

Appreciating the Hidden Values of Paddy Cultivation

Towards a New Policy Framework for Agriculture

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The Context of Paddy Cultivation

Paddy has always been more than just food:

- Center of religious life
- Focus of family and community
- Semi-natural ecosystem

Paddy cultivation is a cultural way of life

Cultural Impacts of Green Revolution Policies

Loss of local control

- Reliance on external Agro-inputs and knowledge
- State take-over of irrigation networks

National and global reference

- Entertainment and fashion
- Professional aspirations

Materialist Ideologies

- Science vs. Spirituality
- Consumerism



Should we be concerned that cultures are changing?

No, cultures always change; it's natural

The aspects that are changing are the most irrational and ignorant beliefs.

They are better off transforming to global cultural standards

Yes, they are changing against their will;

They are losing their traditional knowledge.

The world is losing its cultural diversity.

Cross-roads for Agriculture



Yields stagnating

Environmental pollution and
soil erosion

Population still increasing

More of the same? Or a new
direction?

What direction?

The answer depends on our value system (culture)

How do we view the current situation (Do we need to change anything?)

- Environmental values: Are we doing what we can for the environment?
- Social values: Are the poor getting the benefits they deserve?
- Cultural values: Does agriculture support the values that we feel are important?

There ARE alternatives

Agro-ecological approaches
(Bellagio conference in 1999)

Environmentally-oriented
agriculture (e.g., permaculture)

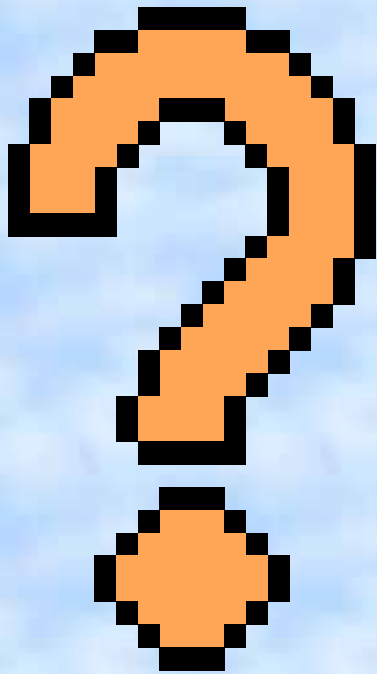
Spiritually-oriented agriculture
(e.g., biodynamic)

Traditional indigenous
practices

Community-based practices
(IPM, PIM, forestry, etc.)



On what basis do we select among alternatives?



Economic strategy?

Technological options?

Cultural preferences?

Lesson from Bhutan



Use “happiness” as the deciding factor in selecting an agricultural approach.

Happiness for whom? The farmer, the family, the community, and the larger society

Four Pillars of Happiness



Economic Development

Cultural Heritage

Environment

Governance

Finding Happiness in Paddy Cultivation

Social structure

Cultural identity

Religion and
spirituality

Aesthetic beauty



Happiness and Policy

Because happiness is important to people, it should also be important to governments

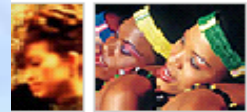
Happiness can be used as a policy goal





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EDITORIAL

Tallying national happiness

In most countries, progress is measured in terms of GNP or GDP -- gross national or domestic product. But one small country has adopted a startlingly different yardstick. In 1972, the king of Bhutan declared that progress in the landlocked Himalayan mini-kingdom would henceforward be gauged in terms of GNH -- gross national happiness.

The king was not joking. Contentment, not capital, became Bhutan's official priority. As indicators of national well-being, profits, losses, surpluses and deficits were folded into just one of four "pillars of gross national happiness" -- and even then with key qualifications. Thus, in his annual report to the National Assembly, the Bhutanese prime minister testifies not just about "equitable and sustainable" socioeconomic development, but also about "preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance."

Bhutan might seem an odd place for a revolutionary social philosophy to bubble up. About the size of Switzerland, it boasts fewer than a million people. Already isolated by geography, it has locked in its image as an enigmatic Shangri-La by tightly controlling access. Fewer than 6,000 tourists visited the hard-to-get-to nirvana last year, most of them via Druk Air, one of the world's smallest national carriers (according to Bhutan's official Web site, it boasts "a fleet of two BAe-146 aircraft.") It's the kind of place that celebrates "Wood Male Monkey Year." The temptation is strong to see GNH as just another charming expression of Bhutanese eccentricity.

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Policy Considerations:

What Do We Need to Know to Formulate Policies?

What IS happiness (in a particular context)?

- This identification is necessarily ***subjective (emic)***
- ***We need to ask the subjects (and verify empirically)***

What aspects of paddy cultivation provide happiness?

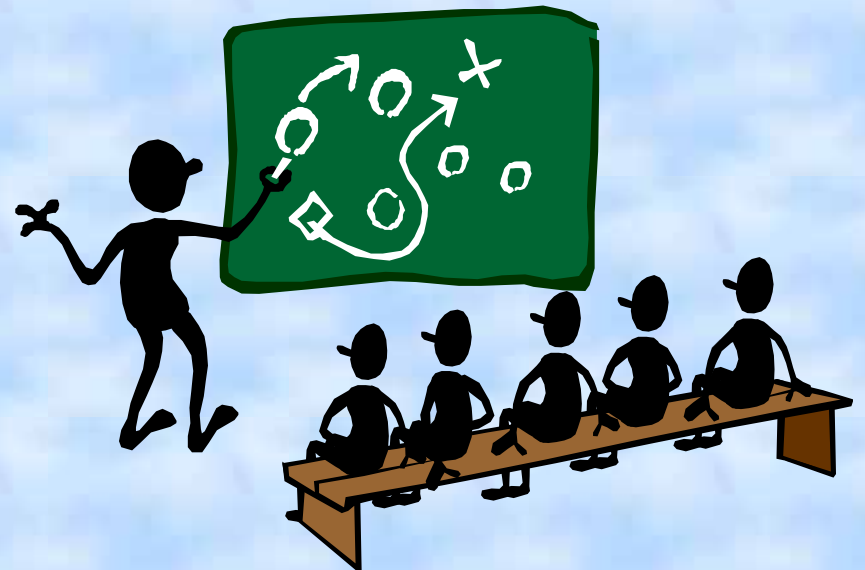
How is the local concept of happiness changing, and why?

How to Learn about Happiness (Values)

Participatory

Respectful (avoid “semiotic hegemony”)

Humble (realize that you don't understand it)



Participatory Methodologies for Studying Livelihood Happiness

Facilitate subjective assessments

- Learn from PRA experience
- COMPAS Program on “cosmovision”

Visioning as a tool for identifying cultural values

- World Water Vision process
- Scenario-building in forestry (CIFOR)
- Agricultural visioning at community level

Visioning a Happy Future



The vision paints a picture of a desirable future, and can be used as a basis for planning and policy formulation.

The vision can empower the community to chart their own course – culturally and economically – to help realize their vision.