



PUTS

Social science that makes a difference



**HSRC**  
Human Sciences  
Research Council

# INTRODUCTION

- Reflexive nature of Anthropologists in various settings – own discipline or rural development.
- Engaged in critiquing development discourse for a number of decades (Ferguson, Escobar, Pottier, Mosse).
- Development Ethnographies on the increase – especially the workings of organisations and projects.
- Actor-oriented approaches (Long and others)
- Need clearer understanding of development process, rather than evaluation.
- Development anthropologists – data collection and reflection on process.
- In parallel or post-project

## INTRODUCTION (2)

- Emerged as result of changes in development practice since the 1980s.
- Participatory development and simultaneous interest in indigenous/local knowledge.
- Various tools developed to promote these interests.
- Promoted by Bi- and Multi-lateral donors and often encouraged by national govts (lip-service?)
- Participation Continuum: Manipulation – Consultation – Functional – Self-mobilisation (rare?).

# INTRODUCTION (3)

- Despite origins tools are not anthropological:
  - Not participant observation
  - Lack Depth
  - Very limited duration
  - Ineffective into social relationships & dynamics.
- Common platform for Social, Natural Scientists and subjects to interact.
- Time, cost efficient, more qualitative than surveys.
- Ignores **power** and **negotiation** in **creating knowledge**.
- **Seldom free of constraints supposed to overcome.**

# Study Conceptualisation

- Ugandan/SA SC collaboration to look at genetic diversity of African Vegetables.
- Promote awareness and increase use
- 1<sup>st</sup> Phase – IK on cultivation and use.
- Farmers have knowledge.
- Natural(9) and Social Scientists (1).
  - Participatory tools used
  - Facilitate info collection and presentation
- Max of 5 days in each Parish (8 villages).
  - Influences results and post-study reflection.

# IK Static Stock of Knowledge

- IK seen as useful – something science can improve upon.
- Initially 47pp, 267 item questionnaire developed.
- Tools and subject areas predefined limiting scope.
- Way info recorded a problem.
- Way info reported a problem.
- Simplified headings and layout.
  - Technical and social disassociated.
  - Select what one wants.
  - Relationship between technical and social ignored as reported separately.

# Power-laden Interactions

- Villagers – Researchers
  - Gatekeeping
  - Tried to impress us with conventional practices
  - Movement controlled to some extent
  - Language constraints
- Villager – Villager
  - Seemed harmonious but not enough time to examine local power relationships
- Researcher – Researcher
  - Egos, titles and some disciplinary constraints
  - Lack of experience with tools and approach

# Time

- Quality of encounter depends on time.
  - Short duration – resource limitations and subsequent design.
  - Lack of depth of information.
  - Minimal trust and collaboration.
  - Limited exchange of knowledge.
- Overcome this – recommended stronger participatory process for 2<sup>nd</sup> phase.



# Timing

- Conceptualised as Uganda left out of recent IPGRI African study.
- Implemented at end of 1<sup>st</sup> rainy season – difficult to travel.
- No idea what happens during rainy seasons – not able to probe.
- Coincided with my availability.
- Farmers not consulted.

# Locality

- Field sites chosen for suitable accommodation for SA Team member.
- Close to accessible roads.
- Workshops held in church – away from places of production and preparation – some info not reported.
- Transect Walks attempted to overcome constraints.
- But most practices not observed.

# Analysis of Difference

- Differences in knowledge often due to social function, gender, age and social group differences.
- Reflects differences in need, experience or access to resources - not less knowledge.
- Study only looked superficially at gender and age.
- Differences between different types of producers noted.
- Differences between Muslims and Christians not examined.
- Research team's interdisciplinary boundaries influenced type of data collected.

# Conclusion

- In practice participatory tools do not seem to overcome the constraints for which they were developed.
- A rural tourism still in practice.
- Research process is one of interactions of power and subsequent negotiation.
- IK is not free of these interactions – generated knowledge is influenced by these interactions.
- So is use of IK.