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# Participatory Research (The basics; 101) - Presentation at UK Food Systems Research ECR conference

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# Participatory Research

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# Session Plan

- Presentation on participatory research (10 min)
- Small groups; exploring delivery challenges (20 min)
- Whole group; sharing thoughts and insights (10 min)

*Note: the slides and further resources will be shared*





## What is it?

image from: <https://www.educare.it/jj/temi/scuola/scuola-e-dintorni/2893-la-teoria-del-campo-di-lewin-a-scuola>



Kurt Lewin  
1890 - 1947

## Action Research

*“The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management or social engineering.*

*It is a type of **action-research**, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action.*

***Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice.”***

(Lewin, 1946, p.35)





## **What is it?**

### **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**

*"PAR is an innovative approach to economic and social change, which goes beyond usual institutional boundaries in development by **actively involving the people in generating knowledge about their own condition and how it can be changed.**"*

*PAR requires a strong commitment by participating social **scientists to deprofessionalize their expertise and share it with the people, while recognizing that the communities directly involved have the critical voice in determining the direction and goals of change as subjects rather than objects.**"*



Orlando Fals Borda  
1925 - 2008



## What is it?



### Participatory Action Research

(Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991)

**"Nothing about us without us"**

(Charlton, 2004)

### Action Research

(Lewin, 1946)

**Co-production**

(Ostrom, 1978)

Solution-oriented, collaborative approaches to research  
community-based research OR community-based participatory research OR participatory learning OR Knowledge co-production  
OR transdisciplinarity OR citizen science OR citizen social science OR integrated knowledge translation OR transformation research OR post-normal science OR mode-2 science OR transition management OR community-engaged scholarship OR scholar activism OR engaged scholarship  
OR slow scholarship OR community-engaged scholarship OR community-university partnership OR research partnership

#### Terms and methods for citizen participation

Community researcher OR citizen researcher OR peer researcher OR community consultant OR lay researcher OR community action researcher OR community champion OR citizen scientist OR citizen social scientist OR community-led OR community-centred OR citizen-led OR user-led OR user-centred OR participant-led OR participant-centred OR co-research\* OR co-inquiry OR collaborative inquiry OR participatory inquiry OR co-analysis OR collaborative analysis OR participatory analysis OR co-investigation OR collaborative investigation OR co-design\* OR collaborative design OR participatory design OR co-development OR participatory inquiry OR participatory evaluation OR participatory mapping OR participatory modelling OR collaborative modelling OR living lab OR transformation lab OR PhotoVoice OR participatory video OR community voice OR participatory policy OR Participatory Rural Appraisal

**Definition of and application of terms varies within and between studies**

(Hoekstra et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022)



## ***What is it?***

- A research orientation emphasising direct collaboration with those directly affected by the topic
- It considers the needs and goals of both the researcher and the non-academic collaborators
- Approaches or individual studies may emphasise action, methods to facilitate collaboration in research activities, empowerment, social learning, or all of these.

(Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Vaughn and Jacquez, 2020)



What are you trying to achieve?

Who should be involved?

# ***Principles for co-production***

- Co-production is adequately resourced
- **Power is shared** through **equitable partnerships** which include those with relevant experiential knowledge, expertise, and assets
- **Different knowledge bases** and contributions are respected, valued, and blended
- **Relationships** are built and maintained based on **mutual respect**, dignity, **trust**, transparency, humility, and relational ethics
- Diversity is important and supported when agonistic pluralism is practiced
- **Reciprocity** and mutuality are practiced



# ***Who participates and whose priorities are privileged?***



FIGURE 1. Community involvement and power research continuum.

(Morford, 2004, p.2)

Whose labour?  
Who benefits?

What are the power dynamics?  
Who makes which decisions?

# *Practical considerations*

- Participants need **capacity** to participate in terms of:
  - skills and understanding
  - time, information and financial resources
  - Other access requirement; depending on participants
- **Long-term commitment** might be difficult for participants
- Finding a '**common language**' appropriate across stakeholder groups
- Community participants may have **personal or emotional connections**

(Bergold and Thomas, 2012)

(Fischer et al, 2021)

(Estrella et al, 2000)

(Flicker, Roche and Guta, 2010)



## ***Benefits of participatory research***

- **Capacity building** and empowering (O'Neill, 2007)
- **Inclusion** of harder to reach populations (Pettinger et al., 2018)
- Deconstruction of stigmas (Damon et al., 2017)
- Increase **research impact**; identify relevant & timely research priorities (Smith et al., 2022)
- Enrich insight and understanding by harnessing **multiple evidence-bases** (Tengö et al., 2014)
- **Identify multiple pathways** for complex societal transformations; manage trade-offs and competing visions/values. (Norström et al., 2020)

# ***DisBenefits of participatory research....***

- Takes more time, potential for conflict, potential for co-option by loudest voices

(Oliver, Kothari and Mays, 2019)

- Contextual factors which can cause challenges need to be managed, such as pressures in academic settings

(Williams et al., 2020)

- Negative impacts at an individual level, such as feelings of disempowerment

(Hoekstra et al., 2020)

**Plan and manage the process to maximise positive impacts!**



### ***Group exercise - 20 min***

#### **Scenario**

You are carrying out some research on the barriers and enablers to healthy food consumption of young mothers in a neighbourhood in your city which is considered to be deprived. You have one year to do this, and a small budget of £2000 for the participatory activities.

*(Note: you are welcome to discuss a different research topic if you want)*

## ***Group exercise - 20 min***

### **Methods for inspiration**

- (1) Fridge Stories: People give you a guided tour of their fridge, telling stories about different parts of it
- (2) Food Mapping: People mark on a physical map where they source food and what they get; and share stories
- (3) A Shop-along: The researcher accompanies the participant whilst they are shopping.
- (4) Food diaries: Participants are asked to keep a record of the food or drink they consumer. This could be in multiple formats, e.g. photos, written, voice notes, or simply keeping receipts



## ***Group exercise - 20 min***

### **Questions to think about:**

- Who do you want to involve?
- How would you go about involving them in the research? (consider, what parts of the research process to involve them in and what methods you would use)
- What practical or logistical challenges could there be?
- What ethical challenges could there be?

### **Feedback to group:**

What are the main things you learnt? Anything that surprised you?

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## Further resources

### **The UK Participatory Research Network (UKPRN)**

<http://ukprn.weebly.com/resources.html>

### **Centre for social justice and community action**

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/social-justice-community-action/toolkits/>

### **Involve (methods for community engagement)**

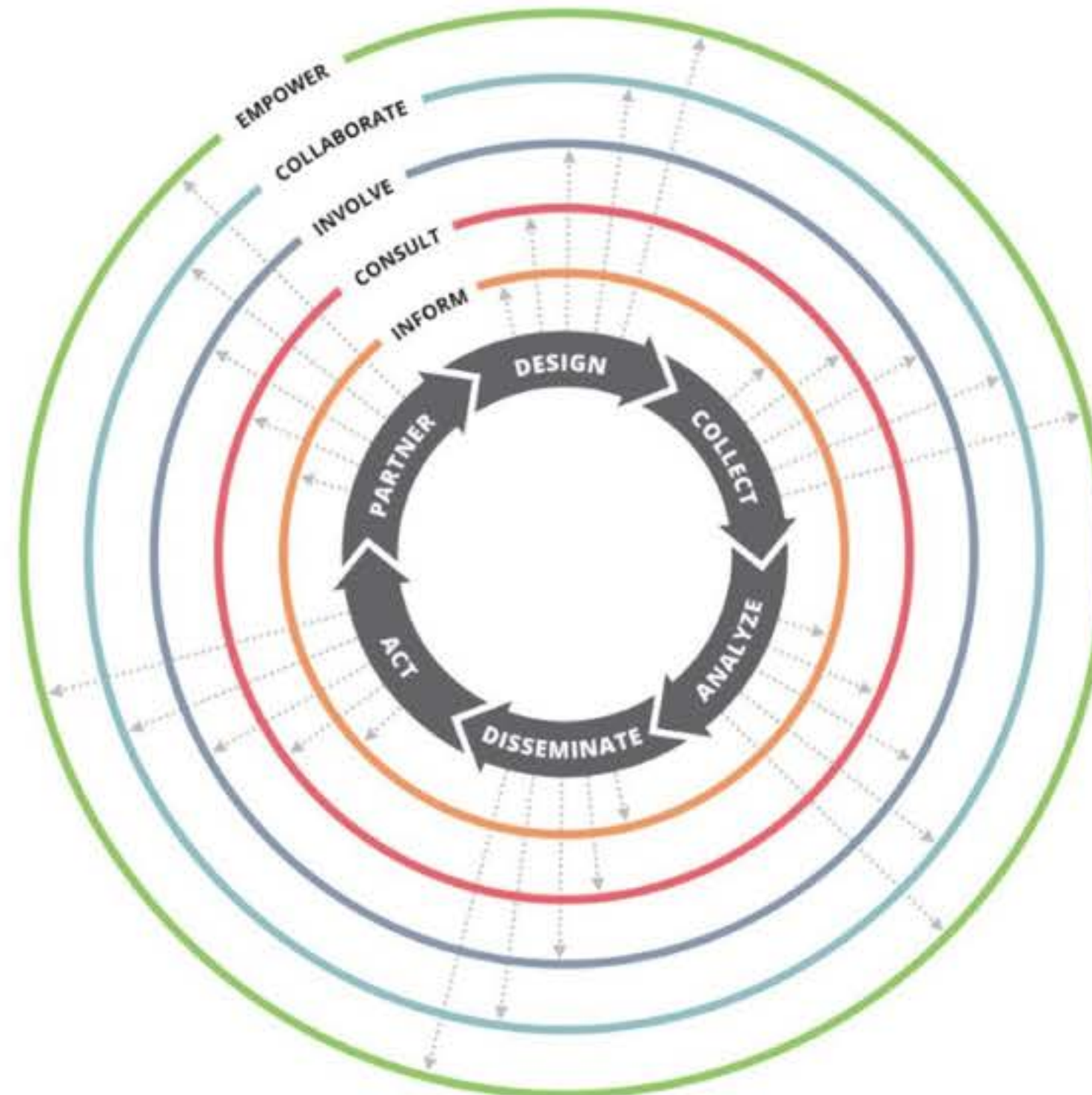
<https://involve.org.uk/resources/methods>



# Further resources

## Participation Choice Points in the Research Process

At each step in the research process, there is a choice about the degree of participation. The choice guides the selection of research methods and tools.



### **INFORM**

*Information is provided to community*

### **CONSULT**

*Input is obtained from community*

### **INVOLVE**

*Researchers work directly with community*

### **COLLABORATE**

*Community is partner in research process*

### **EMPOWER**

*Community leads research decisionmaking*

Levels of participation based on:  
*Spectrum of Public Participation*  
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