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Rapid, small scale socioeconomic studies for natural resource management

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Regional organisations, such as Catchment Management Authorities in NSW, need reliable biophysical and social data to inform their Natural Resource Management investment decisions. A number of large scale approaches are available for gathering/creating[1] socio-economic data, including comprehensive socio-economic surveys and Social Impact Assessment (SIA). However, because of their depth and breadth these can be expensive and slow. Communities and organisations need to undertake quick data collection and analyses to assist in urgent decision making, grant applications, and policy-making processes (McNall & Foster-Fishman, 2007). To complement large scale socio-economic studies a number of smaller scale, more rapid approaches for assessment have developed in a range of disciplines. This report provides an overview of the rapid assessment approaches that may be useful for natural resource management. The focus of the report is on identifying and briefly discussing a range of low cost, relatively quick and reliable techniques which have the potential to gather socio-economic information on economic sustainability and socio-economic well being. There can be no simple definitive tool to allow managers to select the best assessment options in a given situation because the issues in question are complex and contextual. It should be possible, however, to develop a decision tree to assist managers and policy makers decide when rapid approaches are appropriate, and which approaches will serve them best. Development of such a tool is beyond the scope of this report, but the foundations for that development are provided below.

Reasons for assessment

Socio-economic data is gathered/created for a variety of reasons, and the motivation for an assessment is one of the factors which should influence the choice of assessment approach. Some of the main reasons for undertaking assessment are discussed briefly below.

Appraisal

Sometimes simply referred to as socio-economic research, or socio-economic assessment, this is undertaken to understand a situation, or community to aid in planning. This may include analysis of context (including social and economic profiling) and/or needs assessment.

Impact Assessment

This tests the potential impact of specific proposals (resource development, polices and plans), usually by trying to understand the distribution of costs and benefits of the proposal. Formal SIA includes the identification of strategies to mitigate adverse consequences, as well as long term monitoring, and could not be considered a rapid technique. However, more rapid impact assessments may be appropriate in some situations.

Social acceptability

This involves inquiry into the acceptability of specific planned or proposed actions. The challenge lies in understanding how public judgments are formed, sustained, and altered. Poor public support of initiatives is sometimes attributed to inadequate understanding of the scientific bases for policies, however judgments derive from a complex, albeit poorly understood, suite of factors, including context, trust, esthetics, and personal history (Stankey & Shindler, 2006).

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[1] When operating in a positivist or post positivist paradigm information exists and can be collected or gathered. Researchers working in a post modern paradigm argue that all data is contextual, and therefore it is more accurate to refer to creating information.

Audit

Performance audits evolved from financial audits and are concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of programs, activities and the organisations that carry them out (Davis, 1990). Performance auditing asks 'did we do what we said we would"?, and 'did we do things right?'

Evaluation

Unlike auditing, program evaluation developed in a social science framework and is more concerned with outcomes and consequences than organisational efficiencies (Davis 1990). Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to the development of evaluation from mere measuring, through description and judgment, to a responsive and interpretive process as the 'coming of age' of evaluation. Contemporary writing on program evaluation emphasises context and interpretation (Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991).

Project evaluation is an applied form of social research which tests the effectiveness of interventions and activities, with the intention of informing and improving future practice (Patton, 2002). Evaluation moves beyond summative assessment (i.e. determining if project goals and milestones have been achieved, if the money was spent on time and so on) to formative assessment (i.e. understanding such things as client needs, the implications and side effects of implementation and program logic) (Cook & Shadish, 1986).

These assessments can be undertaken at many scales, but the focus of this report is comparatively small and rapid assessments.

In natural resource management fields the concept of (and often specific name Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) has taken on increasing importance as groups and organisations seek to demonstrate progress made toward biophysical sustainability. Stem et al. (2005, p.296) undertook a wide ranging review of the literature on M& E "to encourage the conservation community to look within and outside its boundaries to make the most of what others have learned, and ultimately, to improve programmatic efficiency and effectiveness". They suggest that the primary distinctions between the approaches they discuss follow the structure of the approaches, not the data that feeds into them, so that many of their reviewed approaches may be equally suitable for biophysical or socio-economic monitoring and evaluation.

Small scale socio-economic assessments

In the last few decades small scale socio-economic assessments have developed to meet two distinct aims – rapidity and inclusivity. There is overlap between rapid and participatory approaches, as community[2] participation often enables quick studies, and rapid approaches may be better tolerated by community groups. The purposes of the assessments range from creating data for planning activities to achieve certain aims (needs analysis, planning), to evaluation of activities (audit, evaluation), capacity building and research (Figure 1).

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[2] Discussion of what constitutes 'community' in this context is beyond the scope of this report, but readers are directed to Harrington et al. (2008) for detailed exploration of the forms of community in rural Australia
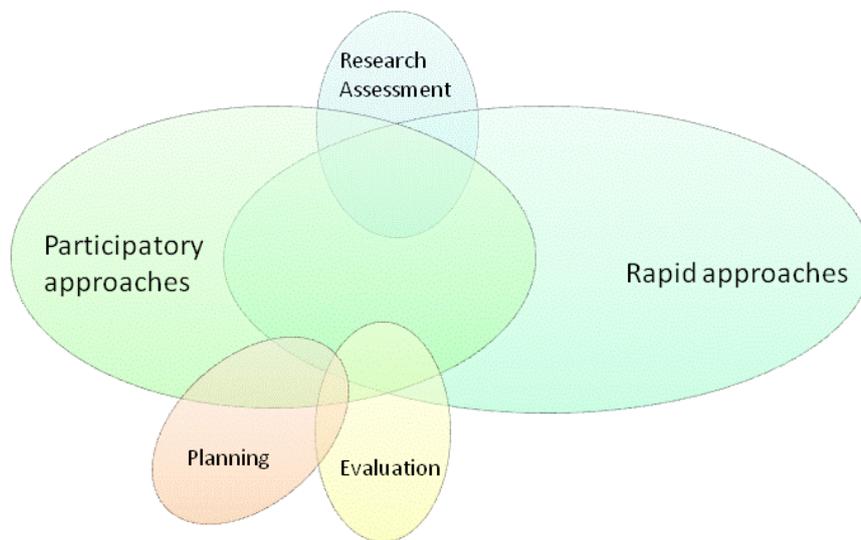
Figure 1 A representation of the relationship between the variety of rapid socio-economic assessments

Different socio-economic assessment studies also involve a range of relationship(s) between agencies and the community of interest, which can be considered as being positioned along a continuum of participation from no outside involvement to community led and managed studies. For this reason it is useful to consider participation before exploring the various forms of rapid study available.

Participation

Rapid and participatory socio-economic study approaches have arisen in part as a response to attempts to support sustainable development, especially in 'developing' countries in the past three to four decades (Furze, de Lacy, & Birckhead, 1996; Gruber, 2008; World Bank Group, 1994). The need for rapid and comparatively low cost methods responds to the large needs and small support base in many of these areas. Participation as a term entered the environmental management lexicon through a range of sources, initially in the 1950s and linked with Non Government Organisations (NGOs) development and planning efforts (Rahnema, 1997). In her frequently cited paper Arnstein (1969) suggested that citizen participation in planning and making decisions about issues which impacted them equated with citizen power. She proposed

a typology of participation, arranged in a ladder, the lowest rungs of which represented the least citizen power, rising through to citizen control (see Figure 2).

Reed (2008) provides an excellent summary of the development of participatory approaches, and presents various participation typologies, including that proposed by Bigg, who described the level of engagement as a relationship that can be "contractual", "consultative", "collaborative" and "collegiate".[3]

Participation and environmental sustainability were firmly linked by the report from the United Nations General Assembly that produced Agenda 21. Principle 10 of the report on environment and develop states that *"Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have… the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided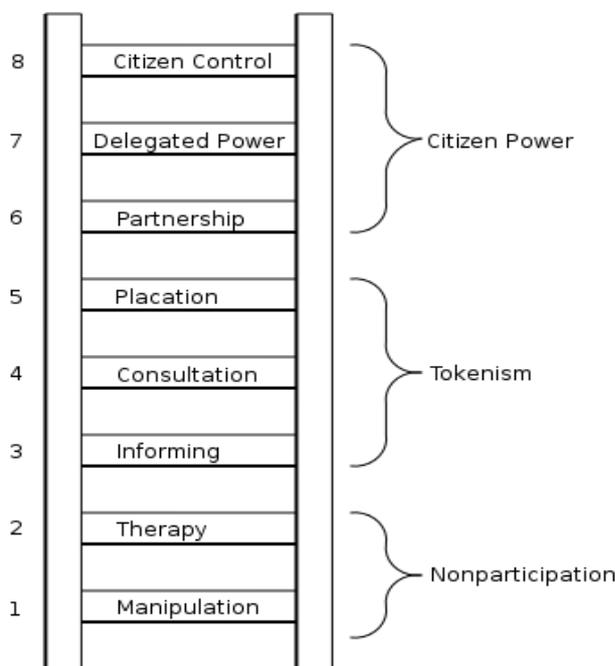"* (United Nations General Assembly, 1992). Williams (2004, p. 557) suggests that participatory development's move from 'margins to mainstream' was heralded in the World Bank's *World Development Report 2000/1: Attacking Poverty*, which emphasised empowerment of poor people through enabling their voices to be heard. Participatory approaches were seen as enabling a 'voice' for expressing differences, and empowering a greater range of people than would otherwise be recognised (see for example Blackburn & Holland, 1998).

Figure 2. A ladder of citizen participation. From Arnstein (1969)

Closely linked with providing justice/ fairness and voice, especially to those previously denied these, is the idea of building the 'capacity' of individuals and communities. Collaborations, particularly participatory activities, have been proposed as key tools for achieving the emancipatory goals in world development (Chambers, 1997; Woodward & Hetley, 2007).

Arnstein's ladder of participation and related metaphors have been valuable tools for conceptualising power relations in situations that are linear and easily described and understood. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that management issues related to

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[3] Reed's literature review can be accessed in full at http://www.see.leeds.ac.uk/research/sri/working_papers/SRIPs-08.pdf [accessed April 2010].

water, climate change, food production, biodiversity and ecological sustainability are 'wicked' problems because they are difficult to define, and the outcomes of management actions cannot be predicted with certainty (see for example Australian Public Service Commission, 2007). Arnstein's ladder is insufficient to guide our understanding of how best to involve and communities in addressing wicked issues. Writing in the context of climate change research Collins and Ison (2009, p. 2) suggest "that the roles, responsibilities and purposes of those involved have to be re-conceptualized, not along the lines of participation mediated in terms of power, as suggested by Arnstein, but as a process of social learning about the nature of the issue itself and how it might be progressed" (Box 1).

Box 1: Extract from Collins and Ison (2009), on designing learning systems

"Whilst the imperative for participation has increased, critical engagement with understandings and the epistemologies of participation and the practices that result has, we argue, lagged. Within policy-making arenas and research agendas, attention has remained focused on developing better techniques, tools and mechanisms for participation. In effect, participation has become a normative goal inextricably linked to the search for climate change adaptation. We contend that this presents major challenges for systemic and adaptive governance in a climate-changing world. While we regard the energetic search for improving participatory techniques and methods and raising awareness of news skills and approaches as positive… there is a lack of corresponding inquiry into the epistemologies that underlie how participation is being conceptualized in policy-making processes for climate change adaptation. It is perhaps surprising to find that Arnstein's ladder of citizen engagement…remains, implicitly and explicitly, at the core of many approaches to participation. Indeed, for many practitioners it remains the 'benchmark' metaphor for describing and evaluating participatory activities….[T]he underlying epistemology of participation in terms of power frames understandings and sets the context in which decisions about processes, tools and techniques for adaptation are made. This in turn affects how participation is 'practiced' and the extent to which adaptation is likely to be successful. This gap in debates about participation and adaptation means that policy-makers, practitioners and researchers run the risk of advocating and using participatory tools, practices and techniques inappropriately, with undesirable consequences…Our rationale is that new ways to think about the nature of environmental issues require commensurate inquiries about the meaning, not just the means, of participation in policy-making processes… suggesting that the roles, responsibilities and purposes of those involved have to be re-conceptualized, not along the lines of participation mediated in terms of power, as suggested by Arnstein, but as a process of social learning about the nature of the issue itself and how it might be progressed".

Social learning is a broad term that has been variously used to describe the shared enquiry involved in co-management of natural assets (Schusler, Decker, & Pfeffer, 2003), a process by which groups learn from each other to enhance socio-ecological outcomes (Stringer, et al., 2006), the learning of a social entity as a whole through context specific multiparty collaboration (Pahl-Wostl, et al., 2007) and the achievement of concerted action in complex and uncertain times (Ison & Watson, 2007). The core of all of these descriptions is collaborative participation in activities that lead to learning and practice change. Social learning implies participation in medium to long term activities with an overt goal of behavioural change; it is not a "rapid"

approach and as such it does not fall within the remit of this report. Understanding when social learning is more appropriate than rapid assessment approaches is, however, important. Schusler et al. (2003) discuss many of the conditions needed to attempt and achieve real social learning.

Within the overarching category of rapid assessment approaches are a variety of situations that require some degree of community participation. In an approach that follows and builds on the discussions around Arnstein's ladder, Parkes and Panelli (2001) suggest that the mode of participation in research ranges from co-option of local people through to collective action by local people (Table 1). Moving down the table shifts the research relationship from working on, to working for, to working with community, until the bottom row expresses research undertaken by community.

Table 1 modes of participation in collaborative research, modified from Parkes & Panelli (2001)

Mode of participation	Involvement of local/researched people
Co-option	Token representatives are chosen but there is no real input or power sharing
Compliance	Tasks are assigned with incentives but outsiders decide the agenda and direct actions
Consultation	Local opinions are sought but outsiders analyse and decide on the best course of action
Cooperation	Local people work together with outsiders to determine priorities but responsibility remains with outsiders for directing the process
Co-learning	Local people and outsiders share their knowledge to create new understandings and they work together to form action plans with outside facilitation
Collective action	Local people set their own agenda and mobilise to carry it out in the absence of outside initiators and with or without outside facilitators

Rapid approaches

A research approach is analagous to an inquiry paradigm, or way of approaching an issue. McNall & Foster-Fishman (2007, p. 152) note that rapid appraisal approaches share "a similar set of techniques for putting trustworthy, actionable information in the hands of decision makers at critical moments". Their list of rapid approaches includes Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Rapid Assessment, Rapid Ethnographic Assessment, Rapid Feedback Evaluation and Real Time Evaluation. Each of these is discussed in brief below, and in some greater detail in the annotated bibliography section of this report.

Rapid rural appraisal

In the abstract of his (1981) paper, Chambers notes that "Decision makers need the right information at the right time but in rural development much information generated is too costly and inappropriate." Chambers (1981) proposes Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) as a "fairly quick and fairly clean" alternative to both "quick and dirty" (brief visits by few people) and "long and dirty/ long and clean" (standard anthropology and sociology) appraisals for development aid. He suggested (p99) two principles to guide RRA: *optimal ignorance* and *proportionate accuracy*.

The first principal, on optimal ignorance, refers to the importance of knowing what it is not worth knowing. It requires great courage to implement. It is far, far easier to demand more and more information than it is to abstain from demanding it. Yet in information gathering there is often a monstrous overkill. The second principle on proportionate accuracy applies especially in surveys, much of the data collected has a degree of accuracy which is unnecessary. Orders of magnitude, and directions of change, are often all that is needed or that will be used.

An RRA is developed by the researchers, usually outsiders from the community in question, taking into account the context of the community and the information required. Methods for obtaining the information include reviewing existing data sets, using interviews, focus groups, storytelling, simple visual pictures and representations of activities and rapid observational assessments of indicators. Although developed in the 1980s RRA is still used to gain timely and useful information (see for example Haque, Deb, & Medeiros, 2009).

Participatory rural appraisal

Participatory Rural Apprasal (PRA) developed from RRA, and is similar except that it has the added emphasis on involving the researched as researchers. PRA is a suite of approaches, methods and behaviours that help people share reflections on their social and physical environment. PRA is characterised by attitude and approach, rather than specific methods. It is based on a willingness to listen, to share power and knowledge, and to be self-critical in order to foster communication and understanding (Chambers, 1994a, 1999). PRA emphasises co-learning, both through learning alongside local communities, and by involving project stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds (Pretty, Guijt, Thompson, & Scoones, 1995). When undertaken effectively PRA can enhance communication by building better relationships, empower the involvement of local people in their area's future, and increase the chance that development projects will succeed by tailoring them to local situations (Chambers, 1994b).

Rapid assessment

The health discipline uses the term rapid assessement to cover rapid appraisals using qualitative methods such as observation, interviews and focus groups combined with analysis of existing data and geomapping- i.e. for appraisals analogous to RRA in the rural development field.

Rapid ethnographic assessment

This could be considered a special case of PRA, with the emphasis on participatory cultural description. This included a variety of Rapid Assessment Procedures (RAP). RAP provides a framework for the collective exploration of locally constructed representations of a community's needs and resources.

Rapid feedback evaluation

This category contains the growing number of approaches to provide project/ program evaluation rapidly (see for example Nunns, 2008). The World Health Organization Rapid Assessment and Response (RAR) falls into this category. The RAR is a well developed set of tools, skills and practitioner attitudes for situations when data are needed rapidly, resources (time and/or money) are limited and current information is required to develop policies (World Health Organization, 2002).

Real time evaluation

Real-time evaluations (RTE) developed in the 1990s as a response to humanitarian crises (McNall & Foster-Fishman, 2007). It is a departure from more conventional "ex-post" or after the fact evaluations in that it occurs while the event or intervention being evaluated occurs. Thus RTE can influence management as it happens. That this approach emerged in the field of humanitarian disaster relief is understandable, as after-the-fact evaluations may cost lives, and the lessons learned may not carry over into future operations (Herson & Mitchell, 2005).

Synthesis

Policy makers and project managers are faced with numerous combinations of approaches with different goals, and involving various degrees of community involvement. Some system can be introduced into this choice by presenting them as a matrix, as per Table 2.

Table 2 A matrix of rapid assessment approaches

	Appraisal	Impact Assessment	Social acceptability	Audit	Evaluation
Informing				RA	RA RTE RFE
Consulting	RA	RA	RA	RA	RA RTE RFE
Co-operation	RA	RA	RA		RA
Co-learning	RRA	RRA	RRA		RRA
Shared control/ community led	PRA REA	PRA	PRA REA		PRA

Rapid Rural Appraisal-RRA   Participatory Rural Appraisal- PRA
Rapid Assessment- RA   Rapid Ethnographic Assessment –REA
Rapid Feedback Evaluation-RFE   Real Time Evaluation-RTE

The specific tools used within each of these approaches depend in part on the approach selected and the context of the issue being addressed, including history and current resources. The following section briefly introduces some of the specific tools used in small scale /rapid

assessments, firstly for data gathering/creation, then for analysis. A selection of useful practical guides is provided in Box 2.

Guides to assessment tools/methods

Data creation/collection

Document review

Document review is a separate activity from reviewing literature to provide a theoretical framework. Document review uses printed artefacts, both published and unpublished, as data, which can be treated in the same ways as interview and observational data (Silverman, 2001). Document review is useful because much of the substantive information needed for a case study can be gained from documents. Document review is also valuable because it provides data gained in a non-reactive way. Non-reactive research has no influence on the production of the information used as data (Neuman, 2003).

Observation

Observation involves the researcher making systematic observations of social situations (Spradley, 1980). While traditional ethnographers are characterised as objective outsiders observing a class of 'others', current understanding of ethnography allows researchers to participate openly in the cultural activities they observe (Angrosino, Mays de Perez, & Lincoln, 2003).

In depth/ semi-structured interviews

Interviewing in particular ways can also be a scientific research tool, used to increase understandings of reality (Wengraf, 2001). Semi-structured interviews are used when the research goal is to generate themes and narratives and the aim is to understand, rather than explain, behaviour (Fontana, Frey, & Lincoln, 2003; Miller, Crabtree, & Leavy, 2004). Semi-structured interviews generally use an interview guide approach. The interview guide, or loose schedule of questions, keeps the dialogue within the research framework but is sufficiently flexible to allow the narrative to be created from the participant's perspective, not the researcher's (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

> Box 2 some useful field manuals:
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> - Community engagement (Aslin & Brown, 2003).
> - Community consultation (Coakes, 1999).
> - Participatory management (HarmoniCOP, 2005).
> - Participatory learning (Pretty et al. (1995).
> - Participatory evaluation (Woodhill & Robins 1998)

Focus groups/group interviews

Group interviews involve the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously, so that the data is created through the group interacting (Fontana & Frey 2003). Research groups can be distinguished from groups with aims such as decision making, education or therapy, because they meet to discuss a topic chosen by the researcher (Morgan & Leavy, 2004). The term 'focus group' is often used for group interviews, although this term is generally claimed by market researchers who define focus groups within a narrow set of criteria, including that participants must be strangers to each other and the facilitator.

Data analysis

Data requires some analysis or at least organisation to be of value to policy makers and managers. A variety of analytical approaches exist, most of which involve statistics for quantitative work, and transcription to text for qualitative work. More rapid approaches are used, but are less rarely documented than are rapid data creation/gathering approaches. Group assessment approaches such as PRA can and do use group data analysis, two examples of which are provided in Allan & Curtis (2002) and Webber and Ison (1995). These anlayses usually focus on thematic content and major themes, although there is no reason why discourse analysis could not be included given the availability of computer aided qualitative analysis software such as NVivo. Rapid quantitative analysis is focused more on graphical presentation than on statistics.

Conclusion

This report has briefly explored some of the factors influencing the choice of rapid assessment processes, collated some key publications related to the topic and suggested a matrix for classifying rapid appraisal approaches. Future work in this area could include the development of a decision tree to help policy makers and managers decide on the best assessment approach for particular purposes.

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Rapid approaches – a selective annotated bibliography

The following selective bibliography provides some examples of the approaches discussed in this report. The annotations are abstracts provided by the authors.

Rapid rural appraisal

Chambers, R. (1981). Rapid rural appraisal: Rationale and repertoire. *Public Administration and Development, 1*(2), 95-106.

Decision makers need the right information at the right time but in rural development much information generated is too costly and inappropriate. Rapid rural appraisal forms part of the attempt to learn about rural conditions in a cost effective way. Such appraisal involves avoiding the traps of quick and dirty or long and dirty methods and using instead methods that are more cost effective. To do this means ignoring inappropriate professional standards and instead applying a new rigour based on the two principles of optimal ignorance - knowing what it is not worth knowing - and proportionate accuracy - recognising the degree of accuracy required. The article reviews a range of approaches and techniques for rapid rural appraisal that are less rigid and exhaustive than many traditional methods and yet more rigorous in relation to cost and use. Time is emphasized as a critical factor in effective appraisal and rapid rural appraisal methods increase the chance of reducing the bias against the poorer rural people in the promotion of rural development.

Haque, C. E., Deb, A. K., & Medeiros, D. (2009). Integrating conservation with livelihood improvement for sustainable development: The experiment of an oyster producers' cooperative in Southeast Brazil. *Society and Natural Resources, 22*(6), 554-570.

Recent evidence suggests that although reconciliation between livelihood improvement and biodiversity conservation for sustainable development is complex and difficult, it is feasible to attain such a goal. One such experiment was carried out in southeast Brazil to protect mangroves and livelihood enhancement through the development of an oyster producers' cooperative. By employing a mix of qualitative research methods, including a variety of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques, we found that institutional initiative for innovative oyster-rearing techniques and the development of the local-level organization were crucial for reconciliation of income enhancement with conservation. The examination of how development and innovation interventions can lead to sustainable development has revealed that the state of "capabilities" and their expansion is at the core of sustainable livelihood opportunities and ecological systems. The Cananeia Cooperative experiment evidently supports these assertions.

Participatory rural appraisal

Allan, C., & Curtis, A. (2002). Participatory Rural Appraisal: using it to understand rural communities. *Natural Resource Management, 5*(1), 28-34.

This paper presents and critiques the methods and key findings of a Participatory Rural Appraisal of the Billabong Catchment area in NSW as part of the Heartlands project.

Berardi, G. (1998). Application of participatory rural appraisal in Alaska. *Human Organization, 57*(4), 438-446.

This article outlines key features of participatory appraisal methods and reports on a reconnaissance of their application to Alaska village sanitation issues. Characteristics of participatory research applicable to research on village sanitation project planning include collaborative versus extractive information gathering, emphasis on strong initial contacts that promote mutual learning and respect between villagers and outsiders, and flexibility in choice of methodology

Chambers, R. (1999). Relaxed and participatory appraisal: notes on practical approaches and methods Retrieved 3 May 2001, from www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/pra/rcwkshpjun99.pdf

Loader, R., & Amartya, L. (1999). Participatory Rural Appraisal: extending the research methods base. *Agricultural Systems, 2*, 73-85.

The rapid acceptance of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approaches to facilitate the understanding of problems among rural people, and the acknowledged priority for such studies to be sensitive to local conditions, has sometimes meant that such approaches have overlooked opportunities for the appropriate application of relevant techniques. PRA and its forebears have for some time incorporated quantification or classification techniques such as matrix ordering or ranking (with considerable success), but with only limited incorporation of more complex analytical tools. This paper suggests that there are methods which, if sensitively incorporated into the PRA framework, can add value to current PRA-based studies, without compromising the ownership of the research or the validity of the outputs. An example is presented from Nepal, where conjoint analysis was used to help farmers to assess their rice variety requirements.

Nyanzi, S., Bah, O., Joof, S., & Walraven, G. (2007). Ethnography and PRA among Gambian traditional birth attendants: A methods discussion. *Qualitative Research, 7*(3), 317-326.

Ethnographers are often sceptical of employing Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tools in their research, calling them 'a quick and dirty' approach. However, ethnography has limitations as a research method. We therefore combined the two methods to enhance their strengths. Based on fieldwork in rural Gambia, this article discusses the procedure, merits and shortcomings of triangulating PRA and conventional ethnography methods to conduct research among an illiterate study population of traditional birth attendants. When tailored to suit the target study population, some PRA tools do enhance the emic perspective - thus empowering the study participants and making research results more context-relevant.

Pereira, E., Queiroz, C., Pereira, H. M., & Vicente, L. (2005). Ecosystem services and human well-being: A participatory study in a mountain community in Portugal. *Ecology and Society, 10*(2).

Ecosystem services are essential for human well-being, but the links between ecosystem services and human well-being are complex, diverse, context-dependent, and complicated by the need to consider different spatial and temporal scales to assess them properly. We present

the results of a study in the rural community of Sistelo in northern Portugal that formed part of the Portugal Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The main purpose of our study was to assess the linkages between human well-being and ecosystem services at the local level, as perceived by the community. We used a range of tools that included participatory rural appraisal and rapid rural appraisal as well as other field methods such as direct observation, familiarization and participation in activities, semi structured interviews, trend lines, well-being ranking, and other ranking and scoring exercises. Sistelo has a unique landscape of agricultural terraces that are now being abandoned because of the depopulation of the region, a common trend in mountainous rural areas of Europe. From the community perspective, some components of well-being such as material well-being have been improving, whereas some ecosystem services, e.g., food production, have been declining. Although a few of the local criteria for well-being are closely related to local ecosystem services, most of them are not. People recognize many of the services provided by ecosystems, in particular, provisioning, cultural, and regulating services, although they feel that provisioning services are the most important for well-being. It is apparent that, for the Sistelo community, there is an increasing disconnect between local well-being and at least some local ecosystem services. This disconnect is associated with greater freedom of choice at the local level, which gives the local inhabitants the power to find substitutes for ecosystem services. The consequences of land abandonment for human well-being and ecosystem services at different temporal and spatial scales are discussed.

Pepall, E., Earnest, J., & James, R. (2007). Understanding community perceptions of health and social needs in a rural Balinese village: Results of a rapid participatory appraisal. *Health Promotion International, 22*(1), 44-52.

This article reviews the process and key recommendations derived from conducting a rapid participatory asset-focused health and social needs assessment in the small traditional rural village of Tulikup, Bali. The assessment aimed to develop recommendations for a community radio station based in Tulikup to promote social change and development. The health and social needs assessment utilized an asset-focused rapid participatory assessment cycle methodological framework, incorporating Annett and Rifkin's (1995) guidelines for rapid participatory appraisals (World Health Organization, Geneva), community-based action research (Sage Publications, California; Stringer, 1996) and asset-based community development. The study explored Tulikup's pre-existing assets and highlights the value of using rapid participatory appraisal techniques as a first step in involving communities in assessing needs and planning meaningful community development strategies. Data was collected over a 3-week in-country period and included interviews with key informants, informal individual and group discussions, field observations and reviews of existing secondary data sources. Triangulation using cultural interpreters, and participatory consultation processes with community members helped ensure data reliability and validity. Recent terrorist attacks in Indonesia and, most notably, Bali, have had widespread economic and social effects throughout Bali. In particular, secondary consequences of unemployment and a reduction in income have had negative impacts on population health and child labour at the village level. The findings and recommendations of the health and social needs rapid assessment have been utilized by the radio station to promote social change and development.

Temu, A. E., & Due, J. M. (2000). Participatory appraisal approaches versus sample survey data collection: A case of smallholder farmers well-being ranking in Njombe District, Tanzania. *Journal of African Economies, 9*(1), 44-62.

Social scientists and rural development interventionists in Tanzania and in Sub-Saharan Africa depend mainly on conventional sample surveys; in part this is a legacy of their basic training.

Participatory rural appraisal and intervention approaches offer a varied range of methods. We ask ourselves whether the results from participatory, rapid appraisals are conflicting and different to those from sample surveys? This paper compares results of a Rapid Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) with a conventional sample survey. These surveys were conducted at the end of 1995 and mid-1996 respectively, to establish socio-economic well-being ranks in Njombe district. A comparison of results shows that the well-being ranks established using PRA are valid and the approach is reliable. The three qualitatively established well-being ranks differed empirically in many socio-economic indicators. These include resource endowment, labour force size, agricultural land, livestock ownership, forest woodlot management, perception of food insecurity, technological advances in agricultural production and natural resource management systems. Results show that the low well-being group and female-headed households are disadvantaged. The goal of the Hifadhi Ya Mazingira-Njombe project is to develop environmentally sustainable crop and livestock husbandry practices in the district. The well-being ranking exercise has strong implications for the project's strategy. We discuss the adopted methodology and implications. The paper recommends that development programmes and workers in Tanzania and Sub-Saharan Africa ought to extend their approaches. It is time to include more of the participatory, relatively rapid rural appraisal and intervention techniques. Benefits that they may accrue are time saving, lower costs, quality information and stakeholder involvement.

Webber, L. M., & Ison, R. L. (1995). Participatory Rural Appraisal Design: Conceptual and Process Issues. *Agricultural Systems, 47*, 107-131.

Emphasis in many past PRAs has been placed on the doing dimension, with limited attention to the theoretical or conceptual underpinnings to process design. In this paper conceptual and process issues relating to design are discussed using a PRA case experience in the Kyeamba Valley, NSW.

White, L., & Taket, A. (1997). Beyond appraisal - Participatory appraisal of needs and the development of action (PANDA). *Omega-International Journal of Management Science, 25*(5), 523-534.

It is often useful to have a framework for guiding decisions about process when carrying out or facilitating some intervention, This paper describes such a framework, developed out of combining participatory rural appraisal (PRA) with various OR/systems methods, that we have used in work in both developing and developed countries to enable local people to obtain, share and analyse knowledge of their life and conditions and to plan and act according to that knowledge. The paper begins by examining the framework provided by PRA, indicating why we felt it necessary to develop something slightly different, This paper will then outline the approach which we refer to as PANDA (Participatory Appraisal of Needs and the Development of Action), Applications are illustrated by means of a case-study taken from a developing country context.

Rapid assessment

Allan, C., Khan, S., & Davidson, B. (2008). Assessing social acceptability of management options for harmonising irrigation with environmental concerns: A case study from the Murrumbidgee Valley, Australia. *Water SA, 34*(4), 517-522.

The flows in regulated rivers are strongly dependent on water demand by downstream water users. In irrigated catchments the river flow regimes are deliberately distorted to cater for crop

demand, with significant deleterious ecological impacts. A number of opportunities exist to manipulate irrigation demand and supply to provide more natural seasonality of flows and optimise the social, environmental and economic outcomes from water use in a catchment. Possible options to achieve this goal include improved cropping mix incentives, groundwater - surface water substitution, intra and inter-seasonal water trading and harmonisation of on- and off-farm storage, distribution, application and drainage infrastructure with environmental outcomes. Each of these options will impact in some way on irrigation and wider communities. In this paper 'community' involvement in setting irrigation research agendas and evaluating water management options in the Murrumbidgee Valley, Australia is explored. A brief assessment of social acceptability, combined with hydrological and economic models, was found to be an effective approach for scoping different irrigation demand management options to improve seasonality of flows. In this study the value of articulating assessment criteria when dealing with new and potentially disruptive options for the management of irrigation demand in a catchment context is demonstrated.

Aral, S. O., St. Lawrence, J. S., Dyatlov, R., & Kozlov, A. (2005). Commercial sex work, drug use, and sexually transmitted infections in St. Petersburg, Russia. *Social Science & Medicine, 60*(10), 2181-2190.

The relationships between commercial sex work, drug use, and sexually transmitted infections (STI) in St. Petersburg, Russia were assessed using qualitative research methods and an examination of existing research, surveillance and epidemiology data. The rapid assessment methodology included in-depth qualitative interviews with key informants, naturalistic observations of commercial sex work and drug use sites, geo-mapping, and a critical review of the available surveillance, epidemiology, and sociological data. Patterns of commercial sex work and drug use in St. Petersburg are described. The existing surveillance data attributes infections to injected drug use over and above any other risk category. However, examination of the clinic and epidemiology data suggests that HIV infection may be increasing fastest among groups that are acquiring HIV through sexual transmission. Targeted screening studies of STI and HIV morbidity among populations that are not included in the surveillance algorithm are needed, such as commercial sex workers, street youth, and the homeless. Sexual history taking to better characterize the proportion of cases that result from sex between male partners would also be helpful.

Balogh, R., Whitelaw, S., & Thompson, J. (2008). Rapid Needs Appraisal in the modern NHS: potential and dilemmas. *Critical Public Health, 18*(2), 233-244.

This paper reports on our experience of undertaking a Rapid Appraisal of Health and Social Needs (RNA) in West Cumbria, UK. RNA aims to identify community-defined problems and to collect intelligence for action rather than simply for documentation. The broad nature of the study is summarised and we reflect critically on methodological and structural issues that arose. A number of inter-related themes were significant: the limitations of a 'rapid' approach; within an action frame, the implications that arose from focusing on locality capacity-building; the ability that commissioning organisations had in this public health domain; and the way in which such organisations tend to construct 'needs'. These themes then are located in problematic contexts. Primarily, we were working with a fledgling NHS organisation, arguably set unrealistically high expectations to deliver innovative public health functions. Furthermore, the desire to see the NHS working more efficiently resulted in the expectation that the exercise should be done in a particular way" within a realist tradition of arriving at quick, simple and 'definitive' needs. We conclude by suggesting that if such work is to be meaningful then there needs to be a number of

pre-cursors: an initial consensus on the nature of 'need'; an agreement between commissioners and researchers around common frameworks and realistic expectations of the process; and finally, an acceptance of the importance of history in this work and the way histories of local inter-agency work reflect embedded forms of local knowledge. We suggest that NHS volatility means that much of this knowledge is often lost.

Garces, L. R., Pido, M. D., Pomeroy, R. S., Koeshendrajana, S., Prisantoso, B. I., Fatan, N. A., et al. Rapid assessment of community needs and fisheries status in tsunami-affected communities in Aceh Province, Indonesia. *Ocean and Coastal Management*.

This paper describes the application of the methodology called Rapid Appraisal of Fisheries Management System (RAFMS) to assess quickly the situation in tsunami-affected coastal fisheries in Aceh Province, Indonesia. As a diagnostic tool, the RAFMS is introduced in terms of its conceptual framework and procedures. The RAFMS was used to appraise the status of the fisheries sector in selected 15 villages. Information generated concerning level of fishing effort, marketing patterns and community perspectives on livelihood options are used as three illustrative examples. The paper also provides some insights in applying the RAFMS methodology in the context of disasters and in the broader context of tropical fisheries management.

Garrett, J. L., & Downen, J. (2002). Strengthening rapid assessments in urban areas: Lessons from Bangladesh and Tanzania. *Human Organization, 61*(4), 314-327.

Understanding urban issues is extremely important for programming, especially for organizations that have traditionally focused on assisting poor households and communities in rural areas. Development organizations and governments frequently use rapid assessment methods because they have limited resources and little time to devote to longer-term, more complex research projects. Generally these methods employ qualitative techniques to solicit information from relatively small numbers of people in a short time. Researchers have raised questions about the reliability of these methods, and policy makers and other development practitioners, the primary audience for the findings if they are to have impact, sometimes doubt the validity of findings. This paper holds up CARE's experiences with rapid assessments in Bangladesh and Tanzania to widely accepted criteria for sound social science research: basically, whether feasible and ethical methods can generate accurate, valid, and reliable results that others, such as programmers and policy maker, will find useful. Experiences in Bangladesh and Tanzania suggest that the principal challenges to the validity of rapid assessments in urban areas can be met through use of representative samples; integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches; incorporation of team members with a variety of perspectives, knowledge areas, and professions; and linkages with local organizations and community members who are familiar with the economic, political, social, and cultural context of the city.

Gaude, A. (2005). Socio-economic situation and land use conflicts around Ag-Gel National Park (Azerbaijan). *Archives of Nature Conservation and Landscape Research, 44*(4), 69-99.

The Ag-Gel National Park is located in the Kura-Araks lowland of Azerbaijan. It was established in 2003 in order to protect Lake Ag-Gel and the surrounding semi-desert landscape. To date, detailed information on local people's livelihoods was not available. Against the background of modern protected area management the present paper analyses the socio-economic situation, and in particular the land use and resulting conflicts in the vicinity of Ag-Gel National Park. The

analysis is base d on Rapid Rural Appraisal techniques and focused on semi-structured interviews with the sedentary population of the study area. The situation of the population and the agricultural sector in the study area has been subject to the following three processes: the political and economical transformation, the resulting agrarian reform and the consequences of conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Over 90% of the sedentary population are internally displaced persons (IDPs) of the territorial conflict. The majority of people earns a living from subsistence farming, especially livestock husbandry. Grazing, especially overgrazing within the national park was identified as the main land use conflict. In order to accommodate the different land use interests, a zonation concept for the national park as well as the creation of a buffer zone outside the park are suggested. To prevent further impoverishment of the affected population, compensation of incurred losses and alternative methods of earning income become necessary. A range of measures is discussed.

McNall, M., & Foster-Fishman, P. G. (2007). Methods of rapid evaluation, assessment, and appraisal. *American Journal of Evaluation, 28*(2), 151-168.

A central issue in the use of rapid evaluation and assessment methods (REAM) is achieving a balance between speed and trustworthiness. In this article, the authors review the key differences and common features of this family of methods and present a case example that illustrates how evaluators can use rapid evaluation techniques in their own work. In doing so, the authors hope to (a) introduce readers to a family of techniques with which they may be unfamiliar, (b) highlight their strengths and limitations, and (c) suggest appropriate contexts for use. Ultimately, the authors hope that REAM becomes a valuable addition to evaluators' toolkits.

Ramírez, R. (2001). Understanding the approaches for accommodating multiple stakeholders' interests. *International Journal of Agricultural Resources, Governance and Ecology, 1*(3-4), 264-285.

Conflict and collaboration are often treated as mutually exclusive modes of stakeholder interaction, with little understanding of the contexts in which stakeholder relationships take place. The conceptual framework in this paper addresses accommodating multiple interests as an evolving, cyclical, iterative process, swinging back and forth from collaborative to conflictive situations. A typology is presented with nine contextual facets that come into play in accommodating multiple interests: the nature of the problem, the stakeholders, the convenor, the networks, stakeholders' capacities, stakeholders' choices over procedures to deal with conflict, negotiation, and dispute resolution. The nine facets function as lenses through which to analyse multiple stakeholder situations. The typology is used to analyse four existing approaches: Collaborative Management, Collaborative Learning, Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (RAAKS) and 'linked local learning'. A set of criteria to assess their impact is developed, and desirable future directions for methodological development are discussed.

Rhodes, S. D., Yee, L. J., & Hergenrather, K. C. (2006). A community-based rapid assessment of HIV behavioural risk disparities within a large sample of gay men in southeastern USA: A comparison of African American, Latino and white men. *AIDS Care: Psychological and Socio-medical Aspects of AIDS/HIV, 18*(8), 1018 - 1024.

Because the southeastern USA is experiencing a disproportionate HIV infection rate compared to other regions of the country, we explored HIV behavioural risk disparities by race/ethnicity among self-identifying gay men. Conceived and implemented as a community-based participatory research (CBPR) study, this rapid assessment collected demographic and HIV

risk-behaviour data from men in five gay bars in the northwestern part of the state of North Carolina, using an assessment available in English and Spanish. Of 719 participants, 34.8% reported inconsistent condom use during anal intercourse in the past three months, 11.4% reported ever having had a sexually transmitted disease (STD), 3.6% reported being HIV-seropositive and 26% reported illicit drug use during the past 30 days. Compared to white participants, African American/black and Hispanic/Latino participants were more likely to report inconsistent condom use during anal intercourse with multiple partners during the past three months. African American/black participants were more likely to report illicit drug use during the past 30 days. Hispanic/Latino participants were more likely to have never been tested for HIV. Rates of HIV risk behaviours among gay men remain high and racial/ethnic differences indicate the need for targeted and tailored prevention strategies.

Rowa-Dewar, N., Ager, W., Ryan, K., Hargan, I., Hubbard, G., & Kearney, N. (2008). Using a rapid appraisal approach in a nationwide, multisite public involvement study in Scotland. *Qualitative Health Research, 18*(6), 863-869.

This article reflects on the use of a multisite rapid appraisal (RA) approach with reference to the (to-date) largest qualitative study gathering the views of cancer and cancer care in a cross-section of the Scottish population. A series of ten RAs were conducted in ten communities across Scotland, reflecting the geographical and socioeconomic spread of the Scottish population and involving 507 members of the public, including the views of people who are often termed "hard to reach." The research method is evaluated with reference to principles of RA approaches: the inductive approach, triangulation, assessment and response, and participation. Presentation of the methods adopted in this study demonstrates the value of the rapid appraisal approach in engaging with members of the public in health-related issues, which belies the "quick and dirty" reputation of RA approaches and offers a model for future public involvement work in health care. This makes the reflections on the method utilized particularly relevant to policy makers and researchers wishing to achieve meaningful public involvement and/or consider a method not previously used in this context.

Vigar, G. (2006). Deliberation, Participation and Learning in the Development of Regional Strategies: Transport Policy Making in North East England. *Planning Theory & Practice, 7*(3), 267-287.

Two trends in contemporary governance practice are mirrored in recent UK efforts in transport policy and practice: first, a concern to develop strategies in more participative and deliberative ways; second, a re-territorialisation of the state with greater attention to regional levels. This article discusses these issues through assessing a single regional transport strategy-making effort. The article argues that the process has achieved some of its aims and is a useful effort at generating awareness of, and interest in, this aspect of strategic policy making. However, the case highlighted shows how important it is to develop an appropriate collaborative process if a policy mechanism is to endure. This requires greater attention to: the purposes of participation in strategy development; the skills, practices and roles needed by the animateurs of such processes; the system of formal decision-making institutions and mechanisms arising from re-territorialisation in the UK case; and reconceptualising participatory processes in more deliberative ways. The article concludes with an assessment of ways forward both specifically for the development of strategic transport policy and for stakeholder engagement in similar exercises in other policy areas.

Rapid ethnographic assessment

Franchi, V., & Swart, T. M. (2003). Rapid Assessment Procedures -- A Participatory Action Research Approach to Field Training in Community Prevention and Intervention. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 25*(1), 99 - 115.

Given the racialization of subjective, material and historical realities in South Africa, psychological training and practice in community raise crucial and often thorny ethical, epistemological and methodological questions. This article appraises the strengths and limitations of using Rapid Assessment Procedures (RAP) (Afonja, 1992) in the field training of postgraduate students in community-counseling psychology. Rooted in an activist participatory action research framework (Lykes, 1997), RAP provide a framework for the collective exploration of locally constructed representations of a community's needs and resources; joining the "community" (negotiating a dialogical form of communication and a respect for the insider-outsider dialectic); working through one's "situated otherness" and deracializing psychological training and practice.

Rapid feedback evaluation

Nunns, H. (2008). Responding to the demand for quicker evaluation findings. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*(34), 89-99.

Some public sector stakeholders are demanding evaluative findings within a short timeframe. Although evaluators want to be responsive to such requests, there are a number of barriers that hinder their ability to produce evaluative information more quickly. This paper describes the results of an investigation into ways to help evaluators respond to such evaluation "timeliness" issues. It examines the factors that underpin the issue and the barriers to addressing it. A review of the literature identifies three approaches evaluators can use to address the timeliness issue. An unintended result of the investigation is also presented. Based on the findings of the literature review, a tool (named the "time/resource matrix") has been developed for responding to and managing stakeholder demand for quicker evaluative findings.

Mounteney, J., & Utne Berg, E. K. (2008). Youth, risk and rapid assessment: a new model for community social work assessment? *European Journal of Social Work, 11*(3), 221 - 235.

Rapid Assessment and Response (RAR) is an international public health research methodology which has been widely used in developing nations in response to the spread of HIV/AIDS. RAR is pragmatic " focusing on speed, action, plus the triangulation and cross referencing of different methods with a view to increasing the validity of findings. This paper provides a description of the transfer of the RAR research instrument into community social work practice. Specifically, it describes its adaptation and use by a Norwegian city outreach team with the purpose of improving their own community needs assessment skills. The assessment experiences of the team of social workers are summarised, drawing on experience from five community assessments focusing primarily on young people at risk, undertaken in the city of Bergen between 2003 and 2006. Organisational challenges, methodological preferences, ethical dilemmas and social work role uncertainties are discussed. It is concluded that implementation of an adapted RAR methodology potentially has a "double empowerment" effect. It both encourages the development of new transferable social worker skills as well as having local community development benefits.

Real time evaluation

Herson, M., & Mitchell, J. (2005). Real-Time Evaluation: where does its value lie? *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* Retrieved 32, from http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=2772

Although there are diverse methodological approaches to RTE, there are also some perceptible common characteristics:.
• The RTE takes place during the course of implementation (EPAU recommends that it starts as early as possible).
• Like monitoring, it may aim to be iterative rather than one-off, hence the idea of on-going evaluation.
• The time-frame is short, with each exercise typically lasting days, rather than weeks.
• The methodology pays the usual attention to secondary sources of information, but is then interactive. Most RTEs are carried out through field visits combined with headquarters meetings, although some have been based purely on telephone interviews with field-based staff.
• RTEs use internal 'consultants' rather than, or perhaps alongside, externals/independents. The number of team members varies from one to many, but may include sectoral or other specialists, local staff or consultants.
• Restricted use is made of the DAC criteria for evaluation , with a greater emphasis on process.
• The emphasis is on immediate lesson-learning over impact evaluation or accountability.
• 'Quick and dirty' results enable a programme to be changed in mid-course.

About the author

Dr Catherine Allan lectures in Environmental Sociology and Planning at Charles Sturt University. Between 1986 and 2000 she was employed in various landcare liaison roles with Victorian and South Australian natural resource management state government agencies, including two years as the Murray Mallee Soil Conservation Officer. Catherine's current research interests focus on adaptive management and aspects of social and participatory learning. Catherine facilitated a Participatory Rural Appraisal of the Billabong Catchment area in 2002 as part of the Heartlands Project, and a Participatory Action Research project with landcare Groups in NE Victoria in 2005. She has also evaluated a number of projects for Catchment Management Authorities in Victoria and NSW.

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