



Participatory approaches in urban areas: strengthening civil society or reinforcing the status quo?

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SUMMARY: *The paper examines current experiences with the use of participatory methodologies in low-income urban communities. It outlines the nature and development of participatory approaches and describes experiences, prospects and problems related to their use in an urban context. Three case examples from the UK, Sri Lanka, and India and South Africa demonstrate how innovative approaches are being used by different agencies to strengthen and support the activities of community based organizations. Finally, the paper concludes with a number of broad questions about the future application of participatory approaches in low-income urban communities.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROPOSERS OF PARTICIPATORY research and development approaches claim that they are dynamic and flexible ways of gathering information about, with and by local people and their conditions and livelihoods. According to the now voluminous participation literature, when first developed during the late 1970s and early 1980s, these methodologies were concerned primarily with gathering accurate and detailed information efficiently. At that time, the emphasis was on the word "rapid" for the purposes of "appraisal" or "diagnosis" of local problems and priorities, and most of the analyses and actions were controlled by outside researchers and development agents.

As experiences and insights grew, it became evident that local people, who had previously been viewed as passive "subjects", "clients" or "beneficiaries", had much to contribute to the research and development process. As these approaches were adapted and modified further, the depth and validity of local people's experiences and knowledge became clear. Thus, by the late 1980s, much of the attention had shifted from "rapid"

1. Chambers, Robert (1994), "The origins and practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal" in *World Development* Vol.22, No.7, pages 53-969; also Chambers, Robert (1994), "Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): analysis of experience", *World Development* Vol.22, No.9, pages 1253-1268; also Chambers, Robert (1994), "Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): challenges, potentials and paradigm", *World Development* Vol.22, No.10, pages 1437-1454.

2. Lalith Lankatilleke, personal communication.

3. World Bank (1994), *The World Bank and Participation: Report on the Learning Group on Participatory Development. Fourth Draft (revised)*, World Bank, Washington, DC.

to "participatory" research and development. In particular, the process of information gathering and the information itself became a catalyst for the more direct involvement of the community within the development process. Today, these participatory approaches are being applied in a wide range of social and ecological contexts, and are shaping and influencing national, regional and international research and development programmes and policies worldwide.⁽¹⁾ Although more commonly associated with rural development and primary health programmes, there is now a growing body of experience using similar approaches in urban settings.

This paper examines current experiences with the use of participatory methodologies in low-income urban communities. Particular attention is given to the application of these approaches for local level adaptive planning and community based development by people's organizations and their supporters, rather than on rapid appraisal methodologies used for research and information-gathering by external agents. Section II begins with a broad analysis of the linkages between current macro-economic and socio-political trends and growing donor and state interest in people-centred development strategies. It argues that participation, formally sanctioned and supported by national governments and aid agencies, is a double-edged sword. On the one side, participation can bring about increased access to, and control over, vital resources and decision-making processes by local people, cutting away bureaucratic red tape and institutional constraints as it proceeds. On the other, it can be used by governments and donors to justify and reinforce inequitable social relations of power. For this reason, the key question remains: who participates in whose project?⁽²⁾

Sections III and IV consider the nature and development of participatory approaches, while Section V describes experiences, prospects and problems related to their use in an urban context. In these sections, three case examples from the UK, Sri Lanka, and India and South Africa offer insights into how innovative approaches are being used by different agencies to strengthen and support the activities of community-based organizations, with impressive results. Finally, the paper concludes with a number of broad questions about the future application of participatory approaches in low-income urban communities.

II. PARTICIPATION, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY: THE MAKINGS OF A CIVIL SOCIETY?

OVER THE PAST decade, the international donor community and national governments have begun to pay a significant amount of attention to people's participation, along with related issues such as good governance and democracy.⁽³⁾ In part, this is because they have come to recognize that the modernist models of development they wish to foster will not be embraced and consolidated until effective demand for them can be articulated by the relevant sections of the society. From an optimistic viewpoint, it could be argued that this is because the values of hu-

4. Thompson, John (1995), "Participatory approaches in government bureaucracies: facilitating the process of institutional change", forthcoming; see also Adepoju, Aderanti (1993), *The Impact of Structural Adjustment on the Population of Africa: The Implications for Education, Health and Employment*, James Currey Ltd., London; also Gibbon, Peter, Kjell J. Havnekik and Kenneth Hermele (1995), *A Blighted Harvest: The World Bank and African Agriculture in the 1980s*, Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ; and Nelson, Joan M. and Stephanie J. Eglinton (1993), *Global Goals, Contentious Means: Issues of Multiple Aid Conditionality*, Overseas Development Council, Washington, DC.

man rights and democracy have been acknowledged as part of the "new" development paradigm and portrayed as something that should not be sacrificed in the name of growth. In a more cynical vein, it could be asserted that donors and states perceive democratic participation as part of a broader process of structural reform, the shift towards market oriented economies, and the decentralization and privatization of public services.⁽⁴⁾ The effective exercise of democratic structures is perceived as necessary to control state corruption and mismanagement. However, with the reduction in the funding and provision of government infrastructure and services, the meaning of "participation" has changed. In addition to participation in national elections and planning, the concept also involves people's participation in the delivery of services that were previously the responsibility of the state. With this understanding, participation in development is little more than a cost-cutting strategy aimed at placing greater responsibilities onto local communities while reducing external support. Within this context, the meanings and methods attached to "participation" by the different agencies making use of participatory approaches are of prime importance.

For whatever reason, the aid world's discovery of participation as one of the priorities within development has led to the search for means to promote it. Some donors have sought to use participatory development projects and programmes to strengthen civic associations and create new mechanisms through which state institutions can be held responsible for their actions. It is in this light that the participation and governance debates have led donors to collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), and to support locally derived solutions to poverty alleviation and "sustainable development". Some have suggested that if local organizations and community-based approaches are strengthened, by channelling funds to them and by increasing their control over development initiatives, so too will be civil society as a whole. Similarly, programmes and policies that aim to create decision-making processes in which local organizations and associations have a presence allow new means through which civil society can exert influence over public decisions and open that public process to more scrutiny. In this manner, participatory development is directly linked to state accountability, empowerment of local groups, and transparency in decision-making.

Participatory approaches have not only received support from mainstream or conventional development agencies. Political and theoretical debates have had to recognize and respond to the apparent failures of Marxist and other class analyses and class action to predict, and effectively intervene to direct, social change. Traditional class-based organizations have had declining membership in many countries and have suffered particularly from the reduction in formal sector employment. Such a trend is directly linked to the promotion of free markets and the decline in public sector employment. It reflects an increase in part-time working, contract workers, and the relocation of industries to low-wage countries.

5. Campbell, Andrew (1994), *Landcare: Communities Shaping the Land and the Future*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, Australia; also Hulme, David (1994), "Social development research and the third sector: NGOs as users and subjects of social inquiry" in David Booth (editor), *Rethinking Social Development: Theory, Research and Practice*, Longman Scientific and Technical, Harlow, UK, pages 251-275; also Farrington, John and Anthony Bebbington, with Kate Wellard and David L. Lewis (1994), *Reluctant Partners: Non-Governmental Organisations, The State and Sustainable Agricultural Development*, Routledge, London; also Uphoff, Norman (1993), "Grassroots organizations and NGOs in rural development: opportunities with diminishing states and expanding markets", *World Development* Vol.21, No.4, pages 607-622; also Uphoff, Norman (1992), "Local institutions and participation for sustainable development", *Gatekeeper Series SA31*, Sustainable Agriculture Programme, International Institute for Environment and Development, London; also Edwards, Michael and David Hulme (editors) (1992), *Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World*, Earthscan, London; also Eckstein, Susan (editor) (1989), *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, University of California, Berkeley; also Korten, David C. (1990), *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford.

6. Scoones, Ian and John Thompson (editors) (1994), *Beyond Farmer First: Rural People's Knowledge, Agricultural Research and Extension Practice*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

7. Diaz Albertini, Javier (1993), "Non-profit advocacy in weakly institutionalized political systems: the case of NDGOs in Lima

At the same time, there has been an increase in "social movements" grounded in identities related to gender, place and ethnicity. The apparent strength, ubiquity and diversity of these movements has resulted in a new attention and new literature, although this builds on a previous interest among some authors.⁽⁵⁾ This literature has emphasized that movements are characterized by the concern to demand rights of citizenship from the state, and to express social resistance to the many ways in which state and wider society have dominated low-income sectors. These observations generate a vision of civil society as a more complex mosaic of different interest groups than most class analyses had suggested.⁽⁶⁾ At the same time, they are less concerned with revolutionary change than many of the analyses of the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than emphasize the overthrow of the state and the nationalization of the means of production, they stress the need to make the state more transparent, more open to public scrutiny, and more responsive to societal concerns. This, in turn, leads to the argument that these social movements must be strengthened if this is to be achieved.

The literature also recognizes that the traditional view of the state as powerful institutions with the ability to intervene successfully to support capitalist interests is also flawed. In many cases, the state is weak and ineffectual.⁽⁷⁾ Many of these groups have tried to identify a new strategy in relation to the state. Within the old model, groups working with and for low-income communities generally adopted one of two strategies; they either provided welfare services to mitigate the worst effects of poverty or they adopted a political stand and undertook advocacy and political education to organize direct resistance. In response to the new situation, with increased poverty in many countries as a result of the global economic recession and widespread adoption of structural adjustment policies during the 1980s, many of those working to support low-income communities began the direct provision of services and material assistance to low-income groups. However, such service provision was often not considered an end in itself but the first step in a complex strategy to develop and recruit support for new state programmes (often in very specific areas) to meet the needs of low-income communities.⁽⁸⁾ Through participation in new programmes, communities can begin to realize their needs and learn how to develop successful strategies to realize them.

In developing effective research and development interventions for low-income households, many professionals have come to recognize the essential participation of these households, not only in creating the political pressure to secure resources but also in the design of the intervention. Conventional ways of working with communities, with an emphasis on questionnaire surveys and professional style dialogue, have not proved effective and new methods have been needed. In this context, professionals have both sought to use participatory methods developed by others and have experimented with new ways of working with communities.

The activities of the institutions of civil society - NGOs, resi-

Peru", *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* Vol. 27, No.4, Winter.

8. Arrossi, Silvina, Felix Bombarolo, Luis Coscio, Jorge E. Hardoy, Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite (1993), *Funding Community Initiatives*, Earthscan Publications Ltd., London; also Turner, Bertha (editor) (1988), *Building Community*, Building Community Books, London; also Korten, David C. (1990), *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford.

9. Pretty, J.N., John Thompson and J.K. Kiara (1995), "Agricultural regeneration in Kenya: the catchment approach to soil and water conservation", *Ambio* Vol.24, No.1, February, pages 7-15.

dents associations (including those formed by squatters and by tenants), self-help housing associations and cooperatives - have therefore attracted the interest of donors for their role as development organizations. Many have assumed a self-help and developmental role. Many design their own projects and negotiate the support they require directly from the state and donors. These institutions have also attracted interest for their role as political agents that can also help make the state more accountable, especially when groups of these institutions form coalitions or federations, as in the National Federation of Slum Dwellers in India or the South African Homeless People's Federation.

In recent years, many community-based organizations, and the agencies that support their efforts, have employed a diverse range of participatory approaches for identifying local problems and opportunities, analyzing local capacities and resources, planning and implementing community-driven programmes and projects, and operating and maintaining local initiatives. These approaches have had a crucial role in helping local groups exercise greater control over the development process and articulate their interests and priorities to governments and donors more clearly. The next section describes some of the basic elements commonly associated with these participatory approaches.

III. WHAT ARE PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES?

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES ARE flexible, process-oriented methodologies. They combine guiding principles, core concepts and sets of interactive techniques which have been developed to better realize high levels of community participation in official development programmes and, more importantly, to give local people greater control over the process of development. Participation, as a principle, is now commonly accepted to be an important component of successful development programmes. However, many different interpretations are given to this principle. Pretty identifies seven different levels of participation in development programmes ranging from "passive participation", when people are simply told what is going to happen to them, to "self-mobilization" in which local people are active agents of change independent of external organizations.⁽⁹⁾

Participatory approaches as described here are intended to facilitate higher levels of participation in which local people maintain significant control over the development process. The use of such approaches has, in general, been initiated by development practitioners and agencies who have become concerned that much of development dialogue and decision-making is designed by, and limited to, professionals. Their objective is to facilitate the integration of local people into such debates and, in some cases, to enhance community control of resource allocation and planning processes. They include a range of different activities designed to:

- Increase awareness and understanding about the key actors and groups at the local level.

- Improve the quality and quantity of information about local conditions.
- Identify viable local development options
- Mobilize local and external resources for such options.
- Enable local people to identify constraints, set priorities and take action.
- Strengthen the self-confidence and capacities of local organizations.
- Develop and support mechanisms to resolve local conflicts.

The ways in which these participatory approaches work are most easily explained through examples. The boxes in this section are illustrative of such approaches and describe three different programmes that have developed specific approaches to improve and increase community involvement. Box 1 describes Planning For Real, a methodology practised by the Neighbourhoods Initiatives Foundation in the United Kingdom. Planning for Real aims to involve local residents in identifying and realizing the needs of their community. By working alongside the residents, the Foundation is able to combine local ideas and experience with professional skills provided by government staff. Planning for Real-style methods are now being used by a range of other groups both within and outside the UK.

Box 1: Planning for Real

"I think it made people realize just how much they themselves have got to offer, and that nobody is actually ordinary."

Planning for Real is the label for a cluster of techniques and materials. In one sense, they are a tool-kit that allows people to explore possibilities, sort out options, rank priorities, share out responsibilities, set out a plan of action - all without having to endure talking shops which drive everyone up the wall and eventually out of the door. In another, they are a strategy designed to establish common ground between 'us and them' as a basis for a combined operation to create a working neighbourhood. This common ground is the neighbourhood which everyone knows.

***The model:* The first step is to use this common knowledge to make a three-dimensional model of the neighbourhood. The model is made in sections each about a metre square, so that it can be taken around to attract attention. It is put together by a handful of people who have not yet given up hope for their neighbourhood. Because of its size - anything up to 60 one-metre squares - it attracts attention and plenty of curious people gather round to discuss the reality, the problems and the potential. Part of the tool-kit is a range of suggestion cut-outs, visual representations, roughly to scale, of what could be done to turn this anonymous dwelling area into a working neighbourhood. There are many possibilities for improvement - pedestrian crossings, play areas, workshops, trees, bus routes, improved housing. Many informal and formal discussions about the model take place; anyone can put any item anywhere, so long as they move no-one else's suggestion.**

Residents are not the only people involved. Local officials are invited along to a formal meeting as long as they are willing to agree to a "house rule" to keep their

mouths shut until spoken to. In practice they are soon being questioned. In this way, the process of consultation is being turned upside down. Instead of the professionals graciously presenting their own plans for residents' comment, the residents are consulting the professionals, to establish the range of options, the limitations, the possibilities - so that they can reach their own informed conclusions.

Priorities: The next step is to make out cards corresponding to all the items on the model. Each card has a note of the location and the subject. The cards are then transferred to another table where they are laid out beside a giant chart separated into three horizontal sections, NOW, SOON, LATER. With the same freedom of manoeuvre, and the same anonymity if they choose, people can then transfer the cards to what seem the most realistic priorities for action. At once it becomes obvious, usually to people's considerable surprise, that there are comparatively few disagreements, and those there are can often be resolved by experiment on the model, an informal conversation which leads to an acceptable compromise. The NOW, SOON, LATER chart allows both for long-term vision and for identifying what could and should be tackled here and now.

Resource surveys: The residents who promoted the model go round, house-to-house, face-to-face, with a cartoon questionnaire (looking as unlike a government form as possible) to find out from each family who is good at what. Back they come, and even the first sample of 50 households reveals a treasure trove of talent - hobby skills and work skills - which no-one, outsiders or insiders, realized was there. In parallel with this, some of the "moving spirits" amongst officials and politicians are digging out resource information from within the local authority and other outside bodies - tracking down people who could help with advice, materials and equipment which might become available, loans or grants that might grease the wheels of local effort.

Use of the model shows roughly *where* innovations might take shape. The resource surveys begin to show *who* might become involved within the community. The giant NOW, SOON, LATER chart sets out the *when*. This knowledge fuels real decision-making to produce an immediately practicable *action plan*.

SOURCE: Gibson, Tony (1994), "Showing what you mean (not just talking about it)", *RRA Notes 21: Special Issue on Participatory Tools and Methods in Urban Areas*, IIED, London.

The development of participatory approaches in urban areas has been encouraged by two factors. Their initial development was closely associated with the need to rapidly gather accurate information about the people involved in or affected by a project. Among the identified advantages of such methods are that they offer better, more comprehensive information faster than conventional research methods and at lower cost. Second, information collection has been shown to be one means by which local residents realize and fully appreciate the value of their own knowledge and gain increasing confidence in their capacity to be important agents in development. Thus these approaches have become an important part of development strategies that try to empower low-income communities to take a more active part in their own development process.

Traditional methods of information collection often involved questionnaire surveys that are time-consuming with long gaps between data collection, data analysis and actions based on re-

10. Amis, Philip (1994), "Urban management training, action learning and rapid analysis methods", *RRA Notes* 21, Special Issue on *Participatory Tools and Techniques for Urban Areas*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

11. Cernea, Michael M. (1992), "Re-tooling in applied social investigation for development planning: some methodological issues" in Scrimshaw, Nevin S. and Gary R. Gleason (editors), *RAP: Rapid Assessment Procedures, Qualitative Methodologies for Planning and Evaluation of Health Related Programmes*, International Nutrition Foundation for Development Countries.

12. Nencel, Lorraine and Peter Pels (editors) (1991), *Constructing Knowledge: Authority and Critique in Social Science*, Sage Publications, London; also Steier, Frederick (editor) (1991), *Research and Reflexivity*, Sage Publications, London.

13. Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus (1988), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley; also Marcus, George E. and Michael M.J. Fischer (1986), *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

14. See reference 6; also Fals-Borda, Orlando and Muhammad Anisur Rahman (editors) (1991), *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action Research*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

15. Sayer, Andrew (1992), *Method in Social Science*, 2nd Edition, Routledge, London; also Brown, Richard Harvey (1994), *Social Science as Civic Discourse: Essays on the Invention, Legitimation, and Uses of Social Theory*, University of Chicago

sults. Costs are often high because such surveys are labour intensive and in many development projects such additional funds are not available. In many towns and cities in the South, comprehensive good quality data are not available from censuses or other official sources and to obtain it would be expensive. Amis argues that, in the experience of training Indian government officials, lack of data has been an excuse for lack of action and that this problem needs to be overcome for them to be effective.⁽¹⁰⁾ A second problem in the use of questionnaires is illustrated in the account in Cernea of a medical anthropologist moving from statistical sample surveys to rapid methods in order to elicit accurate information about water-borne diseases. The researcher needed information about toilet behaviour, personal hygiene and health beliefs. Although the original strategy was for a sample survey using a precoded questionnaire, the reluctance of respondents to give accurate information resulted in a change of strategy to key informant interviewing and participant observation.⁽¹¹⁾

A more fundamental criticism is that such "objective", positivist data collection processes misrepresent and over-simplify the interactive nature of the research "encounter" between external researchers and local people, a process which is highly subjective, complex and value laden. As a result, these procedures have failed to reveal the dynamism of everyday knowledge, the social construction of changing relations of power, or the "lifeworlds" of local actors. Furthermore, they have misrepresented the way in which outside researchers and local people "co-produce" rather than simply "discover" the worlds of their research.⁽¹²⁾

Such criticism was first responded to by the development of the interpretivist tradition in sociology with micro-level studies, and then by reflexive ethnographic writings in anthropology.⁽¹³⁾ Over the past decade, these and other human and social sciences have drawn on hermeneutics, social and critical theory, art and literary theory, and post-analytical and post-modernist philosophy to update the traditional challenge of interpretivism to the legitimacy and validity of the positivist scientist in constructing knowledge about others.⁽¹⁴⁾ These key debates point to the Western ethnocentrism inherent in concepts about culture, local people's knowledge and the role of outside "agents of change". They show how subjects of social science study have frequently served to reproduce rather than redress race, gender, and other inequalities. Moreover, they indicate that researchers must become part of the investigation within a process that explicitly tackles the complexities of multiple realities.

More recent methodological approaches have extended this debate further by portraying research as a collaborative process, researching **with** and **for** people rather than *on* people.⁽¹⁵⁾ Research is not treated as a neutral, value-free process but as always supporting and questioning something; not just as a systematic quest for understanding but as an "action" science which involves learning through risk-taking and reflexive action in life. In these methodologies, the question "How can the researchers learn about the knowledge and capacities of local

Press, Chicago; also Ricoeur, Paul (1981), *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, edited and translated by John B. Thompson, Cambridge University Press.

16. Lincoln, Yvonna S. and Egon G. Guba (1985), *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Sage Publications, Newbury, CA.

17. Hardoy, Jorge E. and David Satterthwaite (1989), *Squatter Citizen*, Earthscan Publications Ltd., London.

people?" is replaced by the question "How can local people learn about their own knowledge and capacities, and communicate their ideas and priorities to themselves and to supportive external facilitators?" Within these participatory "action" methodologies, the information is "owned" by the community and becomes a means through which local people can identify their needs and priorities, analyze what resources are available locally and externally, and consider how various local groups and, in some instances, the entire community, might access and manage those resources.

In order to address critics who argue that participatory approaches are too subjective, a range of validation techniques has been developed. For example, "triangulation" is the cross-checking of information either by varying the methods, varying the sources of information or varying the investigators. Rather than simply accepting the views of one individual or group about a particular issue or activity, several are consulted, sometimes more than once, in order to separate facts from opinions and rumours. Interdisciplinary teamwork further strengthens this process, as various disciplinary perspectives are brought together in a more holistic framework to analyze and interpret local issues and experiences, thus reducing the chance of narrow misinterpretations. In this way, the "trustworthiness" of the data is assured through repeated participant and peer checks and reviews.⁽¹⁶⁾

The strategies of researchers in the development of participatory methodologies have been complemented by those of practitioners. Development practitioners became motivated to explore the use of participatory approaches when they realized that the identification of correct development interventions required active community involvement. This involvement is necessary because the local political, social and economic dynamics can only be really understood with the help of local inhabitants and informants. Without community involvement, well intentioned assistance may be wasted or "captured" by higher-income groups, often resulting in a process whereby those the assistance is intended to help are further impoverished.⁽¹⁷⁾ With such information, community members can individually and collectively identify and recognize their skills, and also their needs and priorities. Once community priorities have been identified, participatory approaches have, in some cases, also become part of a strategy to support a local mobilization process. This mobilization has helped to ensure a coincidence between policy alternatives being considered by decision makers and local development strategies.

In some cases, such as the example in Box 3, participatory approaches have been combined with the creation and/or strengthening of formal community organizations and federations of such organizations. This practice changes the balance of external agencies working with communities and strengthens those external agencies able to directly represent communities, i.e. community membership organizations. In such circumstances, participatory approaches do more than simply increase the effectiveness of the work of the organizations that

use them, they also create a possibility for new alliances and coalitions in order to more effectively realize common objectives.

IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT of participatory approaches has largely been within two sectors, agriculture and rural development, and public health.⁽¹⁸⁾ Whilst they have separate traditions, there is some acknowledgement of their related origins. Within agriculture and rural development, these approaches are associated with the term "Rapid Rural Appraisal" (RRA) and within the public health sector "Rapid Assessment Procedure" (RAP). Other names for similar methodologies include Participatory Learning Methods (PALM), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and *Méthode Accélérée de Recherche Participative* (MARP). Rapid Rural Appraisal methodologies have drawn on other methodological traditions and have further developed into Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Robert Chambers argues that these influences include participatory research and participatory action research approaches developed from the work of Paulo Freire, agro-ecosystem analysis, applied anthropology and field research on farming systems.⁽¹⁹⁾ There was also an important and influential body of work promoting the right of citizens to have more control of the building and/or management of their housing, especially the tens of millions of city dwellers who develop their own housing themselves;⁽²⁰⁾ although perhaps less important for the development of participatory tools and methods than the work in agriculture and public health, nonetheless this encouraged more participatory approaches in housing and urban development projects throughout the South.

Participatory Rural Appraisal uses similar methods to Rapid Rural Appraisal but, in addition to obtaining the information, is also concerned with enhancing local people's *active* participation in the research and development process. The concepts, principles and methods employed are those that encourage low-income communities to take control of the project or programme for which the research and/or development activity is being undertaken. The process of PRA demonstrates to, and reinforces within these communities, the breadth, depth and validity of their own understanding of their needs and priorities. It builds on people's innate visual literacy by employing a variety of diagramming and visualization methods that enable both literate and non-literate persons to participate actively.

Within the health sector, Rapid Assessment Procedure has been traced back to the early 1980s when anthropological investigation methods were adapted into tools and procedures that could be used to rapidly obtain information on household and community health and nutrition related behaviour.⁽²¹⁾ During a decade when there have been strong "vertical" health programmes such as child immunization, these approaches have assisted also in developing integrated grassroots programmes

18. Scrimshaw, Nevin S. and Gary R. Gleason (editors) (1992), *RAP: Rapid Assessment Procedures, Qualitative Methodologies for Planning and Evaluation of Health Related Programmes*, International Nutrition Foundation for Development Countries.

19. See reference 1.

20. The writings of John F.C. Turner and William Mangin during the 1960s and 1970s were particularly important in promoting this - see for instance Turner, John FC (1966), *Uncontrolled Urban Settlements: Problems and Policies*, Report for the United Nations seminar on Urbanization, Pittsburg; Mangin, William (1967), "Latin American squatter settlements; a problem and a solution", *Latin American Research Review*, Vol.2, No.3, Summer, pp. 65-98; and Turner, John F.C. (1976), *Housing By People - Towards Autonomy in Building Environments*, Ideas in Progress, Marion Boyars, London.

21. See Scrimshaw, Susan C.M. (1992), "Adaptation of anthropological methodologies to rapid assessment of nutrition and primary health care" and other papers in reference 18.

22. See the introduction to reference 18.

23. See Francis, Sheelu (1994), "PALM in Slum Improvement Projects: a training experience from India"; also Norton, Andy (1994), "Observations on urban applications of PRA methods from Ghana and Zambia: participatory poverty assessments"; and Leach, Martin (1994), "Targeting aid to the poorest in urban Ethiopia - is it possible? Rapid urban appraisal" in *RRA Notes 21*, Special Issue on *Participatory Tools and Techniques for Urban Areas*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

24. *RRA Notes 21*, Special Issue on *Participatory Tools and Techniques for Urban Areas*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

that have responded to multiple household needs. By the end of the 1980s, Rapid Assessment Procedure had been adopted as a valid research methodology by many of the largest donor agencies. However, a similar shift to that observed in rural participatory approaches has also been noticed by those familiar with the procedures in that they are increasingly being adopted as a planning tool in addition to being used for research purposes.⁽²²⁾

V. PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

IN THE URBAN context, there has been little explicit development of such methodologies. Although there is an increasing number of case studies of urban community development, in general, very little emphasis has been placed on methodology. Perhaps one of the best known examples is the approach taken by the Million Houses Programme outlined in Box 2 in which the specific methodology of community involvement has always had a clear role. More recently, there has been an increased interest in drawing on methodologies developed within a rural context for urban work. This interest includes a broad spectrum of agencies and areas of work including experimentation with the use of rapid assessment procedures for urban poverty and programme assessments, and the incorporation of PALM tools within the UK Overseas Development Administration's Indian Slum Improvement Programme.⁽²³⁾

As with the use of such approaches in a rural development context, there is a significant distinction between participatory approaches being used to simply obtain information from the community and such tools being used to initiate a development process within the community. In the latter case, information-gathering is very much a first step designed to demonstrate to community members the depth of their knowledge and their capacity to analyze such information. It is this second use which is illustrated in the boxes included here. In its first use, i.e. using these techniques to reveal and analyze local people's knowledge, the exercises are completed once that information is obtained and there is no further discussion of problems and opportunities facing the community. In this form, it is essentially rapid urban appraisal as analogous to Rapid Rural Appraisal, rather than participatory urban appraisal.

While some participatory approaches have clearly drawn on traditions developed in other sectors, particularly PRA and RAP, it is also evident that there has been widespread experimentation with different participatory approaches by groups working in urban areas.⁽²⁴⁾ In many aspects, similar tools and techniques have been developed based around the use of diagrams, maps and pictures to replace written descriptions. Drawing on both urban and rural experiences, specific tools and techniques used in urban areas are:

- **Participatory mapping of the settlement** including the plotting of important landmarks such as rivers, roads, religious

centres (mosques, churches, temples, etc.), and public services plus indications of features such as topography. Such maps may be drawn in any open space within the settlement by a group of inhabitants and local informants.

- Community members undertaking **household surveys** of the settlement to collect socio-economic data such as numbers of children or resources such as skills of household members.
- **Collective modelling of new housing designs** that will better meet the needs of residents. House models can be made from any easily available plastic and cardboard. Models can then be discussed and revised with different groups in the community in order to identify the preferred model.
- **Collective planning of new settlement designs** that will better meet the needs of residents. Once a plan of the existing settlement has been made, residents can discuss how to change buildings, reblock plots and/or improve services. Once done, residents can explore how they can move from where they are presently to where they want to be.
- **Collective identification of resources** including access, management and control, and including sources of income, health and links to rural areas. For example, small groups can draw pie charts to indicate the share of the community working in different jobs.
- **Transect walks**, group walks through a settlement - for example, to identify the different informal sector activities taking place or to identify housing conditions and informally interview local people about issues of concern.
- **Seasonal calendars** to identify seasonally occurring events such as illness, availability of employment, dietary patterns and income and expenditure.
- **Wealth-ranking and well-being analysis** of all households in the settlement either through households being ranked from first to last or using relative colours to indicate different levels of wealth and well-being based on locally defined criteria.
- An historical understanding can be developed either through **trend analysis or life histories**. In trend analysis, discussions with old people are used to plot the provision of basic services in the settlement or to consider how factors such as population and social customs have changed over time. Through small group discussions with accounts of individual life histories, critical events in people's lives and in the life of the settlement can be identified.
- **Institutional analysis** of relations with other local and external groups and organizations can be identified through **Venn diagramming**. Different sized circles are given to small groups of participants who then use the circles to illustrate the relative importance of other groups (e.g., local government departments, NGOs, church groups, self-help groups, etc.) to the community. The size indicates their importance; the distance on the ground indicates their closeness, or not, to the community. Different symbols (squares, triangles etc.) and colours may be used to indicate different kinds of groups or individuals.

- **Matrix scoring and ranking** methods are used to identify, analyze and compare various resources (e.g., public services) and development options (e.g., latrine design, water supplies), and identify priorities.
- **Social dramas and role plays** are acted out by local people to provoke discussion about opportunities and constraints facing community members.
- Establishment of **formal and informal groups** in the community that can provide a focus for and maintain the momentum of community driven development.

One of the most comprehensively documented examples of the use of participatory methods in urban development is Community Action Planning in Sri Lanka. The Community Action Planning approach of the Urban Housing Division of Sri Lanka's National Housing Development Authority was developed to implement the urban component of the Million Houses Programme (1984-1989). Community Action Planning sees people as the main resource for development rather than as an object of the development efforts or as mere recipients of benefits. The objective of the approach is to motivate and mobilize the population of an urban low-income settlement to take the lead in planning and implementing an improvement programme. The role of the National Housing Development Authority and the urban local authorities is to support this process where necessary but it is expected that the community will eventually be empowered enough to take its further development into its own hands.

Box 2: Community Action Planning

"The real authors of the methodology are the community and the officials who worked alongside each other" (Lankatilleke, 1989).

The approach: The vehicle for community action planning and management is the interaction/partnership workshop. At such workshops, community members interact as partners with the staff of the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA), the local authority and the non-governmental organizations. They discuss the problems of the community, identify solutions and formulate plans of action. The community takes responsibility for implementing these action plans in collaboration with the NHDA and other organizations, and to maintain and manage the built environment after the completion of the project.

The first step is a two-day community action planning workshop with participation from all relevant groups. It provides an opportunity for the community to obtain a comprehensive view of its socio-economic situation and to identify its main concerns and priorities. It also exposes the community to the opportunities available for the improvement of its living conditions, as well as the constraints and obstacles that need to be overcome. The participants at the workshop first identify community problems and consider their causes. Possible solutions are then explored and strategies identified. The next stages involve developing concrete action plans and systems to monitor their implementation. Finally, the workshop considers how to ensure that everyone concerned is aware of the plan. Further half-day workshops then consider specific problems and issues.

Settlement regularization: In the community action planning approach, the individuals and community play a central role in settlement regularization. A community workshop determines the broad principles within which the regularization process should take place, such as the width of roads and footpaths. The workshop participants are divided into three groups: a women's team, an officials' team and a team of community members and builders. The groups meet separately to identify the needs for land in the settlement for residential plots, roads and footpaths, amenities, a community centre, a playground, a clinic and any other needs. Each group presents its findings in a plenary session and the presentations are discussed until consensus is reached. Next, the three groups meet again separately to find locations for the land uses and to allocate land. Once this has been agreed, participants consider the logistics for the on-site blocking-out exercise.

The decisions of the workshop on the principles and guidelines for re-blocking are distributed to all households in the settlement. Community leaders inform clusters of households of the day the blocking-out exercise will be conducted in their cluster and request the households to be at home on that day. The action planning team visits the cluster to discuss the plot boundaries with each of the households. The team meets with the families in each block to discuss the size of the area and whether or not it can accommodate all the households and, if not, how the problem will be dealt with. As soon as there is agreement, plot markers are placed to allow all involved to see the implications of the decisions. This will often lead to objections and further negotiations by the affected families. The process of negotiation between the families is the most important part of the exercise. The role of the officials is to ensure that no household can grab more land than has been agreed on by the workshop (which establishes a maximum size for plots in the settlement). In the process, all land disputes are settled on the spot and finally consensus is reached about the re-blocking of the land in the settlement.

Community-building Guidelines: Once land tenure has been regularized, the residents of the low-income settlement are usually eager to start the construction or improvement of their houses. The Urban Development Authority has made a provision in its laws concerning planning and building standards to allow reduced standards in these settlements. In the community action planning approach, representatives of the various interest groups in the settlement work together with health and planning professionals to formulate building codes specific to that settlement. Ideally there are some 20-25 participants; three to five resource people and 15-20 community members (with at least seven women). The workshop addresses a range of questions related to what the building regulations should be and how they should be enforced.

SOURCE: "The Million Houses Programme in Sri Lanka" (1994), *RRA Notes 21: Special Issue on Participatory Tools and Methods in Urban Areas*, IIED, London.

25. See reference 23.

Despite relatively little exchange about the use of participatory methodologies within urban contexts, it is evident from a recent review that they are used by groups working in settlements in urban areas to consider a wide range of issues including neighbourhood and community development.⁽²⁵⁾ The review drew attention to a wide diversity of approaches within three dimensions: North and South; state and voluntary sector; and by originating methodology - both rural and urban.

26. Wratten, Ellen (1994), "Bottom-up planning for urban development: the *Development Planning for Real* pilot" in *RRA Notes* 21, Special Issue on *Participatory Tools and Techniques for Urban Areas*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

27. Lankatilleke, Lalith (1995), "Build Together: national housing programme of Namibia", paper presented at a workshop on *Participatory Tools and Methods in Urban Areas*, IIED, London.

28. See Arrossi and others (1993), and Turner (1988) in reference 8; and "Funding community level initiatives: the role of NGOs and other intermediate institutions in funding and supporting low-income households to improve shelter, infrastructure and services", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol.5, No.1, 1993.

There is clear evidence, reflected in Boxes 1 and 3, of a similarity of approach between North and South. The experiences reflected in these cases and in other examples contained in the review cited above are that low-income communities have an important contribution to make to improvement programmes if such development is to have a meaningful effect on their lives. In the case of *Planning for Real*, originally developed for use on public sector housing estates in the UK, this North-South exchange has been made more focused by a *Development Planning for Real* application for use by groups in the South.⁽²⁶⁾

Development of participatory methodologies in the North and the South have occurred in response to a common need. Development specialists throughout the world share similar training standards and professional norms. They also share a growing awareness about their inability to facilitate increased community control of local development initiatives. As urban development has officially become the job of architects, engineers and planners, so small-scale household building processes (whether self-build or by contractor) have been excluded from professional consideration except as "eye-sores" to be declared illegal and to be later replaced.⁽²⁷⁾ Examples from Africa, Asia and Latin America suggest that there is a rich tradition of community-based urban development efforts,⁽²⁸⁾ many of which have developed appropriate methodologies to improve work with local communities. Some of the better known examples include:

- In Fortaleza, Brazil, NGOs have worked with low-income community groups to collectively redesign houses and settlements.
- In Manila, the Philippines, women have been exploring critical events in the development of settlement through sharing life histories.
- In India, participatory methods have been used to assist in identifying appropriate responses to the earthquake in Maharashtra.
- In Chile, houses have been designed by non-specialists using house modelling exercises.
- In Pakistan, the Orangi Pilot Project makes rapid and low-cost surveys of areas that are to be provided with secondary drains by drawing on the community's expertise.
- In Zambia, PRA methodologies have been used to identify appropriate donor support for income generation projects in Lusaka.
- In Guinea, FAO have developed a programme of support for artisanal fisheries both improving local opportunities and changing national policies.
- In Birmingham, England, participatory tools have helped to initiate discussions and development programmes with Bangladeshi immigrants.

In a joint initiative between NGOs and community-based organizations in South Africa and India, community exchanges have been combined with participatory methodologies in order to "root" the learning process even more solidly within the communities and to rapidly accelerate the capacity of community leaders and members to adopt new roles within the develop-

29. Bolnick, Joel and Sheela Patel (1994), *Regaining Knowledge: An Appeal to Abandon Illusions*, People's Dialogue and SPARC, Cape Town and Bombay.

30. Bolnick, Joel (1993), "The People's Dialogue on land and shelter: community driven networking in South Africa's informal settlements" *Environment and Urbanization* Vol.5, No.1; also SPARC, NGO profile, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol.2, No.1; and D'Cruz, Celine and Sheela Patel (1993), "The Mahila Milan crisis credit scheme: from a seed to a tree", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol.5, No.1.

ment process.⁽²⁹⁾ This partnership is between the People's Dialogue in South Africa together with the recently formed South African Homeless People's Federation and a group of three organizations in India: SPARC, the National Slum Dwellers Federation and *Mahila Milan*, a federation of women's collectives.⁽³⁰⁾

This collaboration has meant that the People's Dialogue members have been able to learn from community-based shelter training programmes in India where the National Slum Dwellers Federation and *Mahila Milan* have been engaged in such programmes for over eight years. They have since experimented with and developed the training process within communities in South Africa. In this process, they have demonstrated the potential of South-South community exchanges to transform the capacity of local groups to address their own development needs. The approaches that are used are described in Box 3 which has been drawn from a description of their application in South Africa. These approaches are disseminated by community members who, once trained in their settlement, visit other settlements and train new "experts".

Box 3: The India-South Africa Community Exchange

The experience-based learning of the training process has two separate but inter-related purposes. First, it enables low-income people to evolve their own understanding of their social and economic environment not just on a micro-level but via exchange in regional and global arenas. Second, it equips the participants, impoverished residents of informal settlements, with the ability to carry out and drive their own experiential learning programmes.

Shack counting: Once the community leadership is ready to undertake the training, a start date is arranged with the training team. Normally, the training begins with the physical counting and mapping of all houses and other structures in the settlement and this shack counting exercise always starts with a huge celebration which might be a concert, community-based drama, or visiting dignitaries or other homeless communities. The training team prepares for the activities of the next day by completing a few practical tasks. A rough map of the settlement, drawn a few days before, and a series of photographs of the settlement are displayed. Everybody should be ready at the start of the day to begin the counting. One member of the "training team" is assigned to each section. They become the leaders of groups of people who will assist in counting all the structures in the sections. By counting the shacks with training team members these people receive a thorough experience-based training.

The informal exchanges that take place during this process are the very soul of the process. This simple process of dialogue and exchange only occurs when the people from communities do the counting. The informal discussions that accompany community-driven enumerations are both an outstanding method of mobilization and an exceptionally accurate way of identifying issues that people in the community regard as relevant. Community-driven enumerations, where they are backed up by a strong but loosely structured federation of informal settlements, achieve what professional enumerators are unable to do. The process helps identify and release the real feelings, frustrations and expectations of oppressed people. The way a

squatter responds to the inquiries of a fellow squatter is very different from, and more relevant than, the way that same squatter responds to the social scientist or researcher. In tandem with the shack count and numbering, the training groups draw rough maps of the settlement.

Mapping: As the groups progress through the settlement numbering and counting shacks, shops, crèches, churches and so on, they draw a simple two-dimensional map of the streets and structures. Key landmarks are included, such as drains, sewers, electric lights, rivers and other major features. Once the shack counting and mapping have been completed, the sections are combined into one by a community member who draws well. The result is that the community members have produced their own physical map of the settlement in which they live: a concrete example of how the attainment of knowledge through practice generates energy and power. Once people have demarcated their settlement themselves, they go on to examine landownership and related matters in terms of their own needs and experience. When professionals undertake this exercise, it is often referred to as a cadastral survey. Once the mapping exercise has been completed, it is possible to learn to read the cadastral survey.

Surveys: Although this training programme does not follow any set formula, a survey usually follows a shack counting exercise to collect a range of data needed for the development process. Once the information generated by the shack count has been reflected back to the community via a mass meeting accompanied by the graphical display of all the information gathered, the survey is started.

House models: Like everything else in the training, the house modelling exercise begins with a dream. Members of the host community are encouraged by the training team to imagine the house they would like to live in and to put that dream on paper. This expression of a desire is the starting point of a sustained system of concrete learning. By drawing the house of their dreams, people begin to visualize possibilities in terms of their abilities and their levels of affordability. Invariably these dreams are extravagant. The houses of people's imaginings are usually too elaborate and costly for their resources. In the steps that follow, aspirations are realigned by the participants themselves. Once individuals have drawn their dream houses, they discuss and revise their houses in groups. The group builds a cardboard model of the chosen house and costs their design. A house modelling competition is held in the community. The chosen design(s) is/are built using cloth or paper as material. People get together to officially open and view the model house(s).

Housing savings groups: Housing savings groups are loosely structured organizations which enable homeless people to develop financial systems that they control and manage themselves. The shack counting and the start of the survey will have generated much discussion on the land and shelter needs of the community. Without fail, the discussions will focus on money. People will point out that they are homeless and landless because they cannot afford formal housing, they will start to think of how they can harness resources so that formal housing is possible. One arrangement is housing savings groups. By actually starting these groups, the training process creates the momentum that will help to drive a people's based housing movement in the "trained" community.

SOURCE: Bolnick, Joel and Sheela Patel (1994), "Regaining knowledge: an appeal to abandon illusions", *RRA Notes 21: Special Issue on Participatory Tools and Methods in Urban Areas*, IIED, London.

These examples demonstrate that, although often associated with NGOs and CBOs, participatory development initiatives have also been initiated and supported by government agencies willing to support greater community involvement in development processes. The India-South Africa exchange programme described in Box 3 is unusual because community leaders themselves have been responsible for demonstrating the value of their respective methodologies and, therefore, for spreading these approaches to members within their organizations. A more common strategy has been the use of trained professionals to facilitate activities at a community level.

Tony Gibson's experiences through using Planning for Real suggest that participatory techniques can transform relations between communities and government officials. In place of hostile relations with low community involvement in government programmes, communities that developed their own agendas through Planning for Real drew enthusiastically on government expertise once the officials recognized that they needed to hand over control of the development process.⁽³¹⁾ Within the community planning approach in Sri Lanka, additional support is available from government staff if it is required by the community. For example, if the community leaders and the staff of the local authority feel the need for a technical layout plan, the Urban Housing Division will prepare such a plan before the on-site blocking-out starts. The plan can facilitate the blocking-out process if the settlement is large and complex but it is only used as a secondary tool to help the action planning team establish a framework to guide the regularization and blocking-out work on the ground.

31. Gibson, Tony (1994), "Showing what you mean (not just talking about it)" in *RRA Notes* 21, Special Issue on *Participatory Tools and Techniques for Urban Areas*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, participatory research and development approaches are being applied with increasing frequency in urban contexts with varying degrees of success. As the three case studies discussed above reveal, some participatory approaches have had a profound effect on the local communities in which they have been employed, as well as on the external support agencies who have promoted them. By strengthening the process of local decision-making, these approaches have resulted in local people being:

- Aware of their knowledge and capacities, and gaining self-respect.
- Able to negotiate as equals with government and other agencies.
- Capable of devising and initiating strategies to improve their situation.
- Able to respond to and resolve conflicts within the community.

From experiences to date, a number of questions have emerged about the use of participatory approaches in urban areas. First, what is the appropriate time-frame necessary for ensuring active local involvement and establishing sustainable development

processes? Second, how truly participatory are these approaches? Finally, how can locally driven, people-centred development programmes link with higher level planning structures and policy-making procedures?

Although having emerged from a methodological tradition whose essential feature was the ability to collect quality data in a short space of time, in contrast to more conventional forms of information-gathering such as formal surveys, participatory approaches, when seen as part of a broader process of social development and institutional transformation, actually take a great deal of time. As rapid assessment has moved towards and merged with participatory development, speed of execution has lost much of its importance. While some of the methods may result in the relatively quick gathering and analysis of information, the establishment of sustainable development programmes and procedures is a slow, arduous, time-consuming process. Reusen and Johnson discuss how participatory approaches were used in an FAO assisted programme to develop viable artisanal fisheries organizations in the port areas of Guinea Conakry, West Africa.⁽³²⁾ Although certain valuable information was gathered quickly, the authors note that the actual process required several years because of the need to train government officials, establish and strengthen representative local organizations, and build a core cadre of skilled facilitators capable of supporting local planning and development efforts. Some participatory approaches and methods are used regularly in rapid reconnaissance, emergency relief and poverty assessment activities,⁽³³⁾ but there is no escaping the fact that real bottom-up development requires a long-term commitment.

Community-based development is a complex process and reservations have been expressed about the nature of participation within such programmes. Who actually takes part and who is excluded? Whose voice is heard and whose is silenced or ignored? Rarely, if ever, will 100 per cent of the local population take part in all aspects of diagnostic analysis, planning, implementation, and so on. Mosse, drawing on experience in rural areas, suggests that the application of participatory approaches cannot be quick if all local people are to understand and accept the external facilitators interacting with them.⁽³⁴⁾ Furthermore, community participation, he argues, is likely to favour stronger groups in the community who can represent their private interests as public concerns. In order to ensure that more marginal groups are involved and empowered, significant effort must be invested in consulting widely, creating non-threatening opportunities in which less powerful individuals are given the opportunity to express opinions and challenge prevailing views, and turning potential "win-lose" situations into "win-win" or "positive-sum" situations where everyone gains and no one loses. There are no shortcuts to getting this process right; it takes time, and a tremendous amount of sensitivity and understanding of local social relations.

How can local planning within the community be linked to higher-level planning structures and policy-making? As community capacity to plan local settlements and projects increases,

32. Rensen, Rene and Jan Johnson (1994), "Linking government agents and local users: PUA for artisanal fishing ports" in *RRA Notes 21*, Special Issue on *Participatory Tools and Techniques for Urban Areas*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

33. Norton, Andy (1994), "Observations on urban applications of PRA methods from Ghana and Zambia: participatory poverty assessments" in *RRA Notes 21*, Special Issue on *Participatory Tools and Techniques for Urban Areas*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

34. Mosse, D. (1994), "Authority, gender and knowledge: theoretical reflections on the practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal", *Development and Change* Vol.25, No.3, pages 497-526 (earlier draft as ODI Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper No.44.)

there is a need to ensure that municipal and city officials openly support and actively encourage such developments. Frequently, autonomous and community driven development initiatives may conflict with official rules and regulations. At a city level, participation is likely to be a more formal process and there is a need to address how local governments can develop planning procedures that are more flexible and responsive to community based initiatives. This will require fundamental changes to the internal procedures and management strategies of the government agencies themselves. New working rules, financial management practices, reporting systems and supervisory methods will be needed. Functions and objectives will have to be clarified before new structures can be designed. At the same time, there must be a shift away from the standardized procedures and specialized units responsible for discrete stages in the development process, and more emphasis must be placed on interdisciplinary sharing and learning. Finally, a range of incentives for reorienting and restructuring systems and structures will need to be developed for rewarding those who facilitate institutional change and promote participatory approaches.

Despite these concerns, there is evidence of growing interest in the use of participatory approaches for neighbourhood improvement programmes in both urban and rural areas.⁽³⁵⁾ The experiences described here demonstrate a new direction for participatory research and development methodologies that are being used by government, non-governmental and community-based organizations. Both the scale of present interest and their widespread acceptance in rural development suggest that their application will continue to grow in urban areas. The challenge ahead is to ensure that with the adoption and use of these participatory approaches will come new institutions and new policies capable of supporting and sustaining the process.

35. In addition to the review in reference 23, the World Bank, Rooftops Canada and the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights have all been considering the use of such approaches.