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Towards empowered participation: stories and reflections

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June 2008

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Participatory Learning and Action, (formerly *PLA Notes* and *RRA Notes)*, is published three times a year in April, August, and December. Established in 1987, *Participatory Learning and Action* enables practitioners of participatory methodologies from around the world to share their field experiences, conceptual reflections, and methodological innovations. The series is informal and seeks to publish frank accounts, address issues of practical and immediate value, encourage innovation, and act as a 'voice from the field'.

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Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an umbrella term for a wide range of similar approaches and methodologies, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Learning Methods (PALM), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Farming Systems Research (FSR), Méthode Active de Recherche et de Planification Participative (MARP), and many others. The common theme to all these approaches is the full **participation** of people in the processes of **learning** about their needs and opportunities, and in the **action** required to address them.

The methods used range from 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.

In recent years, there has been a number of shifts in the scope and focus of participation:

- emphasis on sub-national, national and international decision-making, not just local decision-making;
- move from projects to policy processes and institutionalisation;
- greater recognition of issues of difference and power; and,
- emphasis on assessing the quality and understanding the impact of participation, rather than simply promoting participation.

Recent issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* have reflected, and will continue to reflect, these developments and shifts. We particularly recognise the importance of analysing and overcoming power differentials which work to exclude the already poor and marginalised.

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editorial

Welcome to the 58th issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*. This issue has a reflective focus and follows on from the 40th issue, published in 2001, entitled *Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment*, guest-edited by Michel Pimbert and Tom Wakeford. Issue 40 focused on participatory methods and approaches that seek to enhance deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment. This current issue picks up on the theme of deliberative democracy, looks at successes and failures in citizen involvement programmes and examines some of the changes in the world of participation since 2001.

About this special issue

Many of the articles in this issue are from the North, mainly the UK, however since issue 40, several countries from the South are now engaging in these deliberative democratic processes, as we can see from four of the articles in this current issue. At the end of the theme section, we provide an abstract of each article, followed by relevant internet resources.

The theme section is broken into four sub-sections:

- the strengths and weaknesses of citizens' juries and similar participatory processes;
- participatory budgeting;
- gender and representation; and
- grassroots community activism.

The overall aim of this special issue of *PLA* is to allow practitioners to reflect on some of these aspects of participation. By fostering a deeper understanding of participation we hope to promote improved policies and practices. We believe the articles call for an increased global solidarity among those committed to transforming the power of oppressed peoples via participation.

About the guest editors

Tom Wakeford and **Jasber Singh** are guest editors of this special issue. They are both participation practitioners. Tom works for the Beacon for Public Engagement initiative at Newcastle and Durham Universities in the UK, and is a Visiting Fellow at the International Institute for Environment and Development. Jasber is based at the London Wildlife Trust where he works with young people and communities experiencing oppression.

Acknowledgements

This issue has been produced with the additional financial assistance of the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative at Durham and Newcastle universities, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Northern Rock Foundation, and the Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences (PEALS) Research Centre. As ever, we are also grateful to the UK Department of International Development (DfID) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for their continued financial support of the *Participatory Learning and Action* series.

General section

This issue also includes three general articles. Firstly, we have an article from Bolivia on participatory methods to test new technologies with farmers. The second general article is on participatory mapping among those whose livelihoods depend on rose cultivation in Bulgaria. The third article looks at ways of engaging in processes of healing with children who are in long-term hospital care.

Regular features

Tips for Trainers

The featured tip in this issue is about democracy walls – a structured open space where participants can post their ideas and opinions in a workshop setting.

In Touch

These pages include book reviews, events, workshops and on-line resources.

RCPLA update

Read the latest news from the *Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action* network – and become a member!

Update on multimedia training kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication

In April 2008, *PLA* co-Editor Holly Ashley participated in a two-day workshop hosted by the Technical Centre for Rural Cooperation (CTA) in the Netherlands. The *PLA* Editorial team is a member of a consultative group which is helping with the development of a modular multimedia and multilingual training kit on participatory mapping practice. The title and the purpose of the project is 'Support to the spread of "good practice" in generating, managing, analysing and communicating spatial information'. The project is jointly funded by CTA, IFAD and the Ford Foundation, and the training kit will be available from CTA in 2009/2010. For more information, please contact Giacomo Rambaldi, Email: Rambaldi@cta.int

Follow-up on *PLA* 57 – Immersions: learning about poverty face-to-face

We hope you enjoyed issue 57, which seems to have generated a lot of interest. We are hoping to hold a special event on the topic at the UK Department of International Development office's in London in September.

Update on IKM

PLA co-editor Angela Milligan attended a conference in Cambridge, UK organised by IKM Emergent. IKM Emergent is a five-year research and communication programme funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It brings together a group of development researchers and practitioners concerned with the ways knowledge is created, handled and used in development practice. It is particularly concerned with multiple knowledges – different kinds of knowledge from different sources – and how to ensure that **all** relevant knowledges are considered, including those which are often overlooked such as local knowledge and knowledge generated in the 'South'.

We are currently discussing the possibility of some joint work between IKM Emergent and *PLA* which would look at what happens to knowledge generated in the course of participatory work at local level. Does it feed into regional, national or international level strategies and policies? What happens if it conflicts with these strategies? Is it shared between organisations at local level? What are the barriers to using the knowledge in this way and how have organisations and individuals overcome them?

Following a call for papers in our last issue, we received two research proposals which are now being discussed with IKM Emergent. If the work goes ahead, one of the expected outcomes would be an issue of *PLA* which would capture some of the challenges and ways forward for participatory work.

We hope to have more news in our next issue. In the meantime, if you have particular experiences in this area that you would like to share, please contact Angela at angela.milligan@iied.org.

Next issue: *PLA* 58 – Participatory web for development, December 2008

There are dozens of emerging interactive web applications and services (often referred to as the participatory web, or Web 2.0). These can enhance the ways we create, share, and publish information. But these technical opportunities also bring challenges that we need to understand and grasp. Some of the key questions that this special issue will seek to address include:

- How can Web 2.0 applications be integrated with participatory development approaches?
- How can they facilitate and contribute to people's participation and decision-making?
- What are the challenges and barriers to people's participation?
- How do we address factors such as access, equity, control, and oversight?
- Can Web 2.0 applications challenge fundamental social inequalities?

This forthcoming special issue aims to publish a collection of articles, which provide working examples from practice. The articles will be based on a selection of papers presented at the Web2*For*Dev 2007: Participatory Web for Development conference, Rome, September 2007. It will be co-published by IIED and CTA.

Forthcoming issue

For *PLA* 60, we are hoping to produce a special issue on community-based adaptation methods to climate change. The issue would look at the methods used by communities to cope with climate change impacts (such as floods, rising sea levels, droughts and other extreme weather events). In addition, the special issue would look at methods communities worldwide are using to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. If you have had any relevant experience, please do send us contributions to consider for this issue.

We hope that *PLA* 58 will provide you with some interesting food for thought and we look forward to your feedback. Please continue to send us articles for our general section, or material for **In Touch** or **Tips for Trainers**. Please visit our website (www.planotes.org) for our guidelines for submissions. Here too subscribers can link with IngentaConnect to download the latest issues.

Holly Ashley, Nicole Kenton, and Angela Milligan, Co-editors

PLA 57 errata

p3. – 1st column – Fahamu is a pan-African NGO not a Kenyan NGO.

p.137 – VIPs should be Very Important Person visits (not Village Immersion Programmes).

Theme section

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Nothing we have done as guest editors of this special issue would have been possible without the efforts of the practitioners who have contributed such excellent articles. Just as vital have been the, often unacknowledged, participants in the processes that have been described. It is an unwritten assumption of all those who have contributed to this issue that we owe an immense debt to the insights and wisdom these hundreds of individuals have put into every process we describe. We had hoped to facilitate a process whereby such participants could author their own articles to accompany each of the practitioner perspectives. Unfortunately, lack of resources has meant that just one short contribution by Right 2B Heard, (Article 8d), takes this approach.

We would like to thank all our colleagues at the Policy Ethics and Life Sciences (PEALS) Research Centre, where we were both based during the inception of this project, particularly Anne Galbraith, Tom Shakespeare and Tom Martin. At the Newcastle-Durham Beacon for Public Engagement, we'd like to thank Joanne Walker and Catherine Purvis. At IIED we'd like to thank Khanh Tran-Thanh, Angela Milligan, Holly Ashley and most of all, Nicole Kenton.

Tom Wakeford and Jasber Singh
Guest Editors

Towards empowered participation: stories and reflections

by TOM WAKEFORD and JASBER SINGH

Introduction

This special issue is essentially a series of stories about participation. All are premised on the belief that participation should create opportunities for people's broader engagement in the processes of knowledge generation and policy-making. A second linked theme is that, rather than empower people in this way, much of what is claimed to be public engagement, involvement or 'giving people a voice' merely reinforces existing knowledge-validating and decision-making structures.

In the seven years since one of us jointly edited *Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment* (*PLA Notes* 40, 2001), three trends have transformed the participation landscape in which we operate.[1]

- The rhetoric of participation has become a mainstay of policy documents and political speeches from the United Nations to local councils. In the UK at least, invitations to 'have your say' – via text message, email or telephone – are everyday occurrences on radio, TV and in popular newspapers and magazines.
- An *ad hoc* alliance of market research corporations, foundations and other organisations with influence on government have presented themselves as cutting-edge practitioners and promoters of best practice in participation. They have worked with policy makers to develop and validate schemes that promise a voice to citizens, yet which largely ignore the rich traditions of social justice movements on their own doorstep.[2]

Front cover illustration, *PLA Notes* 40.

Cartoon: Regina Doyle

[1] See www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla_notes/pla_backissues/40.html Guest edited by Michel Pimbert and Tom Wakeford.

[2] A recent example is Involve & National Consumer Council, 2008 *Deliberative public engagement: nine principles*. Involve, London. See www.involve.org.uk/deliberative_principles

THEME SECTION

"…if participation continues to be ignored, suppressed or domesticated, we will not only fail to live up to the promise of participation, but will risk sacrificing some of the democratic gains made by our predecessors."

- There has been a subtle change in how policy makers view citizens. On the one hand, citizen involvement programmes promise a shift from envisaging people as semi-passive 'users and choosers' to seeing them as 'makers and shapers'. Yet, the same authorities may withdraw funding from groups with particular identities – such as visible minorities experiencing oppression.[3]

The resulting participatory programmes usually fail to achieve their stated goal of engagement with citizens and could even lead to a participatory citizenship programme that undermines grassroots attempts to challenge the *status quo*.

Empowered participation, suppression or domestication?

Overall we see the failures of participation as stemming from a combination of structural issues within powerful organisations, together with the misuse of participation techniques in order to advance particular agendas.

The hierarchical structure and pre-defined missions of many government departments, associated delivery agencies and private corporations are antithetical to successful participation. To avoid disrupting 'business as usual', such organisations may therefore adopt one of two broad strategies when dealing with participation processes:

- To facilitate a genuine process and then to devise a means of ignoring or suppressing those of its outcomes that do not suit its agenda (see Shorts 8a).
- To engage in a range of manipulations of the process that ensures that the outcome suits those purposes (see Shorts 8b). We call these practices 'domestication', in so far as they restrict the ability of participants to speak and think for themselves.

[3] An example from the UK was the threat by Ealing local council to withdraw funding from the Southall Black Sisters, perhaps the UK's best known group working on domestic violence and other issues affecting women from black and minority ethnic groups in Britain. The council said it did not want to privilege the ethnic minorities in the local area over the majority white population. In doing so it ignored the well documented particular dangers young black women face in their homes and in the local community. These issues were vividly portrayed in the 2007 film *Provoked*, based on a book of the same name by Kiranjit Ahluwalia and Rahila Gupta.

We contrast domesticated participation with what some analysts are calling empowered participation (Fung, 2006). Last year we asked a range of participation practitioners and analysts to contribute to this issue of *PLA* based on the following logic: if participation continues to be ignored, suppressed or domesticated, we will not only fail to live up to the promise of participation, but will risk sacrificing some of the democratic gains made by our predecessors.

All our contributors have written about their practice in the belief that only by looking at the barriers to empowered participation, with an honest and self-evaluative approach, will practitioners be able to formulate strategies that stand a chance of making an impact on the scale necessary to address our various global crises.

About the articles in this issue

Each contributor to this special issue highlights factors that have threatened the potential for genuine participation in particular contexts. Obstacles may be political – as was the case with *Prajateerpu* (Kuruganti and colleagues, article 2). In other cases, organisers may not even be aware that already oppressed groups, such as women or disabled people, have been further marginalised by the way the participatory process was organised or analysed (Kanji and Tan, article 12).

The way that scientific or medical expertise is deployed in participatory processes is also explored in several papers, focusing on the issues of HIV/AIDS (ICW, article 11), climate change (Eady and colleagues, article 6), nanotechnology (Singh, article 4), and GM crops (Shorts 8c; Bryant, article 3).

Contributors point to the disappointment in what appear to be token exercises in public engagement. Citizens' juries or panels can easily become 'a new toy for academics, policy makers and other professional elites,' as Fitzduff and colleagues stress, when institutions or governments have no real interest in acting upon their recommendations (article 7).

One citizens' jury in the UK (Kashefi and Keene, article 5) proved influential partly because it was well-supported before it began, but also because its conclusions meshed with established government health targets. By contrast, attempts to replicate Brazil's model of participatory budgeting in the UK (Blakey, article 10) have foundered, as prevailing government financial targets pre-empted grassroots decision-making. There are also suggestions (Chavez, article 9) that the Latin American model on which the UK processes have been based is more problematic than has been acknowledged so far. The Mali farmers' jury, l'ECID (Bryant, article 3), stands out as a rare success story, and owes much to both a methodology devised together with members of a successful political

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movement, and, to the status and political activism of the farmer jurors.

Two papers (Clay, article 14 and Haq, article 15) contrast the achievements of sustained, grassroots community activism in Britain in the 1970s and 80s with today's promotion of citizens' juries or government agency-led 'community consultation'. In Andhra Pradesh (Madhusudhan, article 16), an indigenous people's organisation called *Girijan Deepika* has revived informal meetings, *Gotti*, to revitalise community control over food and farming, in a far-reaching campaign to reclaim indigenous knowledge, culture and livelihoods under threat from development programmes. In this context, participatory decision-making and community activism have come together to empower a whole community.

Two articles and four short papers focus on attempts to engage large institutions in participation. The first (Pearce, Pearson and Cameron, article 13) looks at efforts of UK universities, and one in particular, to engage in participatory processes with local residents. In the **In Touch** section, a recent book by Celia Davis and colleagues is reviewed. Its authors explore a deliberative process that was commissioned by a UK health agency that was intended to democratise decision-making in the huge state-run UK health system. In a section called Shorts (article 8), four brief contributions give glimpses of the interface between people and attempts by large organisations to domesticate their participation in four different contexts:

- an ethnically diverse community governed by an unreceptive town council in northern England (Shorts 8a);
- a group of randomly chosen UK residents, some of whom felt duped by a UK government consultation on nuclear power (Shorts 8b);
- a citizens' jury on GM crops where the question asked of the jury by a government agency prejudiced its impact on the policy process (Shorts 8c); and finally,
- the transcript of a youtube.com film made by people with experience of being the 'citizens' in participatory processes when a major UK charity asked them to give their views at a conference (Shorts 8d).

Many people, particularly policy makers or organisations commissioning participatory projects, may read *PLA* in the hope of finding a blueprint that will guarantee the effectiveness of such processes in every context. But we believe this expectation would be misguided. We do, however, believe it is possible to find principles of good practice.[4] Three themes run through this issue that are particularly relevant for practitioners:

- the need for counter-balances;
- long time horizons; and
- reflective practice.

"Future participatory processes face significant challenges if they are to help to shift power and knowledge to those who need it, rather than to those who already have it."

The need for counter-balances

The examples of participatory practice in this special issue that have fostered empowerment, rather than suppression or domestication, have been those which have included what Archon Fung (2006) calls 'countervailing forces'. These forces can be enabled by the setting up of multi-stakeholder panels, financing grassroots organisations to become co-organisers or setting up a broadly-based steering committee. Whatever mechanism is used, such structures can act to counter-balance the weight of the principal sponsoring body or bodies, and thus overcome perhaps the single biggest barrier to empowered participation.

Long time horizons

The second ingredient that makes a participatory process genuinely empowering is the length of time the participative space can be maintained. Past efforts at grassroots community activism described by Clay and Haq (articles 14 and 15), along with the attempts to forge new global participatory structures by the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (article 11) hold powerful lessons for future practice. The Popular Sovereignty Network described by Chavez (article 9) may be a promising model for global development, if it can be sustained.

Reflective practice

Finally, we are encouraged by the increase in our collective capacity, as participatory practitioners, for reflection and learning. Once we constituted a small group whose approach was misunderstood and rejected by mainstream researchers.[5] In response to this hostility, we sometimes spurned critical debate – making us seem almost cult-like to some colleagues

[4] There has recently been a suggestion that the International Standards Organisation (ISO) could incorporate good practice in participation in a voluntary guidance standard for social responsibility, ISO 26000.

[5] This was displayed in the frank exchange between practitioners and theorists that followed a critique of participation by antropologist Paul Richards (1995).

in our lack of reflection on both principles and practice. As resources flooded in, thanks to government enthusiasm for participatory initiatives, we were so busy 'doing', that critical thinking was not prioritised. Participation became attractive to entrepreneurs who adopted the language of empowerment and cherry-picked methodologies that suited them, but ignored the underlying principles, resulting in many examples of pseudo-participation and the disempowerment of the very people to whom such initiatives are meant to deliver a voice.

Now an increasing number of practitioners are dedicating themselves to making regular cycles of learning and reflection core to their practice. The article by Pearce, Pearson and Cameron (article 13) is testament to the inroads into academic culture being made by participatory innovators who can combine practical effectiveness with acceptance from their fellow academics. This is aided by the increasing sympathy for participatory approaches across the global higher education system.

Towards empowered participation?

We acknowledge that there is a general bias towards practice in the UK and Europe in this issue of *PLA*. There is also the danger of assuming that the answers to participatory dilemmas will come from universities rather than elsewhere. That said, both Bradford University's International Centre for Participation Studies and Newcastle University's Policy Ethics and Life Sciences (PEALS) Research Centre have made attempts to develop practice that addresses all three themes of this special issue, though neither would claim more than very partial success.

In 2008, six UK university-based Beacons for Public Engagement began to address a key additional challenge for the future – the use of participatory processes to make the very formation of research questions a process of co-production. This will often involve putting people who have become experts via experience on an equal footing with those who have done so via formal training.[6]

Both *Prajateerpu* (Kuruganti, Pimbert and Wakeford, article 2) and the Nanojury (Singh, article 4) showed that there are potentially great benefits in the blurring of boundaries between people and professors. Those involved in the two processes also came up against a range of powerful barriers that prevent scientists, and other officially recognised experts, from acknowledging and affirming the validity of knowledge that comes through experience rather than formal training.

The professional acceptance of participation within academia is a testament to the many successful participatory projects designed to achieve social and environmental justice at the grassroots. But there is a paradox here. Struggling grassroots community organisations who contribute to the mainstreaming of participatory approaches risk disempowering themselves. In providing legitimacy to academic researchers, they are potentially helping organisations to win grants from funding sources that they might wish to call on. Future participatory processes face significant challenges if they are to help to shift power and knowledge to those who need it, rather than to those who already have it.

Alongside the three recommendations we make – for diverse control, the establishment of long-term processes and acknowledgement of the need to learn from our mistakes – there is a single overriding priority: that the capacity to challenge power structures comes to be acknowledged as fundamental to a just society.

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Fung, A., (2006) *Empowered Participation; Reinventing Urban Democracy*, Princeton University Press
Richards, P. (1995) 'Participatory Rural Appraisal: A quick and dirty critique.' *PLA Notes* 24, 1995. Online: www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla_notes/pla_backissues/24.html#AB2

[6] This is a four-year pilot programme largely funded by the UK government. See the web resources section for further information.

Theme 1: Citizens' juries and similar participatory processes: strengths and weaknesses

The people's vision – UK and Indian reflections on *Prajateerpu*

by KAVITHA KURUGANTI, MICHEL PIMBERT and TOM WAKEFORD

Introduction

At a meeting held at the UK Houses of Parliament on 18 March 2002, a smallholder from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh stood up to launch a report. She gave a personal account of a participation process called *Prajateerpu* (Telegu – meaning 'people's verdict', see Box 1) that remains controversial even as we write, six years later.

Anjamma stated that she and her fellow jurors had concluded that genetically modified (GM) crops would have little foreseeable impact on reducing malnutrition in Andhra Pradesh. The jurors had expressed concerns about the impact that a reliance on artificial fertilisers and pesticides would have on smallholders in the region. They called instead for local self-sufficiency and endogenous development in farming and food, joining a growing global movement for food sovereignty.[1]

The report inspired a political cartoonist for the UK's Guardian newspaper to depict the-then UK Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, as a combine harvester rampaging through the fields, tossing smallholder farmers into the air. Beneath this, a columnist summarised the *Prajateerpu* process, through which Indian smallholder farmers had critiqued the prevailing global elite's vision of food, agriculture and rural development – Vision 2020 (see Box 2).

After the *Prajateerpu* report launch, interviews with Indian smallholder farmer representatives peppered UK news programmes, newspapers and websites. Soon, the director of the UK institute where one of the report's authors was

Member of *Prajateerpu* jury presenting their vision.

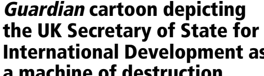
Photo: Sarojini Naidu School

[1] 'Endogenous', meaning 'rising from within'. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endogenous

Dr Vinod Pavarala and colleagues from the University of Hyderabad, India, planning to contact potential members of the jury.

Photo: Sarojini Naidu School

Guardian cartoon depicting the UK Secretary of State for International Development as a machine of destruction.



Cartoon: The Guardian

Overseas aid programme attacked in GM crops row

Clare Short is in the hot seat for funding GM crops in India

Luke Harding in New Delhi and John Vidal

Box 1: What was *Prajateerpu*?

In 2001, a group of smallholder farmers in Andhra Pradesh (AP), India, took part in a participatory exploration of three broad scenarios for the future of food and farming in their region. This participatory process, a modified citizens' jury known as *Prajateerpu*, included an assessment of the potential of genetically modified (GM) crops. The jury was overseen by a panel that included a retired chief judge from the Indian Supreme Court, a senior official from a donor agency and a number of local NGOs.[2] The jury of 19 consisted of mostly *Dalit* or indigenous farmers. Over four days, they cross-questioned 13 witnesses, including representatives of biotechnology companies, state government officials and development experts. Rather than simply accepting or rejecting GM crops in the abstract, the jurors were able to build their own scenario for sustainable and equitable agriculture, and insert elements of the future scenarios to which witnesses had referred.

based was contacted by the minister for international development. Days later, one of the report's two principal authors was suspended, the other disciplined. Although published jointly with Indian organisations, the report was withdrawn by one of the two UK institutes involved. After an outcry by groups in India, where extensive Internet and mainstream media coverage of the report's censorship helped to mobilise a popular campaign, the UK institute lifted its ban. Union threats of collective action in defence of academic freedom, together with interventions by Board members and former directors of the two institutes saw the disciplinary action against the two authors revoked. One of the institute's directors formally apologised.

[2] The role of the oversight panel was to monitor and evaluate the fairness and credibility of the entire process, ensuring in particular that the process was not captured by any vested interests.

Box 2: Vision 2020

Released on India's Republic Day in 1999, Vision 2020 sets out the future of the state of Andhra Pradesh as envisioned by its government – a future in which poverty is eradicated. Vision 2020 seeks to transform **all** areas of social and economic life in the state. It aims to build human resources, focus on high-potential sectors as the engines of growth, and transform governance throughout the state. The UK governmental Department for International Development (DfID) was the major external support agency to the government of AP at the time of *Prajateerpu*. Working with the World Bank, the British government supported a structural adjustment programme for poverty elimination in AP and funded elements of the government's Vision 2020. Both DfID and the World Bank helped the AP government to refocus its spending priorities and divest functions and services in chosen areas. Specific support efforts were made to strengthen the government of AP's capacity to manage the privatisation programme outlined in Vision 2020.

Kavitha Kuruganti, one of three facilitators, facilitating a discussion between a group of women.

Photo: Sarojini Naidu School

Over the following years, two distinct viewpoints on this 'participatory controversy' have emerged:

One group, based in both Andhra Pradesh, India, and in various universities and institutes in the UK, began a participatory review of the process. It was funded by diverse sources including the Dutch development agency (DGIS) and the UK's Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. It involved many UK and Indian partners, four *Prajateerpu* jurors, witnesses and analysts. Because of the level of controversy, the organisers decided to submit the results of this reflection process to an academic journal – resulting in two articles published in 2003 and 2004.

Another, smaller group of analysts associated with the institute which attempted to ban the *Prajateerpu* report, but who were not involved in the hearings, expressed their disapproval of the *Prajateerpu* process in an online forum sponsored by DfID in 2003.[3] Subsequently, the same authors have criticised the process in an online review article (Table 1).

Participation with policy impact

Such enduring controversy about the process cannot be divorced from the controversial nature of the jury's conclusions about food and farming, and of the jury itself.

Most *Prajateerpu* participants were women. All except one jury member also came from castes and indigenous ethnic groups of the lowest social status in Indian society. Brought together from throughout Andhra Pradesh by researchers at Hyderabad University, they heard three clearly articulated visions of the future. The first depicted life under Vision 2020 – the World Bank and UK-aid funded plan. The second looked at the export of organic crops. The third explored a path of self-reliance, promoted by Indian philosophers such as Mahatma Gandhi.

Sitting in a large tent-like structure on the edge of a small village, they heard from people with officially-recognised expert knowledge on the different visions. Aided by three facilitators – all native Telegu speakers – jurors questioned these 'witnesses' and slowly formulated their own vision for food and farming in their native state of Andhra Pradesh.[4]

GM crops and industrial farming are high on the political agenda in India and the UK. The jury's decision to reject GM as an answer to the problems of smallholder farmers received global newspaper coverage. Members of Parliament in both the UK and Andhra Pradesh considered the issues serious enough to table questions to their governments, both formally and informally.

The analysis presented in the 2002 report on the *Prajateerpu* process re-enforced the jurors' critique of government and corporate development policies, describing the UK government's approach to citizen participation in the state as ill-conceived and inadequate. *Prajateerpu*'s conclusions displeased senior DfID officials. They made an official

[3] Scoones, I. & Thompson, J. (Guest Editors) *PLA Notes* 46 *Participatory processes for policy change*, February 2003, www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla_notes/pla_backissues/46.html. These edited proceedings from the online forum were not, to the authors' knowledge, subject to anonymous peer review.

[4] For full details on how jurors were selected, presentation of different visions, safeguards for quality and validity and design of the deliberative process see Pimbert, M. & Wakeford, T. (2003) '*Prajateerpu*, power and knowledge: The politics of participatory action research in development. Part I: Context, process and safeguards.' *Action Research*, 1(2), 184–207 and Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defence of Diversity, 2003 (a coalition of over 140 grassroots groups, lead by the Deccan Development Society) Description of the *Prajateerpu* process (www.ddsindia.org.in/www/default.asp) and video www.ddsindia.org.in/www/videos/*Prajateerpu*.wmv.

Partha Dasgupta of Syngenta, presenting to the jury on GM crops, with simultaneous interpretation into the Telegu language.

Photo: Sarojini Naidu School

complaint to the UK research institutes involved, backed up by informal contact from the Secretary of State.

Five challenges and dilemmas

Engaging with power

Critics have suggested that the *Prajateerpu* organisers did not make sufficient efforts to involve some of the key stakeholders, such as DfID, the World Bank, the Government of AP and biotechnology corporations in the process. Yet these, and many other relevant organisations, were contacted up to a year before *Prajateerpu* took place. DfID agreed to be on the oversight panel, but withdrew before the hearings began. The World Bank declined to take part. But the AP government and Syngenta – the biotech firm which created 'Vitamin A rice' – cooperated fully, providing witnesses and independent observers.

Some critics have suggested that *Prajateerpu's* organisers should have criticised DfID's citizen participation programme through private channels, for a less confrontational outcome. However, as several articles in this special issue confirm, documents critical of government practice have a habit of disappearing into bureaucratic 'black holes', while the bad practice they expose continues. Given our commitment to opening up political space with marginalised smallholders, who were under immediate threat of loss of livelihoods from the DfID-backed Vision 2020 policies, the authors and Indian coalition members felt a duty to publish the reforms suggested by the jurors. The evidence gathered subsequently suggests that the stark recommendations of *Prajateerpu* had impact because – not in spite – of the very public debate they initiated.

A long-term strategy

Those working with marginalised smallholders in India have suggested that *Prajateerpu* should have been followed up further similar events in the region, drawing out themes highlighted by the original jurors. IIED convened two workshops to this end in 2002 and 2003. However, the limited human and financial resources available prevented a significant roll-out of the programme. DfID and corporate biotechnologists have had opportunity and the resources to undertake such inclusive participatory processes, and the jurors of *Prajateerpu* have sought greater inclusion from such authorities.

All those involved in organising the original *Prajateerpu* hearings have expressed regret at the lack of much-needed scaling up of *Prajateerpu* in the state. However, IIED has made links between similar processes in Zimbabwe (via Practical Action, Cooper *et al*., 2003) and Mali (see Bryant, this issue) in which one or other authors here have been involved. This has allowed transformative learning between groups of smallholder farmers (including jurors) from different continents who experience similar threats to their rural livelihoods.

Consensus

Deliberation inevitably involves dialogue and often dissent. Dilemmas relating to the extent to which participatory processes drive those involved towards consensus or divergence are familiar to practitioners in this field. Yet, a small group of critics have persistently accused *Prajateerpu*'s organisers of 'imposing simplistic consensus' by 'editing out dissenting views and aiming only for a singular conclusion', thus avoiding 'contention and disagreement'. Yet there does not seem any evidence to support this view (see Table 1). Far from accusing the organisers of such participatory ventriloquism, *Prajateerpu*'s broadly-based oversight panel expressed satisfaction at the fairness and competence of the process.

The event happened in the glare of considerable national publicity, and was therefore potentially influential. This was obvious to all who took part and may have influenced how jurors framed their recommendations. Assisted by the local facilitators (one is a co-author of this article), the jurors may have chosen to focus on the topics they considered most important and on which there was complete agreement, such as the rejection of GM crops, support for diverse, low

external-input farming, and opposition to land consolidation and contract farming.

Critics who accused the organisers of manipulating the jury would have more justification if the jurors had merely chosen one of the three visions for food and agriculture on offer. Instead, assisted by three independent facilitators, they built a vision of their own, under the watchful eyes of the oversight panel.

To anticipate criticisms about the basis of their vision, the organisers could have interviewed jurors after the hearings in order to, in the words of the critics 'delineate the different strands of argumentation'. But *Prajateerpu* was an exercise in participatory **action** research. To turn it into an exercise where academic analysis overtook the juror's own words in public prominence would undermine the very principles of participatory learning and action.

Reporting on *Prajateerpu*

The people involved in organising *Prajateerpu* included representatives of various Indian social movements and international non-government organisations. They decided that the report should be written by the two organisers based in well-resourced research institutions who had the time and resources to analyse and write. Having two Europeans – one French, one British – as authors of a report about a participatory process in India can be seen as problematic, however much local people were involved. Yet the practical alternative was to have no written report and for the process to be misrepresented, or its impact otherwise diminished.

The authors exchanged numerous drafts of the report with their Indian collaborators so that the latter could validate its contents and style. However, critics implied that the *Prajateerpu* report imported the political agendas of European-based authors. But this judgement misrepresents the sophistication of debates on these issues in India, and is contradicted by a close analysis of the publicly accessible complete video archive of the process. By contrast, critics who passed judgement on the process did so in the absence of first-hand observation and without accessing the video archive. With much, perhaps most, of the critics' funding coming from DfID, the agency the *Prajateerpu* report challenged, their credibility as disinterested analysts is open to doubt.

The significance of the 'people's verdict'

Prajateerpu was unprecedented in the history of policy-making in India. And it continues to be a unique process.

Box 3: Food sovereignty

Defined by Via Campesina as:

'… the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food Sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to food and to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production.'

But debates on immediate and key decisions being made in food, agriculture and rural futures were sidelined by an assault on core aspects of the methodology of *Prajateerpu*. It is no coincidence that the strongest attacks came from organisations with the strongest commitment to a vision for food and agriculture that was undermined by the conclusions reached by nineteen rural smallholders and labourers.

By publicly raising questions about the quality of the participatory process in *Prajateerpu*, government agencies temporarily sidelined the united message emerging from the jurors' vision, which was based unequivocally on food sovereignty (see Box 3). In the long term, however, the process has contributed to a re-assessment of technological fixes to agricultural production, of which GM crops form a crucial element. The most politically significant of these is the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). The report concluded that 'data on some GM crops indicate highly variable yield gains in some places and declines in others'. It did not rule out any potential future benefit from GM crops, but as Practical Action commented when the report was released in April 2008, 'the IAASTD rightly concludes that small-scale farmers and ecological methods provide the way forward to avert the current food crisis'.

Prajateerpu has led to at least three key areas of learning around participatory processes:

- Potentially influential participatory, action and learning processes can be organised by non-state actors, including those with legitimacy among some of the most marginalised people in society. Inherent in such initiatives is that powerful elites who feel their interests are threatened will usually seek to discredit such processes. Organisers must be highly organised, committed and use a range of advocacy methods to enable the discussion of controversial issues with diverse communities.

Table 1: Two views of the same participatory process

Area of analysis	Comments made in a 2007 report by a group of researchers not present at *Prajateerpu* (Stirling *et al.*, 2007).	Response of the authors of this article, drawing on a review which included Indian grassroots organisations (IIED, 2004).
Organiser bias	An 'instrumental' process, driven by a concern that poorer farmers would be 'undermined' by new government policies.	A process viewed by an independent panel as fair and balanced, which allowed those normally excluded a space to analyse different perspectives and policy futures.
Biotechnology witness	Monsanto sent a witness who, it is implied, complained about the process.	Syngenta, not Monsanto, sent a witness. No complaint is on record.
Witness complaint	Several witnesses complained of the process being 'rigged'.	Only one witness, a multi-millionaire corporate farmer, complained that there were too many poor farmers on the jury.
UK and Andhra Pradesh state government's response to *Prajateerpu*.	Not analysed, beyond an implication that both governments 'condemned' it.	Government critics in UK and Andhra Pradesh had vested interest in supporting Vision 2020.
Civil society and opinion-formers response to *Prajateerpu*.	Not mentioned.	Widely supported by civil society organisations and some in government. Used to inform the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development.
Reference to analysis that has been anonymously peer-reviewed	None, but authors imply that their own analysis is the most objective. This analysis has not been subject to anonymous peer-review.	Three articles published, all subject to anonymous peer-review. Authors acknowledge that all perspectives can only be partial (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002; 2004).

- Many experts and heads of organisations profess to have ideals that support such inclusive processes. But many also find ways to justify censoring uncomfortable information, or sidelining perspectives of marginalised people, or both, if the conclusions reached are contrary to their interests, their organisational strategy or their own vision of development and political values. Such practices need to be openly confronted and widely publicised. We also need to explore more effective ways of bringing to account individuals and organisations responsible for such abuses of power.
- Broad transnational coalitions of civil society organisations, action-researchers and marginalised groups can contribute to positive social change. It is important to validate grassroots-based analyses of policies that could not otherwise have been made, even if the initial conclusions reached become temporarily suppressed or marginalised. However, to be effective, a clear advocacy and political engagement strategy needs to be firmly in place well before the process begins.

Final reflections

The phrase 'history is written by the victors' is credited to the British wartime leader, Winston Churchill. We are not clear who the victors are, seven years on from the *Prajateerpu* hearings. Although the GoAP was voted out of office in the elections of 2003 – partly because of the very policies on agricultural development condemned by *Prajateerpu*'s jurors – the newly elected state government seems to have maintained the same central thrust of policy as its predecessor. We have few illusions that *Prajateerpu* is anything other than a minor skirmish in a longer term struggle between oppressed peoples and those who subjugate them. Yet it seems clear that *Prajateerpu* did succeed in its limited aim of allowing a rigorous process of co-inquiry with those living and working at the grassroots. It provided valuable input for international scientific and policy-making processes such as IAASTD. Participatory processes can allow people to begin to escape their portrayal by powerful elites as ignorant and dispensable pawns, and enable them to re-cast themselves as experts by experience with the right to influence political decisions.

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THEME SECTION 1

Mali's Farmers' Jury: an attempt to democratise policy-making on biotechnology

by PETER BRYANT

Introduction

Towards the end of January 2006, 45 Malian farmers gathered in Sikasso to deliberate the role of genetically modified (GM) crops in the future of the country's agriculture. This farmers' jury was known as l'ECID (*Espace Citoyen d'Interpellation Démocratique* – Citizen's Space for Democratic Deliberation). It set out to give farmers, who have been previously marginalised from policy-making processes, the opportunity to share knowledge and make a series of recommendations and influence future policy-making. This was an experiment in deliberative democracy, and a brave attempt to challenge the hegemony of pro-GM discourses. L'ECID represented an attempt to amplify alternative viewpoints, the voices of those rarely asked for opinions, and the perspectives of the people most profoundly affected by agricultural biotechnology. This article is the result of a visit to Mali carried out some five months after l'ECID took place, and focuses on examining the jury's impact on local decision makers.[1]

[1] A longer version of this article is published in *Biotechnology Policy in Africa,* Clark, N.G., Mugabe, J. and Smith, J. with Bryant P., Harsh M. and Hirvonen, M., (2007). ACTS Press: Nairobi, ISBN 9966-41-148-8.

"The farmers agreed unanimously to reject GM crops and instead 'proposed a package of recommendations to strengthen traditional agricultural practice and support local farmers'."

The Farmers' Jury, Mali, January 2006

Between 25th–29th January 2006, 45 farmers from the Sikasso region in southern Mali took part in l'ECID, a Malian deliberative process strongly influenced by the citizens' jury model. Over the past 20 years there has been widespread use of this model in the UK and US. It has been used by some as an attempt to give those previously marginalised from policy-making a voice. Others have used it as a way of finding out opinions on an issue of public significance from (what they have claimed is) a representative sample of citizens. Most of them have a number of features in common:

- bringing together a diverse group of 20 to 30 citizens for an in-depth deliberation;
- involving a number of information providers who offer a further range of perspectives to the group;

The women's group at work during the deliberation sessions. The jury selection process emphasised the need for equal representation of different farmers, in particular women and small scale producers.

Photo: Michel Pimbert

• producing a set of recommendations; and finally
• the presence of an oversight panel of key stakeholders who check the rigour of the process.

In Mali l'ECID aimed to enable farmers:
• to have a better understanding of GM crops and the risks and advantages they carry;
• to confront viewpoints and cross-examine expert witnesses, both in favour and against GM crops and the industrialisation of agriculture; and
• to formulate recommendations for policies on GM and the future of farming in Mali.

L'ECID was organised by the Regional Assembly of Sikasso, with methodological support from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in London and the *Réseau Interdisciplinaire Biosécurité* (RIBios) of the *Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement* in Geneva. Project funding was provided by the Swiss Development

Table 1: Executive Committee members of the ECID Steering Group

Lyegoli Mamadou TEMBELE, Assemblée Régionale
Mamadou TOGOLA, Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER)
Souleymane OUATTARA, Centre Djoliba
Issiaka DEMBELE, Jubilee 2000 CAD/Sikasso
Oumarou SANOGO, Associations des Organisations Professionnelles Paysannes (AOPP)
Youssouf SIDIBE, Compagnie Malienne de Développement des Textiles
Daouda MARIKO, Union Rurale des Radios et Télévisions (URTEL)/ Radio Kene
Boukary BARRY, Kene Conseils
Barbara Bordogna PETRICCIONE, Reseau Interdisciplinaire Biosecurite (RIBios), Switzerland
Michel PIMBERT, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), UK

The question and answer session, during which the jurors cross-examined the expert witnesses.

Photo: Michel Pimbert

Cooperation (SDC) and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS).

A steering group was set up in June 2005 to develop and plan the citizens' jury. This steering group was made of approximately 15 members from various NGOs, unions and government bodies, in addition to the international NGOs providing methodological support (see Table 1).

In keeping with usual citizens' jury methodology, a seven-strong oversight panel was established. It consisted of a well-respected ex-Minister and representatives from four international NGOs. Firstly, in 2005, the steering committee visited each of the seven districts (*cercles*) in the region of Sikasso to explain the process to local actors and to discuss and agree with them their role. Secondly, it commissioned an information guide on GM for the participants, to provide information before the process of deliberation commenced. The guide was sent to both pro- and anti-GM experts for comments.

The Sikasso region has a population of more than 1.6 million inhabitants. The steering committee agreed a selection process to identify 45 farmers/producers from the seven regional districts. The selection criteria aimed to ensure that at least 30% of participants were women, and that all four categories of farmer/producer used by the cotton company CMDT were represented, as well as those affiliated to peasant organisations and unions (large, small and medium producers as well as a women's group).[2] Jury members also needed to have a capacity to listen, communicate and 'report back the information to the actors in the districts'. Meetings in each district produced a list of 45 participants, which was approved by the steering committee who checked all of the selection criteria had been satisfied.

[2] *Compagnie Malienne de Développement des Textiles*.

"The jury was not only a tool for activism: it acted as a transformative element for the jurors themselves. The farmers' jury had an impact on farmers, on politicians, on people both for and against GM crops, and finally on the jurors themselves."

The oversight panel agreed a list of 25 'experts' who were invited to present to l'ECID. Ten refused or were unable to take part. Participants gathered for four days to hear presentations from the 'experts', including farmers from France, South Africa and India, government researchers from Burkina Faso and Mali, scientists and various NGOs. After each session, participants were able to pose questions and discuss together what they had heard. After the final deliberative session, participants were able to ask any of the experts to return and answer further questions. Eight experts were invited back. The participants worked in groups (based upon the CMDT farmer classification) to produce a set of final recommendations.

The farmers agreed unanimously to reject GM crops and instead 'proposed a package of recommendations to strengthen traditional agricultural practice and support local farmers'. Such recommendations included:

- a proposed agenda for research;
- approaches to farmer learning;
- a vision of organic farming;
- measures to tackle biodiversity; and
- a suggested list of decision makers who should receive the recommendations.

The recommendations were passed on to the Sikasso Regional Assembly on January 29th 2006.[3]

L'ECID: the impact

It is too early to judge any long-term impact of the hosting of this process. However, some five months after the event, key decision makers, process facilitators and a number of farmer jurors identified some very real impacts. It appears that the approval of legislation which needs to be in place before GM crops can be introduced had been indefinitely delayed as a direct result of l'ECID. This suggestion came from both anti-GM campaigners and most convincingly from key pro-GM decision makers. Commenting on his frustration over his continuous efforts to take legislation to the Council of Ministers, which would allow the introduction of GM crops first through field testing, one civil servant revealed:

> *…the delay has been because of the jury. It has been a great impact, this has caused a problem.*

This opinion was verified by the coordinator of an International Biosafety project:

> *Everyone is pointing at this Citizens Jury in Sikasso… The impact (of l'ECID) has been very negative… Here (in Mali) things are stalling because of the misinformation made worse by the jury.*

This is a significant achievement for l'ECID, for without such legislative approval it is very difficult for GM crops to be introduced.

There was one very clear indication of the role of l'ECID in raising awareness of the issue amongst politicians. It was interesting to learn of a request from the Sikasso Regional Assembly for a repeat of the Bamako l'ECID follow-up workshop (held in July 2006) for members of the Regional Assembly. At this workshop, five of the farmer jurors made presentations summing up their deliberations. This was followed by an explanation of the process and lengthy discussion. This development must be considered in the context of the economic importance of the region (as the main agricultural producer) and also in the context of the power of the Regional Assembly after decentralisation. In the words of a senior civil servant:

> *Because Sikasso is so important the government is scared to go forward.*

The President of the Sikasso Regional Assembly, Kokozié Traoré, confirmed that the jury had improved his knowledge – and that if the jury's opinion is no GM, then so shall his opinion be. He finished the interview with the following:

> *We are under great pressure to accept the OGM (Genetically Modified Organisms) – but if it is accepted, will the farmers be able to afford the seed? But who brings the seed and the fertiliser, who will own this? It will not be us.*

The critics, drawing upon their own disciplines,

[3] A more detailed explanation of the methodology followed and the recommendations produced is given in ARdS, 2006.

complained about the lack 'of scientific basis' and attempted to rubbish the methodology. One senior civil servant commented:

The anti-GM people gave information without giving the source. From a scientific view point this is not fair.

Another key pro-GM stakeholder stated:

It's easy to scare them rather than give them the science based information.

Those searching for evidence of an approach to participation that is capable of going beyond the rhetoric of the discourse, and leading instead to a transformative process which challenges power bases, may be heartened by the impacts listed above. However, less heartening is the feeling that in fact l'ECID's main impact will be only to delay the introduction of GM crops to Mali. One Mali-based anti-GM campaigner stated:

OGM (Genetically Modified Organisms) will come – all we can do is delay it.

Ibrahim Coulibaly, CNOP (*Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du Mali* – an umbrella organisation representing Malian Farmers' Organisations) also said:

The recommendations will not change the politician's mind or the researcher's, but, it is a kind of warning to these people. Please be careful.

Outlining what he described as the government's new strategy to get GM legislation passed, one senior civil servant said:

They are trying another way. Wait till they (the public) forget about the recommendations and then try again.

The notion that in Mali one of the key decision makers is the farmer is strengthened by the history of powerful political activism and willingness to flex collective muscle as witnessed through the strikes of 1991, 1996 and 2000. It is with this in mind that one of the other main impacts of l'ECID can be seen – that of an increased awareness of the issues around GM crops amongst farmers. One official from a major farmers' organisation commented:

"L'ECID has had a very real impact in Mali, both in terms of stimulating a national debate and ultimately in delaying the introduction of GM crops into the country."

Our association helped choose the members and they then came back and gave us a report. Their report helped us to understand the problem; we then went out to speak to others.

This increased awareness also extended to NGO, union and government representatives. The President of the regional branch of one farmers' organisation commented:

We were not sure what OGM means but the jury helped us make up our mind.

This was reiterated by the President of Sikasso Regional Assembly:

We are happy it (l'ECID) has started to help us understand the issue.

The increased awareness and national impact of the process was undoubtedly assisted by the high level of media interest. Seven local radio stations broadcast the deliberations live every day. Three national newspapers covered the event as did the national TV channel. Many interviewees commented on the role of the media in allowing the debate to be extended from the l'ECID venue to the homes of thousands of Malians.

The jury clearly also built the capacity and confidence of the jurors themselves:

It has given me confidence so I'm now prepared to talk and give the recommendations to ten thousand people or one million people. I will be able to talk to them with my heart. I'm not afraid of this.

We came out with great strength. When you have the recommendations you are powerful, you yourself can become powerful.

I feel very strong because many people back home support us. I am ready to take these recommendations forward.

The process of citizen deliberation and inclusion enjoyed a good media coverage, with all hearings broadcasted live by seven local radio stations in the Sikasso region.

Photo: Michel Pimbert

The jury was not only a tool for activism: it acted as a transformative element for the jurors themselves. The farmers' jury had an impact on farmers, on politicians, on people both for and against GM crops, and finally on the jurors themselves. The jury raised the profile of debate and made people aware of issues to a greater or lesser extent. It provoked responses and it created momentum.

Science, knowledge and citizenship

L'ECID also presents an opportunity to examine the production of scientific knowledge in Mali. It clearly opened up the debate to a wider audience. An official from a farmers' organisation commented:

Usually the debate is at the intellectual level.

A member of l'ECID steering committee said:

The jury permits people to understand the intellectual debate, but this was simplified to allow producers to make the decision.

This broadening of the debate has allowed alternative perspectives to be developed and articulated. Many important issues were grappled with, including:

- ethical and cultural issues around the production of transgenic crops;
- the role of existing organic modes of production;
- the role of women in agriculture; and
- questions of who should be involved in the setting of agricultural research agendas.

Technical fixes became embedded within economic contexts:

What's the point of encouraging us to increase yields with GMOs when we can't get a decent price for what we already produce?

Participants of the citizens' jury reading the newspaper coverage of the event after the first day of hearings.

Photo: Michel Pimbert

Others talked very convincingly of how l'ECID very clearly demonstrated the ability of citizens to contribute to policy-making processes. Ousmane Suy, Chair of the Oversight Panel, offers the following:

> *The success of the exercise proves that decentralised communities and producers are capable of contributing to public policy decisions.*

Such an opinion was also offered by the head of a producers' organisation and a witness at the jury. When asked if he had learnt anything from his involvement in the process, he stated:

> *One thing I discovered was that before going I thought I knew everything in the rural world because I am an intellectual and a farmer; but I realised that the truth is with the people who deal with farming. It has been a humbling truth – I learnt a lot from this process and I realised I didn't know anything. The people who know are the farmers and they've never been to school.*

And from a farmer juror himself:

> *Maybe it's not written in a book but we understand what is a good seed.*

These statements represent a closing of the gap between the expert and the lay, an acknowledgement that different forms and sources of knowledge can be brought together – without having a hierarchy of knowledge.

Inevitably for some, l'ECID represented a threat to a power base that uses knowledge as a means of legitimisation. Interviews with three key scientists (including two from a state agricultural research organisation) revealed an approach to knowledge which saw an ordering of scientific knowledge above other knowledge. One key role player who wished to remain anonymous summed up their feelings as follows:

The final verdict, with farmers' recommendations, is delivered.

Photo: Roger Gaillard

The decree has not been signed and the blockage is due to the lack of information. People are against it because they don't have enough information.

In a classic example of the use of the 'deficit model', (which sees citizens possessing a knowledge deficit which merely needs to be filled with expert knowledge), one scientist (who wished to remain anonymous) sums up the role of farmers in the knowledge production process:

If they have the right information they can make the right choice.

The same opinion also comes from a retired senior scientist who also wished to remain anonymous:

If the farmers were better educated they would ask them (the government) to sign the decree.

One scientist commented that the main learning point for scientists was to reinforce their communication strategy so that, using the deficit model, farmer knowledge could be improved. In none of the interviews with scientists did a single one of them admit to gaining new knowledge from the farmers.

Conclusion: from deficit to dialogue

L'ECID has had a very real impact in Mali, both in terms of stimulating a national debate and ultimately in delaying the introduction of GM crops into the country. It presents an example of decision-making in action and raises questions

regarding inclusion and exclusion and the privileging of knowledge:

- how do we build dialogue when not everyone seeks dialogue?
- how do we avoid continuing to privilege elite or expert forms of expertise over citizen or lay knowledge?

However, in this case study, many of these questions are rendered moot when one considers the refusal of Syngenta, Monsanto and USAID to present their own knowledge for 15 minutes – let alone enter a potentially more threatening deliberation over a few days on a more equal footing. The refusal of one key scientist to attend the Bamako l'ECID follow-up workshop on the basis that it would purely give legitimacy to the process does not bode well.

One cannot help but feel that legitimacy is built through dialogue. Withholding dialogue is a way to de-legitimise a process. Active, engaged dialogue provides a two-way generation of legitimacy – without it, the opposite happens. Internalising this requires an acceptance of other perspectives, other objectives and other forms of knowledge. Citizens' juries are not the only way of introducing participatory democracy into decision-making regarding agricultural biotechnologies in Africa. What the case of Mali does do, however, is allow us to ask questions about who should be involved in decision-making of this sort, how real dialogue between scientists and citizens can be promoted, and how dialogue can help us build better agricultural technologies for Africa's producers and consumers.

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NOTES
The full report of l'ECID in addition to regular updates is available on the IIED website: www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/ag_liv_projects/verdict.html

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The UK Nanojury as 'upstream' public engagement

by JASBER SINGH

"The Nanojury was an attempt to allow open discussion of the policies and developments in nanotechnologies through a deliberative jury process."

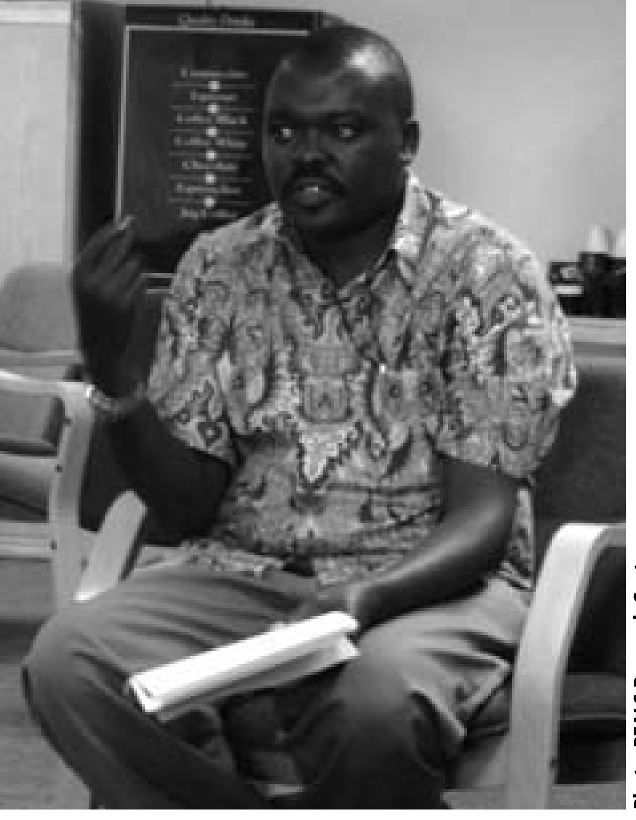
Introduction

In government and commercial circles, developments in science, particularly molecular-scale and nanotechnologies, are seen as crucial for Britain's economic growth. Yet public confidence in governance and scientific innovation is acknowledged to be low.

The crisis of confidence in scientific progress among the UK public, combined with calls for greater public participation in governance, has led to what Alan Irwin has recently documented as a strategic shift in science-society relations. He quotes from a European Commission document, which describes how supposedly 'innocent' citizens are increasingly being actively sought to 'express their views about the possible directions of science and its impacts on society' (Irwin, 2006). The increased commitment to engage the public in science-related policy- and decision-making has been widely welcomed as a step in the right direction. Policy makers consider that public engagement will bring transparency and openness into decision-making on technological developments, and will help to address public mistrust in science. Initiatives in the National Health Service since 1998 have also followed this trend (see review of *Citizens at the Centre*, In Touch, this issue).

In the 1970s, sociologist Dorothy Nelkin reported that much of what passed for participation in governance could best be understood as attempts by the powerful to co-opt the public (Nelkin, 1975). Thirty years later, the worldwide controversy on genetically modified (GM) crops indicated that consultation processes occurring **after** a technology has been developed and commercially released can be used by those in power to create an illusion of public consent for the new technology. This has led some people to question the wisdom of UK public engagement initiatives such as GM Nation.[1] Following the GM debate, some have suggested that all such engagement should occur upstream – that is before the technology has been developed – as this would allow the technology to be **shaped** through public involvement (Willis and

[1] See e.g. Genewatch's report 'GM Nation? The UK's public debate on GM crops'. www.genewatch.org/sub-531175



Grace Maiso, who provided information about the effect of new technologies on rural communities in Uganda.

Photo: PEALS Research Centre

Three members of the Nanojury drafting their recommendations.

Photo: PEALS Research Centre

Wilsdon, 2004). Furthermore, advocates of public engagement state that it 'enables a society to discuss and clarify the public value of science' (Stilgoe *et al*., 2005).

The Nanojury was initially conceived as one of a string of public engagement initiatives that heralded upstream engagement in the post-GM era. Along with many other public engagement processes which focus on new technologies, the Nanojury provided a public space to debate issues that surround nanotechnology before the technology was fully developed or, in most cases, widely commercially available.[2]

The Nanojury process

Initiators and organisers

The idea of organising a Nanojury process came from Doug Parr of Greenpeace UK, together with materials scientist Mark Welland, of Cambridge University's Nanoscience Centre. Greenpeace has a history of protest around GM and other scientific innovations and is traditionally sceptical of new government and business-led development. Rather than simply taking an oppositional stance, the pressure group has developed sophisticated critiques of certain scientific developments led by government and big business, to evaluate (mostly Western) benefits and costs. In assessing nanotechnology, Greenpeace sought to pose questions such as:

- Who is shaping the agenda on nanotechnology?
- Who will it benefit?
- Will it improve the lives of the many?
- Is it pro-poor?
- What will be the effect on the environment?

Both Doug Parr and Mark Welland were keen to adopt an approach that stimulated debate and encouraged public participation in the issues surrounding nanotechnology. The UK Guardian newspaper became involved as the project's media partner. This led to the collaboration with PEALS (Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences Research Centre) of Newcastle University, which has been convening public engagement processes since the late 1990s.

Doug Parr was particularly keen to develop a process that could highlight the power issues surrounding scientific development. He believed that nanotechnology would make a good case study. In particular, he expected the process would enable an analysis that could highlight where the power in the development of science is concentrated – for instance, in funding bodies such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and research councils. The Nanojury was an attempt to allow open discussion of the policies and developments in nanotechnologies through a deliberative jury process.

The design of the Nanojury

Whatever the rhetoric that surrounds them, the vast majority of citizens' juries in the UK have been commissioned by

[2] See online resources section, this issue.

decision makers primarily to provide social intelligence for policy makers. So no power is ceded to jurors or their process (see Kashefi and Keene, Haq, this issue). As a result, consultation fatigue is rife across the UK. Many community leaders and workers are reluctant to take part, having experienced decision makers' reluctance to act on citizens' recommendations. The PEALS team considered it vital to organise the process in such a way that it resonated for people and was rooted in their prime concerns.

The two-way street engagement process for the Nanojury took place in Calderdale, West Yorkshire. It involved a first phase with a bottom-up process, where members of the jury identified the issues that concerned them. In the second, top-down part of the process, nanotechnology was specified as a focus of concern by the funders and organisers of the process. The Nanojury was a 12-week process with six weeks dedicated to the bottom-up approach (see Box 1). The jurors' chosen topic was young people and exclusion. They heard evidence from youth workers, detached community workers, drug rehabilitation workers and senior police officers. During the second six weeks, participants went on to discuss the dictated topic of nanotechnology. When the deliberations were complete, the jurors collectively produced recommendations, including a short drama on the participant-led topic and on nanotechnology. A separate film was also released by PEALS at a launch of the jury's recommendations in London in September 2005.[3]

Reflections on the Nanojury

The two-way street style of engagement, with two separate issues and processes running consecutively, provided critical insights into the nature and quality of the jury process, and in particular the role of organisers in defining and influencing the process, participation and outcomes. In the jury on youth issues, the organisers played the role of a critical friend, and facilitated finding appropriate witnesses in conjunction with the jurors. During the nanotechnology component of the jury process, the organisers had a more powerful status, choosing the witnesses who were to take part and thereby framing the process, the quality of the co-enquiry and the types of questions asked.

The nanotechnology process gave the jurors little more than a passive role. The organisers decided which expert witnesses the jurors should hear. This limited the range and substance of the knowledge to be debated, unlike the first phase of the jury process on young people and exclusion.

Box 1: The Nanojury process

To recruit a diverse group of people – 25 in total – the PEALS team selected some jury members randomly from the electoral roll, and others from a variety of community organisations in West Yorkshire. 'Expert' witnesses – for, against or ambivalent on issues relating to nanotechnologies – were invited to share their perspectives with the jury. Each witness talked for up to 15 minutes, and then jurors were free to ask for clarification on any of the points made. When the witness left the room, groups of jurors worked with a facilitator to discuss the issues raised and produce questions for the witness. The witness was then called back to answer their questions, in an open space for dialogue and debate, facilitated to ensure that everyone had their say. After hearing all the witnesses, the jurors developed a series of recommendations on the development of nanotechnologies.

Power relations between organisers and jury members pose a challenge to the future design of public engagement processes. Organisers do provide a link between the jury and policy makers. But at the same time the dynamic between organisers and the jury needs to be more interactive, less rigid and engineered. As Davies and her co-authors suggest in *Citizens at the Centre*, 'in seeking to instate citizen deliberation in a context of handling strategic issues of policy direction, clarifying the grounds on which the citizens are being asked to speak – creating jointly with them, an expertise space… is fundamental' (Davies *et al*., 2006).[4]

Our reflection on the Nanojury is that the range of organisers created a complex dynamic, with differing claims on how the Nanojury process should be conducted. How successfully these multiple agendas achieved the wider objective of democratising science requires further analysis by jurors, facilitators and others.

Critical reflections on upstream engagement

Upstream engagement such as the Nanojury can open up the discussion around emerging technology. Through the Nanojury, the jurors gained insights into where and how decisions regarding nanotechnology are made, and were able to comment on the developments. In this respect the Nanojury opened up the policy arena on nanotechnology to the public. What is unclear, however, is the influence that the Nanojury has had on policy development. As it stands, it is up to the power holders in business and government to voluntarily 'take on' the findings from the jury; there is no direct accountability to respect their recommendations and perspectives. The DTI's promise, made in September 2005, to provide a response to the Nanojury's provisional recom-

[3] Available online via www.nanojury.org.uk

[4] Reviewed in this issue, In Touch section, p.138.

"Power relations between organisers and jury members pose a challenge to the future design of public engagement processes."

mendations 'in the short term' has neither been fulfilled, nor its absence explained.[5] The jurors and organisers of the Nanojury would welcome a response by the DTI to the Nanojury's provisional recommendations – and to be informed how the public involvement via the Nanojury has influenced policy and development in the nanotechnology field.[6]

Two 'one-way streets' – science and society

Science policy makers claim to respond to the problems and needs of society. However, if they cannot hear the voices from the ground, how can they direct their research to meet those problems? Jurors mentioned that they were concerned about crime and the state of education and drug use, especially among excluded young people. In this context, it is these views and issues, not just debate about high-tech futuristic developments, which should be helping to inform the science-policy agenda. Yet the mutual engagement encouraged by the Nanojury failed to materialise on the side of policy makers. While scientists and policy makers took part in the process to encourage non-specialists to engage with their spheres of work, these experts missed an opportunity to be part of a mutual learning process on issues on which local people had developed their own expertise and wanted urgent policy changes.

A major lesson from this dual engagement process concerns the science-society divide. Some of those involved in commissioning the Nanojury seemed to perceive a neat distinction between scientific and social issues, and gave more significance to the jurors' perspectives on social matters. Upstream engagement can give the veneer of involving the public in governance of technology, while key concerns about the direction in which science is taking society, and how to reorient science towards fulfilling our social and human needs, are not addressed by the current government agenda.

Towards a community development model

The Nanojury succeeded in ensuring that people living in an area of recent economic decline had an opportunity to determine an issue on which they wanted action. The urgent concerns they raised were more directly related to their locality. Some jurors certainly seemed to us to be demanding that future technological progress should be grounded in the values of community development. We believe that the jurors would not have been able to draw such a conclusion if it were not for the two-way street engagement process.

It is important that the Nanojury experience is presented to highlight the political dangers of framing issues solely around technology, rather than human and environmental needs. The jury, and participatory initiatives in general, are subtle and intimate processes that touch the lives of the people they seek to involve. With such intimacy, it is crucial that engagement is done respectfully and that its practitioners show themselves to be acting in solidarity with the lives of all those who are participants in the process (Dean, 1996). Upstream public engagement fails to holistically engage with the public in this way.

Moving out of the polluted stream

It doesn't matter how far you move upstream if the stream is polluted – that is, if it is unable to meet the needs of the people and if it is weak on issues of justice. Will upstream public engagement continue to be a force in policy development and continue to foster public mistrust in science? There is an urgent need to move beyond simplistic upstream-downstream thinking, with its unfortunate connotations of gravity-driven inevitability.

Initiatives are needed that move into community centres, youth clubs, places of worship, pubs, football pitches, parent and toddler groups – to where the people are and where they have created communities. The Nanojury did move into these community spaces and heard what people needed, but most nanotechnology specialists, social scientists and policy makers only listened to the discussions directly about nanotechnology.

We need to learn this and other lessons from the Nanojury in order to build diverse strategies to overcome the science-society divide. One way we could do this is by adopting a community development model, a model which identifies the needs of people and attempts to respond to these needs. If we want to see developments in science that are accepted and of real value to the public, then we must learn from the community development model and identify the needs of the community. Past attempts at science shops – particularly in the Netherlands and Denmark – have, in part, adopted this strategy, as have participatory crop

[5] http://nanotechweb.org/articles/news/4/9/14, Institute of Physics Publishing, London.
[6] See article in Nanotechweb.org, 'NanoJury gives its verdict.' 27th September 2005: http://nanotechweb.org/cws/article/tech/23208.

Table 1: Differences between a standard model of upstream engagement and a community development or co-inquiry approach

Upstream engagement	Community co-inquiry
Participants intended to be a cross-section of a particular population or region, often at random.	Participants chosen non-randomly to be fully inclusive of groups that experience oppression or marginalisation.
Lay people (i.e. non-specialists) invited to discuss a potential scientific or technological development pre-determined by the organisers via the facilitators.	Mixture of specialists and non-specialists begin by discussing what issues matter to them in their lives and what they'd like to change, without any imposition of ideas from the organisers or facilitators.
Non-specialists asked to reach judgements, having been presented with scientific 'facts' from specialists.	The perspectives of non-specialists and specialists are valued equally, as they all draw on rich experience and are open to be debated by the group.
Specialists act merely as informers of non-specialists.	Specialists and non-specialists work with citizens on an equal footing in reaching conclusions.
Process happens in facilitated sessions totalling around twenty to fifty hours, usually spread over a few days or weeks.	Open-ended process that continues for as long as participants remain interested.
Form of output (usually a report) determined by funder and/or facilitator.	Form of output decided jointly between, funder, facilitators and participants.

breeding programmes in India and elsewhere (Pimbert, 1994).[7]

The community development model we propose (see Table 1) should ensure that proposed solutions are analysed in relation to current political reality and that solutions are shaped by a co-inquiry with the people they are meant to benefit. It should be accountable and open to interrogation and the outcome should change if required. The technology's objectives should be co-produced between specialists and the non-specialist members of the public.

For instance, a recent community x-change experiment brought people together to discuss and find solutions to climate change (Eady, Singh, Taylor-Gee, Wakeford, article 6, this issue). It ensured that there was community and expert analysis on climate change, but that these analyses and areas of knowledge were exchanged. It emerged that climate change could only be challenged if solutions were integrated into solving community-defined problems, such as feelings of powerlessness and a lack of collective meeting centres. A community co-inquiry model would use people's experiences as a valuable tool in shaping solutions to development, not keep solutions to problems in isolated boxes labelled 'science' or 'society'.

[7] See www.scienceshops.org

Final thoughts

The Nanojury gained media attention as a pioneering process of upstream engagement. The BBC *Today Programme* was so impressed they commissioned their own citizens' jury from PEALS that focussed on the issue of youth crime and respect.[8] But the Nanojury did more than just open up a new area of science to public deliberation. With its dual process, it has highlighted the limitations of public engagement as the developing technology is discussed in isolation from the main concerns of people's everyday lives (see also Eady, Singh, Taylor-Gee, Wakeford, article 6, this issue). It appears that science development occurs in isolation to people's everyday concerns.

As this journal was going to press, we noticed that a leading UK university was advertising for a public engagement officer whose job was to 'undertake public relations on behalf of stem-cell researchers'. With the growing momentum of upstream engagement, the experiences of the Nanojury should serve as a gentle reminder of the need to ensure that public engagement is not a expensive public opinion survey, or worse a marketing exercise, but a worthy attempt to strive for democracy.[9]

[8] See: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/reports/politics/citizenjury_reading_20050908.shtml
[9] See e.g. http://practicalaction.org/?id=technology_democracy and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_engagement

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Citizens' juries in Burnley, UK: from deliberation to intervention

by ELHAM KASHEFI and CHRIS KEENE

Introduction

This article describes the experience of two innovative community-based citizens' juries that took place in Burnley, Lancashire, in northern England. Jury One was the first citizens' jury to be commissioned and part-funded by a community organisation for the benefit of the local community.[1] Local residents chose the topic of most concern, chaired the process and had input into process development. Over three months, the jury discussed the problem of drug-related burglaries in their neighbourhoods. They made over 80 recommendations on a broad range of topics such as housing, community safety, prevention, transport, parenting, service provision and support options for users. Although the process had great value for the community and professionals who participated, the jury's report led to no tangible outcomes in terms of changes in policy or practice. Despite prior agreement from key agencies, the agencies took no action because they did not have to – from the outset the process had been set up by us as an activist intervention in the exercise of power, but outside of local governance processes.

[1] The majority of the funding for Jury One came from the research project that author Elham Kashefi was working on, which was itself funded by a national sustainable development organisation.

Figure 1: Map of UK showing Burnley

"We wanted the jury to be an activist tool that could lead to change at the local level, to open up possibilities for professionals to come face-to-face with people experiencing the effects of their policies."

Two years later, a second citizens' jury was held in the area, this time considering what would improve the health and well-being of people living in the area.[2] Local activists working through a multi-agency steering group initiated this jury. They brought together professionals working in key agencies with local residents and grassroots community workers to develop and steer the process. Jurors met over one week and made more than 100 recommendations on a diverse range of topics relating to health and well-being. Contrary to experience with Jury One, many of their recommendations were acted upon. In particular, an innovative healthcare centre was opened in the area, with outreach and community work as its core values. The success of this jury rested on many factors, but most importantly, it may have been because there was a match between the issue of importance to local people and government targets for a reduction in health inequalities. As an insider project, this jury was networked into local governance processes.

About Burnley

Burnley is an industrial town situated in a valley in the north of England, which is populated by 88,000 people. Within the six square miles that form the urban part of Burnley are some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. About a quarter of the population and households in Burnley live in areas classified in the top 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. South West Burnley (SWB) itself covers a small part of inner Burnley, and is a mixture of social housing, private rented terraced houses and owner-occupier accommodation a few miles from the town centre. About half of residents in the area live below the poverty line and a quarter are said to have long-term limiting illness. Until recently, much of the housing stock was considered unfit for habitation.

[2] Jury Two was commissioned by a state-funded health agency working at the local level.

Context for our work

The context within which we developed these juries needs a little explanation. When New Labour was elected in 1997, public agencies began to be mandated to involve the public in service planning and provision. Professionals had previously been trained to use their expertise to make decisions. They were now being asked to consult the public. They had to change their way of working from being insular and inward looking to being open, transparent and accountable. Not only was the public to be consulted on service planning but they were also to be asked to judge the performance of these agencies. This was a huge culture shift which, ten years on, is still far from complete. Nevertheless, social inclusion and public consultation became essential requirements for agency action. The demand for consultation work was responded to by the creation of what we can only describe as a consultation industry. A plethora of consultation methods, standardised toolkits and do-it-yourself manuals started to appear to deliver 'the' public view at a competitive price. The problem with these processes was that they delivered the public view in a sanitised and unproblematic package that could be used by service managers and policy makers as part of a tick-box process without regard to quality, effect or content.

During this period, the London-based think-tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), was developing citizens' juries as a way of reinvigorating democratic participation. In the mid-90s IPPR imported a version of citizens' juries from the Jefferson Centre in Minneapolis in the US. It promoted them as processes by which the public view could be obtained in an objective and scientific way. These juries were piloted in the UK by IPPR, the Kings Fund Policy Institute and the Local Government Management Board. They decided to pilot these juries in the UK and their process involved randomly recruiting 12-16 people to meet for 3-5 days to discuss a specific issue of concern to the jury commissioners (such as health agencies and local authorities). In these juries, expert witnesses are invited to make presentations and answer questions. At the end, jurors vote on the question and are given time to present their recommendations to the commissioners.

The IPPR model was a research tool, used to find out what people thought about an issue of relevance to the commissioners. Expert testimony was central to these processes. The construction of citizens here was very much as uninformed lay people who needed to be presented with information from experts in order to make rational and informed decisions. Also, in pursuance of 'objective'

Table 1: Contrasts in underlying assumptions of different models of citizens' juries

Underlying assumptions of IPPR juries	Underlying assumptions of SWB juries
To increase legitimacy of liberal democratic decision-making processes	To establish legitimacy of, and increase trust in, local/community-based decision-making
To increase trust in local and national government	
Recruitment aims to be broadly representative of community	Recruitment to expressly include participation by marginalised members of community
To deliberate on questions of relevance to authority/commissioners	To deliberate on questions of relevance to community
To promote dialogue about pre-defined options	To question underlying assumptions behind pre-defined options
Discussions must focus on a specific question set by commissioners/steering group	Deliberations to be guided by participants problematising their own situation
Facilitators' role is to remain neutral and objective	Facilitators state their position of alignment with jurors
Jurors need expert witnesses to inform them	Jurors seen as having expertise based on their life experience
Experts invited to impart knowledge	Experts invited as co-enquirers and informants
Citizens' juries can act as a platform for decision makers to communicate their way of working and hence increase public understanding	Citizens' juries can act as a platform for decision makers to be held directly accountable and be challenged to reconsider oppressive ways of working
Process aimed at producing a report for consideration by policy committees	Process aimed at bringing about locally-defined action
Process seen as one-off piece of consultation to complement professional decision-making	Process seen as means of engaging with local people as part of ongoing community action
Deliberation involves being serious, rational, logical and un-emotive	Deliberation involves being emotional and humorous as well as logical and practical.
Deliberations to be contained and temporally bounded.	Deliberative process to be 'porous' over time i.e. allow outside world to come inside, and inside world to go out.

(Kashefi, 2006)

or 'scientific' claims by the Jefferson Centre and IPPR, facilitators were briefed to remain neutral and merely chair the debates. We, as facilitators, were fuelled by anger at the injustices we saw and felt passionate about doing something to intervene. We made no pretensions to be neutral or objective. We wanted the jury to be an activist tool that could lead to change at the local level, to open up possibilities for professionals to come face-to-face with people experiencing the effects of their policies, and to humanise 'policy' and its implications. We wanted the experts to be held accountable to the community. In short, we wanted to create a totally different space to the juries we had read about. We took the IPPR model and adapted it for our own purpose.

Jury One: community responses to drug-related crime

This jury was commissioned by a local community organisation working on sustainable development issues within the neighbourhood.[3] When we began developing the first jury, we had no pre-determined ideas about the topic for the jury, the recruitment process or how the jury itself would work. All we knew was that we wanted to find a way for local people to be involved in decisions that affected them. As far as we could see, millions of pounds of public money was being spent 'regenerating' the area but this did not seem to be improving the lives of anyone living there.

We were keen to involve agencies with responsibility for the area from the outset. Over the next 12 months we held meetings with key agencies, councillors, and local authority officers. We explained why we were interested in the jury process and what we planned to do. It was important to have these agencies' support. Each agreed to respond to the jury's

[3] Elham Kashefi was the researcher evaluating this project; Chris Keene was the chair of the organisation.

"In many small yet significant ways, we made interventions in the exercise of power, especially in subverting the dominant paradigm of professionals as experts and sole holders of expertise."

report within three months of receiving it.

In September 1998, 10 local people met for the first time, as a citizens' jury.[4] We met one night a week in a local pub, the atmosphere was that of an informal community project. Six expert witnesses were invited to make presentations to the jury.[5] For the rest of the time, jurors discussed the issue of drug-related crime amongst themselves, to develop their own recommendations. After 11 sessions over 3 months, the jury made more than 80 recommendations on topics such as housing, community safety, prevention, youth work, transport and support for parents. For example, jurors recommended that the Health Authority should fund a drugs-testing facility in the neighbourhood to prevent fatalities from impure drugs and that the Health Authority should draw on the expertise of local people in creating drugs prevention strategies.

Many of Jury One's recommendations were about increasing democratic control and accountability of public services, in particular the police. So, for example, the jury recommended that agencies involved in administering parenting and curfew orders should meet with community groups and local residents to plan how the orders are used, or that the rules of entrapment of drug dealers should be published and openly discussed with residents of South West Burnley. There were also many recommendations about how public money should be spent – that is, that juries could be used as vehicles for priority setting priorities for public expenditure.

Even though we had done a lot of development work with agencies beforehand, we received a negative response from most statutory sector agencies. The Drugs Service was angry at many jury recommendations (for example, legalising cannabis to break the link with harder drugs and community drugs testing facilities). The police ignored the report, although the chair of the Police Authority wrote a letter in support. The Borough Council wrote a full response to the jury's recommendations but nothing ever came out of its response. A local NGO also wrote a response but again, we did not hear of anything changing as a result. No one else responded. All the work that had gone into building up community-based responses to drug-related crime fell on deaf ears.

Although at the time this felt like a lack of success, later analysis of the transcripts and follow-up with some of the people involved has shown that the process in itself was successful in other ways. First and foremost, it allowed for the organic unfolding of knowledge, in all its messiness and with all its contradictions and complexities. Secondly, the process enabled stories to be told and heard, and this act of storytelling and listening was key to the development of the recommendations and how the experts who were there were opened to new ways of looking at their work. For example, at the final feedback meeting with local agencies and community representatives where the jury's recommendations were being presented, one senior officer remained silent throughout the discussions and when asked why he had not contributed to the discussion, he became tearful and said, 'I wish some one had told me all this years ago. I've been doing the wrong thing for 20 years.' Many other professionals had similar experiences. Thirdly, Jury One was a situated process that intervened in the exercise of power in that time, in that place, with those people. In many small yet significant ways, we made interventions in the exercise of power, especially in subverting the dominant paradigm of professionals as experts and sole holders of expertise.

Jury Two: what would improve the health and well-being of local people?

One of the reasons for the lack of action from agencies in Jury One was that we did not have funding for a dedicated worker who could follow up the report and campaign on behalf of the jury. Another reason was that we had set up the process as an outsider project in oppositional mode, and this positioning left few, if any, direct avenues into 'official' spaces we sought to affect. We were aware of these shortcomings and these reflections informed our action on the second jury that was held in the area.

Jury Two was initiated by a multi-agency working group (the Health and Social Group) in SWB that was brought together by a local community development organisation to improve the health of people living in SWB. In 1999, discussions in the group turned to exploring possibilities for setting up a Healthy Living Centre as a way of addressing residents' needs, but the funding bid required evidence of community

[4] The steering group drew up a recruitment profile for the jury based on local census data and local knowledge. This profile was then used by a market research professional who talked with residents in the streets and in their homes until she was able to recruit enough people to satisfy the profile.
[5] These were senior workers from health promotion, probation, the police, youth justice, youth work and the local council.

involvement in the development of the bid. So the Burnley Primary Care Group, acting on behalf of the group, commissioned a citizens' jury on what would improve the health and well-being of people living in SWB.[6] The membership of this group would eventually prove to be a key factor in the success of the jury because it had senior representation from key public sector agencies and local NGOs, i.e. the people who would be able to act on the jury's recommendations.

Twelve local people were recruited to the jury and met over one week in 2000. Each was paid for their participation and for child- or elder-care. Throughout the week the jury heard from 21 witnesses ranging from doctors, social workers, health visitors, community development workers and senior policy makers to mental health service users and residents. One key aspect of this jury was the reconstruction of expertise. Here it was the residents who were seen as the experts on their own lives, who were holding the professionals to account, and who were doing the problematising.

Jury Two made many recommendations about schemes which could rebuild the fabric of the communities in South West Burnley, such as a community transport scheme, community arts festivals, inter-generational social/activity groups, equipment share schemes, a community garden scheme and a community care co-operative. Some of these projects were already developing with volunteers, but they needed financial backing. In all, the jurors made more than 100 recommendations, which the jurors presented to the commissioners on the last day.

All jurors were invited to participate in the follow-up process and many joined the Health and Social Group for some time as a result. After a prolonged period of consideration and many funding applications, the group developed an innovative health centre, which brought together many of the jury's recommendations. A community development worker rather than a medical professional now heads the health centre, which has a steering group made up of local residents and other professionals to direct its work plan. Two jurors sit on the steering group and one has become an integral actor within the centre. Rather than waiting for people to visit them with health problems, much of the work is done on an outreach basis in women's refuges, factories, pubs, workplaces, schools and any other place where people congregate. The centre houses anti-bullying workers, anger management workers, counsellors, health visitors, dentists and nurse practitioners. Health workers also provide activities for local children during school holidays in recognition of the fact that without adult supervision, children's health may suffer.

"The Burnley juries were groundbreaking because community groups rather than public sector agencies initiated them for the benefit of the community (and not for the benefit of the agencies)."

The success of Jury Two, in the first instance, rested on having representatives from key agencies in the Health and Social Care Group. Secondly, this group then brought in researchers to develop the jury so that the outcome would be seen as independent from the commissioners.[7] Thirdly, the jury process enabled jurors to hear from professionals and community activists who were brought in as co-inquirers.

Opening out the process in this way was crucial to the success of the jury process. The jury's recommendations were embedded within the Primary Care Group's programme of work because the issue that was important to local people – improved access to health care – directly matched the Group's target for reducing health inequalities. Furthermore, all H&SC group members could comment on any aspect of the jury process – for example, if they were not happy with the recruitment profile or recruitment process, or if they felt witnesses were not providing a balanced view. In this way, researchers tried to prevent subsequent marginalisation of the jury's recommendations by agencies claiming the process was invalid because of who was recruited, how they were recruited, or who provided evidence. This wider group also acted as a conduit to other agencies (such as the Borough Council or the Health Authority) once the jury report was published, and it was instrumental in the dissemination of the jury's findings.

Conclusion

The Burnley juries were groundbreaking because community groups rather than public sector agencies initiated them **for the benefit of the community** (and not for the benefit of the agencies). They were community interven-

[6] Primary Care Groups, at the time, were health service commissioners. Based at the local level, they were seen to be effective mechanisms for responding to health needs at the local level.

[7] Elham Kashefi and Maggie Mort, based at the Institute for Health Research, Lancaster University developed Jury Two with the steering group, facilitated the sessions, compiled the report and participated in the follow-up process.

tions because the force for change came from the direction of residents, local activists, community workers, and jurors themselves. They created a space where the notion of expertise was subverted, where local people were no longer constructed as lay people as empty vessels that needed filling up with information, but instead as experts of their own lives with valuable knowledge and wisdom that could shape policy and practice. They named oppressive practice. They were powerful vehicles where untold stories could be told and heard, and where these stories of pain and social injustice could directly intersect with policy and policy makers.

I think for the professionals that were there [at the jury meetings] it made them look at things differently … They couldn't run away and hide from it. It was there in their face, there was evidence that these things weren't working. There was no excuses, there was no back door or tell 'em I'll ring them back later. They had to sit there and face it and really think about it. I don't think you can get away from some of those issues and some of those stories that were raised up there. They were really heartbreaking things that had happened. You'd have to be inhuman to not take that on board. (Anonymous community worker and Steering group member, Jury Two).

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NOTES

Elham Kashefi is a researcher based at the Department of Geography, Lancaster University. At the time of the juries, Elham Kashefi was working on a project to evaluate a local sustainable development project that became the commissioners for Jury One. She was the lead researcher and facilitator for both these juries.
Chris Keene is a community development activist, worker and consultant and resident of South West Burnley. He played a lead role in the development of Jury One and was also the Jury chairperson. He was an advisor and expert witness for Jury Two and was involved in the follow up process.

THEME SECTION 1

Community x-change: connecting citizens and scientists to policy makers

by NIGEL EADY, JASBER SINGH, ALICE TAYLOR-GEE and TOM WAKEFORD

Introduction

Our community x-change process aims to strengthen links between the public, scientists and decision makers, and to create opportunities for discussion and debate that will help to influence the directions of policy.

Our project draws on elements of various methodologies for public participation, not least the IPPR citizens' jury model (see Kashefi and Keene, article 5, this issue).[1] However, it seeks to incorporate learning from experiences of bottom-up processes of engagement, which provide space for participants to set and shape the agenda. A conventional IPPR-style citizens' jury would have a decision or question on which to make a ruling. However, as the name suggests, the community x-change is a process by which a group of citizens exchange experiences with appropriate stakeholders in order to co-produce knowledge. Therefore, the boundaries between experts and lay knowledge are disrupted in order to create a safe space where all knowledge is respected and recognised without any form of knowledge being given special attention on an elevated platform.

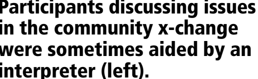
An unusual feature of the community x-change approach, compared to most science communication events in the UK, is that it provides opportunities for scientists to participate in an engagement process as regular participants, without being called upon to act as experts.

"…the aim was to over-represent groups who might not be able to push themselves to the fore in a public meeting or consultation…."

Origins

In the mid-1980s in the UK, it began to be acknowledged that communication is an integral part of being a scientist. Initial attempts to communicate tended towards a one-way transfer of information from the 'knowledgeable' scientist to the public. However, with both a perceived lack of public trust in science and controversy over issues such as genetically modified organisms (GMOs), foot and mouth disease and *bovine spongiform encephalopathy* (BSE), to name but a few topics, it has become clear that a one-way knowledge exchange is not enough. It is in this context that the community x-change aims to involve scientists not as experts but as

[1] Institute for Public Policy Research (www.ippr.org)



Participants discussing issues in the community x-change were sometimes aided by an interpreter (left).

Photos: Community x-change camera volunteers

citizens. For most scientists familiar with a reductionist approach to a particular question or problem, it is unusual to be involved in an approach which draws on a broad range of expertise, and which values lay perspectives on issues normally the preserve of the 'expert'.[2]

The project is the joint initiative of the BA (British Association for the Advancement of Science) and the Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences Research Centre (PEALS), based at Newcastle and Durham universities. The first x-change was convened in the summer months preceding the BA's annual Festival of Science, a six-day series of talks, discussions and debates highlighting recent scientific developments and intended for the public and popular media. A small group of participants from the community x-change shared their experiences of the x-change process at a session held at the Festival in Norwich on 6 September 2006, where a video of the x-change meetings was also shown.

The Norwich community x-change

In the summer of 2006, a group of people of mixed age, ethnicity and background, took part in the first community x-change, in the city of Norwich in East Anglia, UK. They met to discuss local issues of concern, and also to reflect upon and debate about their local environment and climate change, to share their thoughts and ideas on possible action, and to frame questions for further exploration. They then raised these ideas and asked questions of the decision makers, whom they themselves had nominated to be invited to the final workshop. Highlights of the discussions, presented in a series of short videos of the x-changes, recorded by six young people who had previously participated in a community video project, are available on the project's website.[3]

Over four days in June and July, 39 people – mostly from Norwich, Lowestoft and Peterborough – met in Norwich. Two participatory practitioners had spent time building contacts with community groups throughout the region, to recruit participants from a wide range of communities. Sixteen participants had responded to an invitation sent to people

[2] 'Reductionism can either mean (a) an approach to understanding the nature of complex things by reducing them to the interactions of their parts, or to simpler or more fundamental things or (b) a philosophical position that a complex system is nothing but the sum of its parts, and that an account of it can be reduced to accounts of individual constituents.' Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reductionism

[3] www.the-ba.net/communityxchange

on the electoral role, and eight scientists were recruited from the University of East Anglia and Norwich Research Park. It should be noted that the process was not trying to achieve a representative sample of the local population. Rather the aim was to over-represent groups who might not be able to push themselves to the fore in a public meeting or consultation. For example, participants included individuals from the Bangladeshi and Portuguese communities who do not speak English, and young men from a hostel.

Despite the large group, relationships quickly developed, especially as participants met others living in the same local area. Initial discussions focused on issues about the local environment, such as transport and crime. How could public transport networks be improved? What factors are driving young people towards criminal behaviour? As the group began to feel they had ownership of the discussions, and that no questions or comments were out of bounds, groups began to gel.

On the second day, a local environment campaigner, Maxine Narburgh from a charity called Suffolk Connect (now Bright Green), helped to facilitate sessions along with six of the charity's environmental volunteers. In particular, this helped the participants to relate the issues they had raised to climate change. For many of the participants, climate change appeared to be a global issue for governments to discuss and tackle. However, relating global warming to the amount we consume, whether we recycle, the modes of transport we choose – or have – to use, started to open up debate.

On the third day, the participants delved deeper into the issues they had begun to discuss over the first weekend. Alongside issues related to climate change, the group were keen to include social issues of community breakdown and the lack of public meeting places. Of significant concern were specific issues around meeting places for, quite often, isolated ethnic minority women. The participatory process enabled gender inequalities to be drawn out and drew attention to the importance of women's voices in climate change discourse. Part of the process involved the group looking at various scenarios, written by the project team, to present some of the tensions emerging from climate change. Participants talked about the issues in small groups, and two groups decided to dramatise their discussions. One drama addressed flooding in Norfolk, and the other issues of exclusion and isolation. In both cases, the dramas brought a real depth and richness to the process.

In the final workshop, participants had the opportunity to discuss issues raised during the x-change process with 'information providers'. One session in a previous workshop had been devoted to drawing up a list of potential information providers. So the group was able to say who they deemed to be trusted sources of information and to generate questions for these specialists. Those who attended included two environment experts, one who works with a variety of stakeholders, including businesses, on a project to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The other was an environmental activist. A police community support officer, a local councillor and the local MP also attended.

Feedback from reviewers

After Norwich, a team of reviewers, Jenny Chapman and Antonella Mancini, with expertise in community development and participatory approaches, were commissioned to undertake a mid-term review of the process. The intention was to draw out lessons learnt so far, to be incorporated into the next community x-change in Liverpool. These reviewers read all the reports and diaries, viewed the video and raw footage, interviewed 21 members of the project team and the participants, and held a focus group discussion in Norwich with five participants. Although the sample was small and unrepresentative, it was clear that the workshops were enjoyed by most participants and that most had found the experience interesting and engaging. Some participants, however, would have liked more clarity about the purpose behind the workshops. Most expected that something would come out of the process and, in particular, that the information generated would be presented to decision makers. One benefit of working with the review team was that it became clear that a more realistic assessment was needed of resources – human and financial – available to make change take place.

In discussion with the reviewers, the project team acknowledged that they were over optimistic in their expectations as to what they could achieve in a short period of time, in a process led by people from outside the region and with only temporary links to local communities. Another issue that the review team voiced was that there was too little attention paid to explaining to participants the overall purpose of what was being done.

The reviewers recommended an externally facilitated workshop to look at objectives for the next project phase, to agree clear, shared and realistic objectives and to develop a clear theory of change as to how those objectives might be achieved. The project team were only too aware of the inherent power imbalance within the project around decision-making on issues of climate change. However, in seeking to redistribute the power, particularly around local issues of

"..this sort of knowledge, derived from these 'experts by experience' is rarely valued by policy makers."

concern, there was now a clear plan for how participants might affect change. Future workshops would need to allow participants to work with stakeholders to formulate and own a plan to create a better future.

The review team also advocated that the key stakeholders take collective responsibility to improve group dynamics within the project team. All team members should know what is happening and why. The reviewers judged that there had been insufficient feedback and joint reflection about the model and methodology employed at Norwich. We needed to prioritise learning, monitoring and evaluation in the next phase of work. The reviewers specifically recommended a clear write-up of methodology before the workshops and that the x-change process would benefit both from ongoing feedback from participants and from project team members. Where a number of project partners work together, clear terms of reference needed to be negotiated within the project team to enable a transparent and mutually agreed decision-making process.

Feedback from participants

Four of the scientist participants kept a diary of their experiences, from which the following quotations are drawn. Helen Czerski asks:

> *So what will come of all this? It was a fantastic way to explore the problems in society and to hear many different points of view. There was a genuine feeling that if this group had a discussion and made a decision, after hearing a cross-section of opinions and the reasons for them, then the group as a whole would be far more likely to respect that decision, even if they didn't like it. But how do you use a set of opinions expressed by such a group? It was very useful for all of us, but how could we apply what we discovered more generally? I think that the links made between people who live close enough together to see each other on the streets of Norwich or Colchester will be very valuable to them, but the whole of East Anglia is a bit too large for that sort of interaction. I hope that more of these happen and that it makes local communities more cross-linked as a result. The more people who are exposed to the opinions of others in society in an environment like this, the better – or so I think. Thank you to the BA for giving me the opportunity to participate. And if you ever hear of one of these happening near you, don't hesitate to volunteer!*

Peter McKeown writes:

> *I certainly came away from the x-change with a lot of food for thought, as well as a lot of optimism about people's enthusiasm for dealing with problems within local areas. Like most of us, I'll be interested in seeing what becomes of the outcome – what thoughts it provokes when shown at the [BA] Festival, and how it compares with the results of other similar exercises. I particularly hope it is followed up on by local government, and attracts interest from the local press, as opportunities to hear people frankly discussing their thoughts in an unpressured environment are all too rare.*

Laura Bowater writes:

> *The wonderful thing about the x-change was that it brought together a great big melting pot of different people from many communities and walks of life who under normal circumstances would never ever interact with each other. It made me see that in today's society we are individuals who have some contact with our immediate community but that we have hardly any contact with different communities or members of society […] The really amazing thing that I discovered was that almost everyone in these communities wanted to find ways to break through the barriers […] and form wider links with other people from other backgrounds, other beliefs, and other age groups. We noticed that our immediate environment and where we live can make a huge difference to creating these links. It was felt that having green, pleasant spaces where people want to pass the time as well as town and community centres that are inclusive and welcoming are steps that would start to break down the isolation and the alienation that people feel in British society today.*

Reflections

The community x-change has highlighted the importance of recognising community perspectives in developing solutions to one of the biggest challenges of modern times – climate change. The key message we took from the x-change was that feelings of disempowerment and isolation were at the forefront of people's minds, especially some of the women

and younger participants. A conclusion we have reached following our experiences in Norwich is that changing the culture that disempowers and isolates these people is inherently linked to the development of climate change solutions. Like nanotechnology (see Singh, article 4, this issue), climate change does not perhaps fit as neatly fit into the 'science' box as some suppose.

Perhaps the enormous threat of climate change provides an opportunity to reinvigorate democracy and collective action. These, no doubt, will be among the key ingredients required to adapt to a rapidly changing climate. The x-change highlighted the limitations of top-down behavioural change initiatives that target the individual and do very little in allowing communities, especially women and young people, to develop safe spaces for collective analysis of issues of primary concern in their locality – which, no doubt, will be both social and climate-related.

The other challenge that the community x-change highlights again and again is one of institutional culture change.

Over the last 25 years, the focus of the UK science communication community has gradually moved away from dealing with complex issues using simplistic methods of information provision. There is now a glut of initiatives in the sphere of what has become known as public engagement. Scientists will act as citizens in much the same way as any group of individuals in such processes. However, the sort of innovative and flexible thinking that allows knowledge to be co-produced, as we attempted here, is much less readily found. There is now increasing appreciation of knowledge gained from those other than professional experts, for example within the farming community about ecology, or within patient groups about treatment procedures and regimes. But this sort of knowledge, derived from these 'experts by experience' is rarely valued by policy makers. Few of them, in the UK at least, behave as if the expertise, values, hopes and fears for research and regulation can yield creative solutions to complex problems.

"The true legacy of this project in the long term could be significant changes in the way we 'do' science."

For institutions, such as the BA and universities like Newcastle and Durham, the key challenge from this project is to embed participatory approaches within the organisational fabric and move beyond one-way communication of science. A great amount can be achieved through careful planning. Key questions must be asked at the outset about the thinking behind the approach chosen:

- What are realistic timescales for this project?
- What are the barriers to engagement?
- Who can we work with to ensure critical monitoring and evaluation before, during and after the process?
- Have we considered all the various sources of knowledge which could be utilised to produce a creative solution?

These questions could also have profound impacts on government, learned societies and universities.

As our community x-change process begins in Liverpool, so we have recognised a drawback in the funding model behind our project. It does not allow our project team to become integrated into the community in which it works. We have therefore employed a Community Engagement Worker from the area of Liverpool in which we will be working. The funding for this process ends in the near future and we want to maximise the possibility of future interactions between participants. So we are working closely with a number of community groups from the area within which we have drawn our participants. In parallel, we are seeking to share our learning and encourage others to implement it more widely within our organisations. The true legacy of this project in the long term could be significant changes in the way we 'do' science. This would be the most significant demonstration of long-term success of the community x-change.

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Hearing the real voices: exploring the experiences of the European Citizens' Panel

by NIALL FITZDUFF, PETER BRYANT, GWEN LANIGAN and CATHERINE PURVIS

Introduction

Citizens' panels were set up in regions of England and Ireland to discuss the future of rural areas. In 2006, these panels sent representatives to a larger panel at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium. These European Citizens' Panels were made up of 86 citizens from ten regions of Europe.

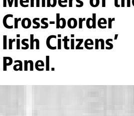
The English and Irish panels

The English regional panel consisted of 15 adults and 15 young people aged between 13 and 83. They were involved via a random selection process from rural Durham and Cumbria in northern England. Drawing on the methodology of the citizens' jury, the panel met four times over six months. They shared personal experiences of life in rural areas and discussed issues with key decision makers and information providers. At the end, the panel generated a set of recommendations on rural issues, which are currently being taken forward in a three year ongoing project.

The process in the Irish border region involved two distinct phases. Randomly recruited participants worked with a team of external facilitators to increase their confidence and to ensure that they were in a position to interact with policy makers efficiently and with confidence. Rather than being asked to respond to precise topics, participants were asked to

Members of the English Rural Community X-change undertake a mapping exercise.

Photo: Swingbridge Video



Members of the Cross-border Irish Citizens' Panel.

Photo: Niall Fitzduff

come up with the topics on which they felt they needed to be consulted. The second phase of this process involved inviting policy makers to meet with the now confident and energised participants, giving them the chance to hear what the participants had to say.

The purpose of this format was to allow the participants to lead the consultation process, rather than them being asked to respond to topics or issues. The process itself raised some interesting points, not least that despite some of the issues being actively out for consultation at the time, policy makers were generally reluctant to engage in the process. However, the policy makers who did take part did so in an open and transparent manner. They were very positive in relation to taking on board the comments and feelings of the participants. They are to be commended for their bravery, their open-mindedness and their contribution to this process.

The English experience of Brussels

Seven young people and three adults from the English panel took part in a three-day event in Brussels, together with a further 76 citizens from across Europe. Each citizen participated in a series of workshops focused on concerns, themes and visions, until finally the panel agreed a set of European-wide recommendations. At the gathering's culmination, the citizens presented their recommendations in the form of a report to a number of high-profile European politicians and civil servants in the European Parliament buildings.

The interaction with European decision makers took place in an auditorium with fixed seating. Upon speaking into an illuminated microphone, each speaker was simultaneously translated into seven different languages and his or her image relayed onto television screens on each person's desk. Recommendations were read out, and copies of the report were presented to key decision makers, followed by an open question-and-answer session. The reaction of the citizens to the meeting was mixed, with one group poised to walk out if the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mariann Fischer Boel, refused to discuss the report. Others seemed relatively happy with the bland commitment from some decision makers to use the report for 'the design and the vision of future regional policy'.

The Irish experience of Brussels

The intense experience of spending four days together with participants interacting in different languages, meeting highly placed officials in the EU institutions and producing their own report was an amazing achievement. At this level the experience was fulfilling. However, for the most part the policy makers defended their policies, missing the opportunity to engage in a new type of dialogue. There was a sense of taking the status quo to task.

How real is all this in terms of participation and change? An optimistic view would be that citizens' panels can influence regional change, given that perhaps 5% of policy is up for negotiation. At EU level, it may be 1% that can be influenced. Then pitch that against 87 'citizens' and their legiti-

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People from nine regions of Europe present their case to the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mariann Fischer Boel, who refused to discuss their report.

Young participant in Brussels reports on his group's discussions.

Photos: Peter Bryant

"Handled well, the feelings of empowerment experienced by those who take part in terms of speaking to those in power is palpable and tangible."

macy in representative terms against the population of Europe. As an educational exercise, the process has merit but it is costly. Handled well, the feelings of empowerment experienced by those who take part – in terms of speaking to those in power – is palpable and tangible. Citizens could be visibly seen to have been empowered and to grow in confidence throughout the process. But it is another matter as to whether it can achieve real change and add value to flagging democracies. Could such processes have the potential to be more than just a new toy for academics, policy makers and other professional elites? As with other articles in this issue, it is too early to say.

Final reflections, by Peter Bryant

So what can we learn from this unsatisfactory interaction and how could we have changed our practices? Our responses could probably be at two levels. Firstly, it would be possible to improve the process by making minor adaptations to the methodology. In advance of such a meeting, an attempt could be made to meet each of the decision makers to explain the process and its outcomes and push for them to commit to follow up (for example, by offering to pay for a meeting with ten citizens from the panel to discuss the deliberations in more depth). Time could be spent with citizens preparing them for the interaction and improving their political capabilities (for instance, by undertaking power analyses, gaining a better understanding of European decision-making processes, role playing the future interaction and rehearsing strategies for pushing for action). Interaction with decision makers could be in a more informal setting, taking into account the need for translators. Assertive facilitation of such a meeting could discourage politicians from offering only platitudes and no commitment to action.

The second option recognises the limitations of tinkering with the process and instead calls for a rethink of the role of approaches such as citizens' panels or juries as tools for activism. This approach challenges the idea that through random sampling a selection of citizens can be 'representative' of a wider set of communities. Instead, what is most important is that citizens are selected who are more able to take action and push for the implementation of the recommendations, upon the conclusion of the deliberative phase of such a project. This could be achieved by linking the process directly with a relevant social movement or movements.

Such an approach could look something like this. The citizens for the English panel are selected from the membership of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The selection may be random to a point, but with a bias towards marginalised members of the population who have little voice. Having undertaken a process of deliberation, which has also increased their political capabilities, the panel members are then supported by the TUC as they lobby decision makers, or use whatever strategy they see fit to try and affect change.

However, not everyone agrees that citizens' juries should be reshaped as tools for activism:

For me random selection is the most democratic way to select citizens. However, it is a biased method because those randomly selected persons accept to take part in the process by being 'politically' active. Two approaches should probably be combined: random selection combined with targeted people coming from under-represented groups.

Betty Nguyen, a French project facilitator.

It was always Peter Dienel's [credited as one of the original designers of a Citizens' Jury process] point of view that the participants get their legitimacy from being an 'ordinary' citizen selected at random for some time and a certain purpose/topic (which is defined by the institution who is the commissioning body and has its own democratic and legal legitimacy). 'Taking action' is not within

"Could such processes have the potential to be more than just a new toy for academics, policy makers and other professional elites? As with other articles in this issue, it is too early to say."

their legitimacy. Of course, it is their natural right to take action. But then they act as only themselves, with nobody's mandate. For me, it is important and gives the recommendations weight that the citizens are selected at random from the whole population. If we choose them from trade union members or special groups of society we inject our bias and political objectives into the process.
Hilmar Sturm, facilitator.

The adoption of a strategy, which links so closely with a social movement, is a call for the repoliticisation of 'participatory' and deliberative processes such as citizens' juries, away from a technocratic instrumentalist approach, which sees them as little more than sophisticated extractive market research tools.

After listening to a presentation on the European project, a friend of mine from Bolivia commented on the political naivety of such processes when held in Europe – and he may be right. In Mali l'ECID – a citizens' jury (see Article 3, this issue) of small farmers and producers examining the issue of GM cotton – has had a tremendous impact. Organised directly through a regional assembly and in conjunction with local farmers' movements, it has led directly to the decision to delay the trialling of genetically modified (GM) crops. The government there has the memory of farmers' direct action fresh in their minds and cannot risk the alienation of such a powerful, organised movement. In Europe, a depoliticised, glorified focus group will never have such an impact. However, the English panel may be moving in a positive direction. They continue to meet some eight months after the Brussels meeting. On hearing the news that the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development has declined their request for a public hearing in favour of meeting with 'technical experts', they have decided to return to the European Parliament building in Brussels in 2008.

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8

Shorts: four brief analyses of citizens' juries and similar participatory processes

THEME SECTION 1

8a: Ignoring and suppressing grassroots participation in a northern English town

by TOM WAKEFORD, BANO MURTUJA and PETER BRYANT

In the spring of 2004 we began work on a citizens' jury process that we co-designed with the residents of a town in northern England. One third of its population is minority ethno-cultural heritage communities. The subject of this 'do-it-yourself jury' was to be decided by the twenty volunteers, drawn at random from community organisations and the electoral roll.

At the end of a day-long workshop, the jurors settled on the role of the police relating to drink and illegal drug use among young people. This topic made local politicians nervous, they asked that we postpone the jury until after the local elections in a few months' time. They refused to provide information to the process or cooperate with it.

Having heard a wide range of perspectives from a diverse set of 'witnesses' the jury sought to recommend a number of solutions to the problems highlighted during the process. The jury at no point divided along ethnic lines. The following is an extract from our 2004 report about the process:

> *We observed that white residents living in areas of diverse ethno-heritage often feel patronised by conventional anti-racism campaigns. Such messages are promoted by the same authorities who seem to have failed to address some of the most urgent problems facing their communities. Our final report suggested that some Asian and other minority communities might welcome a re-direction of resources towards initiatives that allow them to join together with white community members and bring pressure for change, especially since many of the most pressing social and economic problems affect all the local population regardless of their background.*[1]
>
> *We suggest that the re-building of democratic engagement in northern England, as in many other parts of the UK, will be greatly enhanced by an increase of face-to-face meetings such as those that form the essence of a do-it-yourself citizens' jury. However, such exercises are only likely to be successful when they involve a broad range of local community groups and are not controlled by any one stakeholder or funder.*

Though the jury presented their report in person to the council leader, a member of the European Parliament and opposition politicians, the council studiously ignored the process, both before and after the election. As organisers and facilitators we and the jurors fundraised for ongoing activities

[1] See online resources section for links to the full version of the report.

by ourselves, including a stall at the local market. But without the backing of a strong campaigning organisation, our impact on the way in which the local council consulted its population was minimal.

The funder of the jury, a well known UK grant-making foundation, was extremely sympathetic to the jury's desire to make their local council more accountable. They even attended meetings at which council officials expressed interest in working with the jurors. But four years later, jurors have had no contact from the council and have become sceptical that the council has any intention of working with them.

On reflection, we as organisers recognise at least two mistakes we made that allowed the council to domesticate the jury process, even though it was independent of them. Firstly, we underestimated the power of the local council to marginalise the process. By parachuting into a complex local community and organising a process without it being jointly owned and planned by accountable community organisations that had legitimacy with the council, it was easy for senior local policy makers to portray the jury as troublemakers. Secondly, we wrongly expected that the multi-racial group of individuals that emerged from the jury process would be empowered enough to become activists in their own right, supported by an infrastructure that could easily be organised remotely from outside the region. In reality, the community empowerment our project envisaged required long-term investment in grassroots community work. Despite modest ongoing support from an extremely patient funder we have not yet found a formula that allows us to overcome the suppression of our alternative to the 'pork barrel' politics that dominates the dysfunctional government of an economically deprived town.[2]

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[2] 'Pork barrel' is commonly used as a political metaphor for the appropriation of government spending for projects that are intended primarily to benefit particular constituents or campaign contributors. This usage originated in American-English with reference to gifts of salt pork in a barrel by slave-owners to their slaves.

8b: The art of facipulation? The UK government's nuclear power dialogue

'Facipulation' is a recently coined word for the process whereby facilitators and other convenors of participatory processes get participants to produce the result that the facilitators want, whilst making the participants think they are expressing their own ideas.

© Channel 4

Jon Snow presents a Channel 4 News item on the government's nuclear power dialogue.

Transcript of UK TV's Channel 4 News, 19th September, 2007:[1]

With just three weeks left to run, the government's public consultation into nuclear power has run into trouble and a complaint to a professional body.[2] *In nine day-long meetings across Britain two weekends ago, nearly a thousand people were shown videos, presentations, and handouts, and their opinion on building new nuclear power stations canvassed […]*

… now Greenpeace would [be bound to] say that [the dialogue carried a pro-nuclear bias], you could argue, but independently 20 senior academics too have come forward and will be writing to government with similar reservations.[3] *They say the consultations were deliberately skewed by linking nuclear to fears about climate change, because the government knew past [market] research had shown it's the only way to get people to accept nuclear, albeit reluctantly.*

A facilitator from Opinion Leader Research leads participants through a nuclear power dialogue session.

Similar concerns have come from some members of the public who attended – on websites and in unsolicited emails to Greenpeace. [The emails read] 'In the video, alternative viewpoints had doom-ridden music in the background. The government's view was then given against calm, relaxing music,' [said one participant]. 'I feel I have been mugged,' [said another participant].

[1] www.channel4.com/player/v2/player.jsp?showId=9237
[2] This refers to the UK Market Research Society, which is meant to regulate practice among its members, including ensuring that public consultations, for example, are carried out 'transparently [and] objectively'.

[3] A previous UK Government consensus conference on radioactive waste was critiqued by Helen Wallace, then Science Director at Greenpece UK, in *PLA* 40, pages 61-63.

Involve's youtube film of the Nuclear Dialogue.

© youtube.com

Youtube clip: *I'm Richard Wilson from Involve [Deputy Chair of Sciencewise] and I'm here at the Nuclear Dialogue on Saturday here in London.*[4 5]

[Richard Wilson to reporter]: *We [Sciencewise] did offer our advice. Sciencewise consists of a panel of experts – practitioners, academics etc… Because of the timescale it wasn't practical for us to be involved in the commissioning [of the dialogue process]. But I know that the advice we offered [to the government] wasn't ever taken on*.[6]

Opinion Leader Research said: *We refute the points made in the complaint [from Greenpeace]. We believe our work was carried out to the highest professional standards. Opinion Leader will co-operate fully with the Market Research Society investigation*.[7 8]

See www.channel4.com/player/v2/player.jsp?showId=9237

[4] Involve, according to its website 'was founded in 2004 to determine how new forms of public participation can strengthen democracy in Britain and elsewhere'. Involve has its offices in London and is governed by a board chaired by the former head of the UK Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and includes members of a leading market research company, Ipsos MORI.
[5] Sciencewise is 'a programme funded by the Government to help policy makers find out people's views on emerging areas of science and technology so that they can take these into account when making national policy decisions.'
[6] Though neither Sciencewise nor Involve complained about the process, Greenpeace UK made a formal complaint to the Market Research Society alleging improper conduct of a consultation process.
[7] Opinion Leader Research was commissioned by the Government to undertake the dialogue.
[8] The news story followed an official complaint made by Greenpeace UK to the Market Research Society, which has a code of conduct for its members, which includes Opinion Leader Research.

8c: Genetically modified meetings: the Food Standards Agency's citizens' jury

Extract from a report from the Policy Ethics and Life Sciences (PEALS) Research Centre, Newcastle University (PEALS, 2003).

During April 2003, the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) commissioned what it called a 'citizens' jury' from Opinion Leader Research, which is a division of the public relations firm Bell Pottinger (also known as Chime Communications). In contravention of standard practice for citizens' juries, no panel of stakeholders was assembled to oversee balance and fairness in the jury process. Senior staff at the FSA stated that it was itself an independent agency and had been advised by OLR/Bell Pottinger that no such oversight panel would be necessary.

A major disadvantage of not having drawn on a broad range of interest groups for oversight of the jury process became apparent when the question was set for the jury to consider. This was announced by the FSA as: 'Should GM food be available to buy in the UK?' One of the witnesses to the jury immediately objected to this question, commenting that 'with a question like that I can predict a "yes" verdict without even needing to give evidence'. Not only was this question open to the accusation of being skewed, like some opinion poll surveys, towards getting a particular answer, but it is likely to have severely limited the scope the jurors had to discuss a range of issues relating to the links between GM technologies, the food system and farming that they – rather than the FSA – might have thought were pertinent. Citing advice from Bell Pottinger, the FSA 'disagreed that it is good practice to allow jurors to set their own agenda'.

Norfolk Genetic Information Network (NGIN) and Friends of the Earth, two organisations who challenged the legitimacy of the FSA's jury process.

Alongside many other quality control issues surrounding the use of 'off-the-shelf' processes that their organisers decide to call citizens' juries, the FSA initiative leads us to believe that the practice of giving such juries a one-line question, such as the one given to the FSA citizens' jury should be discouraged and that it is misguided for any organisation organising a jury process to believe itself so independent that it can forgo the transparent oversight mechanism that a multi-stakeholder panel provides.

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THEME SECTION 1

8d: If we have time, motivation and resources to participate, does that mean we gain authority and power?

By the RIGHT 2B HEARD COLLECTIVE and SWINGBRIDGE VIDEO

The script of a video contribution to a Joseph Rowntree Foundation conference on participation, November 2007.

All the voices in the video are from people with direct experience of being participants in one or more citizens' jury-type processes.

Narrator: *If we have **time**…*

Simon: *Time? There is not enough hours in the day.*

Trisha: *I don't have enough time for myself as it is at the moment, let alone giving up time for something that I'm not going to see the results from.*

Janet: *How do I find time as a single parent to go out into the community to find out what is needed to be done?*

Jackie: *Time? Where do we get the time to reflect on what we've done? When do we get time to go back and explain what we're talking about at meetings to the public, to the people that we are supposed to be representing?*

Simon: *Time? I only do things if I'm paid, none of this volunteering stuff.*

Narrator: *If we have time, **motivation**…*

Simon: *Motivation? What's my motivation for this scene? Yeah, alright mate, why do I want to come to a session about arts and crafts when I'm absolutely starving? Food motivates me.*

Narrator: *If we have time, motivation, and **resources**…*

Simon: *Please sir, can we have some more?*

Trisha: *Give me £100 and I'll get some community participation. Give the top guy £100 and he'll use it for a round of drinks.*

Anonymous: *They'll get us to organise participation to decide how to distribute what's just peanuts, while all the big money is in their control.*

Trisha: *Why do you start off with a huge budget and by the time you've worked out what the table centres [flowers] are for the men at the top, it gets down to me for community action and there's £3.50 left.*

Narrator: *If we have time, motivation, and resources to **participate**…*

Janet: *They are telling me I have to participate, but I haven't been told what to do since I was 15.*

Joe: *We've been asked, and we've been asked. We've been invited to meetings, we've been invited to participate, but what happens?*

Madhusudhan: *Participation? Participation?*

Janet: *Yeah, right!* (laughs)

Joe: *What's the point?* (laughing) *Why take part in anything? Nothing ever happens, it just doesn't work.*

Madhusudhan: *Participation? Yes!*

Narrator: *If we have time, motivation, and resources to participate, does that mean we gain **authority**?*

Peter: *We need to facilitate the empowerment of citizens through deliberative democracy.*

All: (shouting) *Rubbish*!

Anon: *I don't know who's in charge.*

Simon: *I hate it!*

Narrator: *If we have time, motivation and resources to participate, does that mean we gain authority and **power**?*

Right 2B Heard member Janet and her son Adam.

Swingbridge Video

Simon: (Shouting) *Power*!

Joe: *Power? Empower, isn't that the guy that sends me the bill every month for the electric?*

Trisha: *Power. People go on about power but the decisions already been taken, we're just rubber stamping it.*

Simon: *Power mad.*

Joe: *That and the big stick make me work every day (laughs).*

Simon: *We want more!*

Joe: *Power. If the powers that be see this we're out of a job in the morning.*

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NOTES

Right 2B Heard is made up of people from a variety of backgrounds who have participated in processes of participatory democracy since 2001 – particularly those from communities that have undergone marginalisation in the past.

You can watch the video online on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eurmFan_a-A

On screen appearances: Peter Bryant, Janet Davies, Si Donnelly, Jackie Haq, Madhusudhan, Joe Thomas and Trisha White. Also taking part but not pictured: Assad Afzal, Farmeen Aktar and Jasber Singh.

Facilitated by Hugh Kelly and Lynne Caffrey of Swingbridge Video. Assistance and support from Emma Stone (Joseph Rowntree Foundation) and Tom Wakeford (Newcastle University).

Theme 2: Participatory budgeting: lessons from Latin America and the UK

The watering down of participatory budgeting and people power in Porto Alegre, Brazil

by DANIEL CHAVEZ

Introduction

In the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, previously famous as the birthplace of the World Social Forum and the global capital of participatory democracy, the centre-right coalition that took office after the electoral defeat of the left in 2004 has implemented a new institutional scheme in Porte Alegre. It is known as *governança solidária local* (local solidarity governance), which allegedly will deepen and broaden civic engagement. The scheme has been praised by mainstream international organisations but – for reasons to be discussed below – also strongly criticised by local NGOs, engaged researchers, leftwing political parties, and civil society organisations. This process is consistent with broader changes taking place at the international level through the sustained export of a *lite* version of participatory budgeting by rather non-democratic and non-participatory institutions such as the World Bank.[1]

Between 1988 and 2004, when the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT, Workers' Party) governed the city, the citizens of Porto Alegre developed an exemplary model of democratic local planning and management. The idea of the *orçamento participativo* (participatory budget) contributed to

Figure 1: Map showing Porto Alegre

[1] *Lite* is a reference to diet versions of soft drinks such as *Pepsi* and *Coca-Cola*.

"This conflict is important for the inhabitants of Porto Alegre. But it also has a wider significance for urban politics across Latin America and the rest of the world."

transforming urban residents – who had been powerless under the rule of authoritarian and corrupt elites – into active subjects with increasing power to influence decisions shaping their daily lives. Through almost two decades of trial and error, the popular roots of participatory budgeting gave it a real influence over government and marked a genuine innovation in democratic politics (Menegat, 2002). It is this popular decision-making power that is now at stake in a very practical conflict over the meaning of participatory budgeting, and participatory governance more generally.

This conflict is important for the inhabitants of Porto Alegre. But it also has a wider significance for urban politics across Latin America and the rest of the world. Beyond Brazil, there have been strong efforts by the World Bank and other mainstream 'development' institutions aimed at neutralising the emancipatory politics of participatory budgeting, by promoting its global expansion as just another managerial technology for efficient 'good governance'. Nowadays, in many parts of Latin America and in Europe, even conservative and neo-liberal municipal governments are implementing what they call 'participatory budgeting', in the hope of it offering them democratic legitimacy as they pursue unpopular market-driven policies (Shah, 2007). Across the global South, during the past five years, the World Bank has been busy exporting an ideologically 'neutral' version of participatory budgeting in countries and cities under political conditions very different to those originally found in Brazil.

When the new government assumed office in Porto Alegre in 2005, the mayor publicly declared his commitment to preserve and develop participatory budgeting, while confirming the launch of a more comprehensive institutional reform. The basic features of the new approach were vaguely outlined in a booklet published by the *Partido Popular Socialista* (PPS, Socialist People's Party – a neo-conservative party founded by former communists). The new scheme for local governance is conceived as 'an executive, non-deliberative forum; a network created to foster joint responsibility agreements' (between private, government and voluntary and community sectors). In this new institutional space 'there is no conflict, no elections, no delegates' (Busatto and Zalewski Vargas, 2005).

During the electoral campaign, the incoming mayor, José Fogaça, had committed himself to maintaining the participatory budgeting programme, and also to political and logistical support for the World Social Forum. The PPS-led coalition narrowly won the mayoral election with a strategy that played on a desire for change after almost two decades of continuous leftwing administration, while explicitly recognising the left's record of good government. The catchphrase of Fogaça was simplistic but effective: 'let's keep whatever is working and let's change whatever is not'.

After more than a decade in power, mainly focused on the social and political dimensions of municipal rule, the PT had not paid enough attention to financial sustainability and growing administrative problems. The PT began to lose its local hegemony, first among the middle class and then among those who had been the main beneficiaries of the strategy of 'turning investment priorities upside down' (prioritising the poorer neighbourhoods and social sectors of the city in the allocation of municipal resources). Disenchantment with the federal government also contributed to the setback, as the anti-PT feeling promoted by the conservative sectors converged with falling expectations and hope after the radical changes that were expected when Lula da Silva took office as President of Brazil never materialised.

The fate of participatory budgeting under the new conservative government has since been the beginning a matter of great concern among social activists. The title of the December 2005 issue of *De Olho No Orçamento* ('Watching the Budget'), a bulletin published by *Centro de Assessoria e Estudos Urbanos* (CIDADE), a local NGO active in the field of urban politics and a participatory budgeting watchdog, says it all: 'Institutional formality maintained, but getting rid of direct citizens' participation'.[2] Since then, the processes and structures of participatory budgeting have been decaying: the government no longer provides adequate financial and institutional information for participatory budgeting participants. Elected and appointed officials no longer attend the local assemblies, and the overall level of accountability of the municipal government has declined.

Another sign that the original democraticising purpose of the participatory budget is not safe in the hands of the current administration is the recentralisation of decision-

[2] See www.ongcidade.org

Figure 1: Execution of public works and social projects included in the annual municipal investment plan (in % of the total originally planned).

(CIDADE, 2008).

making power. Felisberto Luisi, a social activist with over a decade of engagement in the process of participatory budgeting, gave me an example when I interviewed him in 2006:

> *Before, the multi-year investment plan was discussed by the citizens, but in 2005 that plan came already written by the government. The Mayor's Office and the City Council are beginning to take back the power that previous governments had granted to the people.*

More recently, the municipal government has been criticised for investing more in propaganda and public relations – including the organisation, in February 2008, of a mammoth international conference focused on the 'radicalisation of local democracy' – than in responses to citizens' demands. According to research just published by CIDADE, in 2007 the municipality spent 15 million *reais* (10 million dollars) on publicity. Meanwhile, only 21 of the 219 public works and social projects included in the annual investment plan (which is supposed to be the main product of the participatory budgeting cycle) were executed as planned. The chart above shows a marked decline in the accountability and efficiency of the municipal government (see Figure 1).

Government officials retort that the new commitment to local solidarity governance means that deliberation is no longer restricted to the municipal budget. It should also include the 'social budget' to which civil society organisations and the business community of the city are invited to contribute. They also insist that the new strategy aims to include those previously 'excluded' from the participatory budgeting process, referring to private companies, foundations, universities, churches, and state and federal agencies. In this context, popular organisations become just one actor among many. According to Sergio Baierle (2005), this would be tantamount to rejecting the principle of popular sovereignty that always characterised participatory budgeting. The real aim of the new governance scheme seems to be the shift of responsibilities away from the state through 'partnerships' that, in practice, are a new form of privatisation of public policy. This requires the subordination of popular organisations to the rules and interests of the most powerful – large private business, in particular.

"Only by debating the promises and limitations of real-world experiments in citizens' participation such as that of Porto Alegre will we be able to radicalise urban politics and build the foundations for deeper and stronger democracies."

Local community organisers are increasingly divided. Many of the most experienced activists have lost their connections with the grassroots. This has contributed to the NGO-isation of the urban movement and the parallel loss of the original radically popular identity of the participatory budgeting programme. Moreover, from the outset, the new administration has attempted (rather successfully) to assimilate and 'neutralise' social leaders and technical staff formerly affiliated with the PT, offering them new jobs in local government

On the political front, too, the situation does not look promising. By the late 1990s, the left had become increasingly bureaucratised. The Workers' Party had tried to compensate for the loss of its social base by co-opting social leaders, starting a cycle that weakened both the party and the movement. More fundamentally, the PT has not been able to develop a coherent strategy to deal with the changed framework of local politics. It has been weakened and atomised by the electoral defeat in Porto Alegre and the wider crisis of the party across Brazil caused by the *mensalão* – the scandal triggered by revelations of systemic political corruption by elements of the PT leadership (Wainwright and Branford, 2006).

After the local defeat of the left in 2004, Porto Alegre has become the scene of a sharp conflict between opposed

"...even supposedly well-developed processes of local participatory democracy could be highly affected by institutional alterations produced by party politics."

political strategies. Further analysis of the conflict unfolding in the city can help to decode the rhetoric and realities of the latest global wave of 'partnerships', 'new governance' and 'community empowerment'. Only by debating the promises and limitations of real-world experiments in citizens' participation such as that of Porto Alegre will we be able to radicalise urban politics and build the foundations for deeper and stronger democracies.

Faced with this scenario, a group of Brazilian and European organisations active in 'reclaiming democracy' campaigns jointly organised an international conference in Porto Alegre, in October 2007, under the title *The Future of Participatory Democracy: Technical Fix or Popular Sovereignty?* The activity had four interrelated objectives:

- to analyse and debate the place of the state and the urban popular classes in the emerging urban landscape of the 21st century;
- to evaluate the limits and possibilities of participatory budgeting and other forms of community-based direct management of social policies;
- to provide a space for analyses and discussion of existing alternatives around the theme of participatory democracy as social emancipation and social transformation; and
- to raise suggestions and guidelines for building an international network of grassroots-based participatory democracy activists.

The conference was convened by CIDADE, the Transnational Institute, Oxfam-Novib, and the Methodist University of Porto Alegre. It had 194 participants from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Philippines, Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the United States. The main result of the conference was the creation of the Popular Sovereignty Network, conceived as an international space for interchanging experiences and developing joint strategies for the invigoration of local sources of popular power.

In short, the recent changes observed in Porto Alegre show that even supposedly well-developed processes of local participatory democracy could be highly affected by institutional alterations produced by party politics. Despite the existence of a vast academic literature published on the Brazilian case, the watering down of participatory budgeting – which contradicts previous assumptions about its strength and even its 'irreversibility' – highlights the need for further research on the objective quality and social roots of citizen participation. It also constitutes a warning against complacency once a participatory 'method' has been mainstreamed.

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10

Participatory budgeting in the UK: a challenge to the system?

THEME SECTION 2

by HEATHER BLAKEY

Introduction

Participatory budgeting (PB) is currently generating a lot of interest amongst policy makers and local authorities in the UK.[1] A way of involving communities in real decisions, it is a technique learnt from nearly 20 years' experience of popular mobilisation in Latin America, where communities in Porto Alegre, Brazil have been involved in spending the city's regeneration budget since 1989 (see Chavez, article 9, this issue). It is an idea that has spread across Latin America, and is now being explored by several European countries.

In the UK, Hazel Blears, the Minister for Communities and Local Government, announced that she hopes to see every local council distributing a proportion of its funds via PB-style 'community kitties' by 2012 (DCLG, 2008). Ten pilots already existed when she first made this announcement in July 2007, mostly brought into being by committed local government officials. However, the support of a government minister clearly took the development of participatory budgeting in the UK to a new level.

In its native context of Latin America, PB is seen as a radical alternative to representative democracy. Through the direct participation and deliberation of individuals (at public meetings) in setting budget priorities for the municipal investment plan, participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre is seen to have led to a shift in standards of living for its poorest communities (Hall, 2005). Although it was originally the project of the Workers' Party, which came to power in 1989, the people of Porto Alegre went on to control the budget process as well as the budget itself – with budget delegates refining the process each year, to ensure that it is a fair and participatory process.[2]

"PB is a source of inspiration for many around the world who are interested in justice and democracy. The question is: can it work here?"

[1] The Department of Local Government and Communities has been hosting a national reference group on participatory budgeting since 2006, and funds the Participatory Budgeting Unit to support local authorities in developing PB pilots.

[2] Since the change in local government in Porto Alegre in 2005, there has been an increasing de-politicisation of active participation (International Centre for Participation Studies – ICPS, 2008, p.10). However, it is PB's more political history that has served as inspiration for pilots in the UK (according to ICPS interviews with organisers and practitioners in the UK, 2007-8).

> **"If the decisions about what must happen have already been made, how can local people really be involved?"**

Essentially, it rests on four principles:

- direct participation of individuals in setting budget priorities;
- deliberation (i.e. informed decision-making rather than an opinion poll);
- social contract (through their participation, citizens become co-responsible for project implementation); and
- accountability (shared and transparent management of resources).

Few would dispute that it has generated real changes in terms of the lived realities of the city's poorer communities. This is in line with its intended goal of helping poorer citizens and neighbourhoods receive greater levels of public spending, and it has reversed a historical trend of declining participation within poor neighbourhoods.

Participants are not being 'consulted' but are themselves making decisions.[3] Put very simply, PB involves a real transfer of power and resources. Therefore, it is important that participants are able to deliberate, to share and defend their ideas, so that decisions are taken on the basis of considered reflection. PB should not be simply a referendum on spending priorities. Equally, direct participation is a crucial feature of PB.[4] Each person has a vote and the right to speak, meaning that there is an unequivocal link between involvement and outcome. In Porto Alegre, in just ten years, participation in the budget process rose from a little over 1,500 people in 1989 to more than 20,000 in 1999.[5] Participatory budgeting also acts as a 'citizenship school' for participants – their ability to participate increases as a result of learning gained through the process itself.

Accordingly, PB is a source of inspiration for many around the world who are interested in justice and democracy. The question is: can it work here? Is it possible to transplant a political method from Brazil and expect it to deliver in the same way in the UK? Latin America and the UK are undeniably very different settings, and the same political system may not transplant easily to a different political and social context.[6] Local government in Brazil has greater power than local government in the UK, and despite the UK's longer history of representative democracy, it appears that Latin Americans, who have more recently struggled for democracy, are more likely to participate in that system in order to solve social problems. While in the UK activists are increasingly disillusioned with and distant from the state, in Latin America, there is a strong tradition of collective action which has mobilised many excluded and marginalised people, who now seek inclusion within the state (Pearce, 2004). Volunteering and social activism in the UK remain healthy but this is increasingly divorced from the formal democratic system, generating a very different political culture in which to encourage participation (Home Office, 2004).

Fixing the system?

Broadly speaking, in Latin America, PB has arisen through social movements, backed by political parties of the Left demanding a voice. In the UK, the motivation is more top-down: a partnership of state officials and an increasingly professionalised voluntary sector develop participatory processes such as PB (as opposed to a more overtly political partnership of politicians and 'the people').[7] As a result, the focus can too often be on 'the people and how to involve them' (in the system as it stands) rather than focusing on 'the system and how to improve it'. The question here is the extent to which the people developing systems of PB in the UK see the problem.

- Is PB meant to 'fix' the people who are disengaged from the political system?
- Or, is it the system itself which could be seen as excluding and hierarchical?

Accordingly, PB has emerged more as 'participatory grant-making' in the UK (participatory decision-making about awarding grants to community groups) rather than involve-

[3] The process for decision-making varies from process to process, but it is the distinction between consultation and decision-making which characterises PB. For a detailed description of the decision-making process in one pilot in the UK, see the longer version of this paper.

[4] ICPS (2008), p.8.

[5] There is not space here to fully explain the process in Porto Alegre. For more information, see Hall (2005), Wampler (2000) and Chavez (this issue).

[6] For example, there are many critics of modern efforts to 'spread' representative democracy around the world – to implant it, as in Iraq and, less recently, Latin America itself, without sufficient reference to local conceptualisations of democracy or local political contexts (Avritzer, 2002). Perhaps, with even the World Bank promoting participatory budgeting (World Bank, 2007), it is time to take a closer look at how effectively ideas such as participatory budgeting do – or could – transplant to the UK, and with what results.

[7] The ICPS research into PB in the UK that this article is based on also looked at efforts to involve the voluntary and community sectors in decision-making processes. This research is outlined briefly in our research briefing *'Here, the People Decide'?*, 2008. The issue of the 'professionalised sector' emerged as an important factor, characterised by senior voluntary sector officials who have followed a voluntary sector 'career path'. This is not to say that the development of experience and skills in the sector is necessarily problematic, but it clearly influences the nature of actors involved in 'community work' – for example, a shift from activists to paid workers.

Residents voting at Keighley's participatory budgeting Decision Day, 25th November 2006.

Photo: Heather Blakely

ment in Council budgeting and expenditure. The danger is that PB is seen as the means to deliver the involvement of more people – a technique that can be taught (usually by consultants for a fee) rather than as a radical overhaul of how we understand our place in the democratic system.

Of course, these differences do not mean that PB has no place here. On the contrary, PB inspires exactly because it does seem to offer a sorely needed alternative to 'business as usual' politics.

PB in practice: lessons learnt

To see how the inspiration translates into practice, the International Centre for Participation Studies (ICPS) at Bradford University followed one PB pilot in the north of England between March 2006 and April 2007.[8] As with all the UK pilots, this was a small-scale experiment, but the overwhelming message was that PB in the UK can inspire, and that it can help people to see how and where to get involved in local decision-making. PB involved a much greater number of people in decision-making than any other local neighbourhood renewal planning process.[9] Approximately 300 people attended the PB Decision Day, with perhaps half coming from just one neighbourhood following a public meeting encouraging people to support the local school.[10]

[8] The longer paper that this article summarises is based on this research.

[9] Neighbourhood Renewal is a UK government programme which focuses on community involvement in generating social outcomes for deprived communities.

[10] Residents of all neighbourhoods eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding were invited to attend the Decision Day, to vote on grant applications by local organisations such as community groups and schools. £130,000 was allocated by residents on that day. The Decision Day followed a consultation process in which residents were asked to name three priorities for the area. This information was given to grant applicants as a guide, but the money was allocated by area on the day according to the Neighbourhood Renewal rules.

"The important point for all organisers and participants is to be alive to creating opportunities for local, and genuinely empowering, engagement with each process."

The sudden understanding that attendance impacted directly on outcomes in their neighbourhood motivated a large turnout. This clearly suggests that our problem is not apathy, but a lack of faith in our ability to make a difference – when people understood that their action would make a tangible difference to outcomes that they cared about, they turned out in considerable numbers.[11]

Yet there are warning signs too. The planning group for the pilot involved the Local Strategic Partnership, the voluntary sector and the council, but not local residents.[12] As a result, all the deliberation took place between paid workers, rather than between communities and individuals, missing two important elements of a radical PB process. However, the evidence from this pilot suggests a very high level of commitment to the radical potential of PB on the part of the organisers. So why were they still unable to create space for deliberation, or to involve residents in the planning process? The reality is that many national constraints conflict with a commitment to genuine participation. Prime amongst these is New Labour's 'delivery culture', which prioritises the achievement of set targets. Deliberations then inevitably focus on how to achieve these preordained targets, rather than any discussion of **what** should be achieved. This situation encourages organisational control – it is the organisers who will be held responsible if the targets are not met. What is more, if the decisions about what must happen have already been made, how can local people really be involved? Their participation is reduced to helping to find the best ways of meeting the targets, rather than deciding just what the priorities should be.

What works *here*? Developing local processes

So, it seems that PB does have a radical potential, to inspire, to engage, and crucially to bring about real social change. We are just at the beginning of this journey in the UK. There is an increasing constituency of committed practitioners and activists with a nuanced understanding of participatory budgeting. But we must not take its potential for granted. We must be alive to the factors which undermine the promise of genuine participation, and those which help the process move in the direction of those more radical outcomes. These include local ownership of the process (not just involvement in what projects are funded), the conscious creation of space for deliberation, and a commitment to community development work around budget literacy.[13]

We must learn to ask the right questions. What works **here**? And of course, when we ask that question, 'here' should not mean 'in the UK' but must refer to the neighbourhood of each individual process. Each process must be allowed to have the flexibility to develop, and be owned, locally. We also need to ask how participatory budgeting fits with the wider political system. In other words, participants need to have the opportunity to consider how the PB process they are part of fits with bigger local authority decision-making processes. How can participants get involved in actually setting priorities for spending – in budgeting, not just in 'grant-making' from a fixed pot? In the words of an activist local to the pilot we followed: 'we shouldn't just be helping decide how to share the pie, we should be asking why isn't the pie bigger!'

The answers to these questions cannot be determined at a national level, but must be explored by the participants in each process. UK government interest in PB offers an important opportunity, so long as the strategic national direction keeps open these spaces for local innovation. The important point for all organisers and participants is to be alive to creating opportunities for local, and genuinely empowering, engagement with each process. For those of us in the UK who believe in the radical potential of genuinely participatory processes such as PB, this is an interesting time.

[11] For more information on this particular UK process, please see the longer version of this paper.

[12] Local Strategic Partnerships exist in nearly all local authority areas in England and Wales. They bring together representatives from the local statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to address local issues and contribute to strategic planning.

[13] Based in part on detailed observation of one UK process, and involvement in the national reference group.

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NOTES
Heather Blakey's research focuses on participatory practice, participatory research methods, identities in Bradford, community engagement and outreach.
This article is a shortened version of a paper entitled 'Radical innovation or technical fix? Participatory budgeting in the UK.' Please contact Heather for the full version of this paper.

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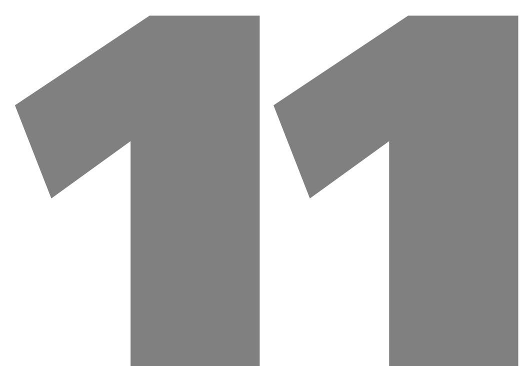
THEME SECTION 2

Theme 3: Gender issues and challenges of representation



The Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS: from principle to practice?

by the INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

Introduction

The International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) is the only international network of HIV-positive women. ICW envisions a world where HIV-positive women are respected and meaningfully involved at all political levels where decisions that affect our lives are made. Our hope is that with your experience of participatory ways of working, you will respond to this paper with advice, support and engagement on these issues.

In 1994, at the Paris AIDS Summit, 42 national governments declared that the principle of Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV and AIDS (the 'GIPA principle') is critical to ethical and effective national responses to the pandemic. While the GIPA principle is widely accepted in theory, our experience is that the views and voices of HIV-positive people still tend to be overlooked or ignored. GIPA is a useful mobilising device to rally around but no strategy was put in place to secure effective involvement. Furthermore, the principle was never gendered. It has proved hard for HIV-positive women to have their voices heard, and harder still for young HIV-positive women and others who are more marginalised, such as sex workers, positive women prisoners and injecting drug users.

Meaningful implementation of the GIPA principle is not simply about seating HIV-positive women at decision-making tables where a mandatory space has been created; it is also about us setting the agenda. It is not only vital that HIV-positive women with the skills and capacity to make decisions are involved as equal partners – but that those in positions of power learn to engage with us in ways that are inclusive and respectful, or else our involvement becomes tokenistic.

"While the GIPA principle is widely accepted in theory, our experience is that the views and voices of HIV-positive people still tend to be overlooked or ignored."

Both the technical and personal experiences of our members demand that they be involved at every level of the development, design and delivery of sexual and reproductive health, treatment and care services for HIV-positive women and girls around the world. To ensure 'services to fit women' (rather than 'women to fit services'), groups and individuals concerned with these issues must work in creative, interactive and participatory ways with HIV-positive women, as well as with others who work directly with community members

and other relevant groups. Only through such collaborative efforts can we adequately address the barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing these services.

Here, we discuss:

- our struggle to ensure that all our members' voices are heard in our advocacy efforts;
- the gendered barriers to greater involvement; and
- the resulting tendency for organisations, institutions and networks (including ours) to 'cherry-pick' and 'gatekeep' when it comes to involvement.[1]

This article draws on experiences from our members' involvement in many processes over the years. We share such experiences through our newsletter, members' e-forum, during our advocacy development and training workshops, and in informal exchanges between members.

Our issues don't get discussed

HIV-positive women's issues are often excluded in national, regional and local mainstream dialogues. The following quotes from HIV-positive women who have taken part in programme and policy initiatives illustrate the exclusion of their experience during design, planning, and implementation.

Our input is not implemented, and our ideas are not taken into consideration.

We have organisations, but men lead them, and our issues don't get discussed.

Policy makers sit in boardrooms and decide what is relevant to our lives – we are not part of the process.

This ongoing marginalisation of HIV-positive women is not only a feature of mainstream policy arenas. HIV/AIDS organisations do not adequately take into account the perspectives of women and reflect the patriarchal norms of societies at large. Despite women's strong leadership in support groups, we find that national, regional and international organisations and networks of people living with HIV and AIDS are dominated by men. Too many NGOs and civil society groups working on HIV see themselves as caretakers and advocates for HIV-positive women, leaving us to assume that they do not think we are empowered or responsible enough to think or advocate for ourselves.

Women are used for their experience, but because the woman is not very educated they think that they need professionals to decide on things. (ICW member, Tanzania)

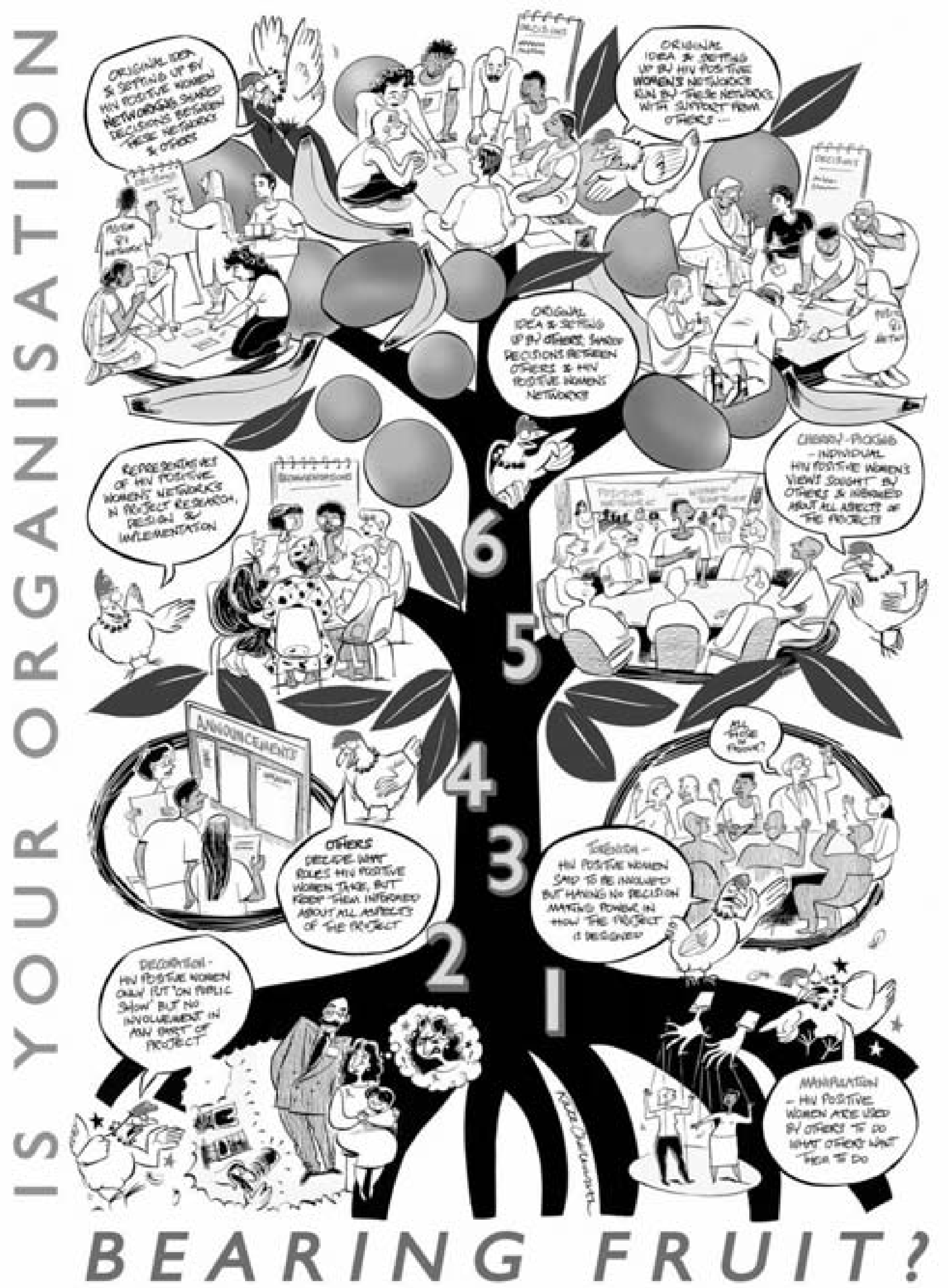
One World Bank officer once said at a meeting, 'We can't involve representatives of HIV-positive women's networks in our meetings because they don't know how to behave in them.' (ICW member)

Issues important to us are often not seen as important by people not directly affected by HIV. Our daily experiences starkly reveal the barriers to achieving our rights both as women and as people living with HIV and AIDS. These experiences can give us insights and knowledge which, if ignored, may well reduce the positive content and impact of work around HIV and AIDS. It is not impossible for people who are HIV-negative or who may not know their status to support us and understand our issues. But any decision-making forum on HIV that does not involve HIV-positive women who represent positive women's networks is missing a vital perspective representing a body of 'expertise by experience'.

ICW has identified a real need for safe spaces, and for research and advocacy development projects specifically run by and for HIV-positive women from different backgrounds or with different experiences and lifestyles. We have developed specific projects with young positive women, and HIV-positive women who are or were injecting drug users. However, outside ICW a frustration for us is that 'women' (or 'gender') is generally seen as one category, differentiated from, for instance, injecting drug users, prisoners, or young people. This implies that HIV-positive women prisoners, for example, have the same experiences and priorities as HIV-positive male prisoners. For women who are already marginalised such as sex workers, mobile populations, prisoners, injecting drug users and young women, the additional marginalisation of their HIV-positive status can silence their voices. Even within activist circles our young members do not feel their concerns are taken seriously by older members. Similarly, ICW members who inject drugs have struggled to get their voices heard either by HIV-positive non-injecting drug users or HIV-positive male injecting drug users.

Increased involvement needs to be qualified in terms of type and quality. Yet policies and guidance papers on HIV

[1] **Cherry-picking** is the act of pointing at individual cases or data that seem to confirm a particular position, while ignoring a significant portion of related cases or data that may contradict that position. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherry_picking. **Gatekeeping** is the process through which ideas and information are filtered for publication. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gatekeeping_(communication)



Cartoon: Kate Charlesworth

rarely qualify GIPA. These policies remain rhetorical and often satisfy themselves with the inclusion of HIV-positive women as research respondents or service recipients.

People sign up to GIPA without knowing the meaning of GIPA – they do it to get funding. (ICW member)

Such experiences with GIPA have led people to speak about MIPA – **meaningful** involvement of people living with HIV and AIDS, and even MIWA – meaningful involvement of **women** living with HIV and AIDS. Yet whatever it is called, if organisations working on HIV do not have a clear idea of what we mean by 'meaningful' we will continue to be used to legitimise exclusive processes of engagement. ICW produced a poster depicting a continuum of involvement moving from manipulation and tokenism to what we then considered to be more meaningful forms of involvement, e.g. the setting up of networks by HIV-positive women (see Figure 1). However, we now realise our poster misses a more political view of GIPA whereby HIV-positive women hold governments to account in terms of what they are doing to uphold the rights of HIV-positive women and what a healthy relationship with policy makers would look like.

Last year I was invited to speak about GIPA and stigma and discrimination at UNGASS.[2] *The government of x organised a meeting for all the delegates from x and told the delegates what they should say […] I was criticised and put aside for making a big noise and being critical about the government.* (ICW member)

We have also noted how we shape our argument to get our message across. For example, HIV-positive women activists often use the gender inequality argument rather than a direct rights-based argument to gain recognition of the importance of their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) (see Box 1). The inequality arguments are powerful and ICW makes reference to these over and over again.

Many HIV-positive women get HIV in their marriage beds. Women often cannot negotiate safe sex.

Box 1: Sexual and reproductive health and rights

- Sexual health: Includes healthy sexual development, equitable and responsible relationships and sexual fulfilment, freedom from illness, disease, disability, violence and other harmful practices related to sexuality.
- Sexual rights: the rights of all people to decide freely and responsibly on all aspects of their sexuality, including protecting and promoting their sexual health, be free from discrimination, coercion or violence in their sexual lives and in all sexual decisions, expect and demand equality, full consent, mutual respect and shared responsibility in sexual relationships. We also have the right to say 'no' to sex if we do not want it.
- Reproductive health: The complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters related to the reproductive system including a satisfying and safe sex life, capacity to have children and, freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.
- Reproductive rights: The rights of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children, to have the information, education and means to do so, attain the highest standards of sexual and reproductive health and, make decisions about reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence.
- Reproductive care: Includes, at a minimum family planning services, counselling and information, antenatal, postnatal and delivery care, health care for infants, treatment for reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases, safe abortion services where legal and management of abortion-related complications, prevention and appropriate treatment for infertility, information, education and counselling on human sexuality, reproductive health and responsible parenting and discouragement of harmful practices. If additional services, such as the treatment of breast and reproductive system cancers and HIV/AIDS are not offered, a system should be in place to provide referrals for such care.

Source: ICW factsheet, adapted from definitions of SRR from the programme for action resulting from the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD), 1994.

Women are dependent on men so they cannot assert their reproductive choices.

We have a hard time simply getting these facts recognised and addressed. Yet, significant as they are, it is only half the story. Some of these messages can over-emphasise women's victimhood. They do not address the fact that women also have sex outside of marriage, can choose to have unprotected sex, or get pregnant by choice. ICW wants to see the sexual and reproductive rights of all HIV-positive women respected. However, we are caught between feeling that gender inequality arguments are somehow seen as 'old hat', and an HIV/AIDS policy context which prefers to avoid the language of rights, particularly sexual and reproductive rights.

[2] UNGASS refers to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, 2001 at which a Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was made. Regular review meetings are held to monitor progress towards the commitments made.

Who represents who and what?

ICW is frequently asked to provide ICW women advocates or to speak at international meetings with the aim of feeding into policies and programmes. These invitations raise a number of questions, which are discussed further below.

- How can we train up less experienced HIV-positive women to take on advocacy roles at international levels, and avoid creating a situation where only a select few have access to the policy-making arena?
- How can we ensure that ICW representatives are effective, feel supported and are able to present their experience as well as the collective ICW perspective and a clear agenda for change?
- Why do already skilled and experienced activists often prefer to 'go it alone' rather than attend such meetings as a linked 'representative' of a network of HIV-positive women?
- The bigger question is, do we even want to continue engaging with policy processes which only open their doors to a select few?

We have not sufficiently challenged definitions of 'positive leadership', which contribute to empowering a select few as global advocates and leading lights, in an individual capacity, and at the expense of the many. We are therefore complicit in creating an 'aidserati' (a global HIV elite), cherry-picking and gate-keeping so that the same faces and names remain on the circuit to the exclusion of others.

> *They call their friends or people that they know.* (ICW member, Tanzania)

One way ICW is trying to address this is through a programme working with young HIV-positive women to develop their advocacy and policy-influencing skills, knowledge and plans. We have run young women's dialogues (YWD) in Southern Africa, South Africa, Swaziland and Namibia. Originally using a training workshop format, we now build in ongoing support for up to a year to allow the women to develop their skills and implement their plans after the initial workshop. We also encourage seasoned activists to mentor less experienced activists.

However, we need to ensure that we are not just fostering a new elite without really challenging the way that policy making is done and the way that positive people are used to legitimise largely exclusive and restrictive policy processes. Do we want to be present at all if our involvement is purely about legitimising others' agendas?

We also need to ensure that our representatives are accountable. How do we, and they, ensure that their individual experiences, perspectives and concerns represent those of other HIV-positive women? Should we even expect them to put forward the views of others? And how do they communicate their advocacy experience back to other women? In situations where ICW is asked to identify a person to be part of a forum where policies or strategies are being devised, we need to ensure that they speak from ICW's perspective, aims and politics. Yet we have yet to articulate clearly how this could happen, or even what this would involve, given that ICW is a network with a membership with such diversity of individual experience. Positive women representatives tend to be invited to decision-making fora at the last minute and this further reduces the scope for advance consultation with other HIV-positive women. Such consultation is vital, however, because it enables women to get involved without publicly declaring their status – which many women are reluctant to do.

"ICW has identified a real need for safe spaces, and for research and advocacy development projects specifically run by and for HIV-positive women from different backgrounds or with different experiences and lifestyles."

> *If GIPA is a conditionality of funding, then people living with HIV need to have a voice in the process – and this needs to be confidential – not just being put on display for the donor to see.* (ICW member)

Organisations for people living with HIV/AIDS are underfunded and their input undervalued. Positive representatives at the policy table are usually there as volunteers. Our attendance is dependent on funding by policy makers and often only out-of-pocket costs are covered. This makes it difficult for anyone in work to take on such a role. It also creates an uncomfortable imbalance when we are around a table with people representing other bodies who are on full-time salaries. Many activists rely heavily on the per diems they get from attending events and workshops run by other organisations. This can create resentment from other activists when they see the same people going to events again and again. If organisations are really committed to ensuring that HIV programmes are successful then adequate funding should be

"Organisations need to recognise that when they do not involve us in ways that are respectful and meaningful the quality of programmes and policies suffers and their impact is lessened."

available to make sure that our time and energy is compensated for.

Policy making environments can be quite intimidating and we often find ourselves the 'lone voice' of HIV-positive women.

I sometimes find I am the only HIV-positive woman at a high-level forum. (ICW member)

We spend weeks away from loved ones, often unpaid, sitting around big tables, our input strictly limited when, for example, we are designated as observers only or are not given a specific slot for speaking. We do this on the off-chance that we can have some influence within parameters that have already been determined. Much decision-making is done in the 'corridors of power' rather than in meetings to which we are invited. Perhaps policy makers should spend some time with our members in the environments where **they** live, and learn from them how to be more inclusive. Too often, our lack of capacity is used as an excuse not to include us, when in fact those that currently make the policies need to think about **their** capacity to engage with us.

We need to look at ways of engaging in processes that lead to positive change in our lives. They may involve mentoring, sharing, building networks, and creating dialogues and accountability so that groups of people feel their voices are represented, even when they are not physically present at meetings. This must not occur as a one-off, but involve continuity and two-way dialogue. Our challenge is that our members are spread broadly across the globe, many with little access to information communication technology (ICT). At ICW we are continually trying to adapt, develop and experiment with more inclusive forms of representation. We would welcome ideas from other organisations and networks on their experiences.

ICW's membership reflects in many ways the diversity of women's lives in general. All HIV-positive women can, with encouragement, relay their experiences of living with HIV and feel solidarity with other HIV-positive people around the world. The impact of 'telling' truths and illustrating barriers to sexual and reproductive health through personal stories can be powerful. It can help influence policy makers to understand and take on board the reality of living with the virus. This can be one important element of GIPA and one which demands as much respect and attention as any other – when it is not exploitative, and used with full sensitivity to the personal issues it may raise.

However, there are additional levels of skill, capacity and political sophistication which are needed in any meaningful application of the GIPA principle. We want the expertise and political sophistication of a growing number of us to be recognised and respected.

In Namibia, for example, we have set up the 13-member Namibia Women's Health Network. It is made up of mainly HIV-positive (12 of the 13) young women.[3] The project is empowering these women and four female Members of Parliament through a series of trainings, which include sexual reproductive health and rights.

Being part of the network and working with other positive women – it has made me realise that I am not alone and there are other people like me. It has released that inner person and psychologically I am no longer that stressed and oppressed. (ICW member from Namibia)

The 13 women will be linked with MPs and a committee of 26 women, who are being selected from the 13 regions (two women – one older and one young woman – from each region), who will monitor services and talk to community members to bring important issues to the policy makers. The project wants to ensure that HIV-positive women are meaningfully involved in making decisions, including national policies, that impact on their lives. Through training parliamentarians, we hope to build the capacity of those in positions of power to engage with HIV-positive people in ways that are equitable, respectful, and productive for all involved.

Now they have the committee to work with. Now we can see that we have a point where we can channel our concerns. Before when you spoke about MPs they were distant and it was difficult for a community to imagine reaching them. (Member of Family Hope Sanctuary in Namibia)

[3] A similar approach has been applied regionally by ICW Latina for the past four years (ICW News 25, 2004).

This example from Namibia does not entirely do away with the problems of selection and representation. But it does build into its workings a commitment to consult and liaise with communities. Organisations need to recognise that when they do not involve us in ways that are respectful and meaningful the quality of programmes and policies suffers and their impact is lessened. The longer we wait to involve HIV-positive women, the more time is wasted in addressing the challenges around HIV faced by countries and communities. We realise that our efforts to move organisations from tokenistic to meaningful behaviour may make us unpopular (particularly when organisations seek to work with us so that they can tick the right boxes). This is partly because it involves HIV-negative women and men questioning their own role in tackling this pandemic and partially because we are often working with organisations with more resources and power than we have. We are not just asking others to think about this issue – we are asking everyone to ask themselves: What am I doing, and what is my organisation doing, to meaningfully involve HIV-positive women?'

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Understanding local difference: gender (plus) matters for NGOs

by NAZNEEN KANJI and SU FEI TAN

Introduction

This article aims to promote a more consistent analysis of recognised local difference in the work we do as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), particularly, but not only, gender differences. We want to do two things.

- Illustrate why and how it is important to 'disaggregate' populations – to separate out different subgroups for analysis – going beyond 'the local' and 'the community' in our analysis. We use examples of selected publications from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).
- Provide a basic tool for thinking about difference in the work we do, focusing on the management of natural resources for sustainable development.

The article is based on a longer review of IIED publications, produced for internal learning. It is particularly relevant for intermediary rather than grassroots or membership organisations.

Why difference?

Poverty reduction is an overarching goal of most development organisations. IIED's mission statement links livelihoods with ecological resilience. It is:

… to shape a future that ends global poverty and ensures fair and sound management of the world's resources.

One key principle underlying the way we work is to

… support a greater voice for less powerful interests by building their capacity to act and speak, by linking local and global levels.[1]

But does IIED's work and that of similar organisations incorporate an understanding of how 'less powerful interests' are differentiated?

It is now more widely acknowledged that economic reforms (structural adjustment policies) and market-led development have increased socio-economic inequalities, between countries and between groups within countries. As IIED's Natural Resources Group strategy puts it:

The importance of geography is being overtaken by social inequalities and large segments of the world's population are marginalised.

[1] From the IIED Strategy Document 2005-2008. See www.iied.org/aboutiied/strategydocument.html

"Gender is a key dimension of social difference, which affects people's experience, concerns and capabilities in the management of natural resources."

The trend is one of greater inequalities **within** rural and urban areas. Those with greater assets and power are much better able to participate in and harness the benefits of market-led development.[2] One example is the expansion of industrialised, commercial and often export-oriented agriculture and forestry. It tends to concentrate land and natural resources in the hands of a few, marginalising production for local and subsistence use. Market liberalisation tends to benefit larger farmers and widens inequalities between them and small, resource-poor farmers.

We argue that international and national NGOs could strengthen their approach and results with a greater understanding of the need for a differentiated policy, which takes into account local context and dynamics. Gender is a key dimension of social difference, which affects people's experience, concerns and capabilities in the management of natural resources. While many NGOs already disaggregate fairly systematically on assets and income differences, a stronger focus on gender perspective, and an understanding of other differences such as race, caste and age would give us a firmer basis for understanding how policies affect different groups.

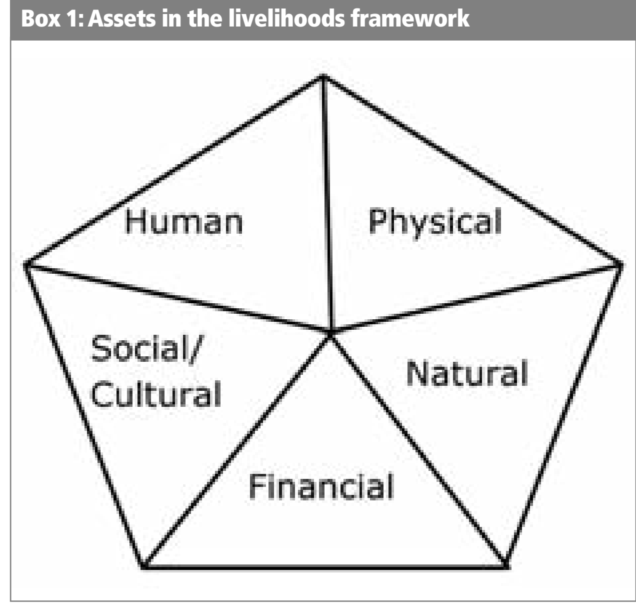
Gender and difference

Unequal gender relations and women's lack of secure rights to land and natural resources tends to exclude them from decision-making over land and natural resource use in many parts of the world. However, women often bear the main responsibility for 'putting food on the table' and are heavily involved in the day-to-day management of natural resources.

If we examine the sustainable livelihoods framework, which is used by a number of agencies involved in development programmes, it is clear that there are differences in the level of assets, or what is sometimes termed capital, of different groups (see Box 1). In different contexts, caste, race and age may be very important. In almost all contexts, gender tends to be important.

Existing assets (material and social, e.g. networks and access to information) affect the power to access and influence policies, institutions and processes. Increasing scarcity and competition over natural resources leads to increased vulnerability for disadvantaged groups. Household level studies indicate that, in the current context, competition between **men and women** and between **generations** often leads to the edging out of women and young men from control over productive resources, so that 'family property' is effectively privatised by older men.[3] While situations obviously vary, there is concern that women systematically lack access to land, credit, income, education and information relative to men, while bearing heavier roles as carers, in the context of HIV and AIDS and often declining health and welfare provision.

Box 1: Assets in the livelihoods framework



Women's roles and activities tend to make them less active in markets than men. When they do participate, the way markets (financial, goods and labour markets) are structured often deny women equal access. Similarly there is differentiated access to state institutions and political parties. Much of what women do contributes to the unpaid 'care' economy (e.g. childcare, cooking meals) as opposed to the 'commodity' economy although they are interdependent.[4] The care economy is under-valued and yet represents an essential underpinning of human and societal well-being.

[2] See for example: *World Development* 28: 7 (2000) and IIED *Gatekeeper* no. 100 'Global Restructuring, Agri-Food Systems and Livelihoods' (2001) – www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=9166IIED

[3] See e.g. the 2006 IIED Briefing paper 'Innovation in Securing Land Rights in Africa: lessons from experience' (www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=12531IIED) and more specifically the paper presented by Christian Lund 'Securing Land Rights: some reflections on approaching the issue.'

[4] For further explanation see Elson *et al*. (1997).

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Box 2: Examples of differences in power and access to information

- Within low income/resource poor communities, women have less knowledge of land registration processes and rules. In Mozambique, women were unaware that their land had been registered by community 'representatives'.
- In Ghana, chiefs who are well informed and connected are able to sell off land without the knowledge or consent of their communities.
- In southern Niger, the restrictions that young women face on their mobility, also restricts their knowledge of basic political processes such as the right to vote.

The perspective of poor women, who constitute approximately half the population in most societies, provides a unique and powerful vantage point from which to examine environment and development strategies:

- Firstly, women constitute the majority of the economically and socially disadvantaged in most societies, with additional burdens imposed by gender-based hierarchies and the subordination of women.
- Secondly, women's work in the survival, ongoing reproduction and care of human beings and the environment is critical and yet continues to be undervalued.
- Thirdly, gender-based inequalities are used to undermine the wages and working conditions of an increasing pool of women's labour used in fuelling economic growth. Export-led industries (such as textiles, electronics and garments) are a case in point.

The scope of work of many NGOs may make disaggregation difficult at times, but we should, at a minimum, avoid romanticising or homogenising 'local communities' (see e.g. Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003). When NGOs work on natural resource management, we tend to define groups according to their use of particular natural resources and/or production systems.

- Do we need to look at how identities and power at the local level intersect with such systems and who benefits from them? These are the factors which actually determine access to – and benefits from – resources.
- Do we privilege formal policy processes and not give enough importance to the influence of customary systems and to everyday and informal struggles which can also influence outcomes?
- Are there times when local difference matters less and when whole communities are equally affected, or are effects always differentiated?
- Do we see women's rights as human rights – or is there an implicit hierarchy of rights (and oppression) which underpins our analysis?

"Do we see women's rights as human rights – or is there an implicit hierarchy of rights (and oppression) which underpins our analysis?"

Review of IIED papers

In order to explore these complex questions, we examine two papers by IIED, which deal with agriculture and small farms. They were selected as they aim to represent the interests of small farmers and rural communities and both seek to feed into policy processes and provide recommendations. In our analysis we asked three questions:

- Does the analysis recognise difference in the population which is discussed in the paper? (Difference refers to a) access to and control over livelihood assets and b) social positioning and decision-making power);
- Do the conclusions and recommendations/policy implications build on a disaggregated analysis?
- What are the consequences? Does it matter, when and how?

Transformations in West African Agriculture and the Role of Family Farms

This paper by Camilla Toulmin and Bara Gueye (2003) was prepared as a scoping study for the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat. It provided the basis for developing a longer-term programme to examine the transformations in West African agriculture and the challenges faced by smallholder production systems. The study was carried out as a desk review of relevant material and did not involve field work.

Does the analysis recognise difference in the population discussed in the paper?

In analysing transformation in agriculture and family farms, there is a clear disaggregation between farm households using the 'three rural worlds' typology:

- the first category is globally competitive and linked to agribusiness;
- the second is locally oriented with access to and control over land but facing declining terms of trade, which means they are able to exchange what they produce for less than before; and
- the third group has limited access to productive resources and has diversified livelihoods, including migration, for survival.

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Women working in rural Niger.

Photo: Marie Monimart

The size and composition of households and how the availability of labour affects household productivity is also discussed. Case studies are cited describing the migration of younger men to earn cash outside family farming. There is much less emphasis on gender disaggregation. For example, household heads are assumed to be male. There is also an assumption that family farms have links with communities, which are based on solidarity and mutual help. This is contrasted with commercial agriculture where there is often no social connection between entrepreneur and local community. However, this picture of family farming is at variance with much of the empirical work on women's labour in agriculture, where there is often struggle over time, resources and benefits at the household level. Equally, there are often struggles e.g. over land and water within communities that operate family farms.

Do the conclusions and recommendations build on a disaggregated analysis?

The analysis then moves to the drivers of change and the challenges. Here, the pressure on family farms to use their cheap labour to adapt is not analysed in terms of the results of women's work burden (and effects on her own and the household's health and well-being), which has been a common finding in wider poverty analysis of farm households. In addition, research on the intensification of cash cropping has shown that food crops may suffer and that income received from cash crops **may** be controlled and used by men in ways that lead to a decline in household nutrition and welfare.[5]

In assessing the rise of producer organisations (e.g. cotton producers) there is little attention to the composition

[5] See e.g. Dey (1980) and Wold (1997).

of the membership in terms of size of family farm, gender or age. The question arises about whose voices are being heard in policy forums, and whether these voices represent the interests of more marginal farmers, youth and women. Similarly, the paper recognises that women rarely have direct access to credit, inputs and extension, and that women provide huge inputs into agriculture. But the implications for a programme of work are not analysed. The detrimental effects of power relations at the global level are clearly signalled in the conclusions and suggestions for future work. However, there is less attention to or awareness of local power dynamics. For example, whether an organisation such as ROPPA (*Réseau des organisations paysannes et des producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*) reflects marginalised farmers' views.[6]

What are the consequences? Does it matter, when and how?

Since the objective is to set out a programme of work on family farming, more can be done to have a clearer and deeper understanding of the unit of analysis – family farms – which gives voice to the concerns of younger and older members, women and men. There are assumptions of harmonious households and communities, which are not empirically supported. Without such an analysis there is a risk of ignoring the interests of less powerful groups as described above.

It would also seem vital to include poverty and sustainability issues as well as the 'productivity' of family farming systems, which seems to be the main focus. This focus may be a response to the 'international' idea that family farms are inefficient. But we also need to make it clear that the costs and benefits of different kinds of family farms vary according to social positioning. It is also a chance to explore whether international development goals of equity, efficiency and sustainability sometimes compete and contain contradictions. The meaning of 'efficiency' also needs to be unpacked, as it can be at the risk of inequitable costs and benefits to different groups in the farming population.

Prajateerpu: A citizens jury/scenario workshop on food and farming futures for Andhra Pradesh, India

This report was co-authored by Michel Pimbert and Tom Wakeford (2002). *Prajateerpu* was devised as a means of allowing those people most affected by the 'Vision 2020' for food and farming in Andhra Pradesh, India to shape a vision of their own (see also Kuruganti *et al*, this issue). A core group of Indian and UK-based co-inquirers began from an awareness that the views of small farmers, and those of other marginalised rural communities whose lives depend on agriculture, had been almost entirely excluded from decision-making during the development of Vision 2020. *Prajateerpu* sought to facilitate deliberative and inclusionary processes for policy analysis and review. The reports describe participatory action research that took place against a background of social, political and scientific controversy in which researchers were active participants. It used different methods in combination, including the citizens' jury, scenario workshop and public hearings. An IIED researcher was an active member of the action research process and the aim was to put expert knowledge under public scrutiny with the aim of democratising knowledge.

"Women's rights are critical if we are to achieve sustainable development. We cannot afford to view these struggles for rights as a luxury or of secondary importance in relation to other areas of contention."

Does the analysis recognise difference in the population discussed in the paper?

The jury selection process did not seek to achieve representation from all social groups. Instead, it purposefully and positively discriminated in favour of the poor and marginalised farmers and landless. Emphasis was put on recruiting *dalit*, *adivasi* and women farmers. The selection criteria for jurors included:

- small or marginal farmers living near or below the poverty line;
- open-minded, with no close connection to NGOs or political parties; and
- likely to be articulate in discussions.

Jurors were chosen from a wide variety of agricultural backgrounds (different agro-ecological zones). They represented small and marginal farmers, food processors and an urban consumer. In addition, the diverse composition of witnesses, including government officials, agriculture experts and academics, ensured that a range of different groups in society fed their views into the process.

[6] Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa.

Jurors, two thirds of whom were women, present their vision during the *Prajateerpu* process.

Photo: Sarojini Naidu School

Do the conclusions and recommendations build on a disaggregated analysis?
The conclusions and recommendations come from the jurors themselves and represent their views and interests. The emphasis in this initiative was placed on the process of deliberative and informed debate. It enabled groups who are discriminated against on the grounds of wealth, caste, ethnicity and gender to use their knowledge, interact with 'experts' and express their opinions.

What are the consequences? Does it matter, when and how?
The methodology employed ensures that IIED and/or other intermediary organisations at the national level are not representing the views of marginalised groups. Rather, this project **directly** 'supports a greater voice for less powerful interests by building their capacity to act and speak, by linking local and global levels'. This is a part of IIED's strategy and principles. Such participatory methods build capacity for much more direct, rather than representative, democratic processes.

This methodology is challenging. Conflicts which occur between groups in such a process have to be managed. Even the process of selecting jurors may be contested – for example, those who do not feel it is important for women to participate directly. As with many methodologies based on 'stakeholder dialogue', much depends on the facilitation. If facilitators encourage such differences to be aired, then a more inclusive and real consensus may be reached than in forums where there are unacknowledged differences in power, or where some of the most marginalised groups are missing.

Lessons learnt

Intermediary NGOs, particularly those such as IIED working at international level, tend to have some distance from the grassroots. They work primarily with and through partners. This almost inevitably weakens staff understanding of specific contexts and dynamic processes of change and their outcomes. We have argued that a perspective which disaggregates is important and that we cannot see the local (or communities, farmers etc.) as homogenous. We need to avoid over-simplification and clearly acknowledge that differences in power operate at all levels. Gender analysis provides an important lens which interacts with class, ethnicity and age but also cuts across them. So for example, gender analysis can reveal the problems that young men face in accessing land and natural resources when these are scarce.

Women's rights are critical if we are to achieve sustainable development. We cannot afford to view these struggles for rights as a luxury or of secondary importance in relation to other areas of contention. Rather, a gender perspective should be integrated into the analysis, in that inequalities of class, income, gender, race and ethnicity interact in particular contexts to determine outcomes. In some parts of the world, for example in South Asia, it is widely recognised that targets for poverty reduction will not be met without reducing gender inequalities. Having said this, we understand that these can be sensitive issues. But if we have good relationships with partners on the ground, we should be able to broach these issues. In any case there are usually many NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) already working on gender. We should be careful to include them in our choice of partner. Discussions on gender are easier for staff based in the North if we understand and are open about difference in our own societies and cultures.

One way we can deepen our understanding of local contexts is to spend time in the field, as opposed to meetings and workshops in national capitals. When this is difficult, we should engage in discussion with community-based organisations on their views about difference and inequality of different kinds. Respecting culture does not mean we cannot speak with partners about issues of equality and how they are interpreted by different groups in their and our societies. Avoiding such debate can even be seen as patronising. Respecting culture does not mean undermining hard-won universal declarations of human rights. For example, there is a real danger at the current time that cultural relativism is used to excuse breaches of women's basic human rights in extremist interpretations of Islam and Catholicism.[7] Both men and women within these societies are contesting these views.

At a very minimum, if we are unable to be in the field regularly or take part in policy processes at the local level

[7] The principle that each culture must be analysed on its own terms and the behaviour of others should not be judged by one's own culture.

Box 3: Some factors of differentiation

- Divisions of labour
- Access to and control over resources and services, e.g. land
- Participation in decision-making
- Distribution of benefits and incentives

ourselves, then we must refer to or build on other organisations' empirical work. What we must avoid is the 'add women' syndrome where the words are added without any analysis or substance. We are not arguing that each piece of writing done by NGO staff must reach the same depth of understanding of local context, difference and inequality – but that we can improve our outputs by acknowledging power inequalities at the local level much more systematically, taking a gender perspective in our work and viewing women's rights as human rights.

Basic tools for addressing difference in NGO work

Given the breadth of work at IIED and in many NGOs, it is difficult to provide a tool which is adequate for all the sectors, context and levels of our work. In general, a good starting point is to think about the key factors which lead to differentiation (Box 3). What follows are some simple guidelines related to different categories of NGO work.

Desk studies/secondary research

This kind of research is often carried out by staff, sometimes as a scoping exercise, to inform the development of further work. As this work lays the foundation it is important to have as nuanced a view as possible of context and factors of differentiation at the local level.

- Find out **which** differences are important and **why** (e.g. caste is a very important factor of differentiation in the Indian context. In the Sahel the important factor may be the type of production system, such as pastoralism, which defines stronger or weaker access to natural resources). It is also important to identify and use information gathered through participatory processes as these are likely to be less filtered and to represent better the interests of marginalised groups.
- Do a wider search for information on websites. A few useful ones are included at the end of this article.

Collaborative policy research with partners

International researchers work together with national partners on a specific project or research programme. This is where we can reflect better the processes that are happening on the ground and the kinds of action that will result in more equitable and inclusive development, management of natural resources, and so on. We can also reflect which particular differences at local level have a bearing on the objectives we are trying to achieve.

- Discuss with partners which aspects of difference are important and why.
- Make sure this is reflected in the terms of reference, research questions and plan, and the methodology to be used.
- Wherever possible, participatory tools and approaches should be used to ensure that different groups within communities can voice their interests and frame the debate.

For example, in the IIED research programme on 'How land registration affects poor groups' the research questions included:

- What are the differences for men/women/incomers in terms of registering claims over land?
- Are women able to register their land as well as men, are incomers excluded?

In Ethiopia, the first phase of the research showed that women were particularly vulnerable to losing land rights, but that there was also some innovation in registration procedures which could protect their rights; so a piece of work was commissioned on women's land rights in Amhara which has since been used widely.

Commissioned research

International and national NGOs commission consultants or organisations. Often work of this kind is commissioned to improve knowledge of an issue for policy, or to provide specific information for a programme.

- Specify that local difference is addressed in the terms of reference.
- Ensure that the methods allow important differences to emerge, and specifically that participatory tools and approaches are used.

Work on producer organisations should include questions such as:

- What kinds of farmers are members of these producer organisations?
- How are these organisations governed?
- How are leaders chosen and how are different interests represented?

Convening actors to discuss specific issues and policies

IIED, and other international NGOs, facilitate processes of debate and information sharing at various levels, local, national and regional.

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- Make sure that a range of interests are represented (including groups that may not be organised/vocal). A good example is the work on citizens' juries. This actively sought to support the voices of more marginalised groups within the context of a facilitated informed debate on a specific issue. In IIED's and other UK organisations' work to support pastoral civil society, on the other hand, currently no pastoral women's organisations are involved. We need to look for other organisations, or identify women within the organisations already involved with the project who could be supported to represent women's interests.
- Make sure that less powerful groups are supported to make their voices heard, e.g. organising time for women to meet and discuss their views to present to wider audiences.

Advice to donors (policy and programmes)

In arguments around major policy choices that will affect all poor groups (that is, the debate between promoting large commercial or smallholder agriculture or giving rights to indigenous groups as a whole) it may be necessary to simplify messages and forego a more nuanced view of the different interests at local level.

But as soon as you get into programmatic advice, the way in which you advise donors to support e.g. smallholder production, must take account of difference at the local level. Since all donors tend to have written policies and make statements which support inclusion, equity including gender equity, sustainability and human rights – it is a question of following through the implications of broad principles and policy statements for differentiated and context-specific policy and processes which may actually support these principles.

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The ivory tower and beyond: Bradford University at the heart of its communities

by JENNY PEARCE, MARTIN PEARSON and SAM CAMERON

What is community engagement?

It is important to distinguish community engagement (CE) from other university outreach activities – e.g. widening participation, lifelong learning, knowledge transfer, cultural activities, volunteering, and research and consultancy. While all these activities are valuable ways in which the university contributes to its locality, community engagement differs in both its goals and the character of the relationship that the university aims to build. Community engagement builds partnerships and shared objectives based on mutually recognised and valued community and university competences. This is at the core of the effort to break down barriers between academia and the community, encouraging mutual respect and building shared approaches to challenges facing the district.

How to measure it?

Our measurement tool is based on four principles: Reciprocity, Externalities, Access and Partnership (REAP).

Reciprocity

There is a flow of knowledge, information and benefits in both directions between the university and its community partners in all activities which they agree to embark on together.

Externalities

There are benefits outside of those accruing to the partners and these should contribute to building social trust and social networks in the Bradford district. Through these we seek to enhance sustainability, well-being and local cohesion, and ultimately to contribute to the building of a learning- and knowledge-based society.

Access

Partners have access to university facilities and resources as opposed to receiving a one-off provision of goods or services.

Partnership

Partnerships deepen and develop through the extended reciprocity and improved access. They are an output and outcome of community engagement activities, which should eventually also become key inputs to improving and enhancing those activities.

Beyond number-crunching

We felt that a pure quantitative (economic or numeric) measure could not capture the importance of this area of work. Community engagement is not market activity – most

"The increasing emphasis placed on the provision for life-long learning has meant that more relationships had developed with communities, particularly with schools and community groups."

of it is not even 'near market' – that is, something which could be sold or measured by proxy estimates such as 'willingness to pay'. Community engagement in its purest form seeks to provide some benefit to the community that is not an accidental by-product in the pursuit of some other aim. Reciprocity means that the university engages literally with the community so that the knowledge base of the academics involved is informed by new information from the members of the community they engage with. Community engagement is not a 'free service' to the community, like community development, but is based on these non-market forms of reciprocity. Attributing a monetary value to such an enterprise, or to collect data through surveys and other mechanisms which assume it has such a value, would compromise reciprocity, leading the community to wonder whether there is a 'hidden' economic agenda.

The most difficult component to 'measure' is that of externalities. We argue that these are mostly in the form of enhanced social capital – or informal and formal social interactions, associations and networks which generate trust and well-being for individuals and society.

Measuring the broader impact of university-community engagement outside participant partnerships is a very difficult task, and would require a serious investment by universities and local authorities in data collection and conceptual clarification of the meaning of social capital, particularly at the level of communities. The REAP tool encourages ongoing systematisation and self-evaluation of goals set by university and community members involved in particular activities. It encourages constant self reflection and 'measurements' of activities, which have been defined by participants. Participants might do this by baseline interviews of those who they wish to influence. They might include quantitative elements, such as how many people attend events. But these would be supplemented by qualitative measures, which assess how those who attended gained from their attendance.

REAP does not establish a model of self evaluation which is applicable across all university-community activities, but an approach to ongoing evaluation guided by the four components of REAP. It aims to avoid costly end of project evaluations or costly (and it argues, ultimately unconvincing in terms of measuring qualitative progress) data collection procedures. Rather, it advocates a self reflection and systematisation culture, through which each activity or project sets its own goals and measurement procedures.

The REAP approach in practice

Our measurement tool is essentially a means of self-assessment, planning, monitoring and reviewing of community engagement activities. It is intended as a guide to thinking through potential partnerships using a practical breakdown of the component parts of REAP. It is to be used actively and creatively whenever a partnership is begun, with potential projects and collaborations weighted according to the four REAP criteria to decide whether a project will meet those criteria. It should be used through the project life to assess progress through indicators and milestones set by partners, and finally to self-evaluate the outputs and outcomes of the project. Qualitative evidence should be rigorously gathered through interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and participant observation as the programme of activities develops. Costs of activities should be calculated and these can be set against income raised to cover those costs. But the team is not advocating evaluation on the basis of income generated. The REAP tool is based on building strong qualitative indicators of ongoing progress towards agreed goals, outputs and outcomes.

REAP and community engagement in Bradford

The REAP self-evaluation and measurement tool was developed as part of the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) award to the university 2004–2006.

The HEIF funding enabled Bradford to broaden its scope of community engagement work and to enhance its existing work. REAP aimed to foster a new culture of working with communities. The first step for the REAP authors was to map the existing work and create a database for the university of its history of CE activities. The authors discovered that each school had a very unique approach to working with communities, dependent on a number of factors, such as individual staff and student interests, internal (school and university) and external drivers.

Economic factors played a particular role. For some, any work with communities is seen as a potential income-generating opportunity and may only be worth undertaking if the economic returns are great enough. Schools such as Infor-

matics, Engineering and Management have a more developed marketing potential and history, and clearer sense of product. There were a variety of projects developed by the university which had relevance to local individuals, businesses, organisations and government. But how to make these accessible to local communities was not normally part of the culture of university schools' thinking.

Where there has been a conscious effort to open up a university project or course to the local communities it is **normally** the result of interests of an individual or group of staff members who are involved in the community in their own time. Examples include the Manningham Corridors Project in partnership with Manningham Means Business, a major initiative by the School of Management to engage with the local communities.[1] The same is also true in SAGE (School of Archaeology and the Environment) where some academics' involvement with local history societies had led to collaboration with the university to strengthen a local history network.

The increasing emphasis placed on the provision for lifelong learning has meant that more relationships had developed with communities, particularly with schools and community groups. SLED (School of Lifelong Learning and Development) had been particularly active in developing these relationships. Within the School of Social and International Studies, the Department of Social Studies and Humanities had a history of researching ethnicity, gender, youth and other social divisions in the locality – but with little actual consultation and involvement of the local communities in the design and carrying out of research. Academics also sometimes acted as consultants on issues of interest in the locality. For example, staff from the Department of Social Studies acted as consultants to local government on issues such as youth participation and local electoral reform.

The School of Health was one of the most embedded schools in the locality with local partnerships with the local health service, primary health care trusts, and with community and voluntary groups such as Sharing Voices, Bradford Mind, and other local health service users. An innovation in the way the university worked with communities was the Programme for a Peaceful City, which was established by the Department of Peace Studies in 2001 and extended its work in the wake of the Bradford riots in July of that year. It aimed to build an interface between the community and academics to discuss and address the problems of community interaction in the district of Bradford. The PPC was always based on the idea of working 'with' not 'to' the community. Bradford District has a vibrant history of community organising, but it also faces many problems of how to build interaction between communities of different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds within a context of high levels of poverty and unemployment.

"Thinkspace's big challenge is how to interest academics in learning from community activists. Innovations like this have to be fostered and nurtured before they are more widely embedded."

From this brief survey, we conclude that the university's work with communities has often been instrumental (such as recruitment), sometimes promotional about the university's profile, sometimes a source of research and consultancy opportunity, sometimes as a source of income generation, but was largely eclectic and *ad hoc*. However, the relationships built up by the School of Health and the Programme for a Peaceful City provided a source for a new, more strategic approach to CE work, which had at its core the principles outlined earlier in this article.

During the two years of HEIF funding, the University of Bradford experimented with a new approach to CE and REAP was developed in tandem with this tool. The university appointed six community associations who would act as catalysts to link communities with the university and to develop collaborations where appropriate. REAP was used by each of the associates in pilot projects, helping to modify the REAP tool.[2]

As HEIF funding has ended, the university has lost all but three of its community associates. Some impetus has gone out of the CE process, which we hope will be recovered as the new university vice chancellor develops his agenda around this area of work. The university is at present particularly active in the promotion of its Ecoversity initiative, which aims to use REAP as a measurement tool. In the meantime, the most vibrant of the university CE initiatives remains the Programme for a Peaceful City, and we outline what it does and how it makes use of REAP.

[1] This project was pioneered by one member of staff in the locality and aims to support economic regeneration through research and hosting knowledge-sharing between businesses and the university.

[2] This process can be explored in detail in the final REAP report.

Programme for a Peaceful City (PPC)

PPC continues to bring together academics and practitioners to reflect on key contemporary debates. Key to its work are the REAP principles. The PPC recognises that society needs different types of knowledge and we also facilitate reflection spaces that explore dialogue and deliberation – and how we negotiate difference in complex and unequal urban spaces. Activities are prioritised where reciprocity is acknowledged.

The activities below all begin with discussions that explore reciprocity and set an agenda for assessing and systematising whether in practice it unfolds in the course of the activity. Each activity also aims to ensure that it contributes something to the wider Bradford District, rather than just those involved directly in the activity itself. The Thinkspace aims to ensure that all the individuals attending are at the same time committed to taking the learning through their networks out into the wider urban setting. We agree how this can be assessed in a cost effective way by Thinkspace members. Thinkspace's big challenge is how to interest academics in learning from community activists. Innovations like this have to be fostered and nurtured before they are more widely embedded. REAP encourages an active approach to reflection and monitoring of activities, ensuring a clear rationale for activities, a clear mutual agreement between those engaged from the university and the community, and a commitment to developing the most cost effective and meaningful way of assessing impact. This will involve quantifying numbers attending events against the costs of the events. But it also involves qualitative assessment in the course of the activities, using quick interviews, focus groups, and event evaluations, to ensure that expected outcomes are taking place. Some of the current activities of the PPC are listed below.

Belfast Exchange

The PPC and partners worked with the Institute of Conflict Research (Belfast) in 2007 and 2008 to organise an exchange visit to Belfast to explore whether learning from Northern Ireland would be useful with regard to the state's current response to violence in the UK, such as the July 7 bombings. Six Bradford Muslims attended a seminar in Belfast in November 2007. We then hosted eight guests from Northern Ireland along with 40 local participants in February 2008 to explore two key thematic areas – human rights and preventing violence. Guests from Northern Ireland included former paramilitaries and human rights activists such as Bernadette Devlin McAliskey. Local participants included activists and senior police officers. The event was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and was also supported by Bradford Youth Development Partnership and the Hamara Centre in Leeds. Reciprocity was built through the PPC's own learning around disagreements in Bradford District on how to respond to the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda of the UK government. Our Bradford partners gained knowledge of the Northern Ireland context, but also a safe space to discuss their own preoccupations with the UK government's agenda. Externalities were many given that our partners had many connections through which to disseminate the learning and discussion, but also the February 2008 seminar brought in other agencies, including the police, to participate in the discussion and to reflect on ways to build greater trust around preventing a violent extremism agenda and to ensure that it was applied with respect for civil and human rights.

Thinkspace

The PPC has established a Thinkspace with academics from a range of universities and practitioners from Bradford and beyond to explore issues of dialogue, diversity and participation. Practitioners are involved from organisations such as Diversity Exchange, Schools Linking, Mediation Northern Ireland, Bradford Youth Service, and Manningham Mills Community Association. Academics (from Professors to PhD students) are involved from Manchester University and Leeds University alongside University of Bradford academics from the School of Health and Peace Studies.

Local Partners

The PPC has continued to work with local partners on a range of events such as an open space discussion with the Diversity Exchange in December 2007 asking local practitioners to explore 'What really matters to you about Bradford?'

We also worked with academics in Social Sciences and Humanities and the Equity Partnership (which supports Bradford's lesbian, gay and bisexual communities) to facilitate a discussion on the tension between religious belief and sexual orientation.

Disseminating research

Key work also involves making more research available to local external partners and to open up academic seminars to practitioners. The PPC works particularly closely with the International Centre for Participation Studies (ICPS) but also with research centres in Social Sciences and Humanities, Bradford Centre for International Development (BCID) and the School of Health.

Public events re. religion and secularism
The PPC works in partnership with organisations such as the Islamic Society of Britain (local branch) and Bradford Churches for Dialogue and Diversity to bring exciting speakers to the university as we continue to explore religious and secular issues. We have recently been liaising with a representative of the British Humanist Society to discuss future ideas. Speakers in 2007-8 have included Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi, Asim Zubcevic from the University of Sarajevo and Professor Ziauddin Sardar.

Conclusion

We advocate working **with** communities, and with a willingness to make academic knowledge and expertise available to the communities of Bradford. This is combined with the recognition that academics can benefit in their research and teaching from the knowledge and experience of the communities around them. This approach can, we argue, demonstrate the benefits of higher education to the wider population. Universities should become less intimidating, elitist and impenetrable, and increasingly valued by their local communities. By looking 'beyond the ivory tower', universities can help to build a learning- and knowledge-based society for the many, not just the few. As social networks and social trust are enhanced over time, social capital will accumulate. This is likely to contribute to more cohesive, equitable and democratic local communities where greater self-confidence and mutual trust creates improved capacity to analyse and address local problems and conflicts, and to access the skills and knowledge which makes this possible.

"By looking 'beyond the ivory tower', universities can help to build a learning- and knowledge-based society for the many, not just the few."

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Theme 4: Community activism from the grassroots

14

The changing face of community participation: the Liverpool black experience

by DAVID CLAY

Overview

The city of Liverpool has the longest established black community in Britain, concentrated in the Toxteth area. Here, 'community participation' has long been a reaction to racism or a fight for better services. My first experience of community mobilisation came in the early 1970s, when police failed to protect black residents on a new housing estate, and this led to campaigns for black studies and the formation of the Liverpool Black Organisation in 1976. However, after the Toxteth riots of 1981 – the culmination of all the frustrations experienced by the black community, particularly in regard to police and community relations – the face of community participation was set to change. As government agencies concentrated on regeneration and economic initiatives, community participation was now in the hands of civil servants and those employed to bring about 'consultation'. Grassroots action was slowly eroded as the community was broken up and dispersed, and government agencies now direct 'community participation' in the city.

Who am I?

My name is Dave Clay. The son of an African father and an English mother, I was born in the Toxteth area of Liverpool during the 1950s. We lived in the slums of Liverpool, within walking distance of the docks. The city of Liverpool has the longest established black community in Britain, epitomised by its role in slavery. There is an abundance of historical information pertaining to the development of Liverpool's black community, most notably *Liverpool Black Pioneers* and *Black Liverpool* by Dr Ray Costello, *A History of Race and Racism* by Law-Henfrey, and *Loosen the Shackles* by Lord Gifford (see above).

The Liverpool black population

The city of Liverpool has a population of 403,625 (population census 2001) with the black population estimated at 35,848 (8.5%). These figures are without doubt underestimated, and the real size of the ethnic population is open to question. Suffice it to say that the majority of black families reside in the Toxteth area. It is within such a multi-racial environment that my views and opinions are formed.

During my childhood, racism was endemic. It was not until government legislation was introduced (Race Relations

Act, 1965) that direct discrimination was made illegal. In reality, the only difference, for example, was that you could not state in a job advertisement that 'no blacks need apply'. You simply did not employ black people. Inadequate housing, low employment, overt racism, police brutality, institutionalised racism, gang warfare and educational underachievement have been the reality for black people in Liverpool. It is then of no surprise that community participation was usually a reaction to racism or a fight for better services. The city of Liverpool is renowned for its working-class resistance and militancy, epitomised by a militant local council during the 1980s. But the history of black resistance has been hidden for many years.

A community fights back

The Liverpool black community has never been far from the headlines. In 1919, Liverpool experienced race riots. Returning soldiers from the First World War could not come to terms with the reality that black people had jobs in munitions factories, and the number of mixed marriages and relations had visibly increased. Mobs of white people descended on the black area of Toxteth, resulting in the murder of Charles Wootton, a former black sailor, who was drowned in the River Mersey.

The Charles Wootton Centre for Further Education was established during the 1970s in the Toxteth area. During the early 1970s, a new housing estate had been built in the area, known as the Falkner Housing Estate. Bigots took exception to the fact that the first families to move in were black. The estate was attacked on two consecutive evenings. I was part of a group that protested and accused the police of failing to protect the residents. They told us that it was their duty to protect the estate. After a third night of attacks we took the situation into our hands and erected barricades to protect the residents. The community mobilised. Despite the incident escalating into a confrontation with the Liverpool police, the attacks stopped. This was my first experience of the community standing up against both the racism of the perpetrators of the attacks and the racism of the police.

I was part of a generation of black kids who were born in Liverpool, only spoke Liverpudlian and in affect were black 'scousers' – a colloquialism for people born in Liverpool.[1] I remember reading about a six-year-old black girl, born in Liverpool, who tried to bleach her skin white, believing that if her skin was white she would be accepted in the playground, since she had no language differences. The psychological implication of this was frightening. 'Why should our kids feel inferior?' we all asked. The answer was easy. This was a period when Agatha Christie's novel, *Ten Little Niggers,* was available in most primary schools.[2] It was period when `little black sambo' and `golliwogs' were the order of the day.[3] There were a million ways to make black people feel inferior. Black studies: we demanded black studies within the school curriculum. No, they said, but we will fund black studies outside of the school curriculum. Consequently night classes were set up. This coincided with the culture revolution in the USA – `black is beautiful' and `black and proud' were better alternatives to bleach. Collective community participation was proving to be positive for black development.

Liverpool Black Organisation (LBO)

There was little or no history of black involvement in trade union activism since very few black people were employed in the city. There was no single body that had the interests of the Liverpool black community on the top of their agenda. It was vital that we organised ourselves. This resulted in the formation of the Liverpool Black Organisation in 1976.

There is no space here to highlight how the organisation created a participative structure that became a thorn in the side of racism. Nevertheless, I would like to recollect a successful protest that was inspired by the work of the late community activist Saul Alinsky. His tactics were based on addressing apathy and showing the community that you could 'legally' challenge authority and **win**.

The Half Penny protest

When a 15-year-old black youth told the organisation that he had been accused of stealing a coat while in a top store in Liverpool city centre, it was a perfect opportunity to deploy the Alinsky tactics. Security staff had demanded to see the inside of his coat, claiming that it had been taken from the store. The youth was adamant that it was his own coat. He was wrestled to the ground and his coat ripped off. It transpired that he was telling the truth. He complained to the store via a solicitor. He was informed that, 'Following a full investigation into your complaints we fully support the actions of our security staff.'

[1] The local accent and dialect of Liverpool, also known to outsiders as 'scouse'.

[2] Agatha Christie was one of the most prolific writers in history, whose books have outsold any others apart from the Bible and Shakespeare. The title of this book, one of 80 novels she wrote, was given a different name for the US market.

[3] 'Golliwog' is a rag doll-like children's literary character created by Florence Kate Upton in the late 19th century based on a black minstrel. Between 1910 and 2001 one of the world's leading jam manufacturers used the character as a marketing tool, giving away golliwog badges. This was despite protests from black people, against whom the term 'wog', derived from golliwog, had long been used.

"Today, real community participation would no doubt contravene Section 5 of the Public Order Act, or come under the scope of the Terrorism Act, epitomising the changing face of community participation."

At this particular time half pennies were legal tender in Britain. In fact, you could legally spend up to 60 pence. So you can imagine the difficulties that would arise if, for example, you paid your bus fare with 120 half pennies. One of the fundamental principles of Alinsky tactics was that every action brings about a reaction. It was how you plan for the reaction that is crucial. It was decided to visit the store at the peak shopping time, Saturday morning. The planning had been meticulous as well as fun. There would be a half penny group who would purchase goods across the eight tills we had identified. Basically, just causing inconvenience to shoppers and staff alike. A solicitor and a vicar were at the door to deal with any reaction. This was a legal protest that would happen every Saturday. Within two hours the management asked us what we wanted. We presented the store with a list of demands, including reimbursement for the youth and a pledge to become equal opportunity employers. All demands were met. Community action had achieved a victory.

1981 Toxteth riots

The Toxteth riots were the culmination of all the frustrations experienced by the black community in Liverpool, particularly with regard to police and community relations.

The events of 1981 are well documented.[4] What is important here is how the riots were to change the face of community participation in regard to Liverpool and the black community.

The arrival in office of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Heseltine, was to see the development of numerous governmental agencies such as the Toxteth Task Force. Government neighbourhood policy revolved around the principle of 'consultation'.

The next 20 years concentrated on regeneration and economic initiatives. Community participation was now in the hands of civil servants and those employed to bring about consultation. Grassroots action was slowly eroded as the community was broken up and dispersed. Social outlets were destroyed under the banner of regeneration.

The growth of housing associations in Toxteth also played a role in stifling local protest. Neighbourhood schemes were now run by this growing housing sector. The Race Relations Act further put an obligatory duty on authorities to produce diversity and inclusion statements. Liverpool's early wealth was built on the slave trade, and the city invested in slavery again, building a number of slave galleries in museums telling us 'not to forget our history'. In reality it is now convenient to exploit our history to coincide with the 2008 European Capital of Culture label. Yesterday we could not have black studies, but today we can view a Ku Klux Klan outfit down in the gallery.

Community participation is now led by any agency that has a stake in Toxteth and you had better believe me when I tell you that there are countless agencies with such a stake. Today, real community participation would no doubt contravene Section 5 of the Public Order Act, or come under the scope of the Terrorism Act, epitomising the changing face of community participation.

Despite these developments, the fruits of grassroots struggle have achieved some rewards. In 1999 Liverpool Council apologised for their role in the slave trade and the month of October was officially recognised as Black History Month. A yearly Libation ceremony (a ceremony involving the sacred act of pouring – see picture inset) takes place at the city docks as the black community continues to impact on the future of the city.[5]

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[4] They were one of the most serious series of riots ever in the UK, lasting nine days, during which one person died after being struck by a police vehicle attempting to clear crowds, and (according to the police) there were 468 police officers injured, 500 people arrested, and at least 70 buildings demolished.

[5] 'Libation' comes from an ancient Greek word referring to the ritual pouring of a drink as an offering to a god. Its modern use often relates to the remembrance of past historical events

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Community participation: 'activists' or 'citizens'?

by JACKIE HAQ

An activist is born…

In the late 1970s, as a young first-time mother, I moved to an inner-city estate in north east England. I felt lonely and isolated from my family who lived some distance from me. When my second daughter was born, I met a paediatrician at the local health clinic. I became involved in a local child health project he had established. Here, incidences of peri-natal mortality and childhood ill-health were much higher than the national average – partly due to relative poverty, in terms of low income, long-term unemployment and a subsequent lack of resources and choices.[1]

The pioneering doctor set out to address the health inequalities by bringing together a diverse team of medical staff, including health visitors and doctors, who were based initially in empty classrooms at a local school. From here, the staff provided healthcare in clinics across the area. Local people met regularly with the staff, to identify community health concerns and critically assess service provision from a local perspective, to increase accessibility and take-up of services.

Even small changes could make significant differences to the quality and accessibility of service delivery. Pregnant women had reported opting out of pre-natal care at the hospital because it did not meet their needs. The uncertainty of length in waiting times meant some women had to leave before being seen, to pick up older children from school. Mothers-to-be who attended the clinic with very young children found the waiting times stressful. Children became increasingly tired, cross and bored. In the consulting room, there were no changing facilities, so women had to undress in front of (often male) doctors. The regime produced anxiety, embarrassment and distress for many women, which prohibited their interaction with the medical team.

"The critical principle underpinning the work was our commitment to collective action. Local residents met regularly to identify and prioritise our concerns and explore possible solutions."

Women from a pre-natal group held a series of meetings with the midwives and a senior consultant obstetrician from the area's maternity hospital. Subsequently, the clinic provided screens for more privacy before and after examinations. A more appropriate appointment system was estab-

[1] Throughout the 80s, parents and their adult children in many local families were unable to find paid work.

"The effect of the so-called 'partnership' model was to divide and rule, limit and sanitise community participation."

lished and a designated play area with toys was provided in the clinics. One midwife told us that her staff had always been to afraid to bring these matters to the attention of the consultant, who was held in high regard by patients for his approachable manner, but who also had a reputation for striking fear into colleagues and staff. She was relieved that we had spoken out.

Community development and collective action

In the estate where I lived was another community project. It was firmly grounded in principles of community development, working from the people's agenda, the so-called 'bottom-up' approach, and committed where necessary to taking collective action in pursuit of locally identified priorities. Although members of the community development staff were local authority employees, they were seconded to the management committee of local residents, who were responsible for the day-to-day management of the workers and the direction and implementation of the work programme.

The project was the hub of many campaigns and initiatives directed at improving life on the estate. The critical principle underpinning the work was our commitment to collective action. Local residents met regularly to identify and prioritise our concerns and explore possible solutions, including locating resources we needed to create positive change. As members of the management committee, we brought a range of existing skills in planning, budgeting, organising and time management that came directly from raising our families, and from various paid jobs. We augmented this expertise with training on project management and committee skills.

Successes included setting up the first credit union in the region.[2] Before, loan sharks regularly preyed on the community, lending money at exorbitantly high interest rates – we found one woman who was charged in excess of 1000% interest. Legal moneylenders also operated on the estate, and charged very high interest rates. The credit union charged, by law, 1% per month on outstanding balances and was open to anyone in the community who saved with us, regardless of any previous bad debt record.

Local people also formed an action group, SCARE (Stop Crime Against Residents). They demanded and gained more beat police and initiatives that targeted police resources at specific crimes. Through regular planning and action meetings, the community achieved more respectful and effective policing of the neighbourhood.[3]

Developing appropriate practical action: the vital local perspective

At its best, this intense, locally-led, hands-on and sustained community development approach reignited a strong sense of community spirit and of belonging, and a pride in the area that overcame the negative stereotypes of outsiders.[4] Many campaigns started on the estate were taken up city-wide, and at times nationally.

However, those achievements were, at times, hard fought for and hard won. Community priorities often encountered opposition from those in power, including local government officers and elected members. Many of us were mothers: when we asked the local government authority to allocate funding for childcare support so that we could hold our regular planning and committee meetings we were met with disbelief.[5] Despite possible funding being available, we were told to fundraise by holding pie and pea suppers, or to wait until our children were grown up! Instead, we initiated a sustained, citywide crèche campaign and continued to raise the profile and value of quality childcare to enable community participation until it became commonplace.

The campaign began locally: women took their children to council meetings open to the public. As the children ran around, talked loudly and at times requiring food, water and toilet facilities, the public officials quickly recognised that childcare was a valuable asset when conducting meetings. The community project subsequently employed someone to work with residents and childcare providers to develop a strategy for childcare at local and citywide levels. This promoted the benefits of good quality childcare and set out policies and standards which were adopted by the city.

At first, local community activists adopted a piecemeal approach, responding to issues as they occurred.[6] Later we

[2] A credit union is a cooperative financial institution, privately owned and controlled by its members.

[3] Previously, many residents at community meetings talked about very limited or non-existent police responses to reported crime, due in part to a lack of officers allocated to the area. A significant number of residents who contacted the police recounted being met with abusive and contemptuous comments and attitudes from some police officers.

[4] The local area was portrayed in a very negative manner in the media.

[5] The 'local government authority' is also referred to as 'the council'.

[6] Issues included poverty and high unemployment; loss of shopping facilities as local stores were closed by national food suppliers who opened out of town, out of reach hypermarkets; crime, including burglary, vandalism and arson. Stolen cars being raced around the estate led to the death of an eleven-month-old child.

developed a locally-led area strategy, bringing together local individuals and groups, senior local government representatives, statutory and voluntary organisations and the police, to deliver co-ordinated and targeted initiatives to regenerate the area socially, physically and economically. The main strands of this strategy tackled crime and fear of crime, increased access to jobs and training, and working with young people to provide legitimate alternatives to the prevailing negative street culture. It initiated major improvements to housing and the environment, and opened a number of out-of-school clubs for children of working parents. Some of this was funded (after persistent community representation) by mainstream local government funding, and some by the then newly-announced, central government City Challenge fund. The advent of City Challenge was to signal a new era of government-sponsored 'community engagement'.

Government-funded 'community engagement'

The 'old style' community development with which I was familiar throughout the 1980s was based on the struggle for social justice, and for equality of opportunity, led by local people, supported by community development workers. The approach was, necessarily, confrontational, given the initial and often sustained resistance by those traditionally in positions of power and decision-making (see also Clay, article 14, this issue). In demanding change, from our own unique 'community' perspective, we challenged existing power bases, most often within local government. At times we challenged central government policy – e.g. on privatisation of school meals provision – which, when implemented elsewhere, resulted in poorer pay and conditions for workers and lower food hygiene standards. We challenged disrespectful policing. We confronted negative media representation of our neighbourhood and community. We rejected repeated attempts of passive 'consultation' as insulting and demanded active participation in decision-making and policy formation.

But with City Challenge, and other subsequent state-funded regimes, the emphasis shifted from working on community-led, community-identified priorities to funding-led, local and central government-themed priorities, such as reducing council housing stock in favour of housing associations and private housing.[7] The local government authority set up a decision-making committee of councillors, private

"In demanding change, from our own unique 'community' perspective, we challenged existing power bases, most often within local government. At times we challenged central government policy."

and voluntary sector people and community representatives, but the balance of power remained firmly with the local authority, despite the political rhetoric about partnerships.[8]

The commitment and hard work of the community representatives on that board was notable. All dedicated time and efforts freely. However, I was concerned that the balance of power and decision-making remained firmly with local and central government. The potential for collective community representation on the board was subverted by competing claims between community board members for limited resources for each representative's own community: the community forum sub-group spent many hours haggling over the allocation of a few hundred thousand pounds in a 'community chest' fund while millions were allocated on the nod of the local authority and private sector (see also Blakey, article 10, this issue). The effect of the so-called 'partnership' model was to divide and rule, limit and sanitise community participation (Haq and Hyatt, 2008).

Later, as subsequent funding regimes emerged, aimed at inner city regeneration, attempts were made to take on board some of the lessons learnt.[9] Funding allocation became more flexible as programmes rolled out, to take into account changing priorities, but still the chance to incorporate new, responsive projects decreased. Some efforts were made to hold elections for board members, although as always the issue of accountability to the wider community remained. Community representatives still had little or no time to disseminate information between the board and the communities, and potentially became gatekeepers holding the community at bay from the boards and strategic partnerships. Timescales for regeneration initiatives increased, providing the opportunity for continuity and sustained community participation. But in reality, the programme of initiatives was still, frequently, meeting the priorities of local government rather than community agendas, not least

[7] Council housing was owned by the local government authority, which was responsible for repairs and maintenance of housing stock and allocation of properties. Councillors on the authority were, therefore, accountable to the local electorate for decisions affecting housing. Government policy removed that level of accountability and further reduced available council housing stock.

[8] See Davoudi *et al*. (1994) at www.ncl.ac.uk/guru/assets/documents/ewp13.pdf

[9] These included Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and New Deal for Communities (NDC).

"The community development approach fosters the politicisation of activists. It facilitates the collectivising of issues leading to collective action."

because the politicians on regeneration boards were still immersed in the local authority decision-making infrastructures and support mechanisms such as secretarial support, attendance allowances and a civil service of council officers preparing briefing papers on up-to-date policy documents. The unpaid representatives from the community sector could not match these resources: they were still on the periphery of policy- and decision-making.

Citizens' jury-type processes and 'community engagement'

Recently, another form of 'community engagement' has emerged: citizens' juries.[10] In 2007, I conducted a small-scale evaluation of the long-term impact of two citizens' juries (CJs) and another type of community engagement process (community x-change) facilitated by PEALS (Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences Research Centre) at Newcastle University during the past five years.

The stated principle underpinning these processes was 'the conviction that non-experts can make informed and important recommendations on issues concerning the current and future well-being of their fellow citizens.'[11] As in the previous examples, local people showed a determination to bring about positive change, not only for themselves but also for others within and beyond their own communities.

The two CJ-type processes focused on and debated a particular issue – one on service provision for elderly people experiencing repeated falls; the other case I studied, genetically-modified crops. In each, there were observable outcomes from this form of community engagement. These included resources on how to run a citizens jury, reports on the resulting discussions, with recommendations and topics identified for further deliberation (PEALS, 2003).

Local participants in the CJ-type processes viewed the experience positively, but were frustrated by the absence of political engagement in order to pursue the outcomes of their deliberations. The following remarks are from a local activist on a jury debating genetically modified (GM) crops:

Well, the GM one, that was a report that went out, but we've no idea of what or where it happened. The report went in, it was sent off to government – it was their way of saying they are 'consulting the public'. There were no mass meetings anywhere but this is how they say they are consulting the public about GM foods. And the report went in, we had this Professor from Argentina, we had this farmer from Canada and the people from RSPB [Royal Society for Protection of Birds] put their views on it. Well many people were against it [genetically modified crops] and the report reflected that. But we never heard what happened with that report.

Many jurors I interviewed voiced the desire to take direct action to ensure their recommendations were acted upon. Yet there did not seem to be a mechanism whereby community leadership could emerge among the participants to pursue this goal. Without any developed community structures and without links to regional or national social movements, there was a lack of direction and a passive reliance on the activities of a PEALS researcher to initiate and lead. When facilitators, by necessity, moved on to pursue funding for other projects, the loose network of participants became frustrated and immobilised, still keen but without a sense of direction, structure or resources.

In contrast, resources for a two-year follow-up process allocated after an initial five workshops in the Rural Community X-change project, (run in Cumbria and County Durham, UK) ensured that local people continued to work on a wide range of issues and making peoples' voices heard.[12] They contributed their perspectives to a European Citizens' Panel, and are exploring ways to influence policy and practice at local, regional, inter/national levels.[13] However, it was evident from my study that, just as in the days of old-style community development projects and subsequent funding-led regimes, many politicians continue to regard themselves at the sole legitimate conduits for, and guardians of, political action and social change.

Some Panel delegates expressed frustration about how issues would be prioritised at the European level. Representatives from all the countries present had to agree upon 10 European priorities to feed into the European Union Commission. The British and Irish both wanted housing to be a priority, but this was not included. A senior European Minister for Rural Development said she would listen to recommendations but would not comment or ask questions. The British delegates felt they were not listened to (they became the

[10] All the articles in Theme 1 of this special issue cover various versions of citizens' juries. See also the online resources section.
[11] See www.ncl.ac.uk/peals/research/completedprojects/diyjury.htm

[12] See www.citizenspanel.eu/images/partners_docs/2007-06-11_ecp_uk_citizensreport.pdf
[13] See www.citizenspanel.eu and article 7, this issue.

'invisibles'). Then the legitimacy of citizens' panels was questioned by politicians in the European Parliament on the basis that the system of elected members of Parliament was superior and already in place to act on the will of the people. However, as one young participant said:

Half the people in our group aren't old enough to vote, so how could we feed into this process?

Young British delegates pointed out that no youth or young people's issues were prioritised. They felt that the European agenda appeared to only agree and prioritise recommendations that fitted into previously agreed funding streams and that fitted into current policy.

Any form of community involvement/participation highlights inherent power dynamics within civic society. Who **are** the appropriate representatives and decision makers? How are decisions made? A superficial parallel could be drawn between community development and CJ-type approaches. The stated starting point is that community involvement is both valued and promoted. However, there are significant differences between them. An integral tension in all the approaches outlined surrounds the role and status of the local people involved: are we obliging citizens or activists?

Activists or citizens?

To date (and despite repeated debates), there is no compulsion in Britain for citizens to become active in their communities. Citizens may choose to engage or ignore political processes and structures. For those who do bring a community presence into deliberative and decision-making processes, one critical question remains: who sets the agenda? Here lies the paramount distinction between the 'old-style' community development and subsequent 'community engagement' approaches. Community **activists** choose to work on issues affecting them and their community on a daily and often long-term basis. They establish parameters of debates and seek action by a variety of means to achieve their aims and objectives.

A citizens' jury deliberates crucial issues, but the agenda is often set elsewhere – by those in positions of power, be it government, business or universities. The terminology of the CJ process also provides a clue to the preservation of the *status quo*: 'expert' witnesses present diverse opinions, which are then interrogated, debated and evaluated by the 'citizens'. In comparison, the community activists view themselves as experts.

As the jury process runs its course, there is a veneer of engagement, but how do we determine success? Without structures to ensure accountability, funding or commissioning bodies retain the power to accept or reject recommendations. Consequently, the **process of 'engagement'** takes centre stage rather than a focus on **outcomes or continuity**. Because the CJ process is time-limited, and in the absence of a long-term commitment by funders, there can be no expectations of sustainable relationship-building leading to refined decision-making in response to evolving circumstances.

"A citizens' jury risks merely being being an island of activity. In effect, it becomes theatre, an illusion. It is carnival – for a short time, roles and power bases are reversed."

When the carnival comes to town…

A citizens' jury risks merely being an island of activity. In effect, it becomes theatre, illusion. It is carnival – for a short time, roles and power bases are reversed. The experts are scrutinised, the 'audience' become interrogators. Participants enjoy taking part in the carnival. There is food, a convivial atmosphere, new experiences and places visited. Opinions are sought and for a while 'citizens' voices are heard. In the exuberance of the moment, there may be bonds of friendship experienced, and promises made in the holiday atmosphere. Expectations, and spirits, are raised.

Then the carnival leaves town. Both experts and citizens go back to their daily routines. The long-term impact, if any, of CJ-type processes is undocumented or uncertain (though some, such as Kuruganti, Pimbert and Wakeford, article 2, this issue, feel they can point to some). Without a strategy for achieving this impact, they offer no more than a veneer of participation and theatrical consultation. It is perhaps ironic, then, that the new UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, when indicating a wish for more citizen involvement in democratic processes, cited citizens' juries, rather than community development, as a preferred way forward.[14] [15]

[14] 'Government [is] putting our trust in the people – and we will renew people's trust in government. And our local democracy [will be] strengthened by citizens' forums and new citizens' juries where citizens and their representatives have the chance to fully debate the concerns that matter to them.' See www.labour.org.uk/leadership/gordon_brown_s_leader_of_the_labour_party

[15] This is despite other UK government reports advocating the value of a community development approach. See www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/153241.pdf

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The over-arching commonality between all genuine forms of community engagement or deliberative democracy that I have encountered is the determination, commitment to community and to others above self-advantage, and a passion and sense of social justice from the people involved. This is a resource beyond compare and beyond price. However, the key issues, as always, are **how**, **by whom and for whose advantage** this is encouraged and utilised. What long-term impact will result from each model of community participation? Of course, it is legitimate to run citizens' juries as a means of contacting and sampling the views of individuals. The advantages are that it may engage a wider sample of people than the 'usual suspects' i.e. those already involved in grassroots politics. To a certain extent, the process brings together a broad spectrum of knowledge bases to the discussions.[16] However, it is surely dubious to formulate 'evidence-based' policy on this basis, if agendas are set by funders, if dissemination is controlled by commissioning bodies, and there are no structures or resources to pursue alternative perspectives or facilitate longer-term, more nuanced debates and actions.

Without links from the micro/local level to the macro/socio-economic political levels, the potential for long-term change must be in doubt. The community development approach fosters the politicisation of activists. It facilitates the collectivising of issues leading to collective action. It may lead on to repercussions far beyond the original geographical location or community of interest. At its best, this approach will challenge the *status quo* and existing power bases. It is therefore potentially risky for participants, policy makers, practitioners and politicians, although the benefits to communities may be great.

In contrast, the notion of 'evidence-based' policy formulated on the basis of findings from citizens' jury-type processes may well be more attractive to those in power. The 'community engagement' is short-term and stage-managed. Although based on the adversarial jury system in practice the outcome appears to be a sanitising of the process of engagement, rather than the (at times) more confrontational community development approach, which demands sustained interaction between politicians and communities.

Over the years, successive waves of 'engagement' have ebbed and flowed and sometimes crashed upon local communities. The citizens' jury is merely the latest model proposed, largely by politicians, for so-called 'community participation'. In practice, the CJ process may contain or even stifle community participation when it precludes proactive, community-led agendas. By their very nature, time- and resource-limited CJs cannot accommodate broad, long-term community direction and participation.[17] While it may be possible for participants of a CJ to organise beyond the public hearing, this has resource implications, not only in terms of finances for childcare or carers' support, but also access to political and administrative structures. Currently there is no legal obligation upon government or other funders of citizens' juries to act on the recommendations or findings from the process. With no legal status, and without a collective sense of identity or cause, the jury may produce little more than a wish list or record of deliberations. Rather than engaging the dynamics and power of a social movement, the jury process may become little more than a series of interest groups, whose voices will be noted, but the existing institutional and political power bases will remain untouched and intact.

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[16] See discussion at http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU37.html

[17] For further discussions on deliberative democracy, see www.nanojury.org.uk/pdfs/nanojury_is_out.pdf and also article 4, this issue.

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Girijana Deepika: challenges for a people's organisation in Andhra Pradesh, India

by MADHUSUDHAN

Introduction

I would like to share the experiences of an organisation of indigenous peoples – *Adivasis* – of the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh, India. Neo-liberal reforms begun in the 1990s have resulted in a wholesale attack on traditional farming communities in India. Various government policies have given corporations free passage to take control over food and farming systems, while indigenous people are merely 'involved' and 'consulted' as part of a development plan.

The resources, culture and knowledge of indigenous communities are being transformed into tradable commodities, displacing the creators of this knowledge from their places and identities, and destroying long-standing systems of survival. Indigenous people are under constant threat of being evicted and displaced from their ancestral homelands.

It is in this rapidly changing context that I describe the experiences of an *adivasi* people's organisation, which has been resisting this threat to the survival of the indigenous community. *Adivasi* communities have organised themselves to take back control and autonomy over their food production and farming.

Under the leadership of an indigenous *Adivasi* People's Formation, local people have initiated a process of reclaiming their collective rights to their land, resources and ways of living. As a co-traveller on this journey, I have found the process inspiring at three levels:

- the organisation being developed by *Adivasis* themselves;
- the interventions that challenge the dominant frameworks; and
- the emerging politics of resistance.

A people's organisation – the challenges

In 1990, a group of *Adivasi* youth began to organise themselves in response to the monopoly of outsiders representing their issues and concerns. Until then, there had only been non-*Adivasis* speaking for *Adivasis*, in the belief that they lack knowledge and are easy targets for exploitation because of their innocence and ignorance. These young people realised that the unequal power structure created by the politics of representation by outsiders could only be avoided through regaining control over the decision-making process. They initiated an organisation called *Girijana Deepika* to channel their voices, identity and ancestral relationship with the land. This was a turning point in asserting their right to be heard and to plan strategies of resistance.

Girijana Deepika evolved as a learning organisation that constantly reviewed its structure, representation, and gender

Some of the activists of Girijana Deepika.

relations, revisiting and altering its objectives according to the changing global scenario. The group consolidated its strengths and weaknesses and worked towards the creation of a membership-based organisation under the leadership of women. Its major strategies were to regain control over their freedom, language, knowledge, way of life, ecosystems and culture and so build solidarity between the people for social change.

The strength and resilience of this group as it has evolved through a period of economic reforms is based on its strong ideological position, centred on the land as an ecosystem, which integrates the physical, biological and spiritual spaces of Adivasis. The Adivasis' struggle has been primarily around the control of this space for their survival. This struggle embodies the elements of knowledge, language, culture, and spirituality and the relationship between land, water, forests, wildlife and systems of governance.

Girijana Deepika adopted two strategies:

- To revive informal community systems of governance and organise people through these traditional forums. This strategy was designed to combat the divisive processes created by the many institutions set up by various government development programmes within each village. These institutions were dividing the community, setting one against the other – elders versus youngsters, women against men, village against village, tribe against tribe.
- To take back control over the ecosystem and resources, thereby enriching people's livelihoods, and challenging the corporatisation of the resources.

Exposing the dismantling of systems of local governance

Girijana Deepika began to rediscover the oral histories of the community and mapped out the changes in traditional institutions that had resulted from state policies. It became evident that the space for organising the community had been taken over by multiple institutions set up by various government programmes in the village. Government development projects that purported to alleviate poverty in fact dismantled the systems of local governance. Each resource was to be managed by a separate institution, established through a distinct 'development programme', with each programme funded through the same bi-lateral institutions (World Bank and so on) that had forced economic reforms upon India. Examples include forest protection committees for forests, water users committees for water resources, watershed committees for land development, educational committees for managing schools and self-help groups

A meeting of the *Tholakari*, meaning 'new beginning', the common platform for women from the Gotti.

ostensibly to empower women.

Those institutions were lauded for enabling 'people's participation'. Critical analysis, however, reveals that these programmes and policies were actually dispossessing people from their land and other natural resources, paving the way for withdrawal of the state's role in providing essential services to the citizens of India, and privatising services and resources in the name of 'people's participation'. These developments violated the constitutional rights of indigenous communities under the Indian Constitution and the commitment of the Indian State to meet the public needs of its citizens. It was 'people's participation' using the politics of violence and exclusion.

This model of development fostered a new powerful class within the community, as a few Adivasis became primary stakeholders in propping up institutions such as women's self-help groups and forest protection committees, whose primary goal was to 'earn profits' through trading in services and commodities, e.g. biodiversity, medicinal plants, carbon trading or eco-tourism.

As a result, the homogeneity of the *Adivasi* community was rapidly replaced with stratified power structures within it. This introduced a new dimension into the Adivasi community. 'Participation' of community members in development programmes and institutions was determined by their resource-base, private capital, and purchasing power. Community members who did not own anything were excluded from participating in decision-making processes. The impact of this type of market- and consumer-driven development and participation translated into the denial of fundamental rights, and economic and political exclusion of resourceless Adivasis.

Revival of the informal gathering, Gotti

As a response to this crisis, *Girijana Deepika* revived the *Gotti* as a local informal forum. Community members meet as equals to discuss, analyse, debate, share, celebrate, create and collectively work on reclaiming their resources for rebuilding their livelihoods. At the same time, forum participants actively engaged in the process of de-constructing the so-called 'participatory development programmes' they were being bombarded with. *Girijana Deepika* activists initially focused on recovering these traditional community systems to organise the people, to mobilise them to rediscover their knowledge, culture and language, and analyse the root cause of their displacement from their land and livelihoods.

The local communicative practices, histories, songs, sayings, dance forms, knowledge sharing, and people's

"Their strategy of resistance was to strengthen the community, to build on the identity and relationship with land and finally to strengthen the capacity to exercise governance at village level."

theatre were used as the pedagogy for dialogue, analysis and action. There has been a constant focus on Adivasi identity and its relation to land and livelihood practices.

The participation of different members of the *Adivasi* community in this political process varied. At first, women engaged much more forcefully and critically, perhaps because of their historical role as guardians of animal and plant genetic resources and as organisers of family and community. At the same time, women were targeted by the ongoing poverty-alleviation programmes, where self-help groups are regarded primarily as an agency to facilitate the entry of global capital, corporate trade and market-driven production systems. However, many women soon realised that self-help groups were in fact designed as institutions for disbursing credit and creating markets; *Adivasi* women began to express a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the state-initiated and corporation-backed forms of 'women's empowerment'.

Women began to pro-actively take on strong leadership roles in the *Gottis*. They helped to democratise the mostly male-dominated *Gottis* and to resolve unequal gender relations, which had been created and intensified through different 'modern' development programmes. Women became actively involved in shaping the *Gottis*, deciding collective action, pushing for membership in such forums, and finally becoming involved in planning and managing the actions and politics of the *Gotti*. This transformation of power relations happened also as a result of the continual reflection on actions, initiated by *Girijana Deepika*, and sustained over almost a decade.

Today, *Gottis* are membership-based forums. Women members from the community initiate various activities to reconstruct the organising capacity of the family and the community at large. *Adivasi* women have begun to articulate a new vision of community life, based on a politics of collectivism. This has taken shape today in the form of a common platform for women from *Gottis* called *Tholakari*, which means a new beginning. Women today are challenging the forces that are dismantling their relationship with land.

Knowledge as a key element of resistance

Girijana Deepika's initial interventions are sustained by the *Tholakari* – people sustaining and nurturing their resources, entrusted to them by their ancestors, which in turn they will entrust to their children, and they to future generations. Their strategy of resistance was to strengthen the community, to build on the identity and relationship with land and finally to strengthen the capacity to exercise governance at village level. They enhanced their capacity to speak out against injustice and also to deepen their relationship with the land. They made a major attempt to rediscover the guiding force of the 'knowledge' that helped them to survive, with knowledge viewed as a body of family, community and kinship systems, as well as the production systems that encompassed all other living things. Knowledge continues to be sustained and passed on from one generation. The strategy adopted by the activists was to position themselves in the centre of *Adivasi* knowledge and with the help of *Gottis* to document the wealth of knowledge ranging from songs, sayings, stories, histories, dance forms, healing practices, biodiversity, subsistence food farming practices, rituals and celebrations. They reviewed and analysed the changing patterns of such practices and the political and economic implications of the newly imposed production systems which were increasing the pace of displacement.

These two approaches sharpened their conceptual clarity about their own knowledge systems and re-affirmed that this knowledge was dynamic and an important source for their way of life. This knowledge also became an essential building block to challenge and reverse the destruction of their lands and the destruction of biodiversity, which had occurred in the name of 'agricultural development'.

Their experiences with documenting and sustaining their knowledge systems brought with it some key observations. Knowledge exists as a network within the community. Various groups within the community practice and innovate in a diverse manner. Commodification of the knowledge had encouraged the stagnation of knowledge within the community. Women were prevented from having access to certain kinds of knowledge, for instance the traditions of animal healing. *Girijana Deepika* made a conscious effort to reaffirm that woman are knowledge creators and transmit knowledge from generation to generation: they are seed keepers, cattle, goat and poultry breeders, authors of songs, performers of rituals and gatekeepers of social organisation within the community. Women in *Gottis* played a key role in bringing this knowledge together, to practice their own ideas and knowledge towards rebuilding and restoring a healthy envi-

Gotti members undertaking a mapping process as part of a regular meeting.

ronment, and to use this knowledge to further the indigenous communities' goal of self rule. Today women, as custodians through *Gottis*, are fighting against the threats from dominant policy frameworks. They are not just documenting the knowledge but revitalising the responsibilities for sustainable relationships with nature.

Regaining control over relationships with the Earth

Gottis made another important intervention – to localise and reorganise the people's capacities to enhance their relationship with the earth, biodiversity and food farming systems, as an alternative to market-driven, corporate-controlled, commercial cropping policies. This particular strategy emerged in the context of the community's growing dependency on commercial crops such as tobacco, cotton, and tapioca, which were causing severe debt and rapid depletion of natural resources. Changes in cropping patterns were aggravated during economic reforms of the 1990s, when credits and inputs were given only for cultivation of commercial crops. This transformation, from subsistence economy to a capitalist mode of production, resulted in the dismantling of community systems of conservation, labour and knowledge-sharing. Severe impacts on soil due to the heavy use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides forced indebted farmers to continue to grow commercial crops in an effort to repay loans from traders.

Over a decade, sixty local varieties of food crops, including cereals, vegetables, pulses and oil seeds, became almost extinct in the region, as the biodiversity of crops, cattle, poultry, goats, and medicinal plants came under attack. Women who were the custodians of food crops and livestock and poultry lost their decision-making powers at home as well as in the public space. The festivals and cultural practices related to agriculture and forests were replaced by dominant 'mainstream' commercial entertainment such as the cinema and TV. Villagers had become passive spectators, in complete

contrast to the energetic, creative participation of traditional festivities and celebrations. The opening-up of trade with new markets further away introduced the different cultures of India's dominant religions, marginalising *Adivasi* spirituality. Traditional knowledge-holders such as healers were sidelined.

Girijana Deepika had realised that control over land could not be sustained unless people regained the strength to reclaim their wealth of knowledge, culture and livelihood production systems. It intervened in the crisis situation using multiple approaches. One target was the revival of food farming systems, strengthening the livestock and poultry production systems, which are integral to the survival of agriculture and the well-being of the family. Just as important, however, was celebrating the culture and knowledge which are key to sustain the communities' relationship with land.

Autonomy over food, seeds and other resources

'What we eat determines our relationship to the land.' This is the political statement of the *Tholakari*. The network of women's *Gottis* at village level is collectively engaged in making this vision a reality through their practice. Land is conscientiously being farmed for food, first and foremost grown to meet the food needs of the family/household. Only then is the surplus sold to local markets. This has meant painstakingly re-building the resource- and knowledge-base of households, who have been – and continue to be – systematically alienated from their land, their seeds, their livestock and their farming practices, through commercial and corporate contract farming.

The acute scarcity of the most critical input – local seeds for food crops – was addressed by women taking the lead in establishing and managing community seed banks. Research revealed how women used to be the key actors in selecting and preserving seeds for the next year's crop. The idea is simple and based on a traditional system of sharing known as *naamu*. If a farmer lends seeds to another farmer, he is repaid with twice the amount of seeds after harvest. For the community seed banks, *Girijana Deepika* obtained a variety of seeds from farmers and also cultivated select food crops specifically to multiply the seeds. These were then distributed to interested farmers. After the harvest, those farmers returned their share or *naamu* to the village seed bank. The village women's *Gotti* then stores the seeds until the next season, when farmers can once again borrow seeds. The community seed banks have become an invaluable resource of more than 60 varieties of diverse seeds – millets, cereals, pulses, oil-seeds, vegetables, greens, spices and fruits. The seeds are preserved and sustained by women for current and future generations. These crops are then farmed using traditional knowledge and practices as well as newer ecological farming strategies. Livestock plays an essential role. Rebuilding and protecting existing animal genetic resources has been the second strategy for rebuilding the autonomy of food production.

Once again, women *Gottis* have drawn upon traditional asset-building mechanisms to help women to rebuild their cattle, goat and poultry resources. For cattle, women have successfully innovated with a traditional practice where farmers hire bullocks for a season from another farmer at an annual fee called *yeddu putti.* The *Gotti* loans money to farmers to purchase a pair of local bullocks and a cow. Farmers repay the *Gotti* annually at a rate equivalent to the amount they would pay to hire the bullocks as *yeddu putti.* There are multiple advantages to this system. The farmer ends up owning the animals, enabling them to cultivate land that they would otherwise leave fallow. The cow ensures a continuous source of replacement stock. The animals provide manure for ecological farming. And because the animals are bought locally, local farmers and the local agrarian economy benefits too. Similarly, like traditional *vaata* practices, poultry and goats are given to assetless women, who then return half the offspring to the *Gotti*. This system adopted by the *Gottis* differs from the traditional *vaata* system. The recipient returns half the offspring only once, rather than for the entire productive life of the original animal.

The community has actively reclaimed and re-integrated their indigenous knowledge and practices of healing and management to protect their animals, and also actively accessed 'modern technologies' such as preventive vaccinations to ensure that their animals remain healthy. The community puts pressure on the state to ensure that it delivers and provides these services, and so resists the state's attempt to privatise and dismantle all public services.

'Collective farming' traditions are being resurrected to overcome the challenges faced by single women and families who face shortages of labour. Collective labour sharing is being re-introduced where people support each other to farm collectively. Members of the collective contribute different resources such as labour, land, animals and seeds, and they share the produce equally. Finally, women's collectives are attempting to reach out to the local markets, by selling their surplus there.

While the community is taking back control, they are simultaneously challenged by the fact that corporations are eagerly waiting to take control of organically/ecologically produced products to meet these growing national and inter-

national niche markets. The indigenous groups are conscious that they will face the same set of exploitative terms and conditions if they enter into trade in organic products under contract farming arrangements. The *Gotti* is committed to continuing the fight against future challenges in the shape of mines, quarries and private-public partnership deals, which are poised to further exploit the land.

Conclusion

Dominant models of development tried to integrate the knowledge of the people but within a framework of unequal power relations. Girijana Deepika mobilised the community to resist the commodification of their knowledge and made the community aware of the way dominant institutes of the state, in collaboration with corporations, exercised their power to take control of people's knowledge systems. The application of traditional knowledge to reclaim autonomy over food production and food sovereignty was a major breakthrough made by the community. Women from the Tholakari have been struggling for recognition of their rights to forests and its resources. They are now involved in effective implementation of the recent legislation enacted by the Government of India, the Forest Rights Act, 2006, that recognises the individual and community rights of indigenous communities to forest resources, as well as their right to protect and conserve forests.

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NOTES
Madhusudhan is an activist with Yakshi, a grassroots network of Adivasis and others working with Girijana Deepika (GD) in the Eastern Ghats region of Andhra Pradesh, India. GD also works with Anthra (www.anthra.org) on strengthening the role of livestock and poultry in Adivasi food and farming systems. The work on indigenous knowledge systems by Anthra and GD made a significant contribution in the process described here.

Theme article abstracts and online resources

1. Towards empowered participation: stories and reflections

Abstract

Last year we asked a range of participation practitioners and analysts to contribute to this issue of PLA *based on the following logic: if participation continues to be ignored, suppressed or domesticated, we will not only fail to live up to the promise of participation, but will risk sacrificing some of the democratic gains made by our predecessors.*

All our contributors have written about their practice in the belief that only by looking at the barriers to empowered participation, with an honest and self-evaluative approach, will practitioners be able to formulate strategies that stand a chance of making an impact on the scale necessary to address our various global crises.

Online resources

- The Newcastle-Durham Beacon for Public Engagement, which has both been a funder of this special issue of *PLA* and is attempting to learn from the experiences contained within it:
  http://beacon.ncl.ac.uk
- Resources related to Archon Fung, the Harvard academic who has written extensively on the concept of empowered participation:
  www.archonfung.net

2. The people's vision – UK and Indian reflections on *Prajateerpu*

Abstract

In 2001 a group of smallholder farmers met in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh to take part in a modified citizens' jury. Known as Prajateerpu *(Telegu meaning 'people's verdict'), the participation process explored three broad scenarios for the future of farming in the region. It included an assessment of the potential of genetically modified (GM) crops. A four-day hearing process allowed a jury of 19 – mostly* Dalit *or indigenous farmers – to cross-question 13 witnesses, which included representatives of biotechnology companies, state government officials and development experts.*

The jurors concluded that genetically modified crops would have little foreseeable impact on reducing malnutrition. They expressed concerns about the impact on smallholders of a reliance on artificial fertilisers and pesticides. They called instead for local self-sufficiency and endogenous development in farming and food.

The recommendations of the Prajateerpu *jury have generated widespread interest in India and beyond, most recently from the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development. Meanwhile, Britain's Department for International Development made official complaints to the UK research institutes where two of the facilitators of* Prajateerpu *were based, and attempts were made to suppress the results, censure the researchers, and discredit the process's methodology. We conclude with some lessons learnt about participatory processes being undertaken on controversial topics of concern to groups who have not traditionally had a voice in decisions.*

Online resources

- General resources about the process, hosted by the International Institute for Environment and Development:
  www.prajateerpu.org
- Deccan Development Society – convenors of the Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defence of Diversity, one of the partners in *Prajateerpu*:
  www.ddsindia.com
- DDS film about *Prajateerpu*:
  www.ddsindia.org.in/www/videos/prajateerpu.wmv
- Vision 2020 document from the Government of Andhra Pradesh:
  www.andhrapradesh.com
- An international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers, defending the values and the basic interests of its members. *Prajateerpu*'s outputs used by the movement:
  www.viacampesina.org

3. Mali's Farmers' Jury: an attempt to democratise policy-making on biotechnology

Abstract

*In January 2006, 45 Malian farmers gathered in Sikasso to deliberate the role of genetically modified (GM) cotton in the future of the country's agriculture. The Farmers' Jury – known as l'ECID (*Espace Citoyen d'Interpellation Democratique, *the Citizen's Space for Democratic Deliberation) – set out to give farmers, previously marginalised from policy-making processes, the opportunity to share knowledge and make a*

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series of recommendations. At the end of the jury, the farmers agreed unanimously to reject GM crops and instead 'proposed a package of recommendations to strengthen traditional agricultural practice and support local farmers'.

This paper examines the jury's impact some five months after l'ECID took place. Key decision makers, process facilitators and farmer jurors felt that the jury had had a real impact – not least that the introduction of GM crops has been delayed as a direct result of l'ECID. Its considerable influence can be traced in part to a rigorous methodological process which ensured that at the outset the jury had gained widespread support. Also important was the economic importance of Sikasso, the region from which jurors were drawn, and a recent history of political activism among farmers. L'ECID stands as a powerful example of public participation in decision-making, and an acknowledgement that everyday people can contribute important perspectives and expertise gained through experience. However, the pro-GM scientists were reluctant to engage in dialogue and continued to insist on the privileging of their expert knowledge.

Online resources

- The region of Mali where the citizens' jury took place: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikasso_Region
- Full documentation on L'ECID: www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/ag_liv_projects/verdict.html

4. The UK Nanojury as 'upstream' public engagement

Abstract

The UK Nanojury was a re-working of the citizens' jury approach to participation. Its most significant difference was that it was comprised of two topics. One was framed by the participants, who chose to focus on young people and exclusion, while the other topic, nanotechnologies, was framed by the jury's funders and organisers. The explicit intention of the proposers of this second topic was to conduct public engagement 'upstream' – in advance of applications of the new technology becoming commercially available.

Yet this idea of 'early' public engagement with developing technologies proved problematic. It became clear that, upstream public engagement on nanotechnology was decontextualised from people's everyday life experiences as highlighted in the Nanojury. As a result, upstream engagement is at risk of becoming little more than a tool that bears no resemblance to people's everyday realities. The Nanojury demonstrated that the concept of upstream engagement needs to be reconsidered. Public engagement focusing on technology should start from people's own experiences and contexts, and so foster the development of new technologies better rooted in people's needs.

Online resources

- Full details of the Nanojury process including commentary from its funders and facilitators and a film featuring participants commentary: www.nanojury.org.uk
- *Democratising Technology:* a report by Practical Action (formerly the Intermediate Technology Development Group): www.itdg.org/?id=publicgood_paper
- Living Knowledge: the international science shop network: www.scienceshops.org

5. Citizens' juries in Burnley, UK: from deliberation to intervention

Abstract

The authors describe the experience of two community-based citizens' juries that took place in a northern town in England. Jury One was the first citizens' jury to be commissioned and part-funded by a community organisation for the benefit of the local community. Local residents chose the topic of most concern, chaired the process and had input into process development. The jury met once a week for 3 months to discuss the problem of drug-related burglaries in their neighbourhoods and made over 80 recommendations on a broad range of topics such as housing, community safety, prevention, transport, parenting, service provision and support options for users. Although the process itself had great value for the community and for the professionals who participated, the jury's report led to no tangible outcomes in terms of changes in policy or practice. Despite having prior agreement from all key agencies, they took no action because they did not have to – from the outset the process had been set up by us as an activist intervention in the exercise of power, but outside of local governance processes.

Two years later, a second citizens' jury was held in the area, this time considering what would improve the health and well-being of people living in the area. Local activists working through a multi-agency steering group initiated this jury, bringing together professionals working in key agencies together with local residents and grassroots community

workers to develop and steer the process. Jurors met over one week and made more than 100 recommendations on a diverse range of topics relating to health and well-being. Contrary to experience with the first Jury, in this instance many of the recommendations were acted upon, in particular through the opening of an innovative healthcare centre in the area with outreach and community work as its core values. The success of this jury rested on many factors, but most importantly, it may have been because there was a match between the issue of importance to local people and government targets for a reduction in health inequalities. As an insider project, this jury was networked into local governance processes.

Online resources

- Burnley Council:
  www.burnley.gov.uk/site/index.php
- Institute for Public Policy Research, whose import of the citizens' jury technique from the US in the mid-1990s led to rapid uptake in the UK and elsewhere over the following decade:
  www.ippr.org.uk

6. Community x-change: connecting citizens and scientists to policy makers

Abstract

In a new initiative in public participation, scientists participated in an engagement process, without being called upon to provide expert opinions. The community x-change project aims to strengthen links between the public, scientists and decision makers. Using a 'social inclusion strategy', a diverse group of participants met in Norwich, UK, in 2006, to discuss and explore solutions to climate change. Through extensive deliberations, the group concluded that climate change could only be tackled if technical solutions were integrated with solutions to social challenges facing the community. For example, feelings of powerlessness and a lack of collective meeting places especially for women and young people, required urgent action. In this community co-inquiry model, people's experiences and perspectives become valuable tools in shaping solutions.

Online resources

- British Association for the Advancement of Science (the BA), organisers of the annual Festival of Science:
  www.the-ba.net
- Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences Research Centre (PEALS):
  www.ncl.ac.uk/peals
- A wikipedia page about the community x-change approach to public engagement:
  www.communityxchange.org.uk
- The UK government's Sciencewise programme, which provided supplementary funds to allow the project to involve groups not normally considered by public engagement programmes:
  www.sciencewise.org.uk/html/about.php

7. Hearing the real voices: exploring the experiences of the European Citizens' Panel

Abstract

Citizens' panels were set up in regions of England and Ireland to discuss the 'future of rural areas'. However, when these panels sent representatives to a larger panel in Brussels, made up of 86 citizens from 10 regions of Europe, participants felt that their recommendations were largely ignored by European bureaucrats. For the most part policy makers simply defended their policies, missing the opportunity to engage in a new type of dialogue. Improvements to the methodology of the European panel are possible. But an alternative approach challenges the idea that a random sample of citizens can be 'representative' of wider communities, and would instead select citizens who are able to take action and push for implementation of recommendations, through linkage to a relevant social movement.

Online resources

- Brussels-hosted website describing the different regions contributions to the European Citizens' Panel:
  www.citizenspanel.eu
- Rural Community Network – one of the organisations from which the Irish citizens' panel grew:
  www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org
- Young Cumbria – a youth and community-based organisation that partnered the English citizens' panel:
  www.youngcumbria.org.uk
- Community Involvement – the lead facilitators of the English citizens' panel:
  www.communityinvolvement.org.uk

8. Shorts: four brief analyses of citizens' juries and similar participatory processes

8a Ignoring and suppressing grassroots participation in a northern English town

- Blackburn and Darwen do-it-yourself citizens' jury report: www.ncl.ac.uk/peals/assets/publications/rowntreejuryfinal.pdf
- Blackburn with Darwen Council: www.blackburn.gov.uk

8b The art of facipulation? The UK government's nuclear power dialogue

- Involve: a UK think-tank on participation: www.involve.org.uk
- Greenpeace UK: part of the international environmental group: www.greenpeace.org.uk
- Market Research Society: UK professional body for market researchers: www.marketresearch.org.uk

8c Genetically modified meetings: the Food Standards Agency's citizens' jury

- The People's Report on GM Crops is available at: www.ncl.ac.uk/peals/assets/publications/peoples_report_on_gm.pdf
- The Chime Communications Group – this page shows Opinion Leader as being owned by this commmunications multinational company, whose clients include the global fast-food chain MacDonalds, Monsanto and British Nuclear Fuels: www.chime.plc.uk/our-companies
- Article from the *Ecologist* (a campaigning environmentalist magazine) desribing the UK government's close ties to the global fast-food industry, which it claims are are working against the interests of public health: www.theecologist.org/pages/archive_detail.asp?content_id=256

8d If we have time, motivation and resources to participate, does that mean we gain authority and power?

- The video of Short 8d is available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eurmFan_a-A
- Swingbridge Video – collaborators with several of the authors in this issue and with Right 2B Heard on this video: www.swingbridgevideo.co.uk

9. The watering down of participatory budgeting and people power in Porto Alegre, Brazil

Abstract

The Brazilian city of Porto Alegre pioneered the idea of participatory budgeting in the late 1980s. Its initial success has been followed by a wave of attempts to set up similar schemes across the world. With the watering down of this radical power-sharing system following the loss of power by the Workers Party in 2004, discussions about financial and political sustainability of such initiatives are now taking place under the banner of an emerging campaign called Popular Sovereignty.

Online resources

- Website hosting the Popular Sovereignty Network, which seeks to strengthen popular power as a strategy to give effectiveness to the participation offers made by governmental institutions: www.ongcidade.org
- The Transnational Institute (TNI) is an international network of activist-scholars committed to critical analyses of the global problems of today and tomorrow, with a view to providing intellectual support to those movements concerned to steer the world in a democratic, equitable and environmentally sustainable direction: www.tni.org

10. Participatory budgeting in the UK: a challenge to the system?

Abstract

Participatory budgeting is a way of involving communities in real decisions, derived from nearly 20 years' experience of popular mobilisation in Latin America, where the people of Porto Alegre, Brazil, have been involved in spending the city's regeneration budget since 1989. In Brazil, participatory budgeting grew out of a particular social, political and ideological context, led by a grassroots impetus for greater participation. This article is a shortened version of a paper entitled 'Radical innovation or technical fix? Participatory Budgeting in the UK', which explores what happened when that model of participation was transplanted to the UK, where it risks being seen as a 'technical fix' divorced from its original context. In one pilot in the north of England, participatory budgeting did inspire large turnouts at public meetings, when people under-

stood that their actions would make a tangible difference to outcomes. However, national constraints, such as pre-set government 'targets', conflicted with a commitment to genuine participation, and encouraged control of the process by official organisers. Local participation was focused on helping to find the best way of meeting the targets, rather than deciding what the priorities should be. This article (and the paper from which it is drawn) considers what the potential of PB in the UK might be.

Online resources

- *A Guide to Participatory Budgeting*, available at: www.internationalbudget.org/resources/library/GPB.pdf
- UK Participatory Budgeting Unit, resources and news about PB in the UK: www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/index.htm
- International resources and forum on PB: www.participatorybudgeting.org

11. The Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS: from principle to practice?

Abstract

In 1994, at the Paris AIDS summit, 42 nations declared their support for the principle of Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV and AIDS – which came known as the GIPA principle. Although these governments acknowledged that this principle is critical to ethical and effective national responses to the pandemic, the views and voices of HIV-positive people still tend to be overlooked or ignored. This paper recounts the experiences of the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), the only international network of HIV-positive women. Too many national governments, NGOs and civil society groups working on HIV continue to ignore, neglect or misrepresent the perspectives of HIV-positive women, and to fail to recognise their diversity. ICW's aim is to ensure that HIV-positive women are meaningfully involved in making decisions that impact on their lives, and are working to support and empower women as activists and parliamentarians, so that their views and voices will be heard. At the same time, it is equally vital that those who are in positions of power learn to engage with HIV-positive women, as equal partners, in ways that are inclusive and respectful.

Online resources

- ICW is the only international network which strives to share with the global community the experiences, views and contributions of 19 million incredible women worldwide, who are also HIV-positive: www.icw.org

12. Understanding local difference: gender (plus) matters for NGOs

Abstract

The paper is based on a longer review of publications from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London, which was produced for internal learning. The review aimed to promote a more consistent analysis of recognised local difference in the work IIED does as an NGO, particularly, but not only, gender differences. In the paper, the authors illustrate why and how it is important to disaggregate populations – that is, to separate out different subgroups for analysis – going beyond 'the local' and 'the community'. The authors use examples of selected IIED publications, and provide a basic tool for thinking about difference, with a focus on the management of natural resources for sustainable development.

Online resources

- IIED – an international policy research institute and non-governmental body working for more sustainable and equitable global development: www.iied.org
- Bridge: www.bridge.ids.ac.uk
- ELDIS: www.eldis.org/gender/index.htm
- FAO: www.fao.org/Gender/gender.htm
- Siyanda: www.siyanda.org
- UNRISD: www.unrisd.org
- World Bank: http://tinyurl.com/6flmoq
- For examples on sectoral/project-based gender checklists see:
  The Asian Development Bank: www.adb.org/Gender/checklists.asp
  SDC Gender Tool Kit – instruments for gender mainstreaming: http://tinyurl.com/5mkowb
  SIDA Analysing Gender: http://tinyurl.com/59qm7d

13. The ivory tower and beyond: Bradford University at the heart of its communities

Abstract

To foster community engagement in their academic institution in the UK, the authors have designed a novel way of measuring and evaluating how Bradford University could effectively work with its communities and assess the ongoing impact of this work. The tool is based on an assumption that community engagement involves building partnerships and shared objectives based on mutually recognised and valued community and university competences. The qualitative measurement tool is based on four principles: Reciprocity, Externality, Access and Partnership (REAP). The authors argue that university-community engagement should encompass both a willingness to make academic knowledge and expertise available to the communities of Bradford and the recognition that academics can themselves benefit in their research and teaching from the knowledge and experience of the communities around them. By looking 'beyond the ivory tower', universities can help to building a learning- and knowledge-based society for the many, not just the few, and so contribute to the development of more cohesive, equitable and democratic local communities.

Online resources
- International Centre for Participation Studies at Bradford University:
  www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/icps
- Bradford's Programme for a Peaceful City – a collaboration with Bradford University:
  www.brad.ac.uk/acad/ssis/activities/ppc

14. The changing face of community participation: the Liverpool black experience

Abstract

The city of Liverpool has the longest established black community in Britain, concentrated in the Toxteth area, where 'community participation' has long been a reaction to racism or a fight for better services. The author's first experience of community mobilisation came in the early 1970s, when police failed to protect black residents on a new housing estate, and this led to campaigns for black studies and the formation of the Liverpool Black Organisation in 1976. However, after the Toxteth riots of 1981, which were the culmination of all the frustrations experienced by the black community, particularly in regard to police and community relations – the face of community participation was set to change. As government agencies concentrated on regeneration and economic initiatives, community participation was now in the hands of civil servants and those employed to bring about 'consultation'. Grassroots action was slowly eroded as the community was broken up and dispersed, and government agencies now direct 'community participation' in the city.

Online resources
- UK Black History Month: celebrating and highlighting Caribbean and African activities:
  www.black-history-month.co.uk and
  www.liverpoolblackhistory.co.uk
- Liverpool Museum's account of the city's part in the trade of black slaves:
  www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/srd/liverpool.aspx
- The Stephen Lawrence murder – the murder of a black teenager in London in 1993 and its subsequent mishandling by the police led to an inquiry that highlighted institutionalised racism in a range British government bodies.
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macpherson_Inquiry#Public_inquiries_into_the_police_investigation

15. Community participation: 'activists' or 'citizens'?

Abstract

In the northeast of England, the author first became involved in community activism to improve medical care for mothers and young children, along with other local residents, working with staff at a pioneering local health clinic. She saw the potential for collective local input to influence positive change within hierarchical institutions. Towards the end of the 1970s she worked as an unpaid volunteer in another local community project, in the centre of a housing estate, which led to the launch of the first credit union in the region. The critical principle underpinning all the work was a commitment to collective action.

With the advent of City Challenge, and subsequent state-funded regimes, aimed at encouraging inner-city regeneration, the emphasis shifted from working on community-led, community-identified priorities to funding-led, local and central government-themed priorities. Despite government rhetoric about

partnership working, power and control remained with the local and central government, and the effect was to divide and rule, limit and sanitise community participation.

A new mode of 'community engagement' is now being promoted. Citizens' juries usually have a singular focus predetermined by funders, lack sustainable structures or long-term resources, and rarely inspire direct action. Their long-term impact, if any, is uncertain. They offer a veneer of participation that is little more than theatrical consultation, and in practice, may contain or even stifle genuine community participation.

Online resources

- A UK Government report extolling the virtues of a community development approach to addressing key issues in society:
  www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitydevelopment
- A brief wiki guide to citizens' juries:
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens'_jury
- Extracts from 'Teach Yourself Citizens Juries: A handbook by the DIY Jury Steering Group':
  www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla_notes/documents/plan_04914.pdf

16. *Girijana Deepika*: challenges for a people's organisation in Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract

Neo-liberal reforms set in motion in the 1990s have resulted in a wholesale attack on traditional farming communities in India. Supported by the government, corporations have begun to control food and farming systems, turning indigenous people into passive recipients of a development plan. In 1990 a group of youth from the Adivasi *community – the indigenous people of the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh – began to organise themselves. They initiated an organisation called* Girijana Deepika*. The group has worked towards the creation of a membership-based organisation under the leadership of women, to regain control over their land, their way of life, and their culture, and to build solidarity among the people.*

Girijana Deepika *adopted two strategies: the first was to revive informal community systems of government – such as the local forum, the* Gotti *– and to organise people through these traditional forms. This strategy was designed to combat the divisive processes created by the many institutions set up by government development programmes within each village. The second strategy was to regain control of the land and farming resources – through, for instance, community seed banks – thereby enriching people's livelihoods and challenging the corporatisation of the resources.*

Online resources

- Introduction to the mountainous area of Eastern India where *Girijana Deepika* works:
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Godavari
- Short summary of *Girijana Deepika*'s original approach:
  www.reflect-action.org/compower/pdfversion/cpaction/R002.pdf
- Details of recent activities by *Girijana Deepika* using the participatory *Gotti*:
  www.anthra.org/Strengthening%20Community%20Livelihoods/adivasi2.htm
- *Jivika* (livelihood) network – facilitating the interaction of field workers, activists, action-researchers, students, teachers, scholars, managers and other practitioners concerned with gender equity in natural-resource-based livelihoods and anti-poverty initiatives in South Asia and beyond:
  http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jivika

General section

17

On the road to change: writing the history of technologies in Bolivia

by JEFFERY W. BENTLEY and GRAHAM THIELE

Introduction

From 2002 to 2006, the authors were part of a project in Bolivia implemented by a consortium of research organisations called Innova. The goal of Innova was to test methods for linking supply and demand for technology. Innova took several technologies that consortium members had worked on previously, and which researchers felt were nearly ready to release. It tested whether they corresponded to what farmers really wanted, and fine tuned those technologies that passed this test, ready for extension to farmers.[1]

The project adapted many participatory methods while trying out promising technologies with farmers (see references at the end of this article). Innova's grassroots technical people were the key to this process since they are in the field most of the time and in close contact with farmers. This article focuses on an innovative type of workshop developed by the project, similar to a method developed independently by Douthwaite and Ashby, J. (2005), in which grassroots agronomists were given the opportunity to map the history of the technologies introduced (the road to change). We heard how the technologies actually changed, some quite a lot, and how some were even dropped, and we were able to understand local reactions to the innovations. We found this type of workshop to be a useful evaluation tool in showing how technologies were adapted and adopted, which were not adopted, and the role of the Innova project in this process.

[1] The UK Department for International Development (DfID) supported research with consortium members on these technologies and continued this support through INNOVA (Strengthening Technical Innovation Systems for Potato-Based Agriculture in Bolivia) between 2002 and 2006.

Background

Background to Bolivia

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in the Americas, with a *per capita* Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US$1000. Income distribution is extremely unequal and there is a big economic divide between people of European (mainly Spanish) extraction and indigenous people, most of whom are Quechua or Aymara speakers. Indigenous people mostly depend on agriculture for a living. Land reforms stemming from the 1952 revolution placed much of the land in the hands of indigenous farmers, giving many rural households two to four hectares of land to farm. However, agriculture contributes only 12.8% of national income. New technologies could help make the land much more productive, and contribute to reducing poverty.

Figure 1: Map of Bolivia showing project sites

Map courtesy of: www.appliedlanguage.com/maps_of_the_world/map_of_bolivia.shtml

About Innova

Innova is a consortium of three partner organisations (see Table 1) who worked together from 2002 to 2006. The project was managed by Papa Andina, the regional partnership programme of the International Potato Centre (CIP).

Innova worked at three pilot sites, one each in the following locations (see Figure 1):

Table 1: Innova partner organisations

Institution	Brief description
CIAT/Santa Cruz	The Centre for Tropical Agricultural Research, Santa Cruz, a public agricultural research and development institution affiliated with the prefecture of Santa Cruz Department.
UMSS	The Public University of San Simón, Cochabamba, which includes an agricultural college.
PROINPA Foundation	*Promoción e Investigación de Productos Andinos*, a private, non-profit institution for research on Andean crops, which evolved out of the IBTA (Bolivian Institute for Agriculture and Livestock Technology) potato programme, with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Table 2: Examples of the supply of technology at the start of Innova

Technology proposed, 2001	Brief description
Improved fallow	Mixtures of purple clover (*Trifolium pratense*) with grasses (*Lolium perenne, Festuca arundinaceae, Dactylis glomerata*). These are planted after harvesting oats or barley, as the field enters fallow, to produce fodder and manage weeds.
Grains-plus-legumes	Mixes of legumes (vetch, purple clover) with grains (oats, barley) for fodder, to conserve soil and water, control pests, diseases and weeds, and stabilise yields.
New fodders	Some 14 varieties of several species of legumes and grasses, planted in small demonstration plots called 'pasture gardens'.
Phalaris grass	Live barriers of phalaris grass (*Phalaris tuberoarundinacea*) planted in rows for soil conservation. The live barriers form a wall that traps soil runoff, slowly forming a terrace. The grass is good fodder.
Chicken manure for nematodes	Integrated management of the nematode *Nacobbus aberrans* (a major pest of potato in Bolivia which causes heavy losses to some farmers) by applying chicken manure to the soil.
Potato Integrated Pest Management (IPM)[2]	IPM of potato pests and diseases in the low valleys (Santa Cruz), including: using insecticides and plant extracts to kill insect vectors of disease (aphids, whiteflies etc.); control of tuber moth in the field; and fungicides for Rhizoctonia.
Herbicide for purple nut sedge	Trials of the herbicide glyphosate to manage the weed *Cyperus rotundus*.
Improved tillage	Several ploughs had been designed, and a few trials were needed to learn the best ploughing dates.
Adoption of implements	Promote adoption of animal-drawn implements.
Home remedies for cows	Better nutrition for livestock; remedies made from local plants to kill cattle parasites.

[2] Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a pest control strategy that uses an array of complementary methods: natural predators and parasites, pest-resistant varieties, cultural practices, biological controls, various physical techniques, and pesticides as a last resort. It is an ecological approach that can significantly reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides. Source: www.en.wikipedia.org

Taking two-minute questionnaires at the technology fair in the high valleys, 2006.

Photo: Jeffery Bentley

- the Altiplano at about 4000 metres above sea level;
- the high Andean valleys at about 3000 metres; and
- the low valleys of Santa Cruz, at about 2000 metres.

The three sites were in different language areas: Aymara on the Altiplano; Quechua in the high valleys; and Spanish in the low valleys. The climate becomes warmer and more humid as altitude decreases, so the crops are different:

- native tubers, quinoa and cereals on the Altiplano;
- potatoes, broad beans and cereals in the high valleys; and
- temperate crops in the low valleys.

The Innova project started with ten main technologies (see Table 2), which were to be validated on-farm.

Participatory methods used

For the first two years, Innova used *sondeos* (Hildebrand, 1981) or rapid reconnaissance surveys, to see what technologies farmers demanded and decide if these fitted with what researchers had been developing. *Sondeos* are similar to PRAs but rely more on individual, semi-structured interviews on farmsteads, and have fewer meetings and visual methods. Innova added a results session to the *sondeo* format during which the *sondeo* team reported the findings back to the community in an open meeting, and local people corrected and confirmed the conclusions (Bentley *et al*., 2004).

Innova staff also helped farmers set up local agricultural research committees or CIALs (Ashby et al., 2000) to test possible innovations and report back on them to their neighbours. In Innova, these were called GETS (*Grupo Evaluador de Tecnología* or Technology Evaluator Group)

Innova added a community feedback session, during which committee members gave their opinions about the technologies in front of other community members.

Another method, the technology fair, was like a field day. Farmers presented their field trials to up to 200 people from neighbouring communities (in groups of 30 each). But, unlike a field day, the technology fair included very short (two minute) questionnaires to gather people's impressions of the technologies they had seen. This was done every year. (See Bentley *et al*,. 2004 for more detail).

These and other participatory methods gave Innova an idea of which technologies were being adopted, but something was missing. It was still not clear why certain technologies had changed more than others. Of course the staff wrote reports, but they were formal and quantitative, with the human side written out of the picture. So, near the end

Javier Aguilera, Rubén Botello and Remy Crespo (left to right, below) design a time line for the multiple mountain plough (opposite page), 17 May 2005.

Photo: Jeffery Bentley

of the project, in May 2005, Innova held a two-day workshop with project staff to write the history of the main technologies, with an emphasis on what actually happened rather than what was supposed to have happened.

Writing a historical timeline: Roads to Change

We called the workshop Roads to Change (*Caminos al Cambio*). This was to emphasise how change happened. We started with a few examples we had written earlier, showing the history of changes. We divided into three groups according to where staff were located (Altiplano, high valleys or low valleys). The people all knew one another, and were comfortable working together. Each group had:

- Three or four grassroots technical people who knew the technologies and the farming communities well.
- A facilitator to stimulate discussions who was an agronomist and a project member and so familiar with the work, but slightly removed from day-to-day field activities.
- A scribe to take notes (a role the authors undertook, with another colleague). In practice, the scribes did more than take notes, also helping the facilitators ask questions about the work.

Each group picked a few interesting technologies, and then talked them through in the following format:

- What is the technology like now (in 2005)?
- What was it like at the start of the project (in 2002)?
- How has it changed?
- What were the critical turning points on the road to change? (What changed? When? Where? Who was involved? How did you know change was needed? Who suggested the change? What were the benefits? Which Innova events influenced the change?)

The next step was to create a table of the results as a timeline (see Table 3).

We organised the steps this way because by this time, each of our participatory methods (CIALs, *sondeos* etc.) was associated with certain project staff. Looking at technical change from the technology's perspective helped us forget a bit about the methods and avoid defensive reactions. Nobody was forced to say, 'What do you mean, my method was not helpful?'

After presenting the results at the end of the meeting to the whole project staff, the three scribes pooled their notes. Jeffery Bentley edited the results and emailed a draft to all

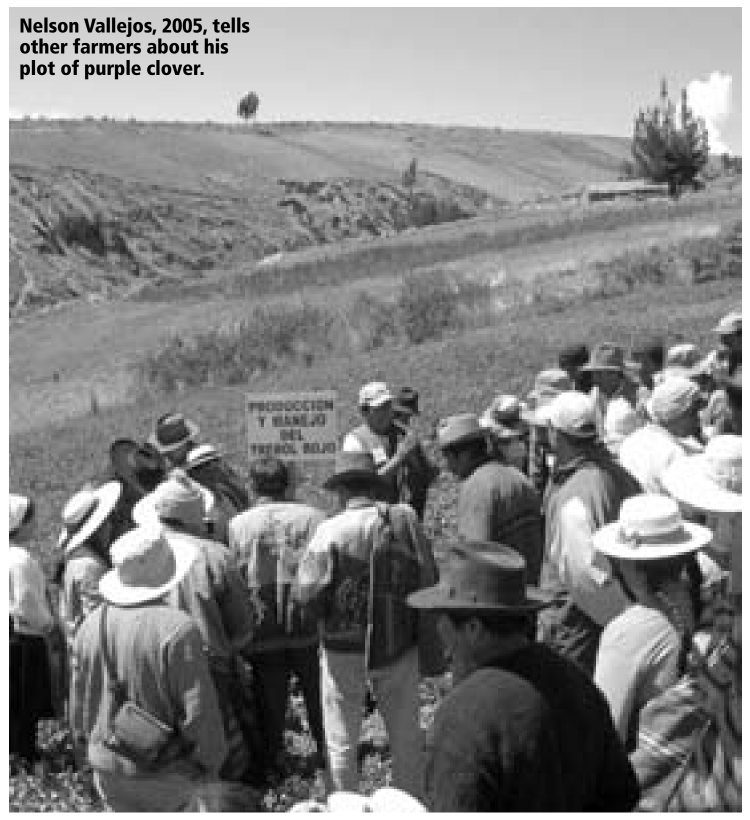
Table 3: Example of an innovation history

Multiple mountain plough							
	1979–1996	1996	1997–2001	2000	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005
Key events	CIFEMA (a university project) in Cochabamba	PRA by PROMETA (a follow-on university project) in Cochabamba	PROMETA in Cochabamba	Municipal government of Umala holds an inter-institutional workshop	PROMETA works on the Altiplano for the first time	Tests with GETs	Ploughs promoted with the PITA: *Proyectos de Innovación Tecnológica Aplicada* (Applied Technological Innovation Projects) in Umala
Changes in the technology	Develops ploughs and other equipment	Implements for soil conservation	Tools to be pulled by horses, donkeys and oxen	Municipality demands tillage technology	INNOVA tests 6 ploughs with GETs	Multiple mountain plough	Sale of ploughs in a store in Patacamaya

Box 1: From improved fallow to purple clover

Purple clover (*Trifolium pratense*) has been in Bolivia since the 1970s. DfID projects in the 1990s conducted on-farm trials of 'improved fallow' (mixes of grasses and legumes) for several years in the high valleys. During the first *sondeo* in November 2002 in the high valleys, people said they were tired of doing little field trials with clover. 'We want to try big fields,' they said.

Innova kept studying 'improved fallow' and in the first technology fair presented a trial, in a farmer's field, with three treatments of different mixes. But at the same technology fair, another farmer, Nelson Vallejos, showed a plot he had planted on his own. Innova's technology was based on the idea of planting clover and grass seed in dry fields, after harvest (in the dry season), so that during the several years of fallow, the plot would grow nutritous fodder, and less weedy herbs. The problem was that the clover and grass failed to thrive in the dry, rocky fields. As soon as Vallejos and other farmers started planting purple clover on their own, they changed it radically. Instead of planting it at harvest time, they planted it at the regular planting time, and they sowed it with oats, instead of pasture grasses, since they knew oats better, and had the seed. They planted purple clover in good soil, not in hillside fields. Innova agronomists Salomón Pérez and Freddy Almendras recommended another change, irrigation. Farmers and agronomists realised that they should plough carefully before planting, instead of simply broadcasting the seed. Later farmers began manuring the clover, and they soon had a thriving field of it. They could cut fodder every day for their cows, even though the clover was growing in a well-tended, permanent pasture, and not on a fallow hillside.



Nelson Vallejos, 2005, tells other farmers about his plot of purple clover.

Photo: Jeffery Bentley

Box 2. High hilling up

Potatoes yield more, and have fewer health problems when soil is heaped high around the young plants. This is called '*aporque alto*' or 'high hilling up'.

Photo: Jeffery Bentley

In April 2001 an earlier project found the flea beetle *Epitrix* damaging seed potato in one of the CIALs in the low valleys. Innova agronomists Ernesto Montellano, Pablo Franco and colleagues began to manage it with a technique they learnt from CIP (International Potato Centre): higher *aporque* (hilling up, i.e. putting more soil around the plants while weeding). But it was hard to do with a wooden plough.

By 2002 people in the CIALs were using higher hilling, which damaged the potato plants less and gave room in the soil for the tubers to grow better. Innova planted tillage trials in all three pilot areas. In 2003, Innova agronomists designed a metal plough pulled by oxen, which made hilling up easier. In the technology fair on the Altiplano in 2005, farmer-experimenter Rogelio Cachaca López showed that he had doubled his potato harvest, among other things, by using high hilling up.

of the participants, who responded with comments within a week. Most of the comments were minor, but one of the participants objected strongly to the editor's summary. We (Bentley and Thiele) liked the case of purple clover (Box 1), because the technology changed so much. We thought it showed how sensitive the technical people were to farmers, thoughtfully incorporating farmer suggestions into the technology. But one of the agronomists said it made the staff look bad, that they had relied too much on farmers. He insisted that some of the changes had come from the agronomists, not the farmers. We incorporated this colleague's suggestions into the history of the technology, and we realised that he had a point. In our haste to show that the farmers had 'participated' in adapting the technologies, we had under-represented the creativity of the agronomists. Without their ideas and encouragement the farmers would never have thought of the purple clover innovations.

In other cases, the technology changed just a little, so the technical people had got it mostly right the first time (e.g. Box 2).

If there was a limitation with the 'road to change' method, it was that the agronomists tended to mention only those technologies they thought were successful. They were much less likely to discuss technologies that were abandoned. For example, Innova taught farmers to make home remedies for cows, from local plants, but the home-brews were abandoned when farmers failed to adopt them because the medicine was tedious to make, and farmers preferred store-bought medicines. Even though this shows clearly that the agronomists were listening to farmers' views, they omitted this case at our workshop. It is perhaps understandable that people want to remember their successes and forget the failures, but this means that some of the lessons learnt are soon forgotten.

Ways forward

We are currently beginning a new project in the Andes called the *Alianza Cambio Andino* (Alliance for Change in the Andes), building on the Innova project and also funded by DfID. We anticipate that some 20 to 30 organisations, 150 plus agronomists, and several thousand farmers will be involved in the four countries (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia). *Alianza* will promote the broader use of the best participatory methods developed by Innova.

We hope to use Roads to Change in a more systematic way to document the outcomes and impacts of using participatory methods in agricultural research and development

"In our haste to show that the farmers had 'participated' in adapting the technologies, we had under-represented the creativity of the agronomists"

organisations and projects. This information will be used to understand the conditions under which a participatory method or combination of methods is appropriate. In addition, the Alianza will use evidence of the effectiveness of participatory approaches to promote policy change in national agricultural innovation systems to make them more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the poor. The histories that emerge from Roads to Change of how participatory approaches make a difference should help support this advocacy process.

Conclusions

Technologies, methods and log frames all have to evolve. Admitting mistakes is an important part of successful adaptations. Roads to Change examined the way a technology changed rather than what the project did or achieved. It provided a novel and more objective window into how the projects' activities influenced the twists and turns on the road to innovation.

Sondeos gave us a picture of demand, but knowing about demand is not always enough. Just because a technology addresses demand (and most of Innova's did), doesn't mean it does so in the best way. For example, the improved fallow described in Box 1 addressed the key shortage of fodder, but it wasn't functional until farmers and agronomists reworked it in the field.

Of all the methods we tried, the CIAL (or the version which Innova called GET) was the most useful for completing a part-developed technology. The other methods all fit inside it, like tools on a Swiss army knife. It would have been impossible to hold technology fairs or *sondeos* without the collaboration of the farmers in the CIAL. The 'community feedback' method was useful for developing the mountain plough and for changing 'improved fallow' to a meadow of clover. The technology fair was perhaps best for giving some researchers the courage to quietly set a technology aside and go on to a more promising topic. We would not have learnt insights like these if our discussions had kept stressing the virtues of everyone's favourite method. To really judge the methods, we needed to look at change from the technologies' perspective.

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NOTE
The full text of the Road to Change paper is available (in Spanish) online: www.jefferybentley.com/caminosalcambiomemorias14.pdf

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Roses and people: exploring sustainable livelihoods in the Rose valley, Bulgaria

by PRESLAVA NENOVA

Figure 1: Map of Bulgaria

Background

I lived in Turnichene, in central Bulgaria, for over a month from May to July 2006. I carried out field research on the social dynamics and processes integral to rose growing-dependent livelihoods in the region.[1] I chose this subject because there has been no significant socio-anthropological research into how social, economic and cultural developments have affected rose growing in the Rose valley since the transition from state socialism.[2]

The timing was good as it coincided with the rose harvest. I chose Turnichene because it is inhabited by a range of rose producers – those working small family plots and large-scale producers with up to 30 hectares. It is also home to the majority of seasonal labourers who provide vital manual labour. A large part of the population lives in extreme poverty, at least seasonally, despite participating in the annual production of rose oil, a high-value international commodity. Turnichene presented an opportunity to research the co-habitation of the three major ethnic groups in Bulgaria, with a population made up of 12% Turkish, 25% Roma and 63% Bulgarian residents (Ahmed Hodja,

[1] I designed the project as part of my MSc in Anthropology and Ecology of Development at University College London, UK.
[2] For the most recent ethnographic and historical account (up to 1989), see Zarev (1996).

Mayor of Turnichene, interview).

I gathered comprehensive data from nearly all those whose livelihoods involve the rose crop, and focused on understanding the role of the crop in the lives of those who depend on it most. Working alongside harvesters and small-scale growers was an excellent starting point for my research and gave me a detailed insight into the relationships between the various stakeholders as well as the production process.

The study had a variety of aims and results, but in this article I will focus on describing how, by involving a large sample of the village and through participatory exercises, the project encouraged this ethnically diverse community to articulate their concerns, opinions and knowledge. I used my findings to raise local awareness of the potential usefulness of discussion for clarifying common goals and the possibilities of such discussion at all levels – including amongst the non-literate and those who do not speak the language of contracts and high-level politics.

The adults of Turnichene had been brought up without basic rights and freedom of expression, and many had even been dispossessed of their birth names forcibly by the communist regime. This totalitarian state was superseded by a chaotic restitution and murky processes of transition to a market economy and democracy. Programmes for reducing rural unemployment, introduced by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with a degree of coercion, as well as the rife corruption which I witnessed and the illiteracy of many in Turnichene contribute to the stifling of the voices of small-scale and family farmers and poor seasonal labourers.[3] They are nonetheless active actors in the dynamic network of power relationships in Turnichene and beyond. The article looks at how I fitted into this and the implications for further research.

Methods

My methods evolved depending on insights I received, relationships I developed and opportunities that arose. I combined planning with a constant rethinking of my approach and integrated myself in the community by living in a Bulgarian household, working on the subsistence plots of a large sample of households as well as alongside harvesters. I also cycled around the village daily, introducing myself and my research objectives to all who were socialising in the square and on their front porches. Many regarded me with curiosity, as my participatory behaviour as a lone stranger was unprecedented. I carefully explained the goals of my study, a personal project, on behalf of a UK University. Seeing me in a neutral light, many were keen to let me know their side of the story. I encountered some initial scepticism when approaching large-scale growers, but they too gladly gave me interviews, giving me their perspectives, presented with fluency and confidence, often during their supervision of the harvest, so that their employees could witness their contact with me.

Semi-structured interviews

I conducted around 100 semi-structured interviews with individuals and focus groups in Turnichene. Bulgarian was spoken well by all in the village and was the dominant language. It is also my first language and I am able to speak village slang or 'folk' Bulgarian, which implied an experience of living in the countryside. Speaking in this familiar way was key in facilitating communication which was spontaneous and relevant to on-going activities. I ensured that I matched my conceptual framework carefully to that of the Turnichene people, for example, by identifying the closest and most easily related to word for 'livelihood' – *pominuk*.[4] I conducted interviews in an informal and dynamic manner. For example, by tentatively raising a general subject I could judge by the response whether a person had an interest in expanding it. Using open questions helped me see what issues informants wanted to focus on. All interviews took place in the active context of what was being discussed and many were like a prompted running commentary whilst interviewees were working. This meant I was better able to avoid being intrusive and was sensitive to interviewees' time availability and practical limitations to being interviewed.

My first step was to join harvesters at the rose plantations early in the mornings, and to help by picking the flowers alongside them. This not only meant learning through doing and tackling issues as they arose, but also the help I provided went some way towards repaying the interviewees for their assistance with the research, and practically demonstrated an interest in forging a bond of solidarity. At this stage I met key informants and experienced working conditions at the small and large plantations. One day, I witnessed a workers' rebellion in which a large group of Roma employees left the field at midday, costing the large-scale rose grower a significant loss of harvest. This spurred informative discussions and commentary in the village in the ensuing days.

[3] For more information on these government policies and their effects, as well as more information on all issues in this article, see Nenova (2006).

[4] This word has interesting connotations. One Bulgarian interviewee commented that before the regime change the word had become redundant because the state provided for all and forced people into work, and no one had to worry about day-to-day survival and livelihood security.

GENERAL SECTION

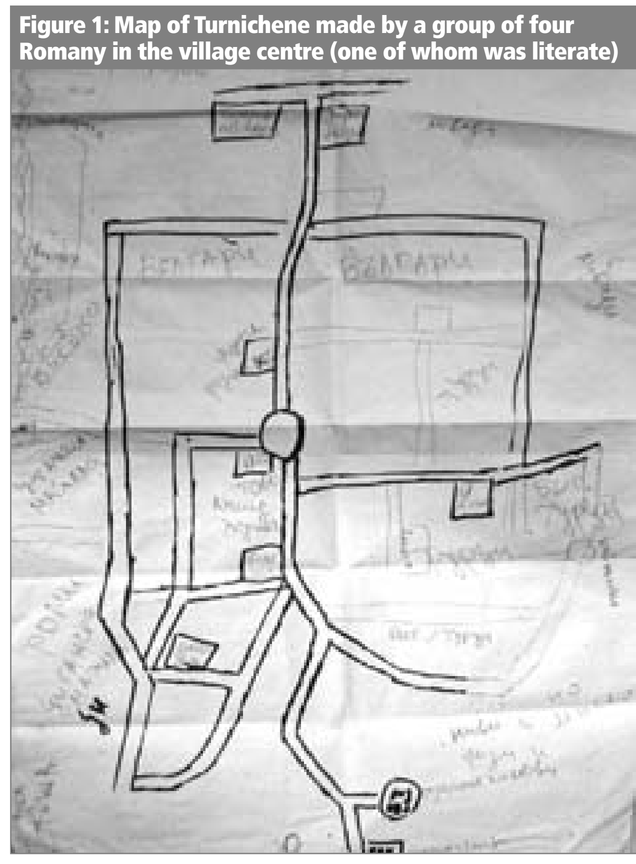
Participatory mapping of sources of annual livelihood security with Roma informants.

Photos: Preslava Nenova

Participatory mapping by Turkish and Bulgarian informants.

Photo: Preslava Nenova

Figure 1: Map of Turnichene made by a group of four Romany in the village centre (one of whom was literate)



I visited all rose producers in the village. The small-scale growers were ones with 15dc (decares) or less. This group of producers use their own family labour, and the area of 15dc is small enough to make viable ways of working the land which are not adequate for larger areas.[5]

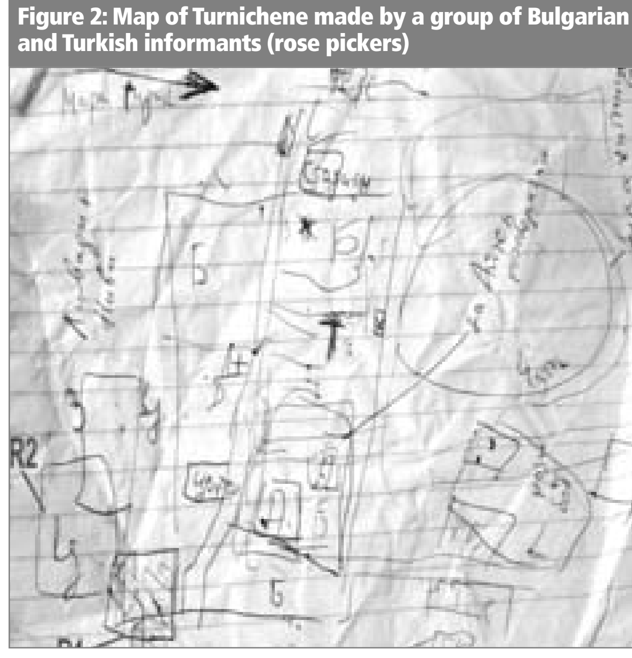
I also created detailed family portraits, following Cochrane (2005) for six families. Three of these worked with roses only as paid labourers, and three were small-scale rose growers. Each category included one family from the Roma, Turkish and Bulgarian ethnic groups.

Participatory mapping

The second major step in my methodology was asking focus groups to take part in participatory village mapping and other mapping exercises. There was no official map of Turnichene at the mayor's office or in the municipal administrative offices and so the maps produced served a very immediate purpose (Figures 1 and 2). Equipped with these I carried out focused participant observation as well as transect walks to look out for poverty indicators, which had been brought out by focus group discussions. During the drawing of the map in Figure 1 the participants gave their perspectives on the significance of the distribution of water resources. The detailed account raised further questions for the research, which has been documented in my thesis.

Eight adults from five Roma families from the poorest quarter created the seasonal map shown in Table 1. (I filled in the writing.) It captures the importance of various non-timber forest products and the dire situation in the winter months when there

Figure 2: Map of Turnichene made by a group of Bulgarian and Turkish informants (rose pickers)



[5] 1 decare (dc) = 0.1 hectare = 1000 m^2. For the purpose of the discussion dc will be used since this is what is used by the respondents.

Table 1: Seasonal mapping exercise

Spring	**March** The [seasonal farm labour] contracts start (hoeing the roses)	**April** More hoeing employment	**May** **Only** rose harvesting	**June** Rose harvesting; Second half of the month – cherry picking
Summer	**July** Lavender harvesting (but now there will be much less income from this because of new harvester machines)	**August** Raspberry picking	**September** Raspberry picking Walnut gathering and selling	**October** Walnut gathering
Winter	**November** We steal wood.[1] We collect scrap metal; Survive on what we have accumulated from the summer.[2]	**December** Same as November and we 'write in the shop's book' (shopping on credit from the few local shops)	**January** Same as November and December	**February** We dig up wild *'grumotrun' (Ononis campestris)* Spiny Restharrow roots from the forest to sell

[1] This refers to the illegal felling of trees from the nearby mountain forests for the purpose of heating of homes and cooking. Most rely on firewood for cooking.
[2] Not just money but also conserves, which Roma households prepare when a particular vegetable or fruit is abundant, although to a lesser degree than the Bulgarians and the Turkish.

Table 2: Participatory map showing proportional importance of sources of annual livelihood security

	Importance This Year (2006)	Importance 5 Years Ago (2001)
Rose picking	**Medium**	**Medium**
Subsistence farming	**High**	**High**
Paid Work	**Medium**	**Low**
Livestock	**High**	**Medium**
Harvesting forest products	**Low**	**Low**
Jobseeker's allowance	**Low**	**High**

This Year (2006)	5 Years Ago (2001)

"..the project encouraged this ethnically diverse community to articulate their concerns, opinions and knowledge."

is no employment or income.[6] For May 'only rose harvesting' was mentioned. There are no crops fruiting as early as May and no other major agricultural tasks occur.

In Table 2, two cups of equal number of beans were used for the two columns, to reflect on the relative significance of incomes, with each cup representing a year of livelihood. Beans are a very important part of the diet and so are useful symbols. The participants in this exercise were all non-literate.

Social dynamics and lessons learnt

Living in Turnichene, I entered a dynamic social landscape, in which I had to remain neutral. I had no problem getting accepted by people and with them opening up about poverty, indigenous technical knowledge, criminality and many other sensitive issues. Employees even spoke to me openly about their employers, small-scale growers about large-scale neighbours etc. This was because most trusted me to a degree to which they were confident that I would not publicly disclose information which would jeopardise their relationships or livelihoods. This enabled them to raise issues which they even wanted me to convey to other parties, while keeping the source anonymous. In the case where an employer openly spoke of his key role in environmentally and socially detrimental large-scale corruption, his lack of concern was based on having security independent of my knowledge, as well as the fact that most in the village were aware of this and complicit themselves.

However, the same closeness which allowed me to create family portraits and study livelihood strategies in detail was also a constraint in the long term, as with time my presence in various households on an equal basis became unacceptable to informants who had expected me to base my research on a distinct group, rather than sustaining the same interest in all.[7] When I spent time with key informants, particularly ones who were from the Roma community, this was seen by the Bulgarian and Turkish community as encouraging the antisocial behaviour of the Roma in the village. Furthermore, other Roma saw this as favouritism which I practised towards some Roma families as opposed to others. In effect, my activity affected village power dynamics, in some cases exacerbating hostilities, and in others forging a sense of communal solidarity. I believe the latter occurred whenever I successfully organised and carried out group mapping or interviews. However, this required an existing good relationship between participants. Outside of their family circles Bulgarian and Turkish villagers did not demonstrate the willingness and availability to spend the dedicated time that a mapping or group interview requires.

In contrast to the Roma, who would engage daily in social interaction in the village square, the Bulgarian and Turkish villagers would not be seen spending leisure time in the street. However, the street is the classic setting for participatory mapping exercises as it is a communal area, supposedly representing free access for all to participate and ensuring the transparency of the exercise. Indeed with the Roma this was possible, and with the exception of the Seasonal Poverty Mapping, I facilitated all Roma group mapping exercises in the central square. There was only one opportunity to carry out a mapping exercise with a mixture of Turkish, Bulgarian and one Roma woman. This was possible because of a celebration of the end of the harvest where a group of about eight employees had gathered around the outdoor table of their rose harvest employer's cafe. I used this opportunity to carry out the participatory landscape mapping and a group semi-structured interview.

The majority of seasonal labourers, including all Roma, felt vulnerable due to their illiteracy. They also felt isolated because of their particular accents and language. Insecurity showed in all transactions with the job centre, money-lenders and employers. Therefore all such dealings were consciously or otherwise kept to a minimum, and informal relationships such as patron-client ones were welcomed and sought. These, however, did not help with breaking cycles of impoverishment, illiteracy and a general feeling of being at odds with *darjavata* (the state).[8] This was why many found the way in which they were induced to enter employment contracts arranged between the job centre and large-scale employers disconcerting. Mistrust of the objectives and assumptions

[6] I suspect unemployment benefits were not mentioned because the participants got the impression I wanted to know about their particular income-generating activities and because the seasonality of benefits was ambiguous. This map also omits some of the variety within the group livelihoods because the participants were aiming to say things which were common to all of them, therefore using 'we'.

[7] Discourse as an ongoing argument between conflicting sides can be an organising element in a rural community. This is what the researcher needs to interpret: 'what is common in a community is not shared values or common understanding so much as the fact that members of a community are engaged in the same argument, the same *raisonnement*, the same *Rede*, the same discourse, in which alternative strategies, misunderstanding, conflicting goals and values are thrashed out.' (Sabean, 1984 in Nuijten, 1992, p 205).

[8] There was a shared view among the poorest that the state must be held responsible for supporting them and that it is the state that had failed them. This recurring concept of the state harks back to the totalitarian state of the communists, centralised power and bureaucracy.

behind the government programme for employment was clear. Many were confused by the paperwork passed between the employers, the job centre and themselves.

In this context I believe that my participatory study served the very useful purpose of stimulating a desire and confidence for expression. Another clear outcome was the clarification of common priorities and obstacles for the various stakeholders. Because people were talking to me as an outsider and re-telling their stories and plights anew, issues had the chance to re-emerge which had otherwise been taken for granted as a fact of life in Turnichene. I believe that the suspicion aroused during my focus on certain groups and families in the village could have been avoided to a significant extent if I had been accompanied by a second researcher. This would have helped dissociate the research from any one individual researcher's personal motives and interests in the eyes of participants. With a number of people working with different groups, hostility could be avoided and, having gained the trust of respective groups, researchers could have brought them together more easily for exercises. A more outcome-driven project, designed to deliver tangible benefits to the community, rather than personal research, may have a better chance of getting Bulgarian and Turkish residents to participate in group interviews and mapping.

"This heightened communication, with me as a mediator, seemed to be a positive factor."

Conclusion

I shared my findings with the Turnichene people as they arose and issues were raised within the community without having to be associated with a particular person or family. This heightened communication, with me as a mediator, seemed to be a positive factor, despite the fact that I facilitated limited direct discussion between different groups of stakeholders. In the context of a disunited and disheartened community I observed the potential to build on the latent capacity of seasonal labourers and small-scale farmers to use their grassroots power to safeguard their rights. Although the exercises I conducted had an empowering effect on certain groups, they did little to disturb existing power relationships, although at times my activity seemed to reinforce existing trends of hostility or group solidarity. Throughout Bulgaria civil society is young and I believe my work gave many in Turnichene a stronger sense that they were not alone and must endeavour to determine their own environment and livelihoods.

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19

GENERAL SECTION

Phila Impilo! Live Life! Ways to healing for children in long-term hospital care

by LOUISE CHAWLA and JILL KRUGER

Making children partners in healthcare

To understand the longest reach of HIV infection in sub-Saharan Africa, it is necessary to consider the children who carry the disease and related illnesses like tuberculosis, or who have lost a parent or other family members to this epidemic. In addition to physical effects, children carry the emotional wounds of loss, fear, or social stigma, and they need emotional support as much as physical healing. An essential component of this support is to enable children to feel that they are agents who have some control over their lives, who can contribute to their own health and the well-being of others. Like all people, children need this sense of self worth and creative agency. South Africa is a country where the need to attend to HIV-affected children is especially acute. Almost one in five adults is HIV infected, more than a quarter of a million children below the age of 15 are living with HIV, and more than a million children in South Africa have been orphaned by AIDS. A related epidemic is tuberculosis, which was identified by the World Health Organisation Regional Committee for Africa as a leading cause of death among people who are HIV-positive and was declared an emergency in the African region.

These are mind-numbing numbers, and in the face of these statistics it is natural to try to attack the problem with a counter-barrage of numbers: how many children have been supplied with paediatric antiretroviral drugs or with treatment for tuberculosis, how many additional beds have been added to paediatric wards, how many programmes have been established to support the extended family networks and foster families that care for orphans. These are necessary steps to address the problem, but by themselves they can obscure the children behind the numbers who are very much alive. By themselves, these approaches also risk neglecting essential provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to which South Africa as a nation is committed, and which acknowledge children's

"An essential component of this support is to enable children to feel that they are agents who have some control over their lives, who can contribute to their own health and the well-being of others."

Through the medium of her sock puppet, a girl has a conversation with artist-facilitator S'bu Sithebe.

Photo: Julie Manegold

rights to the free expression of their views on matters that affect them, including the right to be informed and involved in their own healthcare.

Phila Impilo! Live Life! Ways to Healing is a DVD and a book, which shows healthcare workers and parents how to engage the real children behind the numbers and enlist them as insightful partners in processes of healing. Who understands better than the children in hospitals and clinics how to make these places as comfortable, humane and health promoting as possible, in ways that touch the emotions and spirit as well as the body? The DVD brings together the voices of 23 children, six to 13 years old, in the paediatric ward at King George V Hospital in Durban, along with family members, healthcare providers, a child psychologist, and an artist, using a combination of English and isi-Zulu with English subtitles. Running time is 26 minutes. The 64-page book contains further insights by the children on holistic hospital care.

Dr. Sheila Bamber, Medical Officer for the ward, explains for both parents and healthcare providers how children's symptoms are sometimes similar and sometimes different than symptoms in adults, and the need for the quickest possible preventive care, especially in the case of children's TB, which can be cured. She also emphasises the emotional dimension of healing, such as the importance of greeting each child by name, with a gentle and respectful touch. Most inspiring is not the information that the DVD and book impart but the quality of care that they illustrate.

Methods for children's participation in improving the conditions of their care

In the King George V Hospital in Durban, *Phila Impilo*! introduced a set of participatory methods during a series of workshops over a period of two weeks. Although the programme's focus is children affected by TB and related illnesses such as HIV infection, the following methods could

Drawing to the theme, 'The very best person in my life.

Photo: Julie Manegold

be applied in paedriatric wards and clinics of all kinds:
- Daily rituals
- Thematic drawings
- A Tree of Life mural
- Collages
- Identity drawings
- Sock puppets
- *Umoya* letters (*umoya* is isi-Zulu for 'wind' and 'soul')
- Composite fabric painting.

Daily rituals
The start and end 'rituals' for each day were designed spontaneously during the first workshop, in response to songs and games which the children brought with them. The morning ritual, led by the facilitator Maria Makgamathe, brought all children and facilitators together in a circle. Paired couples stood side by side and greeted each other by hand, the first person with the right, the next with the left. Partners then wove around the circle, sharing this greeting with everyone while singing '*Sawubona* (isi-Zulu: I see you) to you' to the tune of 'Happy Birthday.' The end-of-the-day ritual, led by facilitator-artist S'bu Sithebe, consisted of 'passing strength' around the circle. Children and facilitators stood in a circle again, passing strength through a gentle squeeze of the hand that travelled from person to person. It was always possible to see from the light on children's faces exactly where the 'strength' had reached in the circle. Once or twice, if a child pressed the hand of another too hard, the group protested and the process restarted. These rituals gathered everyone together and affirmed the group's identity – especially important to do in a hospital setting because children had different treatments at different times and sometimes had to leave in the middle of activities, turning up again at a later stage in the day.

Thematic drawings
Art is an essential element of the *Phila Impilo!* programme. Some of the drawing topics included:
- 'The happiest day of my life' (an interesting range of responses, showing areas of personal affirmation important to children, including a strong emphasis on birthday parties);
- 'The very best person in my life' (a number of children drew loved persons who had passed on; some asked first if they could do so);
- 'Things I'm sad about in the hospital' (these comprised mostly drawings that facilitators thought would have been generated by the question about what frightened them in the hospital, such as injections); and
- 'Things I'm scared of in the hospital' (here animals made a surprising appearance, as well as insects such as flies and mosquitoes: yet for anyone who is ill and weak and has a fever, it is difficult to face and ward off intrusive animals and insects).

Many scenes in the DVD focus on the children's vibrant drawings and paintings: images of what is painful, such as injections and crying families, but also images of sources of strength and happiness, such as friends, play, and family visits.

Tree of Life mural
The children made leaves and pieces of bark, which they assembled into a large tree that covered a wall in their ward.[1] Each piece of bark that formed the trunk carried the name of an illness identified by one of the groups of children along with the symptoms that they knew. The flourishing crown of green leaves carried the children's suggestions about what would make their treatment as comfortable and effective as possible. On the leaves the children wrote many sound and

[1] The 'Tree of Life' method in *Phila Impilo!* was adapted from a similar method used by the Boston Institute of Arts, developed after September 11. Vivien Marcow-Speiser from Lesley University introduced the concept to Jill Kruger.

"Their joy in reaching into a remembered outside world and recreating strong icons around their mirror was almost tangible as they worked."

feasible ideas, including play, nutritious meals, family visits, cards and letters, birthday celebrations, having an 'auntie' (nurse) to attend them at night so that someone would be there if they woke up frightened or in pain, and opportunities to go outside. As one child simply said, 'Walk them to the sun.' Possibly the most poignant message is, 'Have adults listen to us when we ask for help.'

Collages

On flexible cardboard (A3 size), children were asked to make collages 'to show the beauty that lies in my heart and in my soul.' Some children chose items for their collage simply because they found them beautiful (for example, a girl said that this was why she chose a piece of red lace). Many, however, cut out magazine images that reminded them of their homes: such as a car 'because we normally use a car, my father's, when we go to town,' or a bed because 'there is a bed like this at home.' A girl who cut out an image of a mother and child explained, 'This mother and child are looking out for each other. They resemble the relationship I have with my mother.'

Identity drawings

Like the collages, the purpose of this activity is to help children in situations of vulnerability confirm their sense of being, belonging and self-worth in the world. The children sat in a circle with their eyes closed, waiting for mystery gifts to be placed in their hands. The gift turned out to be a small mirror for each child. They pasted their mirrors on flexible A3 cardboard, and the facilitators then proposed that they write or draw their best personal characteristics around the mirror. Instead, the children spontaneously drew images of things of deep personal importance: people, houses, fish, flowers, trees. Their joy in reaching into a remembered outside world and recreating strong icons around their mirror was almost tangible as they worked.

Sock puppets

Since many children struggle to sew, they were given the simplest materials: patterned socks, buttons, and 'eyes' from a stationery shop. The materials were set on a table for the children to choose the sock, buttons, and eyes that they preferred, and facilitators then sewed on the buttons and covered them with the adhesive eyes. The children were asked if they would like to name their puppets. This naming activity was the first indication of how strongly the children felt about their puppets. Discussion and deliberation during the process of choosing names lasted an hour instead of the expected ten minutes.[2] The puppets enabled even the shyest children to speak confidently during one-on-one conversations, group discussions, and mini-plays that the children spontaneously created.

Umoya letters

Children who had lost a mother or other family member painted messages of love and then hung their messages in a row, to be carried to the world of the spirit by the breeze. In one of the most poignant scenes in the DVD, the children stand in a group, some with their arms around each other, quietly watching the wind deliver their messages to their loved one.

Composite fabric painting

After the workshops ended, facilitators returned to the hospital to capture the children's descriptions of their drawings and collages. At this time, some of the eldest children were asked to draw examples of the children's best and worst hospital experiences on a fabric banner that expressed the group's ideas.

Although it was not a 'method' by itself, each child's artwork was collated in an 'art book' with their collage on the front cover and their identity drawing on the back cover. In this way, loose pages were transformed into artefacts that children and their families could preserve and value.

The *Phila Impilo!* DVD was launched at a public showing in Durban in January 2008, where the children were given certificates of appreciation for their participation. Many parents were in tears at the launch, but the children were beaming. Two parents whose children had died came so that they could keep the DVD and certificate as mementos. Dr Neil McKerrow, Chief Specialist and Head of Paediatrics and Child Health at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, plans to collaborate with Young Insights in Planning, the

[2] The four youngest children named their puppets for favourite colours; five children chose animals, many chose celebrity names or typical children's names, and four chose characters from the *Takalani Sesame* television and radio programme, which explores tough issues that children face, including HIV infection. This programme is presented in South Africa's 11 official languages and models non-discriminatory behaviour among children. For more information, see Welch (2002).

A boy made this drawing of 'the happiest day of my life' – when his father visited him in the hospital.

Photo: Julie Manegold

non-profit organisation that helped create the programme, in order to pilot the film and publication with medical and nursing professionals in hospitals, clinics and mobile clinics in two KwaZulu Health Districts, exploring how the programme's materials can be most effectively used to spread its example of respectful and creative partnership with children. Screenings will also educate lay people and selected NGOs about the issues that the children raise.

Reflections on the process

Studies by anthropologists have shown that children frequently have little personal space to call their own.[3] This is especially true in hospitals, where children are likely to be even more restricted than at home. *Phila Impilo!* shows how to transform institutional spaces in a large urban hospital into places that express the unique identities of the children who inhabit them, and how to introduce children's insights into processes of healing.

Under most conditions, it is a challenge to enable children to 'speak' in authentic voices, verbally or nonverbally. This challenge was intensified by the timeframe of the programme, which was limited to two weeks of workshops, with follow-up interviews. This is a short time in which to create trust and garner children's earnest perspectives, particularly when children have been schooled in cultural traditions that emphasise reserve in the presence of adults. Traditional Zulu cultural precepts that inform children's behaviour towards adults and older children, including older siblings, are encapsulated in the terms *ukuhlonipha* (to show respect) and *amahloni* (modesty).

All of the methods in the *Phila Impilo!* programme helped the children find and express their personal voice, but the use of the sock puppets deserves special mention. The puppets were initially intended as a simple element of fun and an alternative voice for children who might want to say things that they feared adults might find inappropriate. But from the first, facilitators commented on the way that children's whole beings 'lit up' when the puppets were introduced. A boy of eleven years who had been quiet and withdrawn, for example, became enthusiastic and took part with others once he was wearing his puppet. Children not only pranced about, creating scenarios in which their puppets spoke, but they treated their puppets almost like pets, patting and stroking them and putting them to bed under their pillows or into envelope beds in their art books. The sock puppets changed magically from moment to moment. They were toys yet alter egos, children's close friends, supporters and confidantes yet also their taskmasters. Sock puppets were treated as if they had feelings for their owners too.

The following words that a 13-year-old boy attributed to his puppet Unogwaja are representative:

> *I look after my friend. When he is sick I help him to take his pills. When I am sick as well he looks after me. I sleep during the day. When it is time for meals, I wake him up. I love my owner very much. When I have a headache he knows how to help me.*

A 10-year-old boy shared similar feelings about his puppet Zikwe:

> *The puppet was my friend. It let me express what I felt but could not say. Like my dog, I could play with it. . . .*

He then pretended to be the puppet, which said in response:

[3] Jones (1993); Malone (2007); Ramphele (1993); Swart-Kruger (2001).

"Some of the most potent 'medicines' available… are participatory methods that use the medium of the arts to lower the walls of isolation where children may be trapped by their pain and loss."

I love playing with my friend. He looks after me in the evening. He helps me with my blanket when I feel cold. I love him because I play with him during the day.

The puppets seemed to help the children develop their personal identities in a setting where they lacked core relationships that they might have in the outside world, like trusted friends and family members. This was especially important in a setting where a number of the children had very few visitors, and some had none at all or saw outsiders intermittently over many months of hospitalisation. A report on medical social work play therapy programmes also found that children favour puppets over other media for exploring illness and treatment, and that they use puppets to personify characters in the hospital setting and to carry out treatment procedures (Helton and Smith, 2004). Other play therapists have noticed that children appear to feel released from anxiety and guilt when they can have puppets express what they want to say (Timberlake and Cutler, 2001).

The *Phila Impilo!* programme is a reminder of the humanity behind the tuberculosis and AIDS crises, and that this humanity is the channel for the most effective 'ways to healing.' It presents the resilient humanity of the children, family members, and healthcare providers. As Diane Melvin, a clinical child psychologist from Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, which partnered with the project, observes, 'Chronically ill children have interests, needs and rights.' Over and over again, the children in the film voice their conviction that, 'It is better for parents to tell children what diseases they have.' Hard as the revelation may be, it enables children to move beyond confusion and inarticulate fear to places of strength where they can be participants in creating healing environments for themselves and others. Some of the most potent 'medicines' available, the programme shows, are participatory methods that use the medium of the arts to lower the walls of isolation where children may be trapped by their pain and loss, building in their place communities of sharing and support.

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NOTES
The *Phila Impilo! Live Life!* DVD and book were created by Jill Kruger, a team of African mother-tongue facilitators, and staff of the NGO Young Insights for Planning. They were sponsored mainly by the Joint Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (South Africa). To inquire about obtaining copies of the DVD, contact Young Insights for Planning at yipsa75@yahoo.com The book can be downloaded from: www.act.org.uk/content/view/162/35 or www.icpcn.org.uk

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This article is an expanded version of an article by the same name by the first author, which was published in the South African magazine *ChildrenFIRST*, Vol 12, No 66, May 2008. Parts of this article are reproduced with the permission of the Board and Management of *ChildrenFIRST.*

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Tips for trainers

Democracy walls

by GIACOMO RAMBALDI

Introduction

Facilitators like monitoring the pulse of the events they have been organising and at the same time offering participants a medium where they can share their thoughts, creating opportunities for participatory reflections. This adjusts the flow of action and provides a space to take stock of lessons learnt. In addition, sound practice calls for equal opportunities for all participants to express themselves. Creating spaces which favour focused and free expression of ideas while a process enfolds, is one way to go about it.

The idea of establishing physical open spaces where people could express themselves in a focused, structured and concise manner came to me while looking at a drawing found in *A Trainers' Guide for Participatory Learning and Action* (Jules Pretty *et al*., 1995).

Democracy walls

A democracy wall is a structured open space where people can post their ideas and opinions (Figure 1) using A5 paper sheets. Typically a democracy wall consists of five large sheets of craft paper (1.2 m x 1.8 m) each one featuring one of the following introductions to open-ended statements:

- I discovered that ...
- I noticed that…
- I felt that…
- I learnt that …
- I would like to suggest…

Purpose

- To provide a medium for individual participants to express themselves in a free, focused and concise manner;
- To generate a written, shared pool of reflections which can be used for further participatory analysis; and
- To obtain on-the-spot feedback during an event and be in the position to rapidly adjust facilitation to emerging realities and changing circumstances.

Materials needed

- 5 large sheets of craft paper (1.2m x 1.8m)
- Drawing pins
- Masking tape (2 inches wide)
- Scissors
- Marker pens
- A5 paper sheets or metacards (at least 15 per participant)
- The five 'introductions' written or printed separately on A4 sheets of paper in large letters
- Glue stick

Figure 1. Democracy wall at work at a training at ITC, Enschede Netherlands.

Photo: Jeroen Verplanke, ITC

When working in a multilingual environment introductions should be written in the different languages (Figure 2).

The process

A number of elements of the democracy wall have to be prepared ahead of the event.

The five statements 'I discovered that ...'; 'I noticed that…'; 'I felt that…'; 'I learnt that …' and 'I would like to suggest…' are printed on A4 paper and glued at the top left corner of the sheets of craft paper.

Use masking tape or drawing pins to fix the craft papers onto a wall. The wall has to be large enough to accommodate all five or them (Figure 3). Each sheet should hang distinctively (ensure that there are 10-15 cm between each sheet). Sequencing (left to right) is important and has to be well thought out depending on the context in which the democracy wall is deployed.

If an event includes parallel sessions occurring in different rooms, democracy walls can be set up in each of the rooms. The facilitators may decide to harvest statements made at the end of the sessions or at the end of the day, or to leave them in place for the duration of the event. The intervals of harvest depend on how the organisers plan to make use of the feedback gathered on the walls in the facilitation process.

Metacards (A5 sheets of paper) are prepared together with maker pens and snippets of masking tape. Metacards are typically white but could be in different colours, depending on whether the facilitator would like to later disaggregate entries (e.g. by gender, by type of participants, or other). But in my personal experience, the simpler the layout, the easier the process is. If colour coding is adopted, I recommend using pastel colours and avoid strongly contrasting hues like red, blue, green, yellow, or black as these may impact behaviour depending on how colours are associated to meanings in different cultures.

Figure 2. Multilingual democracy wall deployed at the 2007 Web2forDev Conference in Rome, Italy.

Photo: Anja Barth, CTA

Masking tape snippets (see picture) are prepared for use together with marker pens in numbers sufficient to allow participants to freely contribute (to avoid participants having to queue to get a marker pen or tape to stick their card on the democracy walls with).

At the beginning of the event, participants are briefed on the purpose of the democracy wall and invited – at scheduled intervals – to enter statements on the five elements of the wall using the metacards.

It is important to specify that metacards should accommodate **only one** concise statement written in **capital letters**. Being able to read the card from a distance of 3-5 metres is extremely important. Statements should be formulated as a continuation of the introduction e.g. 'I learnt that…' and followed by the statement on metacard.

Photo: Nynke Kruiderink, IICD

Figure 3. Facilitator preparing the democracy wall during the Web2forDev pre-conference workshop, Rome, Italy, 2007.

If some workshop participants are illiterate or cannot write because of physical or visual impairment, facilitators should ensure that full

Figure 4. An Ogiek elder contributes his thoughts (written with the assistance of a student) to a democracy wall during a participatory mapping exercise. Nessuit, Kenya, 2006.

Photo: Giacomo Rambaldi, CTA

assistance is provided. Those assisting should be known and trusted by the impaired. If communication occurs in a language unknown to some of the participants or facilitators, a translation may be written at the bottom of the metacard.

Depending on whether the participants are used to publicly expressing themselves in writing, facilitators may have to start the process by proactively distributing metacards and marker pens to participants or offer them the opportunity to fill in the cards in private (e.g. during a coffee break). Usually the process is self-propelling and once the first cards are stuck on the walls others are increasingly eager to contribute with their ideas (Figure 4).

Depending on the purpose of the exercise, the facilitator may group and eventually rank the entries and facilitate a discussion around emerging reflections. The outcome of the discussions may feed back into the process or serve as guidance for future activities or improvements of the process itself ('I would like to suggest …')

Advantages

- The tool offers equal opportunities of expression for all participants – the outspoken and the shy, the literate and illiterate.
- It establishes well-defined spaces, which favour focused and free expression of observations, reactions, ideas, emotions, suggestions or complaints while the event enfolds.
- Statements displayed on the democracy walls may induce coalescing ('Hi, others share my opinion and sentiments'), and encourage people to contribute opinions and stimulate reflections.
- From a process management perspective gathered statements are easy to compile (e.g. in a PowerPoint presentation) and emerging issues can be fed back into the debate to enhance reflection and improve analysis.
- From a process documentation perspective the gathered statements are important testimonies and on-the spot snapshots of perceptions.
- Democracy walls offer participants the opportunity to share their views and opinions privately, without the need to speak out in public.
- Statements displayed on the walls allow facilitators to get the pulse of an event and adjust accordingly.
- After grouping (optional), statements featured on the democracy walls can be presented at the closing session of the event and offer further food for thoughts, reactions and comments on future directions.

Reading the walls

Selected statements made by elders during a participatory mapping workshop held on Ovalau Island in Fiji (2005):

I learnt new things about my village. I learnt names of places, names we do not use anymore, names that our elders used and I am so glad that I and future generations have learnt and will use them again.

I discovered that if we look after our environment and our 'Vanua', our source of wealth, we will be able to combat poverty.

I felt this workshop has been useful for all the people of Ovalau – young and old, even our children have learnt new things. It is a big step forward for them and for all of us.

We now have a better understanding of the whole Ovalau landscape and this will be very useful for development planning and resource management.

Selected statements made by trainees during a participatory mapping workshop held In Nessuit, Kenya (2006):

I learnt that there is hidden truth that can be processed by the community in mapping.

I felt I never thought we could make it …. The tracing, cutting, gluing etc. but after finishing the blank model, I felt we were there. It was a turning point to the whole project.

I noticed that you don't get bored when working with people from different professional backgrounds.

I noticed that people must work together to achieve their goal.

I would like to suggest that participatory 3-D models be done on other hunter-gatherers land (Yiaku and Sengwer).

I would like to suggest to include in the plan of activities internal meetings (e.g. in the evening of each day) for discussing about the day and clarifying the activities of the day after. Keeping all updated of what is going on.

Selected statements made by participants at the Web2forDev conference in Rome, Italy (2007) :

I felt that blogging feels very lonely when everybody else is talking

I learnt ... how to blog, ...how to tag; ... what a wiki is ... and what I can use it for ...

I noticed that we have to come up with a description of what is understood by web2fordev

I discovered that Uganda is really mashing it up ...The UK can learn a lot from what happens there

I would like to suggest allocating more time between sessions

I would like to suggest creating an Africa working group on Web 2.0

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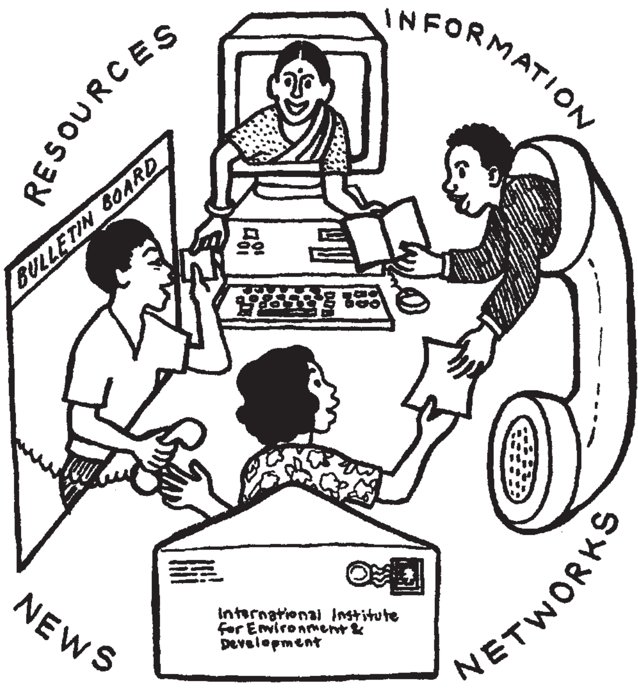


Welcome to the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for the *Participatory Learning and Action* audience, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date 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 contact details 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 to 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:
Participatory Learning and Action, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODD, UK.
Fax: + 44 20 7388 2826;
Email: pla.notes@iied.org

Book reviews

Citizens at the Centre: Deliberative participation in healthcare decisions

● Celia Davies, Margaret Wetherell and Elizabeth Barnett.
Policy Press, London, 2006
ISBN 1861348029 £24.

Citizens at the Centre is the outcome of three years of intensive research and analysis.

The authors conducted an exhaustive process of observation of participation and interviews with all those involved, from the funders and facilitators to the thirty members of a Citizens Council, charged with helping shape policy-making around the National Institute of Clinical Excellence, one of the UK government's key health regulatory bodies.

Anyone interested in the issues raised in this special issue will appreciate the valuable and timely nature of the analysis here. They bring particular clarity to the dilemmas facing bureaucrats, commercial facilitators and everyday citizens when they attempt to walk the tightrope between participatory ideals and the reluctance of those in power to credit knowledge and democratic rights to others.

They also shed light on the challenge of dealing with demands for representative processes, when this can lead to the tokenistic involvement of groups in society who are either in a numerical minority or are not normally involved in policy debates.

Davies, Wetherell and Barnett also discuss the risk that even the most exhaustive and expensive processes, carried out in good faith by well-meaning people, can create new

forms of oppression. It carries a tacit warning that even hugely expensive processes aimed at 'giving people a voice' can actually weaken the voice of groups who already have the least say in decisions.

Along with these key themes, the authors also set the citizens' council in the context of other similar attempts at deliberative democracy, such as the citizens' jury movement in general (see Kashefi and Keene, article 5, this issue; Haq, article 15, this issue) and the 2005 Nanojury in particular (see Singh, article 4, this issue).

This book should be read by anyone who is involved in participatory projects, particularly those initiatives that are funded by single powerful organisations, which, at least in the UK, form the majority. Citizens at the Centre is especially relevant to potential commissioners of such processes, who face the challenge of adapting their institutions and shaping the organisational structures that surround them, in order to create more empowering models of participation.

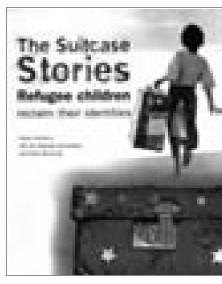
For those who find it easier than ordering the actual book, some of its main findings are usefully summarised in a paper by the same authors which is available at: http://alba.jrc.it/blog/accent//wp-content/uploads/Citizens_council_Mar05.pdf

The Citizens' Council's official page on a UK government agency website: http://tinyurl.com/63qpqc

Reviewed by Tom Wakeford

The Suitcase Stories: Refugee children reclaim their identities

● Glynis Clacherty with the suitcase story tellers and Diane Welvering
Double Storey Books, Juta & Co. Ltd, 2006
ISBN-10: 1 919930 99 X
Paperback, 184 pages



Readers will remember the article by Glynis Clacherty in the general section of *PLA* 54, outlining the Suitcase Project. A book written by the initial group of children involved with the project has since been published and we are pleased to include a review of the book with a brief background to the project here.

In 2001 Glynis Clacherty initiated a 'psychosocial support through art therapy' project for refugee children in Johannesburg, South Africa. In 2002, Dianne Welvering brought her skills to the project as an art teacher, and together with Glynis developed the work presented in the book.

Unlike many other African countries, South Africa has no formal refugee camps catering to the more than 150,000 refugees and asylum seekers from war torn countries like Rwanda and the Democractic Republic of Congo. Instead, South Africa's rights-based approach sees refugees making their own way as they can, finding work and accessing social services where possible. There can be significant difficulty in accessing these rights in practice. Navigating the physical and social realities of a foreign, often hostile land can be daunting, especially as an unaccompanied child.

The Suitcase Stories is a small but powerful glimpse into the human realities behind the statistics. First-hand accounts of the refugee experience are strikingly illustrated with colourful visual imagery taken from the second-hand suitcases that the children used for their multi-media art therapy expressions. The stories are punctuated by concise contextual information, and sandwiched in adult commentary about the therapeutic storytelling process – giving some useful critical insights into the process of art therapy and trauma debriefing that will be invaluable to others working with children from refugee and other backgrounds involving personal distress.

What you won't find in this book are sensationalised horror stories grim with gripping detail. These are first-hand accounts told by real children in their own way, not as responses to interrogative interviewing techniques that search out details readers may want to pore over rather than the experiences that the storytellers feel appropriate to share. Much of what the children have experienced is poignantly illustrated 'between the lines' in a way that leaves their privacy and personal dignity intact.

Too often even in the field of participation one finds stories 'taken' from children by researchers and writers who use them as if it is only the adult academic or commercial product that matters. It is refreshing to discover a book that is truly a participatory collaboration between those who actually own the stories and those who are facilitating the storytelling.

Every story in this book is told voluntarily by a child who has actively chosen what to tell (and not to tell), what to publish and what to remove, and what to change in order to protect their own identity and privacy. The book itself is the result of a request by one of the children in the group to 'Help me make a book about my story. People need to know why we are here. We don't choose to come here. They need to know.' What is also striking about the book is the

IN TOUCH

sense of healing and empowerment expressed by the participants during the suitcase decorating process. This leads one to speculate on the further empowerment and healing that may have come from being able to share their stories with the world in this further way.

■ Available from Double Storey Books Website: www.doublestorey.com

Reviewed by Je'anna Clements (Young Insights for Planning, South Africa)

Affirming Life and Diversity: Rural images and voices on food sovereignty in South India

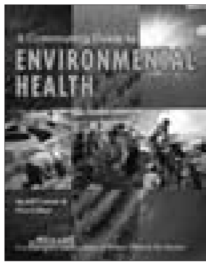
● Community Media Trust, PV Satheesh and Michel Pimbert, 2008.

ISBN: 978 1 84369 674 2

This DVD set contains four DVDs and a book and is part of the *Affirming Life and Diversity* film series. The book describes how co-inquirers worked together in the drylands of Andhra Pradesh to produce social and ecological knowledge for sustainability, autonomy and equity. Their collective and empowering experience is vividly captured in the accompanying videos which show the outcomes of participatory action research facilitated by the Deccan Development Society (DDS) and IIED on Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods. The videos were produced by women farmers who are also village-level film makers with the Community Media Trust of the DDS.

These films show how local organisations of marginalised women farmers and urban food consumers are regenerating sustainable and citizen controlled food systems – for the well-being of their communities and the land. The rural images and voices offer powerful arguments in favour of an alternative paradigm for food and agriculture – one that resonates with the concepts of `food sovereignty' and active citizenship.

■ For more information and to order a copy visit: www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=14556IIED



A Community Guide to Environmental Health

● Jeff Conant and Pam Fadem, 2008 Paperback, 600 pages, illustrated, US$28

ISBN: 978 0 942364 56 9

This illustrated guide helps health promoters, development workers, environmental activists, and community leaders in small villages as well as large cities take charge of their environmental health.

This book contains activities to stimulate critical thinking and discussion, inspirational stories, and instructions for simple health technologies such as water purification methods, safe toilets, and non-toxic cleaning products. Created by Hesperian in collaboration with 120 communities from over 33 countries, the guide is full of explanations and actions that individuals, families, and communities can take to address both the symptoms and root causes of today's pressing environmental problems.

■ Book and CD available from Hesperian Books, 1919 Addison Street, Suite 304, Berkeley, CA 94704, USA.
Email: hesperian@hesperian.org
Website www.hesperian.org
Free to download at www.hesperian.org/publications_download_EHB.php

Enticing the Learning: Trainers in development

● John Staley, 2008 Paperback, 482 pages

ISBN: 0 704426 072 and 9780704426078

This book is for those who work professionally with communities in development work, social action, community organisation, awareness raising and voluntary aid programmes.

More than 100 exercises, group events, conceptual inputs and methods are presented in detail, with timing and practicalities; and more than 50 handouts – guidelines, case studies, questionnaires, etc – are included. The text tells the trainer what to do at every stage, and why and how, in order to `entice the learning'.

The material is drawn from the Development Studies Course conducted at Selly Oak Colleges in the UK, and has been tried and tested in NGOs worldwide. The text is enlivened by the comments, insights and humour of those who have taken part in the training and contains many photographs and line drawings.

This book is an invaluable resource for the established trainer and the would-be trainer.

■ Available from The Institute of Applied Social Studies, The University of Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK. Email: w.banner@bham.ac.uk
Price £18 plus postage.

Events and training

Third Global Congress of Women in Politics and Governance

● 19th–22nd October 2008, Philippines

The Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN/ISDR) are hosting the Third Global Congress of Women in Politics and Governance in Makati City, Metro Manila. The congress theme is Gender in Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Women and environment experts have raised concern over the absence of women in the discourse and debate on climate change and disaster risk reduction, both of which are major global mainstream issues. The involvement of women in areas of environmental management and is of considerable importance in the promotion of environmental ethics.

The overall purpose is to provide a forum for legislators and decision-makers in national governments and leaders at all levels in formulating gender-responsive legislation and programmes related to gender in climate change and disaster risk reduction.

The discussions will be organised around identifying the challenges, defining the appropriate responses and defining and elaborating actions to cope with climate change and its impacts and preparedness and disaster risk reduction. Special attention will be given to defining how women and gender could be mainstreamed. The Congress should define how women can be given the social space to participate, influence, and benefit from global and local responses to climate change. Registration fees from US$1,550 per person.

■ For more information visit: www.capwip.org/3rdglobalcongress.htm; Email: globalcongress2008@gmail.com.

MA Programme Links: Science, Society and Development

● October 2008, Institute of Development Studies, UK

The study of science and society is among the liveliest fields in higher education and one of the fastest growing research areas worldwide. The MA in Science, Society and Development focuses on the most vital health, environment and agricultural concerns of today. But it also asks: how can science and technology best contribute to poverty reduction, social justice and environmental sustainability in the developing world? The MA focuses on practical and policy questions and combines a solid grounding in development theories with an understanding of the politics and governance of scientific knowledge and policy. Based in the Knowledge, Technology and Society Team (KNOTS) at IDS, the course is linked to major new global research hub, the Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability Centre (STEPS). Two full scholarships are available in 2008 for African Students.

■ For more information visit: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/teach/mascience.html or contact: Julia Brown, MA Programme Administrator, Tel: +44 1273 678869; +44 1273 915643; Email: teaching@ids.ac.uk

Advanced Training of Trainers: Visualisation in Participatory Programmes (VIPP)

10–14th November 2008
St. Ulrich, Black Forest, Germany

This Training of Trainers is a specialised workshop for experienced trainers in the development sector from Asia, Africa, the Americas, Australia and Europe, who beyond the basics of VIPP want to improve their trainer skills developing and designing their own training project.

This VIPP Training of Trainers emphasises:

• Advanced facilitation and presentation skills, which will enhance group qualities, synergy and output, including attitudes, behaviours and values of the facilitator.
• Repertoire of VIPP methods and tools used in training. Reflection about the intercultural dimensions of group events.
• Visualisation skills using various media, including cards and charts, drawings and diagrammatic representations.
• The logic and processes involved in training events.

This training combines short visualised inputs, individual tasks, group work, team cooperation, learning by doing and constructive feedback. Key concepts, quality standards and training formats are generated by all participants, a cooperative working style is encouraged and good group dynamics are essential parts of learning and practicing.

■ For more information visit: www.southbound.com.my/vipp/index.html and http://vipp.wordpress.com/about
Registration fee 850 Euro or equivalent in US$ for training fee, lodging (5 nights), full board, VIPP Manual, CD with base material.
Send registration to: Timmi Tillmann, Gomaringerstr. 6, D-72810 Gomaringen, SW-Germany. Tel: +49 7072 505656
Email: Tillmann2003@gmx.net
Deadline for registration is 20 September 2008.

Events and training listed on www.comminit.com
The following are a selection of forthcoming events. For more information on the full range of events and training, visit www.comminit.com

Peacebuilding: Strengthening policy and practice
● 17th–21st November 2008, Birmingham, UK

This five-day course is run by Responding to Conflict (RTC). The course is designed to assist participants to identify constructive ways of engaging with the unpredictable and rapidly changing circumstances within which many relief and development agencies work. It focuses on the relationship between policy and practice in complex situations.

The course will enable participants to develop constructive ways to develop policies for appropriate responses in complex political situations. It will draw on the experience of participants and tutors to examine the key issues that are emerging from the field.

This course is for staff of international and national agencies and those with advisory and management responsibility for relief, development, rights and peacebuilding programmes. It is particularly relevant for those engaged in the planning and implementation of aid and development programmes and those concerned with developing policies for appropriate responses in complex, political emergencies.

■ For more information visit: www.respond.org/PSPP.htm or contact: 1046 Bristol Road Birmingham, B29 6LJ. Tel: +44 121 415 5641; Fax +44 121 415 4119; Email: enquiries@respond.org. Course fee: £970.

Management information systems for monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
● 1st–2nd Sept 2008, Norwich, UK

This module is offered by the Overseas Development Group. It provides professional managers with the opportunity to develop an Information Technology (IT) Based Management Information System (MIS) in a two-week period.

In week one, the underlying structure for each participant's MIS is designed. Week two takes the design further and using available software packages (database, spreadsheet and World Wide Web software), develops the MIS software. Participants will take home a workable system, which can be field tested with live data. Participants should possess basic competency in commonly available software packages.

Course fee: £2,800 per person (including accommodation).

■ For more information visit: www1.uea.ac.uk/cm/home/schools/ssf/dev/odg/prodev/MIS or contact: Overseas Development Group (ODG), University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ, United Kingdom. Tel: +44 1603 592340; Fax: +44 1603 591170; Email: odg.train@uea.ac.uk

World Rural Women's Day
● 15th October 2008, globally

Since 1997, the Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF) has organised an annual worldwide empowerment and educational campaign, World Rural Women's Day. Celebrations and events take place in more than 100 countries around the world.

Rural women the world over play a major role in ensuring food security and in the development and stability of the rural areas. Yet, with little or no status, they frequently lack the power to secure land rights or to access vital services such as credit, inputs, extension, training and education. Their vital contribution to society goes largely unnoticed. World Rural Women's Day intends to change this by bringing rural women out of obscurity at least once a year – to remind society how much they owe to rural women and to give value and credit to their work.

Activities can be organised independently in different ways according to specific local priorities and traditions. It is important, however, that any activities or events be concrete and visible to raise the profile of rural women in the public eye. It is up to individual organisations, groups, or committees to make this day meaningful according to their own circumstances.

■ For more information visit: www.woman.ch/women/2-introduction.php or contact: Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF), 11 Avenue de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva, PO Box 143, Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: +41 0 22 738 66 19; Fax: +41 0 22 738 82 48; Email: wdpca@wwsf.ch or wwsf@wwsf.ch

Community based rehabilitation
● 15th September–10th October 2008, Netherlands

In September 2008, Enablement will offer a four-week international course in management of disability and rehabilitation in the Netherlands. Increasingly, rehabilitation and prevention of disability takes place in the community with the active involvement and participation of the

community. Appropriate technology is advocated, self-help groups are formed, microfinance business training is started etc. Everything is geared towards the empowerment of people with disability and the communities in which they live. This course is offered to rehabilitation professionals and disability and development workers and activists. Please apply well in advance.

■ For more information visit: www.enablement.nl or contact Enablement, Langenhorst 36, 2402 PX Alphen aan de Rijn, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 172 436953; Fax: +31 172 244976; Email: h.cornielje@enablement.nl

Public Participation and Corporate Social Responsibility: from why to how

● 2008 International Conference, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK
27th–29th August 2008

This is the major annual event for the International Association for Public Participation and the first time the international conference has been held beyond the shores of North America.

The conference is a unique opportunity that provides a forum for communities, industry, governments, NGOs, academic institutions, and key thinkers from around the world. Keynote speakers include:

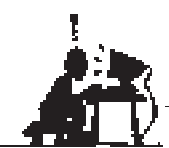
- Alan Young: Scottish and Southern Energy: CSR as a permeated business concept
- Professor Doreen McBarnett: Oxford University: International law, participation and CSR
- Martin Neureiter: ISO 26000: Public participation as a international standard
- Richard Douthwaite: Oil peak and risk to community well-being

Public participation and CSR is a new arena: a new politics of responsibility in business towards communities and to citizens. The response from participants wanting to present has been astonishing with over 70 abstracts accepted to present. These include:

- Guiding principles in community engagement
- The relationship of local people to government in seventeen countries
- Good neighbour agreements in water management
- Light rail development in Phoenix
- Stakeholders driving business decisions
- CSR and sustainable development
- Citizens inside public health policy
- The Australian citizens parliament
- A framework for the evaluation of the UN Brisbane Declaration
- Concept of Zakat: Islamic charity as a tool for CSR

Registration is now open – visit www.cadispa.org then select 'conference' and 'registration'.

■ For more information contact: Diane Coyle at diane.coyle@strath.ac.uk or Tel: +44 141 950 3062.



e-participation

www.managing4impact.com

Strengthening Management for Impact

The Electronic Resource Information & Learning Center (ERIL) website is hosted by the Regional Programme on Strengthening Management for Impact (SMIP) in eastern and southern Africa.

ERIL aims to facilitate and promote a culture amongst stakeholders of pro-poor initiatives of sharing and utilising information and knowledge in order to better manage towards impact.

The Regional Programme on Strengthening Managing for Impact (SMIP) aims to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders and actors involved in pro-poor interventions to effectively manage for impact.

The website includes links to forthcoming training events, related online resources, and information on how to subscribe to the *Managing for Impact* email newsletter. A number of resources on ERIL are accessible only to registered users.

www.rcpla.org

Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action

RCPLA is a global network established in 1997. Its aim is to bring together a diverse, international network of development practitioners to strengthen impact on processes of social change. The RCPLA website was relaunched in 2008, and includes recent case studies about participatory development processes in practice from network members. It also includes a new e-forum, as well as some free-to-download online publications.

www.steps-centre.org

The STEPS Centre

The STEPS Centre is a new interdisciplinary global research and policy engagement hub, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It aims to develop a new approach to understanding, action and communication on sustainability and development. STEPS is based at the Institute of Development Studies and SPRU Science and Technology Policy Research in the UK, with partners in China, India, Kenya and Argentina. The website includes news features and information on ongoing research and projects at the STEPS Centre. These are categorised by STEPS Domains – agriculture, water, and health – and Themes – dynamics, governance, and designs. There are working papers, policy briefs and links to other relevant publications, as well as *The Crossing*, the STEPS Centre blog. In addition, you can sign up to STEPS Direct, and receive media, research and policy briefings, news and notification when new CDs containing STEPS news and information are available, providing accessible information for those with poor Internet connections.

http://opentraining.unesco-ci.org

The Open Training Platform

The Open Training Platform (OTP) is a UNESCO initiative to facilitate access to training materials and resources developed by development stakeholders at a global level. The objective is to make training and capacity building resources openly available to local communities and development stakeholders at grassroots level in order to foster local development. It includes over 2700 training resources in more than 280 categories, such as adult literacy, gender issues, media and communication, environment, legal issues, and development aid.

This website is aimed at trainers, educators (teachers, students, and researchers), decision makers and policy makers, entrepreneurs, farmers, scientists, media people, librarians, archivists and information specialists, cultural actors, health specialists, environmental specialists, development and social workers, and civil servants. Training resources have been contributed by a wide network including UN agencies and partners, development practitioners, development agencies, NGOs and CBOs, and others.

To contribute, users need to register before submitting material. You can also register for an alert system for new material and provide critical comments and ideas for the improvement of the platform. There are also plans for an interest-based forum. Users can also request training resources on CD-ROM, which are distributed locally.

www.project.empowers.info

EMPOWERS: Euro-Med Participatory Water Resources Scenarios

EMPOWERS is a regional partnership of fifteen organisations allied together to improve long-term access to water by local communities. It aims to do so by advocating stakeholder-led activities to empower local people in integrated water resources management and development. The EMPOWERS project (2003–2007) was mainly funded through the European Union's Regional MEDA Water Programme for Local Water Management and was implemented in Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine. The website includes a host of online resources, including guidelines to water governance; a guide to process documentation; storybook case studies; principles and recommendations; a training manual; working and conference papers; progress reports; and information about participatory approaches.

RCPLA Network

In this section, we update readers on activities of the **Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network (RCPLA) Network** (www.rcpla.org) and its members. RCPLA is a diverse, international network of national-level organisations, which brings together development practitioners from around the globe. It was formally established in 1997 to promote the use of participatory approaches to development. The network is dedicated to capturing and disseminating development perspectives from the South. For more information please contact the RCPLA Network Steering Group:

RCPLA Coordination and North Africa & Middle East Region: Ali Mokhtar, Near East Foundation – Middle East Region, Center for Development Services (CDS), 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +20 2 794 7278; Email: cds.prog@neareast.org; amokhtar@nefdev.org; Website: www.neareast.org/main/cds/default.aspx

Asia Region: Tom Thomas, Director, Institute for Participatory Practices (Praxis), S-75 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi, India 110 049. Tel/Fax: +91 11 5164 2348 to 51; Email: tomt@praxisindia.org; www.praxisindia.org

Jayatissa Samaranayake, Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID), 591 Havelock Road, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka. Tel: +94 1 555521; Tel/Fax: +94 1 587361; Email: ipidc@panlanka.net

West Africa Region: Awa Faly Ba Mbow, IED-Afrique, BP 5579 Dakar Fann, Senegal. Tel: +221 33 867 10 58; Fax: +221 33 867 10 59; Email: awafba@iedafrique.org Website: www.iedafrique.org

European Region: Jane Stevens, Participation, Power and Social Change Group, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. Tel: + 44 1273 678690; Fax: + 44 1273 21202; Email: participation@ids.ac.uk; Website: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip

Participatory Learning and Action Editorial Team, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK. Tel: +44 207 388 2117; Fax: +44 207 388 2826; Email: planotes@iied.org; Website: www.planotes.org

Latin America Region: Jordi Surkin Beneria, Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participacion. Tel : +591 3 3519845; Email: jsurkin@gntp.org; skype: jsurkin

Eastern Africa Region: Eliud Wakwabubi, Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK), Jabavu Road, PCEA Jitegemea Flats, Flat No. D3, PO Box 2645, KNH Post Office, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel/Fax: +254 2 716609; Email: pamfork@nbnet.co.ke

News from the RCPLA Network Coordinator

Deepening Participation for Social Change was selected as the RCPLA theme for 2008–2009. The most recent RCPLA workshop was held in Cairo from 4th–6th March 2008. It reaffirmed the network's focus on helping organisations adopt participatory approaches, and improving and deepening understanding and implementation of participation. This workshop was also an opportunity for network members to gather together from around the globe. We gave particular attention to building group cohesion and 'bridging the gap' between old and new members, allowing old and new to interconnect, share information and lessons learnt, and benefit from each others' experiences and capabilities. The momentum created on the first day helped members to discuss the future of the network and work closely to develop a focused network plan for the coming years.

For more details about the Cairo workshop, and to learn more about RCPLA news and activities, please visit the newly redesigned website at www.rcpla.org. To join the RCPLA network please contact Ms Passinte Isaak, email: pisaak@nefdev.org

News from the Asian Regional Coordinator

Praxis – the Institute for Participatory Practices – is currently organising TheWorkshop'08, an annual commune on participatory development. Based in New Delhi, with branches in Chennai, Patna and London, Praxis works to promote participatory practices in all spheres of human development. Praxis carries out consultancies, and also engages in several self-funded initiatives to further the cause of participatory development. TheWorkshop is one such initiative.

Now in its twelfth year, this event provides development workers, policy makers and proactive individuals with a forum for reflection as well as learning. Participants can learn about the latest tools, techniques and trends in participatory development from experienced workers in the field.

Over the years, this event has drawn an enthusiastic response from the sector. More than 1100 participants from 33 different countries and organisations have attended to date. Among these are participants from the Asian

Dr Robert Chambers facilitating a session at TheWorkshop'07.

Photo: Praxis

Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, UNDP, UNOPS, ActionAid, Care, CARITAS, NIPRANET, British Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, JICA, Oxfam and Brooke Hospital, as well as other bilateral and multilateral organisations, national and international NGOs and various government departments.

This year, TheWorkshop'08 will be held from 19th–28th August 2008, in Thrissur (Kerala), India. Registration has now closed for 2008, but please look out for this event next year! For more information, visit www.theworkshop.in

News from the eastern Africa Regional Coordinator

How can practitioners stand up and be counted in the development of the National Social Protection Strategies? Lessons from Kenya

Following up on its recent hunger survey, during 2007–2008 Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK) has collaborated with Bread for the World (BftW) to do a survey on basic social security as part of social protection in Kenya. The survey covered the work of BftW partners and other independent actors. It was part of a wider international study in Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia.

The findings helped to shed more light on social security systems and provided a solid contribution in terms of policy recommendations based on the knowledge gathered from the study. The study findings are expected to direct attention to how communities can sustain social security systems and complement the work of BftW partners by analysing what inhibits people's access to social security and how to design appropriate corrective measures. The findings will be useful to all the BftW partners and national agencies responsible for social protection systems or implementing basic security systems. This will allow them to better understand social protection systems that can work for the vulnerable and extremely poor sections of society.

Following the study, PAMFORK is hoping to play a lead role in developing the Kenya National Social Protection Strategy for the country. The exercise is spearheaded by the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services with support from UNICEF and UNDP.

Poverty and vulnerability are the greatest challenges facing Kenya with 46% of the population living below the national poverty line while 19% live in hardcore poverty unable to meet their basic food requirements. Many are vulnerable to poverty because of a wide range of factors, including natural disasters such as floods and drought, environmental degradation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, a lack of income following retirement and a breakdown of traditional safety-net mechanisms.

The current worldwide economic recession has resulted in rising prices of basic commodities, especially food – which has further driven more people into extreme poverty and vulnerability. Extreme poverty and vulnerability in Kenya has been exacerbated by the post-election violence in which more than 350,000 people have been displaced from their homes and about 1200 killed. The majority of those internally displaced people depend on relief and emergency support from the government and others. But this is not sustainable. They require social protection in the short-term to protect their basic livelihoods. Greater social protection strategies are needed.

Social protection activities in Kenya are multi-sectoral and involve several government ministries and departments, and other stakeholders such as development partners, NGOs, CSOs and organisations involved in

providing social protection at different levels. But a lack of coordination is a major impediment to effective delivery. A social protection strategy is required to coordinate the roles and contributions of different stakeholders. A social protection policy will also raise awareness amongst important government decision makers and development partners.

Ghana and Pakistan already have national social protection strategies, and several African countries are in the process of developing them, including Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. This is emerging as best practice in addressing poverty and vulnerability in developing countries. Practitioners in other countries need to play a proactive role to ensure informed and meaningful community participation in creating and implementing social protection strategies.

We believe that 'a stitch in time saves nine'. PAMFORK is calling on all practitioners wherever they are to stand up and be counted – for the time is now!

News from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

The Participation, Power and Social Change Group at IDS is pleased to announce the launch of the *Champions of Participation Resource Pack*. The Champions of Participation events took place in June 2007 and January 2008 in the UK. Local government officers, elected officials and citizen representatives from 14 different countries came together to share their experiences of citizen participation in local governance. A new resource pack drawn from this international learning experience is now available. The pack includes a report, policy brief and a series of case studies. In particular it addresses experiences, challenges and lessons from different participation practitioners in the UK and internationally. To receive a pack email ppsc@ids.ac.uk

We are still welcoming applications for the MA in Participation, Power and Social Change. The course will start in October this year and is designed for working practitioners who wish to study and practice ways of increasing the participation, influence and voice of people in development processes. If you would like further information please contact teaching@ids.ac.uk

Finally, our Participation Resource Centre holds a collection of practical and analytical materials relating to participatory approaches to development, citizenship, rights, governance and the environment. Details of the collection are available through our website www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/prc and we run a limited information and document delivery service, which is free to those in the South – please email: ppsc@ids.ac.uk.

News from IIED

Affirming Life and Diversity: how Indian farmers became filmmakers

Non-literate Indian farmers have turned into filmmakers, to take part in a research project. The project's innovative ethical approach is described in a new book and series of films, which were launched at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity conference in Bonn in May 2008.

IIED, Deccan Development Society and a team of village-based women's groups (*sanghams*) teamed up to study ways to sustain local food systems, the biodiversity they depend on and the livelihoods they support. The project identified ways of sustaining local crop and livestock diversity to increase people's livelihoods options and their ability to adapt to climate change. The project sparked a revival of local food culture that is helping to preserve agricultural biodiversity and traditional farming practices in several hundred villages in Medak district, Andhra Pradesh.

The women involved in the project decided that they wanted to use video to document the research and share its findings. The Deccan Development Society had previously trained villagers to use video and had proven that non-literacy was no barrier. The project shows that local food systems, crop and livestock diversity, and livelihoods can be sustained in the face of modern pressures. As such, it offers both policy and practical guidance for the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity that the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity approved in 1996.

For more information, and to order a copy of the book *Affirming Life and Diversity* and 12 films on 4 DVDs, see our **In Touch** section.

What next for IIED? Video messages to IIED from our partners in Peru

IIED has been undergoing a critical process to develop its new institutional strategy. IIED and the Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods (SABL) programme believes that it is very important to find ways of including the analysis and views of local partners with whom we work. We recognise that our choices should fully take into account their perspectives, their contribution to our success, and the

impact of whatever we decide on their work.

During the month of April 2008, IIED collaborated with ANDES (Association for Nature and Sustainable Development) an indigenous NGO based in Cusco, Peru. We asked indigenous communities in the Peruvian Andes to help frame IIED's next Institutional Strategy on policy research and advocacy work.

We invited some of our partners to give their views on what IIED should be doing next as part of its new institutional strategy. Following extensive discussions, SABL and its partners decided to use participatory video methods to elicit views, analysis and recommendations from a range of non-literate and literate people with whom we work in Peru, India and Iran.

The goal of this consultation is to listen to communities' views and priorities – and understand how IIED can better work together with its partners and the communities they represent, to achieve common objectives. These consultations are crucial in integrating perspectives from our partners on emerging priorities and bodies of work:

- how they see us and to get their perceptions of what added value IIED brings to the work on sustainable environment and development; and
- how they think an organisation like IIED can make a difference.

We now have a series of video messages sent by indigenous communities and other partners based in Peru. An outline of the methodology used for this participatory video process is also on the website as well as a description of the questions used. More videos will be added soon, including the ex-Minister of the Environment and indigenous parliamentarians. Other videos will show national and international perspectives/analysis to complement the local community perspectives which you can now access on this website.

You can watch the videos online at www.iiedwhatnext.org

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NOTES

NOTES

participatory learning and action

Guidelines for contributors

For a full set of guidelines, visit our website www.planotes.org or contact us at the address below.

Types of material accepted

- *Articles*: max. 2500 words plus illustrations – see below for guidelines.
- *Feedback*: letters to the editor, or longer pieces (max. 1500 words) which respond in more detail to articles.
- *Tips for trainers*: training exercises, tips on running workshops, reflections on behaviour and attitudes in training, etc., max. 1000 words.
- *In Touch*: short pieces on forthcoming workshops and events, publications, and online resources.

We welcome accounts of recent experiences in the field (or in workshops) and current thinking around participation, and particularly encourage contributions from practitioners in the South. Articles should be co-authored by all those engaged in the research, project, or programme.

In an era in which 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 process of participation. Whilst we will continue to publish experiences of innovation in the field, we would like to emphasise the need to analyse the limitations as well as the successes of participation. *Participatory Learning and Action* is still a series whose focus is methodological, but it is important to give more importance to issues of power in the process and to the impact of participation, asking ourselves who sets the agenda for participatory practice. It is only with critical analysis that we can further develop our thinking around participatory learning and action.

We particularly favour articles which contain one or more of the following elements:

- an **innovative** angle to the concepts of participatory approaches or their application;
- **critical reflections** on the lessons learnt 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;
- potentials and limitations of **scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches***;* and,
- potentials and limitations of **participatory policy-making processes***.*

Language and style

Please try to keep contributions clear and accessible. Sentences should be short and simple. Avoid jargon, theoretical terminology, and overly academic language. Explain any specialist terms that you do use and spell out acronyms in full.

Abstracts

Please include a brief abstract with your article (circa. 150-200 words).

References

If references are mentioned, please include details. *Participatory Learning and Action* is intended to be informal, rather than academic, so references should be kept to a minimum.

Photographs and drawings

These should have captions and the name(s) of the author(s)/photographer clearly written on the back. If you are sending electronic files, please make sure that the photos/drawings are scanned at a high enough resolution for print (300 dpi) and include a short caption and credit(s).

Format

We accept handwritten articles but please write legibly. Typed articles should be double-spaced. Please keep formatting as simple as possible. Avoid embedded codes (e.g. footnotes/ endnotes, page justification, page numbering).

Submitting your contribution

Contributions can be sent on paper or by email to: **The Editors, *Participatory Learning and Action*, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1 0DD, UK.**
Fax: +44 20 7388 2826
Email: pla.notes@iied.org
Website: www.planotes.org

Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network

Since June 2002, the IIED Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action has now housed by the Institute of Development Studies, UK. Practical information and support on participation in development is also available from the various members of the RCPLA Network.

This initiative is a global network of resource centres for participatory learning and action, which brings together 15 organisations from Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe. The RCPLA Network is committed to information sharing and networking on participatory approaches.

Each member is itself at the centre of a regional or national network. Members share information about activities in their respective countries, such as training programmes, workshops and key events, as well as providing PLA information focused on the particular fields in which they operate.

More information, including regular updates on RCPLA activities, can be found in the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*, or by visiting www.rcpla.org, or contacting the network coordinator: Ali Mokhtar, CDS, Near East Foundation, 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +2 2 794 7278; Email: amokhtar@nefdev.org

Participation at IDS

Participatory approaches and methodologies are also a focus for the Participation, Power and Social Change Group at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This group of researchers and practitioners is involved in sharing knowledge, in strengthening capacity to support quality participatory approaches, and in deepening understanding of participatory methods, principles, and ethics. It focuses on South-South sharing, exchange visits, information exchange, action research projects, writing, and training. Services include a Participation Resource Centre (open weekdays) with an online database detailing materials held. The Group also produces a newsletter and operates an email distribution list.

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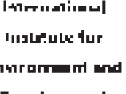

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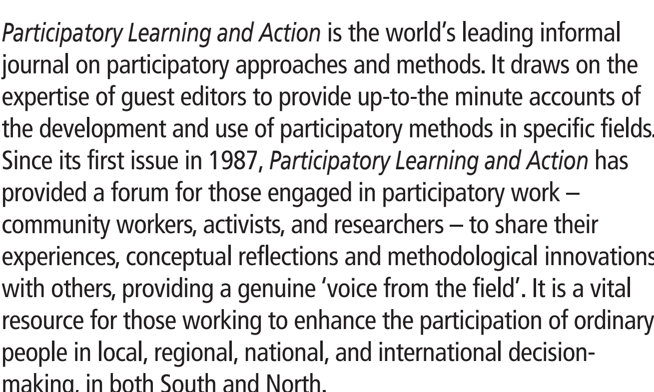

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