



## PREVIEW: IMPORTANT NEW BOOKS

The appearance of important new publications is reported here, and the books are briefly described. We have requested review copies, which will be sent to experts for their opinions regarding the books' practical usefulness. The reviewers' comments will be published in a subsequent issue of the *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor*.

Brookfield, Muriel and Harold Brookfield (eds) (1999) *PLEC News and Views. Special issue on methodology*. No. 13, April 1999. 34 pp. ISSN 1020 0843. Published for the United Nations University in the Department of Anthropology, Division of Society and Environment, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia. Fax: +61-2-6249 4896. E-mail: mbrook@coombs.anu.edu.au

This special issue of the periodical that is part of the United Nations University project on People, Land Management and Environmental Change (PLEC) addresses project methodology in the areas of biodiversity, agrodiversity, and demonstration sites. It contains three articles: 'Methods for the assessment of plant species diversity in complex agricultural landscapes: guidelines for data collection and analysis from the PLEC Biodiversity Advisory Group'; 'Guidelines on agro-diversity assessment in demonstration site areas'; and 'Demonstrating PLEC: a diversity of approaches'. Although the guidelines are for PLEC project members in the first place, and quite specific to them, there might be material in them that could be of use to others.

Selener, Daniel, N. Endara and J. Carvajal (1999) *Participatory rural appraisal and planning workbook*. 146 pp. (Available in English and Spanish). ISBN 9978-40-814-2. USD25, postage included. All orders must be prepaid. 20% discount is available on orders of more than 10 books. Send check payable to International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) Regional Office for Latin America, Apartado Postal 17-08-8494, Quito, Ecuador. Tel./Fax: +593-2-443 763. E-mail: daniel@iirr.ecuanex.net.ec

The publisher informs us that this hands-on workbook provides guidelines for conducting participatory rural appraisal and planning (PRAP) to identify and design community and regional level projects, based on local needs. It emphasizes the 'how to' of the PRAP methodology in a practical and understandable way.

The workbook begins with brief descriptions of areas related to the planning and practical implementation of PRAP at the field level. The second part of

experiences with the Malakand/Dir Social Forestry Project in Northern Pakistan, and on fieldwork in the same area.

His dissertation focuses on indigenous forest management (IFM) in relation to village land use planning, and compares it with scientific forest management as practised by the Forest Department. The feasibility of a merger of the two is discussed. The aim of the study was to systematically describe indigenous forest management and its effect on the local vegetation. A general study of IFM practices was carried out in twelve villages, and two of these were singled out for detailed, in-depth analyses. The core of this dissertation is the description of indigenous forest management techniques, institutional regulations (such as the control of access to forest produce), the utilization of forest products (such as timber harvesting), and other forest-related practices, including grazing).

Saleem Ullah's account offers valuable insights into living conditions in the rural communities of Northern Pakistan. The villages studied were categorized on the basis of the effectiveness of forest protection, management practices, and land tenure arrangements. The focus was on the extent to which the village communities make use of traditional patterns in managing their forests.

This report contributes to the discussion on how independent and self-reliant village communities are in the management of their natural environment, in particular their forests. The author does not, however, address the forest policy impact of IFM, or the question of local political empowerment through the self-management of renewable natural resources. Instead, he stresses the advantages of the village land use planning system as a transitional stage and a means of overcoming the antagonism between the stakeholders and the forest administration. This thesis will appeal to all those who are interested in empirical studies on indigenous forest management, i.e., sociologists, foresters and professionals in the field of natural resource management.

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Wautischer, Helmut (ed.) (1998) *Tribal epistemologies: Essays in the philosophy of anthropology*. 239 + xvii pp. ISBN 1-84014-128-X. GBP39.95 Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 3HR, England. Tel: +44-1252-331 551. Fax: +44-1252-344 405. E-mail: ashgate@cityscape.co.uk <http://www.ashgate.com>

In their explorations of the nature of human knowledge, anthropologists and philosophers are increasingly turning towards perspectives which contrast 'Western' and 'local' ways of knowing. In the same spirit, this edited volume focuses

on the nature of knowledge, presenting a series of theoretical discussions on how knowledge and meaning are structured and manipulated among local peoples. Its authors come primarily from the social sciences, but also include 'hard' scientists, and members of indigenous groups.

The ten papers are distributed across sections which focus on methodologies for studying local epistemologies; the ethnographic assessment of knowledge; the mediation of meaning by shamans; and the roles of communal knowledge in a culturally diverse world. Each piece employs a similar approach, which consists in describing local or traditional ways of knowing, and detailing the structure and function of knowledge within a society. This description becomes a jumping-off point into highly philosophical discussions of the nature of knowledge. As a work rooted in psychological anthropology, many of the contributions attempt to explore aspects of knowledge and consciousness which are unique to individual cultures, contrasting these with structural conditions which may be basically human. Individual contributions draw examples from Native North America, Siberia and the South Pacific.

While interesting, most of the papers here draw heavily on the conceptual framework of psychological anthropology, in which knowledge is formed discursively as it is actively created, shaped and transmitted by individuals and institutions. This line of thinking could have several potential contributions for researchers working with indigenous knowledge (IK), and there is a definite need for works which explore the discursive aspects of IK in a practical manner. Unfortunately, like many anthropological works rooted in psychological theory (along the lines of 'French' Structuralism), this volume defers to theoretical discussions, essentially applying the analytical approaches of literary criticism to ethnography and the oral traditions of local peoples. Moreover, the complex writing style of many of the authors makes their papers difficult to follow.

This volume has a great deal to contribute to the postmodern debate on how knowledge is generated within society, and how it is approached by the social sciences. But readers of the *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor* are likely to find *Tribal epistemologies* only tangentially relevant to the practical study of IK. Although this work will probably be welcomed by philosophers and psychological anthropologists as a theoretical exposition, it offers little which is applicable to sustainable development.

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