

CHAPTER 13

Creating, evolving and supporting participatory methodologies: lessons for funders and innovators⁶⁴

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Increasingly donors expect us to define clearly in advance what all our outputs and outcomes are going to be, and who the funding is or is not going to be spent on. So there is no investment in creativity, there is no faith in us as creative agents of change, nor in the people with whom we might work, as independent thinkers who might come up with new good ideas for themselves, based on their own experiences, along the way. The set agenda which allows no room for exploration or experimentation is stifling critical opportunities for learning. (Welbourn, Chapter 9 this volume)

Introduction

A recurrent theme and concern in the workshop which led to this book was relationships with funders, often referred to as donors – both the agencies themselves and those who work within them. This chapter sets out to review the roles of funders in supporting the creation, evolution and spread of participatory methodologies (PMs); and seeks to derive practical lessons for them and for those innovators and practitioners whom they sponsor and support. To do this I draw on two main sources: my own involvement with Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA); and the experience and accounts of contributors to this book.

All the innovations and evolutions described in this book required resources. These took three forms.

First was funding by donor agencies for the creation, evolution and spread of PMs. In some cases this was over a period of years: *Reflect*, for example, was evolved and piloted through a three-year grant from the UK's Overseas Development Agency (ODA, now Department for International Development, DFID) to ActionAid (Archer); and the development and spread of Internal Learning Systems (ILS) were supported for years by the Ford Foundation (Noponen, Narendranath, Nagasundari). Other funding agencies for the methodologies described in this book included the Aga Khan Foundation, the

Asian Development Bank (ADB), Charity Projects, Diakonia, Humanistic Institute for Development Cooperation (Hivos), Marie Stopes Foundation, Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation (Novib), Oxfam, Redd Barna, Save the Children Federation (SCF), the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Several of the authors (Barahona, Jupp, Levy, Mayoux, Remenyi, Welbourn) have innovated when contracted as consultants.

A second source was partial or total funding by parent organizations. Partial support applied with *Reflect* within ActionAid in its early stages (Archer), and total support to the mapping of participatory practices within ActionAid (Newman). My own experience began with support from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex.

Third, innovators of PMs funded or subsidized themselves, pervasively doing more than was commissioned or paid for. Every consultant and every committed development professional know this, and it applies to all the contributors. It is a corollary of creativity.

Those who fund have power. Funding agencies have had a big influence on the creation, evolution and spread of PMs. This chapter draws on the experiences of relations with funders in the evolution of RRA and PRA and on other chapters to explore how funding agencies, their staff and those whom they fund could adapt and change their practices and multiply pro-poor impacts.

RRA and PRA: a personal journey

In recounting some of the history of RRA and PRA I am relying on memory as well as written records. My personal involvement carries three dangers. First, I may attribute too much to my own role and my view may be over-coloured by my own ego and experiences: there were innumerable other actors, events, experiences and streams of innovation, evolution and spread that I do not describe or do not know about. Second, because I have myself worked in a funding agency and had contacts of long standing in funding agencies, obtaining support for those RRA and, more so, PRA activities in which I was involved may have been less difficult than it often is for others, and I may have been allowed more freedom than is usual. Third, while some sought to integrate RRA and PRA methods and approaches into organized and standardized systems, what actually spread could be, and usually were, ideas and methods which were versatile and could be adopted and adapted individually, for example semi-structured interviewing in RRA and participatory mapping in PRA. These three conditions may not be found, either separately or in combinations, with other methodologies, and so confront us with the familiar dangers of moving from the particular to the general. The cases of RRA and PRA raise issues shared with other accounts in this book and provide material for comparisons, adding some relevance and credibility to the conclusions.

RRA

RRA was, and remains, a quiet professional revolution, a loose coalescence of many small innovations underpinned by some common practical principles like triangulation (various forms of crosschecking) and optimal ignorance (not finding out more than is needed). While less participatory than most of the other methodologies described in this book, it was one major flow that led into PRA.

From today, in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, it is difficult to imagine oneself back in the professional values and practices of the 1960s, 1970s and even 1980s. In those days, three modes of learning about rural life and conditions prevailed and were largely unchallenged: extended social anthropological immersions; large-scale and lengthy questionnaire surveys; and brief rural visits which came to be described as rural development tourism. For purposes of policy and practice, all three had serious drawbacks: social anthropological approaches were too slow, and their outcomes esoteric and inaccessible; large questionnaire surveys were laborious, expensive, insensitive to local knowledge, inaccurate, slow to process and often misleading or inconclusive; and rural development tourism was vulnerable to biases of place, project, person, season, politeness and professional interest. In response to these deficiencies, many practical fieldworkers, consultants and researchers created and evolved their own ways of finding out. But they did not parade these. Most of what they improvised, invented and used was not respectable among normal professionals, and was not written up or shared. Instead it was hidden to avoid ridicule or condemnation by colleagues.

A much cited and apt illustration comes from the agricultural economist, Michael Collinson, working in East Africa. In a week he could identify agricultural research priorities for a farming system or farming area. But he felt he then had to follow with a three-month questionnaire survey. In no case did this contradict his earlier insights or findings, but he was obliged to do this in order to convince the establishment. For this sort of survey, not only were funds available, but funders themselves as part of the establishment demanded it (Collinson, 1981).

My base, IDS, was privileged for funds. Founded in 1966, it received a core grant of some 80 per cent of its budget from the Ministry of Overseas Development. Providing they could convince their colleagues, the faculty of IDS could gain access to funds to convene workshops and conferences. We were a relatively small group of 20–30 fellows, and knew one another. To obtain funding for a workshop or conference all that was usually required was a two-page memo and a small meeting at which plausible enthusiasm was likely to carry the day. So it was that Richard Longhurst and I, together with Ian Carruthers at Wye College, were able to convene a workshop on RRA early in 1979. This generated enough evidence and excitement to put a proposal to the Ford Foundation, which then supported a conference later in the year to which were submitted over 30 papers. It was clear that this was a vital subject. There were

new criteria of rigour, methods which were cost-effective, and the seeds of a revolution to provide methods and approaches which were alternatives or complements to those already professionally entrenched.

We invited an accomplished editor, Arnold Pacey, to come and to edit the papers of the conference. But we had no provision in the budget for editing, publishing or dissemination. This was one of the grossest errors of my life. In those days of the 1970s, difficult to conceive now, research budgets rarely included these.⁶⁵ Better late than never as I thought, I submitted a supplementary proposal for \$10,000 to the Ford Foundation. This was turned down. The champion of the first grant was moving on, and when I worked for the Ford Foundation later I learnt a small grant could be as much work as a larger one. The error was not including the provision in the original proposal. I have since reflected on how much faster the evolution and spread of RRA would have been if we had had that \$10,000 for the book. We sent copies of the papers to people who asked for them.⁶⁶ But a book on RRA had to await publication of papers from the University of Khon Kaen's international RRA conference (Khon Kaen University, 1987), some six or seven years after those earlier papers would have been published.

PRA: early days

The Khon Kaen conference owed much to agro-ecosystem analysis and its sketch mapping and diagramming (Conway, 1985) which Gordon Conway and his colleagues, supported again by the Ford Foundation, had evolved at the turn of the 1980s at Chiang Mai in Thailand and then disseminated in Southeast Asia. After Khon Kaen, combinations of methods were more widely recognized and used, such as focus groups, semi-structured interviewing, transects and observation, and especially sketch mapping and seasonal and other forms of diagramming, freed from the constraints of conventional scientific notions of precision. The potent brew of these mixtures spawned more and more improvisations and inventions. Many of these were evolved by the Sustainable Agriculture Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), led by Conway, who with his colleagues and myself, conducted annual one-week trainings in RRA with the staff of SDC in rural Switzerland, and I gave a couple of development lectures in Berne.

In 1988 Conway, Jenny McCracken and I held a 10-day RRA training for the Ethiopian Red Cross, funded by the Swedish Red Cross, in Wollo in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Red Cross Society, ERCS, 1988). Learning by training was intense. We were on the edge of participatory approaches. There were big, dare I say, seminal, 'ah has!'. Conway was amazed at the detailed recall by two farmers of rainfall over the previous five years. I was startled, in a small hut, watching two Ethiopian professionals interviewing three farmers. On the basis of what the farmers said, the professionals drew a histogram of the labour demands of agriculture by month. When this was shown to the farmers to see if they could understand it, they looked and replied, 'Yes, you have drawn what we said.'

Another 'ah-ha!' was coming to realize the gross roadside bias, distortion and inaccuracy of the sketch map we drew.

Later, yet another revelation was with agricultural scientists in West Bengal. This time we asked tribal men and women to draw their own histograms on the ground of their agricultural labour by month. They did it, and then the women protested, and added a block across the base of theirs for all the other work they did. In parallel, other threads and evolutions – by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Gujarat, and with community action planning in Kenya – indicated that something was on the verge of happening.

Support from IDS, a welcome from the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) in Hyderabad and funding from the Ford Foundation, the Aga Khan Foundation and the ODA, then gave me two years based in Hyderabad. The funded proposal was 'for support for popular participation in the management of rainfed agriculture and enhancing professional contribution to rainfed agricultural research and watershed management'. Apart from these terms of reference, the only strings were that I would spend a minimum of 44 days with AKRSP (India) and the Sadguru Water Development Foundation, both in Gujarat. ASCI made few demands on my time, giving freedom to spend most of it with those in India who were innovating with PRA, participatory approaches in which local people were facilitated to do their own appraisal, analysis and planning.⁶⁷ There was a rapid sequence of shared 'ah-ha!s': a seasonal diagram on the ground with stones which showed how the timing of migration prevented children's education; a 3-D coloured model farmers made of a watershed; a social map showing all the houses in a village; matrix scoring of varieties of millet using seeds, and a veritable explosion of creativity and inventiveness released by the enthusiasm and sensitive facilitation by colleagues, some of it captured and presented in *RRA Notes* No. 13.

The freedom was extraordinary. I wrote short six-monthly reports to the three funders and they imposed no constraints. This meant that I could be a freely moving colleague and almost co-conspirator with those innovating in the field, as well as photographer and, as things rapidly evolved, disseminator. For quite soon, and unexpectedly, I found myself conducting familiarization workshops of one or two days, over 30 of them in 18 months, for NGOs, the government, academics and training institutes. Whether this was the right thing to do can be questioned. We warned from near the start about behaviour and attitudes, and the dangers of going to scale. But the bad effects of the subsequent massive adoption of PRA rhetoric by donor agencies, NGOs and governments led to much abuse. At the same time what happened because of the spread of PRA, though often bad, may have been less bad than it would have been, and may have sown seeds for later changes. The counterfactuals are not knowable. There were many inspiring examples of good practice and some of the bad practice was improved. But I do ask myself whether, had I had more foresight, less enthusiasm, more self-restraint and perhaps also less freedom, spread would have been slower and abuse less. The jury is out, and may always be.

PRA: training, networking, dissemination

When I returned to IDS in mid-1991 the overriding priorities were training, networking and dissemination. Since IDS was receiving less and less core funding, other support had to be raised. The Ford Foundation, ODA and Sida combined for two years, and other donors – the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Danida (the Danish aid agency) and Novib (the largest) followed on. Their grants were used for South–South roving workshops, enabling Indian trainers to spread PRA to other countries, seeding and encouraging networks, and sharing materials and ideas. So I was in effect funded to be a funder. The grants gave independence within IDS, where few knew or understood what we – my secretary Helen McLaren, myself and occasional research assistants – were doing. My real colleagues were in the South and in IIED. The latter came to IDS for perhaps a dozen brainstorming workshops. IIED produced *RRA Notes*. PRA spread like wildfire. At the same time, bad practices in the name of PRA led to much criticism, not least by academics and by participatory practitioners in other traditions or schools. In early 1995 Novib funded a three months' breathing space during which I prepared a proposal for £760,000 for 'Activities in support of Participatory Appraisal, Learning and Action through capacity-building in the South, South–South sharing, networking, research, workshops and dissemination'.⁶⁸ Novib turned this down, requiring a year during which PRA would be evaluated. A PRA innovator and trainer to whom I mentioned this exclaimed incredulously, 'They must be joking!' To him the strengths and benefits were so much a part of his daily experience. But we were up against another rationality.

Devastated and depressed by Novib's rejection, I flew direct from Amsterdam to Berne. Three staff from SDC met me at the airport. I could scarcely believe what followed. Within a few hours, they had pledged support for the whole programme.

Lessons from the RRA and PRA experience

The conditions which allowed me to be involved in supporting the emergence, evolution and spread of RRA and PRA were unusually favourable. While, as Heraclitus said, we can never step into the same river twice, it is worth examining those conditions in order to see what lessons they hold. Four stand out.

- *Diverse experience.* When seeking funds I had the advantage of having been a nomad between organizations and roles – administrator, researcher, consultant and funder myself when working in the Ford Foundation in 1981–4. This helped me to be proactive, rather than reactive, in raising funds for what I thought needed to be done.
- *Long-term relationships with funding agencies.* Long-term relationships were important. I never thought of working in the Ford Foundation or training SDC staff as investments. The trainings in Switzerland were simply good experiences with lots of learning and much fun. But I see now how they must have helped, especially when SDC saved the day in 1995.

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- *Flexibility.* I was astonished in 2005 to read in my original 1989 proposal that I went to India to work on rainfed agriculture, agricultural research and watershed management. I had forgotten that. The main focus rapidly became PRA and its dissemination. What happened in India took me and others by surprise. It was anyway unknowable in advance. These were the days before the virus of logframes had infected donor agencies and their relationships. Had I had one, my time would have been anxious, constrained and less productive.
- *Engagement in the field.* Again and again it was involvement in field situations that led to 'ah-ha!s', insights and innovations, especially uncontrollable social processes which forced adaptive improvisation and inventiveness. This was experiential learning, learning by doing and observing, with cycles of action and reflection, being provoked and stimulated to try to understand what was happening and to work through its practical implications.

Enabling conditions

These experiences with PRA and the creation, evolution and spread of other PMs, show that PM projects differ from most others. For a physical infrastructure project, detailed planning, time-schedules and targets can make sense. For process projects where the future is less controllable or predictable, they make less sense, and can distract and demoralize. For projects to generate, or which require, new PMs, the misfit is even sharper. What can be evolved, how long it will take, what obstacles will be encountered, where the process will lead, what unforeseen 'ah-ha!s' will open up new vistas and opportunities – these are among many unknowns. It is not like building a bridge. It is more like setting out on a voyage. Enabling conditions for creating, evolving and spreading PMs have their own character compared with conventions for most other projects. Four sets of issues stand out.

First, a key enabling condition for creating and evolving PMs is continuity of champions and institutional support. Again and again this has been critical. One example is the Ford Foundation's championing and support for ILS (Nojonen, Chapter 4 this volume). Another is Nick Menzies of the Ford Foundation in China (Remenyi, Chapter 11 this volume) with the progressive introduction into China of questionnaires, then RRA, and then PRA.⁶⁹ In these cases the personal and institutional support was spread and sustained over close to or more than a decade. With SDC's support for PRA and its spread, and for the other participatory activities to which it led, the continuity has been even longer.

Second, organizational responsibility for dissemination and spread is largely overlooked. Donors who sponsor the creation and use of a PM often see it as a one-off exercise to achieve a particular programme objective. Many PMs like those for the Starter Pack Programme in Malawi (Levy, Chapter 10 this volume) do have a tailored fit: their principles, methods and how they were evolved may

have wide value but their detail limits them to one context. Other PMs, like some pioneered by Jupp (Chapter 8 this volume) – for example, the visuals for participatory assessments of human rights abuses, and the Views of the Poor study in Tanzania – have wider applicability but have not been spread by the sponsoring organizations or anyone else.

In contrast, the use of positive deviance – identifying and learning from the feeding practices of poor families whose children were nevertheless well-nourished (Jupp) – was spread by Save the Children Fund to eventually cover 2.2 million people in 265 villages. The difference was the existence of and ownership by an organization and its partners and their wish and ability to use the innovation. The potential gains to poor people through the dissemination of what are still only one-off PMs must be one of the biggest missed opportunities in development.

Third, issues of time, resources and scale of impact are as vital as they are contradictory, varied and nuanced. Sometimes open-endedness, trust and patience, without strict timetables, are conditions for innovation. Evidence includes piloting *Reflect* over months, even years (Archer, Chapter 1 this volume), how Stepping Stones took much longer to produce than originally envisaged (Welbourn, Chapter 9 this volume) and also how the elaboration and simplifications of ILS painstakingly took place over years (Noponen, Narendranath, Nagasundari, Chapters 4, 5, 6 respectively this volume). But others' experiences (Jupp, Mayoux, Chapter 7 this volume) have been the opposite. Thus Jupp in her chapter:

As a consultant I am often asked to work on short contracts with strict budgets. Whilst this has obvious constraints and can be frustrating, I would also claim that it has forced me to be extremely creative. I find the fact that I almost never have resources to write manuals or guidelines means that approaches used are always fluid and evolving ... I am free to invent and innovate for every new circumstance and this is very liberating. Of course, this also means that clients have to have trust in me.

The time and scale of impact involve intriguing trade-offs. When support is for years, as with ILS, a methodology may go to scale through organizations, but over-elaboration and time-consuming routinization can creep in (Noponen, Narendranath and Nagasundari). When support is for a short time, the gains from innovation may be brilliant but one-off, localized, temporary and without wider impact: the guidelines, the training workshops, the facilitators who would disseminate are missing, and with them is lost the chance of a far wider impact. The challenges for funders and consultants alike are to recognize the trade-offs and optimize outcomes. Where there is time-bound pressure for innovation it may need to be followed by sustained support for further evolution and dissemination.

Fourth, multiple sources of funding can similarly cut both ways. Some organizations prefer a single source of funds, to minimize distracting visitors and reporting requirements. When SDC was the sole agency supporting

participatory work at IDS, less time had to be spent on donor relations than earlier or later when there were more funding sources. Others see benefits in having several funders. Welbourn, for example, writes of the development of Stepping Stones:

I feel that the freedom to take the time needed, multiple funding sources and the wide range of skills and experiences of the advisors were all key contributory factors which facilitated the production of a package that is far more eclectic in its content and diverse in its appeal than might otherwise have been the case.

Single and multiple funders present different vulnerabilities: a single funder who withdraws support can be sounding a death knell, but such withdrawal may be less likely precisely because responsibility is so clear; multiple funders appear to provide more security, but the withdrawal of one can set off a chain reaction in which all end their support without any accepting responsibility.

Disabling conditions

Abrupt termination of funding

The unexpected end of Novib funding for PRA activities (see above) would have been devastating had not SDC stepped immediately into the breach. Other PMs are not so fortunate. A stark example is the withdrawal of support by one donor to Stepping Stones in Africa. Leaving aside the discordance of this decision with the acuteness of the HIV/AIDS crisis in southern Africa especially, and the official priority of aid to Africa, it also at a stroke left unemployed the Stepping Stones facilitators who had been trained through prior funding from that donor (Welbourn). As in this astonishing case, the ethical issues of cutting off funding can as be as vast and acute as they seem to be ignored.

Inappropriate indicators and evaluations

There is a paradigmatic tension between linear thinking and objectively verifiable numerical indicators, on the one hand, and evolutionary thinking and validation by adoption, on the other. This contributed to Novib's decision not to renew support for PRA at a time when it was spreading fast in perhaps 50 countries, and to the withdrawal of one donor's support for Stepping Stones despite its adoption and spread in over 100 countries. The request from the World Bank for literacy performance figures from *Reflect* so that these could be used internally for support in the bank was resisted because it was reasserting the traditional idea of literacy as narrowly focused on reading and writing.

Fracturing relationships and trust

All too often relationships and mutual understanding and trust carefully nurtured over years are fractured and destroyed by staff transfers in funding agencies, the

new person having other priorities. Trust may be lost, and distrust inhibits through controls and the sense and reality of loss of freedom.

Practical advice for funders

For funders who wish to support the creation, evolution and spread of PMs, the list below presents practical advice. This draws on evidence, experience and ideas from the workshop, from contributions to this book, and from the funding of RRA and PRA networks and dissemination.⁷⁰

- Be circumspect and sensitive in selecting PM innovators. Prefer those with good non-negotiable ethical principles and whom you are confident to trust.
- In a PM development phase, work with organizations that are enthusiastic and committed. Do not impose on unwilling organizations.
- Judge time scales carefully to optimize creativity and impact.
- Accept that achievements and setbacks in evolving and spreading PMs cannot be forecast.
- Avoid premature evaluation. Entrust evaluation only to persons who themselves have experience of and understand PMs.
- Recognize the importance of training and mentoring for facilitation, and provide budgets and time for this, especially early in a project's process.
- When sponsoring the development of a PM, do not treat it as a one-off or leave people in the lurch. Be prepared to provide resources and support for follow up, perhaps with other agencies, for recording, learning from, writing up, training, dissemination, and supporting NGOs and CBOs and further evolution of the methodology.
- When seeking to spread a PM avoid targets for disbursements. Provide for unspent budgets to roll over year on year.
- Encourage transparency and consistency in your organization, on websites and in hard copy. To help those seeking support for developing and spreading PMs, make it clear and public what you fund, your criteria, how you can be approached and what your accountability system is.
- Undertake 'immersions' and promote them among your colleagues to gain first-hand experience of PMs and an understanding of what they entail.
- Promote within your organization the use of non-written reporting systems, including photographs, audio and video diaries, especially those produced by community members.
- Fight and resist procedures and requirements when they conflict with the above.

Lessons for innovators

Those who seek and receive support – grantees, recipients, beneficiaries, consultants, innovators, pioneers, protagonists, activists, managers – whatever their roles and identities, are easily tempted or provoked into criticizing the

organizations and the staff who finance them. And as we have seen, criticisms can be well founded. The other side of the coin, though, is that those who are supported often have much to learn and understand about the orientation, perceptions, incentives and constraints of funding agencies and their staff. From the RRA and PRA experience, and from the contributions to this book, these practical guidelines can be suggested.

- *Take pains to understand funders and their organizations.* They are often opaque and unpredictable. But try to find out who funds what, and what their requirements are. Donors suffer reorganizations, disruptions and changes of priority. Keeping up-to-date with these can save time and effort otherwise spent on wild goose chases that are doomed from the start.
- *Find and work with allies and champions.* In most funding agencies some staff are on a participatory wavelength, even when the organization itself is not. Search for the like-minded, and find ways of working with and supporting them.
- *Develop long-term relationships.* This was a lesson of the RRA/PRA experience, especially with SDC: the late 1980s training of SDC staff in RRA and lectures delivered in Berne seem to have prepared the seedbed for understanding and support later in the 1990s.
- *Negotiate and be prepared to say no.* Power relations are two-way. Those in funding agencies are not always as powerful or imperious as they appear. Sometimes they need help to spend budgets. Those who fund participation and PMs need support within their organizations. They may even need those who are funded to be critical so that they can use those criticisms internally. Those funded are often too deferential, too sensitive to real or imagined signals. A light suggestion is then interpreted as an imperious instruction. There are times for saying no for reasons of conditionality, co-option or reputational risk, as *Reflect* did to the World Bank (Archer).
- *Insist on flexibility.* Funders are often less controlling and more open to change than they appear. Logframes and proposals that have been accepted can be taken as more constraining than they should be. At one time, ActionAid Bangladesh was funded by DFID for *Reflect*, and wished to change direction, but felt it could not do this or modify its logframe before a mid-term review. However, donors may be open to change if they are informed and consulted. Their requirements can also sometimes be made less demanding, as with Nojonen's Eureka moment when she realized that statistics from a sample of ILS users would be enough.
- *Provide funders with information and materials they can use.* They need to be able to show results. Conventional reports, which are often unread, can be complemented or replaced by visuals. The pictures taken by poor people in Tanzania became an exhibition in Berne which was seen by senior officials, civil society and political leaders (Jupp). The ILS diaries in south India gave information which could potentially be used not only for proposal writing, advocacy and lobbying, but also for reporting to donors (Nagasundari). Visuals, videos and stories can be more persuasive than long written reports.

- *Involve funders.* Understanding and trust are built on familiarity and shared experience. Part of the solution is for both sides to have common experiences in the field. Funders often welcome personal and professional involvement. Working for the Ford Foundation in Delhi, my best times were not making grants, which I did not enjoy or do well, but times in the field with grantees. Aid agency bureaucrats have become increasingly caught in a capital trap of meetings, negotiations, policy discussions and workshops, reducing or eliminating contact with other realities including those of poor and marginalized people.⁷¹ They can be invited to take part in reviews and reflections like those of ActionAid (2000, 2001). In Tanzania, the emotional experiences and insights of the staff of SDC and its partners in their field research meant much to them. Even a year later, they were still repeatedly referring to them (Jupp).

Funders can, then, be invited to the field to take part in processes and activities. Seeking their participation and advice will often be personally and professionally rewarding for them, give them a break from their normal bureaucratic life, and equip them better to exercise influence in support within their organizations. Often such field visits will be the best and most memorable work experiences they will have. Creators and evolvers of PMs have something good to offer them.

Pro-poor symbiosis for creativity, innovation and spread

In these various ways, funders and funded need and can help one another. Too often, those funded do not understand the constraints or culture of the funding agency, and those in the funding agency do not understand the conditions for creativity, innovation and good spread. But with mutual understanding, the relationships can be symbiotic and win-win.

PMs are not, however, inherently pro-poor. Participation can take forms which further impoverish those who are poor or further marginalize those who are already excluded. Elites can gain at the cost of non-elites, men at the cost of women and so on. Participation ladders demonstrate how the P word can be used to cover anything from slave labour to spontaneous action, with many roles and relationships in between.⁷² So the questions – who participates? who does not participate? who gains? and who loses? – have to be asked again and again. Honest answers are often uncomfortable. That said, as examples in this book so strikingly show, PMs can be created, evolved and facilitated which are pro-poor, benefiting and empowering many of those who are weaker and marginalized.

The challenge and opportunity now are to put to use the lessons of experience and to invent, multiply and spread more methodologies which are both participatory and pro-poor. Lessons will continue to be learnt, and will add to and qualify those postulated above. Contributions to this book show some of the potential of PMs to reveal unrecognized realities and to transform power relations. The scale of potential impact from spreading existing PMs wider and

from others yet to be invented is hard to assess. It depends not least on the commitment, creativity and mutual understanding of those who sponsor and fund and those who innovate and spread. If all parties can combine well, many more PMs may be created. Although how funders, innovators and disseminators can combine is beginning to be better understood, much remains to be learnt. Nothing is certain. How big the potentials and impacts prove to be, only time will show. But the possibility that they may be vast makes the case for vigorous and sensitive exploration by funders, innovators and disseminators alike.

Introduction

1. The Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, UK.
2. The main exception is Kennedy's account in Chapter 9 of the spread of the PM through the Chinese local government system.
3. For examples of the innovation and learning that is emerging from re-examination of participatory citizenship and deepening democracy, see the Learning Institute on Citizen Participation in Local Government (<http://www.learninginstitute.ac.uk/english/index.htm>).
4. Especially the terms 'participatory research' and 'participatory action research' have become interchangeable in the PM tradition, which has its origins in popular adult education and social movement experiences of the 1960s and 1970s (Dove, 1974; Fals-Borda, 2001). However, the term 'participatory research' is also used by social scientists to describe methods which involve participants in the process of determining questions or collecting data, and which may also have objectives of contributing to participant learning and action.
5. The spread of PM was substantially restricted by its status, the Ford Foundation, and of course that the approach be comprehensively tested and developed before being taken up on a wide scale. As we went to press, reports have arrived that other NGOs in India such as Sarva Shiksha in Karnataka are now learning from and adapting aspects of PM to their work.

Chapter 1

6. Set up in 2000, CEMAC is a democratic space for dialogues between people of different countries, organisations and networks to meet, highlight and learn from each other.
7. This logo was designed by Barry, a graphic artist with Action Aid at the time.
8. The Overseas Development Agency (ODA) of the UK was later renamed the Department for International Development (DFID).

Chapter 2

9. Supply, Supply and Training Package in practice. While communication and relationship skills, it is also a life skills training package, covering many aspects of our lives, including why we believe in the ways we do, how