

Participatory Approach in Public Policy Development Actions in Brazilian Amazonia: An Experience in Pará State

Abordagem Participativa em Ações de Políticas Públicas de Desenvolvimento na Amazônia Brasileira: Uma Experiência no Estado do Pará

Mário VASCONCELLOS SOBRINHO ¹; Marco Antônio Carvalho TEIXEIRA ²; Ana Maria de Albuquerque VASCONCELLOS ³

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this paper is to discuss the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in theoretical and empirical terms. It focuses particularly on an experience in the Brazilian Amazonia carried out in the municipality of Igarapé Açu, Pará State. The programme is called ParáRural. This programme was created in 2005 by a state law and aims to alleviate rural poverty from generation of work and income to very low-income rural families. In ParáRural there is a belief that local people and organisations participation in rural planning leads to a greater level of programme's efficiency and effective investments. The paper shows that PRA is limited in its scope, practice and results. This is for various reasons. Firstly, participation thrives only in a climate of trust; secondly, participation ceases as soon as the resources finish; and thirdly, PRA demonstrates the irreconcilable differences between the divergences of needs among those involved in development practices.

ABSTRACT:

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir o Diagnóstico Rural Participativo (DRP) em termos teóricos e empíricos. O artigo é centrado em uma experiência na Amazônia brasileira realizada no município de Igarapé Açu, no estado do Pará. O programa é chamado ParáRural. Este programa foi criado em 2005 por uma lei estadual e visa aliviar a pobreza rural por via da geração de trabalho e renda para as famílias de baixa renda. No ParáRural há o entendimento de que a participação das pessoas e organizações locais no planejamento municipal possibilita maior eficiência do programa e dos investimentos. O artigo mostra que o DRP é limitado em seu escopo, práticas e resultados. Isto acontece por várias razões. Primeiro, porque a participação só prospera em um clima de confiança; segundo, a participação cessa assim que os recursos terminam; e, terceiro, o DRP demonstra que existem diferenças irreconciliáveis entre as diversas necessidades dos envolvidos nas

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práticas dos programas de desenvolvimento .
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1. Introduction

Since 1970s participatory approach has been debated for its contribution to reverse top-down planning to focus on people who are considered 'powerless' (Chambers, 1983: 22). However, the failure of 'blueprint' development interventions to carry substantive improvements in poverty reduction has only been recognised in the last 25 years. From 1990s, activities of development projects have been carefully planned and structured in advance to allow for meaningful participation, although this practice has been criticised for its failure to support people in planning their own development (Hulme, 1997; Bowyer, 2005).

The connotation of participation in development has been positioned in development projects and programmes as a means to reinforce their sense and sustainability. One of the problems is that participation in projects has been seen not as connected to matter of politics or governance, but as a manner of encouraging action outside the public sphere (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999; Gaventa and Barrett, 2010).

In spite of a variety of meaning and different proponents of participation, all these aim to implement a large number of development activities. Although there is divergence in some aspects, the main idea is that participatory approach has changed from a strategy for rural development (Chambers, 1983) to a fundamental approach for governance and intervention to other spheres of social, economic and political life (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999: 2). However, the question is to what extent participation in development planning leads to a greater level of interaction between civil society and government as a mean of governance.

The application of a variety of participatory methodologies reflects the model to promote participation finds. The use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), for example, emphasizes that local people are enabled to make their own appraisals, analysis, and plans (Mutebi, 2004: 290). It involves a series of techniques designed to share knowledge between local people and non-local people used mainly in rural settings for project appraisal and in some cases in project cycles and research studies (op. cit., 291).

In spite of the role of Participatory Rural Appraisals to focus on the significance of local knowledge, PRA may also demonstrates the irreconcilable differences between the divergences of needs among those involved in development practices (Laderchi, 2001: 16).

The aim of this paper is to discuss an experience of a Participatory Rural Appraisal used in a development programme carried out in the municipality of Igarapé Açu, Pará State, Brazilian Amazonia. The programme is called ParáRural and it was created in 2005 by a state law. ParáRural aims to alleviate rural poverty from generation of work and income to very low-income rural families. The programme has financial support from the World Bank since 2008 when the programme effectively started up.

In ParáRural there is a belief that local people and organisations participation in rural planning leads to a greater level of programme's efficiency and effective investments. In practice, ParáRural has been commended for bringing the different rural actors together (from public sphere and civil society) as a mean of governance to elaborate, implement and evaluate a plan of common interests and to lead the way in efficiency and effectiveness for the use of public resources. Although the ParáRural programme has included participation in planning and established new institutional arrangements to sustain this method, there are doubts about the outcomes of this pattern. One of the reasons of this is that relationships between the actors have ceasing once the resources are finishing.

2. Participation and Governance for Sustainable Livelihoods

The rhetoric of sustainable development has become the accepted response to the environmental challenges faced by contemporary societies (Smith et al., 2000; Toner and Franks, 2006). As the concept becomes more widely accepted amongst politicians, policy-makers and the public, evidence

is building about its practical significance. Attention is increasingly focusing on the relative roles and responsibilities of citizens and consumers, individuals and institutions, and local and national spaces, in translating statements of intent into practical actions. Smith et al. (2000) for example, demonstrates the existence of wider involvement in the debate of what these important actions mean for national and international debates surrounding sustainability and community. They argue that there is a number of means, all based on the principal that individual and community action can have a significant aggregate impact on local (and global) environmental problems (Smith et al., 1995).

Governance emerges as a new theme in development co-operation, defined as a reform strategy, and a particular form to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making them more accountable, open and transparent and more democratic (Gaventa, 2004; Cooke, 2004). This brings together older concepts of stakeholders' rights and public accountability with recent interpretations of citizenship and policy (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999: 34). Crook (2003: 77) argues that the degree of responsiveness to the poor and the extent to which there is an impact on poverty are determined primarily by the politics of local-central relations and the general regime context. The translation of good government into better lives for the poor is expected to happen via the mediation of civil society.

For Toner and Franks (2006: 83), participation is only one of the sustainable livelihood principles to play an active role in intervention. These principles have been in the debates surrounding the process and people-centred (bottom-up) approaches to development management (op. cit., 81). Participation also becomes linked with the establishment of rural livelihood development carried out by donors and governmental development agencies through programmes and project development (McGee, 2002). The ideas of people's participation as an active process of direct involvement in the political structures that govern national life first emerged through the debates on scaling up (Bowyer, 2003: 89).

As Bouwen and Taillieu (2004: 145) note, participation becomes 'interactive participation', in which people participate in the development and implementation of plans, by discussion and contributing to solutions. It means that best practice is put forward under shared decision making and self-determination as levels of participation. Shared decision making implies that interested parties not only intervene in planning, but also become partly responsible for the outcomes (Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004: 146). The variety of participation implies a level of difficulty in defining participation. Some authors at one end of the scale regard participation as a managerial technique of joint superior-subordinate decision making, focussing on effectiveness contingencies. At the other end, participation is seen as a management philosophy and a way of involving citizens meaningfully in decisions (Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Gaventa, 2004). Meaningful involvement requires several conditions: (a) people should experience participation as feasible and realistic based on the task; (b) the boundaries and the limits of people's authority and decision making scope should be clearly defined and mutually accepted; (c) participation thrives only in a climate of openness and trust. Defined in this way, participation is not merely an instrument, but a complex system of structure and processes, that builds and supports sharing of legitimate authority over participants and that pervades the way an organization or institution views and relates to its members (Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004).

As was argued by Nelson and Wright (1995: 18) if part of the agenda of participatory development is to bring about a more equitable balance among people in decision making then it is essential to acknowledge that there are differences in power between individuals and groups. These differences can be reflected in many different ways and are involved in the definition of priorities, and in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects. The main concerns arise over power and dependency in relation to networking procedures. The new technologies have to be seized upon and appropriated to provide social and human development. If not, the knowledge concept will enlarge the levels of exclusion and inequality (Stringer and Reed, 2006: 12). The attention in the social space on change, create ways to integrate local people in planned interventions (Arce, 2003: 849). The strategies and decision making networks reflect and preserve current privileges, perpetuating inequalities and social exclusion (Gilchrist, 2004: 102). Community development usually operates within political systems where workers can be persuasive either because of their position in the networks or because of their professional status. Therefore, it is implied that specialists in this field must acknowledge their own influence while working to reduce power differentially (op. cit., 110).

3. Use of the Participatory Approach: Dilemmas and Challenges

Participation has turned into an act of faith in development that is supported by the idea that is inherently a good thing; that a focus on correct techniques is the key to guarantee the achievement of such approaches; and that considerations of power and politics on the whole should be avoided as divisive and obstructive (Clever, 2001:36). In spite of the considerable amount of actions and practices to promote participation, it still presents challenges as it is connected to complex dynamics of interaction at local levels. Both the increased involvement of civil society organizations and the possibilities for enhanced participation at local level are likely to create an improved participatory and enabling framework for implementing environment projects (Taylor, 2005: 94).

Although participatory approaches have been considered a challenge to incorporate local people's knowledge as a priority in development debate, it raises some dilemmas. One dilemma is that what is expressed as local knowledge results from perceptions of what agency legitimately and pragmatically expects (Mosse, 2001: 21). As Kothari (2001:143) demonstrates, participatory approaches to development are about the identification, collection, interpretation, analysis and (re)presentation of particular forms of (local) knowledge. However, it is now widely acknowledged that the production and representation of knowledge is inseparable from the exercise of power. Power is manifested in the workings of the development practitioner and is widely played out by other cultural intermediaries (op. cit., 143).

A participation approach encourages local people to take part in the programme and has an important role in programme decision making. However, this participation fails to realise that people have preferences to explore their resources according to their own interests (Mutebi, 2004; Laderchi, 2001). It implies that participatory approaches are not only contextual, but also emphasise poor people's creativity and ability to investigate and analyse their own reality (Chambers, 1994; Laderchi, 2001). Although participatory methods can increase the downward accountability of development processes, these benefits cannot be taken for granted (Mayoux and Chambers, 2005: 272). It is for this reason that much depends on how they are used and by whom and the levels of political will not only to hear the voices of the poor but also to listen and take action (op. cit., 272-3).

The argument about the participatory approach made by Blackburn and Holland (1998) reinforced the idea that to create the conditions for local analysis of existing realities and subsequent courses of action is to change realities. The knowledge that people pursue is not simply articulated in direct and immediate relations between people and environment but is also historically constructed through all sorts of social practices (Kothari, 2001: 143). Mutebi (2004: 290) argues that the introduction of participation in Uganda was essential for opening up the democratisation agenda. It was due to the concerns of local administration and local people that they interacted and influenced the government's actions. This example illustrates that the introduction of participation in Uganda's local government system contributed to institutional change. According to Mutebi (2004: 291), the use of participation aspirations coincided with those of the donor community and those who favoured popular participation. However, the use of participation needs an assessment in order to carry out other phases of government actions. As Taylor (2005: 94) argues, the incorporation of participatory approaches need to be connected with assessment as strategies for development and building capacity for community participate within their project (op. cit., 95).

The example of interaction promoted at local level from Melluci (1996), demonstrates how people create interactions informally to exert influence on policy. Similar to Melluci's point of view, Gilchrist (2004: 49) argues that in the democratic space at local level, people create complex interactions that help people to learn from their experience. It means that people at local level are not isolated; on the contrary, they are involved in complex interactions and create networks to articulate personal problems and to organise for policy influence. However, local level requires a political space (Engberg-Pedersen and Webster, 2002; Rao and Walton, 2004; Bowyer, 2005). For example, Bowyer (2005: 475) demonstrates that the government in Peru has introduced a new public space that is designed to incorporated ordinary people into diverse spheres of public activities. This initiative has resulted in social policy to promote interaction among state and civil society as important component in the politics of poverty reduction.

Engberg-Pedersen and Webster (2002: 267) point out two groups of strategies that have surrounded the policy space. One group of strategies is carried out by the poor in an attempt to change their situation in terms of their resources and assets. Another group of strategies is to secure the interests of the poor by effecting change in the actions and policies of others and also bringing about change in public policy and in its implementation.

The new thinking on implementation places a growing emphasis on the 'bottom up' dimension of participation and the idea of space for transformation (Cornwall, 2004; Hickey and Mohan, 2004). However, the focus on implementation is a complex process, necessitating flexible social adaptation by diverse national institutions and actors (Hickey and Mohan, 2004: 3). Policy learning is seen as a good implementation outcome. It is flexible and designed to result in a process of national institutional reflexive engagement (Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Flynn and Kröger, 2003). Policy transfer implies a rather less conscious and substantive copying of policy solutions which may or may not fit particular institutional settings well (Flynn and Kröger, 2003). As Flynn and Kröger (2003) point out, policy learning supports a move away from measuring outcomes by instrumentalist approaches which rely on 'hard' legal and scientific data of transposition or compliance (2003: 152). Policy learning offers to enhance administrative implementation capacities, not so much in the sense of formal capacities (resources, staff, fiscal and legal powers) but rather in the sense of capacities to understand, and manage information (Flynn and Kröger, 2003: 153). It implies bringing deeper changes into institutions to change the values, beliefs, preferences and priorities of implementers and target groups. Policy learning also implies a focus on participation as interconnected informal knowledge between those involved in policy action. The inherent differences among the partners are seen as opportunities rather than constraints, and learning benefits occur for both partners. Such a process compares favourably with the conventional mechanisms for knowledge transfers and learning in a development context (Johnson and Wilson, 2006: 78).

People also create interaction through informal networks (Gilchrist, 2004). The role of the informal network is crucial in development and in political activity (Castells, 1997). There is a growing recognition of the micro-social processes of collective actions — the interactions, dialogue and emotional ties between participants (Olson, 1965). However, the networks that emerge need to be flexible enough to recognise the diversity of experience and values that motivate people and the power relations that are involved in these models of interaction (Gilchrist, 2004: 51). Rigid procedures can discourage improvement and risk taking. It is rarely possible to estimate the precise outcome of community development and in any case, the requirement to do so stifles the initiative and synergy which networking generates (op. cit., 105). The benefits of networking should be demonstrated over the long term, but the lack of an eventual outcome can also be criticised. At some stage there must be results in terms of occurrence such as new projects, proposal agreements, funding available, and so on. The less noticeable enhancement should also be recognised, such as increased joining process among agencies and changes in relationships and attitude (Gilchrist, 2004: 105).

Bouwen and Taillieu (2004: 139) argue that it is important to provide incentives for a joint social construction to share knowledge and experiences. Joint learning starts from the different knowledge that the actors bring to the learning, although these are not necessarily equally valued (Johnson and Wilson, 2006: 72). The joint perspective implies that the production of knowledge is involved in a social process and system in terms of a multiplicity of actors and relations. Joint learning is an opportunity for organizational members to use valued skills and abilities for important goals, to gain self-confidence (Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004: 140). However, the production of knowledge is more than a result from interactions among individuals and collective groups of people involved in ongoing negotiation (Long, 1992). It is not simply articulated in the direct and immediate relationship between participants and observers but also historically constructed through all sorts of social practices (Kothari, 2001: 141).

The production of knowledge through the use of participatory approaches in policy action is a new challenge since it moves beyond the boundaries of project or grassroots intervention to other spheres of social, economic and political life (Laderchi, 2001: 21).

Gaventa and Barrett (2010) demonstrate that in the last few years participatory approaches to local governance have been gaining increased attention in the United States, parts of Europe and Latin America. Brazil is seen as a good example of the joint approach where local-level participatory planning is accompanied by a process of participatory budgeting (Gonçalves, 2013; Cornwall, 2013).

Initially the use of participatory approaches in Brazil is linked to the 'Participatory Budgeting' (Gonçalves, 2013), where the state enables the population to discuss the budget as an instrument for governance (Sucupira and Mello, 1999: 8). As Gaventa and Barrett (2010) argue, how local laws for participation are actually implemented vary a great deal across states and municipalities (2004: 29). Despite a positive experience of the participatory approach in Brazilian cities, the challenge is in extending the participatory approach to rural areas. The ParáRural programme adopted a participatory approach and offers analysis of the participation experience to involve local people in public action debates and rural policy development issues. The challenge is to understand the impact of programme and policy development at local level. The local space involves complex interactions among local institutions/development agencies and between local people and organisations. Although there are examples of other projects that focus on participation in Brazil (Cornwall, Romano and Shankland, 2008) and Pará, there is little evidence that they have resulted in policies that are more responsive to the citizens or more inclusive of rural people's livelihood and development. The ParáRural programme is particularly interesting as a means to illustrate the route of change from a project to a governmental programme and policy at local level, involving local organisations (Vasconcellos Sobrinho and Vasconcellos, 2012) as intermediaries Vasconcellos and Vasconcellos Sobrinho, 2014) for rural policy development actions.

4. Accessing Local People's Knowledge in the ParáRural

Although the linkages at local level are the key issues to legitimising the actions of the ParáRural, what reality is accounted for to prioritise the knowledge of the local people in policy making? (Chambers, 1997b: 41).

The ParáRural, for example, has acted in the municipality of Igarapé-Açu was carried out by a consultant and his view of participatory approaches. The consultant promoted workshops, training and other practices, to achieve individual, family and organisational levels. The consultant carried out workshop in the municipality to access local knowledge about natural, cultural and social resources livelihoods.

The challenge for participatory approaches is the inherent tension between local categories and the degree of standardization required to enhance the validity of aggregation across different communities. As Mayoux and Chambers (2005: 279) argue, this challenge is often cited as insurmountable and a reason for preference for questionnaire surveys, however this problem is inherent in reality and is in practice avoided in most questionnaires.

In these descriptions, participatory approaches generally stand for a number of reversals: from top-down to bottom-up, from verbal to visual, from a 'blueprint' to a learning approach, from closed to open, from professional to personal (Chambers, 1997b: 42). These reversals indicate that participatory approaches subvert existing power relations through stressing the importance of local knowledge by regarding them as responsible actors and by starting from their local and personal needs and interests. These claims and representations inspired the ParáRural project to adopt a participatory approach to initiate a public debate on local development issues. Participation fails when committed to reverse or subvert power relations, since it is always part of an operation of power, governing people to behave in a particular, determined way (Mosse, 2001; Banks, 2003; Webster, 2002).

Participatory research is undertaken using a diverse set of participatory tools determined by the research agenda and local context that enables local people to participate and leads to a reversal in the relationship between the community and the outsider (Robb, 2002: 74). In the municipality of Igarapé-Açu, for example, PRA exercises was used by consultant as an important resource to access local people's knowledge from all community beneficiaries of the ParáRural. Local people engaged in group debates to identify forms of land production, resources of production and socio-economic configurations.

The group debate made by local people is a key source to focus on local people's knowledge. The local people have confidence in their own ability, and are often trying to express what they really believe and the type of resources produced by them for long generations. Effective practice requires consideration and above all sufficient time to understand the problems that local people are facing to engage in the programme effectively.

This focus on local people livelihood is an important mechanism to give priority to local demands. It is now more widely recognised that scaling up which is carried out on larger-scale research beyond

individual's communities through participatory techniques has led to the quality of information being compromised (Robb, 2002: 72). It avoids the predominance of traditional uses of measurement and indicators that are usually determined by outsiders who may have limited knowledge of local people's realities. The conventional techniques supply information for specialists to construct their own accounts of what people do. However, they fail to understand people's own accounts of why they do certain things and what they do by asking them about their knowledge, beliefs and practices (Cornwall et al., 1993: 4). The critical point is that conventional experimental design prioritised technical procedures rather than the complex dynamics of interaction between local people. It obscured those who practise interactions in changing social, economic and ecological environments through complex relations. As a homogeneous approach it was rigid and based on a model of institutionalised knowledge derived from expert assessment and administrative criteria. The following section identifies examples of the diverse nature of the communities that take part in the programme in focus in the municipality of Igarapé-Açu.

5. Policy Space: Supporting Local People's Knowledge

The ParáRural actions at local level community maintained interactive participation through accessing local people's knowledge. With government incentives, local people carried out strategies to change their resources and assets. Strategies may vary in the policy space; however, the most important issue is to identify the local people viewpoint about their resource and how to implement policy actions to change at the same time with security and access to their resources (Engberg-Pedersen and Webster, 2002: 257). In the municipality of Igarapé-Açu, in some way the consultant influenced local people's awareness, to show that they do have the knowledge about their livelihood and have contributed to reach solutions.

Local people have produced a variety and combination of resources that is the result of their daily life and are also part of their own cultural identity. Communities working closely within the project are empowered to start taking responsibility for their own development, tackling such things as organizing association and transportation for their agricultural production, and so on. The consultant practices in Igarapé-Açu contributed to strengthen the interaction among government policy development and local people. The feature of this organisation, a strong base linked with the social movement and rural workers, was a positive approach towards engaging local people with programme actions. Local people from Igarapé-Açu, for example, are starting to take responsibility and to become aware of their own development from learning that they are part of a system and were willing to look for solutions. However, even though interactions are part of a long-term relationship with ParáRural, direct interaction with the government is a new process to be learned. The group debate carried out by consultant was significant in showing an understanding of family organisations in each area where the programme operates. Local people used drafts and other sources to show how their life in Igarapé-Açu is organised. It made possible an understanding of how production is structured and how family and production are integrated.

This method identified the resources that local people have included as important for their livelihoods and the strategies to make them suitable. Local people's knowledge is involved in process that is constantly changing in the context of its production and use (Cornwall et al., 1993: 9). Land is the most basic of natural resources to local people in Igarapé-Açu, however, as is pointed out by Saha (2002), local community's resources include other issues such as forests, biodiversity, natural pastures, and wildlife (2002: 35). It means that the mere presence of the resource locally does not make it natural capital for local communities. As Saha (2002) notes, it is only when local people can gain access and use a resource for a livelihood that they become natural capital (2002: 36).

However, land struggles in areas of the programme actions require rapid solutions for the local people involved, particularly for land titles. The titling process in Brazil is carried out by federal and regional (state) agencies and is grossly behind schedule. It is a slow process that impacts on family production. Land demarcation has been a politically charged issue in Amazonia. In the area researched, for example, local people have lived and worked for long generations but, most of them have no title documents and thus cannot qualify for the credit programmes available. The "challenge facing agriculture worldwide involves more than just achieving higher production, justifiable as that goal has been for previous scientific innovation" (Fernandes et al., 2002: 22).

The Unit of Family Production is an example of the social distribution of family labour from Igarapé-Açu. It identifies the family skills, ability and social organisation for production rather than just an understanding of distribution of economic practice itself. Each person has a specific role in the family unit. For example, the research shows that there are some cases in which the head-family works alone, but there are other situations where the family works together. Women, for example, cultivate domestic animals and medicinal herbs around the house and yard, and they also have an important role during the harvest period. The men work predominantly alone in cleaning, clearance and burning activities.

The main goal of workshops promoted by the ParáRural from its consultant was to enable individuals and groups to build the information that they needed in order to achieve their aspirations, to solve at least some of their problems and to increase local people's accountability of the whole development process. Local people in communities from Igarapé-Açu have been oriented to build information about their social and economic resources and livelihoods. The information produced cannot be seen as an end in itself, it needs to be oriented to improve programme implementations. This is particularly pertinent if the government wishes to spread actions to another area.

The dynamic of a model of family agriculture demonstrates the skills and knowledge accumulated over the generations of collective family labourers. Additionally, it means that they have a solid knowledge of economics and the environment based on family agriculture and resource management.

The Unit of Family Production from Igarapé-Açu presents a variety of relations and a diversity of species of production. Each place has a meaning and is the result of social construction and family reproduction. For example, there is predominance of the cycle of production supported on *roça* (rice, corn and manioc crops) as part of the local knowledge and cultural identity that is constructed socially. The diversity of species from the back yard (*quintal*) provides fruit throughout the year for the family to consume and take to the market. In spite of the predominance of the production for everyday family life, there is also produce destined for the market. There are some differences between areas of production.

A complex task is to identify what impact mapping the local people's knowledge and cultural practices is having. The focus on the social space for change has made visible the ways in which individuals, households and family groups try to integrate planned interventions into existing strategies or generate their own paths for social change.

The participation of local people is important to define resources and to decide what is appropriate and a priority for them. The research demonstrates the existence of different activities carried out by family groups that form their system of production, particularly production outcomes and their relation to personal consumption and markets.

Even though agriculture is an important economic activity of the north-east of Pará, activities such as the cultivation of fruit, the cultivation of palm-oil started to be recurrent in the area. This reveals the communities' division of production. The production of crops, extraction activities and back yard production represent local people's ability and skills from generations back (Tura, 2000a: 32). This indicates that these activities are a significant element of their knowledge and cultural identity. Family production constructs lives based on the relationship between livelihoods and needs. The fieldwork shows that family production is organised according to the potential of livelihoods and its linkage with socio-cultural local knowledge.

Local knowledge is produced according to local needs and livelihood resources. The identification of needs and priorities are key elements to recognizing what is valuable for local people and it is important for the development of their livelihood. It mixes people's culture, knowledge and identity.

Knowledge gained from the experience of small agriculturists/farmers in Igarapé-Açu provides major understanding of Units of Family Production (UFP). The example of one UFP from the Caripi community in the municipality of Igarapé-Açu illustrates the social and economic practices connected with family production.

I have increased the fruit production in my land but I cultivate other crops at the same time. It is only an experiment but I have to find a market to sell it. I have to take care because I know a family that had invested only in fruits and suddenly they lost everything because the juice factory collapsed. And they didn't have another option to sell the produce (Family-based small-scale rural agriculturist).

However, local people are also open to the development of new practices since changes are connected with their usual practices. For example, the group of agriculturists of the Igarapé-Açu intends to increase the production of organic fruit. This kind of activity has taken place in some UFPs as a result of the use of new technology transferred by a research institution called EMBRAPA and the local people's knowledge of fruit cultivation. Among the agriculturists/farmers from four communities interviewed, the agriculturists from Igarapé-Açu were recommended to cultivate various types of mixed species such as fruit associated with manioc, corn and rice to prevent eventual risk of plantation diseases and to avoid losing production in the case of market collapse. In spite of all the risks that the agriculturists pointed out, they were also suggested to focus on UFP consumption as the main priority for the families.

6. Participation and Power Relations in the ParáRural Model

Participation and power relations are a critical issue in the ParáRural model. Fieldwork demonstrated that land and credit have influenced the configuration of power. Taking the example of Igarapé-Açu, fieldwork demonstrated that credit access has been dominated only by those who have land registration and are involved in a social organisation (association). The data arose in the research demonstrates that credit policy was designed to be assessed by family-based small-scale agriculturists, however it has not been adapted in light of changes. It is difficult to find local people who are happy with the forms of credit access. For example, local people in Igarapé-Açu have lived and worked there for long time but, predominantly, they do not have all title documents and they are not organised in associations and thus cannot qualify for the available ParáRural credit programme. This requires some changes in the definition of the criteria of the credit access such as land registration and concerns as to how family-based small-scale agriculturists are organised.

What the credit policy defines as results to be achieved is different from local people's view of the resources produced. While the former prioritises economic results, the latter is based on a model of environment conservation. If the ParáRural does not negotiate with World Bank for a new model of credit access and results evaluation, it will be difficult for many family-based small-scale agriculturists to access credit to carry out new forms of production. If rural communities do not have credit access they will return to traditional forms of production based on 'slash and burn'. The fieldwork has demonstrated that the model of the ParáRural is very well designed, however it also has demonstrated that there is a great gap between what was planned and what has been executed. The ParáRural does not take into account land registration and does not clearly define the forms of credit payment. Its cycle of planning is thus closed and it does not, therefore, offer the possibility of replication. This means that the incorporation of participation and the involvement of local communities in knowledge production are not sufficient. Although the ParáRural by its consultant uses the participatory approach in issues of project implementation to support and expand local production resources, the investment in external organisational cultures is an important issue to take into account. This is especially true when dealing with the existent power relations between other organisations that interact at local level.

Conflicts of interest in the use and occupation of land at local level is another difficult task in the consolidation of the ParáRural. The land struggles require special attention when dealing with conflicts in defining areas of family-based small-scale production, areas for large-scale palm oil production and areas of conservation. This is particularly evident when certain rural communities do not want to take part in the ParáRural because the programme incentives in some way impose specific forms of production.

Fieldwork has demonstrated that local people are concerned that the programme will continue to over stress issues regarding economic production. Local people want the ParáRural to incorporate and go faster with other land issues such as land reform, geographical demarcation and registration. Taking into account that tenure security is a significant task in poverty reduction; the results of this research indicate that the ParáRural should be the main vehicle to negotiate this issue with other government departments. If the ParáRural positively negotiates tenure security, chances are that local people will gain greater confidence in the programme.

7. Final Considerations

In spite of the role of participatory rural appraisals to focus on the significance of local knowledge, PRA demonstrates the irreconcilable differences between the divergences of needs among those involved in development practices. It allows for profound changes in powerful institutions and in the global economic, social, cultural and political *status quo* on which the primacy of these institutional rests.

However, the use of the PRA offers not just a toolkit for transforming the development paradigm, but a framework for analysis and awareness-raising that would be capable, over time, of convincing a critical mass of people of the need for transformation. Participation in projects and programmes is important to bring people such as beneficiaries, stakeholders, actors, into the development process. However, the challenge is how to transform the development paradigm, making it more democratic and equitable.

An important principle of participatory development is the incorporation of local people's knowledge into programme planning. Participatory initiatives have been used to create the relationship between the ParáRural, policies and rural communities. The rationale behind this programme is to help producers make the transition from the traditional slash and burn agricultural practices that currently prevail in Amazonia frontier towards more diversified and sustainable agricultural and extractive practices while taking into account local people's knowledge, culture and demands. The ParáRural actions are carried out to encourage more sustainable economic activities by compensating, directly or indirectly, family-based small-scale producers for good agricultural practices and to achieve economic, environment and social results. The programme action is also associated with the environmental services such as forest conservation and management, reduction of forest fires and fragmentation, maintenance of stream and river margins, soil conservation, recuperation of degraded areas and biodiversity conservation.

However, it requires a re-approach on a conceptual category in order to consider social analysis not simply as a model of economic development but as a social sphere in its own right. The emphasis on the social provides a basis for a critical view to explore the field of action, to consider changes in the policy processes at community level. The social aspects of development have been increasingly recognised by the international development agencies as of vital importance (Blair, 2000; Rao and Walton, 2004), and have become an instrumental field central to current development practice. Taking into consideration social development, the use of social knowledge as a resource for policymaking has created situations to mobilize researchers and policy makers in new political alliances for engagement with practice. The emphasis on policy relevance implies that the capacity to form new relationships and linkages across institutional boundaries has to be built in order to generate a field of action across divides between social research and development practices.

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1. PhD em Estudos do Desenvolvimento, professor do PPAD/Universidade da Amazônia e PPGEDAM/NUMA/Universidade Federal do Pará, mario.vasconcellos@unama.br; mariovasc@ufpa.br

2. Doutor em Ciências Sociais, professor do PPAPG/EAESP/Fundação Getúlio Vargas, marco.teixeira@fgv.br

3. PhD em Estudos do Desenvolvimento, professora do PPAD/Universidade da Amazônia, anamaria.vasconcellos@unama.br

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