

THE WORLD CONVERGENCE CONGRESS

The Congress was a happening that taught us very much, a key moment in the world history of participatory methodologies for having facilitated the first meeting of our diverse schools and trends.

Davydd Greenwood, Cornell University, United States.

It was a marvellous experience where participants from many regions were able to formulate freely their concerns and points of view, and to open up and affirm their knowledge in an impressive show of contemporary solidarity.

Hernando Roa, Bogotá, Colombia.

Since my return I felt that something had happened to me! The impact of the event is going to have major personal repercussions. As a psychotherapist, my work is taking on a new dialogical stance.

Gerard Rademeyer, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

I found the Congress a formative experience in several ways. It was extraordinary to have been able to attract so many diverse people who share an overlapping ideology of participation and empowerment of those who are disadvantaged.

Robert Chambers, IDS, University of Sussex, England.

We found the Congress stimulating, productive and enriching, a significant milestone.

Rajesh Tandon, PRIA, New Delhi, India.



PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION CHALLENGES AHEAD

Compiled and Analyzed by
Orlando Fals Borda

Wallerstein, Heller, Cardoso, Max-Neef, Galeano, Chambers, Tandon
Flood, Molano, De Roux, Fournier, Niño, Lincoln, Goulet



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1988

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11. BEYOND "WHOSE REALITY COUNTS?" NEW METHODS WE NOW NEED

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Activities called PRA (participatory rural appraisal) and its equivalents in other languages have evolved from a confluence, sharing and adaptation of methodologies, methods and participatory traditions. Synergies have generated new things to do and new ways to do them, including visual forms of analysis. A conjunction of conditions has produced an explosion of activities and applications, and spread to many countries and organisations: NGOs, government departments, and even universities, and raising questions of ethics and of sharing methodologies.

Coming from our different traditions, should we seek places of convergence and springboards for action? If so, could the concept of responsible wellbeing, and the question "Whose reality counts?" provide us with a common ground? They fit with eclectic pluralism, a celebration of diversity, and democratic reversals of dominance.

They raise shared issues of how we teach, learn, and construct realities, of dominant institutions and their cultures, and of personal power. They point towards responsible wellbeing for "uppers" being sought in empowering and privileging the realities of "lowers".

Do we now have a phenomenal opportunity? We have participatory methodologies which are powerful, popular and self-spreading. We have new space opened up by government and donor-agency policies for participation and poverty reduction. Rapid spread has brought much bad practice. At the same time, PRA and other participatory methodologies have also shown a potential to contribute to changes at levels which are policy-related, institutional and personal.

To make the most of these opportunities invites sharing methods and experience between different traditions, and inventing new

methods. Five methodological challenges now (May 1997) stand out as points of leverage. These are how better to:

1. Enable the realities and priorities of poor and marginalized people to be expressed and communicated to policy-makers.
2. Enable trainers to facilitate attitude and behaviour change.
3. Make normal bureaucracies more participatory.
4. Build self-improvement into the spread of participatory methodologies.
5. Enable people with power to find fulfilment in disempowering themselves.

Could it be that effective repertoires for these could lead to much good change?

Could convergences and sharings of experiences and approaches among us contribute to such repertoires? Could we between us seize these opportunities in the new spaces which are opening up?

The past ten years have been a time of exhilarating innovation and discovery in participatory methodologies. Among these, those described as PRA (participatory rural appraisal) (Mascarenhas et al 1991; RRA and PLA Notes *passim*), now sometimes broadened to PLA (participatory learning and action), include many diverse practices. These have evolved and spread fast and wide, raising many issues and questions, and now opening up problems and potentials on a daunting scale. This paper asks whether those at this Congress can help in ways forward. It sets out to examine what has happened and where we are now, and to outline new methodologies we now need. In a pluralist spirit of self-doubt, it invites readers to share their experience and ideas, so that together we can try to do better.

PRA: WHAT HAS HAPPENED

PRA has flowed from a confluence and sharing of traditions and methodologies. The streams which have mingled and given it momentum have been many. Especially from Latin America, the inspiration of Paulo Freire (1970, 1974) and popular education and then of Participatory Action Research (e.g. Gaventa 1980; Fals-Borda 1984; Fals Borda and Rahman 1991) brought notably the idea that

it is right and possible for poor and marginalized people to conduct their own analysis and take action. Research on farming systems and livelihoods brought the insights that resource-poor farming and other livelihoods are often complex and diverse, and that many farmers and poor people seek to complicate not simplify, and diversify not standardize, to reduce risk and produce more. Social anthropology brought understanding of insider-outsider interactions, of the importance of rapport, and of the distinction between emic and ethic, the view from inside and the view from outside.

This resonated with the post-modern understanding of multiple realities, and the recognition that professional realities are constructed differently from those of local people. Perhaps most creatively, agro-ecosystem analysis (Gymantasiri *et al* 1980; Conway 1985) contributed from ecology the value of observation linked with mapping and diagramming, and of visual expression and analysis of local complexity. For its part, rapid rural appraisal (RRA) (KKU 1987) was the main antecedent of PRA, and brought alternatives to questionnaire surveys and to local "development tourism" (the brief local visit by the professional outsider). RRA stressed especially observation, semi-structured interviewing and focus groups. And the list can be lengthened, with parallels in and eclectic borrowing and adapting from other practical approaches-card sorting from VIPP (Tillmann 1993), role plays from theatre in development (Mda 1993), 3-D modelling and empowering through anonymity from Planning for Real (Gibson 1995, 1996). With the spread of PRA, different traditions have merged creatively, with synergies and inventiveness. Much of the spread has been South-South, through trainees from one country going to another. The sharing, borrowing and adapting have been very much in the spirit of this Congress, learning from one another without boundaries.

These traditions and methodologies have flowed together and inspired and supported innovations. Many of the early innovators were field staff in NGOs, at first mainly in India and Kenya. Methods and approaches evolved and spread with astonishing speed. Nothing may be new under the sun, but some methods and approaches have at least seemed new in form, emphasis, combinations and sequences, and in the way they have coalesced: the "discoveries" that "they can do it" that local people, whether

they can read or not, can map, diagram, list, estimate, rank, construct and score matrices, and in other visual other visual ways present and analyze their complex realities; the advantages of visual over purely verbal analysis, especially with local complexity; the relative ease and utility of comparing rather than measuring; the synergies of analysis as a group activity and especially democracy of the ground, how differently we relate to one another when working on the ground, with less inhibition, and less verbal and physical dominance; the crucial importance of the behavior and attitudes of facilitators, not dominating, to keep quiet, not following a rigid routine but using their own best judgment at all times.

The result has been a growing and evolving family of approaches and methods, continuously discovered, invented, rediscovered, reinvented, and always experienced, variously known as PRA (participatory rural appraisal), PALM (participatory learning methods), MARP (méthode accélérée de recherche participative) (Gueye and Freudentberg 1991) and DRP (diagnóstico rural participativo); with other equivalents in other languages. To describe these and related participatory methodologies, the term PLA (participatory learning and action) has sometimes been used.

The scale and speed of the spread of these approaches are difficult to grasp. From small beginnings in the late 1980s, PRA related practices are now to be found in over 100 countries. PRA has spread from rural to urban, from countries of the South to countries of the North, from appraisal and planning to action and monitoring and evaluation, and from NGOs to government departments and even universities. In a research and data-collecting mode (which many feel should be described as RRA, not PRA or PLA) it is provided alternatives to questionnaires (Action Aid-Nepal 1992, Mukherjee 1995) and its methods are now widely used in graduate research (Attwood 1997). It has had many policy applications (Chambers and Blackburn 1996; Holland with Blackburn, forthcoming). In adult literacy, REFLECT (Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) (Archer 1995; Archer and Cottingham 1996a, 1996b; Fiedrich 1996) uses PRA visualizations, and after pilot testing in El Salvador, Uganda and Bangladesh, is now being implemented in over 25 countries.

There have been applications in almost every sector and practical domains of local development including agriculture,

children, community planning and action, education especially girls education, emergencies and refugees, fisheries, forestry, gender awareness, health, land tenure and policy, livelihood analysis, livestock, older people, organizational analysis, participatory monitoring and evaluation, pastoralism, people and conservation, poverty programmes, sanitation, sexual and reproductive health (including HIV/AIDS), urban development, urban violence, water supply, watershed management, and women's programmes. Probably thousands of NGOs and hundreds of Government field organizations have sought to adopt PRA to some degree and in some form, and large organizations have tried to use it on a large scale.

In sum, a conjunction of conditions has produced an explosion of activities and applications, and much debate about the quality of practice (see e.g. Mosse 1993; Osuga and Mutarysa 1994; Guijt 1995; Guijt and Cornwall 1995; PLA Notes 25 *passim*). It is timely to take stock and ask what it is right to do now. What is right depends on who we are, where we are and what we can do. What we perceive as right depends on the traditions we work in and what we see as the ethical basis for action. It is a strength that we are all different, whether we can converge and share, learn from each other, and together do better.

CANDIDATES FOR CONVERGENCE: RESPONSIBLE WELLBEING, AND WHOSE REALITY COUNTS?

Agreement is not always necessary for action. Differences and dialogue can come first and lead to learning. Or action can come first generating experience. Similar actions and behaviors can generate similar experiences. These in turn can contribute to philosophy and theory. So it has been largely with PRA. People have done things, found what worked, and only then asked why. Common experiences have led to convergences. In a spirit of eclectic pluralism, sharing, borrowing and adapting, we can ask whether two of these can present a common ground.

The first candidate for convergence is a concept of responsible wellbeing. "Wellbeing" is the English word which best seems to encompass what local people often express when they cardsort

individuals into piles or ranks in what used to be called "wealth ranking" (Grandin 1988; PRA Notes 15 passim). It is multidimensional and locally defined, referring to what are perceived as good or bad conditions, and good and bad quality and experience of life. Wellbeing encompasses much besides wealth or income.

"Responsible" qualifies wellbeing, adding the social dimension of relations with and effects on others, including unborn generations. The responsibilities of the rich and powerful are onerous, and responsible wellbeing is difficult for them to achieve. Responsible wellbeing is individually defined, and will differ much between individuals and cultures.

The second candidate for convergence flows from the question "Whose reality counts?" In puzzling how to reduce errors and do better in development, an issue in the late 1970s was "Whose knowledge counts?", and ITK (indigenous technical knowledge) was increasingly recognized and valued (IDS 1979; Brokensha, Warren and Werner 1980). Now the questions have elaborated and gone further to include:

- Whose categories and concepts count?
- Whose values and criteria?
- Whose preferences and priorities?
- Whose analysis and planning?
- Whose action?
- Whose monitoring and evaluation?

In sum, Whose reality counts? Is it reality "uppers", of those who normally dominate? Or should it be, can it be, increasingly that of "lowers", those who are normally subordinate?

"Whose reality counts?" fits with a theme of "reversals" (better expressed in the Italian *inversioni*), or turning things on their heads, upending the dominant and normal view. This has been an orientation of major religions and social movements. It belongs to no single tradition. Its implications resonate with eclectic pluralism, a celebration of diversity, and democratic reversals of dominance. It raises shared issues of how we teach, learn, and construct realities, of dominant institutions and their cultures, and of personal power.

Could responsible wellbeing be sought in part through embracing the question "Whose reality counts?", and through "uppers"

making what counts much more the reality of "lowers"? Could this be a common ground on which we converge?

A PHENOMENAL OPPORTUNITY?

This leads to asking whether the participatory development community may now, in 1997, at the time of this Congress, be facing a phenomenal opportunity. Having often been wrong before, I continually doubt my judgment in suggesting this. But there seems to be a conjuncture of two exceptionally favourable conditions.

The first is methodological. There have been many quiet convergences and sharings. We now have the potentials of participatory methodologies, including PRA, which are powerful, popular, versatile and self-spreading. Having evolved through borrowing and inventing, the ideal is that they should continuously evolve through more sharing without boundaries and more inventing, and be freely adopted, adapted and owned.

The second favourable condition is political. Donor agencies and national governments are on an increasing scale promoting participation, and often combining this with intentions to reduce poverty. Cynics will say that rhetoric is one thing, and reality another. But rhetoric opens doors, makes spaces, and provides points of leverage. Moreover, participation is being taken seriously in some of the centers of power. Under the leadership of James Wolfensohn, and following a prolonged internal learning process (see e.g. World Bank 1995), the World Bank is officially committed to participation: projects are monitored for it and some are participation flagship projects. An Interagency Group on Participation, of donor agencies with NGOs, has met three times. Governments have espoused participation: Bolivia has a Law of Popular Participation; others including India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Uganda and Vietnam have sought to go to scale with participatory approaches in government field agencies.

If we have both the methodologies and the political rhetoric for going to scale, do we have the vision, gut, creativity, flexibility and commitment to see and seize the opportunity, or will we mess up and miss the chance?

GOING TO SCALE

These two favourable conditions have combined to lead to requirements by governments and donors that PRA should be used on a large scale. In some places, all donors have required it in programmes. In both Nepal and Andhra Pradesh it has been said that the issue is not whether PRA will be used, but whether it will be used well. In India, PRA has been required in the very large national watershed programme, and over 300 trainers were trained in four months. In several countries, it is being used in local government, with training of elected leaders and staff. Most dramatically, the Indonesian Government in 1995 issued instructions that PRA should be used in over 60,000 villages, and that before the end of the financial year (Murkherjee 1996).

This list and these numbers are needed to force us to realize the scale of what has happened and is happening. Other methodologies introduced by governments on a large scale have usually had a more top-down orientation: the training and visit system of agricultural extension (Benor and Harrison 1997), and logical framework analysis and ZOPP (GTZ 1988; Foster 1996) are two examples. PRA differs from these by being in theory at least standardized, less routinized, more enabling, and intended to empower local people, to "hand over the stick", emphasizing changes in personal behavior and attitudes, and replacing domination and teaching with facilitation and learning.

Theory and practice are, though, never the same. Spread has presented many problems of quality. Cases have been common of the following. Methods have been stressed, neglecting behavior and attitudes. Visits have been rushed. Approaches have been standardized and routinized. Activities like mapping meant to be carried out by local people have been undertaken by outsiders. Appraisal has not linked with planning and action. Follow up has been weak. Local people have given their time and nothing has resulted. While these abuses are far from universal, and there has been some excellent practice, they have been widespread and have raised many questions of principles and ethics (Absalom et al 1995).

The PRA experience pitchforks us into the responsibilities of scale. We are exposed to implications of personal choice. Not to choose is a choice. Not to act is an action. The issue for trainers and

practioners is at what scale and level to be involved or not involved. Three responses can be suggested (Chambers 1995): the small, secure and beautiful, limiting scale in order to maintain high quality; a middle range of engagement with a particular organization over months and years; and accepting trade offs in working with large organizations which go to scale rapidly. The temptations are either to hide in snug wombs of the small, secure and beautiful, or to be seduced by the importance and other rewards of going to scale. It is middle range, though, which is the most significant (Wagachchi 1995; Johansson 1995; Thompson 1995; Hagmann, Chuma and Murwira 1996; Blackburn with Holland in draft). Perhaps all three levels are needed, and engagement with each can be a responsible activity if complemented and informed by the others.

These conditions present huge opportunities. Bad practice is an opportunity to improve. Scale is an opportunity to have widespread impact. Potentials are not just for local level participation, but for changes at three levels: policy, institutional and personal. To seize those opportunities we have part of the means in existing methods and methodologies. But they are patently not enough. So the remainder of this paper asks for our own responsible wellbeing, what other methods or methodologies do we now need to seek, invent, use and spread?

THE FUTURE: NEW METHODS WE NEED

As new spaces open up and the frontiers move fast, five methodological challenges now (May 1997) seem to present points for innovation and leverage.

1. How better to enable the realities and priorities of poor and marginalized people to be expressed and communicated to policy-makers

Political organization and power is the usual means for securing action to benefit poor and marginalized people. That will always be vital. But beyond that, it has become more evident that the realities and priorities of poor people often differ from those

supposed for them by professionals and policy-makers. The challenge is to enable poor and marginalized people to analyze their conditions and identify their priorities in ways which freely express their realities, generate proposals which are doable, and are credible and persuasive to policy-makers.

Two approaches have begun to be developed and show promise:

(i) *Participatory poverty assessments (PPAs)*. PPAs using PRA approaches and methods have been pioneered in Ghana (Norton, Kroboe, Bortei-Dorku and Dogbe 1995; Dogbe 1996), Zambia (Norton, Owen and Milimo 1994). South Africa (Allwood 1996, May 1996, Murphy 1995, Teixeira and Chambers 1995), and most recently in Bangladesh (UNDP 1996), using a variety of processes (for reviews see Norton and Stephens 1995, Robb 1996, Chambers and Blackburn 1996, Holland with Blackburn in draft).

Insights and priorities have included, for example, the importance of all-weather roads for access to curative medicine during the rains, the need to reschedule the timing of school fees away from the most difficult time of year, and how rudeness by health staff deters poor people from seeking treatment. In Bangladesh, where the focus of analysis by poor people was on "doables", differences in priorities between men and women, urban and rural, were highlighted. The first doable priority of urban women was drinking water, and the second private places to wash themselves. A widespread desire of poor people was enforcement of the anti dowry laws. A better understanding of sectoral priorities, for example between health and education, has also resulted.

(ii) *Thematic investigations*. Thematic investigations using PRA approaches and methods have illuminated local realities in a range of contexts. Examples of insights are:

- Area stigma: how living in an area with a bad reputation for violence makes it difficult to get jobs (from Jamaica, Moser and Holland 1997).
- How a quarter of girls of school age were "invisible" to the official system (from the Gambia, Kane, Bruce and O'Reilly De Brun 1996).
- How the problems and priorities of women differ not only from those of men but also between women depending on their access

to basic services and infrastructures, and their social background (from Morocco, Shah and Bourarach 1995).

- How wide the gap was between policy and practice with exemptions from healthcare charges for the destitute and those with infectious or chronic diseases (from Zambia, Booth 1996).
- How indigenous people's threatened land rights coincided with areas of greatest biological diversity (from Honduras and Panama, Denniston with Leake 1995).
- How an official belief that indigenous tenure systems no longer existed was wrong, and how diverse and crucial they were (Freudenberger 1996).
- The ability of local peoples to define sustainable management and conservation practices for themselves (from India and Pakistan, Cujja, Pimbert and Shah 1996).

There are methodological challenges in further developing these methods.

Perhaps now, though, a larger challenge is finding how the insights they generate can effect changes in policy, both policy-in-principle and policy-in-practice. As part of political process, there are questions here about how findings are analyzed and by whom, how they are presented and to whom, and how they are followed up. Some options and issues are:

- Modes of analysis and categories.
- Forms of presentation, especially maps and diagrams.
- Videos taken by and with local people.
- Poor people meeting policy-makers face-to-face in central places.
- Policy-makers meeting local people face-to-face in local places

Have you experiences and suggestions to share?

2. How better to enable trainers to facilitate attitude and behaviour change

In the PRA experience, attitude and behaviour change among facilitators and trainers has been recognized as more important than methods. An international South-South Sharing Workshop held in South India in 1996 described attitude and behavior change as the ABC of PRA (Kumar 1996), as perhaps it should be the ABC

of all participatory methodologies. Learning to unlearn, and learning not to put forward one's own ideas, not to dominate, criticize, interrupt or talk too much, not to rush or be impatient, these negatives, together with positives such as show respect, embrace error, ask them, and be nice to people (personal communication, Raul Peresgrovas), have proved key to good facilitation of analysis by others. Many professionals have been socialized into behavior that is the opposite of these. As facilitators, then, they are disabled at the start. The concern then has to be for programmes of rehabilitation to liberate them (us) from the prisons of their (our) conditioning.

There is now a wealth of experience, and a repertoire of approaches and techniques for training for ABC (see e.g. Pretty, Guijt, Thompson and Scoones 1995; Kumar 1996; Roy, Chatterjee, Yadav, Mukherjee and Bhattacharya 1997). The opportunity is further to develop and spread three sets of methods. These are for the following practices:

Exercise and sequences for use in training. Some exercises and sequences are already widely used in PRA training, for example: in role plays like "dominator" and "saboteur", leading to those words becoming part of the joking culture of a group; sequences like "what would you do if?" leading to group formation and group contracts.

Staying nights in communities. Again and again, in PRA training, there has been resistance to spending nights with communities, again and again the experience has been formative. UNDP staff have together spent days and nights with communities in India as a training experience. World Bank staff are now required to spend a week of immersion in a village or slum as part of their executive training. The significance and potential impact of this practice could easily be underestimated.

Training of trainers and styles of training. The very word "training" is a problem here, implying as it does teaching and the transfer of knowledge. Learning to improve as a trainer, largely experiential through sharing, example, and fieldwork. A basic principle is that such training must itself be participatory and experiential. Training has to become not teaching, but helping one another to experience and learn. A trainer of trainers is then herself or himself a participatory facilitator.

Going to scale demands many more trainers in participatory methodologies. The temptation and tendency is then for "cascade" training, in which trainers train trainers, or even train trainers of trainers. The ideal training, which is experiential and interactive with people in communities, is to be in some central institutes to organize. So the initial trainer is liable to be in some central place, classroom based, with lectures. This then is the imprint and culture which is passed down the cascade.

The challenge is to add to the exercises, sequences and types of experience, and to develop and spread participatory styles of training.

Have you experiences and suggestions to share?

3. How better to make normal bureaucracies more participatory

A repeated experience with PRA has been tension and contradiction between topdown bureaucratic cultures and requirements, tending as they do to standardize, simplify and control, and demands and needs generated at the local-level, tending as they do to be diverse and complex and to require local-level discretion. Participation at the grass-roots level requires participatory procedures and culture in facilitating organizations. Where these do not exist, field-level participatory processes are liable to be fragile, vulnerable and damaged by dominating modes of interaction.

The changes needed are personal, procedural and systemic (Blackburn with Holland in draft). At the personal level they include: ability to listen; reflexivity; capacity to facilitate and engage in dialogue and mutual learning; and capacity for vision. Procedurally, they include moving from product to process, new incentives for participatory behavior, and multiple feedback mechanisms including participatory monitoring and evaluation. Systemically and structurally, they include decentralized budgets and replacing targets with trust. The changes sought correspond with those advocated by some of the gurus of management, for example Tom Peters in *Thriving on Chaos* (1987) and Senge in *The Learning Organization* (1990).

In the field of development, considerable experience has been gained and analyzed (see e.g. Uphoff 1992; Thompson 1995; Leurs

1996; Adhikari *et al* 1996; Blackburn with Holland in draft), and strategies recommended. But the task remains enormous and intimidating. Where progress with bureaucratic reorientation occurs, regression to the "normal" often seems to follow. Sometimes corruption may be a part of this, where participation would mean lower incomes for government officials. So there remain daunting methodological challenges. Three in particular are the following:

1. How to conduct and report on research which identifies what really happens, especially with "rent seeking behavior" (corruption). Unless this is known, many obstacles to participation may remain hidden and ignored, with a potential for preventing change. How to achieve some of the more commonly advocated actions and conditions for change within bureaucracies, for example:
 - Continuity of commitment to participation.
 - Networking with allies.
 - Starting small and slow, and resisting pressure to scale up too fast.
 - Funding flexible without the punitive orientation of targets.
 - Accountability and transparency based on trust.
 - Training, encouraging and supporting grass-roots staff.
 - Accommodating diversity of activities at the field level.
 - Incorporating participatory monitoring and evaluation, and multiple feedback channels.
 - Incentives to reward participatory behaviour in-house and in the field.
 - Easy access to information to foster learning across organisational units.
2. How to achieve more rapid grassroots spread of participatory approaches, as often required by donors and governments, with acceptable trade-offs between quality and scale. Options to explore include lateral spread of grassroots innovations, and the routinized insertion of benign genes with self improvement built in.

Have you experiences and suggestions to share?

4. How better to build self-improvement into the spread of participatory methodologies

Of these questions, this may appear the most way out. It is whether in PRA and other participatory methodologies it is possible to sow seeds of change which will work away improving performance over the months and years. This question crosscuts the others.

The metaphors are genes and viruses. Genes are part of the core composition of an organism, reproducing similar characteristics wherever the organism develops. There is a genetic code or script which is largely unalterable. For their part viruses spread on their own, penetrating organisms that already exist. So the question is whether, either as genes inserted at the start, or as viruses spread later, there can be elements in participatory methodologies in general, and PRA in particular, which will mean that however badly things start, they will get better.

Three clusters of genes or viruses exists and could be strengthened, as follows:

1. *Field Experience*. One cluster in PRA methods and experiences. In themselves, they have a capacity to transform the mindsets, behaviours and attitudes of professionals. Here is an illustrative account, from a PRA training: "I felt that the methods were not relevant, interesting or rigorous. Then we went to the field and in the village we agreed to have positive attitudes and respect for the community. My problem was not in respecting people. I just wanted to know what we would gain from respecting people and using stones and so on. I was invited into the hut of a poor agricultural labourer in the most marginalized part of the village. We asked the old man in the hut to show the village in a sketch map and gave him some chinks. This was the turning point of my life. He started sketching the village, showing the poorest huts the only ones he knew. I was amazed to see the professional expertise with which this illiterate man used seeds and chinks. I was also impressed with the wealth of information and how he was enjoying telling people his story. I got many answers to my questions from that one day in the field". (Neela Mukherjee in Kumar 1996:20).

The PRA methods which empower local people to present and analyze their realities do, again and again, surprise them with

what they find they can do, and change the way outsiders see them and behave towards them. Thus a villager in Sinthiane, Senegal, after completing a historical matrix said: "This is just astonishing. We know each of these pieces because they are parts of our existence. But we have never thought of it all put together like this. This is our life and our history". (Quoted in K. and M. Schoonmaker Freudemberger 1994:128).

Ora Tembomvura woman, Zimbabwe, who said to Ravai Marindo (Ranganai 1996:88) after PRA modelling and diagramming: "And we thought we were so foolish because we could not write. Yet look, we had all this information inside us".

And as a facilitator, John Devavaram has written (Mascarenhas et al 1991:10), "one doesn't get bored repeating field work. It is always interesting".

2. *Reflexivity*. If PRA has a tablet of stone, it is the non tablet "Use your own best judgment at all times". To the extent that it is a system, it is self-organizing. In the spirit of Richard Forsyth's (1991) idea that each of us can design our own religion, so any practitioner can, in this ideal, evolve her or his understanding through reflection on experience. Reflexivity has been part of PRA as of other methodologies. It could, though, be more stressed and practiced, through activities like keeping diaries, reflection on experience, and sharing reflections and learning. And new forms of reflection and learning using PRA methods could be devised.

3. *Behavior and attitudes training*. The prime candidate gene is ABC-attitude and behavior change. In PRA, behavior and attitudes matter much more than the methods. But PRA training still usually stresses the methods. Often in a routinized manner. The question here is whether a core of a few ABC exercises, relatively unthreatening and easy to implement, could be identified and made a standard requirement, and embedded in PRA training for going to scale.

Such top-down standardization conflicts with PRA philosophy. But it may be a question of trade-offs. The issue is whether such a cluster of genes might work away on the trainer/facilitator as well as those trained/facilitated, with better long-term effects than other approaches.

All three clusters of genes or viruses are already there, but not yet all fully developed or used. All present scope for innovation. In itself, one cluster may not be enough.

With bad facilitation, the fulfillment and fun of field experience do not manifest themselves, and PRA can be variously rushed, rigid, routinized, and exploitative. With only reflexivity, personal dominance might not be confronted. Behavior and attitudes training without reflection might allow defences to inhibit learning and change. But together there might be a powerful synergy.

Where new training is undertaken, inserting these genes may be feasible. It is likely to be more difficult to spread them where there is already bad practice. At least partial solutions may be trainers' retreats to share experience, and general recognition that training and change should never cease.

Have you experiences and suggestions to share?

5. How better to enable people with power to find fulfillment in disempowering themselves

Perhaps the methodological challenge is to find good ways to enable powerful people to gain from disempowering themselves. For the realities of "lowers" to count, "uppers" have to hand over the stick. Changes in dominant behavior entail having respect, standing down, shutting up, and facilitating, enabling and empowering. This is the key to many changes, professional, personal and institutional.

Zero-sum thinking misleads here. We talk of giving up power, abandoning power, surrendering power, and then of gaining power, as though it were a commodity of which more was better and less worse. The reality is often different. Personal disempowerment can be a gain in several ways as follows:

- *Liberation and peace of mind.* Participatory styles and management are liberating. Centralized control of more than the minimum is stressful. Disempowerment spreads responsibility and diminishes stress. Decentralization decreases punitive management and fear. Disempowerment reduces the deceptions of "all power deceives" (Chambers 1997 ch. 5). Openness, honesty and realism make for peace of mind. When responsibility is shared and dispersed, the strain of centralized work overload and of

doing badly are diminished; the main responsibility for development is removed from overburdened shoulders, and conflict reduced by permitting and promoting local diversity.

- *Effectiveness.* Disempowerment offers new roles and new effectiveness. To facilitate participation is practical. It works. Uppers can gain from the instrumental success of the approach. There are fewer errors of standardization and control.
- *Collegiality.* Power on a pinnacle is lonely. In a participatory mode, a boss is not isolated, but a team member. Relationships are more equal, with mutual learning and partnership.
- *Fulfillment.* Disempowerment and participatory styles and management can be fulfilling. One learning from the PRA experience is how satisfying it can be to facilitate participation. This is not new; it is a rediscovery, a reaffirmation. Losses are more than compensated by gains. Indeed, the self importance and control that are "lost" are often liabilities anyway.
- *Fun.* Faced with the horrors of war and extremes of cruelty and deprivation, talk of fun seems frivolous. But fun (creativity, play, laughter, shared pleasures) are part of what most people value and wish for themselves and for others. Repeatedly, PRA experiences have been enjoyed by participants who conduct their own analysis, make their own maps and diagrams, add detail, and are creative; and have been a delight for facilitators who do not dominate but act as catalysts and find satisfaction in discovering what local people know and can do.

The key understanding is that reversals need not be threatening for uppers. Uppers who lose in one way can gain in others. Reversals of roles like "handing over the stick", enabling others, and disempowering oneself as an upper are means to responsible wellbeing, fulfillment and fun.

The challenge is to find use of more and better methods to help powerful people realize these gains. PRA has some, including field experiences. Others could be the self-improving genes. What else?

Have you experiences and suggestions to share?

QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

Is all this stuff of the real world or fantasy? Could a good repertoire of methods in any one of these domains have a huge impact? Could convergences and sharing of experiences and approaches contribute to such repertoires? Can we between us seize these opportunities in the new spaces which are opening up? Immediately and practically:

Other priorities. Are these other methodological domains with bigger potential which should take priority?

Practical help. Can you contribute ideas and experiences which will help in a practical way?

Development and spread. How could methods best be found, developed, shared and spread?

Future action. Should we try to take things forward? If not, peace. But if so, how?

FINAL REMARKS

It is a defect of this paper, for which I apologize, that it does not relate directly to other papers in this symposium. All of us are following different paths and have different preoccupations. I hope that in a spirit of pluralist convergence we will find common ground and mutual learning in our discussions.

In this paper methodology refers to a system of principles and methods. Method, refers to a way of doing something. PAR, agro-ecosystem analysis, and PRA are examples of methodologies. Semi-structured interviews, transects and matrix scoring are examples of methods.

The question of labels is difficult. PRA and its equivalents in other languages are still the terms most commonly used. So PRA is used in this paper. RRA Notes was renamed PLA Notes (participatory learning and action) in 1995 to reflect the range of approaches and applications (including urban) in contributions received. PAMFORK, the Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya, and some others, are using PMs (participatory methodologies) to embrace an even wider range.

I feel bad suggesting this as point of convergence, since I have written a book with this title. It is a "can't win". It is arrogant for

me to put this forward. At the same time, it would be wrong not to do so if it really could provide common ground. In the spirit of the one-sentence manual, "Use your own best judgment at all times", let me urge any reader to be critical, to make up her or his own mind, and above all to make better suggestions to help us forward.

For a more detailed exploration of responsible wellbeing, please see *Whose Reality Counts?* pp. 9-12, which includes equity, sustainability, capabilities and livelihoods as components of and contributors to responsible wellbeing. Examples of other experiences with going to scale are badly needed. I would appreciate sources of information on this. The Community Development movement of the 1950s ought to provide relevant lessons. There must be others, even if they have not so centrally had to confront the issues of personal behavior and attitudes, and institutional cultures.

In an earlier draft I said "We can be safe as ostriches hiding our heads in sand, avoiding the issue, or as giraffes with a lofty view, pontificating far from the ground. Or we can be vulnerable as a gazelle, committed to the middle ground and exposed to predators." The analogies do not fully work, but I did not want to lose them completely. The danger in this paper, and the temptation to be feared in the milieu of the Congress, is posturing as a grotesque ostrich-giraffe hybrid.

Examples of the differences between the realities and priorities of local people and those supposed for them by professionals can be found in *Whose Reality Counts?* (Chapters 2, 3 and 8, 174-183).

Participatory monitoring and evaluation could well have been a separate methodology for development. It has a potential for closing the participatory project cycle, referring back to and reinforcing participatory baseline analyses. See the IDS Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Pack (Mebrahtu et al 1997). Oddly, there is much writing about the concepts of participatory monitoring and evaluation but rather little actual experience reported. Priorities would seem to be writing and sharing accounts of this type in practice, and further field experimentation and development, rather than more academic and theoretical writing on the subject.

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