

## Participatory Action Research

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### **Introduction**

PAR is an approach that strives to take seriously the ethics and politics of the processes and outcomes of doing research. As implied in its name, PAR is oriented towards collaboration, at various moments in the research cycle, and holds social and environmental change as a key objective, combining individual agency and structural transformation. PAR draws from diverse historical and geographical experiences, including North American action research and Brazilian radical pedagogy, to promote a research approach that collaborates with participants to identify and attempt to address particular, situated issue(s). It thus brings to the fore questions of unequal power relations between those involved in research (e.g. participants, researchers, communities) in order to directly and collaboratively tackle them, in turn providing a more ethically sensitive and politically relevant approach. PAR draws on both established methods (e.g. interviews) and sometimes develops novel methods (e.g. participatory video and diagramming). PAR has also provided fruitful ground for dialogue with radical (e.g. postcolonial) epistemologies concerned with addressing the power hierarchies implicit in research practices and in promoting social and environmental justice. Nevertheless, there exist numerous criticisms and warnings over the limits to the collaborative and transformational claims of PAR and the discourse of “participation” has proven susceptible to rapid co-optation from above (e.g. neoliberal development discourse). This has led some to focus exclusively on social change and “militant” research while others drop claims of action and remain focused on methods of participation. I am grateful to Kye Askins, Mike Kesby and Sara

Kindon for their comments on a draft version, as well as two anonymous reviewers, many of which have been incorporated into the final text. The entry would not exist without the tireless work of PAR activists and scholars to which its sole authorship does no justice.

### **General Overviews**

There is a large volume of book-length engagements with PAR. Kindon et al 2007 provide one of the most comprehensive overviews of all aspects (e.g. epistemological, methodological, ethical) of PAR and is the go-to reference in human geography. Other key books include Whyte 1991, on PAR in industry and agriculture; Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991, grounding PAR in the experiences of the global south; McTaggart 1997, providing international perspectives; Reason and Bradbury-Huang 2007, a large international handbook on action research; and McIntyre 2008, a detailed reflection of two PAR projects. More recent overviews include Chevalier and Buckles 2013 and Kemmis et al 2014. The ever-expanding body of literature on PAR is testimony to its immense geographical, practical and epistemological scope. Despite criticisms, there is little sign of scholarly engagement slowing with Kindon et al working on a sister volume (provisionally titled "Critically Engaging Participatory Action Research: Praxis, Paradox, Potential") and a new Sage Handbook of Participatory Research being developed by the Institute of Development Studies (UK). Kindon et al 2009 provides a comprehensive if dated overview of PAR from a geographical perspective.

Chevalier, J.M and Buckles, D.J., 2013. *Participatory Action Research: Theory and Methods for Engaged Inquiry*. London: Routledge.

Good overview based on the authors' extensive experience with PAR practitioners and theorists across and the world. Written in a modular format with the aim of being directly applied to learning at schools, universities and research institutions.

Fals-Borda, O. and Rahman, M. (Eds.), 1991. *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action-Research*, The Apex Press, New York

Provides several reflections from some of PAR's key practitioners and theorists. Particular emphasis on grounding PAR in the experiences and practices of the global south,

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R. and Nixon, R., 2014. *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research*. London: Springer

Authors reflect on their experiences and seek to promote new ways of understanding participation, action and research. Participation, for example, is (re)thought via the work of Habermas and practice through the influential work of Schatzki.

Kindon, S., Pain, R. and Kesby, M., 2007. *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting people, participation and place*. London: Routledge.

Influential text by human geographers that consists of 26 short and collaboratively written chapters on varying aspects of PAR in thought and practice. Aims to represent the cyclical nature of PAR by moving across reflection-action-reflection while grounding discussion in a range of contexts from across the world.

Kindon, S., Pain, R. and Kesby, M., 2009. 'Participatory Action Research', in in Kitchin, R. and Thrift, N. (eds), 2009. *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography*, Volume 8. Oxford: Elsevier, 90-95.

Overview of PAR including historical origins, core debates and critiques, methodological questions and ethical dilemmas.

McIntyre, A., 2008. *Participatory Action Research*. London: SAGE.

Provides a thoughtful reflection of PAR from two research projects: understanding and transforming problems of urban youth at a North American inner-city public school and a conscious-raising PAR project with women from a community in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

McTaggart, R. (ed.) 1997. *Participatory Action Research: International Contexts and Consequences*. New York: State of New York University Press.

Examines PAR in thought and practice from a range of international perspectives from Europe, Latin American and Asia. Particularly helpful for appreciating how PAR has emerged within historically and geographically specific contexts, this exposing commonalities and differences.

Reason, P. & Bradbury-Huang, H. (eds) 2007. *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, London, Sage.

Large edited volume with extensive set of contributors and discussions. Includes epistemological and practical debates alongside multiple case studies.

Whyte, W. (ed.) 1991 *Participatory Action Research*, Newbury Park: Sage.

Provides several international case studies of PAR with a particular focus on its uptake in industry and in agriculture.

### **Foundational Works and Historical Lineages**

This entry draws primarily on Anglophone literature and, although several works from the global south are included, it is important to stress from the outset that alternative lineages would be provided from different geographical starting points. Participatory and action-oriented approaches to research inevitably draw from multiple historical and geographical traditions. Pinning these down to certain individuals or texts

works against the ethos that PAR represents for many. Nevertheless, key pioneers of the approach are often highlighted and give a sense of where its contemporary usage originates. Lewin 1946 is often treated as a foundational text, in which the North America social psychologist coined the term “action research” based on his (and his colleagues’) attempt to improve the living conditions of “minority groups” by incorporating them in the research process, raising their esteem and working towards social change. Adelman 1993 and Brydon-Miller et al, 2003 provide helpful contemporary reflections on Kurt Lewin and action research. The subsequent work of the Brazilian radical educator Paulo Freire 1970 is also seen as a key milestone due to his explicit focus on social transformation whereby, through their participation in research, communities gain empowerment via the critically reflexive process he termed *conscientização* (conscientization) (see Blackburn 2000 for a helpful summary of Freirean thought). Freire’s *conscientização* highlights the unequal power relations of traditional research methods while also drawing attention to issues of race and colonialism. This research approach spread across much of the global south in the 1970s, in what Kindon et al 2007 term the “first wave” of PAR (Fals-Borda 2001 and Hall 2005 provide accounts of this). This can be seen in the uptake of “participatory research” (PR) in Asia and Africa. Based on his research in Tanzania, Hall 1975 provides one of the first discussions of PR as an explicit critique of the Western social sciences and Tandon 1981 was influential in spreading PR across Asia through the “Participatory Research Network”. This was followed by a second wave in the 1980s that saw an uptake in PAR in development discourse and its subsequent institutionalisation, particularly its influence on what became known as participatory rural appraisal (PRA). At the same time, the work of feminist, postcolonial and other radical scholars became influential in the scholarly uptake of PAR into the 1990s, as discussed by Park et al 1993.

Adelman, K., 1993. ‘Kurt Lewin and the Origins of Action Research’, *Educational Action Research*, 1(1): 7-24.

Helpful discussion of the context of Kurt Lewin’s work and his vision of action research and subsequent influences and evaluations.

Blackburn J. 2000 Understanding Paulo Freire: Reflections on the origins, concepts, and possible pitfalls of his educational approach. *Community Development Journal* 35: 3-15.

Summary of key ideas and practices in Freire’s pedagogical approach.

Brydon-Miller M, Greenwood D and Maguire P. (2003) Why Action Research? *Action Research* 1: 9-28.

Reflections by leading practitioners of action research on some of their intellectual and practical inspirations. Part of the first edition of the new Action Research journal.

Fals-Borda, O, 2001, "Participatory (action) research in social theory: origins and challenges", in *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Enquiry and Practice* Eds Reason, P, Bradbury, H (Sage, London) pp 27–47

Personal reflections from the Colombian pioneer of PAR, charting its uptake in the global south since the 1970s and the challenges faced by participants and institutions engaging with the approach.

Freire P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York, Continuum.

One of the most famous works by renowned Brazilian educator and radical philosopher who spent much of his early life working with peasants in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America, from which he advocated the need for critical education as a means of empowerment and consciousness raising.

Hall, B., 1975 'Participatory research: An approach for change', *Convergence* 8(2): 24-32

Provides one of the first uses of "participatory research" based on research conducted in Tanzania in the 1970s. The article argues that traditional, Western methods from the social sciences are of limited use in an African context and on this basis calls for a participatory research approach. Available by subscription through ProQuest at

\*<https://search.proquest.com/openview/924581c113af58c8db8a46314b53bb7b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2030445>\*

Hall, B , 2005, "In from the cold? Reflections on participatory research from 1970–2005" *Convergence* 38(1) 5–24.

Explores the uptake of participatory research since the 1970s and subsequent development of international research networks, particularly rooted in Africa and elsewhere in the global south.

Lewin, K. 1946. Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues* 1 2, 34 36.

Classic and pioneering text on action research, often considered as layering the foundation for contemporary PAR.

Park, P. and Brydon-Miller, M., Hall, B. and Jackson, t. (Eds.), *Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada*, Bergin and Garvey, Westport, CT (1993).

Explores some historical trajectories of participatory research from the perspective of North American practitioners and theorists. Particular focus on grassroots perspectives, including social movements and First Nations.

Tandon, R., 1981. 'Participatory research in the empowerment of people R Tandon' *Convergence*, 14(3): 20-29.

A key proponent of participatory research as an alternative research approach that explicitly critiques the “top-down” and “extractive” methods of Western social sciences. Based in India, Tandon was also the regional coordinator of the “Participatory Research Network” which he, along with others, used to advocate for an approach to participatory research based on experiences of the global south.

### **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Development (PD)**

During the 1980s participatory rural appraisal (PRA) became one of the fastest growing and most internationally recognised forms of participatory research. PRA grew in part out of rapid rural appraisal (RRA), which had been innovating with “quick” interdisciplinary team approaches to grounded knowledge. PRA sought to incorporate a collaborative element that recognised the agency and expertise within research communities. PRA was quickly popularised as an effective approach to international development in rural areas of the global south, with Robert Chambers 1994 and 1997 one of the most influential proponents of the approach. PRA spawned a large literature by scholars and policy makers of international development. Cornwall and Guijt 2004 provide a personal overview of shifting understandings and relations to PRA and Moser and McIlwaine 1999 demonstrate the potential for extending the approach to participatory urban appraisal (PUA). Although PRA led to much methodological innovation it often became formulaic and lacked deeper theorisation. Mohan 2007 charts a broader epistemological shift to participatory development (PD) over recent decades. Brock and McGee 2002 provide a book-length engagement on the widespread application of participatory approaches to poverty reduction in the global south. Gaventa 2004 notes how PD has involved a strong push to bringing participatory approaches into practices and ideas of governance of the global south, and thus parallels the rise of participatory democracy.

Brock, K. and McGee, R., (eds), 2002. *Knowing Poverty: Critical Reflections on Participatory Research and Policy*, London: Earthscan

Edited collection with contributions from leading figures of participatory development. Focused on both practical and theoretical challenges of tackling participatory approaches to poverty reduction.

Chambers, R. (1994) ‘The origins and practice of participatory rural appraisal’, *World Development*, 22(7): 953–69.

Pioneer of PRA examines the historical originals of the approach and outlines different elements to its use in practice.

Chambers R. (1997) *Whose reality counts? Putting the last first*, London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

A review of PRA’s use in practice for two decades by one of its leading proponents. Highlights particular challenges and issues and proposes solutions based on the author’s first-hand experience.

Cornwall, A. (2003) Whose voices? Whose choices? Reflections on gender and participatory development. *World Development* 31:8, 1325 – 1342

Critical overview of the uptake of PD that highlights the gender gap in participation and points to broader challenge of incorporating marginalised voices, suggesting ways forward.

Cornwall A and Guijt I. (2004) Shifting perceptions, changing practices in PRA: from infinite innovation to the quest for quality. *PLA Notes* 50: 160-167

Personal reflections by leading practitioners on their shifting relations to PRA. Summarises some of the advantages and challenges including the issue of “scaling-up” PRA.

Gaventa J. (2004) Participatory development or participatory democracy? Linking participatory approaches to policy and governance. *PLA Notes* 50: 150-159.

Examines how the rise in participatory development has increasingly emphasised issues of governance thus giving rise to a parallel shift towards participatory democracy.

Mohan, G. (2007) Participatory development: from epistemological reversals to active citizenship, *Geography Compass* 1, 779 – 796.

Critical overview of the rise of epistemologies of participatory development and the importance of a spatialised research agenda that examines this shift in practice.

Moser, C, and McIlwaine, C, 1999, “Participatory urban appraisal and its application for research on violence” *Environment and Urbanization* 11 203–226.

Demonstrates the potential of participatory urban appraisal (PUA) for addressing issues around violence. Discusses several PUA techniques and draws on fieldwork in Colombia.

### **Participatory Geographies**

Participatory approaches have seen a rapid uptake by geographers since the 1980s, in turn leading to attempts to spatialise PAR. By the mid 2000s participatory approaches were entering the mainstream of human geography and Pain, 2004 provided an early literature review. Participatory geographies were discussed at the first conference sessions at the 2004 congress of the International Geographies Union in Glasgow and then in 2005 at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Denver, in part leading to the formation of the Participatory Geographies Research Group (PyGyRg), attached to the Royal Geographical Society in the UK in 2005. In a guest editorial, Pain and Kindon 2007 argued that spatiality and participation are co-constitutive, but suggested that no coherent geographical approach had yet emerged. Klodowsky 2007 argued that attention to sociospatial context is central to any geographical approach to participation. Kesby 2005 and Kesby 2007 has built on feminist and post-structuralist

approaches to theorise PAR as a spatial form of governance. His work highlighted the need to map out how PAR may facilitate empowerment not only for participants in the immediate arenas of research but also beyond them across space/time. There has been a rapid uptake in PAR within geography, which over a decade became the most in vogue mode of “engagement”, as Wills, 2016 charts. This fashion also posed a crisis as some saw PAR becoming increasingly divorced from its radical origins and instead (re)producing knowledge hierarchies. Kindon 2010 reflected on these dilemmas several years since the uptake of participatory geographies and Mrs Kinpaiby 2008 provided an influential intervention on the need for more critical reflexivity on the participatory turn in geography in the context of the neoliberalising university. Nevertheless, PAR remains popular in geography, with Wynne-Jones et al, 2015 editing a recent special edition of a leading geographical journal demonstrating vibrant debates and applications of participation. Askins 2017 provides a more recent summary of PAR as embedded and embodied across place and space. She argues it is still an approach that provides hope for collaboration and solidarity in oppressive times and spaces.

Askins, K. 2017. ‘Participatory Geographies’. Entry for the International Encyclopaedia of Geography, Wiley-Blackwell and AAG publication, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786352.wbieg0698>

One of the most comprehensive and up-to-date attempts to outline the uptake and development of participatory geographies.

Kesby, M., 2005. ‘Rethorizing Empowerment-through-Participation as a Performance in Space: Beyond Tyranny to Transformation’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(4): 2037–65.

Based on his longstanding research in rural Africa the author provides a nuanced argument on the need for a spatial account of the emancipatory power of participation.

Kesby, M., 2007. ‘Spatialising participatory approaches: the contribution of geography to a mature debate’, *Environment and Planning A* 39: 2813-2831.

A bold and influential argument for the spatialisation of participatory approaches. Demonstrates how geographical questions around distance and spaces of participation can provide nuanced accounts of the entangled power relations of emancipation and domination in PAR.

Kindon, R., 2010. ‘Participation’, in Smith, S., Pain, R., Marston, S. and Jones, J.P (eds). *The SAGE Handbook of Social Geographies*. London: SAGE, 517-546.

(Re)assess participation in light of its rapid uptake in social geography, exploring the values of the approach. Suggests ways in which an invigorated participatory approach could allow for a mutual repoliticisation of PAR and social geography.



Klodawsky, F, 2007, "'Choosing' participatory research: partnerships in space-time" *Environment and Planning A* 39 2845–2860.

Participatory research does not happen in a vacuum but takes place through sociospatial relations that are contingent on geographical context. Drawing on empirical work in Canada, the paper argues that critical reflection on such context is important for understanding the limits and potential for participatory approaches.

mrs kinpaisby, 2008. 'Taking stock of participatory geographies: envisioning the communitarity', *Transaction of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33: 292-299.

Innovative article that uses dialogue in order to critically examine the uptake of participatory approaches in geography. Highlights the need for greater work in breaking down boundaries, such as that between academic and activist, in order to challenge key structural constraints.

Pain, R., 2004. 'Social geography: participatory research', *Progress in Human Geography* 28(5): 652-663.

Literature review that explore the benefits of participatory research for social geographers and what their experiences can add to wider debates and critiques on participation.

Pain, R. and Kindon, S., 2007. 'Participatory Geographies', *Environment and Planning A* 39: 2807-2812.

Introduction to edited collection in leading geographical journal. Represents the growth of interest in participatory approaches in geography and by geographers.

Wills, J. 2014. Engaging. In: Lee, R. et al. (eds) *The sage handbook of human geography*. London: Sage, pp. 367–384.

A generous account of the ways in which practices of engagement have shaped and been shaped by developments in human geography. Provides a useful framework from which to understand the uptake of participatory geographical approaches.

Wynne-Jones, S., North, P. and Routledge, P. (2015), *Practising participatory geographies: potentials, problems and politics*. *Area*, 47: 218–221

Introduction to special issue of leading geographical journal that provides up-to-date overview on participatory geographies. Highlights tensions over the rapid uptake of participation, particularly due to demands of the (neoliberal) university that often work against the ethical and political motivations for PAR and related approaches.

## **Participatory Methods**

A central focus of PAR approaches has been methodological, to the extent that participation has at times been confused for a method. Although there are no off-the-shelf models for applying PAR, there has been

much discussion on the potentials (and limitations) for different methods to be deployed within a participatory approach. Kesby et al 2013 provide a helpful guide for research students using participatory approaches. Kindon et al 2007 is a good first stop as its chapters discuss several specific participatory methods, each of which have spawned their own literatures. For example, White 2003 provides a book-length engagement with participatory video, with chapters examining this in a range of developmental contexts, and Lunch and Lunch 2006 provide a user handbook. Participatory video has also received numerous critiques, as explored in a special section of the journal *Area* edited by Milne, 2016, that highlighted the Western assumptions around processes of “empowerment” that often mask neo-colonial relations of domination. There is a rich literature on the potentials for arts-based participatory methods, including work by Diprose, 2015, as well as participatory diagramming, on which Kesby et al, 2013 provide a good introduction. Geographers such as Allen et al, 2015 have identified much scope for pioneering the use of participatory mapping and Elwood, 2006 has been an important proponent of participatory GIS. There has been much innovation with new methods such as photovoice, which Wang 1999 identified as a specific application of photographic techniques, geared towards identifying, discussing and then seeking policy solution on specific issues. Finally, there is a literature on the use of participatory methods in the context of research with specific participants. For example Cammarota and Fine, 2008 explore PAR approaches with youth as does Kitchen, 2001 with disabled people.

Allen, A., Lambert, R., Apsan Frediani, A. and Ome, T. 2015, Can participatory mapping activate spatial and political practices? Mapping popular resistance and dwelling practices in Bogotá eastern hills. *Area*, 47: 261–271

Drawing on research in Colombia this paper exemplifies the potential of participatory mapping to produce knowledge and counter dominant geographical narratives that often trap marginalised communities.

Cammarota, J. and Fine, M. (eds), 2008. *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion*. London: Routledge

Edited collection on the application of PAR with youth participants. Particular focus on pedagogy and the emancipatory potential of PAR.

Diprose, G. 2015, Negotiating contradiction: work, redundancy and participatory art. *Area*, 47: 246–253

Reflection on using participatory art in a project in New Zealand. Highlights the potential for generating new subjectivities and negotiating contradictions faced in the everyday lives of research participants.

Elwood, S., 2006. ‘Critical Issues in Participatory GIS: Deconstructions, Reconstructions, and New Research Directions’, *Transactions in GIS* 10(5): 693-708.

Review of participatory GIS debates and literatures by a leading scholar in the field at a time of rapid uptake of the method.

Kesby, M., Kindon, S. and Pain, R., 2013. 'Participatory' approaches and diagramming techniques', in Flowerdew, R. and Martin, D. (eds) *Methods in Human Geography: A guide for students doing a research project*. London: Routledge.

Good overview of participatory methods for a human geography textbook. Explores modes of participation at different stages in the research process (arguing that PAR does not necessarily involve participation at *every* stage), includes specific discussion of participatory diagramming as well as using participatory approaches in the global south, along with several case studies.

Kitchen, 2001 Using participatory action research approaches in geographical studies of disability: some reflections *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 21 (4): 61-69

Draws on research conducted in Ireland to reflect on the challenges of using PAR with disabled people, highlighting that many participants were unwilling or unable to engage.

Lunch, N. and Lunch, C. 2006 \*Insights into Participatory Video: A Handbook for the Field[<https://insightshare.org/resources/insights-into-participatory-video-a-handbook-for-the-field/>]\*

An example of one of many practical guides for implementing participatory methods, in this case participatory video. Exemplifies an important literature on PAR not targeted primarily at academic audiences.

Milne, E-J., 2016. 'Special Section: Critiquing participatory video: experiences from around the world. Guest edited by E J Milne', *Area* 48(4): 401-451.

Special section of leading geography journal that examines various critiques of participatory video, building on a previous handbook of participatory video. Critiques include: assumption of empowerment and social change that actually mask hidden power relations; the reproduction of neoliberal-colonial practice; the technical and high-cost nature of videoing; and ethical questions over when participation in videos ends (e.g. during screenings).

Wang, C. 1999 'Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health', *Journal of Women's Health*, 8(2): 185-92.

The author attempts to innovate with a new, explicitly participatory method, termed Photovoice, that incorporates photographic techniques as a means of allowing participants to identify, analyse and consider policy outcomes in response to particular issues.

White, S., (ed.) 2003. *Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower*, London: Sage

A comprehensive edited collection that explores different elements of participatory video. Draws on international case studies and identifies key advantages of the method along with some limitations.

### **Community-Based Participatory Research**

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) aims to place an identified community as the central partner and subject of investigation. Kindon 2016 notes that CBPR is inspired by and deeply interconnected with PAR. The Durham Community Research Team 2012 provide a useful overview and literature review of CBPR, noting that the literature is predominantly academic and challenging its implicit ethical superiority. Banks and Armstrong et al 2013 consider in detail the ethical challenges that arise depending on the level of participation of and within a given community. Askins and Pain 2011 discuss the importance of material “contact zones” when developing participation with communities. Ledwith and Springett 2010 provide a book-length engagement with participatory approaches to community-based research and provide a number of helpful suggestions for others embarking on this as does Hacker 2013. CBPR has been employed in diverse contexts yet has been particularly popular in urban cases involving neighbourhood participation and overlaps with discussions on participation in planning. For example, Reardon et al 1993 discuss the use of PAR in the context of urban planning with a neighbourhood in East St Louis. In this context there have been critiques of how participation does not equate to meaningful community planning, as Lahiri-Dutt 2004 argues via her research in Sydney. Moreover, the unequal levels of participation within a community have been noted, as Guijt and Shah, 1998 argue from a gendered perspective.

Askins, K. & Pain, R. 2011 ‘Contact zones: participation, materiality and the messiness of interaction’. *Environment & Planning D: Society & Space*, 29(5): 803-821.

A spatial reading of use of PAR in an art project that emphasises the importance of material spaces or “contact zones” through which participation unfolds with communities.

Banks, S. and Armstrong, A., et al, 2013. ‘Everyday ethics in community-based participatory research’, *Contemporary Social Science* 8(3): 263-277.

Reflection on ethics in CBPR in the context of its recent boom in academic work. Highlights the need for greater attention to the power relations that appear due to differing levels of participation.

Durham community research team, 2012. ‘Community-based Participatory Research: Ethical Challenges’ [<https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/connected-communities/community-based-participatory-research-ethical-challenges/>]

Good scoping review of work on CBPR. Provides case studies of ethical challenges, advice for future research and a list of readings and websites.

Guijt, I. and Shah, M.K. (eds) 1998 *The Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development*. Intermediate Technology Publications: London

Provides a view of community in the context of participatory development and highlights the importance of gendered power relations for defining levels of participation.

Hacker, K.A., 2013. *Community-Based Participatory Research*. London: SAGE.

Textbook on CBPR that introduces and defines the concept before exploring methods and suggesting how it is applied. Particularly valuable for students and researchers considering using this approach.

Kindon, S., 2016. 'Empowering Approaches: Participatory Action Research', in Hay, I. (Eds) *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 17.

Up-to-date chapter on PAR in a methods text books that includes discussion on the overlaps between PAR and CBPR.

Ledwith, M./ and Springett, J., 2010. *Participatory practice: Community-based action for transformative change*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Provides an overview of the intersection between participatory and community-based research. Written in an engaging way for a broad audience, contains a wealth of reflections and advice.

Lahiri-Dutt, K. 2004. 'I plan, you participate: A southern view of community participation in urban Australia'. *Community Development Journal*, 39 (1): 13-27.

Based on experiences of urban planning in Sydney the author provides a critique of governments' use of community participation and highlights the many limitations and challenges of fostering meaningful engagement with communities.

Reardon, K., J. Welsh, B. Kreiswirth, J. Forester., 1993. 'Participatory action research from the inside: community development practice in East St. Louis' *The American Sociologist*, 24 (Spring) (1993), pp. 69-91

Influential work on using PAR in the context of urban community development. Explores opportunities and challenges for university in engaging and working with communities.

### **Critiques of PAR**

The exponential growth of PAR around the world during the 1990s inevitably led to critical reflection, in some cases damning critique. In an early example, Greenwood 2002 lamented the often implicit moral superiority of action researchers and their lack of high scholarly standards thus questioning the sudden popularity of PAR within academia. Much critique was targeted towards PAR's uptake in development practice in the form of PRA and participatory development (PD). The milestone publication here was

Cook and Kothari's 2002 edited collection that makes a case for participation as the "new tyranny". Their focus was specifically on the experiences of PD and the "ritualistic" use of participation by international development actors. This led to a flurry of publications debating the tyrannical nature of PD. For example, Parfitt 2004 highlighted the inevitably ambiguous nature of participation (as means and/or end), Williams 2004 argued for (re)politicising participation and Kapoor 2005 provided a postcolonial deconstruction of PD as resting on a form of desire of the Other. Yet it soon became clear that participation was here to stay with Hickey and Mohan's 2004 book outlining new and transformative approaches to PD that have taken on board the critique of tyranny, although Gaynor, 2014 notes that it remains to be seen whether this has impacted development practice. Korf 2010 provided a geographically-sensitive critique of the use of PRA which argued that PRA processes tended to separate themselves as "exceptional" spaces outside those of the political institutions of development reducing real political action. Janes 2016 argues that, despite claims to the contrary, PAR relies on epistemic privilege and uneven power relations that work against its claims to act in a democratising and decolonising way. Feminist researchers have provided one of the most productive encounters with PAR through their ongoing critical engagements and Brydon-Miller et al, 2004 highlight the limits to participation without abandoning it.

Brydon-Miller, M., Maguire, P. and McIntyre, A. (eds), 2004. *Travelling Companions: Feminism, Teaching and Action Research*, Westport: Praeger.

Edited collection that opens a critical dialogue between feminist and PAR approaches. Represents a key feminist critique of androcentricism in PAR and broader reflections on power and privilege in the research process. Ten chapters explore possible means of developing feminist approaches to PAR.

Cooke B and Kothari U. 2002. *Participation: The new tyranny?* London: Zed Books.

Key publication that lays out the case for participation as a damaging rhetoric in international development. Eleven chapters lay out numerous challenges to practitioners and theorists of participatory development that provoked much critical reflection in the years to come.

Gaynor N. 2014 'The tyranny of participation revisited: international support to local governance in Burundi'. *Community Development Journal* 49: 295-310.

Reflection on the tyranny debate several years on. Draws on research in Burundi to argue that academic responses to the debate have yet to make their way into PD practice.

Greenwood, D. 2002 'Action Research: Unfulfilled promises and unmet challenges', *Concepts and Transformation*, 7(2): 117-39.

Sustained critique of the presumed benefits of action research. Draws attention to the lack of scholarly standards sometimes applied to action research approaches that, in turn, undermines their capacity to realise social change.

Hickey S and Mohan G. 2004 *Participation: from tyranny to transformation? Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development* London: Zed Books.

A defence of participation against those who dismiss it in light of discursive critiques. Argues for the ongoing political and ethical relevance of participation for development in practice.

Janes, J.E., 2016. 'Democratic encounters? Epistemic privilege, power, and community-based participatory action research', *Action Research* 14(1): 72-87.

A postcolonial critique of community-based PAR that highlights several challenges including: epistemic privilege; claims to authenticity; and the dislocation of knowledge from its sociospatial context.

Kapoor, I. 2005. Participatory development, complicity and desire. *Third World Quarterly* 26(8), 1203-1220.

Brings together postcolonial and psychoanalytical approaches to provide a novel analysis of participation as hinging upon a desire for the Other. PD is thus prone to exclusionary power relations although confronting this is not impossible.

Korf, B., 2010. 'The Geography of Participation', *Third World Quarterly* 31(5): 709-720.

Explores critiques of PD and argues that PRA tends to unfold in spaces that are "dislocated" from political institutions, thus limiting its capacity for social transformation. An explicitly geographical critical reading of participation that engages with a range of theoretical debates.

Parfitt, T, 2004, "The ambiguity of participation: a qualified defence of participatory development" *Third World Quarterly* 25 537-556

A sympathetic revisiting of participation in light of Cooke and Kothari's critique. Draws attention to the ambiguities of participation and in so doing suggests potential for emphasising its tendencies towards emancipation.

Williams, G, 2004, "Evaluating participatory development: tyranny, power and (re)politicisation" *Third World Quarterly* 25 557-578

Argues that participatory approaches are not pre-determined and contain ongoing potential for (re)politicisation and working towards emancipation.

## **Ethics and PAR**

The growth in uptake of PAR has also been accompanied by ongoing ethical reflections over its use. On the one hand, ethical considerations have prompted greater scrutiny over the uneven power relations

involved in PAR approaches. Feminist scholars have led the way here, as Askins 2018 demonstrates, by highlighting the multiple subjectivities involved in PAR. Mohan, 1999 and Cahill, 2007 emphasise the need to take seriously the politics embodied and personal relationships that the approach generates. In this context ethical considerations of how entanglements of domination/emancipation play out through the relations generated in PAR are crucial. In this light Kesby et al 2007 and Mason 2015 draw on poststructuralist approaches to theorise PAR as a form of governance as a means of mapping out and making visible the power relations involved in particular projects. On the other hand, and building on this, there have been attempts to develop a more explicitly participatory ethical practice and set of guidelines. Manzo and Brightbill 2007 explore existing principles for ethical research and highlight numerous deficiencies from a participatory perspective. Cahill et al 2007 highlight the different domains that govern the possibilities for a participatory ethics, including institutions (e.g. university ethical boards), research practices (e.g. agreements with community) and politics (structural or hegemonic conditions). Working across these domains, Pain et al, 2011 have reflected on question of “impact” and Routledge, 2002 on the ethics of collaboration in research practice. There are many examples of attempts to develop ethical “protocols” for participatory research, such as that of \*\*Just Space\*\*.

Askins, K. 2018. ‘Feminist geographies and participatory action research: co-producing narratives with people and place’, *Gender, Place and Culture*

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1503159>

Overview of the uptake and response to PAR in the leading feminist journal of geography. Suggests how an ethics of PAR should be informed by the emotional and embodied geographies that arise in the course of collaboration.

Cahill, C. 2007. The personal is political: Developing new subjectivities in a participatory action research process. *Gender, Place, and Culture* 14(3), 267-292.

A poststructuralist reading of PAR that identifies the generation of new subjectivities as a key outcomes of PAR, thus highlighting the ethics and politics of personal transformation in the course of research.

Cahill, C., Sultana, F. and Pain, R., 2007. ‘Participatory Ethics: Politics, Practices, Institutions’, *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographers*, 6(3): 304-318.

An introduction to a special edition on participatory ethics. Provides a helpful overview of different ethical domains and the challenges of working with a participatory approach in each one.

\*Just Space[<https://justspace.org.uk/history/research-protocol/> ]\*



A useful example of a protocol development by a community organisation in London in the context of growing collaborations between scholars and activists and concerns over the potentially extractivist nature of research.

Kesby, M., Kindon, S. and Pain, R., 2007. 'Participation as a form of power: retheorising empowerment and spatialising Participatory Action Research' in Kindon, S., Pain, R. and Kesby, M., 2007. *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting people, participation and place*. London: Routledge, 19-25.

Draws on spatial and poststructuralist readings of PAR to retheorise it as a form of governance, entangled across power relations. PAR as governance is neither inherently emancipatory nor oppressive and thus requires specific attention from researchers.

Manzo, L.C. and Brightbill, N., 2007. 'Toward a participatory ethics' in Kindon, S., Pain, R. and Kesby, M., 2007. *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting people, participation and place*. London: Routledge, 33-40.

A call for an explicitly participatory ethics in research. Explores this across multiple dimensions: representation, accountability, social responsiveness, agency and reflexivity.

Mason, K. 2015. 'Participatory Action Research: Coproduction, Governance and Care, *Geography Compass* 9(9): 497-507

Reviews debates on PAR from the perspective of human geography. Highlights poststructural accounts of entanglements of power, advocates for theorising PAR as governance and emphasises the richness of spatial approaches.

Mohan, G, 1999, "Not so distant, not so strange: the personal and the political in participatory research" *Ethics, Place and Environment* 2(1) 41-54

Important discussion of the ethical dilemmas of doing PAR in the global south. The author argues that rather than diminishing power hierarches, participatory approaches often strengthen them and calls for greater critical reflection within the academy.

Pain, R., Kesby, M. & Askins, K. 2011. 'Geographies of impact: power, participation and potential.' *Area* 43(2): 183-188.

Critical engagement with the rise of "impact" discourse within human geography and UK academia from the perspective of leading participatory geographers. Suggests that participatory approaches to co-production have much to offer narrow, institutional understandings of impact.

Routledge, P. 2002. 'Travelling East as Walter Kurtz: identity, performance, and collaboration in Goa, India'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 20,477-498.

Reflects on the ethics and politics of collaboration in the course of fieldwork. Draws on the author's relations with grassroots organisations in Goa, India.

### **Activist and Militant Research**

There is a rich tradition within human geography of fusing activism with research, at times eschewing or deliberately avoiding the idea of participation altogether. Reflections in the 1990s centred around the positionality of academics at a time of rapid neoliberal transformation. Blomley 1994 lamented the lack of discussion over how to combine activism with scholarly work despite acknowledging that he and other academics were politically active. Routledge 1996 provided an influential theorisation of the "thirdspace" between academia and activism from which he saw much potential for critical encounters. Fuller and Kitchen's 2004 edited collection was a milestone publication in the growth of what some were terming scholar-activism, providing a range of critical reflections. Ward 2007 helpfully traced the history of activist geographies as emerging in parallel yet distinct to participatory geographies, emphasising the importance of social change ahead of methodological concerns of collaboration. Others place activist research within a longer tradition of being what Mitchell 2008 terms a "public scholar". The work of Richa Nagar, well reflected in her collaborative book with Sangtin Writers, Sangtin Writers Collective and Nagar 2006, outlines a feminist methodology for activist research that valorises practices of storytelling, memory and experience. The Autonomous Geographies Collective 2010 discussed some reservations with PAR's lack of progressive edge and debated whether solidarity action research (SAR) may provide a more radical alternative. Recent years have seen a flurry of interest in militant research. Russell provides a good introduction to this approach that is directly oriented to the task of political transformation through the already existing embeddedness of a researcher within social struggles. Nevertheless, Halvorsen 2015 raised caution over militant research's tendency to fetishise social movement activism as inherently radical or emancipatory while Taylor 2015 has called for more pragmatic and immediately "useful" forms of everyday scholar-activism in our engagements outside the academy.

Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010. Making Strategic Interventions: The messy but necessary world of scholar activism inside, outside, and against the neo-liberal university. *ACME*, 9, 245 – 275.

Critical and honest reflection on doing research with activists. Explores tensions within a research collective over their understandings of participation and the challenges of seeking political transformation while working within (and against) a neoliberal university,

Blomley, N. 1994 'Activism and the academy', *Society and Space*, 12: 383–85.

Early reflection on the silence of discussion around the relationship between academia and activism. Questions the unique role that academics can play in social movements.

Halvorsen, S., 2015 'Militant research against-and-beyond itself: critical perspectives from the university and Occupy London;', *Area* 47(4): 466-472.

A critical reflection on the uptake of militant research within human geography. Suggests militant research often relies on implicit assumptions over the radical potential of social movements that can work against broader struggles for social change.

Fuller, D. and Kitchen, R., (eds), 2004. *Radical theory/ critical praxis: making a difference beyond the academy*, Praxis (e-press)

Excellent edited collection of reflections on the relationship between academia and activism in diverse international contexts.

Mitchell, K., 2008. 'Introduction: Becoming Political To the memory of Allan Pred', *Antipode* 40(3): 345-350

Introduction to special edition of geography's radical journal on public scholarship. The subsequent papers provide a range of personal reflections on the challenges of engaging scholarship towards social change beyond the academy.

Routledge, P. 1996. 'The Third Space as Critical Engagement' *Antipode* 28:4, 397- 419.

Influential text that theorises the site between research and activism as one of critical engagement, where both nourish yet challenge each other. A novel approach to activist research that draws on feminist and postcolonial ideas.

Russell, B. 2015. 'Beyond activism/academia: militant research and the radical climate and climate justice movement(s)'. *Area*, 47: 222–229

The first of several recent interventions in human geography arguing for a militant approach that negates detached positionalities of researchers or activist.

Sangtin Writers Collective and Nagar R., 2006. *Playing With Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism Through Seven Lives in India*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Good example of a collectively written book that outlines a feminist and activist approach to research that resists what the authors term the challenges of "NGOization". The book provides insights into feminist empowerment through practices such as story-telling, memory and community-based experiences.

Taylor M. 2014. 'Being useful' after the Ivory Tower: combining research and activism with the Brixton Pound. *Area*. 46(3), pp. 305-312

The author draws on her experiences with a local currency group in London in order to theorise a useful and inclusive notion of scholar-activism that moves beyond what she sees as the exclusionary nature of “capital A” activism. Suggests some practical ways that scholars can be immediately useful to their research participants.

Ward, K., 2007. 'Geography and public policy: activist, participatory, and policy geographies', *Progress in Human Geography* 31(5): 695-705.

Overview of debates and historical trajectories of three parallel approaches to creating public policy in human geography. Locates activist and participatory approaches as overlapping yet with distinct historical traditions in the discipline.

### **Textbooks**

Researchers inspired by PAR tend to reject “off the shelf” packages and as such there are few explicit “textbooks”. Nevertheless, there are a number of book-length engagements that provide useful introductions and overviews for students and practitioners interested in particular approaches to PAR, in addition to those cited elsewhere in this entry. Lawson et al (2015) produced a “pocket guide” to PAR that will provide a useful first step to some, although its scope is somewhat limited. Banks and Brydon-Miller (2019) have recently published what may become a classic text dealing with questions of ethics in the context of participatory research that will be a great resource for students. Greenwood and Levin's (1998) introduction to action research is now a little dated but still a great first stop for those interested in where this approach came from and some of the methods for using it. Similarly, Jason et al (2003) provide a good introduction to community based participatory research with a diversity of case studies. A number of texts that are either explicitly critical of PAR or promote overlapping “radical” or anti-oppressive approaches stand out. The People's Knowledge Editorial Collective (2016) is strong on issues around race and the whiteness of PAR as are Brown et al (2005) who provide a broad overview of approaches to “research as resistance”. Shukaitis and Graeber (2007) provided a now classic text on “militant research” that has an excellent engagement with Spanish and Latin American approaches. Finally, Cornwall's (2011) edited collection is an excellent first stop for those interested in debates around participatory development. A much-awaited follow up to Kindon et al's (2007) classic text, still under preparation, will likely provide the new go-to text for geographers.

Banks, S. & Brydon-Miller, M. (2019). *Ethics in participatory research for health and social well-being: Cases and commentaries*. Routledge.

The nearest example of a text-book dealing with ethics and PAR. Eight in-depth chapters provide fascinating discussions of case studies and the various ethical demands raised through participatory research.

Brown, L. and Strega, S. (eds) (2005) *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press/ Women's Press

A useful text for placing PAR within a broader range of "anti-oppressive" research approaches, including indigenous research and storytelling. Will be of particular interest to those coming from more critical perspectives on PAR.

Cornwall, A., Ed. (2011): *The Participation Reader*. Zed, London

An excellent place to start for those interested in participatory research in the context of development. Includes a range of critical reflections that take on board the many heated debates and criticism that have been emerged around participatory development.

Greenwood, D. and Levin, M. (eds) (1998) *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

An excellent overview of action research that includes chapters on both its history and philosophy as well as methods and ethical issues. Recommended to students interested in exploring this approach.

Jason, L. and Keys, C. Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Taylor, R.R. and Davis, M.I. (eds), 2003. *Participatory Community Research: Theories and Methods in Action*

An excellent book-length engagement with CBPR that explores a range of methods, theories and case studies that will be of interest to students and practitioners alike.

Lawson, H.A., Caringi, J., Pyles, L., Jurkowski, J. and Bozlak, C., 2015. *Participatory Action Research (Pocket Guides to Social Work Research Methods)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A self-defined "pocket guide" on PAR that provides a helpful introduction. Particular emphasis is given to methods in the context of youth, welfare and the global south.

People's Knowledge Editorial Collective (2016) *People's Knowledge and Participatory Action Research: Escaping the White-Walled Labyrinth. Reclaiming Citizenship and Diversity Series*. Coventry: Coventry University. Available at: <http://www.peoplesknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Peoples-Knowledge-and-Participatory-Action-Research-Book.pdf#page=125>

Excellent example of a collectively written text that interrogates many of the power relations involved in doing PAR with a particular emphasis on whiteness. Explores paths towards more equal and anti-racist forms of doing PAR.

Shukaitis, S. and Graeber, D. (eds.) 2007. *Constituent Imagination: Militant investigations, collective theorisation*. Oakland: AK Press

One of the best book length explorations of militant research available in English. Engages with a range of traditions from across the world.