developing a good relationship with people. When the local people see the outside facilitators unable to do a routine job such as ploughing a field, transplanting paddy etc. and find the outsider willing to learn from them, the communication pattern changes.

Team contract

It is also important to avoid getting involved in matters that may adversely affect the conduct of fieldwork and relationship with the local people. I have found that instead of the team leader or one person enforcing discipline, it is better to go for a *team contract* where the team members themselves develop guidelines for monitoring their behaviour and attitude in the field and agree to follow the contract along with a mechanism of review and corrective measures.

Other modes

In addition *critical self awareness,* regular *reflection on the behaviour* of the group in the field, use of *video recording* of field workers in action and *support by the other members* actually helps in developing the right kind of attitudes and behaviour. It is important to explain the objectives of the exercise in the beginning and not hide anything or make false promises to the community. Such measures would go along way in building a better relationship with the community.

Conclusion

On the whole, the right kind of attitude and behaviour of the field workers and facilitators is not only desirable but is in fact, essential for achieving the objectives of participatory research.

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Notes

Somesh Kumar was the Founder Director of PRAXIS, The Institute for Participatory Practices, Patna, India.

References

Kumar, S (Ed), (1996), ABC of PRA – *Attitude and Behaviour Change: A Report of the Proceedings of a South-South Workshop on Attitudes and Behaviour in PRA,* ActionAid India and Praxis, Patna.
Kumar, S (1999) *Tendrils of Hope: PRA in a Nigerian Village*, Praxis, Patna

Team formation: poker style

Françoise Coupal

Introduction

This exercise is used to form teams based on criteria set by participants. I have particularly used this exercise in PRA/PLA workshops, which involve practical three-day community assignments that enable participants to apply the PRA/PLA tools learned in the workshop. The exercise is very efficient and effective in forming teams and ensures that teams contain a balance in terms of gender, skills, and experience.

Objective

To form multidisciplinary teams in a participatory and transparent fashion.

Materials

Flipchart paper, markers, 20 small strips of different coloured paper or multicoloured 'poker chips' or multi-coloured tokens. If you don't have 'poker chips or tokens' simply use multi-coloured paper or different colour beans. In addition, prepare community assignment profiles that give a brief description of the community and/or project where participants will undertake their community practice.

Steps

Prior to the exercise place the names of the different community assignments on regular-sized paper and post them on different parts of the wall of the workshop room.

Ask participants to read the community assignments and to write their first three choices of assignments or priorities on a piece of paper. Remind participants that they may not necessarily get their first or second choice of their community assignment.

After participants have written down their choices for community assignments, brainstorm together key criteria they think would be important to ensure balanced and multi-disciplined teams.

For example, when we did this in Cameroon with the World Food Programme (WFP), workshop participants came up with the criteria listed in Table 1. In order to ensure that all groups were balanced and that not any one group had, say,

all managers or national counterparts, we assigned a different poker chip or coloured paper to each criterion. For example, for gender we gave yellow chips or pieces of paper to women participants and white to men etc. All those with prior experience of PRA methods were counted up and given a different coloured piece of paper and so on.

It is important to keep track of the number of persons per criteria. Thus, if there is a total of five teams and only four village leaders, then villagers must each choose a different community assignment to ensure that there is balance in all of the teams with one team only without a village leader. Similarly, if there are only 12 men, each team, if it is to be balanced, should ensure a roughly equal number of men. If there are five participants with prior PRA experience, this would mean one participant per team. It is possible that one person may have many different coloured pieces of paper.

At this point, have all participants stand on one side of the room looking at the community assignments posted on the wall in front of them.

Table 1: showing an example of group brainstorming		
Criteria for multidisciplinary teams	No. of participants	colour paper or chips
Gender balance in teams	12M 12 F [1]	F=yellow, M=white
Prior experience with PRA methods	5	Pink paper or chips
National counterparts	8	Blue paper or chips
Village leaders	4	Orange paper or chips
Gender focal points	4	Green paper or chips
Directors/managers or WFP	5	Red paper or chips
Specialised sectoral knowledge	5	Light green paper or chips

The facilitator should begin with the criterion which has the fewest slips of paper. In this example, it was village leaders. Ask the village leaders with orange pieces of paper to select the community assignment of their choice by walking towards the posted sign announcing their community assignment.

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[1] F = Female; M = Male

Ensure that their first, second or third choice or priority has been met. If not, see if other villagers would like to switch with them. If necessary review the priorities of the other village leaders by referring to the piece of paper where their priorities were written down. Suprisingly, this system has never resulted in all the participants choosing the same assignment.

After ensuring that the village leaders are satisfied, move on to the next criterion with the fewest participants. In this case it was those with prior PRA experience. Thus, five participants with pink chips or coloured pieces of paper are asked to select their community assignment, remembering that each team should contain one person with prior PRA experience. Ensure that the gender balance is also maintained, and that those with PRA experience are satisfied with their choices.

Move on to the criterion, ensuring that participants are satisfied with their choices after each criterion and coloured chip or piece of paper is called. Remind participants that they do not always get their first or second choice.

At the end of the exercise ensure that all teams are balanced according to criteria and number of persons per criterion. Finally ask participants to place the names of the team members on the sign announcing their community assignment.
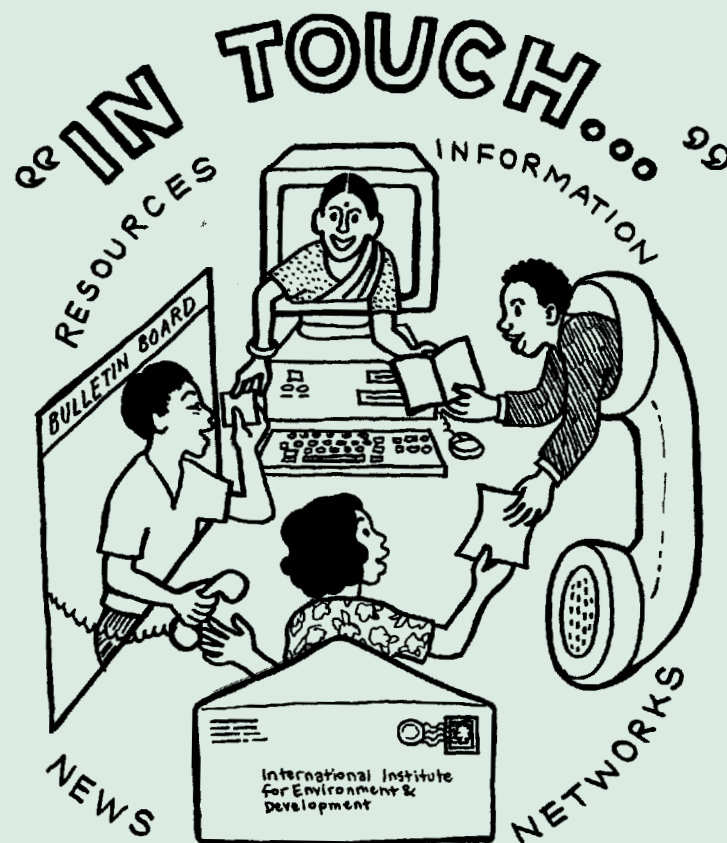
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The exercise takes up to 30 minutes and participants are usually pleased with the results. Criteria for the teams are set by the participants and they get to select their teams according to the criteria that they listed. Each workshop and different set of participants may have different criteria. In some countries, language can be a very important issue and you may want to ensure that each team has the right language mix. There are other more sophisticated tools for team formation that explore personality traits of individuals more intensely and match individuals accordingly. However, this can sometimes be subjective. For example, participants who consider themselves 'leaders' may not turn out to be the leaders in their team. In helping participants, I have tried to avoid this type of subjective criteria, as it is generally difficult to measure in such a short period of time.

Françoise Coupal, Director, Mosaic.net International, 705 Roosevelt Ave, Ottawa, Canada, K2A 2A8. Email: coupal@mosaic-net-intl.ca; Website: www.mosaic-net-intl.ca

Notes

Welcome to the *In Touch* section of *PLA Notes*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for readers of the *Notes*, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date information on training, publications and networks. Your help is vital in keeping us all in touch about:

• **Networks** Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide - training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide the point-of-contact for other readers.

• **Training** Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key training materials that you would like to share with other trainers?

• **Publications** Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers should know about?

• **Electronic information** Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?

• **Other information** Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.

Please send your responses to: PLA Notes, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODD, UK.
Fax: + 44 (0)20 7388 2826 Email: sustag@iied.org

PLA Notes **is published in February, June and October.**
Please submit material two months before the publication date.

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Conferences

Uniting Science and Participation in Research

5th – 9th November 2000, Kenya

The CGIAR programme on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis for Technology Development and Institutional Innovation is holding its third International Seminar in Nairobi, Kenya. The overall theme of the conference is to understand different options for the organisation and management of science and participation in participatory client-driven research processes. The seminar will be held in English with Spanish translation available during the plenary sessions.

For further information on this event, please contact **Kathryn Laing, Assistant Co-ordinator, PRGA Program, CIAT, AA 6713, Cali, Colombia. Tel: +57 2 445 0131; Fax: +57 2 45 0073; Email: prga@cgiar.org**

'Voices for Change' – A Conference for North and South – inviting grassroots opinion

15th – 17th September 2000, Cambridge, UK

Cambridge Education Resource is organising an innovative, new forum for learning about and supporting education for social change through facilitating learning between grassroots practitioners in education in both the North and the South. The conference will promote information exchange through using a range of participatory tools and approaches.

For further information on this event, please contact: **Judith Collier, The 'Voices for Change' Conference. Tel: +44 (0) 1223 353321 Email: judith@iec.ac.uk**

Workshops/courses

Participatory Natural Resource Management from a Systems Perspective: Analysis, Implementation and Evaluation

9th – 20th October 2000, with optional field work 23rd – 27th October 2000, Chatham, UK

This course will develop the skills of those who are seeking to either incorporate or further develop the use of participatory approaches in their projects and programmes in the context of natural resource management. It provides an introduction to the concepts and approaches of participatory natural resource management from a systems perspective and will combine theoretical and practical training situations.

For further information, please contact: **Training Support Unit, Natural Resources Institute (NRI), Medway University Campus, Chatham Maritime, Kent, ME4 4TB, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1634 883448; Fax: +44 (0)1634 883577; Email: nri-training@gre.ac.uk**

Reports and books

Shifting the Balance Handbook – People, Power and Participation

Scottish Education and Action for Development (Sead)

This handbook is aimed at all groups working in the field of community development and emphasises the important role of learning from both Southern and Northern experiences around community development and participation. It is part of an on-going programme of work centred around the themes of people, power and participation and aims to highlight how much the North can learn from the South. The handbook is presented in sections providing guidance to a range of methods, from holding participatory conferences and meetings in the community, to looking at views of sustainable development, models of democracy and economic development.

For further information, please contact: **Liz Ferguson, Information and Membership Development Officer, Sead, 167-171 Dundee Street, Edinburgh EH11 1BY, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 131 477 2780; Fax: +44(0) 131 477 2781; Email: sead@gn.apc.org**

Working from Below – Techniques to strengthen local governance in India

Sanjiv Lingayah and Alex MacGillivray, with Marcus Hellqvist
New Economics Foundation, 1999.
ISBN: 1 89940 724 3

This report looks at innovative ways of strengthening local governance in India. It gives particular emphasis to two participatory techniques, which have been field tested primarily in the UK –community based indicators and social auditing. The report introduces the concepts of governance and participation and the links between them

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in the Indian context, but also draws on case studies from around the world to illustrate various perspectives.

For further information on this or the other work of the New Economics Foundation, contact **NEF, Cinnamon House, 6-8 Cole Street, London, SE1 4YH, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 20 7407 7447; Fax: +44 (0) 20 7407 6473**

Sewing a better future? A report of discussions with young garment factory workers about life, work and sexual health
Alexandra Maclean, CARE International in Cambodia, 1999

This report presents the findings of research with young garment factory workers conducted by CARE International's – Cambodia sexual and reproductive health Project. Participatory techniques were used to explore social and economic contexts within which young workers make decisions about sex and safer sex. Through the research, the project aimed to explore how young people relate to each other, how they relate to health service providers, members of their families/communities and factory management, and what communication channels are available for reproductive health information provision.

For further information, please contact: **CARE International - Cambodia, House 18 A, Street 370, PO Box 537. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Tel: +855 23 721 115; Fax: +855 23 426 233; Email: care.cam@bigpond.com.kh**

Qualitative Research for Improved Health Programs: a guide to manuals for qualitative and participatory research on child health, nutrition and reproductive health
Department of International Health, John Hopkins University, 2000

This guide provides a reference that describes and compares over 50 qualitative and participatory research manuals with specific reference to the health sector. It also includes sections on participatory approaches and is aimed at researchers, NGOs and programme managers involved with qualitative research/community work. A French version of the manual is planned for later in the year.

To obtain a copy or for further information, contact: **Research Publications, SARA Project, Academy for Educational Development, 1825 Connecticut Avenue,**

N.W. Washington D.C. 20009-5721, USA. Tel: +1 202 884 8000; Fax: +1 202 884 8400; Email: saramail@aed.org; Website: www.aed.org

Integrated Conservation and Development – A Trainer's Manual
Sejal Worah, Dian Seslar Svendsen and Caroline Ongleo. Asian Institute of Technology

This trainer's manual was developed through the work of the Integrated Conservation and Development Training Programme, an initiative funded by WWF and DFID-UK. The manual draws from the training workshops held as part of the programme around participatory management of protected areas and therefore, the majority of the training sessions presented in the book have been field tested in a variety of situations and geographical contexts. In brief, the manual presents an experiential model for learning, along with a participatory strategy for monitoring and evaluation of conservation and development projects. Those who use the manual in their own trainings are also encouraged to provide feedback on the materials to the authors.

For further information, please contact the **ICDP Training Programme, Asian Institute of Technology, GPO Box 4, Khlong Luang 12120, Thailand**. Copies can be ordered through WWF-UK at the following address: **Nan MacHardy, Programme Support Officer, A/P, WWF-UK, Panda House, Weyside Park, Catteshall Lane, Godalming, GU7 1XR, UK. Tel:+44 (0)1483 426444; Fax: +44 (0) 1483 426409; Website; www.wwf-uk.org**

A Report on International Training of Trainers in Stepping Stones
15th – 26th November 1999
ActionAid India

Stepping Stones is a training package on HIV/AIDS, gender, communication and relationship skills designed for use in HIV/AIDS projects and other development work. As a tool aimed at facilitating behaviour-change regarding sexual health, this report documents a training of trainers which was held in India at the end of 1999 and in which, participatory approaches to adult learning were employed.

For further information on Stepping Stones, please visit the website *www.stratshope.org,* or to obtain copies of this report, please contact: **ActionAid India, PB No. 5406, 3 Rest House Road, Bangalore –560 001, India. Tel: +91 (0)80 558 6682; Fax: +91 (0)80 558 6284; Email: coblr@actionaidindia.org**

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Las Herramientas son para Construir – Medio y Fin de las Técnicas Participativas para un Desarrollo Comunitario.

Silvestre Ojeda and Inigo Retolaza. CID 1999

This community-development focused publication is based around two sections. The first looks at technical aspects of participatory research and the required framework for its use to sustain a proper process of community development, whilst the second presents a case study of a project evaluation with special focus on how participatory techniques can be combined and managed. Available in Spanish, please contact Centro de Informacíon para el Desarrollo – CID, Rosendo Gutiérrez 595 esq.Ecuador, Casilla 5097, La Paz, Bolivia. Tel: +591 2 411018; Fax: +591 2 411528, Email: plural@caoba.entelnet.bo

The Community Planning Handbook

Nick Wates. Earthscan, 2000. ISBN: 1 85383 654 0

In response to the increasing demand world-wide for more local involvement in planning and management, this handbook provides an overview of new methods for community planning. It establishes general principles for community involvement, presents a selection of methods and shows how various methods have been combined in innovative ways. Amongst the many methods presented are Planning for Real, Action Planning, Visualisation techniques (diagrams and mapping), Open Space workshops and Microplanning workshops. There is also a guide to further sources of information and references.

This publication can be obtained from
Earthscan Publications Ltd., 120 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9BR, UK. Fax: +44 (0) 20 7278 1142; Email: orders@lbsltd.co.uk

Participation Villageoise au Développement Rural – Guide du Formateur et Manuel du Practicien

Réseau Africain sur les Approches Participatives

This publication on village participation in rural development in French has been prepared by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and five country teams in West Africa. It is comprised of a trainer's guide, a field guide for practitioners and a card set of tools of participatory methods. Chapter One is a direct translation of the IIED publication *A Trainer's Guide for Participatory Learning and Action* which introduces adult training and the role of trainers in this context. Currently available in French, the publication will also be available in English in the near future.

This publication is available from **KIT, BP 95001, 1090 HA Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 20 56 88 387; Fax: +31 20 56 88 498; www.kit.nl/aed/html/publications.htm** also from various distribution points in West Africa and the World Bank.

Resources

The Information Resource Centre of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India

In recognition of the importance of information exchange to support participatory practitioners, the Information Resource Centre of The Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) has attempted to streamlined its services. The IRC will act as a nodal point for information exchange between PRIA and the wide array of networks and individuals it is currently engaged with. The Centre holds material around participatory research and development and is open from 8.30am to 9.00pm.

For further information, please contact: **PRIA, The Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 42 Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi-10062, India. Tel: +91 11 608 1908; Fax: +91 11 6080 183; Website: www.pria.org**

!Nara – Working for Social Change
Namibia

!Nara is a Namibian non-governmental organisation which is committed to enhancing the capacity of its partner organisations and institutions through the provision of training on participatory methodologies and co-ordination of work around sustainable social and economic development. Based in Windhoek, Namibia, *!Nara* advocates for people's control of their own development process and carries out a range of training, participatory research and participatory monitoring and evaluation work. It emphasises the promotion of participatory processes through its training courses on participatory methods.

For further information on the work of this organisation, please contact **!Nara, Puccini House, 6 Puccini Street, PO Box 4157, Windhoek, Namibia. Tel: +264 (0)61 222 860; Fax: +264 (0) 61 222 864**

RCPLA Network

RCPLA Network meeting

The last full meeting of the RCPLA Network was held in Bolivia in 1997. Since this time, there has been much development of activities by the members around information sharing and exchange to support practitioners of participatory development world-wide. Such activities have included:

• regional meetings and workshops;
• attendance at international events;
• promotion of the work of the network partners and of the RCPLA network itself as a tool to support practitioners;
• translation projects;
• development of the RCPLA website (www.rcpla.org);
• development of project proposals to support information related projects in certain regions; and,
• building capacity in areas such as information management and documentation etc.

However, the need for quality information amongst practitioners is by no means redundant and with the continuing spread of participatory approaches, it is even more important that we try to support quality in practice through the dissemination of quality information. This also implies a certain engagement of practitioners themselves with the information debate – as they have a responsibility to share their practical experiences with participatory development through established information infrastructures, such as the RCPLA Network. Indeed, the importance of such engagement was noted at the recent Francophone Exchange for Participatory Development (co-hosted by one of the RCPLA Network members – IIED-Senegal). During this meeting, it was acknowledged that practitioners often *consume* more information than they *produce*. It is only through a commitment to information sharing from practitioners and information professionals that experiences can be exchanged on a larger scale. With such issues in mind, a workshop for the whole network is currently being planned for September 2000. Held in Cairo, this meeting will bring together all the RCPLA partners and we will be looking at how to structure our work over the next few years. One thing is certain: the demand for information around participatory methods, and indeed, information for development, still remains strong and we must try to respond both to this demand and to the wide array of information needs of our audiences, through our work as individuals and as a network.

This meeting is open to RCPLA members only. However, if you would like further information on the work of the network or on the outcomes of this meeting, please contact Emad Morris or Paul Mincher from the Steering Committee Group (see addresses above). Key points from the meeting will be presented in a future issue of PLA Notes.

Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN)

The first edition of NEPAN's new journal, 'Participation', was published in December 1999 and they are planning to publish the 2nd issue in June 2000. This journal is written in English and is free to members of NEPAN, but non-members can pay for a subscription. NEPAN also publishes a journal called 'Shabhagita' which is written in Nepali and which looks at participatory development. This is now in its 15th issue. In addition, they are going to publish the second training manual on 'Participation, Rural Development and Local Governance' shortly. The first manual was published in 1998. Both the manuals are in the Nepali language and are aimed at grassroots development workers and trainers.

Other new activities include broadcasting a regular radio programme on participatory development processes and the development of a separate web site for the network that they hope to be operational by June 2000.

For more further details on the work of NEPAN around participatory development and information exchange, please contact: Chet Nath Kanel; National Co-ordinator; Nepal Participatory Action Network; GPO Box 13791; Kathmandu; NEPAL; Tel: +977 1 482955; Fax: +977 1 419718; Email: nepan@mos.com.np

Uganda Participatory Development Network

The Uganda Participatory Development Network (UPD-Net) are holding their annual workshop from 24th – 25th August 2000 in Kampala. They are currently looking for papers in the following areas;
Participatory development at the community level;
Favourable environment policies; and,
Participatory management & organisational structures.

If you have interesting experiences around any of these areas and that you would like to share with others, please contact the Network Co-ordinator, **Silvia Angey Ufoyuru, at Uganda Participatory Development Network, PO Box 3791, Kampala, UGANDA. Tel: +256 41 542995/534497; Fax: +256 41 542995; Email: cdrn@imul.com**

ACHR launch website

The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) is a regional network of grassroots community organisations, NGOs and professionals actively involved with urban poor development processes in Asian cities. ACHR now have launched their website that can be found at http://www.achr.net. This website contains news from the urban poor sector, details of new publications and ACHR activities/programmes such as the Community Environmental Development Facility.

For more details, contact: **Maurice Leonhardt, Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, 73 Soi Sonthiwattana 4, Ladprao 110, Ladprao Road, Bangkok 10310, Thailand. Tel: +662 538 0919; Fax: +662 538 0919; Email: achrsec@email.ksc.net**

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) – UK

It has been a busy few months for IDS, which have included two major workshops. *The Pathways Retreat* was held in April as part of an ongoing project, *Pathways to Participation*, which aims to promote critical reflection on PRA in order to improve the quality and impact of participatory work. A workshop report and videos from this event will be available in the near future. A Popular Communications Workshop was held at IDS in May – this provided a week of theatre, dance, music, radio and other ways of exploring and understanding how different cultures use media. In addition to all this, IDS is currently involved, along with Bath and Sheffield Universities, in an action-research project of impact assessment for and by development finance organisations (DFOs). The project seeks to build on the priorities, experiences and agendas of these organisations, to develop credible and useful impact assessment.

For further details on any of the above, please contact **Jane Stevens, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 1273 606 261; Fax; +44 (0) 1273 621 202; Email: JaneS@ids.ac.uk**

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Participatory Monitoring and Impact Assessment of Sustainable Agriculture Initiatives: an introduction to the key elements. By Irene Guijt, SARL Discussion Paper 1. June 1998
This document is a practical, methodological introduction to setting up a participatory monitoring process for sustainable agriculture initiatives. It explains why interest in participatory monitoring is growing, introduces several key concepts and identifies steps in developing a monitoring system. Price £8. Available in English (order no: 6139) forthcoming in Portuguese

Changing Views on Change: participatory approaches to monitoring the environment. By Joanne Abbot and Irene Guijt, SARL Discussion Paper 2. June 1998
This document reviews participatory approaches to monitoring in the context of tracking biophysical changes in general and specifically, of projects focusing on environmental regeneration. It explores the entire monitoring process focusing around a central question: What is the role of different stakeholders in each of these stages? Price £8. Available in English (6140), Portuguese (6140P) and Spanish (6140S).

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