

**Timo Kinnunen**  
Särkiniementie 16 A 41  
70700 Kuopio  
Finland

# Participatory Rural Appraisal

## Preface

Originally written by **Timo Kinnunen** on the 7th May in 1995 for *KEHI-course*, which was carried by *Universitas Ostiensis*. Actually there is no sense to publish this report, but I do it because it is possible now, and there might be some utility to somebody if this kind of text is generally available.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

There are two strategies, which can be applied at different levels. We can discuss different tools, which can be applied in different worlds. When interpreting well-developed world, it might be better to use the equipments which are applicable just there, and if studying the wishes of people in developing countries, it might be better to use other equipments. One end-user tool for developing countries is a method of *Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)*, which is aimed to be used when studying wishes and values of peoples at villages, or rural areas. Another method, which can be applied in well-developed countries, as well as developing countries - as a kind of bridge - is a method of *Object Oriented Planning (OOP)*, whose aim is to study the different connections of a project, and its functionality, and analyze it. There are questions which cannot be studied only interviewing people, or trying to find out different motives. Some questions are demanding the study of economic interests, the questions of financing and making system function, the questions of law, and other similar general topics. Quite near to these comes *Project Analysis (PA)*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature used

*PRA* has been described e.g. at some books:

- *The PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal*. Clark University. Program on International Development and Social Change. Worcester, MA 01610, USA.
- **Joachim Theis** and **Heather M. Grady**: "Participatory Rapid Appraisal for Community Development". IIED.
- *Looking at Gender, Acriculture and Rural Development*. Part IV. Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Helsinki. Finland. 1995.
- Kumppani I/94 pp. 40-41.

*Object Oriented Planning [OOP]* has been described e.g. by:

**Paul Silfverberg**: *Principles of Objective Oriented and Participatory Planning Process*. Helsinki University Knowledge Services Ltd., 7th September 1992.

and briefly

---: *Principles of Objective Oriented Project Planning/* Lecture Brief.

*Project Analysis [PA]* has been described by

---: *Guidelines for Project Analysis*. Annex A. Helsinki University Knowledge Services Ltd. September 25, 1992

In addition to these I have used my memories from lectures given by **Paul Silfverberg** and **Baba Niber Tiertto**. The former being an advocate of *object oriented planning*, and the latter an advocate of *PRA*.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PRA and OOP

What is the difference between *PRA* and *OOP*. The former is local, low-cost, and emphasizes close social interaction with cooperated participants, when the latter is institutional, expensive, and formal - and rational. In general, *OOP* seems to emphasize higher level of scope than *PRA*. *OOP* stands for sustainable development, but this is the case also with *PRA*. What is the difference? *OOP* states as a requirements e.g. the comprehensive and realistic assessment of needs. But is this really the case when we are just planning to do something, which we have pre-determined, and fixed, and proved to be reasonable, and realistic beforehand? *OOP* might success if people working for it are intelligent, and reasonable, and the world to which *OOP* has been applied is also that kind. When thinking only possible, we might accept only those "needs" which we can fulfill with our current means. But could we then reject those ones, which are difficult to attain? And have we clearly seen all other needs which are hidden but still possible to be attained. All the possible problems cannot be solved only by reason. And there are impacts which we cannot avoid. When trying to find out any reasonable solution, we might make value judgements about others, or the topic in question in the same time. If we are just insisting that which is possible, is therefore good - or that which seems to be realistic within a project, is reality, we are giving just nothing to the target people. And further - applying only reasoning we could overlook invisible, which might be an essential component of "need". Hence, we could see only a part of a problem, or situation. All of these topics have been recognized by *PRA* as possible dangers. *OOP* is demanding also comprehensive assessment of a project's social and cultural prerequisites and impacts. I think that this is very hard goal to attain, because we have a living phenomena at front of us, when studying any culture. We could impose our ideas, categories, and values without realizing that they are not valid ones. We might trust e.g. to our systematic approach too much - without realizing that there are another systems with their own terminologies. We could think that our science has got just the right conception, and that all the reports we have, are valid ones. Then there is a demand for clear and comprehensive institutional arrangements for the implementation of our project, and that our operation is getting financing, and producing more investments. Long experience in developing countries has given us an important lesson: only few projects have succeeded to continue, and increase investments. *OOP* is demanding also the use of appropriate technology. But what is "appropriate" - if we are discussing technology? Is it something which is just "possible", or "cheap"?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Problem and field analyses

There are several kinds of analyses which *OOP* applies at high level, from which the most important is problem analysis. *OOP* has proposed for that a plan is as good as the capability of planning team. This is quite correct, but this does not refer to people in developing countries but instead to those who are

planning something for them. The planning should be inter-active team work where all relevant parties can actively participate in the planning. But this is not possible in objective-oriented planning, and therefore it is a compromise. But there are certain dangers in it, which we study next. The most essential dimensions there are economic and financial aspects, that is, the point of view of the financing participating counterparts - such as investment and recurrent costs, financial resources, risks, etc. But there might be the question: whose money, and whose risks? When discussing economic and financial analysis we are referring to those who are going to invest money, or giving a support to our project. **THEY** have a risk, not **PEOPLE** in target country - if we are not especially planning to sell weapons, or dig to its soil e.g. old nuclear warheads, or transport our hazardous waste to developing countries. Then there are social and cultural dimensions, that is, both the needs and roles of various [participating] groups, and cultural traditions and impacts [of the project]. A good question might be: whose needs might come first? There are also purely institutional issues - as the roles of various organizations. Then, management of a planning process and planning methodologies - and management practices and strategies. A good question: whose organizations and managements? Then there is the possible use of natural resources, and environmental risks, and the relationship between social and natural environment. There are environmental impact assessment and required environmental planning. The topic concerning environment is very important, because we have not only e.g. trees and water as pure phenomena but they are also socio-cultural phenomena. Finally, there are also technical aspects - as the questions of level and quality [of planning and technology] and infrastructure, and skills and adequacy of manpower - which all belong to the interests of financing institutes. Notwithstanding that there are several dimensions in consideration, is this a formal approach - perhaps because it is a compromise. In addition to these restrictions - it clearly emphasizes an utility of monetary world, and its point of view. It is mostly pure planning, indeed, which is using modern logic, and philosophically the doctrine of utilitarianism. It may not need anything but a piece of paper, and perhaps some modern ADP technology, and mostly such human contacts which are far from a target country. Quite contrary to this is **PRA**, which is demanding such virtues as patience, respect of community members, and humility. The question is: what is important for you, is it not for me, perhaps, but we must develop the situation according your choice. In many areas in the world people have lived for a long time, and they have learned, too, how to live there - and that view we ought to respect. This seems to be quite another point of view than **OOP**'s. There are several, merely formal differences. **OOP** has clearly defined time-schedule, which **PRA** has not, and **PRA** has not clearly defined project organization, and hierarchy, which **OOP** has. But why **OOP** has this tendency to higher formal structures? Because also them can be targets for problem analysis, interest group analysis, resource assessment, and objective analysis. When we have pre-formulated the questions concerning possible problems properly, we can study various problems together - such as economic-, social-, institutional-, environmental-, and technical, and manage them at higher level than with the methods of **PRA**. We are concerning with the concepts of well-developed countries.

When we have established higher levels of view before, we can test it, if there is any problems. If we have still any difficulties, we can go to lower levels - as local government level, or household level, if there is some problems left. If **OOP** tries to apply only matrix when tracing problems, it is very far from **PRA**, because some problems can never be extrapolated from matrixes - only logical problems can do it. However, if there are no logical discrepancies within the matrix, and we have still non-functionality, we ought to ask from initiatives what is their own concern, or have they any wishes. If we trust only to such things as to logical tree when illustrating everyday problems of people, or the problems of health, we might go totally wrong - that is - our conclusions might be false anyway. If we use logic, or any syllogistic-like reasoning, we can prove almost everything we want right - or wrong. The problem is quite same with induction. But - anyway - if **OOP** decides to use **PRA** in that situation, or when dealing with any local problems, there is no controversy with **OOP** and **PRA**. They are supporting each others, if seen as tools, which has been developed for different purposes. During centuries there has been little change to the direction of the emphasis of the view of helpless people, or of people in trouble. It has been the age of colonialism which has only emphasized the utility of strong-ones, and conquerors. It is now time to change, and that is for **PRA** stands for.