

Legal

A HAND AND HEARTBOOK



Robert and Helen Bernstein
Institute for Human Rights
NYU SCHOOL OF LAW

Empowerment Learning Lab

2020-2022



Ana Filipa dos Santos Lopes

A HAND AND HEART WORKBOOK FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS, ACTIVISTS, AND RESEARCHERS

An offering of the Legal Empowerment Learning Lab (Lab). The Lab is a groundbreaking learning workshop for grassroots legal empowerment practitioners and academics on participatory research methods. The Lab aims to open up democratic forms of inquiry to explore what works, what matters, and what's needed to achieve justice from the bottom-up. The inaugural workshop drew a diverse and dynamic group of more than 25 practitioners and academics from around the world to engage in learning about community-led research design principles.

[HTTPS://WWW.LAW.NYU.EDU/CENTERS/BERNSTEIN-INSTITUTE/LEGAL_EMPowerMENT/LEARNING_LAB](https://www.law.nyu.edu/centers/bernstein-institute/legal_empowerment/learning_lab)

CONTENTS

WHO ARE YOU, WHO IS THIS FOR	1
EXPLORING PRIVILEGE AND STORIES OF SELF	2
WHAT IS COMMUNITY	3
INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL EMPOWERMENT	5
STARTING PAR	7
PRINCIPLES OF PAR	12
EXCAVATING THE “WE”	13
JUSTICE THROUGH PARTICIPATORY LENS	21
WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH	23
WHAT IS “PARTICIPATORY”	24
A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO A FEW METHODOLOGIES	27
MAPPING POWER: DETAILED VIEW	13
DISSEMINATION: EXAMPLE	30
BUILDING CAMPAIGNS THROUGH PAR	31
SHARED LEADERSHIP	32
SOLUTIONS EMERGING FROM THE DATA	36

A NOTE ON AUTHORSHIP

This workbook has been constructed by listening to the collective reflections of the members of the institute. The members include: Aakanksha Badkur, Luciana Bercovich, Matthew Burnett, Bethany Carson, Poorvi Chataker, Mela Chiponda, Lucy Claridge, Sukti Dhital, Sabrina Dycus, Felipe Mesel, Francesca Feruglio, Michelle Fine, Ariadna Godreau-Aubert, Antonio Gutierrez, Ellie Happel, Emese Ilyes, Tim Kakaru, Chris Kidd, Erin Kitchell, Dyari Mustafa, Noor Mushin, Jhody Polk, Arianna Salgado, Meg Satterthwaite, Shreya Sen, Carol Anne Spreen, Maria Torre, Bindhu Vjayan, Tyler Walton, and Tom Weerachat

All the art is from artists throughout the world who have contributed to a database of activist art to offer to movements and organizers. Each piece will include the name of the artist. The full collection can be viewed at TheGreats.co
art on this page by [Vanessa Mundle \(minttu\)](#)



- **THE WORKBOOK INCLUDES PROMPTS AND PROVOCATIONS THAT ALLOW FOR DEEPER EXPLORATION OF PAR WITHIN THE LEGAL EMPOWERMENT/ COMMUNITY JUSTICE SPACE. RATHER THAN A STRICT GUIDE, WE HOPE TO INSPIRE GUIDING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN EXPLORING THIS TYPE OF RESEACH AND ACTION.**
- **THE WORKBOOK INCLUDES SNIPPETS OF WISDOM FROM ACTIVISTS AND RESEARCHERS AS WELL AS FROM PUBLISHED ACADEMIC WORKS.**
- **THE RESOURCE IS FOR THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE LAB AND IS OFFERED TO THOSE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO LEGAL EMPOWERMENT LEARNING AND RESEARCH.**
- **IT IS FOR ACADEMICS, IT IS FOR ACTIVISTS, IT IS FOR ANYONE, IT IS FOR YOU.**
- **IT IS FOR EVERYONE COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES RATHER THAN MAKING DECISIONS FOR COMMUNITIES.**

A NOTE ON STRUCTURE

This hand and heart workbook weaves together a variety of techniques and ways of knowing to offer an invitation that both introduces a wide lens on participatory action research and legal empowerment but also invites deep, intimate personal reflection. Self-reflection, situatedness, and deep engagement is a key aspect of PAR. Bound together, you will find prompts to engage with, concepts to be exposed to and interrogate for yourself, stories from activists and academics, and space for you to apply your learning. You can use this with your collaborators, your community, or for your own personal process.

You can move through the invitations in the order that they appear, or you may choose aspects that seem to pull you in at this particular moment. We want this to be meaningful and we invite you to co-construct this hand and heartbook with us as you engage.

If you choose to follow the linear organization we offer, you will start with a series of exercises that help you excavate your individual privilege/power. Then, you will be introduced to Legal Empowerment, followed by Participatory Action Research.



A DEEP CHANGE IN APPROACH IS NEEDED TO ALTER THE BASIC CONDITIONS OF THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE PERSISTENT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. LEGAL EMPOWERMENT—LED BY THE GRASSROOTS, WITH LAWYERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN SUPPORTING, RATHER THAN LEADING ROLES—IS A CRUCIAL PART OF THE JUSTICE TRANSFORMATION THAT IS NEEDED.

•WHO ARE YOU? DRAW, WRITE, OR DRAW AND WRITE YOUR RESPONSES.



•WHERE DO YOU COME FROM? WRITE AN "I COME FROM..." POEM USING ALL OF YOUR SENSES (TASTE, SMELL, SIGHT, HEARING, TOUCH...). SPEND JUST THREE MINUTES TO FREE WRITE THESE LINES, WITHOUT CENSORING YOURSELF. ALLOW THE STRANGE TO EMERGE.



**WHAT PRIVILEGES DO YOU CARRY? WHAT MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE?
DRAW, WRITE, OR DRAW AND WRITE YOUR RESPONSES.**

WHEN WE ENGAGE WITH PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES, INCLUDING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH, WE ARE ENGAGING IN A POLITICAL PROCESS OF SHIFTING POWER.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IN LEGAL EMPOWERMENT CENTERS ACTIVISTS MAKING MEANING ABOUT THE ROOT CAUSES OF INJUSTICES THAT DEEPLY IMPACT THEM.

HERE, YOU START WITH YOURSELF:

- **WHAT STRUGGLES DO YOU HAVE?**
- **WHO/WHAT ARE YOU SUPPORTING?**
- **WHO/WHAT DO YOU GIVE SOLIDARITY TO?**
- **WHAT ARE ANY SYMBOLS THAT REPRESENT/REMIND YOU OF YOUR STRUGGLES/SOLIDARITIES?**



HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR COLLABORATORS PERCEIVE YOU WITH RESPECT TO YOUR POWER AND POSITIONALITY? WHAT ASSUMPTIONS MIGHT THEY MAKE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR INTERSECTING IDENTITIES?

How do each of your positionalities function as resources - not just barriers- in the group? Consider “queering” your privilege - spend time focusing on what gifts you bring to the project



HOW HAVE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR PRIVILEGE SHIFTED OVER THE YEARS?



WHO IS IN YOUR COMMUNITY? HOW DO YOU DEFINE COMMUNITY?



WHO GETS TO BUILD KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY?



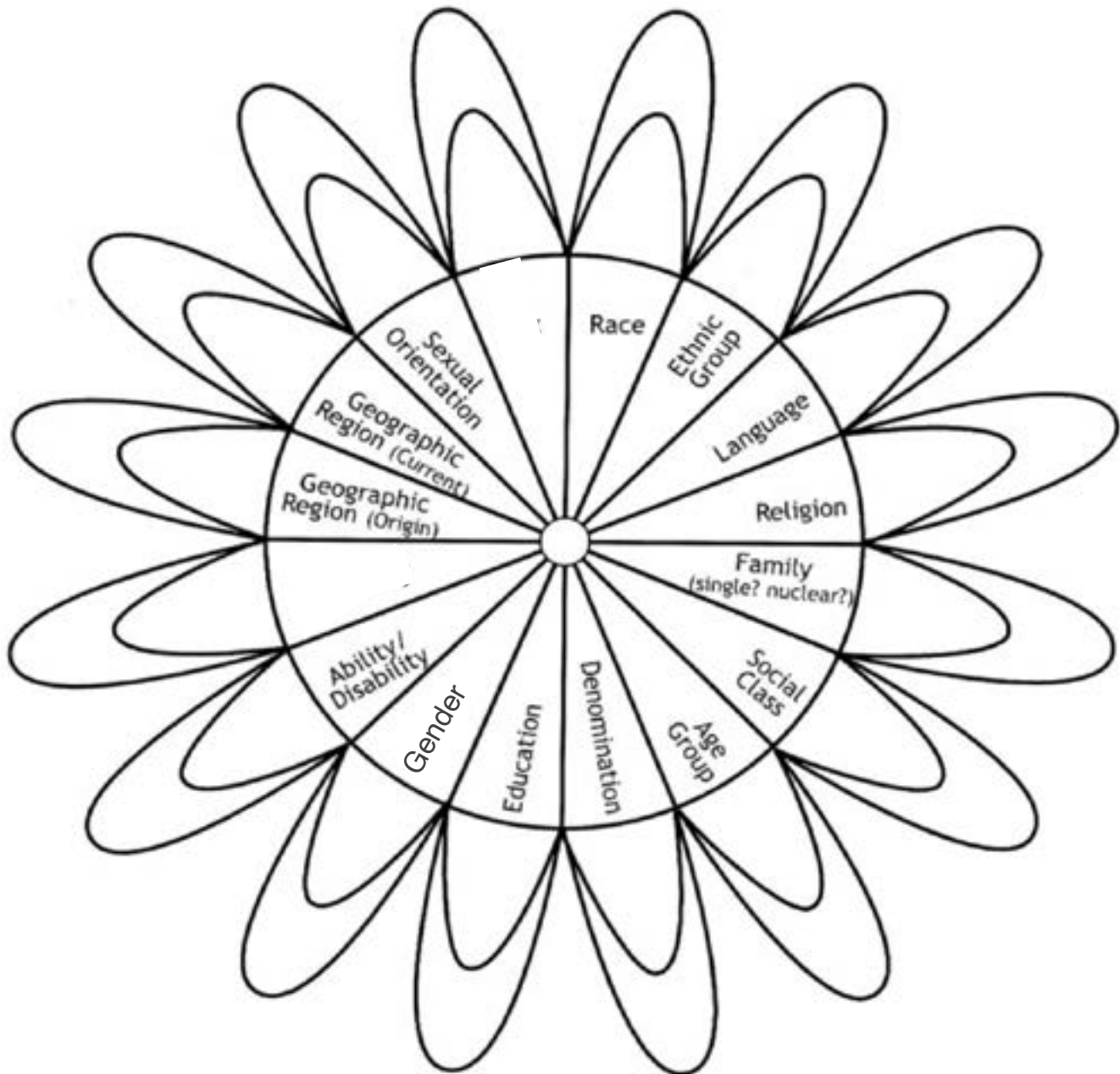
HOW IS EXPERTISE UNDERSTOOD IN YOUR COMMUNITY? WHO GETS TO BE AN EXPERT?



WHAT IS CONSIDERED LEGITIMATE KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY? WHAT IS CONSIDERED ILLEGITIMATE KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



THE FLOWER POWER IS A HELPFUL EXERCISE THAT VISUALLY EXPLORES HOW YOUR PERSONAL IDENTITIES COMPARE WITH SOCIETAL POWER STRUCTURES



- **IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT WE DRAW OUR POWER FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES BUT EACH ONE OF US HAS POWER.**
- **AS YOU ASK YOURSELF WHERE DOES YOUR POWER COME FROM FEEL FREE TO CHANGE THE INNER CATEGORIES. THESE SOURCES OF POWER MAY INCLUDE: RACE, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER, ABILITY, LANGUAGE, RELIGION, ETHNICITY, ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY, ENERGY ACCESS, PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, ACCESS TO RESOURCES OF POWER - AFFILIATIONS WITH POWERFUL PEOPLE, CASTE, LEVEL OF LITERACY, ETC.**
- **USE THIS TOOL TO GUIDE SELF-REFLECTION ABOUT THE POWER THAT WE ARE HOLDING AS INDIVIDUALS, ILLUSTRATING OUR PRIVILEGES AND WHERE OUR POWER COMES FROM.**
- **THE INNER PETAL WILL HOLD YOUR IDENTITY AND THE OUTER PETAL WILL BE THE DOMINANT CATEGORY IN YOUR COMMUNITY (THIS MAY BE THE SAME).**

Adapted from Educating for a Change by Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, D'Arcy Martin, and Barb Thomas (Toronto: Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action and Between the Lines Press, 1991)



WHAT WOULD A DEMOCRATIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE LOOK LIKE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



Ely Astorga for ArtistsForClimate.org



WHO HAS WRITTEN THE STORY OF YOUR COMMUNITY?

Despite the empowering nature of participatory research, a literature review found that—ironically—“participatory evaluation methods are rarely used in studies of legal empowerment interventions,” with only two percent of the studies found to be participatory in nature.

Legal empowerment centers and demands accountability from all powerful actors impacting the human rights of the disempowered.

Beyond formal exclusions, many communities that are formally “protected” by the law in fact experience the legal system as a regime that actively devalues their lives, with often deadly consequences— as killings by police of Black Americans in the United States demonstrate. These are all human rights violations: they abrogate the right to equality, to be free from slavery, to enjoy fair working conditions, and to be recognized before the law; the right to healthcare, and gender equality; Indigenous rights; the rights to water and to a healthy environment; and the rights to equality and to life. Such violations happen every day, with justice beyond the reach of those experiencing the abuse. But what is the best way to tackle these problems? More and more, it is apparent that the old human rights methods of “naming and shaming” are insufficient—even if updated to include new narrative and interdisciplinary strategies.

A deep change in approach is needed to alter the basic conditions of those who experience persistent human rights violations. Legal empowerment—led by the grassroots, with lawyers and other professionals in supporting, rather than leading roles—is a crucial part of the justice transformation that is needed. When rights-holders directly engage institutions affecting their lives, they demand that systems become more accessible and responsive to the daily challenges of the people. And when the law and legal systems are actively harming marginalized and oppressed peoples, a critical form of legal empowerment can ensure they are the authors of their own liberation and demands transformation of the law. Human rights advocates should embrace this reality by becoming reliable partners to movements led by the communities experiencing grave rights deprivations. They should ensure that strategic litigation is rooted in the most pressing concerns articulated by communities, collectivities, and movements. And they should take their cue in law and policy reform efforts from communities who seek to shape the law into a more accurate reflection of the justice they seek. Such transformations aim to make human rights advocates reliable allies in efforts to shift power toward those most directly affected.

Legal empowerment strategies facilitate the broad “localization” and “vernacularization” of human rights, as they involve people advancing and claiming their own rights in their own idiom. In many contexts, legal empowerment suggests a shift away from dichotomies such as state v. private sector or local v. international and toward more embedded understandings of how power plays itself out across borders and in given contexts. Legal empowerment centers and demands accountability from all powerful actors impacting the human rights of the disempowered.

Beyond formal exclusions, many communities that are formally “protected” by the law in fact . The potential of legal empowerment will be more fully realized when it embraces what movement lawyers have long recommended: a “critical” shift to understanding that social change—and transformations in major economic, social, and cultural structures—will come only when legal efforts effectively build the power of communities facing human rights violations to transform those systems. This “critical” component of critical legal empowerment entails a rejection of the technocratic approaches sometimes forwarded by access to justice practitioners and an embrace of community-based efforts to engage the legal system in strategies to shift power downward.

Communities have embraced legal empowerment practices—such as the use of community paralegals—for many decades. Many practitioners have argued that legal empowerment as deployed by development agencies has been too focused on simple “inclusion” in the formal processes of law, leading to the reification of existing power relations. While there are many pathways to legal empowerment, the broad, “bottom-up,” human rights-focused ones are aimed at enabling people to “know, use, and shape the law,” bringing about transformations in “knowledge, agency, and governance”. In addition, as Waldorf explains, this approach to legal empowerment: “emphasises rights, participation, and accountability... [I]t adopts a pragmatic approach to legal pluralism, working with formal, customary, and religious law.”

The “empowerment” sought is the critical agency to analyze reality from the perspective of the oppressed and to make change: “social transformation—not only a more just distribution of wealth and income, but a more expansive sharing of power” that enables disempowered people to make “significant change through their own actions.” As legal empowerment is normatively rooted in human rights law, these changes advance the rights of those disempowered within existing systems.

Legal empowerment cannot only seek the inclusion of marginalized communities and the reform of existing law. Instead, it must seek thoroughgoing change in the aims of legal systems. Achieving such changes requires movement building, organizing, and coalition work. It demands a reconceptualization of what the law is, what it can do, and who it can do those things for. It also demands what Gerald López calls “rebellious lawyering,” in which self-reflection, humility, and critical inquiry are essential for those who see themselves as legal professionals aligned with communities. As Claudia Muñoz of Grassroots Leadership explains, “We know and believe that the people that can transform the systems are the people that have been through these systems. Nobody has better answers, nobody has more urgency.”

Social change—and transformations in major economic, social, and cultural structures—will come only when legal efforts effectively build the power of communities facing human rights violations to transform those systems.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an integral part of liberating ways of working and lies at the heart of transformation. It is a powerful approach, which supports community organizing and action to change lives. It is a form of knowledge construction that is:

- **COLLECTIVE**
- **ROOTED IN PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES AND LIVES**
- **RESPECTFUL OF THE KNOWLEDGE THAT PEOPLE HOLD**
- **EMPOWERS PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD THROUGH THEIR EFFORTS TO CHANGE IT- ALLOWING THOSE MOST IMPACTED TO KNOW, USE, SHAPE, AND TRANSFORM LAW**
- **SHIFTS POWER IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS BY DEEPLY INVOLVING THOSE WHO OTHERWISE WOULD BE RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

People in communities decide the focus of the research and the questions to be explored. Through the PAR process, members of the community who join as co-researchers reach out to other people in their communities and deepen their understanding of each other. As people build analysis collectively and develop a richer understanding of the sources of their oppression, their ideas about what needs to change become clearer. The research process brings people together in small intimate spaces and in larger forums, in this way strengthening their organizing. The research process is highly participatory and teaches people new skills and methods for organizing. In all of this, people develop greater confidence to assert their needs in their families, communities and wider society.



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW? WHAT INJUSTICES DO YOU WANT TO ADDRESS? REFLECT ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP - IN YOUR OWN WORDS - TO THIS WORK.



HOW HAS THE COMMUNITY YOU ARE WORKING WITH DEFINED THE PROBLEM?



WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY WANT TO CHANGE IN THE PROBLEM THAT WAS JUST DEFINED? IN A LEGAL EMPOWERMENT CONTEXT, WHAT IS THE LAW THAT THE COMMUNITY WOULD LIKE TO TRANSFORM?





WHO ARE YOUR THOUGHT PARTNERS AS YOU BEGIN THIS WORK?



Monique Jackson for Fine Arts



**WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS KIND OF WORK?
WHO HAS DONE IT IN THE PAST? WHO IS
CARRYING THIS WORK INTO THE FUTURE?**



Monique Jackson for Fine Arts

Know that your work sits within a larger struggle. Consider how to be in solidarity with the larger struggles.



THINKING ABOUT OTHER GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ALSO FOCUSED ON THE SAME WORK, HOW ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT THIS ISSUE?



Monique Jackson for Fine Arts



WHO IS SITTING AT YOUR TABLE, SKETCHING OUT THE PAR PROCESS WITH YOU?



Monique Jackson for Fine Arts



WHO IS AT YOUR (MAYBE METAPHORICAL) TABLE MAKING MEANING/ANALYZING WHAT YOU HAVE GATHERED THROUGH THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS?



WHO IS IT FOR? WHO WILL THIS WORK IMPACT? WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THIS GROUP?

Who do we include in our community of researchers? An example...

We were intentionally diverse: more than half of us were prisoners, the rest of us were free, but across our group we were also mothers and not mothers; women who had suffered serious illness and those of us who had been spared, thus far; some who had experienced family violence as children, and some who only witnessed or heard about it; women who engaged in activist community politics as adults and those who stayed away; women who grew up speaking Spanish and those of us who primarily spoke English; we were Black, Latina, Caribbean, White; a few lesbian, a few straight, and lots between. No one had a monopoly on expertise, but we built a research community that was delicately mindful of power dynamics, challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about who had capacity and expertise throughout. Together we pooled our wisdoms and aspired toward strong objectivity (Harding, 1994), where differently positioned people intentionally and delicately work across distinct standpoints, to generate robust evidence to complicate simple dominant narratives.





All interviews and focus groups were conducted by pairs of researchers, one from the “inside” of the prison and one from the “outside,” with the exception of interviews with corrections officers, and with college students post-release from prison, which were conducted by María. Each step was a deliberative and deep conversation swirling around a small table in the College Bound office, as we sometimes smuggled in cookies and fresh strawberries, over cross-tabs and transcripts, tears and laughter, across four years (Fine, Boudin, Bowen, Clark, Hylton, Martinez, Missy, Rivera, Roberts, Smart, Torre and Upegui, 2001). Our theoretical framework, methods and findings are available in full at www.publicscienceproject.org.

from:

Stoudt, B. G., Fox, M., & Fine, M. (2011). Awakening injustice in a new century. In *Conflict, interdependence, and justice* (pp. 165-191). Springer, New York, NY.

Important Principles of Participatory Action Research

- **FULL INCLUSION AND APPRECIATION OF PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE**
- **ALL SOCIAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES THAT OPPRESS PEOPLE ARE APPROPRIATE SUBJECTS FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND ACTION. WE SILENCE NOTHING AND NO-ONE**
- **PEOPLE'S DAY-TO-DAY LIVED EXPERIENCES ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE'S OPPRESSION BY PATRIARCHY (AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM ORGANIZED AROUND THE EXTRACTION OF PROFIT FROM PEOPLE'S LABOR, BUSINESSES, LAND, AND NATURAL RESOURCES), RACISM AND CAPITALISM (AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM ORGANISED AROUND THE EXPLOITATION OF PEOPLE, THEIR LABOUR AND NATURAL RESOURCES FOR PROFIT)**
- **PAR CREATES SPACE FOR PEOPLE WHO MAY EXPERIENCE RACISM, CAPITALIST AND PATRIARCHY'S OPPRESSION IN DIFFERENT WAYS BECAUSE OF THEIR AGE, RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ABILITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND SO ON - TO BE HEARD AND RESPECTED**
- **BY BEGINNING WITH THE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TRADITIONALLY SILENCED, THE PROCESS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IS TRANSFORMED AND THE IDEOLOGICAL POWER BASE IS CHALLENGED**
- **STRIVES TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES BASED ON REAL LIFE EXPERIENCES RATHER THAN ON THEORIES AND ASSUMPTIONS, WHILE ALSO CONTRIBUTING TO THE FORMATION OF THEORIES**
- **PARTICIPATION**
- **MAKING PEOPLE'S VOICES, IN ALL OF THEIR DIFFERENCE, MORE AUDIBLE AND APPRECIATED; PUTTING PEOPLE AT EASE AND GIVING THEM VOICE THROUGH 'ORDINARY TALK' WHICH STARTS WITH THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES**
- **AT ALL STAGES OF THE RESEARCH THERE IS SHARED DECISION-MAKING BETWEEN THE 'OUTSIDE' PAR FACILITATOR AND THE 'INSIDER' RESEARCHERS. THIS COLLABORATION IS CENTRAL TO BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND CO-CREATING MEANING**

-  HOW DOES WHAT JUSTICE LOOKS LIKE CHANGE DEPENDING ON THE “WE”?
-  WHAT ARE THE POWER DYNAMICS THAT ARE AT PLAY IN ALL THESE “WE’S” COMPRISING THE COMMUNITY?
-  WHAT TOOLS ARE YOU USING TO HELP EVERYONE UNDERSTAND THESE POWER DYNAMICS?
-  WHO IS OFTEN LEFT OUT OF THE “WE” IN THE COMMUNITY YOU ARE WORKING WITHIN? WHO IS SILENCED?

CHOQUES: As you are gathering as a community, do not center consensus at first. Begin with getting ALL the ideas out first - THEN ask: is there a good enough frame that we can live with? Gloria Anzaldua has a term, called “choques” meaning crashes/collisions. These are difficult but it is important to allow these “choques” and to work through them to have a stronger outcome.

Mela Chiponda: At the start of projects, we have used power analysis to help women understand issues around power, the power they hold as individuals, the power they hold together, the negative power, the patriarchal power that comes with legal authorities. We prepare doing power analysis, even using the Master's House, various tools which allow women to think critically about who is holding the power and what kind of power they have. We sometimes have separate meetings at first. We have meetings with the police, with the army. We make sure people holding negative power, the power that comes with authority, we have to be aware of them holding this power, and the discomfort that comes with holding this power. It comes with challenges, but with time it can be broken down. Sometimes it is not possible to break down this power. The preparation takes time. It takes time to build people's power. It is critical to combine Participatory Action Research with movement building. PAR can be used for movement building as well as knowledge building.

 **WHAT ARE THE CAPACITIES THAT ARE PRESENT IN THE COMMUNITIES WHERE THIS PROJECT IS ROOTED? WHAT EXISTING TOOLS, RESOURCES, AND STRENGTHS ARE FOUND IN THE COMMUNITY WHERE YOU ARE WORKING THAT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU PURSUE THIS PROJECT?**



Andreea Iuliana

Methods of community engagement may include beginning with a workshop to generate a list of concerns. From these conversations, a shared mission, shared budget, and mutual goals are developed. This is often not straightforward and requires negotiation among various stakeholders. It is based in what the community is prioritizing at the time. As a community, co-develop interviews, surveys, focus groups, and observation protocols. It is important to provide training to the community members who are going to be conducting the research. Together, the data is collected, compiled, and analyzed. Not everyone wants to be involved at all levels, but it is useful to find a way to invite people to enter where they would like to be involved. When there are lessons lifted from the experience, bring the community back together to discuss next steps that are to be taken. These outcomes can be developed into local and national campaigns aimed at raising consciousness. Creative strategies like education workshops, art exhibits, radio programs, and booklets can be used to disseminate the outcome. Actions may involve working with a range of other groups.



HOW WILL THE COMMUNITIES YOU ARE A PART OF BE IMPACTED BY THIS WORK?

One of the goals of participatory action research methodologies is to figure out the mechanisms that are able to lift up all the positions.



HOW WILL THIS WORK CONTRIBUTE TO KNOWLEDGE BUILDING AND AGENCY BUILDING IN YOUR GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES?



Andreea Iuliana



WHAT ARE SOME KEY ORGANIZING STRATEGIES YOU ARE CONSIDERING?



WHAT ARE TENSIONS THAT WILL ARISE FROM THESE DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES?



Michela Esposito

Pay attention to the minor voices in the community that often sound like the opposition - make an effort to find out why that perspective is appealing to them.



HOW CAN YOU INVITE PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT THE ISSUES THEY ARE CONFRONTING IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS THEM TO SHARE THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE ON THEIR OWN TERMS?

The problem tree as a tool for understanding issues.

It takes time to understand the issues. Coming up with a common problem takes time. It sometimes takes breaking down various components to dig deep. Illustrating that, “This is what we are seeing, but what is the root cause, what is sustaining this, who are the drivers?” This helps understand lived experiences and helps to illuminate patterns. You can use problem tree and a tree that you wish it could be. For the problem tree, have the community draw a tree and then begin labeling its parts. The roots represent the causes, the trunk represents the main problem, while the branches represent the consequences. The problem tree can illicit possibilities, areas of common desire, or common frustration. You can build questions and areas, identify a piece to start with, the research question to frame the work around. Using the venn diagram to demonstrate how they are connected, how key stakeholders are connected, how can we bring them together? It takes tools, methodologies to build power. Mapping, walking together. Using popular education tools to surface people’s experiences. This helps think about different positionalities and power and vulnerabilities associated with these positions. Also individual stories become collective, shared knowledge. Depending on the group, depending on the context, sometimes engaging through a walking tour, or whatever is comfortable for the group. Using the arts, using drawing, using one on one interviewing or storytelling. Whatever is comfortable for the group as an entry point.

It may not always be possible to bring together different stakeholders. A project in NYC asked parents and teachers and students separately what their vision was for a school. Instead of having everyone in the same room, this project created different groups so that the power dynamics did not reproduce the violence. After gathering these visions, they created a walk through that included everyone’s perspectives. They did not hold integrated contact zones but created these events in which people had the opportunity to hear each other.



WHO DOES NOT AGREE WITH THE PROJECT AS IT IS ENVISIONED? WHAT ARE THE VOICES OF OPPOSITION TO THIS WORK?



HOW ARE YOU GOING TO CONSIDER THESE PERSPECTIVES, HOLD THESE COMPLEXITIES?

Be careful to document all the negative and positive aspects of collaborators' experiences - pain, damage and the joys - don't confuse damage with justice.

JUSTICE THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY LENS

LEGAL EMPOWERMENT NECESSARILY BEGINS WITH THE COMMUNITY'S OWN SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT—ITS OWN CONCEPTION OF ITS RIGHTS—AND ITS OWN LEGAL SYSTEM. BEGINNING HERE IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN INDIGENOUS CONTEXTS, SINCE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES HAVE BORNE THE BRUNT OF EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE FOR GENERATIONS. “KNOWING” CUSTOMARY LAW INVOLVES HONORING FORMS OF LAW THAT MAY HAVE BEEN HIDDEN, SILENCED, AND EVEN VIOLENTLY REPRESSED BY COLONIAL SYSTEMS.



WHAT IS JUSTICE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



WHO GETS TO DEFINE JUSTICE IN YOUR COMMUNITY? WHO SHAPES THIS DEFINITION?

When HIV-positive patients in Mozambique were having trouble obtaining crucial test results, the defensores de saúde led a meeting between affected patients and the director of the health center. Together, they brainstormed a solution that involved some immediate—but limited—improvements that the director could implement. In addition, the patients and director also agreed on joint advocacy they could undertake to higher-placed health officials for resources that would solve the problem for the long term. This kind of mediation, conducted in the enlarged “shadow of the law,” can be more effective than traditional oppositional human rights approaches. Further, it may often be more fair, since rights violations frequently come about due to systems beyond the control of frontline state actors like doctors and nurses at state-owned hospitals or medical posts.

Ref: Schaaf, M., Falcao, J., Feinglass, E. et al. ‘We all have the same right to have health services’: a case study of Namati’s legal empowerment program in Mozambique, 20 BMC Public Health (2020) 1084.



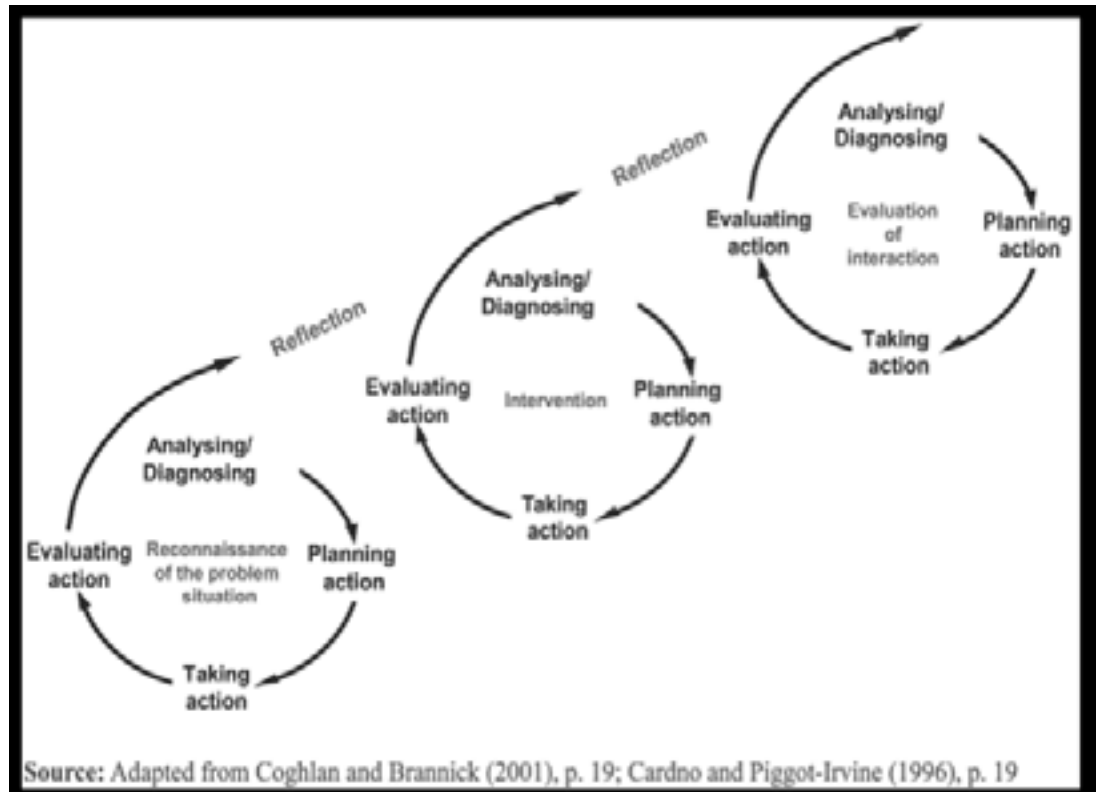
WHAT WOULD JUSTICE LOOK LIKE IF YOUR GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY COULD SHAPE IT? DARE TO DREAM BIG WITH THIS PROMPT. DRAW THE ANSWER. WRITE THE ANSWER.



WHAT WOULD JUSTICE BE IN A WORLD WITHOUT BINARIES?

TOO OFTEN SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER COLLABORATIONS—WHERE THEY DO EXIST—ARE IMPLEMENTED IN A TOP DOWN MANNER, WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PROCESSES DRIVEN BY THE SCHOLAR'S PRIORITIES AND INTERESTS. SUCH PROJECTS OFTEN USE HIGHLY TECHNICAL METHODS THAT CAN SEEM IRRELEVANT OR EVEN EXTRACTIVE TO COMMUNITIES. FURTHER, RESEARCH THAT IS NOT ANCHORED IN A COMMUNITY'S OWN SENSE OF JUSTICE WILL OFTEN MISS WHAT MATTERS MOST.

PAR APPROACH INVOLVES A CONTINUOUS ACTION/ REFLECTION SPIRAL OF PLANNING, ACTION, OBSERVING, REFLECTING AND RE-PLANNING



WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Participatory action research (PAR) or social action research is revolutionary and turns on its head approaches to traditional research. PAR is a research process involving collaboration of the ‘outsiders’ and the ‘insiders’ with a view to deepening a shared understanding of the world by trying to change it. PAR emphasizes a strong link between research and action, meaning that research generates information and knowledge which is used to inform action. In addition, the insights gained from reflection on action informs our knowledge about power and how change happens leading to a new phase of enquiry/research.

In PAR the external ‘researchers’ usually have an existing relationship of solidarity with the community/constituency who will co-research the problem/issue. If this relationship does not exist then the process begins with relationship building and negotiating roles and responsibilities. PAR researchers argue that the research process must be democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing. PAR breaks away from traditional research and forms alliances with individuals with the least social, cultural and economic power. PAR often uses the term “researcher” to refer to both the outside academic and the insiders to the research.

FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

FPAR uses research to challenge the many forms of oppression which poor and working class women confront in the global South. FPAR supports women’s organising, women’s conscientisation about the systems and practices that marginalise and oppress them, and their actions for change. FPAR is rooted in and respects the principles of PAR but goes one step further in acknowledging that women lack power, as compared with men of the same social group, in all institutions – of family, community, school and university, religious bodies, and within the state.

CRITICAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Critical participatory action research (CPAR) projects are conceived and implemented across universities and communities/movements to build theory, transform policy, support social change and forge new solidarities. In these spaces, academics, policy makers, community members, students and activists design research projects together, pool intentionally diverse standpoints, and integrate qualitative, quantitative, archival and historic evidence to probe questions of (in)justice, enacting the principle – No Research about Us, Without Us! These projects rely upon mixed methods, deeply rooted in the ethical and democratic production of knowledge, committed to a qualitative and participatory understanding of the experience. CPAR embodies a distinct epistemology about whose knowledge matters and the dangerous limits of a “knowledge monopoly” tainted by an epistemology of privilege. With a range of methods, CPAR projects draw upon quantitative, qualitative, ethnographic, archival, historic, folkloric and visual methods to challenge dominant narratives, generate counter-narratives and democratize knowledge production.

PAR researchers argue that the research process must be democratic, equitable, and life enhancing.

Building a Research Collaborative:

Holding space where diverse knowledges engage, rooted in the wisdom of those most impacted. To create our research team we needed to facilitate a process that María Elena Torre has called a participatory contact zone (2009), where insiders/outsideers could share what we know and don't, so we could participate as equally as possible, learning from each others' distinct sources of expertise and experience. We offered a Masters level social science research methods course and spent months reading and discussing prison, college, feminist theory, capitalism, patriarchy, racism, mothering, politics, Whiteness, punishment, and transformation as well as methodology, sampling, crafting research questions, standpoint epistemology, feminist theory, critical justice studies, and critical race theory. (see Fine, Torre, Boudin, Bowen, Clark, Hylton, Martinez, "Missy," Rivera, Roberts, Smart, Upegui www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/changing_minds.pdf). That is, we read together a range of critical theory texts – rooted in questions of epistemology, gender, race, class; challenging traditional conceptions of science, the prison-industrial complex, and social inquiry, and developing a collective set of questions we could pursue about if/how/why/for whom college in prison mattered. This commitment to building a team of shared and, distinctive knowledges is crucial to any CPAR project.

The course was designed to build a research-literate, dialogue rich, highly diverse "participatory contact zone." Two (then) Ph.D. students, Rosemarie Roberts and Melissa Rivera, co-taught an advanced research methods course in the prison where fifteen students investigated personally meaningful questions about the impact of college, interviewing five women per question. Under a general "umbrella question" (What is the impact of college in prison?) the women fashioned their own unique questions: How does your involvement in college affect women's relationship with their children? Does college shift women's relationship to religion? How does college help women who have experienced domestic violence? Why do some women drop out? How do the correction officers feel about college? Within the semester, 75 "pilot" interviews were conducted. By the end of the course, seven of the women, by then trained as researchers, agreed to join the research team. For the next four years, every other week and then once a month, our research team gathered from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m. when the prison comes to a halt for "count" and those of us not wearing green were escorted out.

Stoudt, B. G., Fox, M., & Fine, M. (2011). Awakening injustice in a new century. In *Conflict, interdependence, and justice* (pp. 165-191). Springer, New York, NY.



TO UNPACK ETHICS AND TO UNDERSTAND ETHICS OF CARE, ASK WHAT DOES PARTICIPATORY MEAN TO YOU? WHO IS ABLE TO PARTICIPATE AND IN WHAT PROCESS?



HOW ARE YOUR RESEARCH/KNOWLEDGE BUILDING TOOLS PARTICIPATORY?

CAUTION SHOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THE CO-OPTION OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS BY THE ELITE AND POWERFUL TO INCREASE THEIR POWER.



WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO DO PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH?




Lyma Rima for Fine Acts



WHAT ARE THE ETHICS GUIDING YOUR PROCESS?

WHAT DOES CONSENT LOOK LIKE IN YOUR PROJECT?

 **KEEP IN MIND:**

 **CONSENT IS NOT A BLANKET QUESTION. FOR INSTANCE, IT NEEDS TO INCLUDE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SHARING AND IDENTIFICATIONS. CONSENT IS CONTINUOUS.**

 **AS YOU WORK TO MAKE VISIBLE THE ISSUES, HOW ARE YOU MINDFUL OF THE VULNERABILITY OF THE PEOPLE SHARING?**

 **CONSENT IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS. CONSENT IS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS, AND THERE ARE NO RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT TRUST**

Attention to ethics is not a preliminary step in PAR, not simply an institutional step before the process. Ethics are infused throughout in PAR and PAR has unique ethical considerations. It is important to remember that PAR methods could give rise to concerns that traditional research methods (might) avoid. For instance, centering and uplifting storytelling might increase risk of revictimization or designing spaces for collective community engagement might increase risk of stigmatization



WHAT ARE THE THEORIES/ASSUMPTIONS THAT ARE A FOUNDATION FOR YOUR PROCESS?



WHAT MOVEMENT/ MOVEMENTS ARE YOU CONNECTING TO WITH THIS WORK?



Violeta Noy for Fine Acts

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO A FEW METHODOLOGIES

SURVEYS

Quantitative, Mixed Methods

Good for:
Understanding the scale of a problem and identify key patterns
Getting numbers/stats
Reaching large numbers of people
It's easy to protect anonymity

MAPPING

Quantitative, Mixed Methods, Qualitative

Good for:
Powerful organising tool (creating a shared understanding of social economic, or political connections; allows strong participation; good for prioritising issues). It's very accessible to people with low literacy
Relatively easy and quick

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Qualitative

Good for:
Understanding 'how' and 'why' of an issue
Stimulating in-depth, collective reflections over an issue
Reaching groups that are marginalised/pushed aside

INTERVIEWS

Quantitative

Good for:
Understanding 'how' and 'why' of an issue
Capturing specific experiences and perspectives
Allowing someone to express freely about sensitive issues

STORYTELLING

Quantitative

Good for:
Creates space for personal reflection and expression;
Captures a unique perspective- with care - can be virtual or in person
Increase personal confidence and visibility of a group/issue

CROWDSOURCING VIDEO AND PHOTO EVIDENCE

Quantitative

Good for:
Good for public campaigning: helps mobilizing people and increase participation and visibility
Can gather large amounts of data
Increase visibility of an issue

One Methodology in Detail: Power Mapping and Analysis

This is a collaborative tool used where research participants can all contribute to the visual map of power holders and power relationship affecting your issue.

Power mapping is used to:

- Take into consideration all players/actors relevant to this research and identify the key player to target for action.
- Provide an analysis and visual presentation of where power relationships stand in relation to the issue(s) under research.
- Identify relationships between key players and assess relevance to the PAR.
- Identify further information in the form of research questions to further develop the power map and inform the PAR process.
- Involve everyone related to the PAR project

Materials needed: writing surfaces for decision makers, organized stakeholders, influencers, core constituencies, writing tools. Can be done virtually (such as Jamboard or Padlet) or in person.

Process

Once the group has defined its primary goal and research objectives, as the group who is the person who has the power to make decisions that achieve your goals? You have to be specific – name the person and the role that they play. Please note that this may not be one person but a number of people.

Write the names, designate a specific color, and place them on the designated ‘decision-makers’ location.

Ask the group to consider the core constituencies – the groups of people directly affected who may not be organised - designate a different color.

- Mapping the Players
- Taking each player at a time, ask the group where this player sits in terms of:
 - Influence over the decision
 - Support for our goal.
- Place the relevant post-it note on the appropriate spot on the grid.

This step should involve a lot of discussion and conversation- the aim is to share the knowledge in the room. Do not get stuck and/or argue about the exact placement of the players on the map- the focus is on the positions relative to each other than the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ placement.

Identifying Relationships

Have the group analyze the power map and placements of all players. Ask them about any known links between any of the players and draw lines between them to show the connections. This will help identify potential avenues for the research team to reach decision-makers and influence the influencers indirectly.

Research Questions

These should arise from the conversations taking place while trying to place each player on the map. Questions that may need some interrogation: What view(s) does this player have about our issue? Who are the key leaders in a named stakeholder institution, and what are their relationships with decision-makers? Political factions or alliances of decision-makers?

Analysis

Which people or groups influence the decision-makers and support your issue? How can you involve them? Think about the decision-makers – what communities do they identify with? Where do they spend their time? How does your issue affect their constituencies? Are they subject to competing views or priorities? For critical players – what is holding them back from supporting our position? Are there people or groups influential in terms of power which you should recruit as allies? For those groups or individuals where you have no direct relationship and who may be necessary to the work, how will you connect with them? Are there 2 – 3 apparent spots on the map where your actions may have the most significant impact? Who are the players who are critical to our success? How can we influence the decision-makers? Who influences the decision-makers, and how can they hear us? For any of the not supportive players, can we move to them to be more supportive?



HOW ARE YOU POTENTIALLY REPRODUCING THE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION WITHIN YOUR OWN PROCESS?

THERE IS NO ONE WAY OF CARRYING OUT PAR, THE ACTUAL METHODS ARE DIVERSE, AND DIALOGUE IS CENTRAL TO THE PROCESS. DIALOGUE DURING PAR TAKES PLACE IN MEETINGS AND OTHER ENGAGEMENTS BETWEEN THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS. THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS SHOULD ALLOW FOR TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO IDENTIFY AND INTERROGATE EMERGING ISSUES AND REFLECT ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS TO MAKE SENSE OF THE DATA AND WORK ON FINDING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION POINTS AND FURTHER RESEARCH.



HOW ARE YOU ENSURING THIS IS NOT AN EXTRACTIVE PROCESS THAT DOES NOT ABANDON THE COMMUNITY AFTER THOSE WITH MORE POWER DOCUMENT THE RESEARCH AS THEIR KNOWLEDGE?



Example from PAR work focused on education in prisons

Brainstorming dissemination: Who do we want to influence? Given the “good news” emanating from the statistical data, confirmed by the interviews with women, correction officers, university faculty and the children, and given our policy goals to re-establish both Pell grants (federal) and TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) grants (in New York State) for women and men in prison, we (those of us not in prison at the time) met with members of the Black, Puerto Rican, Latino and Asian Legislative Caucus in New York State to solicit their advice on converting research to policy and advocacy. Then Chairman Jeffrion Aubry told us, “We can only support this report IF you can demonstrate statistically that access to higher education yields tax savings, reduction in crime and no risk to public safety.” And so we did. Michael Jacobson, a prominent criminologist volunteered to conduct a cost/benefit analysis of college-in-education for a hypothetical group of 100 women, estimating annual costs of additional incarceration to be \$30,000 and annual cost for college in prison to be \$2,500. Jacobson determined that providing access to college in prison is far more cost effective than reincarceration, foster care, health complications and diminished employability.

As a group we deliberated and ultimately decided to create multiple products, written in distinct “voices” – policy, scholarship, organizing and popular culture. On the official report, we determine that authorship would be alphabetical but Michelle’s name would be listed first, to increase the perceived legitimacy/university grounding of the research. We sent copies of the final report to every governor in the country and all the state legislators in New York State, streaming quotes alongside statistics, cost-benefit analyses and photographs, opening with a letter of gratitude from a college graduate sent upstate to Albion Prison. We produced 1000 evidence-based advocacy brochures, in English and Spanish, flooding community -based organizations, advocacy groups and local libraries, and postcards with quotes from the research, “Get tough on crime, educate men and women in prison!” “Since my mother has been enrolled in college all she wants to talk about it school, and reading and homework!” “As a Correction Officer, I don’t like the college program much – since I can barely afford college for myself or my kids – but I know they are reading at night, not getting in fights and won’t be coming back.”

The full research team has co-authored multiple chapters and articles in widely recognized methods texts, academic journals, corrections journals and local newspapers (including the first edition of this Handbook on Qualitative Research in Psychology), and as co-researchers are newly released from prison, our “we” expands as we speak in person across the state, and country.

Stoudt, B. G., Fox, M., & Fine, M. (2011). Awakening injustice in a new century. In Conflict, interdependence, and justice (pp. 165-191). Springer, New York, NY.

Building a Campaign Through PAR

- A CAMPAIGN IS A SERIES OF ACTIONS AND EVENTS THAT ARE AIMED AT ACHIEVING A GOAL OR RESULTS. OUR DEFINED GOAL IN THIS CASE MAY BE TO BUILD A GRASSROOTS PEOPLE-LED, AND COMMUNITY DRIVEN MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND JUSTICE. A CAMPAIGN HAS CHARACTERISTICS WHICH INCLUDE HAVING A VISION, STRATEGY, MOBILIZATION AND SUPPORT STRUCTURE, HAVING A LEADERSHIP, ALLIES, TARGETS AND SOLIDARITY ACTIONS. THE STRATEGY FOR THE CAMPAIGN SHOULD THEREFORE BE GUIDED BY A WELL-THOUGHT CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORK.
- CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORK CAN BE DEVELOPED THROUGH THE PAR PROCESS BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT COMMUNITIES HAVE THE WISDOM THEY NEED TO MAKE THE CHANGES THEY WANT TO MAKE.
- THE MAIN GOAL OF THIS CAMPAIGN CAN BE IDENTIFIED COLLECTIVELY AS COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE CARRYING OUT THEIR PAR THROUGH USE OF THE VARIOUS TOOLS THAT ARE USED IN PAR TO COLLECT DATA. THE PAR PROCESS IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF PARTICIPATORY DATA COLLECTION, REFLECTION AND ACTION, THEREFORE, THE CAMPAIGN IS NOT AN ISOLATED ONCE-OFF INITIATIVE OR ONE-OFF EVENT, BUT IT IS A PART OF A SET OF PRIORITIES WHICH INCLUDE COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND MOVEMENT BUILDING, MEDIA WORK, ALLIANCE-BUILDING, AND OTHER ACTIONS.



WHAT IS COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP?

- COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP DURING PAR IS GUIDED BY THE IDEA OF SHARING POWER AND RESOURCES. IT IS BUILT ON A LEADERSHIP STYLE THAT IS COLLECTIVE. FOR COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP TO BE A REALITY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO BUILD TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE IN THE COMMUNITY. BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVES ASSISTING OTHER PEOPLE FIND THEIR OWN VOICES. FOR THE GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES TO FIND THEIR VOICES, THERE IS NEED FOR THEIR MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT IN ALL DECISION MAKING PROCESSES OF THIS CAMPAIGN SO THAT THERE IS A SHARED PURPOSE AND VISION. PAR IS HELD TOGETHER THROUGH ENGAGING IN RESPECTFUL DISCUSSIONS AND DIALOGUE WHICH SHOULD ASSIST IN DEFINING THE SHARED EXPECTATIONS OF EACH ONE IN THE MOVEMENT.
 - PAR HOLDS THAT ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RELATIONS ARE COLLECTIVE NOT INDIVIDUAL. A NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIP MUTUALLY CONNECTS PEOPLE AND THESE BRING ABOUT THE HARMONY AND WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY. THEREFORE, COMMUNITY DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE MADE BY THE INDIVIDUAL BUT AS A COLLECTIVE. FOLLOWING THIS BELIEF, THE CAMPAIGN IS THEREFORE SHOULD TO BE LED BY THE GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES COLLECTIVELY WITH THE LEADERS DEMOCRATICALLY NOMINATED AND ACCOUNTABLE BACK TO THE CONSTITUENCIES THEY LEAD.
-

Guiding Principles of PAR and Collective leadership (to be negotiated with the participants)

Elements	Shared/Collective Leadership Approach
Structure	Non-hierarchical, a flat structure guided by democracy and consensus
Leadership	Largely negotiated and informed by context
Decision-making	Big decision involve everyone, and the participants in their respective areas
Inclusion	Involve and include all grassroots people, dismantling sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, ageism, classism, religious and cultural fundamentalism, and all forms of discrimination.
Diversity	Equality which is not based on being alike but celebrate differences
Communication	Multidirectional and transparent, information should not be a privilege of a few people in the movement, but must be accessible to everyone
Processes	Collectively with the research participants and in collaboration with community groups and movement. Harnessing collective intelligence.
Accountability	Collective accountability, research participants are responsible for making sure individuals fulfil their responsibilities, and are answerable to the collective

Through building a people driven movement, people build counter power as they reject the place that the system has designated for them and create their own spaces of safety, alternative knowledge, care, strategizing and ultimately transformative change. During the campaign, there is need to invite, engage and ignite an examination of how we organise ourselves, and our community in a transparent manner.

Foundations of Participatory Action Research



INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

- ACTION ADDRESSES THE DIFFERENT SOURCES OF PEOPLE'S OPPRESSION AND CAN OCCUR AT BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE LEVEL
- THROUGH ACTION WE LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THE WORLD WORKS, ABOUT THE SOURCES OF PEOPLE'S OPPRESSION AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO CHALLENGE THIS, AND ULTIMATELY WE LEARN ABOUT AND TRANSFORM OURSELVES
- WE LEARN WITH MIND AND HEART AND BECOME AWARE AND EMANCIPATED
- ACTION CAN PRODUCE CHANGES IN PARTICIPANTS THAT GO BEYOND INTELLECTUAL UNDERSTANDING



CONSCIENTISATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

- THE STARTING POINT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IS CONSCIENTISATION, A PROCESS THROUGH WHICH THE OPPRESSED BECOME AWARE OF THEIR OPPRESSION, ITS ROOTS AND ARE EMPOWERED TO TAKE ACTION TO TRANSFORM THEIR SITUATION. PAR IS A PROCESS THROUGH WHICH PEOPLE CAN BE CONSCIENTISED
- PAR AIMS FOR CHANGE IN THE CONDITIONS OF PEOPLE AND THEIR COMMUNITIES. THE FOCUS OF CHANGE COULD BE AT FAMILY LEVEL WHERE PEOPLE PUSH BACK ON PRACTICES THAT EXCLUDE THEM, OR IT COULD BE AT COMMUNITY LEVEL WHERE PEOPLE ORGANISE TO OPEN THE SPACE FOR THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING. BEYOND THE MICRO LEVEL, CHANGE ACTIONS COULD FOCUS ON EXPOSING CORRUPTION OR STATE FAILURE, PRESSING FOR IMPROVED OR NEW LAWS AND POLICIES, FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF INSTITUTIONS OR BETTER SERVICE DELIVERY.
- PAR IS THEREFORE A TOOL TO SUPPORT ACTIVISM AROUND A PARTICULAR ISSUE WHICH PEOPLE IDENTIFY AS IMPORTANT TO THEM
- PAR SUPPORTS ACTION INFORMED BY ANALYSIS AND AWARENESS CREATED THROUGH THE RESEARCH PROCESS, BUT IT ALSO ENABLES CRITICAL REFLECTION ON ACTIONS AND THEIR OUTCOMES, TO DEEPEN KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE STRUCTURES OF OPPRESSION AND HOW THEY CAN BE CHALLENGED. THIS NEW KNOWLEDGE FEEDS INTO A NEW CYCLE OF RESEARCH AND ACTION. THIS PROCESS OF RESEARCH-ACTION REFLECTION IS CALLED PRAXIS AND IS THE FOUNDATION FOR CONSCIENTIZATION



AFTER TAKING ACTION, REFLECT TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY, HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THIS? HOW ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT IMPACT?



Ivonne Navarro

Foundations of Participatory Action Research Continued



RESEARCHER FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS



PAR FACILITATORS/RESEARCHERS DO NOT SEE THEMSELVES AS OCCUPYING A PRIVILEGED POSITION OUTSIDE OF THE WORLD THAT THEY COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS TO UNDERSTAND



THE RESEARCH IS NOT NEUTRAL AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE STUDY, INCLUDING THAT OF THE PAR FACILITATOR, IS INTEGRAL TO THE PROCESS AND THE KNOWLEDGE GENERATED



AT THE CORE, PAR IS ABOUT REFLECTING ON AND CHALLENGING THE TYPICAL POWER OF RESEARCHERS TO DECIDE, INTERPRET, MAKE KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATE THIS TO OTHERS. CHALLENGING THE POWER OF THE 'KNOWLEDGEABLE' OUTSIDER IS A FIRST STEP IN THE PROCESS OF CONSCIENTISING AND EMPOWERING PEASANT AND WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE



PAR DEMANDS HIGH LEVELS OF OPENNESS, TRANSPARENCY AND FLEXIBILITY IN THE CHOICES BEING MADE THROUGHOUT THE RESEARCH PROCESS



RESEARCHERS NEED TO OPENLY AND HONESTLY RECOGNISE THEIR OWN POWER AND SOMETIMES THEIR UNRECOGNISED SELF-INTEREST IN THE PRESERVATION OF UNEQUAL POWER. PAR IS A PROCESS OF (FURTHER) RADICALISING THE OUTSIDE RESEARCHERS TOO



ARE THERE SOLUTIONS THAT ARE NOT STUCK IN THE LEGALITIES OF THE ISSUES THAT ARE VALUED BY THE COMMUNITY?



**HOW ARE YOU CRACKING OPEN TO IMAGINATION OF WHAT ELSE IS POSSIBLE?
IS YOUR PROCESS ABLE TO INTRODUCE WAYS FOR THE IMAGINATION TO
EXPAND?**



Compassion Contagion

OPENING UP THE IMAGINATION IS AN IMPORTANT STEP THAT HAS TO BE THOUGHTFULLY DONE. DOING SOMETHINGS WHERE YOU ARE GATHERING “DATA” AS A WAY OF BUILDING TOOLS. GATHER DATA TO BUILD THE TOOLS THEMSELVES, AS IN THE CASE OF PARTICIPATORY SURVEY DESIGN. THIS IS A WAY TO HAVE SHORT TERM PROJECTS INFORMING LONG-TERM PROJECTS.



WHAT COMMUNITY BASED SOLUTIONS ARE EMERGING FROM THE INFORMATION/STORIES/DATA YOU AND YOUR COLLABORATORS GATHERED?



WHAT SOLUTIONS ARE EMERGING FROM THE DATA THAT ARE BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE COMMUNITY?

Following years of complaints by villagers near a coal mine owned by Mahanadi Coalfields Limited in the Sundargarh district of Odisha, a number of organizations joined together to create a “community-led ‘groundtruthing process’” to identify, assess, and fight the negative impacts of the mine. First, the community identified its priority concerns: excessive dust, spontaneous and continuous fire in overburden dumps, and water pollution. Next, community representatives were designated for training in preparation for the groundtruthing process. CPR-N and its partners then shared information about relevant laws, standards, and conditions the company had agreed to in exchange for permission to operate the mine. Where information was missing, CPR-N and its partners provided support to the community representatives to file requests with administrative agencies using India’s Right to Information (RTI) law. With the legal framework in view, the community representatives designed the groundtruthing process, collecting primary and secondary data related to the priority concerns that could be used as evidence of violations of the clearance conditions placed on the company, regulations, or laws. Community representatives took photographs, collected media articles, and obtained copies of Monitoring and Compliance Reports concerning the mine through RTI applications. With these data in hand, the representatives drafted complaints alleging violations and backed by evidence. They filed these complaints with the Odisha State Pollution Control Board and the regional office of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change. These complaint letters sought action by the agencies to remedy the community’s priority concerns. Less than one year after the complaints were filed, remedial measures had been initiated to respond to the complaints concerning two of the three priority concerns: excessive dust and spontaneous fire in overburden dumps.

Ref:<https://www.cprindia.org/research/reports/closing-enforcement-gap-groundtruthing-environmental-violations-sundargarh-odisha>



Ana Filipa dos Santos Lopes



HOW HAS YOUR METHODOLOGY CONTRIBUTED TO A MORE EXPANSIVE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER?



WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER A "SUCCESS" FOR THIS PROJECT?



DO YOU ANTICIPATE EFFORTS TO DELEGITIMIZE YOUR WORK? WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO BUILD IN A RESPONSE?



A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

Thank you for entering in this conversation with us.

The words and exercises and invitations in this hand and heartbook emerged from our collective voices in the Legal Empowerment Lab. We are activists, organizers, educators, lawyers, and researchers and we are honored to now call you a part of our community.

We hope you have found a way to shape the words and invitations to allow them to respond to the needs in your own communities.

If you like, we invite you to share your thoughts with us about the experience of engaging with this workbook (email us at elab.bernstein@nyu.edu). As we receive feedback, we will continue to update the file available on our website to reflect your voices and perspectives.

Join us for our Legal Empowerment Tea Times, a gentle space for building community.

Visit our Twitter account to build and imagine with us.

We hope this is only the beginning of our connection. It is a joy to share this journey with you.

- **OUR TWITTER HANDLE IS: @LE_LEARNINGLAB**
- **YOU CAN SEE MORE RESOURCES AND CONNECT WITH US THROUGH OUR WEBSITE FOR THE LEARNING LAB: [HTTPS://WWW.LAW.NYU.EDU/CENTERS/BERNSTEIN-INSTITUTE/LEGAL_EMPOWERMENT/LEARNING_LAB](https://www.law.nyu.edu/centers/bernstein-institute/legal_empowerment/learning_lab)**
- **OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL HOLDS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CRITICAL LEGAL EMPOWERMENT AND CAN BE FOUND AT THIS ADDRESS: [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/CHANNEL/UCNKBZ3BCRXLNTGPUECWGJAA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNKBZ3BCRXLNTGPUECWGJAA)**





Robert and Helen Bernstein
Institute for Human Rights
NYU SCHOOL OF LAW

The Bernstein Institute for Human Rights at NYU School of Law advances legal empowerment through participatory research, education, and advocacy. Legal empowerment is a human rights based approach that centers people in their own fight for justice and creates opportunities to know, use, shape, and transform the laws and systems that impact their lives.