

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* (Telugu 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

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 communications 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) describing the UK government's close ties to the global fast-food industry, which it claims 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