



# dailydigest PGIS'05

Nairobi, 8 September 2005

## Introduction

Nobody drunk one-too-many from the welcome cocktail of the previous evening, otherwise everyone could not have looked so fresh, energetic and ready to begin a day of serious work. It was evident that participants had interacted well with one another from the extended conversations, chats and laughter, shared with their neighbours as they settled at their desks. It was set to be yet another lively day at the conference.

## Highlights of the day

### How do we actually practice PGIS?

The thrust of the day's proceedings related to deeper questions of PGIS practice. Participants focused on the methodological issues in the execution of PGIS practice.

### Intangible cultural heritage



The morning's session kicked off with participants going through the plenary

session on intangible cultural heritage. Reiko Yoshida took the participants through a presentation on the current draft Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage, where she explained that UNESCO wants to involve community members as genuine partners in the preservation of their heritage.

"The intangible cultural heritage convention wholeheartedly invites the participation and inclusion of community members."

Reiko Yoshida, UNESCO

However during the workshop session, Sheri Longboat from Canada expressed a need for caution because,

*"Once we begin to map and document our indigenous knowledge, we begin to lose control over it – and it might be exploited and used against us."*

While Ogeli Ole Makui from the Kenyan Maasai community remarked:

*"If you train the communities to own the knowledge they can regenerate and modify information, and know why some information may be hidden, and in this way they can be empowered."*



### Scale and accuracy

From ITC, Mike McCall's presentation, *Precision for whom?* tackled the issue of accuracy and precision in GIS practice. He asserted that the PGIS content produced was not always as precise as we might

be led to believe.

"What are the costs of misrepresenting the true ambiguity of the knowledge that we are dealing with? As a professional group we have almost a fetish for precision."

Mike McCall, ITC

In the afternoon, participants broke into working groups, and a lively debate continued on the topic. Sammy Musyoki asked,

*"What do we need accuracy for? If we need accuracy to lobby, negotiate, and convince policy makers, without neglecting the need to empower communities, then we should use accuracy strategically."*

However, there remained a lingering question amongst the participants about the importance of accuracy in PGIS mapping – and the debate continues...

## Representing local spatial knowledge



In his presentation, Giacomo Rambaldi noted the importance of emphasizing the process – and not just the product – in order to add value to local spatial knowledge. He also stressed that the focus should be on practice which is

demand-driven and that is specifically intended to address community problems.

“PGIS is intended as a practice that is embedded into long lasting processes of innovation and change. It should be flexible and adapted to different socio-cultural and biophysical environments, where geo-spatial tools, methods and technologies are integrated – from pebbles to key boards.”

Giacomo Rambaldi, CTA

CTA Director Hansjörg Neun also stressed the importance of spatial knowledge:

*“Remember that information is the only commodity that multiplies as it is shared.”*



And Robert Chambers commented that:

*“Knowledge is not a stock to be mined – it is something like a river that is moving all the time.”*



## Conclusion

Amidst the laughter and a lively exchange of ideas, there was also much serious discussion and debate. It is significant that at the end of a hectic second day, participants were still bubbling with energy and ready to take on day three with gusto.

This was the day that saw even shy participants find their footing and make remarkable contributions from the floor.

## Editorial Team:

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## mapping for change

