Sanpad.draft5.jun17.07.doc Text 11,700 words Refs 2,700 words

POVERTY RESEARCH: METHODOLOGIES, MINDSETS AND A QUIET REVOLUTION

Paper for the SANPAD Conference The Poverty Challenge 2007

Durban, South Africa 26-29 June 2007

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Abstract

Meanings of key words are defined, and some of the writer's biases noted. The underlying question of the paper is to what extent, with research on poverty, there are linkages between methodologies, mindsets, concepts and perceptions. Three streams, syndromes or paradigms are described. The first is standardised, non-contextual and quantitative and is about income poverty, Poverty Lines, statistical analysis, and questionnaire surveys. The methods and mindsets of many economists are associated with and sustain the reductionism of this approach. The second is idiosyncratic, qualitative and contextual, and is about poverty in cultures and communities as conceived and expressed through the intimate interaction of researchers and local people. The methods and mindsets of many social anthropologists are associated with and sustain the particularism of this approach. The third is participatory and interactive, and is about poverty as expressed and analysed by local people, often in groups facilitated by outsiders. The mindsets and methods of many in civil society, and increasingly of others independent of discipline, are associated with and sustain the pluralism and multidimensionality of this approach.

These three streams, syndromes or paradigms can supplement and complement each other, and do not have to be mutually exclusive. Each has strengths and weaknesses. Attempts to gain from combinations includeconstructing composite indices and mixing the quantitative and qualitative methods of the first two streams. The power and potential of participatory approaches and methodologies (PMs) go further, but have been under recognised and undervalued. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, PMs have exploded with creative diversity. Relating to poverty some are:

Participatory Poverty Assessments;
Inventions and applications including participatory numbers and statistics;
Face-to-face experiential learning; and
Local people's own research.

Practical lessons concern: innovating methods to fit specific topics and local conditions, requiring plenty of time for trials and piloting; the key importance of facilitators, their selection, training and mentoring; and behaviour, attitudes, ethics and quality.

A way forward now is for development professionals to be more courageous, inventive and reflexive in the approaches they use in research to understand the illbeing of poverty and the wellbeing to which poor people aspire. The quiet revolution to which this points demands radical change in embedded professional methods, mindsets, attitudes and behaviours. As of 2007, the seeds of such a revolution are there but scattered, threatened and vulnerable. Unfortunately for poor and marginalised people, the recognition, let

alone creation and adoption, of PMs are blocked by massive professional, academic, bureaucratic and institutional inertia. Innovation and adoption seem to vary inversely with power, with high status econometrics and the World Bank's research trapped in a sclerotic conservatism that impedes innovation and change. The challenge is to transform tertiary education, research institutes, and other citadels of professional power and knowledge, liberating them from their learning disabilities, and opening up potential for endless adventures in experiencing and learning. Success in this struggle would be a win-win: for professionals it would bring enhanced understanding and more realism and relevance to their work; and for those who suffer the multiple deprivations of poverty, more chance of a better life.

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"In some cases, the methods used to identify poverty drive the debate to such an extent that they change the way the subject is understood" (Spicker, *The Idea of Poverty* 2007: 7)

"A plague o' both your houses" (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*[i])

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!" (Wordsworth, *The Prelude*)

1. PRELIMINARIES

Context, purpose and content

For professionals concerned to understand poverty this is a brilliant time to be alive. The explosion of methodological innovation of recent years opens up almost unlimited scope for further creativity and invention. For the pioneers of discovery, the walls of the old disciplinary silos that once penned us in have fallen and there is new freedom to explore, invent and hybridise methods and methodologies and to learn experientially. At the same time, a majority of professionals and of powerful institutions remain pent in their professional prisons. Or, mixing metaphors, like dinosaurs they lumber on while new nimble creatures scuttle at their feet, proto-mammals promising another future. To what extent they can and should coexist and coevolve with the dinosaurs, and to what extent supersede them, time will show.

This paper seeks to understand what has happened and is happening with approaches, methodologies and methods for poverty research. The rate and diversity of innovation makes this impossible for me to do well. I shall start with a short historical overview, and then adopt a selective empirical approach, leaving it to others to review technical issues within the dominant paradigm of measurement[ii]. My hope is that a historical perspective will make it easier to see where we have come, where we are, and where we might now go. I shall outline and analyse some of the methods and methodologies that have emerged in the past two decades to see what they have in common, and what conditions their creation has required. This will lead into reflection about constraints, potentials and preconditions for creativity and speculation about future trajectories.

Meanings.

I am not saying that this is what these words should mean, only that these are my intended meanings in this paper.

Approach a general way of going about things. An approach is larger than a method or a methodology. Approaches can, for example, be variously reductionist, particularist, or participatory, non-contextual or contextual, or mixed method. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They can have dimensions that are methodological, behavioural and to do with relationships.

Emic expressing the views, concepts, categories and values of insiders

Etic expressing the views, concepts, categories and values of outsiders

Illbeing the experience of bad quality of life

Income-poverty poverty conceived and measured as income. For ease and accuracy of measurement, reported consumption is often taken as a proxy for income. Consumption-poverty would then be a more accurate term, but to avoid repeated qualifications in the text, income-poverty is used as a proxy for consumption-poverty

Lowers people who in a context are subordinate or inferior to uppers. A person can be a lower in one context and an upper in another

Material poverty poverty conceived as deprivation of income, wealth and physical assets such as clothes and shelter

Method a detailed way of proceeding or doing something

Methodology a system of methods and principles

Mindset the ideas, attitudes, beliefs and predispositions with which a person approaches, frames and interprets situations and experiences

Multidimensional poverty poverty conceived as having many dimensions such as material poverty, vulnerability, physical weakness, bad social relations, and powerlessness.

Normal professionalism the concepts, methods, values, and mindsets commonly manifest in a discipline or profession (such as economics, engineering, social anthropology or social work)

Paradigm a mutually supporting pattern of concepts, values, methods, behaviours, relationships and mindsets. A top-down paradigm of planning and things can be distinguished from a bottom-up paradigm of participation and people.

Particularism focusing on the particular and on contextual complexity, as in much anthropological study

Reductionism reducing the diverse and complex to the standard and simple for purposes of analysis, or studying part of systems separately from the wholes, as in much economic practice

Reflexivity self-critical epistemological awareness, the quality of reflecting on one's own mindset and predispositions and how these frame, mould and distort what is perceived and expressed

Uppers people who in a context are dominant or superior to lowers. A person can be an upper in one context and a lower in another

Vulnerability means exposure and defencelessness. It has two sides: the external side of exposure to shocks, stress and risk; and the internal side of defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss

Wellbeing the experience of good quality of life

Caveats: mindset, predispositions, limitations and scope

Self-critical epistemological awareness – being critically reflective about one's own ways of being, mindset, categories, ways of framing reality, perceptions, prejudices and predispositions – can be threatening or fun. In my case it has gradually become more fun than threat. So I can warn the reader about some of the relevant biases of which I am aware. As a lapsed biologist and historian, and now as an undisciplined social scientist, I take pleasure, and have sustained a livelihood, by looking for gaps between professional concerns and for aspects of realities that seem to have been overlooked or understudied. As my main habitat, I am liable to exaggerate the importance of such gaps and aspects, and am vulnerable to glee when I think I have found a professional omission or misperception. In my view, numbers and statistics are important, but often more flawed than their users recognise. I tend to privilege the knowledge, values and abilities of poor and excluded people over those of established groups like academics and powerful old men. I have been repeatedly astonished at the insights and capabilities of lowers that are revealed when uppers adopt participatory behaviours, attitudes, approaches and methods. I surely have other biases of which I am less aware, but these at least will show themselves in this paper. You have been warned.

The paper is also limited and biased in scope. It is about learning about, and to a lesser extent with, poor and marginalised people, about their lives, illbeing, priorities and the proximate conditions they experience. It is not about learning about the structures that make them poor and marginalised, and keep them so. It is only indirectly about the rich and powerful, arguably a higher priority for study and transformation. For this subject, there is no shortage of information: a google for *poverty research methodology* on 23 April 2007 yielded a harvest of over 8 million items. I have given most attention to participatory approaches and methods, since these are relatively recent, are continuously evolving and being invented, extend into new areas, present new findings and reveal neglected and often surprising realities. Reviews of more traditional research methods, their strengths and limitations, are not in short supply[iii], and it seems more constructive to describe and assess some of the methodological frontiers than to dwell on and in the better known and duller disciplinary heartlands or backwaters. The ingenious refinements and innovations within these areas are many, and fall within the ambit of, in Thomas Kuhn's (1962) term, normal science, that is science within an established paradigm; and should be well covered in mainstream disciplinary journals, especially in the fields of economics, medicine and [iv]anthropology. The focus is therefore more on the parallel movement of the past three decades which has evolved to become paradigmatically distinct, now associated with participatory approaches, methodologies and methods, and the concepts associated with them.

2. CONCEPTS OF POVERTY AND METHODS: THREE STREAMS

Seen historically, three streams of research approaches stand out:
Economic reductionism: quantitative, and non-contextual;
Anthropological particularism: qualitative and contextual;
Participatory pluralism
The first two are more conventional, standardised and embedded. The third is more innovative. Each has elicited and sustained its own paradigmatically distinct concept of poverty.

Any attempt to summarise the historical relationship between concepts of poverty and methods for studying poverty will oversimplify. Realities are mixed, muddled, messy and nuanced. That said, it still seems reasonably valid and useful to distinguish these three streams, noting that each has its distinctive concepts and methods: income and consumption-poverty associated with questionnaires; idiosyncratic, emic concepts of poverty associated with participant observation; and multi-dimensional poverty associated with participatory approaches. The contrast is strongest between the first and third. The older and more embedded traditional approach of questionnaires is linked with the reductionist concept of income poverty. The more recent participatory approaches with their exhilarating explosion of methods and methodologies elicit more complex and diverse systems realities of poverty as multidimensional.

(i) Economic reductionism: quantitative and non-contextual.

Income poverty: origins and spread

Those sources I have consulted on the origins of the economic, quantitative and non-contextual stream (Rein in Townsend 1970; Holman 1978; Beck 1994; and Spicker 2007) all refer to the pioneering research of Booth and Rowntree in England in the late nineteenth century. In investigating poverty in London, much of Booth's work was qualitative, but he also tried to measure it and invented the term *poverty line* (Spicker 2007: 42). Rowntree's later study in York was more quantitative, with a questionnaire household survey of 11,560 families. He used the idea of household budgets and set the pattern of the measurement of poverty primarily in terms of income[v] to the relative neglect of other aspects.

The spread of this approach was extraordinary. There have been many developments, refinements and qualifications. There can be few countries in the world that do not now have a poverty line, measured either in reported income or in reported consumption. It is pertinent then to ask why the questionnaire survey and of the concept of income-poverty became so universal around the world to the extent of being methodologically hegemonic, especially during the 1960s,1970s and 1980s. Seven reasons can be postulated:

1. The British imperial and colonial influence and influence on governments and educational systems in the Empire and Colonies, and other countries
2. The power and attraction of statistics, and their influence on policy and opinion (which both Booth and Rowntree experienced)
3. The growing authority of statisticians, statistical procedures, and concepts of scientific rigour in the professional analysis of numbers

4. The training of students in statistical, sampling and questionnaire survey methods, and the ease with which such training could be routinised, giving an easy task to teachers and providing skills to students for later employment
5. The rise and power of economists and of economics as a profession, particularly after the second world war
6. The ability of questionnaire surveys to generate poverty lines to provide comparisons between countries, between geographical and administrative regions, and between categories of people and of occupations, and, when in time series, to indicate changes over time.
7. The usefulness poverty line statistics for practical and policy purposes: they fulfil the needs of the state to simplify and count poverty in order to make it legible, enabling it to grasp a large and complex reality (Scott 1998)[vi].

The value of statistics should not be in dispute. They can enable an overview, and can permit comparisons over time and comparisons between categories of people, contexts and even countries. If they cover a range of dimensions (like infant mortality, longevity, education, access to health services and so on) they can be useful to policy-makers.

Methodology and mindsets

Methodology, professionalism, bureaucratic inertia and mindsets fit together. Questionnaire surveys as methodology provide the numbers needed for professional analysis. Bureaucratic inertia embeds and perpetuates them as practice. And mindsets seeking standard simplicity are sustained and reinforced.

It has not only been the state that has welcomed reductionist statistics. Economists have too. Thus V.M. Dandekar, for years the doyen of Indian economists

"Whichever criterion we might use to define the poor, if poor and not-poor are to be mutually exclusive classes, we must use one single definition of poverty" (Dandekar 1981: 9)

Poverty statistics derived from questionnaires have major defects. They often focus on one dimension[vii] – income or consumption poverty, and the resulting numbers are their most prominent output. Critical analysis and prescription tends to focus on sampling and sampling errors to the relative neglect of more significant non-sampling errors. Whatever their shortcomings, such surveys, like the National Sample Survey in India, have their value for making comparisons, even if these may be based on dubious data. And part of their value is providing the statistical fodder which planners and economists can analyse, almost always without the inconvenience of exposure to the realities which purport to be represented[viii]. However bad they are, numbers can be laundered, printed out and analysed. It was an economics professor from a North American university visiting Nepal who gave Gerry Gill the title for his (1993) paper "OK, The Data's Lousy, But It's All We've Got".

Questionnaires as method and income or consumption poverty as concepts probably fitted better the realities of poor people in urban London and York a century ago, many with cash incomes from one source of employment, than those of many poor people in developing countries today with multiple sources of subsistence and livelihood. Income poverty as a concept, and poverty line measures as a tool, come at a cost. They can

dominate thinking and policy. They can be brutally reductionist. They are limited to flows, not stocks. There is so much they do not capture - wealth, shelter, clothing, vulnerability, disability, access to education and services, transport and communications, or the environmental and other effects of where poor people live - which Booth saw as so significant. Nor do they touch other dimensions of illbeing like violence, insecurity, discrimination, bad gender and other social relations, or powerlessness.

Resilience, primacy and persistence

Income-poverty, is, though, resilient and maintains its primacy. Since drafting this paper, I have seen Andrew Sumner's 2007 paper "Meaning versus measurement: why do "economic" indicators of poverty still prevail?". Many reasons can be postulated:

- Most other dimensions do not have comparable statistics
- Time series data for income-poverty often go back many years
- Poverty lines based on income-poverty are already established
- National survey systems are stable and have formidable inertia. They also produce statistics which provide full employment for powerful economists
- Income-poverty is repeatedly entrenched whenever a new measure is sought – even with the Human Development Index (Sumner 2007: 10), and most powerfully in current practice in the first MDG, to halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day[ix].
- The dominance of conventional[x] economists in the World Bank and in Ministries of Finance and Planning

In dealing with the discordance between the single measure, and multidimensionality, economists muster a sleight of hand or mind. They acknowledge some of the other dimensions, and then ignore them. This is not a new phenomenon. Gunnar Myrdal, himself an economist, noted:

"In presenting their concepts, models and theories, economists are regularly prepared to make the most generous reservations and qualifications – indeed to emphasize that in the last instance development is a "human problem" …Having thus made their bow to what they have become accustomed to call the "non-economic" factors, they thereafter commonly proceed as if those factors did not exist" (Myrdal 1970: 28-29)

Thus Montek Ahluwalia wrote for India (1986: 72): "A comprehensive assessment of the living conditions of the poor, and changes over time, must encompass not only consumption levels, but also health, longevity, security in both health and consumption levels, and, of course, access to public goods such as drinking water and education". But he then pointed out that

".,,,time series data on all of these dimensions are not available. Data from a series of consumption surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation..are available, and these data have been used in most of the studies of rural poverty in India" (ibid 59)

This led him into forms of syntax in which "poverty" meant having low reported per capita consumption. When this slide of meaning takes place, poverty is then not what people living in poverty experience. Nor does it reflect the expression of their priorities.

Poverty is economic, to do with reported income or consumption. The prescriptions then tend to be economic, buttressing and justifying policies of economic growth. Those who plough this furrow dig themselves into a reductionist rut. Wider and more complex realities disappear out of sight and out of mind. As the naughty verse has it:

Economists have come to feel
What cant be counted isnt be real
The truth is always an amount
Count numbers, only numbers count

Poverty becomes what has been measured.

(ii) Anthropological particularism: qualitative and contextual

For a long time, economics on the one hand, and most other social sciences, especially social anthropology on the other, followed largely independent trajectories. For social anthropologists defining and measuring poverty were not priorities. Their main concern was with observing and interpreting social relations and behaviour, and their method participant observation. When they used the word *poverty* it was with an idiosyncratic, locally and culturally specific meaning, influenced by the interaction of context and their own conceptual framework. For Margaret Haswell, working with an agricultural society in West Africa "Fundamentally, the nature of poverty can be defined as that point at which there occurs an imbalance between man and land of such an order that men can no longer rely upon the natural fertility of the land for their survival" (Haswell 1975: 71). Richard Waller (1999) in his essay on "Pastoral Poverty in Historical Perspective"started with pastoralists' own discourse on poverty and description of who is poor. Other writers, like Polly Hill writing on Ghana (1977), did not find it necessary to define poverty but rather implicitly combined local meanings with common ideas about deprivation. Others simply found definition unnecessary. In these traditions, poverty has been understood as a varying and often indeterminate blend of emic and etic non-numerical concepts.

(iii) Participatory pluralism:

The oppositions between approaches that were macro, economic, quantitative, and based on large-scale questionnaires, and those that were micro, anthropological, qualitative and based on participant observation, were presented sharply and analysed eruditely in Pranab Bardhan`s book (1989) Conversations between Economists and Anthropologists. And in that book John Harriss, an anthropologist, headed his chapter with "a plague o' both your houses." The defects and limitations of both approaches were well known, well documented, and recognised as serious. But the other ways of finding out had been pioneered in the 1970s and 1980s were little recognised among academic elites and not named in the index of that book. These other ways were a third stream born of frustration with traditional questionnaires and with anthropology. They were already well established among practitioners. Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), drawing especially on semi-structured interviewing (Grandstaff and Grandstaff 1987) and agro-ecosystem analysis (Conway 1985) came of age with an international conference in 1985 (Khon Kaen University 1987), with practice and theory linked to a repertoire of methods for finding out more quickly and accurately, and so for practical purposes more cost-effectively.

In the very late 1980s and early 1990s, mainly in India, RRA evolved into Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in which local people, usually in small groups, expressed and analysed their realities through maps, matrices and other diagrams using visuals and tangibles often on the ground. The behaviour, attitudes and mindset of facilitators were crucial. The outcomes were many, with much abuse of the approach and methods as they spread, but also with brilliant innovations.

The approach was participatory: local people, especially those who were excluded and marginalised, like women, people of low caste, dalits or tribals who were marginal were encouraged and enabled to express their realities and priorities jointly; interaction between them generated cumulative group-visual synergy[xi] and cross-checking; and the emergent expression of realities was bridging in the sense that it did not need to polarise qualitative and quantitative.
The approach was also pluralist with a philosophy of "sharing without boundaries" (Absalom et al 1995).

The realities that manifested and were made visible with participatory approaches transcended reductionism and particularity. When facilitated well primacy was accorded to the expression of their emic realities by lowers minimising the imposition of the etic frames of meaning of uppers. The word poverty itself was challenged, and its hegemony as a concept and category when translated from dominant into subordinate languages. The concerns of poor and marginalised people that came to light were less "poverty", and more reducing illbeing and the bad life they sought to escape and enhancing wellbeing and the experience of the good life to which they aspired. When these priorities were expressed, reductionism was replaced by multidimensionality and particularism by commonalities[xii].

3. BEYOND REDUCTIONISM AND PARTICULARISM: MULTIDIMENSIONALITY, MERGING AND MIXING

Before considering participatory pluralism, there are three complementary and linked trends to be recognised: conceptually, the shift towards a multidimensional view of what is still called poverty; the merging of dimensions in composite indices; and methodologically what are now known as mixed methods.

Multidimensionality

Multidimensionality has always been recognised, including by Booth and Rowntree. The post second world war mantra was to fight not just poverty but the three evils of "poverty, ignorance and disease". For some, the multidimensionality of poverty was so self-evident that it did not need discussion. Charles Elliott, an economist and writing in a tradition of political economy, said in the opening sentences of his book Patterns of Poverty in the Third World

"The basic configuration of world poverty is well known. Although the detailed statistics are unreliable, the services of a statistician are not required to establish that the majority of mankind is ill-fed, ill-housed, under-educated, and prey to preventable disease" (1975: 1)

This was then an adequate basis for his analysis of the nature and causes of inequality and social stratification.

At the same time, in powerful institutions – the World Bank, the IMF, and Ministries of Finance - primacy has tended to be accorded to income and consumption poverty. This is illustrated by the opening words of the Overview of the 1990 World Development Report on poverty.

"During the past three decades the developing world has made enormous *economic* progress. *This can be seen most clearly in the rising trend for incomes and consumption*: between 1965 and 1985 consumption per capita in the developing world went up by almost 70 per cent. Broader measures of well-being *confirm* this picture – life expectancy, child mortality and educational attainment have all improved markedly" (*my emphasis*)

The picture is defined by incomes and consumption. Broader measures confirm. The WDR 1990 does have one of its nine chapters on delivering services to the poor and another on transfers and safety nets; but the rest and the underlying and encompassing frame are economic, with poverty defined in income and consumption terms. With the Copenhagen Social Summit in 1995 this was decisively broadened and the term multidimensionality came into the mainstream, to become later a major theme of the WDR 2000/01 Attacking Poverty, which was informed by the Voices of the Poor research (see below). That WDR opened with the words:

"Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being. But what precisely is deprivation? The voices of poor people bear eloquent testimony to its meaning…To be poor is to be hungry, to lack shelter and clothing, to be sick and not cared for, to be illiterate and not schooled. But for poor people, living in poverty is more than this. Poor people are particularly vulnerable to adverse events outside their control. They are often treated badly by the institutions of state and society and excluded from voice and power in those institutions" (WDR 2000: 15)

and the major sections of the report are on opportunity, empowerment and security[xiii]. Since then, vulnerability, which overlaps with the security concern, has become a major area of research, a concept and reality often overlapping with but clearly distinguished from poverty. Webs of deprivation have been described, one with five, one with ten (Narayan et al 2000), and one with twelve dimensions (Chambers in press). The multidimensionality of poverty was the theme of the launch conference of the UNDP International Poverty Centre in Brasilia in 2005 (Kakwani and Silber in press).

Merging: composite indices

One response to multidimensionality has been to invent composite numerical indices. These are necessarily limited to dimensions for which there are statistics. Sumner (2007: 10) has listed some of these composites: the Physical Quality of Life Index, the Combined Quality of Life Indices, the Human Suffering Index, the UNRISD Level of Living Index, the General Index of Development and Socioeconomic Index, the Food Security Index of IFAD, the Integrated Poverty Index, the Basic Needs Index, Women's Status Index and Relative Welfare Indicator, WHO Quality of Life Indicators, the Combined Consumption Level Index, the Real Index of Consumption, the Index of Economic Well-being, and the Human Freedom Index. The best known and most influential are those developed and popularised through the UNDP's Human Development Reports. These have potential variously to correct the macro- economic and income-poverty biases of World Bank's analyses. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite of per capita GDP and

indices for life expectancy and education, but according to Sumner still gives primacy to GDP per capita. This composite index has been used widely, with not only national but also subnational applications, for example in Indian states with their own HDIs. And yet another, again originating in the Human Development Report, is the Human Poverty Index.

For all their value for comparing regions, countries, and areas within countries, a weakness of these indices is what they cannot or cannot easily and realistically include: vulnerability – hard to measure meaningfully; social relations, especially those of gender; seasonal deprivation; subordination and exploitation; and powerlessness.

Mixing methods

Another response has been to mix methods. Mixed methods refers to combinations of qualitative (qual) and quantitative (quant), of contextual and non-contextual. Three good sources are: Booth et al eds Participation and Combined Methods in African Poverty Assessment: Renewing the Agenda (1998) which reviews the weaknesses of "single-stranded methods" and the evolving agenda; Kleih and Wilson eds Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Survey Work (2001), a rich source on practical methodological issues; and Kanbur ed Q-Squared: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods of Poverty Appraisal (2003) which publishes 21 analytical contributions to a workshop held at Cornell.

Three types of qual/quant combinations have been described (Marsland et al 2001: 7): *merging* – swapping tools and participatory attitudes; *sequencing*, with qual informing quant, or quant raising questions for qual to investigate; and *mixed suite*, with concurrent use of tools from the different traditions. Practised thus separately and/or in sequence some of the more common combinations and complementarities are:

- Qual to identify hypotheses or questions for quant to test or explore
- Qual to identify and explore what quant will miss, or that quant cannot broach
- Qual to crosscheck and correct quant, and calibrate degrees of error
- Qual to probe causalities, including illuminating correlations from quant

- Quant (where there are time series) to identify trends in whatever dimensions are measured
- Quant to provide cross-section comparisons between different individuals, households, groups and communities, and across regions, countries and continents
- Quant to provide estimates of prevalences and distributions within population areas
- Quant to triangulate with qual

In recent years, it has become increasingly widespread good practice to combine qual and quant, often with a participatory element (see for example Adato et al 2007; Howe and McKay 2007; Parker and Kozel 2007; Place et al 2007). This can occur in many ways. A promising mixed suite practice has been Kay Sharp's (2007: 275) inclusion of proportional piling in the sequence of a household questionnaire survey in Ethiopia.

One of the drivers has been practical. Identifying the food insecure with conventional surveys is slow, expensive and inefficient. The Directors- General of IFPRI and ICRISAT

wrote in 1997 that "Most indicators traditionally used to identify food-insecure and undernourished households and individuals are based on the time-consuming process of assessing household consumption (by measuring total expenditures, for example) or the nutritional status of individuals" and pointed to the need of project managers for new more cost-effective indicators, which mixed qualitative and quantitative research had sought to identify (Chung et al 1997). As with the evolution of RRA, inventiveness has been driven by practical need.

Participatory Approaches: pluralist, creative and diverse

These mixed methods are part of the astonishing explosion of methodological creativity of the past dozen years or so. Often they have elements which are participatory and largely unrecognised by mainstream institutional and academic research. Much of this relates to poverty. The strongest combinations in poverty research have been where qual and quant have been combined with participatory. This is a major finding from Participation and Combined Methods in African Poverty Assessment: Renewing the Agenda (Booth et al 1998).

The review that follows is selective. It presents but a fraction of the field. It has three purposes: to give an idea of what has been and can be done; to encourage others to break out of the old mould and adopt, adapt and invent for themselves methods such as these; and to provide material for comparative analysis to understand better the nature of the creativity and diversity which they represent.

Participatory approaches to research on poverty can be separated into four clusters, though in practice these overlap: participatory poverty assessments (PPAs); inventions and applications; face-to-face experiential learning; and local people's research.

1. Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs)

A participatory poverty assessment has been described (Norton with others 2001) as an instrument for including poor people's views in the analysis of poverty and the formulation of strategies to reduce it through public policy[xiv]. The first PPA in Africa was in Ghana in 1993 (Dogbe 1998) followed by Zambia (World Bank 1994; Milimo et al 1998). Both these used PRA methods. The third, in South Africa in 1995 (May et al 1998) was unusual in inviting contributions from NGOs and researchers who then used different methods, from PRA (Texeiro and Chambers 1995) to individual life histories and others. These first three African PPAs were qualitative, very open-ended and did not seek to generate numbers. Later PPAs, in Tanzania and Kenya, were designed with a degree of standardisation and produced some statistics[xv]. UPPAP (the Uganda Participatory Policy Process) drew on lessons from earlier PPAs, went through two rounds, and attracted a lot of international interest in the North[xvi] as well as the South (Bird and Kakande 2001; Robb 2002: 154-162). A PPA approach was used in South London in the UK, with striking findings about deprivation (Cornwall 1997). By 2007 hundreds of PPAs have been carried out, in all continents except presumably Antarctica, and at subnational as well as national levels.

The insights and policy impact of PPAs have been considerable. They have repeatedly drawn attention to aspects of deprivation to which poor people gave higher priority than those of the dominant professional perceptions and policies. For example, the South

African PPA identified and named time poverty (now more often referred to as poverty of time) as a deprivation especially of women.[xvii] Reviews (World Bank 1996; Booth et al 1998) of African PPAs found strongly and repeatedly:

- Physical isolation as a key factor in access to services and markets
- A sense of isolation, from services, markets, government institutions and information
- Seasonality of access and vulnerability
- Differential vulnerability among different categories of people
- The importance of water supplies
- Security of life and livelihood as a primary concern
- Access to curative health care as a consistently high priority
- Local visions of poverty relating to community norms (e.g. dignity and self-respect)
- Hunger and dietary inadequacy as a distinct dimension of deprivation
- The decline of traditional – and insufficiency of alternative – safety nets

A PPA-style project, at first known as Consultations with the Poor, and later as Voices of the Poor, was conducted in 1999 in 23 countries in preparation for and to influence and to contribute to the World Development Report 2000/2001 (Narayan et al 2000). Over 20,000 men and women were involved in focus group discussions and analysis. It used a methodology (Shah 1999) that was framed around four issues – wellbeing and illbeing, problems and priorities, the role of institutions, and gender relations. It was designed to cover those topics but to be very open-ended. The findings presented daunting problems of analysis which I have discussed elsewhere (Chambers 2002). Striking commonalities were found between the very diverse groups and contexts concerning wellbeing and illbeing, social relations, places of the poor, relations with state and other institutions, the importance of health and the body, and insecurity.

The methodology, devised specially for the Voices of the Poor, has never, to my knowledge, been used again, nor has this model for comparative poverty research been tried again. It could be used on a much smaller scale, and in my view has much to commend it.

2. *Inventions and applications: some examples*

There have been innumerable inventions and applications, and they continue to multiply and diversity. Those that follow are no more than illustrations.

Wealth ranking and wellbeing grouping

Wealth ranking has an earlier history in social anthropological practice but was first popularised through the work of Barbara Grandin (1988). It was adopted and adapted in early PRA (see e.g. RRA Notes 18, June 1993). .In the 1990s it spread widely among NGOs like ActionAid, and then Plan International. In a participatory mode it often became wellbeing grouping, as local analysts sorted household cards into piles, using criteria broader than and different from wealth. More recently it has become a common feature of poverty research. At the Toronto Conference of May 2004 on *Q-Squared in Practice: experiences combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 8 of the 14 papers

selected from some 60 submissions, reported on research which had used wealth or wellbeing ranking or grouping.

Inter-community commensurability was thought for a time to pose insuperable obstacles. Where comparisons were made, as in the Kenya PPA, they were questioned on the grounds that communities could not be expected to have the same cut off points. This was until a breakthrough in South Africa where a novel participatory wealth ranking process has been evolved and applied to almost 10,000 households to assess the number of poor households and their level of poverty (Simanowitz and Nkuna 1998; Simanowitz et al 2000; Hargreaves et al 2007). Qualitative and quantitative data have been combined to increase comparability across contexts, with local perceptions of poverty formally used to generate a wealth index of asset indicators. The information from many rankings was used to determine indicators that were consistent between rankings. These were then used to classify households into socioeconomic welfare rankings and to assign poverty lines. The outcome was "a rich appraisal of the prevalence and depth of poverty" and of its indicators with policy relevance (Hargreaves et al 1 2007:224).

Food security in Malawi

In Malawi, the Targeted Inputs Programme sought to provide agricultural inputs to those who were poorer. To answer the question "Did the intervention succeed in targeting the poor?" three categories of households were identified by participatory processes in communities: food secure – having enough to eat throughout the year from harvest to harvest; food insecure – having enough food to last from harvest to Christmas but not between Christmas and the next harvest (in April/May); and extremely food insecure – having a longer period of not having enough to eat. Each household in the villages visited by the study was classified into one of these categories. The study also recorded which households had received the input package or not. The comparison between food security category and receipt or non-receipt of inputs is shown in Table

Food security Status	TIP Recipients	Non – recipients	Total
Food secure	21.2	33.5	28.9
Food insecure	38.5	39.7	39.3
Extremely food insecure	40.3	26.8	31.8
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Levy 2003: 22

Through participatory mapping and discussion of cards the study explored reasons for inclusion and exclusion, why poor people were not being reached, and other dimensions most of which the researchers considered would have been impossible to research using a household survey (Barahona and Levy 2007: 336)

The stages of progress method

The Stages of Progress method was evolved and invented by Anirudh Krishna in Rajasthan. It has now been applied in five contexts – in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh in India, and in Kenya, Uganda and Peru (Krishna 2004, 2005, 2006) . Representative groups in communities are asked to define stages of progress that poor households

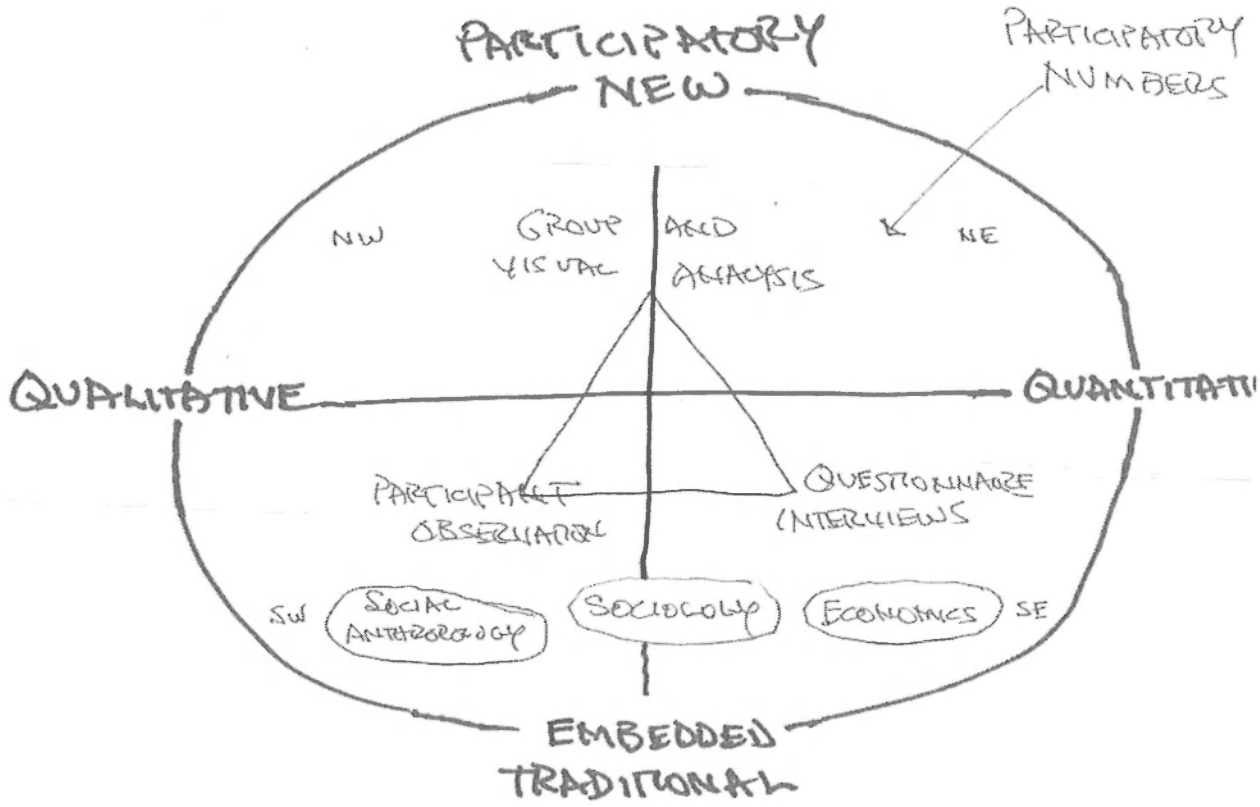
typically follow on their pathways out of poverty. These are defined in terms of the sequence of what they spend on, food always coming first. Participatory classification of households according to the stages they are at, and where they were 25 years earlier, combined with household histories, give insights into why some progress and others fall back. Numbers are generated for those that have risen and fallen, and unlike conventional panel data, the reasons for rising or falling are identified. "..because Stages is easy to apply, enjoyable in practice, and its logic is intuitively clear, it can help community groups undertake analyses by themselves"[xviii]. The findings have policy implications. The most striking has been that in all but one context, poor health and health-related expenses have been the most common reason associated with falling into poverty, having been identified as a factor in from 60 to 88 per cent of cases in the five contexts (Krishna 2006: 16].

Participatory Numbers and Statistics

Participatory approaches in research are commonly equated with the qualitative, the NW quadrant in the figure. Over the past decade and a half there have been innumerable examples, some of them mentioned above, of numbers and statistics being generated through participatory approaches and methods, in the NE quadrant[xix] .

FIGURE 6.1.

DIMENSIONS OF METHODOLOGY AND OUTCOMI



Local people can generate numbers by counting, calculating, measuring, estimating (often associated with comparing and relative proportions), and valuing, using a wide range of methods, many of them associated with PRA like social mapping, matrix scoring and pile sorting. The resulting "alternative statistics" (Archer and Newman 2003: NO16) can be empowering, especially in dealing with officialdom. Local people can also use GIS

(Geographic Information Systems) and GPS (Geographic Positioning Systems): there has been an astonishing evolution and spread of Participatory GIS in recent years, with many applications including empowering people to defend their lands and forests against corporations and loggers[xx].

In the context of poverty, illbeing and wellbeing, many examples of numbers generated through participatory processes could be cited– a study of service utilisation in over 130 villages in Nepal (ActionAid Nepal 1992), a study of responses to drought in 20 districts in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi (Eldridge 1998) or the Guatemala study of violence which led to a table derived from 176 focus group listings showing frequency of mention of 22 strategies for coping with violence (Moser and McIlwaine 2001: 140). In the UNDP Participatory Poverty Assessment in Bangladesh (UNDP 1996) statistics were generated from focus groups indicating the ranked priorities of poor urban and rural women and men. The iconic example is the Malawi census. The official census gave a rural population of 8.5 million. When this was disputed, statisticians well versed in participatory approaches and methods took a representative sample of 54 rural villages, and combined participatory social mapping and a short questionnaire with brief household visits. When extrapolated, the estimated rural population was 11.52 million, some 36 per cent higher (Barahona and Levy 2003 and 2007).

This extraordinary opening up of participatory statistics has been largely unrecognised, let alone adopted, blanked out as it has been by disciplinary blinkers, institutional inertia, and power structures, and the reflexes and habits they sustain. This failure of recognition and adoption has been especially marked in research conducted by or sponsored by the World Bank, dominated as it is by macro economists and framed to fit their mindsets and feed their traditional modes of analysis. But what has happened, and what we now know to be possible, leads to asking, again and again, "is your questionnaire really necessary?", "is your questionnaire the best way of learning?" and beyond these "who learns?". The evidence is now massive that poor people, with sensitive and light facilitation, have far greater capabilities to generate numbers than normal professionals have supposed, that their numbers are usually more accurate, and that participatory numbers can be tools for empowerment and social justice.

3. face-to-face experiential learning

The third approach to learning about poverty has been experiential, face-to-face. This has taken three main forms: immersions; total participatory research; and life histories. And combinations have been made of all three.

Immersions[xxi]

Immersions (Eyben 2004; Irvine et al 2004, 2006) are when a person who is not poor spends time living hosted by a family in a poor community, usually for at least two or three days and nights, and often for longer, usually with a period of preparation beforehand, and another for reflection afterwards. Immersions have a prehistory, but have only begun to spread significantly in the past decade. Pioneers have included Karl Osner who initiated the Exposure and Dialogue Programme (EDP) in the mid-1980s. Over 50 EDPs for senior politicians, administrators, church people and others, mainly from Germany, have taken place in numerous countries. The World Bank under James Wolfensohn initiated a programme of immersions for senior staff, hundreds of whom have

taken part. Increasing numbers of organisations are using immersions for the selection and/or orientation of new staff: the Trade Union SEWA (The Self-Employed Women's Association) and the NGO PRADAN, both in India, among others. ActionAid International is practising and organising immersions in at least eight countries. UKZN, here in Durban, organised an immersion in February this year (pers. comms, Nompumelelo Danisa and Imraan Valodia). And the NGO PRAXIS in India is setting up a website for sharing insights and experiences[xxii]. Perhaps most significantly, Sida has adopted immersions for its staff as a policy. Immersions seem to be gradually taking off to become a movement[xxiii].

Immersions would not conventionally be classified as a research method or approach. This is in part because of the traditional idea that research should be focused, objective, detached and dispassionate, with preset objectives or hypotheses. In contrast, immersions are open-ended, experiential, face-to-face, interactive, and human.

The learning may be translated to an intellectual and policy level. The classic and best known immersion is that of Ravi Kanbur in India in 1999. His account was read widely round the world, and fed into and influenced the World Development Report which he was leading. In 2004, the Cornell economist Gary Fields (one of the authors of the 1990 WDR) had an immersion with SEWA. He had feared that according to the standard labour economics model, the minimum wage might harm the very people, in this case self-employed women, it was meant to help. But through exposure to their context he revised his view, learning that it could and did benefit them as an aspirational target (Fields 2004). Beyond such specifics, the most significant changes come through the personal learning that comes from living and being with poor people. As Taaka Awori, the Country Director of ActionAid Ghana, put it after her immersion in a community in Northern Ghana:

The immersion has helped me grow as a development practitioner but more importantly as a person. It was a very different way of learning for me because I learnt experientially. In that sense, all of me was learning, not just my mind as is usually the case. The immersion allowed me to stop analysing people living in poverty as objects of development but rather to just be with them and allow the learning to emerge.

The human and emotional aspect is important. In conventional science, emotion is believed to distract and distort. In experiential learning it is integral, for it is the whole person, not just the mind, that is learning. The amateur video made by ActionAid International staff in April this year in Western Kenya, recording their experience of living for three days with people affected by HIVAIDS, uses banner headlines like EMOTION and ANGER (AAI 2007). The experience made a deep personal and professional impact, and provoked heart-searching, challenging priorities and practices. There were insights relevant to policy and practice; but perhaps more important was the explosive frustration felt and the passion, energy and commitment that followed.

Total participatory research.

Views of the Poor is the title of a report subtitled "The perspective of Rural and Urban Poor in Tanzania as recounted through their stories and pictures" (SDC 2003) (Jupp 2003)[xxiv]. This was intense and total participatory research, an immersion experience for staff of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and of their partners.

The aim was to gain a better understanding of those who were very poor, and to strengthen SDC's poverty focus. After training in participatory research methods, the staff spent a full day each with a very poor family, living and working with them, leaving their hands free by taking no notes. The researchers were shocked. After the experience, some needed counselling. The learning and personal impact were strong and a year later found to have lasted. In some of their words:

I could not believe that the family only had one broken hoe to cultivate with. It was like trying to dig with a teaspoon. I will never forget that

The image of the baby crying all day with hunger will always be with me

I've worked in rural villages for more than twenty years, but I have never had an experience like this

Even village leaders could not tell you what we experienced for ourselves

We heard untold stories. It was an eye-opener as families shared their problems that would never be aired in group meetings. They treated us like confidantes.

Listening, and life stories of people living in poverty

Oral histories have a long pedigree. More recent is the practice of empathetic interaction and listening as a source of insight, personal learning and inspiration. Harsh Mander's (2001) Unheard Voices: stories of forgotten lives is about

"real-life stories of forgotten women and men, girls and boys, in contemporary India. These are invisible people who in many ways, have been pushed to the extreme edges of society in the name of development and change. Their narratives show not only how they survive and cope; they bring out their endeavour to overcome, with rare and humbling courage, resilience, optimism, humanism and hope."

Those who tell their stories are street children, sex workers, women, dalit and tribal survivors of atrocities, riot victims, especially women, homeless and destitute people, scavengers of night soil, and those living with leprosy and HIV. In the same spirit and genre, ActionAid researchers in Asia listened to and recorded 250 life stories in Vietnam, Pakistan, Nepal, India and Bangladesh. The volume Listening to People Living in Poverty (Parasuraman et al 2003)[xxv] presents 29 of these, and analyses what they show and what can be drawn from them. As the authors accurately say " this book presents quintessentially the worm's eye view of the experiences of poverty and its impact, against the bird's eye view that dominates the present discourses on poverty."

Kumaran, one of the researchers, concludes his powerful paper Listening as a Radical Act (2003: 14) by saying that " Life story collection is much more than a research method. It is an attitude of mind, a disposition of heart…..by privileging this method of collecting data, we have given legitimacy and significance to different ways of being a researcher and a person. Soon the alternative ways of doing research may come to complement other conventional ways, and hopefully create a radically new development researcher…""

A question for all of us who are engaged with research, writing, analysis and policy concerning poverty, is whether combinations of these three approaches - immersions, total participatory research, and listening to stories as a radical act - should be integral to our personal and professional learning. This is a far cry from Poverty Lines. But we can ask whether we need to offset the depersonalising and distancing of conventional research by privileging these other approaches. Arguably, they have their own rigour, they add a new depth, they involve us more as people. The authors of Listening to People Living in Poverty provoke and challenge us with their reflection that (p 26):

"In a world overwhelmed by bits of floating information, introducing emotions into the reflective process frees meaning-making in creative ways"

People's research: whose research and for whom?

The major objective of poverty research may be for outsiders to gain knowledge and understanding. This is classic normal extractive professional practice. The aim of such research may be to change things for the better. But it may make no direct difference to those who are "respondents". Much of the most promising and pathbreaking research of recent years, as outlined above, has been, in contrast, with the active participation of poor people themselves. Often this has been, at least at first, with external facilitation and support. The ancestry of people's own research includes John Gaventa's (1980) seminal study Power and Powerlessness: Rebellion and Quiescence in an Appalachian Valley which describes how poor communities were enabled to do their own research on toxic waste dumped on their land. In agriculture and natural resource management, there have been many examples such as Farmer Field Schools, Integrated Pest Management (Dilts 2001) in Latin America CIALs (Comite de Investigacion Agricola Local) in which farmers conduct their own research. Though not directly related to poverty and illbeing, these have shown the great capacity that committed local people have for conducting their own investigations and analysing and acting on their own data. Similarly, the Reflect movement, now in over 60 countries, encourages local groups of poor people to review their situation and to research and analyse it, often using PRA methods (archer and Newman 2003; archer and Goreth 2004; Archer in press). The Views of the Poor research included PRA methods with which poor people did their own analysis, for example though mapping, listing, ranking and scoring, time lines and trend analysis, flow diagrams, and children's drawings. People were given disposable cameras to take photographs of what was significant in their lives, and these were later displayed as an exhibition in Bern (pers. comm.. Dee Jupp). Participatory video (PV) has also spread very widely in the past few years (Satheesh 1999; Lunch and Lunch 2006). One of its seedbeds was videos made by poor women in rural India. Though they could not read or write, they became skilled professionals and went on to teach PV to others in India and other countries.

The question to ask, then, and repeatedly, is whose research is it? Conducted by whom? For whom? And if the answer is "our" research, for "us" to benefit "them", it can always be asked – are there ways they could conduct the research, learn from and own the outcomes, and be empowered to act on them? In the 2000s we know enough about participatory approaches and methods to recognise that the answer can much more often be that there are such ways, than it would have been in earlier decades. Sarah Levy (in press) presents a persuasive case for locally-owned information systems in the 21st century, with local resource centres to empower local communities and groups, informing them, and enabling them to take local action and to claim rights[xxvi]. The questions Whose

knowledge counts? Whose research counts? and Whose reality counts? are about power and agency. Instrumentally as well as ethically, they point towards transformations of power relations in research. That is a challenge indeed.

5. PARADIGMATIC AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Paradigmatic

The contrast between reductionist and standardised concepts and methods, and concepts and methods that are participatory and pluralist has paradigmatic and practical implications for what should be done. With the first go top-down approaches. These can work to a degree as with the green revolution and some of the measures advocated by Jeffrey Sachs such as immunisation and mosquito nets. These can be effective where a standard and robust input fits a uniform receiving environment – the HYV input package on flat irrigated fields, vaccinations into the homeostatically controlled and highly standardised inside of the human body, and less certainly nets as barriers between people and mosquitoes. But these approaches do not work, or do not work well, with local conditions that are complex, diverse, dynamic, uncontrollable and unpredictable (Chambers 1997: 70-4, 103, 162-3, 187). These demand bottom-up approaches which encompass, express and fit local conditions.

Suffice it here to note the relevance here of the principles of the theories of chaos (Gleick 1988), complexity (Waldrop 1994), and emergence (Johnson 2001), summarised as deep simplicity (Gribbin 2004). In particular, theoretical understandings of SOSOTEC - self-organising systems on the edge of chaos -resonate with practices of local diversity and creativity, and the invention and application of methods context by context, and purpose by purpose. [xxvii]

Practical Lessons and Reflections

A lot of experience has now been gained in how to evolve and apply participatory approaches and methods. Here are some emergent practical lessons and reflections.

1. ***Local fit.***

Sarah Levy (in press) argues that for the locally-owned information systems she advocates, we need to develop methodologies

" to reform out-of-date over-centralised information collection systems…If we want to empower poor people to take part in reducing poverty and promoting development, we must end the monopoly of information by central governments. The development of participatory methods capable of producing local as well as national statistics mean that the potential now exists, even in remote and marginalised communities, for people to produce their own information. The results have the potential to be more reliable than those produced by outsiders"

2 Long gestation, innovation, piloting and continuing evolution

Participatory methodologies for local fit and specific purposes can rarely if ever be plucked off a shelf. Typically, they have to be evolve, often with combinations of creativity, trial, error and improvisation. The Voices of the Poor methodology (Shah 1999) came out of a brainstorming workshop, a piloting of a draft methodology in

Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bolivia and India, and a further workshop which reviewed the experience and agreed the basics of the methodology. The Stages of Progress Method reveals the difficulties that can be faced. Anirudh Krishna went into the field in rural Rajasthan seeking to understand why some but not other households had been able to escape from poverty and why others fell into it. Panel data would have required a gap of seven or eight years. He sought an alternative

"It took six months of field research, including four months experiencing nothing but failure, before a potentially workable methodology started taking shape. These initial formulations, implemented in the first Rajasthan study (Krishna 2003; 2004), were successively improved upon in additional studies, undertaken with research partners and community groups in other parts of India and later in Kenya, Uganda, Peru and North Carolina, USA" (Krishna 2006: 3)

Those participatory methodologies through which local people analyse their own realities and which have spread widely have typically had long gestation periods, with much experimentation. Reflect was grown out of a combination of Freirian consciencisation and the PRA approach and methods. It was piloted for weeks and months first in Uganda, then Bangladesh and then El Salvador, with many changes, and now continues to evolve and take different forms in over 350 organisations in over 60 countries (Archer in press). Stepping Stones (Welbourn in press) is another case. Accounts of the Internal Learning System (Nandago in press, Narendranath in press, Nandago in press) and the Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) (Mayoux in press) also illustrate the way in which successful participatory methodologies continuously evolve and are adapted to local and institutional conditions and priorities.

3 ***Training and mentoring of facilitators***

"Asked who are the most important persons in the development, spread and evolution of high quality participatory methodologies, without hesitating I will respond "The Facilitator" (Nandago, in press)

Repeatedly, accounts of these methodologies emphasis the importance of training and mentoring facilitators. For the wealth ranking in South Africa (Simanowitz et al 2000), for Reflect (Nandago in press), for Stepping Stones, and for ILS the training and mentoring of facilitators is stressed. For the Voices of the Poor, the selection and training of facilitators, much of it carried out by one person, was crucial to the success of the methodology. For the Stages of Progress method, Krishna (2006: 3-4) writes this:

"Because so much depends upon the quality of interviewing – and upon combining carefully results derived separately from individual interviews and community groups – training is a very important aspect of this methodology. Training for a period of ten days was built in at the start of this exercise in each study site. Following three days of classroom discussions and simulation, the study teams would go out to conduct practical exercises with the methodology, first in one set of communities and following feedback and discussions, in a second set of communities. I remained with the study teams for additional periods of up to two weeks, working with them and watching them as they worked, and developing, in discussion with them, further refinements to these methods"

The disappointing performance of some large programmes, like the Watershed Programmes in India, can in part be attributed to poor selection, inappropriate training and lack of mentoring of facilitators. Not everyone can be a good facilitator. Participatory poverty research demands sensitivity to poor people. Selection of facilitators, the depth and intensity of their training, and the closeness and quality of the mentoring and support they receive, are conditions for good performance with all participatory methodologies, but especially those involving poor people.

4. Behaviour, attitudes, ethics and quality

In participatory research, ethics, behaviour, attitudes and quality are indissolubly linked. There is a profoundly personal dimension to quality. Arguably, this is true of all research that involves personal interaction, including extractive questionnaire surveys. With participatory research, however, the quality of the relationship is more central. Where the outside researcher is more a facilitator, where it is joint insider-outsider research, even more where the research and analysis are by the insiders, the behaviour and attitudes of the outsider are key to quality. From a purely practical point of view, unless there is respect, empathy and trust, quality will suffer. But this is approaching from the wrong end. With participatory approaches, ethics have to come first. There have been endless abuses, especially of PRA, using the methods exploitatively, taking people's time, and raising their expectations. This is both wrong and ultimately self-defeating. A fundamental of respect is awareness of the other and behaving in ways which do not exploit but enhance, which do not just extract but empower. As Sarah White and Jethro Pettit say in their paper "Participatory methods and the measurement of well-being" (2004: 94)

"Ultimately..it is not so much the techniques used as how the research is conducted and the relationships established between researchers and research participants that determine the quality of research. Questions of ethics and behaviour have a direct bearing on how valid the findings are"

The authors explore the significance of the shift from wealth ranking to well-being ranking, and the much wider, deeper and nuanced realities that can be expressed around equivalents of the word well-being. For these, and for the "thinking, meaning and feeling" of people at the individual level to be opened up and understood, the relationship between researcher/facilitator and participant/researcher can be crucial, especially early in the process, before the research and learning have become more "theirs". How well all this can be done depends heavily on the sort of person the facilitator is.

6. The Best of All Worlds?

The potentials opened up by participatory methodologies appear almost unlimited.

Discovery and learning: surprises, significance, new dimensions, sensitive areas, collective action

Precisely because of these preceding features, these approaches frequently lead to surprises, to significant and useful findings, to new insights into sensitive dimensions, and collective action.

Surprises are predictable. PPAs have repeatedly revealed poor people's realities to differ from what professionals have supposed. In the voices of the poor (Narayan et al 2000), the second most commonly identified cause of rural poverty as perceived by focus groups in their causal linkage diagrams was, after sickness, theft[xxviii]. Participatory studies of urban violence in Jamaica, Guatemala and Colombia elicited a far wider range of types of violence, as people perceived them, than outsiders might have supposed and the importance, positive or negative, of different related institutions. The Guatemala study showed the frequency of mention of 22 different strategies for coping with violence. And contrary to common professional belief, violence categorised as economic was found to be much more widespread than that which was political (Moser and Holland 1997; Moser and McIlwaine 2000,2001 and 2004).

An example of fundamentally important findings has been the high priority to poor people of a strong and healthy body and of good access to curative treatment, higher than most professionals have supposed.. This has been a repeated finding – of PPAs, of the Voices of the Poor, and of Listening to the Poor (leading to its chapter on The Labouring Body). Applications of the Stages of Progress methodology have reinforced and confirmed this, showing across countries and conditions that sickness and costs of treatment are almost always[xxix] identified as the most significant cause of becoming poorer (Krishna refs *passim* esp.2006: 22).

An example of new and sensitive dimensions opened up is sexual and reproductive health, and violence against women. Participatory approaches and methods have enabled women and girls, and those who have been abused, to express and analyse their realities. Topics like pre-pubertal sexual activities, the number of partners young men have, the characteristics valued by young women in different types of partners, have all been uncovered (M.K.Shah 1999; Cornwall and Welbourn 2002), with participants enabled to analyse and share their own realities. Pioneering work by Meera Shah and her colleagues (Shah et al 1999) in Zambia facilitating seventeen PRA methods like matrix scoring, anonymous slips, pairwise ranking, and Venn diagramming enabled teenagers to share and analyse many aspects of their sexual behaviour and preferences: girls, for example, listed 16 types of partners and scored them in a matrix against five characteristics. And boys indicated the numbers of partners they had had.

Finally, an example of collective action is the movement of Community-Led Total Sanitation (Kar and Pasteur 2005; Sannan and Moulik 2007). Habits of shitting (the crude word is always used) and their consequences have been brought into the open through facilitating participatory appraisal and analysis. Except where there are programmes of hardware subsidy for latrines, this frequently provokes action to achieve what is known as ODF (open defaecation free) status. This has recently been introduced into Tanzania, Ethiopia and some other African countries. Early evidence is that when sanitation becomes total – there is no open defaecation – there can be a sharp, even dramatic, improvement in health outcomes.[xxx]

Credibility and impact

The credibility of what is learnt through participatory approaches and methods is increasingly recognised. It almost goes without saying that data and insights from participatory local processes usually have a richness and authenticity of detail that gives them a special authority. There is also a credibility of observed process. With good

facilitation, and even without it, triangulation with group visual methods can be seen to be taking place, and successive approximation, cumulative crosschecking and additions observed, with transparently obvious attempts by participants to "get it right". This group visual synergy has its own impressive rigour (Chambers 1997: 159-60, 207). Again and again, the realities of local people, expressed, visually and/or in numbers, have carried conviction, and empowered them to present to and influence those in power.

From experiential learning, as with immersions, total research, and life histories, those who have learnt can gain in confidence and credibility, for example in arguing cases within bureaucracies. Some have spoken of how this leads to being able "to speak with the authority of passion" (AAI 2007). Advocacy that draws on lived experience can get closer to speaking from within the realities of those who are poor and marginalised, in contrast with the more common othering of talking and thinking about "those people".

Quiet revolution, endless adventure

Many of the thrilling innovations and discoveries of the past two decades were at first ignored, denied or denigrated in academia. They threatened the security of professional conservatism and power. Students who wished to use PRA approaches and methods for thesis research faced scepticism and opposition from their supervisors. Some established academics were among the last to learn. Trapped in teaching, their fieldwork past, and tempted to repeat courses year on year, many were not in a position, or inclined, to learn new methods hands-on. But in more and more universities, and more and more disciplines, this has been changing. Those still in denial or unaffected in their methods and methodologies are mainly older faculty and the higher status professions and departments, notably economics. For them, the knee-jerk questionnaire reflex all too often overrides alternatives. There are few cases indeed (but there are an honourable few) of economists, whether academic or operational, who have been prepared to innovate. Nor have other professions and disciplines been quick to change.

Globally, much of the creativity and innovation has come from relatively powerless civil society of the South, and most of the numbing imperviousness has been manifest among the most powerful in the North, most lamentably in the citadels of sustainable error in Washington DC. Innovation and adoption seem to vary inversely with power and with high status as with econometrics. Methodologically, the World Bank's research seems trapped in a sclerotic conservatism that impedes learning. Mentally and methodologically, many who are imprisoned in their paradigm of normal science deserve sympathetic understanding, and beyond that, liberation therapy. This is nothing new. Thirty five years ago, that great polymath economist, Gunnar Myrdal, put his finger on it when he wrote:

"That economists work within a methodologically conservative tradition is usually not so apparent to the economists themselves, especially as the tradition affords them opportunity to display acumen and learning, and, within limits, to be inventive, original and controversial" (Myrdal 1972: 267)

The challenge, to them and others, is to be inventive, original and controversial outside the safe and stable walls of their paradigm.

Eclectic and creative pluralism

Methodologically, this leads to a future of eclectic and creative pluralism, repeatedly improvising, combining, and inventing approaches and methods to fit specific needs and situations. Fundamentalisms with walls are fatally flawed ("I do PRA", "I do Appreciative Inquiry" "Questionnaires are the only way" ….) and should be a thing of the past, looked back on with wonder as well as sorrow. We can see now that one big way for poor people to be better served is for development professionals to be more courageous, versatile, creative and especially reflexive. Self-critical reflexivity, struggling to become aware of one's mindset, predispositions, embedded words and categories and frames of meaning, has not been a prominent in tertiary education or professional training, which, quite the opposite, have dealt in and imparted certainties. Yet critical reflexivity would appear basic to good work in development, and most needed by those, and those disciplines and professions, that least doubt and question themselves.

All of this applies in the approaches we use in research to understand poverty and illbeing, and the wellbeing to which poor people aspire. The quiet revolution to which this points demands radical change in many professional methods, mindsets, attitudes and behaviours. As of 2007, the seeds of such a revolution are there but scattered - germinating, but often threatened and vulnerable and failing to spread. The challenge is to transform tertiary education, research institutes, and other sites of professional power and knowledge, liberating them from their learning disabilities, helping them to see what is happening around them, and opening up for them the endless adventures in experiencing and learning that await us all. Success in this struggle will be a win-win, a best of all worlds. For professionals who want to make a difference it offers enhanced understanding, realism, relevance and fulfilment; and for many of those who suffer the multiple deprivations of poverty, it should bring empowerment and a better chance of a decent life.

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Ends

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[i] The idea for this quotation came from John Harriss 1989

[ii] See for example Leibbrandt and Woolard 2007, paper to this conference

[iii] For reviews of traditional research methods, the best place to look may be in the reading lists of university courses, discipline by discipline, especially sources where one disciplinary approach is being critiqued by another. There are strong critiques by anthropologists of the approaches of economists, for example Harriss 1989 and Jodha 1989, and most trenchantly Polly Hill in her polemic Development Economics on Trial: The anthropological case for a prosecution (1986), but economists do not seem to have bothered much to reciprocate.

[iv] I agree with the thrusts of the abstract of Andries du Toit's paper to this conference. Poverty studies can be a diversion, a distraction, from other studies that can lead to transformation. I would argue that the World Development Report 2010 should be, not about poverty, but about wealth, not about the poor and powerless and their transformation but about the rich and powerful and theirs. At the same time I have gained much confidence in the power of poor and marginalised people themselves to take action.

[v] These bald summaries omit the qualifications and subtleties of the work of Booth and Rowntree. For a summary and some criticisms see Holman 1978: 2-13

[vi] In Seeing Like a State, James Scott does not mention poverty lines. Knowing the extent and location of poverty was not a priority in the cases he presents, but his arguments and analysis apply as well to poverty, once it became important for the state to know about it, as they do to other domains.

[vii] Much else may be covered, for example in living standards measurement surveys. But notoriously many data are not used, and the point is that PL data tend to have primacy and be most propagated and discussed.

[viii] Honourable exceptions are many, for example those economists like Ravi Kanbur and Gary Fields, both from Cornell, who take part in immersions, most recently here in Durban in the immersion organised I believe by the School of Development Studies at UKZN

[ix] The first MDG also aims to halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

[x] I use the term "conventional" economists because there are those who have led the break away from the reductionism of income-poverty, most notably and honourably including Gunnar Myrdal, Dudley Seers and Amartya Sen

[xi] Group-visual synergy is a repeated experience with PRA methods". The interaction of local people with their visual representations, especially on the ground, with cumulative cross-checking, the addition and correction of detail, and commitment to completeness, often take off into self-sustaining activity" (Chambers 1997: 207). Little eye contact, less scope for domination, and opportunities to contribute manually rather in words combine in a "democracy of the ground" (Chambers 2002:)

[xii] This bald assertion concerning multidimensionality and commonalities deserves fuller treatment. For illustration from the analysis of empirical data generated in a participatory mode, see Narayan et al. 2000, chapter 2 "Wellbeing and Illbeing: the Good and the Bad Life" (pp. 21-43)

[xiii] The original sequence was empowerment, security and opportunity, but this was changed after Ravi Kanbur, the leader of the report, resigned following pressures from the State Department to make changes. Opportunity then came first.

[xiv] For overviews, analyses and reviews of PPAs see Hanmer et al 1997; Holland with Blackburn 1998 for reviews of individual PPAs ; Norton et al 2001; and Robb 2002.

[xv] The Tanzania and Kenya PPAs were led by Deepa Narayan of the World Bank. For an idea of the process in Tanzania, and illustrations of the statistics produced, see the video The Poverty Experts, probably still available from the World Bank Information Department

[xvi] Manchester City, for example, sent a team to study the process, and there were calls for Uganda to provide technical assistance to the North to advise on how to conduct such a successful PPA.

[xvii] A woman asked how she would spend an extra two hours if they were given to her immediately replied growing vegetables. Others burdened with shopping, collecting firewood and water from far away, field work, gardening and other tasks wanted to spend more time with their children (May with others 1998: 108)

[xviii] At the time of writing I have been unable to trace the source of this quotation

[xix] Participatory statistics almost certainly have earlier antecedents, but began to be generated and visible in the very early stages of the evolution of PRA, from 1990 onwards. For an overview and references see Chambers 2003. For a rich range of methods and insights, visit the website of the major pioneers of this field, the Statistical Services Centre at the University of Reading in the UK .**www.reading.ac.uk/ssc** . A book on participatory numbers by Jeremy Holland and Savitri Abeyasekera has for some years been forthcoming.

[xx] For Participatory GIS visit **www.iapad.org** and **www.ppgis.net** . Issue 54 (April 2006) of Participatory Learning and Action (IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1 0DD **www.iied.org**) Mapping for Change: practice, technologies and communication contains 15 short articles on PGIS, including practical and ethical issues. Participatory Learning and Action is free to subscribers from non-OECD countries. Visit **orders@earthprint.co.uk**

[xxi] For an overview, see Eyben 2004. For reviews of approaches and practical and ethical issues, and for other sources, see Irvine et al 2004 and 2006. A report of an ActionAid Internationla Pilot Immersion in Northern Ghana is available from Birte Brumby **b.brumby@ids.ac.uk**. For information on immersions organised for development professionals by ActionAid International, see AAI 2006 or contact **immersions@actionaid.org**

[xxii] **www.praxisindia.org check**

[xxiii] For sources on immersions, contact Birte Brumby **b.brumby@ids.ac.uk**

[xxiv] The Views of the Poor report (SDC 2003) was produced by Swiss Development Cooperation, Berne. The guidance notes Views of the Poor: Some thoughts on how to involve your own staff to conduct quick, low cost but insightful research into poor people's perspectives (Jupp 2003) is available from the author Dee Jupp **dee.jupp@btinternet.com**

[xxv] Companion volumes for Nepal were Listening to people living in poverty in Nepal (2 volumes) (New Era and ActionAid Nepal 2004)

[xxvi] Levy cites a personal communication from Bimal Phnuyal that one such resource centre in Nepal which displayed information locally generated was renamed "The Rights Claim Centre".

[xxvii] The relevance of these theories is elaborated a little in an IDS Sussex Working Paper in press "From PRA to PLA and pluralism: practice and theory"

[xxviii] I have perhaps ten times bet money in workshops that no one will guess what rural people in SubSaharan Africa identified most commonly as a cause of poverty, after health. No one has yet guessed theft, so I have yet to lose any money, though this footnote might constitute an own goal if anyone ever reads it.

[xxix] Only in one of the six studies was poor health and health-related expenses not the most frequent reason for falling into poverty. That was in Rajasthan with 60 per cent of households. However the most common reason – high interest private debt, with 72 per cent, may often have been related, especially to cost of treatment.

[xxx] The first research reported shows moderate reduction in diarrohoeas from 38 to 26 per cent when sanitation moves from 29 to 95 per cent but when this goes to 100 per cent total sanitation the drop was dramatic to only 7 per cent (Sannan and Moulik 2007: 4)