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A PRACTICAL VISIONING METHOD

APPLIED IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Papers presented at:

World Future Society
Fourth Annual General Assembly
July 18-22, 1982

A PRACTICAL VISIONING METHOD FOR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

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The session will describe "A Practical Visioning Method for Diverse Communities." Three of us will report our experiences in working with this practical visioning method.

My name is Pat Scott, Director of The Management Institute in Chicago. I will describe the methodology. Next, Dr. Alfred Hess will describe the cross-cultural use of the method, specifically its use in villages of India. Dr. Hess is an applied anthropologist and a faculty member at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Randy Williams will report on the use of the method in farm communities in North America. Randy is a community planning specialist with Rural Ventures, Inc., of Minneapolis.

Each speaker will give the presentation, then allow a period for questions for clarity, discussion or comment.

A PRACTICAL VISIONING METHOD

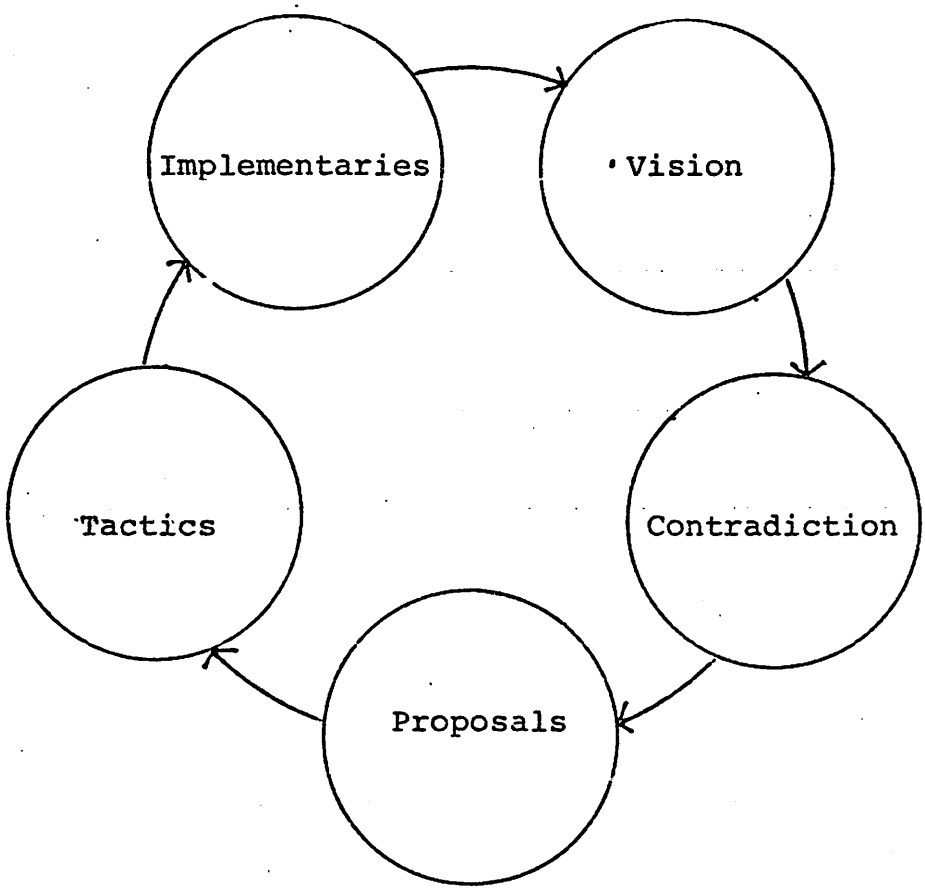
The practical visioning method was developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs in the early 1970's. This was an effort to respond to the need for a new social method which would engage grassroots wisdom anbd organize it for action. What developed was a team-oriented strategic decision-making process.

The method assumes that people in their own community, whether it be neighborhood- or corporation-based, carry within themselves the solutions to the contradictions which face them. Those solutions can be tapped in a structured group process, facilitated by methods specialists. Each group member is asked to assume full responsibility for the question before the group, because it is the pooling of unique individual perspectives into a collective whole which will yield a new, comprehensive picture of its desired future.

The method is a blend of both the rational and intuitive processes. It uses free-flowing brainstorming to generate new ideas and a system of constructing rational charts to arrange those ideas into like groupings. The process is concerned to occasion perspective shifts on familiar problems.

The product of a session is a series of charts which hold a master picture of the group's consensus for action. In some cases the product is an entire book of community plans developed by the community for its own use.

A Practical Visioning Method
for
Diverse Communities



FIVE STEPS OF THE METHOD

The method which developed is a five-step process. (See chart.) The steps are vision, contradictions, proposals, tactics, and implementaries.

PRACTICAL VISION

The process begins by looking at the group's vision of its community or organization. What are the hopes and dreams of the group for the next 3 to 5 years? Vision is often latent or unarticulated. It is important in this step to get people to say what they want to see their community or organization look like in the future.

A vision is not abstract. It is real; it can be seen in the mind's eye. It is an image. "Better communication" is not really a vision in this context. What does "better communication" look like? "Regular departmental memos" and "regular monthly interdepartmental meetings" would be vision elements. Those specific vision elements are achievable.

Vision has to have a specific focus. There need to be some limits placed on the initial question so that answers can be specific. A popular focus question right now in industry is "What is our company's vision of productivity in the next 3 to 5 years?" Because of the interrelatedness of the parts of a company to the whole, every aspect of the organization has some relation to productivity. Each group member speaks to the question from his or her unique perspective and all the relations to productivity get addressed in the visioning session.

The beginning point of vision is significant because it is out to capture the group's hopeful anticipations about its future and give direction to its destiny. The method could have started with the problems that face the community or organization, but this is a drain. When the group deals first with its vision, it has identified the prize it is after. Problems are joyless and extremely resistant to change; people can go after visions with passion and courage. Problems are debilitating; visions are energizing.

UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS

The second step of the method is contradiction identification. Contradictions are more than problems. They are socially interrelated realities which block the vision from being realized. What specific contradictions stand in the way of the vision? If the vision has been latent, what has prevented it

from coming into being? Here participants concentrate on what constrains the vision from being realized. If the group were to try to put the vision in place immediately, where would it be frustrated? Where would it run into a brick wall? Where would it get stopped? These are the contradiction points.

A contradiction is not "lack of something". It is the presence of contradictory elements so embedded in the social fabric that the reality has become perceived as "the way it is". Once the contradiction points are identified they become windows to the future. Unidentified, they remain rocks in the road of community progress. An example for the health-care industry involved the division of nursing of a major national hospital association. The nursing division wanted to expand its education programs to include staff nurses. Its previous target audience was nurse executives. As it tried to expand its market to nurses below the executive level, it discovered that (a) many hospitals do not pay for continuing education of staff nurses, and (b) staff nurses' salaries are so low they cannot afford to pay the prices charged by the association for its continuing-education programs. The contradiction of low wages and poor financial support for continuing education by hospitals for nurses constitutes an underlying block to the vision of expanded markets in nursing education. This block contrains the vision of expanded markets in continuing education for nurses.

This step deals solely with contradiction identification. It is unconcerned with resolution. Resolutions are a separate step. They are formulated in relation to the contradictions.

PROPOSALS

A proposal is a broad direction of movement which will effectively resolve or eliminate the contradiction. Proposals are broad arenas of action necessary to address the elements which constrain the vision. Another term for proposal is strategy.

Proposals attack the contradiction from many points. For instance, if a contradiction for an organization is "limited technological utilization", proposals might include (1) increased technological access, (2) practical employee training, and (3) secured funding sources. The contradiction would be practically overcome by introduction of greater technological resources, training programs to help employees understand and use resources, and financial resources to insure the monetary aspect of the proposal.

Broad proposals alone do not insure that the vision will be realized. The next step is to get at the specific action steps that will make the proposals happen.

TACTICS

Tactics are the next step. These are the concrete actions that bring the proposals or strategic directions into being. These are specific achievable steps. They are not sequential. They are collective actions, each of which is significant on its own. For example, if the proposal were for a "public education campaign", the tactics might include (1) a speakers bureau, (2) a speech-writing position, and (3) consumer hot-line. Tactics are not yet specific enough. The question of who, when and where still have to be addressed.

IMPLEMENTARIES

The final step is titled implementaries. This is a step which deals with the actual "marching orders". Who is assigned the action, when is it to be done (date), and where is it to be carried out?

The group has made an individual and collective journey to plan its next year. Even though the planning context is usually 3 to 5 years, the plan will be good for about one year. The process will then need to be repeated because part of the vision will have been realized, some of the contradictions resolved, and many proposals and tactics achieved. In short, in a year there will be a new situation which requires attention again.

In some companies and organizations this plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis to insure its implementation over the year.

STRUCTURING THE METHOD

The method has been adapted to three major timeframes: one day, two-and-one-half days and a week-long consult. The one-day sessions are most popular for citizen gatherings like forums or town meetings. Citizens can be assembled to give a day to deciding the shape of their community in the future. Notable examples of this include the Colorado Front Range Project conducted by Judy Ellison, written up by the December 1981 Futurist, and the Town Meeting programs conducted nationwide by the Institute of Cultural Affairs in celebration of the U.S. Bicentennial. The Farm Forums of Rural Ventures are an illustration that Randy will discuss.

The two-and-one-half-day format has been the most successfully applied in the public and private sectors. Multi-national corporations have used this methodology as part of their corporate planning process. Hughes Tool of Houston has used the method with both its senior executive level and hourly workers. What is discovered is that, in many instances, the vision about the

company and its future is a shared vision regardless of the level of the employee. McDonald's Corporation and Massey Ferguson have internal consultants who conduct these sessions with interdisciplinary teams of managers. McDonald's has highly refined the process for its own use as a planning instrument for its marketing.

Finally, the most in-depth application of the method is a week-long consult. Each step of the method occupies an entire day. The product is a guidebook of the vision, contradictions, proposals, tactics and implementaries developed by the community for its own use under the direction of facilitators skilled in the methods. Fred will say more about this approach called a "consult".

The time allotted for each session is brief but adequate. The method is geared to get intuitions. It is a method biased toward action and consensus, not deliberation. It presupposes that the fusing of many intuitive insights into a rational whole represents an adequate base for community action and corporate planning. The pace is quick in these sessions. Under the press of a limited time-frame, many decisions can be made that would normally take months to achieve.

INTERIOR STRUCTURE

Within the larger framework of the five steps of the method, each step has a three-part structure. Each session begins with a talk followed by a team workshop and concluding with a working plenary where a consensus for action is built.

The talks serve to focus the attention of the group and get its consciousness directed to the subject of the session -- vision, contradiction or proposal with respect to a given question.

The team work is the heart of the session. The team is made up of 12 to 25 people who work to get their individual perspectives into the total planning process. In the team sessions, time is allotted for each person to write down his or her individual responses to the issue at hand -- thereby insuring that everyone has something to contribute when the larger team process begins. The teams bring their data and reflections to the total working group in the plenary session.

It is important to understand that the plenary is a larger group working session, not a time of reports. It operates like a disciplined think tank. Each team has generated an independent set of visions, contradictions or proposals. The task in the plenary is to make those several visions one. The idea is to

incorporate all insights, not eliminating any. The task is to give structure and form to a single inclusive, practical vision. This is done by gathering data from teams in a structured fashion. Teams begin to see overlapping items which will finally emerge as a commonly consensed vision. The product of the session is a single rational chart which holds all the groups' insights in holding categories.

A plenary gives a way for everyone to help construct and see the whole picture of the visions, contradictions or proposals. The plenary tries to disclose different perspectives about the data by casting it in new relationships not familiar to those who live with their situation day after day. The facilitators who lead the sessions are out to occasion new ways to view and therefore change the situation in a community or corporation. Finally, the plenary session is a way of articulating a collective resolve. The ideas are all now in implementable form.

CELEBRATION

The work of the group has been intense and meaningful. A heightened sense of community has been achieved. Every effort has been made to maintain an environment of possibility about the openness of the future. It's time for a celebration.

In villages there is usually a village-wide feast with much food and many songs. Some of the songs will have been written during the consult; others will be traditional folk songs of the villagers. Corporate personnel often retire for drinks, hors d'oeuvres and a banquet. Town meetings may end with a songfest. Regardless of how the session ends, people know they have had a hand in shaping their own future. They didn't just vote on issues -- they shaped the issues. They took seriously the fact that they were making decisions on behalf of other neighbors, citizens, or corporate personnel. They sensed something new had happened for them. They emerged with a new confidence that their insights made a difference. Their participation had been structured into their community or workplace in a way they never dreamed it could have been. They experienced being in control of their community as a work place in a new way.

CONCLUSION

The great trend of participatory management, anticipatory democracy, and local self-determination is aided or blocked by our operating methods. The methods we use are all arbitrary to some degree. Yet they are in some measure based on our presuppositions about people and consciousness.

The benefits of this method lie in its ability to tap into people's latent vision of their future -- which is a primal source of self-motivation. It is structured to allow genuine teamwork on the challenging task of creating a desired future. Finally, it is the occasion for a community -- whether neighborhood or corporate -- to both plan and implement a realizable task.

COMMUNITY CONSENSUS PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Pat has described the methodology of envisioning and planning for the future which is the subject of this session. As an applied anthropologist, I will be reporting on the use of this method in Third World villages as a tool for creating a community-wide consensus about the future. The original application of this methodology was in assisting a community to envision its own future; discerning the contradictions which were preventing that vision from being realized; and determining the programs, strategies, and tactics which would overcome those contradictions. The method has since been employed in more than 300 communities in over 30 nations around the world.

Specifically, I want to talk about the use of this methodology in village development in the State of Maharashtra, India. Maharashtra is on the western side of the sub-continent; Bombay is its capital. Its population is over 50 million, making this state larger than most developing nations, and larger than many countries in Europe. The state is divided into four divisions, 75 districts, and 232 telukas (comparable to American counties). The Village Development Project of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) was designed to create a demonstration village in each teluka of the state. These demonstration villages were then to reach out to and have an impact on every other village in their telukas. The phased design started with one demonstration village, Maliwada, and then replicated itself by stages to one in each division, then one in each district and, finally, one village in each teluka. This replication took five years to accomplish. In order to show how this methodology worked, I am going to concentrate on only one village, the original demonstration at Maliwada.

Maliwada is a small village on the South-Central Deccan Plateau, about 12 miles from the division capital, Aurangabad (a city of 100,000 inhabitants), and about 250 miles east of Bombay. Maliwada means "the place of the farmers (malis)". In 1975, it contained 1699 people, mostly of the mali caste. The village elders invited the Institute of Cultural Affairs to make their village the demonstration site for Maharashtra. The project was begun with a village-wide consultation held the last week of December of that year.

THE CONSULT METHODOLOGY

"The Consult" included all villagers who could participate, outside technical consultants from across India and a number of Western countries, and the ICA's methodologists. Village attendance averaged over 100 at the regular working sessions; and, at the major meetings, nearly a third of the villagers were present. There were nearly 80 technical consultants representing government agencies, businesses, and social service agencies. There were about 20 ICA methodologists, including both Indian nationals and Westerners (called "Europeans", whether from Australia, America, or that continent). Half of the ICA staff had been living in Maliwada for several months, preparing for the Consult. They would continue to provide auxiliary methodological assistance to the village for the next several years.

The Consult was one week in length. A full day was devoted to each stage in the envisioning/planning methodology. Each day would begin with a general brainstorming by the entire group. Then the consultants and villagers would break into sub-groups to explore different arenas of the life of the village (e.g., Agriculture, Commerce, Health, Education, etc.). The smaller groups would do further, more specific, brainstorming; they would spend the afternoon touring the village, examining specific situations in their arena; they would eat together and formulate specific aspects of the plan for their arena of concern. In the morning general assembly, each arena would report; then a coordinated formulation of that stage of the planning would be created. Then the process would begin again on the next phase of the method.

In this way, one day was spent creating a vision of what Maliwadans wanted their village to be as a result of this development project. Another day was spent cataloging the major contradictions preventing this vision from occurring. On the third day, practical proposals were forged to attack these contradictions; and, on the fourth and fifth days, strategies and tactics were designed to implement these proposals. Finally, all the various tactics were interrelated, for some tactics would implement several different proposals at the same time; a set of comprehensive programs were thus formulated and adopted as the developmental design for Maliwada for the next several years. The results of each stage of the Consult were written up; and a booklet, containing the demonstration plan, was presented to each family in the village.

During the Consult, the village participants were the key persons in the process of arriving at a consensus. It was their vision of the future which was determinative. It was their agreement on what could, or could not, work in Maliwada which was central to the determination of the demonstration project plan.

The role of the technical consultants was to bring their expertise to bear on the village situation, to make suggestions as members of a group, and to have those suggestions accepted or rejected on the basis of their applicability, feasibility, and fit with other elements of the overall plan. They had little opportunity to go apart and create textbook solutions to problems. There was no room here for abstract plans dealing with general developmental needs; there was only room for specific applications. Of course, as the level of planning got more specific, the consultants' expertise, their "how to" knowledge, became more and more valuable.

The role of the ICA methodologists was to keep the whole Consult method operating and coordinated. Their job was contentless -- not to shape the nature of the program for Maliwada, but to provide a context within which more than 200 people could consider and make consensus decisions about the future of this village. These methodologists ran the general workshops; facilitated the sub-groups; supervised the logistical support of meals, lodging and transportation; and compiled and organized the various segments of the plan. A core of these methodologists stayed in Maliwada to assist in the implementation of the program adopted at the close of the Consult.

THE PROGRAMS AND THEIR RESULTS

Seventeen programs were designed, during the Consult, as the development plan for Maliwada: seven dealing with the "Social Well-Being" of the village, seven dealing with the "Economic Well-Being" of the village, and three with "Community Reconstruction".* Three health programs called for the establishment of a Health Outpost providing regular medical services to the village, a Demonstration Home for training in adequate sanitation methods, and a Community Commons, including a Community Kitchen to serve meals to various other programs and thereby be a forum for nutritional training. The four education and training programs were designed to establish a pre-school, expand the enrollment and participation in the government-run primary school, provide adult skills training, and train village residents in the methods of community development.

The Economic Programs contained three agricultural programs establishing a Farmers Co-op, an Irrigation Project, and a Demonstration Farm. New industries would include an Agricultural Produce Enterprise and a combine of other small industries. A trading company and a Commercial Services Union would be created to market Maliwada's products and produce the credit services necessary for expansion.

* See Program Chart, page 12.

Maliwada
Human Development Project

December/January 1975-76
Consult

THE SEVENTEEN ACTUATING PROGRAMMES

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY REFORMULATION IN MALIWADA

ICA Consultants

Chart #1

ONE TOWARD THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF MALIWADA VILLAGE			TWO MALIWADA VILLAGE TOWARD	THREE TOWARD THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF MALIWADA VILLAGE		
COMMUNITY HEALTH A	COMMUNITY EDUCATION B	COMMUNITY TRAINING C	COMMUNITY RECONSTRUCTION D	COMMUNITY COMMERCE E	COMMUNITY INDUSTRY F	COMMUNITY AGRICULTURE G
MALIWADA HEALTH OUTPOST I	EARLY LEARNING CENTRE IV	IN-SERVICE TRAINING INSTITUTE VI	RURAL HOUSING PROJECT VIII	COMMERCIAL SERVICES UNION XI	AGRI-CULTURAL ENTER-PRISES XIII	MALIWADA FARMERS' CO-OPERATIVE XV
VILLAGE DEMON-STRATION HOME II			MALIWADA COMMUNITY CENTRE IX			CORPORATE IRRIGATION PROJECT XVI
MALIWADA COMMUNITY COMMONS III	MODEL VILLAGE SCHOOL V	MALIWADA COMMUNITY ACADEMY VII	VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT X	MALIWADA TRADING COMPANY XII	LOCAL INDUSTRY COMBINE XIV	MALIWADA DEMONSTRATION FARM XVII

Community Reconstruction Programs focused on new housing (many villagers lived in lean-to homes within the walls of much larger houses now in ruins); on a new community center; and on the installation of paved streets, sewers, clean water and electricity. The villagers organized themselves into five "guilds" to implement these various programs. The resident auxiliary methodologists from the ICA were assigned to facilitate each guild.

Three years later, in October of 1978, an evaluation was conducted to study the effects of these programs on the life of Maliwada. The results were startling. Perhaps the most interesting and, in the long run, most significant finding was that the population of the village had increased. In less than three years, the population had risen from 1699 to 1898. The natural population increase of births over deaths was 105. The other 94 persons represent former village residents who returned to live in Maliwada. Since the population of the village had remained constant for a number of years prior to the start of the project, even though the birth rate exceeded the death rate, an out-migration rate of about 35 per year can be assumed. These new population figures meant a reversal of that trend, an in-migration rate of about 31 per year. While a difference in the migration rate of a small village of nearly 770 persons per year may not, in itself, appear significant, if this trend spread to the other 25,000 villages in Maharashtra, it would involve altering the rural-urban migration rate by more than one million persons per year and would greatly ease the burdens on Bombay, Nagpur, Poona, and the other major urban centers of Maharashtra, which have been unable to cope with India's "rush to the cities."

Other indications of the enhancement of the Social Well-Being of the village are not as easily quantified. The fact that the Health Clinic serves 40 patients per day cannot adequately portray the decline in eye and ear infections, the decrease in prevalence of scabies and diarrhea, the reduction in the general level of malnutrition, and the resulting higher activity level of the average village resident. Statistics do help to grasp the scope of the educational activities: public school attendance quintupled from 30 to 150, requiring the addition of four new government-supported teachers; 72 children were enrolled in the new pre-school; 12 students were enrolled in universities in Aurangabad; 260 adults had received skills training for new jobs; and 70 adults were in literacy programs.*

Major construction projects included a Community Center, an industrial complex housing several new small industries, a Health Center, a Pre-School, and 19 new homes, with renovation of many others. Electricity was installed throughout the village; roads were paved and sewers installed, eliminating much of the standing

* See Social Development Chart, page 14.

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MALIWADA HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Chart #2
October, 1978

PREVENTIVE HEALTH*

VITAL STATISTICS	BEFORE PROJECT INITIATION	CURRENTLY
Population	1699	1898
Births Per Annum	not available	44
Deaths Per Annum	not available	9
Instances of Malnutrition	50% of children	2-3
Health Clinic Patients Per Day	0	40
Number of Latrines	0	16
Common Diseases	ear/eye infections scabies diarrhea	stomach disorders
Availability of Medicine	Aurangabad Medical College Hospital	Local Health Clinic
Rural Health Worker Area	10 villages	Maliwada

*Partial listing, only

FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION*

PARTICIPATION	BEFORE PROJECT INITIATION	CURRENTLY
Infant School	0	32
Pre-School	0	40
Primary School	30	150
University Attendance	2-3	11-12
Human Development Training Institute	0	50
Nutrition Classes	0	50-60
Farmer Training	0	130
Business Management Trg.	0	9
Vehicle Maintenance Trg.	0	9
Other Skills Training	0	12
Literacy Classes	0	70
English Classes	0	40
Weekly Leadership Trg.	0	30
Youth Programmes	0	120
Pre-School Teachers	4	8

water throughout the village; and a new well was dug, providing both drinking and irrigation water for the new community garden. Much of this construction was done by labor volunteered by village residents.

However, the most dramatic results were in the Economic Programs. Through the introduction of new, dry land varieties, jowar yields tripled over three years. Village farmers were also busily diversifying into milk production, eggs, poultry, and other animal husbandry pursuits. But the expansion of non-farm labor jobs has been even more amazing.

A virtual revolution in the occupational patterns of the village has occurred. In 1975, 104 persons earned wages totalling Rs 114,650, averaging about Rs 1100 per annum. Three years later, the work force had expanded to 344, totalling Rs 389,000 in income in the village. Even though a portion of that number was only part-time employees, the average annual income of all wage earners rose to Rs 1130. In a land where underutilized human labor is the largest resource wastage, the tripling of earned income in the village is far more significant than the modest rise in average worker income. This rise in non-farm income may be a significant factor in the reversal of the village's migration pattern.

By 1978, the number of agricultural wage-workers had dropped from 75 to 50, while those working in small industry rose from 9 to 204, and those in some form of commerce or service from 20 to 90. Whereas in 1975, 72% of all persons earning wages were farm workers; in 1978, 59% were working in some industry; and 26% were involved in commerce or providing a service.

MALIWADA WORKFORCE SHIFTS*

	1975		1978	
	Number Workers	Total Income(Rs)	Number Workers	Total Income(Rs)
Agricultural	75	60,000	50	40,000
Industry/Trades	9	19,500	204	220,500
Commerce/Service	20	35,150	90	128,500
TOTALS	104	114,650	344	389,000

Two important industrial developments were the establishment of a Nutri-Food processing and packaging plant, which employed 140 persons, and a woodworking establishment that started out

*See chart of "Work Force/Income Level Alterations" for greater detail on page 16.

Chart #3

WORKFORCE/INCOME LEVEL ALTERATIONS
VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT
MALIWADA, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

	1975		1978	
	Number	Income	Number	Income
PRIMARY SECTOR				
Agricultural Laborers	75	Rs 60,000	50	Rs 40,000
SECONDARY SECTOR				
Nutri Food	0	0	140	133,000
Box Factory	0	0	8	14,000
Construction	3	7,500	15	20,000
Brick Factory	0	0	6	6,000
Carpenters	2	5,000	15	20,000
Flour Millers	2	4,000	4	10,000
Rope Makers	1	1,500	5	6,000
Clothing	1	1,500	11	11,000
TERTIARY SECTOR				
Community Paid Workers				
Health Asst.	0	0	1	1,200
Pre-Sch. Teacher	0	0	1	1,200
Pre-Sch. Cooks	0	0	3	2,100
Village Sweeper	0	0	1	1,200
Government Paid Workers				
Teachers	4	14,400	8	28,800
Post Office	0	0	1	1,000
Other				
Blacksmith	3	6,000	3	6,000
Baker	0	0	1	1,500
Barber	2	2,000	2	2,000
Butcher	0	0	1	2,000
Tea Stall	4	2,500	12	10,000
Kirana	2	6,250	8	27,500
Goldsmith	1	1,000	1	2,000
Water Delivery	0	0	4	4,000
Transport	2	2,000	13	13,000
Dhobi	2	1,000	8	4,000
Bicycle	0	0	1	1,000
P.A. System	0	0	1	5,000
Community Kitchen Caterers	0	0	20	15,000
TOTALS	104	Rs 114,650	344	Rs 389,000

selling shipping boxes to Auto Parts of India in Aurangabad, and then began making furniture. Another important development was the enticement of the State Bank of India to locate a branch bank in the village, making credit much more accessible.

SUMMARY

T. S. Epstein (1962, 1973) and others have studied the effects of large governmental capital investments, such as a large irrigation project, on village development. While the government cooperated extensively in the development of Maliwada, the crucial difference in this case was the creation of a village-wide consensus program of development, with very little government investment required. It was not as a result of government planning, but the result of village initiative that improvements were made in Maliwada. The village drew upon the resources and services of the government, and upon the investment of private businesses; but 70% of the new investment in Maliwada came from the residents themselves, either in "sweat equity" or in secured loans. These loans did require the backing of the government-owned banking establishment; but most were short-term, at 13% interest, and were repaid within the duration of the demonstration project. Thus, this development was relatively inexpensive to the government (estimated at about $22 per capita, and most of that was in services the government was already structured to provide).

The Maliwada Demonstration Project showed the kind of development a village can experience when a consensus plan is created and the enthusiastic participation of all residents can be expected. Of course, not all the 231 taluka replication villages were as successful; but, after two years of plan implementation, more than 175 have been judged successful. Third World nations cannot afford to wait for funding for large-scale infrastructural improvement projects, such as dams and irrigation projects, to speed up the process of rural development. For a very low per-capita investment in government services, the consensus planning method can be employed to dramatically accelerate village development. In the process, these nations may find a way to ameliorate the urban migration which has created shanty-towns and slums in major cities across the Third World.

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TOWARD REVITALIZING SMALL FAMILY FARMS

Randy Williams
RURAL VENTURES, INC.

My task this afternoon is to present to you examples of how Rural Ventures, Inc., has used the practical visioning method in rural communities in the United States. I will discuss four points. First, I want to briefly describe Rural Ventures and its approach as context for why we use the practical visioning method. Second, I will define the rural situation which we are seeking to address as we see it. Third, I will describe four specific applications of the method as we have used it; and, finally, I will state my understanding of the implications of this method for rural development in the country.

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Rural Ventures, Inc., is a private, for-profit corporation engaged in the design and implementation of programs to enhance economic and human development in rural areas. Its primary aim is to increase agricultural profitability and foster job creation through: (1) the application of the most appropriate production, marketing and management techniques on new and existing small family farms, rural businesses and rural communities; (2) the optimal use of natural and human resources; and (3) maximizing the effectiveness of local institutions.

One of Rural Ventures' unique characteristics is that it is owned by a consortium of shareholders including corporations, agricultural cooperatives, religious organizations and private voluntary organizations whose technologies and services are incorporated into Rural Ventures' projects where appropriate. For example, Control Data Corporation provides computer-based education and data bases of agricultural and small-town technology. Hubbard Milling specializes in handling, processing and distributing farm products. Super Valu, Inc., a food-store chain, contributes years of experience in food distribution. Health Central provides management, training and financial services to small community hospitals. Land O'Lakes and Cenex, which are agricultural cooperatives, have wide experience in planning and delivering technical, financial and product support services to small communities and individual farmers. The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and four dioceses of the Catholic Church in Minnesota have gained national recognition for their support of small-farm values and minority programs. The Delta

Foundation, based in Mississippi, has an outstanding track record in minority small-business development for poverty-stricken rural areas. The Institute of Cultural Affairs implements comprehensive community improvement programs around the world. Each of these is a Rural Ventures shareholder and each has contributed significantly in various ways to the successful implementation of different projects.

Let me mention briefly the presuppositions from which Rural Ventures operates.

1) We believe the revitalization of small family farms is essential to rural economic development. Studies have found that the most effective farm operations are the one- or two-farmer units, in terms of cost per unit of output.

2) We believe a basic problem in rural development is the under-utilization of natural and human resources. Labor-intensive small-farm operations with multiple enterprises do much to overcome this problem.

3) We see that a crucial issue for small-farm operators is planning. Planning is often the ingredient which most influences profit and loss for farmers and small non-agricultural businesses as well, and too often it is the missing ingredient as small farmers fail to realize that their farm is in fact a small business.

4) We believe the delivery of information and data; i.e., education, is fundamental to the revitalization of rural communities. We assume that revitalizing small farms is not a return to 40 acres and a horse, but represents the decision to "work smarter, not harder", as the saying goes.

   Education must provide not only the new technologies but also the means for small farmers to become innovators; i.e., education must provide motivation and methods.

5) Following on that thought, we are certain that attitudinal change is necessary to rural development. New technologies must be presented in such a way that passive acceptance of the future is replaced by active participation in problem-solving and the creation of alternative futures.

6) Finally, local participation in planning and implementation is necessary to rural development. Grass-roots men and women are no longer satisfied to completely delegate responsibility for creating their destinies to elected representatives and others. They desire creative ways to participate in their own progress and they have the insight to contribute significantly.

II

What is the situation which we seek to address?

The 19th-century transition from an agrarian to an industrial society quite expectedly led to the demise of the rural in this nation as the population shifted from the country to the city. Now, with the onset of the information society, there is a sign of the beginning of a back-to-the-countryside trend. However, for the bulk of the 20th century, institutions both public and private have geared most of their services to meet the urban explosion. Consequently, less than necessary attention has been paid to community services, education, health care, housing, etc., in the rural. So, as rural population begins to rise, it frequently puts a strain on the system which the system is not able to bear. Meanwhile, through the communications media, which are as available to the rural population as to the urban, the 20th-century information revolution has hit the rural perhaps as hard as the urban with its accompanying impact on values, lifestyles, roles, community groupings and all the rest. The extent of this is such that some have suggested that it is inappropriate to any longer refer to the "rural" as rural, as if it were isolated from the real "urban" world. Divorce rates, crime, chemical dependence and the total array of social problems are now felt in the rural arena as much as in the urban. The percentage of working wives in the rural areas is nearly as high as elsewhere, especially among small-farm families where unsubsidized farm income does not meet the family requirements. With the composite impact of these various related trends, some population shift from the urban to the rural, and information as a basic resource available to the rural -- perhaps the revitalization of the rural economy and therefore the upgrading of the quality of life in the rural is now much more viable than at any other time in the century.

The effects of the economic and cultural trends of the 20th century on agriculture and farmers, especially small farmers, are well documented. The rural exodus along with inflation, reduction in parity, increased fuel and energy costs, decreased commodity market prices, high interest rates, etc., have rendered the economies of scale a powerful force; and the existence of the small family-owned farm has become seriously threatened. The

number of family farms has decreased dramatically. There has arisen a class of hobby, or week-end, farmers whose economic stability was never intended to depend upon farm operations. Meanwhile, there are some hangers-on who continue to farm on the old homestead, but depend heavily on off-farm income to make ends meet. The regrettable aspect of this scenario is that many small farm operators remain on the farm out of sentimentality and cultural attachment rather than out of the hope, much less a plan, that somehow small farms could again become economically viable. Consequently, they too often await, as passive victim, a seemingly inevitable future to come and wipe them out. And they have no motivation and no obvious means to try to change it. There is the story of the farmer who inherited a million dollars and said he was going to keep on farming until it was all gone. This would be amusing were it not so tragically indicative of the real attitude of many farmers as they face the future.

Some argue that small farms do not have the right to exist and to attempt their revitalization is to attempt to turn back the clock. However, there are those who would insist that the revitalization of small farming as a profitable endeavor is crucial to the ability of the globe to feed itself, and that small-farm operations are more labor-intensive and energy-efficient and are, therefore, more conducive to the equitable use of the planet's limited resources.

Without becoming enmeshed in that debate at this point, we simply assume that small farms must and can become feasible; and one of the important keys to the success of small farming over the next several years will be the degree to which the farmer can cease being the victim of circumstances and the passive recipient of an inevitable future, and become an innovator who sees the current situation as a challenge calling forth from him/her new creativity whereby he/she becomes the shaper of a future not yet determined and an agent of constructive social change. Farmers can no longer afford to assume that someone or something else, or nothing, will bail them out of their current plight. They, along with others, must assume a most personal responsibility for changing the fortunes of their profession. They must actively ascribe to the statement of Rene Dubos, "Trend is not destiny." To this end, the practical visioning method is most appropriate.

III

I now want to describe four applications of the practical visioning method in rural settings across the United States.

In ten southern counties of rural Virginia, the method was used for research toward an economic development plan. A series of farm forums was held, one in each of ten counties. These were attended by farmers, representatives of farm organizations,

extension agents, small-business operators and representatives of municipal government. Each farm forum was three hours in length during which time the participants were asked to state their future vision for the farms, businesses and communities; determine what obstacles would prevent the vision from reaching fruition and propose what steps could be taken to remove the obstacles. The results of the forums were then incorporated with certain baseline data into an economic development plan which depends heavily on citizen participation for its implementation.

In the Eskimo community of Selawik in arctic Alaska, the practical visioning method was used for community planning. An economic development program based on arctic farming was being initiated, but it was clear that its success would depend upon addressing certain social and cultural issues as well. The village was called together for a three-day planning conference which began with a practical vision of the future of the village regarding its economic well-being, its social progress and its cultural heritage. Field visits were conducted throughout the village in the mornings; economic, social and cultural teams worked in the afternoons; and plenary sessions and cultural celebrations were held in the evenings. The creative proposals from the conference became the basic strategy for the implementation of that project, which is soon to enter its third year.*

In the New England region, Rural Ventures is conducting a sheep-industry development project. The practical visioning process was used with a group of sheep farmers to plan for the growth of the sheep industry in that region. Through three four-hour sessions, they were asked first to envision the condition they would hope to see in the sheep industry in the next five years and to identify those elements that were contradicting the vision. They were then asked to propose steps which they would take in their own farm operations that would begin to make an impact on the contradictions, and thereby release the vision. These products greatly informed the successful operations of these farmers, to the extent that other farmers and support industries have taken a renewed interest in the economic well-being of rural New England.

Finally, in Princeton, Minnesota, a group of beginning farmers, husbands and wives together, spent five four-hour sessions building a management and implementation plan for their individual farms. These sessions followed the basic five-step format as described in the earlier presentation. The visioning was done as very practical issues: production rates, profit margins; but it was also stated in terms of family cooperation and vacation time. As the contradictions were analyzed and the

*See Vision, Contradiction and Proposal Charts on pages 24, 25 and 26.

SELAWIK PLANNING CONFERENCE

THE PRACTICAL VISION CHART

OCTOBER 10-12, 1980

A. TOWARD IMPROVED SURROUNDINGS			B. TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE			C. TOWARD HEALTHY LIFESTYLE		
Reliable Emergency Services I	Family Recreational Activities II	General Village Sanitation III	Alternative Energy Sources IV	Expanded Local Employment V	Appropriate Agriculture Project VI	Total Transportation System VII	Preventive Health Programs VIII	Subsistence Life-Style Support IX
Co-operative Emergency Shelters	Year-Round Recreational Facilities	Water and Sewage Hauling	Solar and Wind Power	Local Occupational Training	Agriculture Farm Site	Permanent Trail Markers	Baby and Mother Care	School Subsistence Curriculum
				Native Crafts Marketing				
Fire Fighting Plan	Available Village Library	Expanded Running Water	Super-Insulated Homes	Child Care Center	Family Gardening Plots	Airport Taxi Service	Wellness Education Program	Local History Book
Erosion Control Program	Competitive Sports Events	Neat Village Appearance	Wood Fuel Industry	Commercial Fishing Operation	Farm Skills Training	Heated Airport Shelter	Drug Abuse Education	Subsistence-Related School Calendar
				Portable Saw Mill				
Public Safety Board	Senior Citizens Center	Grass-Cutting and Clean-Up	Inexpensive Wood Stoves	Check Cashing System	Inexpensive Milk Supply	Additional Airport Run-way	Tooth Decay Information	General Hardware Store
				Sled-Making Business				
Education in Local Laws	Adult Games Program	Improved Garbage Dumping	Joint Oil Purchase	Selawik Tourist Bureau	Reindeer Herd Experiment	Village Trans-portation Options	Alcoholism Counseling and Treatment	Subsistence Equipment Availability
	Youth Recreation Center		Energy Cost Research	Skin Tanning Industry	Efficient Food Storage		Parent Effective-ness Training	

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THE UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS CHART

OCTOBER 10-12, 1980

I Untrained Local Leadership	II Neglected Community Organization	III Untrained Maintenance Personnel	IV Unresponsive Educational Structures	V Partial Subsistence Curriculum	VI Conflicting Farm-Site Preparation Plans	VII Non-Existent Alcohol and Drug Care	VIII Unresolved Land Restrictions	IX Abbreviated Eskimo Heritage	X Uncoordinated Transportation Plans	XI Individualistic Small Business Ventures	XII Limited Health Care	XIII Impractical Personal Money Management
Restrictive Gov't Regulations	Uncoordinated Efforts (Drug Abuse Treatm't)	Obtaining Costly Equipment & Facilities	Overall D.O.E. Requirements	Untrained in Preparation Methods	Unknown Conditions of Farm Sites	Difficulty Changing Habits	Building Availability	Lack of Skills in Tourist Trade	Transportation to Emergency Shelter	Difficulty in Getting Loans	Home Care Aides Needed	Uninformed About Banking
Short Range Planning	Unlocated Committed Co-Ordin. for Youth	Unavailability of Equipment	Attendance Requirements	Unskilled Reindeer Herd Management	Inexperienced Farm Hands	Drinkers' Denial of Problem	Limited Space for Youth Center	No Local Editor	Limited Capacity to to Transport Wood	Profitability Relative to Market Size	More Health Information	Difficulty in Getting I.D.'s
Stronger Health Council Leadership	Co-operative, Helpful Image	Logistics of Obtaining Equipment	Difficulties in Changing Educatio n	Availability of Local Craftsmen	Unavailable Grazing Range	No Plan for Drug Abuse Education	No Shelter for Log Cutting	No Center for Local Eskimo Studies	Uncertain Time to Start Bridge Construction	No Child Care Provided	Follow-Up Health Care	Untested Check-Cashing Feasibility
Uninformed City Leaders	Lack of Continuity in Staffing	Inadequate Security For Cash	Too Much Television	Nonexistence of Subsistence Curriculum	Unavailable Garden Equipment	Alcoholism	Unplanned Winter Food Storage	No Local Written History	Inaccessible Gravel Pits	No Local Buyers	Keeping Rivers Clean	Misunderstood Banking System
Stronger Leadership in Mothers' Group	Ways of Involving People	Faulty Fire Extinguishers	Contract For Staff Vacation	College Recognition	Undetermined Appropr iate Scale for Project	No Order and Discipline	Limited Space For Library	Many Dialects	Runway Goes Into Lake	Irregular Demands For Crafts		
Stronger Leadership in City Council	Tracking System for City Owned Equipment	Expensive Fire Equipment	Unavailable Teachers	Lack of Technical Training Skills	Limited Alternatives for Local Agriculture	Unestablished Financial Controls	No Facility for Day Care	No Book Selection Guidelines Established	D. of T. Offices Too Far Away			
Salary for Alcoholism Counselor	Community Members Willingness	Solar Energy Cost Beyond Indiv. Income	Fiscal Year Deadlines	Selawik Local Planning in Curriculum	Inaccessible Garden Lands	Alcoholism Education Needed	Unresolved Land Restrictions	Writer Representative for Oral Historian	Uncertain Time To Start Shelter			
Over worked Leaders	Unknown Individual Community Needs	Maintenance Costs	Dependence on State and Federal Fundin g									
Limited Funds for Skills Training	Inconsistent Communication of Schedules	Building Maintenance Equipment & Staff										
Undiscovered Funding Sources	Lack of Imagination in Planning Activities	Absence of Maintenance Personnel										
Expense of Obtaining Books	No Planning for Local Demand	Materials and Plan for Jacub										
Training for Program Leaders	Disagreement on Tourism	Unsuitable Technology for Local Homes										
High City Employee Turnover	Few Opportunities to Train Sponsors	Decorative versus Heating Stoves										
Uninformed About Funding Sources	No Determination of Local Interest	Unknown Inventory Requirements										
Untrained in Grant Writing	Individ. Approach to Oil Purchasing	Safety on Bridges										
Outdated Ordinances	No Local Co Op	No Garbage Transport System										
Ordinances Not Understood	Lack of Structured Program											
City Ordinances Enforcement	Representatives for Public Safety Board											
Expensive Sled Materials	Expected Pay for Every Effort											
Craft Materials Hard to Obtain	Training for Librarian											
Hiring an Architect	Clean-Up Demonstrations											
High Construction Costs	Lack of Organizational Back-Up											
Cost of Transporting Inventory												
Funds for Recreational Facilities												

SELAWIK PLANNING CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 10-12, 1980

THE CREATIVE PROPOSALS CHART

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC HEALTH		B BLENDING THE NEW WITH THE OLD LIFE-STYLE		C PUBLIC COMMITMENT FOR AGRICULTURAL PROJECT		D BASIC NEEDS FULFILLMENT		E COMMUNITY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN	
Cash-Flow Facilitation I	Reduced Alcoholism II	Management Assistance III	Heritage Preservation IV	Leadership Motivation V	Farm-Site Preparation VI	Health Care Expansion VII	Low-Cost Energy VIII	Adequate Equipment IX	Resource Use X
Resident I.D. System	Family Support Programs	Day Care Center	Mothers' Club Program	Long Range Structured Programs	Farm Site Ownership	Tundra Sewage Disposal	Wood Fuel Project	Heavy Equipment Purchase	Total Land-Use Plan
			Local History Documentation	Informal Leadership Training	Camp Site Construction	Regional Health Service	Alternate Transportation Modes		
Check-Cashing Feasibility Study	Alcohol Counseling Funded	Business Management Training	Selawik Elders Association	Organization Goal Setting	Reindeer Feasibility Study	Health Information Center	Utility Contract Review	Equipment Operators' Training	Multi-Purpose Community Building
		Expert Marketing Advice	Native Skills Curriculum	Local Organization Coordination	Agriculture Test Plot	Nutrition Education Focus			
Personal Finance Information	Chemical Dependency Information	Expanded Business Experience	Local Heritage Center	Regular Public Meetings	Farm Skills Training	Preventive Care Program	Local Building Materials	Village Maintenance Schedule	Available Facility Inventory
				Total Citizen Participation	Consumer Market Research				
				Local Enforcement Schemes	Farm Acreage Allotment				

strategies and tactics proposed, the implementation came not only to production and marketing, but significant actions were timelined with regard to education and family events. Among these families, the practical visioning process will now be used for annual planning and will be updated quarterly.

IV

Let me now quickly state what I believe we have learned from these applications of the practical visioning method as we continue our efforts for rural revitalization.

From the Virginia application it seems that, in addition to the objective input of baseline data into a broad planning process, there is the need for the subjective input of local citizens in rural areas who have the most acute vested interests in the expressed vision. In this case, although the broader plan was not funded for implementation, initiatives were taken by local groups to implement limited portions of the plan as it applied to specific communities.

From the Selawik, Alaska, experience we demonstrated the value of inclusiveness in the visioning process. Whereas the Eskimo people must find ways to become less dependent upon outside suppliers of food in order to stabilize their economy, it was obvious that, unless chemical dependence were attacked and the Eskimo cultural heritage reclaimed, no amount of economic impetus would be successful. Only the visioning of the local people themselves could identify these inter-related influences.

From the New England sheep farmers we saw evidence that regional problems, such as the rebuilding of the sheep industry, cannot be addressed without some local solutions. Many of the particular issues preventing the placement of services necessary to sustain the industry could not be met until local farmers began, through quality production and creative marketing, to demonstrate that there could be a supply of sheep raised within the region in order to meet the market demand, thereby justifying the existence of support services. The practical visioning method provided a way for farmers to see their effect on the larger industry beyond their individual operations and to plan accordingly.

From the individual farm families in Princeton, Minnesota, we heard the following responses to the visioning method:

"If we had had this method ten years ago we wouldn't be in the shape we're in now."

"Don't wait until the other guy starts something."

"I learned how to project into the future."

"A farm is a business. It requires looking ahead, not just day to day."

"This is the first time my family ever worked together like a team."

From these examples of the application of practical visioning in rural America, we see again the values of local participation, active anticipation rather than passive acceptance of the future, consensus building and teamwork, and people exerting some influence over their own destinies with hope and resolve. Rural Ventures, I am certain, will continue to look for even more effective ways to utilize practical visioning.