



OUT OF THE THEORY &  
INTO THE FIELD

Women and Gender in  
Development Conference  
Virginia Tech  
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# Gender and Empowerment in Participatory Research

Ann M. Oberhauser, Professor of Sociology and  
Director, Women's and Gender Studies, Iowa State University



Dominican Republic – Bjorn Sletto on  
participatory mapping



Philippines – courtesy of Maria Elisa  
Christie

# - Themes for Workshop -

- Introduction and Background
- Purpose of Research
- Approaches to Participatory Research
- Methods and Techniques
- Gender, Feminism, and Participatory Research
- Applications and Case studies
- Participatory Exercises
- Wrap-up and moving forward

# - Background / Experience / Research -

**Clark University**, Graduate School of Geography

- Political Economy, Radical Geography
- Feminist Geographer

## **Southern Africa Research**

- Rural land use in Zimbabwe
- Gender and Rural Livelihoods in South Africa



## Appalachia – West Virginia

- Women's coops and home-based economies
- Cabin Creek Quilts



## West Africa

- \* Women and the informal sector in urban Ghana



# Designing Participatory Research



Purpose of  
Research



Context and  
Power  
Dynamics



Positionalities



# Purpose of Research

- 'Development' / Empowerment / Human Rights
- Environment – Livelihoods – Cultural Heritage
- Stakeholders
- Resources – natural, economic, social capacity
- Outcomes and Impact

# Early Approaches to Participatory Research

**Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)** - “approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act” (Chambers, 1994: 953)

“Key different between participatory and other research methodologies lies in the **location of power** in various stages of the research process” (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995: 1667-8).

- Problematize the notion of ‘participation’ by exploring ways in which it is interpreted and produced
- Determine how, why and for whom research is conceptualized and conducted

# Contemporary Approaches to Participatory Research

**Community-based participatory research (CBPR)** “equally involves the community, ... and the researchers in all facets of the research process” – empowers groups to appreciate and address complex social, cultural, and political factors (Liamputtong, 2010)

**Participatory Ethics** questions the obligations, challenges, and tensions involved in collaborative research towards social change (Cameron and Gibson, 2005; Cahill, Sultana and Pain, 2007)

“Overall, a distinctive aspect of **feminist participatory methodologies** is that they strive for a **more valid interpretation of research results** than conventional research methodologies, as well as the facilitation of a deeper **understanding of the complexities of the lives of research participants**” (Caretta and Riano, 2016: 260)

**Decolonising methodology** – “requires the unmasking and deconstruction of imperialism, ... a reclamation of knowledge, language, and culture; and for **social transformation of the colonial relations** between the native and the settler” (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2008; 117)



# - Concepts and Context – define and give examples

- Discuss and define these terms with your neighbors

Research Ethics

Collaboration

Participation

Community

Social change

Feminist methodologies

Power relations in fieldwork

Empowerment

# Toolkit – Methods and techniques for conducting participatory research

- Visual methods
  - Mapping (mental, PGIS, PPGIS, sketch)
  - Interview
  - Focus group / workshop
  - Photovoice
  - Activity charts
  - Walking transects
  - Well-being ranking
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- Research for Organizing - <http://www.researchfororganizing.org/>
  - Participatory Feminism - <http://atlas.geo.cornell.edu/parfem//par.htm>
  - Participatory Action Research, Planning and Evaluation  
<https://www.participatoryactionresearch.net/>

# Participatory Research (PR)

...involves collaboration with stakeholders to identify practices, problems and priorities.

- Interrogation of own positionality and power differentials
- Promotes social change and outcomes that benefit participants



It is different from conventional research with shared authority among researchers and participants

(Cornwall & Jewkes 1995)

# Case Studies – India and Ethiopia & the World

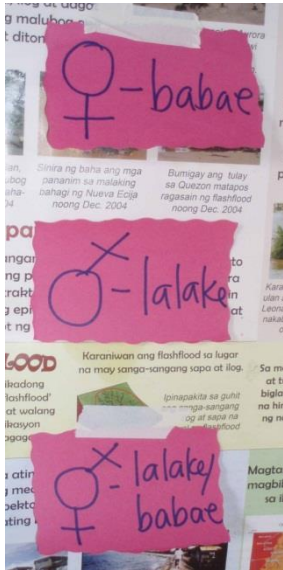
Sangtin Yatra – labor movement in India (Richa Nagar)

- Community-based
- Outcomes and opportunities to build collaborations
- Books, newspaper articles
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MI4vEeGL6OY&t=6s>

Mai-Aini Refugee Camp in Ethiopia workshop on gender-based violence

- UN International Rescue Committee
  - Films, diagrams, storytelling
  - empowerment
  - <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=participatory+research+gender&&view=detail&mid=872B6301EEE853B4DFC6872B6301EEE853B4DFC6&&FORM=VRDGAR>
  - Insights video – participatory videos
- Global themes
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3Ffe1k0mZM>

# Visual tactics...



Claveria, Tamboboan, Philippines

...are particularly useful for research in developing countries since they are accessible activities for individuals regardless of literacy levels (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995; Goebel 1998)

Tamil Nadu, India (IPM CRSP South Asia)

# Why a focus on gender? On women?

Gender and inequality in development issues  
(see SDGs)

Around the world, women continue to be disadvantaged relative to men:

- Access to, ownership of, key productive resources (land, inputs, equipment)
- Limited literacy and educational attainment
- Access to services – legal and customary
- Face additional domestic responsibilities

Feminism and Participatory research

- Integrate contextual understanding
- Speak from standpoint of oppressed groups
- Collaboration
- Multimethod approach
- Reflexive practices and activist orientation



# Gender roles exercise

1. What do you think the photos tell us about gender roles?
2. Do they match the stereotypes you would expect?



Accra, Ghana



Kagali, Tanzania

# Providing space for women's participation

- Separate groups for women and men
- Cultural sensitivity
- Collective discussion and presentation
- Helps with literacy issues



Mayuge, Uganda



Punchak, Bogor, Indonesia



## Land Rights in Zambia

- Women with limited access to natural resources supporting their families (Oxfam, 2016)
- Commercial farms displace rural communities/ “Land Grabbing”
- Human Rights Watch

Complementary gendered knowledge

- Different perceptions of land-cover and access to resources in Zambia (Mapedza et al. 2003)

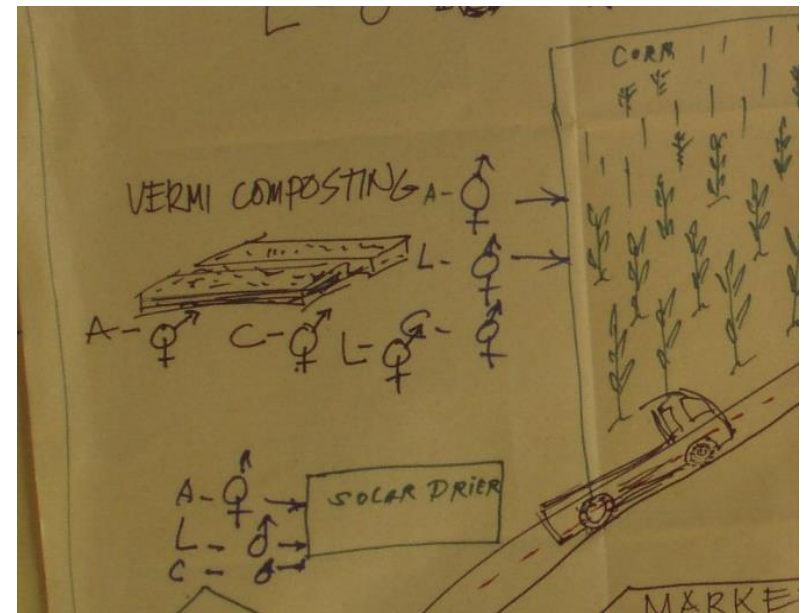
[Forced to Leave: Commercial Farming and Displacements in Zambia](#)



# Maps: sex vs. gender



Kamuli, Uganda



Claveria, Tamboboan, Philippines  
Mapping gender

## Women mapping

Men and women  
mapping gender

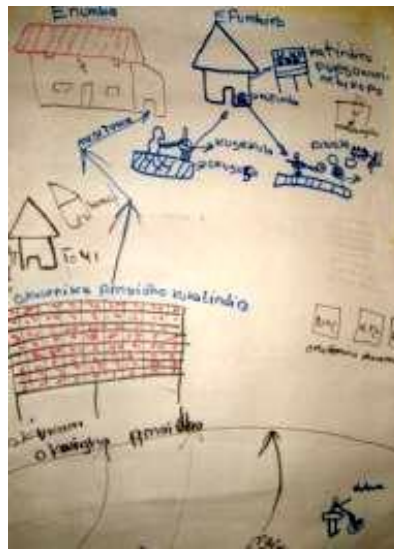


# Gender analysis of sex-disaggregated data

Dogon country, Mali

# Gendered Mapping and Power

- Mapping of gendered differences in access and use of resources is critical to protecting biodiversity and women's livelihoods.  
(Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, et al. 1995).
- There is legitimacy in treating “visual imagery and narratives as sources of empirical data”; including gender as a subject of study enriches feminist geographical research in political ecology.  
(Rocheleau 1995)



Of the visualization methods used in PR, participatory mapping (PM) is the most widely used, having “spread like a pandemic with many variants and applications.”

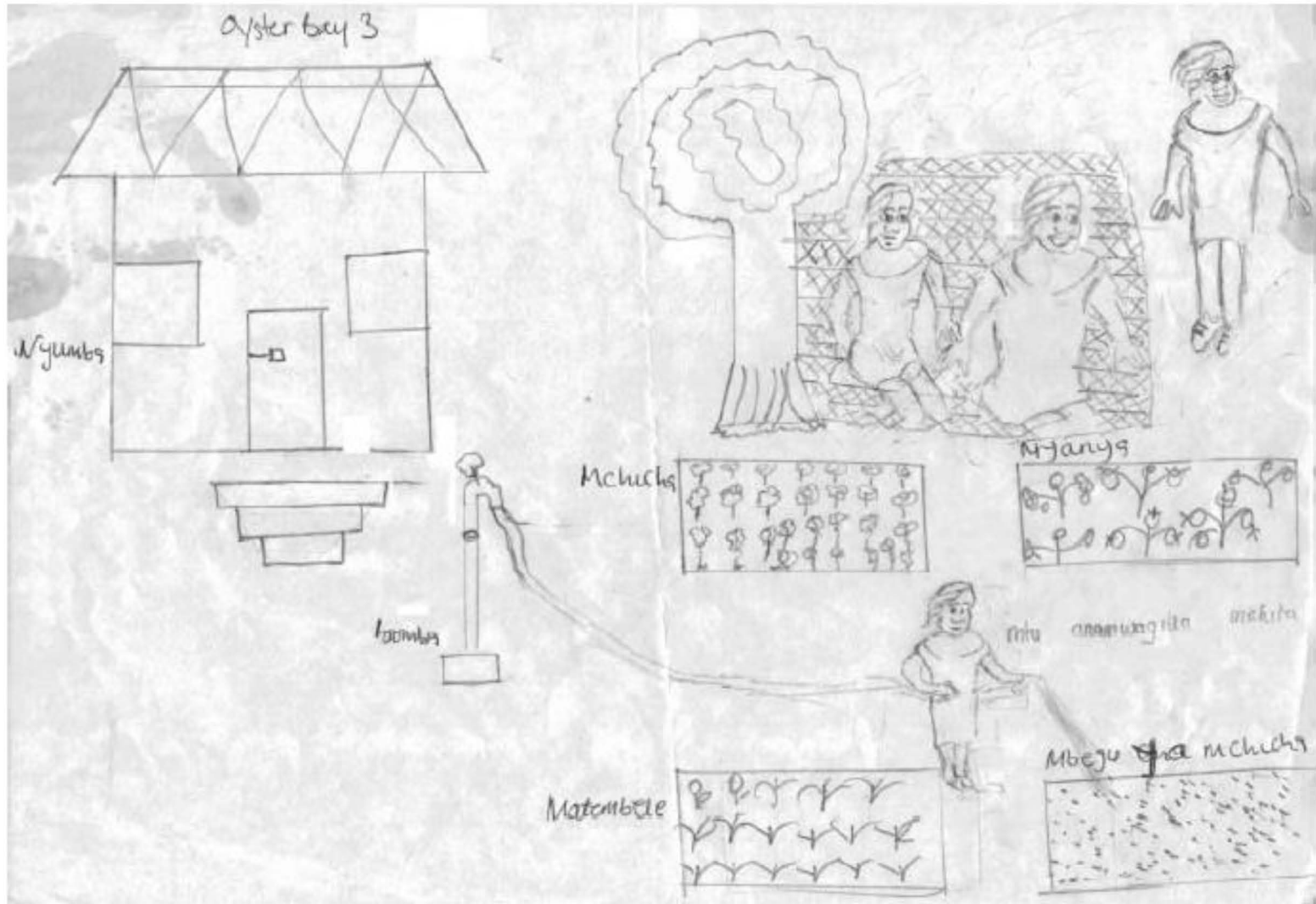
(Chambers 2006)



*Photo Credit: Corbett 2009*

- “While map-making has been a tool of the powerful, today it is becoming a tool of empowerment.”

(Herlihy & Knapp 2003)



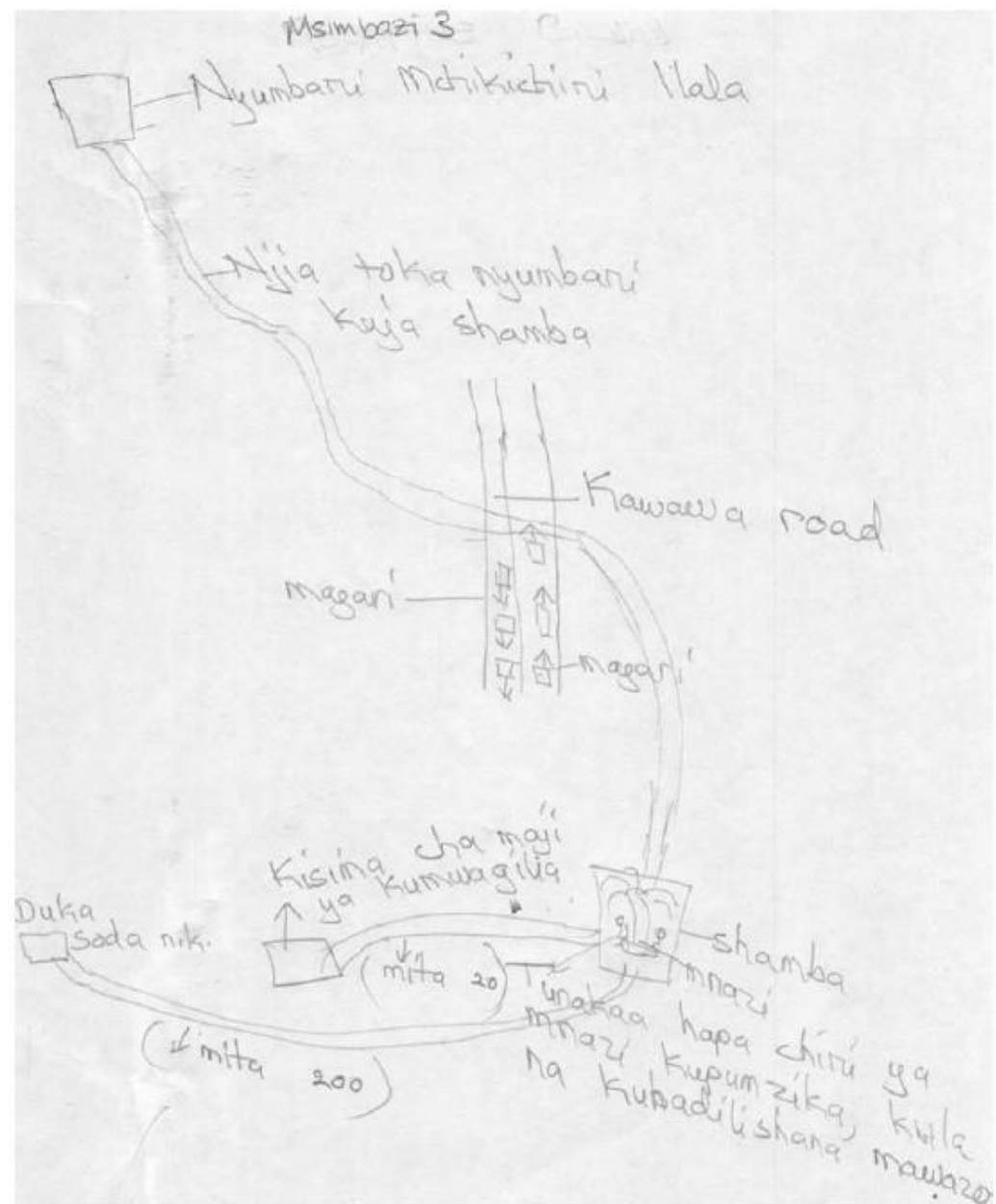
**Figure 1** A mental map of a farm with very strong community cohesion, drawn by a male member of a group with strong social cohesion.

Source: McLees, 2013

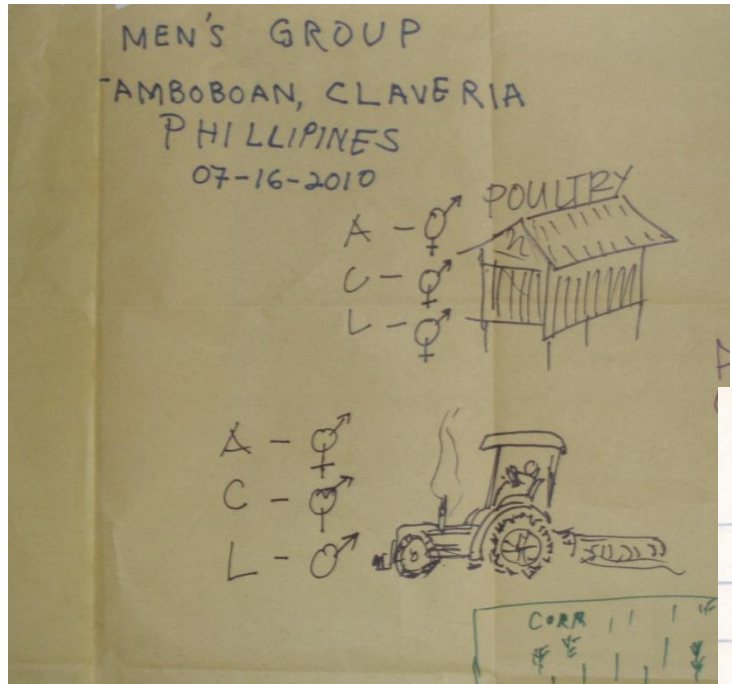


Customer helping water plot of farmer. "This shows how important our customers are in daily life on the farm."

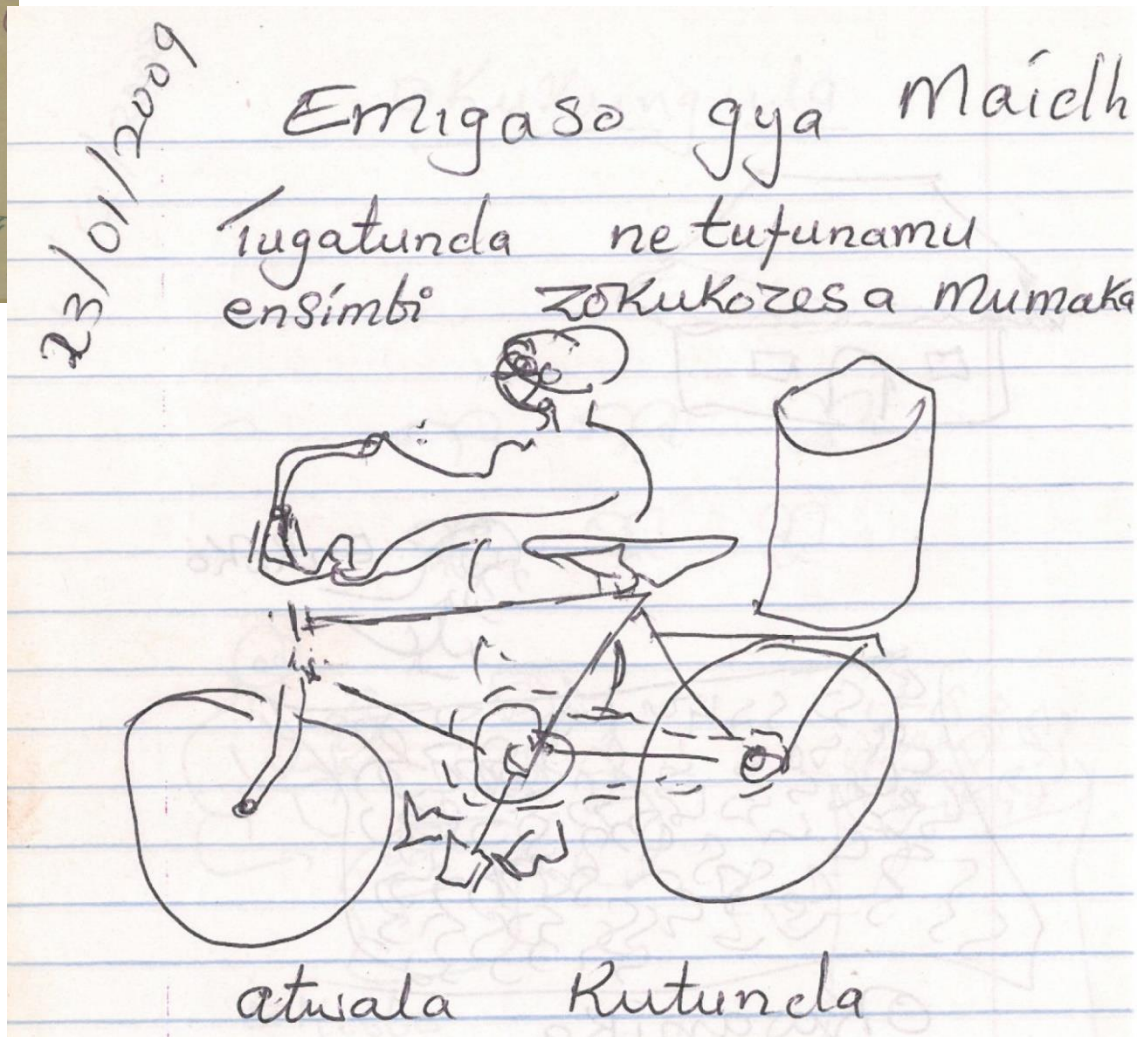
Source: McLees, 2013



**Figure 2** A mental map of an urban open-space farm with very little cohesion. These maps often show important nodes in daily life, rather than important shared spaces. This map shows the home (nyumbani), the path to the farm (njia kuja shamba), cars on the busy Kawawa Road, the well for irrigation (kisima cha maji ya kumwagilia), the shop where they buy soda (duka), the farm (shamba), and the coconut tree where the farmer and her plot neighbor rest (mnazi).



# Men draw machinery and transportation



Claveria, Tamboboan, Philippines

Kamuli, Uganda

# Feminist Participatory GIS

- Mei Po Kwan – feminist visualization
- Elwood - interactive – geotagging geovisualization – producing and sharing digital spatial data
- Participatory Mapping – Univ. of Texas
- Indigenous communities of Peru – struggle for land and resources
- Bjorn Sletto, Community and Regional Planning





## Ugandan community mapping communal grazing lands

Source: Oxfam (2016)



Community members in Okeng, Uganda use participatory mapping to identify their communal grazing lands on satellite imagery (2015). Photo: Marena Brinkhurst/Namati

### Securing community land rights through grassroots legal empowerment

**‘We know our borders; we know our resources; we know our rules, and they are written down for everyone to see; people are attending meetings and we feel stronger together. Now it is easy for us to organize and ask the government for things we want.’**

Community member, Jowein, Liberia

Even where national laws formally recognize the land rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, they may still lack security on the ground. Communities often have to complete a long process to obtain a title or a certificate over their land. Namati, an NGO that works with grassroots legal advocates, has identified a five-part process for communities to strengthen their tenure security.<sup>1-5</sup>

# So, is participatory research empowering for women in poor settings in the developing world?

## The process can provide space for:

- Learning, reflection, expression
- Group discussion— women only, collective
- Speaking their truth
- Being co-researchers with universities: considering farmer's knowledge as respectable as researchers
- Teaching the “illiterate” researchers—who cannot read the situation
- Signaling areas of power differences and disagreements
- Signaling bottlenecks in value-chain



Bogor, Indonesia

- Does not change their circumstances, but changes *them*
- Identifies gender-based constraints and opportunities to improve women's lives.

# Mapping gendered space exercise

- 1) Sketch the Virginia Tech campus (or another campus familiar to you) showing 3 or 4 places that are important to students, faculty, staff, and visitors.
- 2) Mark these places as areas most frequented by different groups on campus – women, men, genderqueer, people of color, and other social identities. Are they inclusive spaces? Why or why not?
- 3) Present a couple of examples from your map: How are these spaces on campus reflective of diverse social identities? What does this symbolize in terms of campus and “community” space?

## Take Aways ... Moving Forward

- Globalization
- Digital Technologies
- Feminist Research and Praxis
- Interdisciplinary work and practice

# Review – Feminist Participatory Research

- Purpose of participatory research
- Approaches to PR
- Methods and Techniques
- Including gender / feminism in PR
- Applications and Case studies
- Participatory Exercises
- Wrap-up and moving forward

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