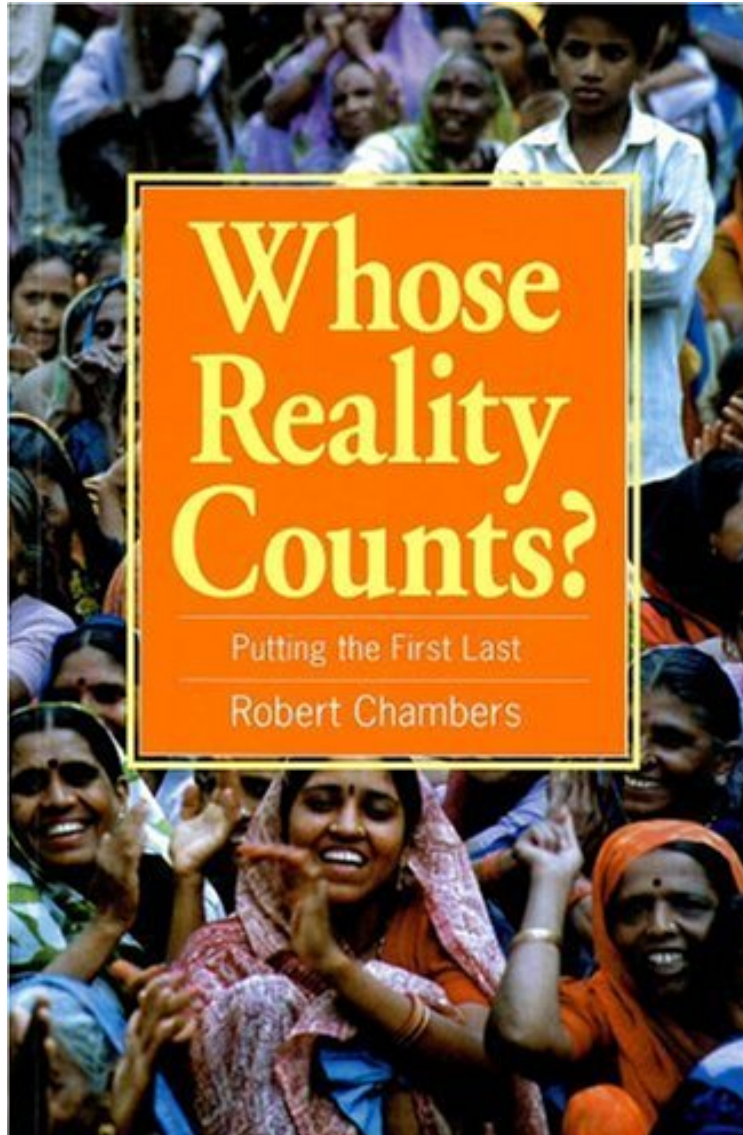


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Whose Reality Counts?: Putting the First Last

Robert Chambers

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In this sequel to "Rural Development: Putting the last first" Robert Chambers argues that central issues in development have been overlooked, and that many past errors have flowed from domination by those with power. Development professionals now need new approaches and methods for interacting, learning and knowing. Through analyzing experience - of past mistakes and myths, and of the continuing methodological revolution of PRA (participatory rural appraisal) - the author points towards solutions. In many countries, urban and rural people alike have shown an astonishing ability to express and analyze their local, complex and diverse realities which are often at odds with the top-down realities imposed by professionals. The author argues that personal, professional and institutional change is essential if the realities of the poor are to receive greater recognition. Self-critical awareness and changes in concepts, values, methods and behaviour must be developed to explore the new high ground of participation and empowerment. "Whose Reality Counts?" presents a radical challenge to all concerned with development, whether practitioners, researchers or policy-makers, in all organizations and disciplines, and at all levels from fieldworkers to the heads of agencies. With its thrust of putting the first last it presents a new, exciting and above all practical agenda for future development which cannot be ignored.

About the Author Robert Chambers is Research Associate, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex and the author of Participatory Workshops (2002) and Ideas for Development (2005).