



**Action Learning, Action Research
& Process Management
Association Inc.**

5TH ALARPM / 9TH PAR WORLD CONGRESS WEB ARCHIVE

**THE WORLD CONGRESS:
5th on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management
(ALARPM) and 9th on Participatory Action Research (PAR)**

The Congress is held in Ballarat, Australia from Sunday 10 September to Wednesday 13 September 2000.

The Organisational Learning Stream is one of the biggest streams within the Congress Program with 2 or 3 choices usually available within this stream alone. In addition, delegates may access keynotes, workshops and symposia from the 6 other streams - Process in Our Practice, Indigenous Peoples, Environmental/Agricultural, Global Issues, Social and Community and Personal Reconciliation and Renewal. For people working in organisational settings, all streams may be of interest while the Process in Our Practice and Personal Reconciliation and Renewal Streams will probably be particularly relevant.

STREAM: ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING & FUTURE OF WORK

STREAM KEYNOTES

Transformative potential of action learning: Its pay off and tensions

Professor Victoria Marsick - Associate Professor in the Department of Organization and Leadership, Columbia University Teachers College, New York, USA. Dr Marsick has managed staff development and training for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and has consulted worldwide for numerous international agencies and US firms including AT&T, Exxon and CIBA-GEIGY. She is the author or co-author of several books on organisational learning including *Creating the Learning Organisation* and *Sculpting the Learning Organisation* (both with Karen Watkins).

Living and learning systemic inquiry: Ponderings from adventures in third wave action research

Professor Susan Weil - founder and Director of the SOLAR Centre and Professor of Social and Organisational Learning at University College, Northampton, UK. Susan' current work incorporates developments around the use of "learning histories" and learning stories as vehicles for maintaining connections between systemic and 'on the ground' learning and inquiry. Susan's research, scholarship and work with diverse communities of practice have resulted in numerous published works. She is currently working on two books to do with living and learning new cultures of inquiry and alternative forms of knowledge generation.

**OTHER KEYNOTES OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO PEOPLE IN
THE ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING STRAND**

Professor Robert Flood is a Visiting Professor of Management at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia and was formerly Professor of Management Sciences at the University of Hull, UK and Director of its Centre for Systems Studies. He is an international consultant and editor of the international journal *Systemic Practice and Action Research*.

Professor Flood is the author of eight books on management and systems, the most recent being the bestselling *Revisiting the Fifth Discipline: Learning within the Unknowable*.

Dr John Gaventa is a political sociologist working on participation and participatory research and education methodologies, interested in linking grassroots participation to policies and programs of larger institutions and in training and capacity building for strengthening civil society. He is currently working with the Institute of Development Studies in the UK.

Ms Deborah Lange is based in South Australia where her major area of work involves organisational change and development, personal and professional effectiveness. Her current focus is the dynamic interplay between personal and professional effectiveness. Her creative and stimulating presentations have been the highlight of previous ALARPM Conferences.

Professor Yvonna Lincoln is Professor and Program Director, Higher Education Program Area, Texas A&M University. She is the author, co-author and editor of seven books on qualitative research methods including *Naturalistic Inquiry*, *Fourth Generation Evaluation* and the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. She has done fieldwork in South America, Scotland and China as well as in the USA.

Professor Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt is Director of OZI specialising in Action Learning and Action Research, Leadership Programs, Postgraduate Research Training and Supervision, including *Qualitative Research Methods*. She is also an Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Education at Griffith University and at Southern Cross University as well as Professor of Professional and Organisational Development in the International Management Centre. Professor Zuber-Skerritt consults extensively in South Africa and Europe as well as Australia. She has published 25 books, over 30 book chapters and more than 100 journal articles, papers and reports.

WORKSHOPS

Philip Carter (Faculty of Business, Auckland Institute of Technology, New Zealand)

"Understanding and advancing the human-computer relationship using psycho-dramatic enactment" (90min)

Derek Foster (Department of Primary Industries, Queensland)
4PS Team development system (45min)

Iain Govan (South Australia)
"Effective Communication & Reconciliation" (45min)

Tricia J. Hiley (RMIT University, Melbourne)
"Reconnecting learning with education - Turning learning inside out" (90min)

Jim Hirsch (Department of Primary Industries and Resources, South Australia)
"Making meaning from information: The effects of values and world views on 'common sense'" (45min)

Karen Norum (University of South Dakota), Patrick Jenlink (Stephen F. Austin State University) & May Lowry (University of Colorado at Denver)
"From a cacophony to a polyphony of voices: Searching for the ideal future of the public education system" (90min)

Judy O'Neil (Partners for the Learning Organization), Victoria Marsick (Columbia University) & Karen Watkins (University of Georgia)
"E+G=We: The public service electric and gas story" (90min)

Ian Plowman (Department of Primary Industries, Queensland)
"Dinosaurs, dead mullet, laughter, balloons, birds nests and war clubs (Learning: Why we should; how best to do it; why we can't) " (90min)

SYMPOsia

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE ORGANISATIONAL SQUARE (45min)

IW Ferreira (Vista University, South Africa)
'Raising skill levels in South Africa: A prerequisite for healing past divisions in a diverse society'

Mark Glazebrook (Deakin University, Victoria)
'Building bridges between the sectors: Corporate citizenship as a catalyst for social change'

Steve Bright (Catalyst Communications)
'The widening gyre - storytelling as a methodology for articulating difference in large, complex organisations'

SYSTEMS VIEWS (90min)

Gordon Kubanek (Canada)
'Beyond hard or soft systems: A systems model of learning organizations and brain communication'

Heather Shaw (Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria) & Andrea Barrett (Systemic Intervention Consultancy, Western Australia)
'A public sector experience of a change management process - Our learning and insights from the journey'

Oscar Mink (University of Texas, Austin)
'The myth of fingerprints - reconciling the individual and the organisation'

MANAGING DIVERSITY (45min)

Suresh Marcandan (People Power, Brisbane)
'Managing diverse value systems - Transforming corporate culture through collaborative learning, research and action'

Judith McMorland (Dean, Auckland Consortium for Theological Education, New Zealand)

‘Testaments to diversity: Covenants and contracts in a theological consortium’

LEADERSHIP AND RENEWAL IN THE UK PUBLIC SECTOR (45 mins)

Yusuf Ahmad & Mike Broussine (University of West of England, Bristol)

‘The UK public sector modernisation agenda - a form of renewal?’

Louise Grisoni & Chris Miller (University of West of England, Bristol)

‘Confronting unimaginable complexity: Public sector leadership, research, and development in post graduate education’

REWORKING LEADERSHIP (90min)

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt (Director, OZI, Australia)

‘The origin, history and nature of ALARPM’

Stephen Kemmis (Professor Emeritus, University of Ballarat)

‘Leadership: Less is more’

Richard Bawden (Visiting Distinguished University Professor, Michigan State University)

‘Systemic development as participatory action research’

Bob Dick (Australia)

‘Leadership of self, relationships and the world’

Mary Farquhar (A/g Head, School of Asian and International Studies, Griffith University, Queensland)

‘Leaders without socks’

Paul Chippendale (Values Education Network, Australia)

‘Values: Social order in chaos’

Denis Looney (Corporate Context, Australia)

‘Action learning for profit’

Robin McTaggart (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Staff Development and Student Affairs, James Cook University)

‘Participation is an ethic’

AL/AR & WORKBASED LEARNING (1) (90min)

Chris Booth (RMIT) & Catherine Garner (Cabrini Hospital, Victoria)

‘Action learning in management science: The reconciliation of hard and soft skill sets’

Consuelo Rodriguez (Universidad Central de Venezuela)
'Management and control processes in PyMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) of metropolitan area of Caracas'

Ted Sandercock (Concerns Based Consultants)
'Action learning in action: Business leadership'

Peter Waterhouse, Ray Townsend (Workplace Learning Initiatives) & Brent McGregor (Burgess Furniture)
'Facilitating change via action learning with frontline managers'

AL/AR & WORKBASED LEARNING (2) (90min)

Regine Wagner & Marilyn Childs (University of Western Sydney)
'A town like Alice – Work based learning goes central'

Jeff McLean & Pat Davis (Monash University)
'The importance, and characteristics of, a "*certain type of relationship*" to organisational & action learning'

Adela McMurray (Swinburne University, Victoria) & Wayne Pace (Brigham Young University, Utah)
'Action research and counter-attitudinal advocacy in promoting cultural continuity: Maintaining organisational dynamic equilibrium'

Anne Herbert (University of South Australia)
'Constraints on critical questions'

ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION (90min)

Robyn Hill & Ken Gooding (Chisholm Institute, Victoria)
'Using action research to promote personal and organisational transformation'

Olga Strakhova (St Petersburg University of Economics & Finance)
'Management of Russian enterprise'

Wojciech W Gasparski (Institute of Philosophy & Sociology, Warsaw)
'How to solve ethical dilemmas in business through action learning'

Jose Vargas (Centro Universitario del Sur, Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico)
'Mexican organizations in transition'

LEARNING ORGANISATIONS (90min)

Ted Sandercock & Peter Meier (Concerns Based Consultants)
'Historical humanity: An application of the open-ended generative principle'

Beate Aretz & Keith Linard (University of New South Wales, ADFA)
'The learning organisation'

Andre van der Westhuizen (Technikon Northern Gauteng, Pretoria, South Africa)
'An academic leadership model for transformation towards learning organisations in higher education'

John Garrick (University of Technology, Sydney)
"Working knowledge" (45min)

WORKERS' PARTICIPATION (45 mins)

Gorm Simonsen (Aalborg University, Denmark)
'Workers participation in organisational development'

Derek Foster (Department of Primary Industries, Queensland)
'Typology for staff participation within public sector organisations'

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Ian Plowman (Department of Primary Industries, Queensland)
'Meetings, bloody effective meetings'

Marc Lammerink (RAWOO)
'Getting local communities involved in research for biodiversity conservation and livelihood development''

Teresa Arnold (University of South Australia)
'Reconciling economic development with people in small business: Renewing capability'

Patrice Braun (University of Ballarat)
'Spawning e-business communities of common interest: An action research approach'

Getting Local Communities involved in Research for Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Development: the example of Mount Malindang, Philippines

Marc P. Lammerink and Paul Smits
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This research programme on biodiversity is undertaken jointly by Philippine and Dutch researchers. Location is the Mount Malindang range on the Philippine island of Mindanao. The programme responds to the need for better understanding of biodiversity, especially at the ecosystem level. Results of the research programme are geared towards influencing policies, and educational and development programmes on the sustainable use of biodiversity resources.

The programme is the product of a series of studies, consultations, workshops and other activities designed to focus the research programme and involve researchers and stakeholders in its formulation. The first step was the development of a National Biodiversity Research Agenda providing directions and general content of the programme based on research needs and questions that are important for biodiversity conservation efforts in the Philippines. Through this Agenda, a multi-stakeholder group of researchers, government and non-government organisations affirmed the guiding concepts and further defined qualities that makes the research programme relevant to sustainable development in the country.

With the Dutch partners, it was further decided to pursue a pre-implementation phase in order to identify a more specific research site and to formulate research priorities and roles of the various project partners. Subsequently, workshops with key persons from Mindanao-based institutions and researchers were held, which further focused the programme.

The pre-implementation phase is a research, training and planning phase before the full programme starts. A training workshop on participatory research was initially held for the researchers in February 1999 in Musuan, Bukidnon. In this way, a pool of Mindanao-based researchers became involved in the programme.

The problem analysis in the region was divided among three ecosystem-based teams for upland, lowland and coastal ecosystems. A Stakeholder Analysis Team was also formed with some members coming from the ecosystem research teams. The teams conducted a situation and problem analysis in the area making use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods in March to June 1999. This allowed for a better description of the identified research site merging the observations of external data-gatherers with the experiences and perceptions of the subjects of the research - the people in the communities of Mount Malindang and its environs. Post-PRA workshops among the researchers who were involved in the problem analysis and key Philippine and Dutch partners were held to identify biodiversity research problems and opportunities as well as more specific researchable areas. A culminating workshop among the Philippine and Dutch researchers and key partners was held in Tagbilaran, Bohol in August 1999 to agree on the programme's vision, mission, goals and strategies.

The research programme which is finally formulated and will be implemented and tested the coming years in Mount Malindang will provide a framework, strategies and methods for similar programmes in other valuable but threatened biodiversity areas in the Philippines. The main intent of the Biodiversity Research Programme is to initiate a research programme in Mount Malindang Range and its environs and use this experience as a basis for better research and sustainable development efforts in other biodiversity hotspots in the Philippines.

Getting Local Communities involved in Research for Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Development: The example of Mount Malindang, Philippines

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Summary

Jointly Philippine and Dutch researchers undertake an innovative research program on biodiversity in the Mount Malindang range on the Philippine island of Mindanao.

The programme responds to the need for better understanding of biodiversity, especially at the ecosystem level. Results of the research programme are geared towards influencing policies, and educational and development programmes on the sustainable use of biodiversity resources.

This paper describes the process so far to formulate the research agenda. It is the product of a series of studies, consultations, workshops and other activities designed to focus the research programme and involve researchers and local communities in its formulation.

The main intent of the Biodiversity Research Programme is:

- * to make biodiversity research more responsive to real-life problems and development needs;
- * to introduce a new mode of knowledge production for biodiversity conservation which is interactive and participatory, multi- or interdisciplinary and learning based;
- * to strengthen national capacity for biodiversity research and enhance local ownership by empowering the Philippine research partners and local communities;
- * to promote genuine research Cupertino between researchers from the Philippines and the Netherlands, based on mutual trust, sharing of experience and a two-way learning process.

Paper

The flora and fauna Biodiversity in the Philippine forests, wetlands and marine ecosystems are considered one of the richest in the world. The Philippines has become a high priority country for conservation concern, due to the enormous biological importance of the archipelago, which bridges two major biogeographic regions and supports an astonishingly wide variety of animal and plant species.

However, the rate of loss of biodiversity in the Philippines is higher than anywhere else. The loss in terrestrial ecosystems is caused by habitat destruction through excessive logging, sometimes clearing and burning, agricultural encroachment, human settlements, draining and filling of wetlands, and environmental pollution.

Biodiversity loss is fuelled by large scale schemes to convert natural areas for agriculture, mining and other purposes. Population pressure, poverty and livelihood opportunities exerted through poaching, hunting and collection of valuable plants, further contribute to over-exploitation and to non-sustainable use of the country's biodiversity. Final but not least, extreme weather conditions, heavy rains and typhoons, accelerate the erosion process.

The past fifty years of corrupt forest management and large-scale logging operations has left the forest in a critical condition. Deforestation has dramatically changed hydrological regimes in the hills, causing high levels of soil erosion and land degradation, and have led to serious salination of water tables. Just a century ago, nearly all of the Philippines was covered by forests, now only one fourth of the area is under forest cover.

In the coastal ecosystem, mangroves, freshwater swamp forests, peat swamp forests, coral reefs, and sea grass beds, are the rich nursery ground for a variety of many coastal and marine fish resources. These have been lost at a dramatic high speed over the last decades as a result of wood logging, conversion to aqua- culture, illegal fishing practices, and urban industrial pollution. Only one third of the original mangrove area is still intact. More than half of the coral reefs of the Philippines are in an advanced state of destruction because of dynamiting and cyanide use.

Many plant species have been found relevant to agriculture in the Philippines, because of food values, or medicinal/herbal and ornamental values. However, wide-spread introduction of genetically uniform varieties of crops have replaced many of the local varieties, many of which have been rapidly disappearing.

Besides being rich in biodiversity, the Philippines is also culturally 'rich'. Numerous tribal communities are scattered around the country, and although social and economic integration has begun, these communities widely continue to manage their own resources and environment in a culturally balanced way, using indigenous knowledge systems to conserve and manage forest, lowland and coastal ecosystems.

Territory and ancestral domains of indigenous people have been traditionally encroached by migrant settlers, infrastructure projects and local trans-national corporations. Commercial mining has contributed to forest destruction and degradation, adversely affecting sustainable small-scale mining practices.

The 'open access nature' of coastal waters have resulted in depletion of fishing grounds making Philippines fisherman the poorest in the nation. All these have contributed to continuing deterioration of the traditional habitat of indigenous people, their culture and particularly their indigenous resource management. Nevertheless, much of the wealth of knowledge has survived in the collective memory of indigenous people and communities¹.

Mount Malindang of Mindanao, Philippines, provides a prototype of the systemic nature and elements of the threats and responses to biodiversity in the Philippines. People are already living in high elevations and farming on steep slopes. Logging has denuded significant portions of

¹ R. Guzman, M.P. Lammerink, J. Smolders, "We know little of what we pretend to preserve - Biodiversity and Sustainable Development in the Philippines", RAWOO, The Hague, 1996

formerly thickly forested lands. Political and economic power holders, the military and armed insurgent groups move within the range, trying to obtain as much stronghold on the land as they possibly can. The need for integrated solutions to conserve Mount Malindang is quite evident.

The *Biodiversity Research for Development Programme in Mindanao*² (BRP) is a research programme on biodiversity undertaken jointly by Philippine and Dutch researchers in an area of the Mount Malindang range. The programme is committed to undertake and promote collaborative, participatory and interdisciplinary research that will enable sustainable use of biological resources, and effective decision-making on biodiversity conservation, to improve livelihood and cultural opportunities.

The programme responds to the need for better understanding of biodiversity, especially at the ecosystem level, where interaction with the human system produces impact that is felt most, by larger groups of human populations. Knowledge is expanded not for knowledge's sake alone, but primarily to benefit the human communities and biodiversity together. The results of the research programme are meant to influence how the resource users and their socio-economic and cultural institutions use and sustain biodiversity resources, thus influencing policies, educational and development programmes.

The programme is the product of a series of studies, consultations, workshops and other activities designed to focus the research programme and involve the researchers and stakeholders in its formulation. The first step was the development of a National Biodiversity Research Agenda, which provided the directions and general content of the programme based on research needs and questions that are important for biodiversity conservation efforts in the Philippines. Through the National Biodiversity Research Agenda, a multi-stakeholder group of researchers, government and non-government organizations affirmed the guiding concepts and further defined the qualities that makes the research programme relevant to sustainable development in the country.

In the Philippines Mindanao was chosen because, relative to the other two regions of Luzon and Visayas, very little has been done and supported for biodiversity conservation research. Furthermore, the focus on a particular research site in Mindanao, the Mount Malindang Range and the communities in its environs, enables the Philippine and Dutch partners to engage in this innovative research endeavour. Participatory and interdisciplinary research in a biodiversity-rich but vulnerable area will produce knowledge and methods that will hopefully be useful to local people and their institutions. At the same time, these people and institutions are supported in building their own capacities and linking with external resources for their development.

With the Dutch partners, it was further decided to pursue a pre-implementation phase in order to identify a more specific research site and priorities and to formulate a relevant research agenda, based on the situation in the chosen research site. Subsequent workshops with key persons from Mindanao-based institutions and researchers were held, which further focused the programme through a recommended research site within the Mount Malindang Range; a framework and roles of partners; and a pre-implementation plan.

² The programme has been given impetus and financial support by the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation, through the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO).

Guiding concepts of Biodiversity Research Programme in Mount Malindang

Location-derived and development-oriented: The research agenda, priorities and methods are obtained from the needs of the people in the area where it is being undertaken. People identify problems and potential solutions, which are meaningful for their own development. In this way, the relevance and usefulness of research is established from the beginning.

Promoting multi-stakeholder participation: It involves not only the research community, but most importantly, the local communities and stakeholders, including local governments and non-government organizations. Constant interaction and feedback among the stakeholders make research more responsive to local development needs. Their participation enhances the mechanisms for the research to input into policies, programmes and day-to-day practices that will conserve biodiversity resources.

Systems-oriented and interdisciplinary: The conceptual framework of the research is holistic, i.e., it examines and aims to understand the interaction of different elements of the system. To do this, research brings together the natural and socio-economic/cultural components and their interactions, which affect biodiversity. Researchers of various disciplines in the natural and social sciences and those experiences in cross-cutting or multi-disciplinary studies come together in this approach.

Using an integrated ecosystems or landscape approach: Interactions of elements within an ecosystem are fundamental to studying biodiversity. However, the interactions among the elements of contiguous ecosystems are equally important to provide a holistic and integrated analysis. Materials, energy and people flow through adjoining ecosystems with positive or negative effects on these. A landscape approach can use methods of analysis associated to the watershed or catchment area that spans the uplands, lowlands and coastal/marine ecosystems. Political-administrative units cover landscapes, so that they, in particular, will benefit from this broader and integrated analytical approach for making better decisions.

The Pre-Implementation Phase, occurring from January to December 1999, is a research, training and planning phase before the full programme implementation. A training workshop on participatory research was initially held for the researchers on February 1999 in Musuan, Bukidnon. In this way a pool of Mindanao-based researchers became involved in the programme.

The problem analysis in the region was divided among three ecosystem-based teams for upland, lowland and coastal ecosystems. A Stakeholder Analysis Team was also formed with some members coming from the ecosystem research teams. The teams conducted a situation and problem analysis in the area making use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods in March to June 1999.

This allowed for a better description of the identified research site merging the observations of external data-gatherers with the experiences and perceptions of the subjects of the research - the people in the communities of Mount Malindang and its environs.

Post-PRA workshops among the researchers who were involved in the problem analysis and key Philippine and Dutch partners were held to identify biodiversity research problems and opportunities as well as more specific researchable areas. A culminating workshop among the

Philippine and Dutch researchers and key partners was held in Tagbilaran, Bohol in August 1999 to agree on the programme's vision, mission, goals and strategies. The Bohol Visioning Workshop also created coherence in the proposed researchable areas by substantiating the landscape-level and cross-cutting themes; and firmly grounding all the researchable areas in the situations and interactions described.

The research programme which is finally formulated and will be implemented and tested the coming years in Mount Malindang will provide a framework, strategies and methods for similar programmes in other valuable but threatened biodiversity areas in the Philippines. The main intent of Biodiversity Research Programme is to initiate a research programme in Mount Malindang Range and its environs and use this experience as a basis for better research and sustainable development efforts in other biodiversity hotspots in the Philippines.

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Emerging of a PAR network for reconciliation: the example of ADESO las Segovias, Nicaragua

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ABSTRACT

Social development should be built on the capacities of people. However, development research mostly does not take into account demands of local people, let alone their knowledge. Most researchers don't even know how to translate such demands into research questions and 'research has become part of the problems of underdevelopment rather than being part of the solution to these problems'. Knowledge which is based on analysis of local, complex and diverse realities and which gets its meaning in a specific cultural setting, is an important source for social transformation. Particularly, through Participatory Action Research this knowledge can be brought to the forefront.

It has been a great challenge to support the development of a research program, that allows for alternative directions, giving room for new approaches and methods for interacting, learning and knowing. Yet such approaches still have to be developed. The new Dutch research policy for development offered the opportunity to develop such a regional research network in Nicaragua.

The intensive process to start a demand-driven research program in las Segovias, Nicaragua, starts in 1993. Jointly the 34 organisations encompassing this research network faced many dilemma's, paradoxes and opportunities. Autor has been accompanying this process for almost five years through missions from the Netherlands. In the first years quite intensive, later more from a distance. Autor has been present during some of the important moments, that have shaped the strategic direction and focus of the program. His role was that of a facilitator and process-supportive consultant.

Reconciliation was one of the major challenges in the first years. The Northern region of Nicaragua was torn by political conflicts between competing groups and parties. Now ADESO 'Las Segovias' has grounded and has become a renowned institution in the Northern region of Nicaragua if it concerns knowledge about the area or decisions on what directions to take in development. Support to municipalities and local government makes those in charge more confident on the actions and priorities of development in the region.

After Hurricane Mitch the usefulness of a participatory research program was shown by the answers that were generated when the despair was diminished a bit. It showed that participatory action research can be an important base for the finding of strategic answers even in and shortly after disasters. Who had ever thought of this when the area first was visited to discuss possibilities for the set-up of a local oriented development program?

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Marc P. Lammerink, PhD, is an economist and a social scientist and director of FMD Consultants (Forestry Manpower Development), located in The Netherlands. His main fields are the development of participative training methodologies in the field of natural resource management, the support to organisations in developing countries with the implementation of sustainable development projects and the implementation of participatory action-research. He is the author of several books and many articles on action research and popular education.

Among others he is involved in the setting-up of a demand-driven biodiversity research program in the Philippines and was facilitating the development of a regional research network in Northern Nicaragua. He has also been coordinating an action-research project which focused on possibilities for improving community management of water resources in communities located in Kenya, Cameroon, Guatemala, Colombia, Nepal and Pakistan.