Participatory Action Research: a Human Rights and Capability Approach

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Part 1: The Theory

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RE-InVEST
REBUILDING AN INCLUSIVE, VALUE-BASED EUROPE OF SOLIDARITY AND TRUST THROUGH SOCIAL INVESTMENTS

Maynooth University
National University of Ireland Maynooth
Social Sciences Institute

Introduction

'Sometimes silence can be a tool of oppression; when you are silenced… it is not simply that you do not speak but that you are barred from participation in a conversation which nevertheless involves you' (Ahmed, 2010 p.xvi)

This guide provides an overview and detailed explanation of the innovative methodological approach, the Participatory Action Human Rights and Capability Approach, PAHRCA, developed by the RE-InVEST project. It outlines human rights, capability, and Participatory Action Research (PAR) theoretical approaches and brings together these key principles and steps of the PAHRCA methodology. It is written for researchers, academics and policy makers in the broad social sciences areas, and NGOs and vulnerable[1] groups seeking to gain a more in-depth understanding of the theories and concepts underpinning PAR and PAHRCA.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the practical implementation handbook, *Participatory Action Research: A Human Rights and Capability Approach: The Practice*. This provides additional material on case studies of the implementation of PAHRCA in practice, sample participatory methods and other practical information for those implementing PAHRCA or providing students with case study material on this approach.

Our overall research project used mixed methods and included the qualitative PAHRCA approach alongside quantitative methods and theoretical analysis. Please consult our various national and syntheses research reports and briefing papers to find out more about our research findings (www.RE-InVEST.eu).

RE-InVEST was funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 research programme under Grant Agreement No 649447. It is an innovative academic-civil society partnership that involves 19 organisations (universities, research centres and civil society organisations working with vulnerable groups). RE-InVEST is investigating the philosophical, institutional and empirical foundations of an inclusive Europe of solidarity and trust. It draws on capability and human rights based participatory approaches to examine how the European Union Social Investment package can be strengthened. A key principle for our collective work is "not to think about them, without them". This has enabled the voice of the most vulnerable to be directly heard in our research, and therefore, to bring it into EU, regional, national and local policy making.

Following discussions during the research proposal phase we developed the PAHRCA qualitative methodological approach which respected human rights and capability theory principles and which sought to be as participative and transformative as possible. A draft PAHRCA methodological toolkit/guide was then developed and circulated to participants prior to the Maynooth University H2020 training conference held in Ireland in September 2015.

The developmental process further developed the theory and concepts of the methodological framework and co-trained participants in the methods as a way of implementing the participative methodology in practice. This process continued throughout the period of the RE-InVEST H2020 project with the further development of the theoretical approach and learning from the practical implementation of the methods. This iterative praxis-based process informed the development of the final methodological framework and this Guide.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) views participants as co-researchers who have special knowledge about their own situation. Hence they are not only 'interviewed' but take part in research by engaging in, examining, interpreting, and reflecting on their own social world, shaping their sense of identity. As researchers, scholar activists, NGO workers and activists we have worked collectively to understand and implement PAR through a co-construction of knowledge approach to understand and address vulnerability, poverty and social problems across the EU. In developing the PAHRCA approach we hope we have contributed to what Farruga and Gerrard (2016 p.277) call an unruly and critical research, or, in other words 'an alternative politics of research'; one that challenges assumptions underpinning hegemonic or orthodox research approaches and policies.

1 The terms vulnerable, *marginalised*, *disadvantaged* and *socially excluded* are used interchangeably throughout this handbook to refer to the vulnerable people who are the focus of the RE-InVEST project and PAHRCA approach.

The methodological framework PAHRCA brings together participatory, human rights and capability theory into one research approach. The aim of the research approach is to bring people into processes which involve them challenging and changing their own world and participating in the co-production of knowledge. The goal is not only data extraction, or the production of knowledge, but is about working with vulnerable groups to empower them to understand and challenge the structures that cause their marginalisation and oppression. In short, it involves a longer period of relationship building where actors in the research – academics, intermediary groups like NGOs and vulnerable groups – are considered co-researchers who are jointly co-constructing knowledge and then undertaking some form of collective action that brings that knowledge as a form of power into the public sphere.

PAHRCA is a five-step flexible approach

1. **Identify, meet and develop agreement with partner NGO/intermediary**
2. **Preliminary 'meet ups' with participants – trust building**
3. **Developmental & capacity building: educate & implement human rights & capability approach: capacity building**
4. **Inquiry/data gathering/analysis: method of inquiry**
5. **Undertake action/outcome**

Creating a more democratic and inclusive form of knowledge

Gowan (2010) has described political contestation of policy in terms of 'sin talk', 'sick talk' and 'system talk' where discourses lay the causes of exclusion at the feet of moral culpability, pathological incapacity or structural inequality respectively. PAHRCA research situated experiences clearly within 'system talk' and demonstrated capacity to reveal new insights, priorities, and definitions and created a more democratic and inclusive form of knowledge than the limited dominant policy knowledge. Our aim is to move away from research which disguises, sometimes intentionally, the reality of the impact of policy on well-being of the vulnerable or justifies the structural violence embedded in policy failures and inherent in marketised forms of service delivery.

Our experience convinces us that the PAHRCA research approach is an extremely innovative and useful approach. It co-constructs, in a participative and 'bottom-up' manner, new knowledges of social and economic policies and, most importantly the experience of vulnerable people of these policies. It is also a method of 'action' that brings this knowledge into the 'public sphere' of academic, NGO and policy debates. PAHRCA is, therefore, at least a 'potential' power that can be drawn on to empower the voice of the excluded and challenge social injustice (Gaventa and Cornwall-2003).

This guide is not just based on theory and policy ideas but is also rooted in, and reflects, the practice of praxis and, therefore, includes and reflects the RE-InVEST experience of the implementation of PAHRCA. All of the participants in RE-InVEST contributed in an iterative and participative way to co-produce the methodological approach set out in this guide. The theory and methods are based on the ones we developed and used to undertake the RE-InVEST project and they include feedback and reflections from our attempts to make the PAHRCA work in the real world.

PAHRCA is a flexible participatory action research methodology and approach. It can be undertaken by NGOs, groups and organisations themselves along with vulnerable groups, or by NGOs in partnership with academic researchers, or by policy makers and NGOs, or by policy makers, NGOs and vulnerable groups – or any combination of the above groups. The most important principle is that the voice of vulnerable groups and those working with them are central to the research process.

Readers who want to know more about the practical methods of PAHRCA and detailed case studies of its implementation, should refer to the NGO practical implementation handbook, *Participatory Action Research: The Practice*.

For readers who want to know more about individual country findings for our different research questions or, for our overall analysis please follow the links to our publications at the end of this hand book.

Similarly for readers who want to hear first hand about the experiences and views of the co-researchers from the vulnerable groups please refer to these links at the end of this handbook.

The main sections of this guide include

Introduction:
This provides background information about the process of developing the guide and PAHRCA research methodology, references to the accompanying NGO Hand Book and the contents.

Part One:
Outlines the human rights and capability theoretical framework and connects it to the theory of participatory action research. It also outlines the links between these theories and our research approach and unpacks key concepts including power, transformation, participation and impact.

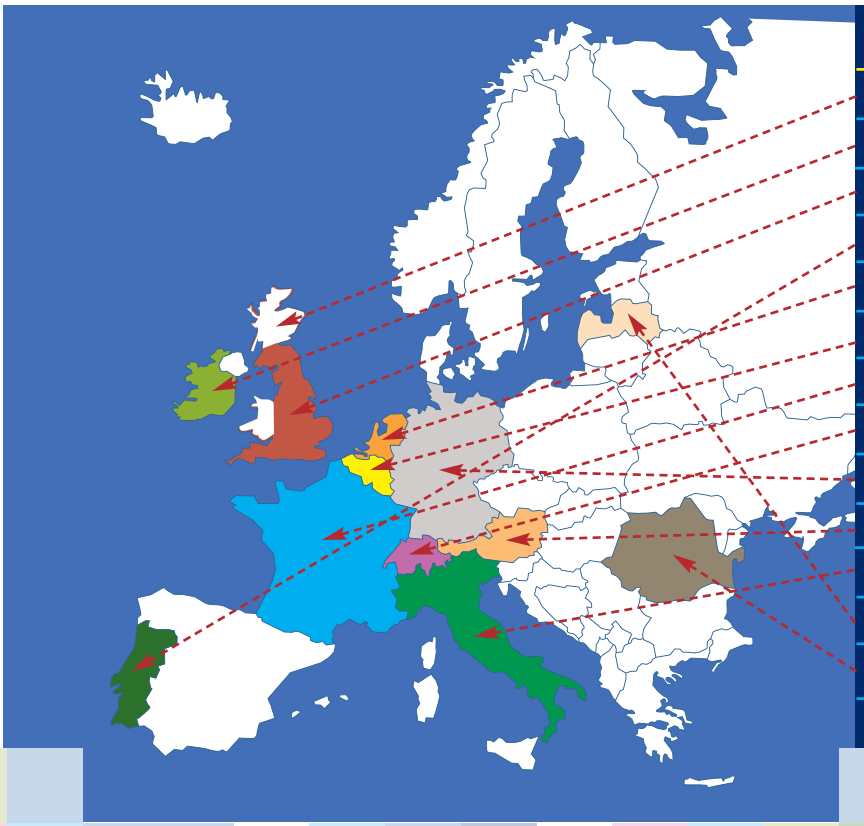
Part Two:
Provides an overview of the key steps within the PAHRCA methodology and details from four case studies the implementation of PAHRCA undertaken as part of RE-InVEST.

Part Three:
Outlines some key advice and learning from practice regarding the role of the academic, approaches to ethics, and concludes with reflections on our experience of PAHRCA and provides our main learnings for academics and policy makers implementing a PAR human rights and capability approach with vulnerable groups, and NGOs in the areas of social and economic policy.

Part Four:
Links and Bibliography

We hope that this guide informs, educates and inspires you to consider the implementation of a participatory action approach using human rights, capabilities and co-construction in your research and engagement.

Our principal advice to those undertaking PAHRCA is to be flexible, have fun along the way, and understand that PAR requires a significant commitment of time, energy and values. Our collective experience of implementing PAHRCA has been one of enthusiasm toward its core aim of involving and empowering the excluded and vulnerable through a participatory human rights and capability approach. At the end of every participative action research project we have undertaken, we have felt that it has always been worth it, as has taken us take another step, together, on the journey toward a better society and a more inclusive Europe.



Country	Issue
Scotland:	Lone parents
Ireland:	Housing
England:	Mental Health
Portugal:	Work
Netherlands:	Housing
Belgium:	Immigration
France:	Immigration
Switzerland:	NEET
Germany:	Work
Austria:	Work
Italy:	Vulnerabilities
Latvia:	Disability & Work
Romania:	Migration

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Contents

Part One:

Theoretical Approach: Introduction to Human Rights and Capabilities

Human Rights

Human rights embody the universal values and the core elements of what constitutes well-being and a good life. Human rights are the basic and fundamental, rights and freedoms that belong to everyone. Human rights transform by empowering people. These rights are laid out in international law, including treaties, which contain the provisions which give human rights legal effect, and are widely supported. However, their realisation depends on government support. Bengtsson (2001) proposes two formulations. A human right could either be a legal basic right in national law, which is legally enforceable, or it could be a universal right, which can be provided in a welfare state. In both cases, policy measures – either directed at the household or an organisation that in turn assists a disadvantaged household – may support the implementation of the right.

Ideas about human rights have evolved over many centuries and gained strong support after World War II when the United Nations adopted the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights – which set out for the first time the human rights and fundamental freedoms shared by all human beings without discrimination of any kind. Human Rights are universally agreed basic standards that aim to ensure that every person is treated with dignity and respect; they are interdependent and indivisible, meaning that rights are linked and not protecting one right may impact on another, they belong to all people without discrimination. Usually set out in law, through international or regional treaties, or national legislation, they form a legal statement of universally accepted principles of how the state should treat its citizens and other people living within its jurisdiction. Human Rights include Civil and Political Rights, such as the right to life, the right to a fair trial and the right not to be subjected to torture; and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, such as the right to work, to join a trade union, to health, to housing, to education, and to an adequate standard of living. Specific groups are protected in specific treaties such as women, children, people with disabilities, minorities, and migrants. For people affected by social injustice, poverty and social exclusion, the usage of a rights-terminology has proven to change their perspective by making them aware of their rights and the ways in which their current situation compromises these rights.

Important international treaties that define social and economic rights

- Article 25 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (ratified by the UN General Assembly in 1948) states that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control"
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (UN General Assembly, 1966), Article 11, states that "States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent".

However, it remains difficult to engage economic and social rights mechanisms. Despite arguments affirming the justiciability of economic and social rights (Marlier et al., 2007), traditional legal methods to challenge such rights violations are rare. States are obligated to give effect to economic and social rights (CESCR, 1998, para 1), yet these rights often rely on non-legal measures of implementation.

Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBAs) have been developed in order to address this. HRBA is based, fundamentally, upon the principles of accountability, participation and empowerment whereby states (duty bearers) are made accountable through various local, national and international processes to fulfil their obligations, arising from international instruments, to the 'rights holders' (citizens, especially those whose rights are violated). It aims to empower the rights holders to advocate effectively by using the language of international human rights norms, based on indicators and benchmarks, to measure compliance.

The HRBA is concerned with the process as well as the outcome of human rights implementation and recognises people as key actors in their own development, rather than passive recipients (UNICEF 2004). Participation is both a means and a goal, strategies are empowering, both outcomes and processes are monitored and evaluated, and programmes focus on vulnerable, disadvantaged, and excluded groups. The Danish Institute of Human Rights and the UN notes that central to the premise of HRBA is that human beings have inalienable rights and deprivation of needs is a denial of rights.[2] However, it also notes that there are also some notable differences between these needs and rights:

- Human rights go beyond the notion of physical needs and include a more holistic perspective of human beings in terms of their civil, political, social, economic, and cultural roles.
- Rights always trigger obligations and responsibilities, whereas needs do not.
- Rights cannot be addressed without raising the question of who has obligations in relation to these rights. This automatically raises questions about the actions and accountability of duty bearers.
- People are often expected to be grateful when their needs are met; this is not the case when people's rights are met. **This reminds us not to campaign for 'the needy', but rather to support vulnerable people as equal human beings in their efforts to claim their rights and address the poverty, suffering and injustice in their lives.**

A human rights approach, therefore, includes a number of key principles (UNICEF, 2004) including:

- Participation is both a means and a goal.
- Strategies are empowering.
- Both outcomes and processes are monitored and evaluated.
- Analysis includes all stakeholders.
- Programmes focus on marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded groups.
- Both top-down and bottom-up approaches are used in synergy.
- Measurable goals and targets are important in programming.
- Strategic partnerships are developed and sustained.

By adapting human rights obligations to local situations, the HRBA aims to effect lasting change in the relationship between the duty bearers and the rights holders (Hearne and Kenna, 2014). The shift in focus onto the role of excluded groups is central to this understanding of human rights. As Stammers (2009:249) describes, "historically, movements that have constructed and struggled for human rights have typically challenged arbitrary power and privilege... social movement struggles around human rights have contained a dimension which points towards democratising all forms of social relations".

The ideals, concepts and strategies of rights continue to inspire and empower the vulnerable to believe that they deserve, and are entitled, to live in human dignity with adequate standards of living, social justice and real democracy.

Capabilities

Capabilities refer to the opportunities or freedoms of persons to opt for specific forms of functioning – beings or doings – based on a person's resources (Sen, 1999; Burchardt and Vizard, 2007; Nussbaum, 2011). Or more broadly, they are defined as *'the real freedom to lead the kind of life people have reasons to value'* (Sen 1999). For the realisation of the opportunities, capabilities need the input of resources and conversion factors. Resources refer to the material aid a person can mobilise (income, goods and services). Personal conversion factors, such as skills, and social conversion factors, such as social norms and institutions, are needed to achieve well-being.

2 https:/www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/DimensionOfPoverty/Pages/Index.aspx
"Wherever we lift one soul from a life of poverty, we are defending human rights. And whenever we fail in this mission, we are failing human rights". —Kofi Annan United Nations Secretary General

The capabilities approach (CA), developed by Amartya Sen (2001), develops the human rights approach and argues that human development requires consideration of what resources are available to people. What are people actually able to do, and to be, in given social, political and economic contexts. This tends to open up analysis to a range of aspects of the social and political system. Capabilities refer to the choices that individuals can achieve (see Figure 1). Hence, capabilities depend on (a) the amount of resources at one's disposal, (b) the 'conversion factors' that determine the potential outcomes of the transformation process, given the allocation of resources, and (c) the freedom one has to choose (see Figure 1). Socio-economic vulnerability can therefore be the result of a lack of resources, constraining conversion factors, and / or lack of free choice.

Directly linking rights and capabilities, Nussbaum's (2000, 2003, 2005) ten 'central capabilities,' are fundamental human entitlements inherent in the very idea of minimum social justice, or a life worthy of human dignity. Her capabilities list includes many of the entitlements that are also stressed in the human rights movement (see Figure 2).

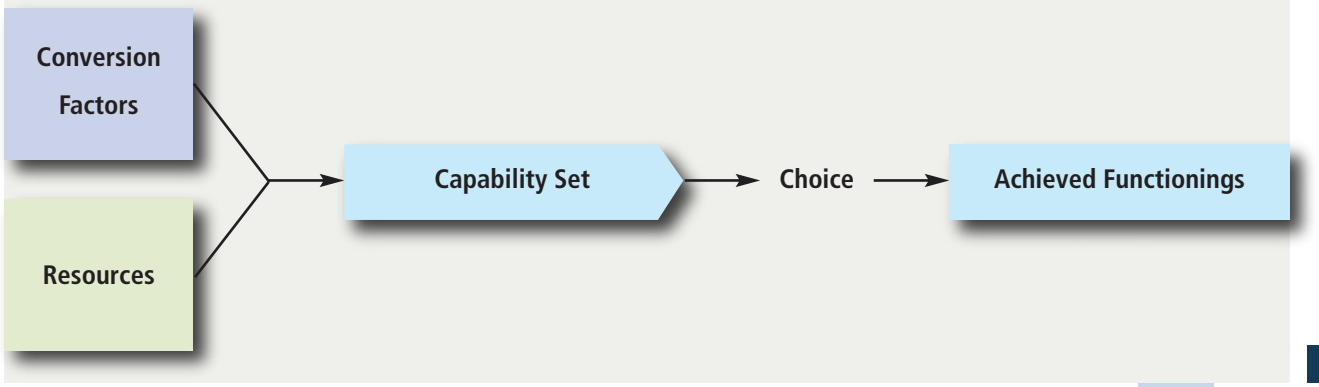
Figure 2: Nussbaum's Ten Capabilities

Realising Martha Nussbaum's 'Capabilities' for Everyone

For democracy to thrive, Nussbaum suggests developing ten capabilities that determine "what people actually are and what they are able to be"

Life	able to live a full human life of normal length
Bodily Health	able to enjoy bodily health, including adequate nourishment and capacity for reproduction
Bodily Integrity	able to move freely and safely from place to place
Sense Imagination and thought	able to make full use of the senses to experience, think, reason, imagine and create
Emotion	able to experience attachment to people, things and experiences and to express feelings of love, longing, grieving and justifiable anger
Practical Reasoning	able to conceive of the good life and to engage in critical reflection
Affiliation	able to live with others in mutual respect, understanding the position of and worth of 'others', and establishing the basis of self-respect and non discrimination
Other Species	having respect for animals and plants
Play	ability to laugh and enjoy recreational and playful activity
Environmental Control	able to engage with the processes and choices that affect our political and material lives, including rights of political participation, property holding and employment

Figure 1: From resources and conversion factors to achieved functionings (individual well-being)



[3] See Haffner et al. (2016, 2017) for more detail.

Nussbaum argues that where humans are concerned, the basis of these entitlements lies not in rationality, but, rather, in the bare fact of being a living human being, and having a minimal level of agency or capacity for activity. That is enough to give a human being a dignity that is equal to that of every other human being (Nussbaum, 2008). These central entitlements are thus prepolitical, belonging to people independently of and prior to membership in a state; and they generate constraints that political institutions must meet, if they are to be even minimally just. The CA in this way takes issue with human rights approaches that consider rights to result only from laws and institutions.

However, Nussbaum also highlights that the word 'capability' does not by itself suggest the idea of an urgently important entitlement grounded in an idea of basic justice. On the other hand, human rights language helps us perform that task (see also Sen, 2004). When used as in the sentence 'A has a right to have the basic political liberties secured to her by her government', the language of rights reminds us that people have justified and urgent claims to certain types of treatment, treatment that secures their central capabilities—no matter what the world around them has done about that. She argues that the human rights tradition, which can be affected by vagueness and lack of clarity should be supplemented by the CA which provides an analysis of what rights are in practice.

An anthropological understanding of capabilities and human rights — the receiver, doer, judge

We too bow down to power – not to that of a dictator and a political bureaucracy allied with him, but to the anonymous power of the market, of success, of public opinion, of 'common sense' — or rather of common nonsense — and of the machine whose servants we have become. Our moral problem is man's indifference to himself.

(Eric Fromm, 1949:248)

As part of the RE-InVEST project, Bonvin and Laruffa (2017) further developed the human rights and capability theoretical framework distinguishing between three roles or anthropological dimensions of humans; as a receiver, a doer and a judge. The 'receiver' role reflects his/her need for adequate support (in terms of resources or services); the 'doer' role refers to his/her agency in transforming resources into valuable activities (including work, leisure, domestic activities, social participation etc. – this is an individual's '*opportunity for action / agency'*); finally, the role of 'judge' reflects his/her freedom to make choices and his/her voice in various 'collectives' to which s/he belongs. The role of judge or evaluator in an individual is described as having *'capability for voice'* and '*capacity to aspire'.* This role embodies the ability to formulate evaluations/ opinions/ thoughts/ aspirations in combination with the ability to build support/ acceptance/ consensus.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIMENSION	KIND OF DEPRIVATION
Receiver	Poverty: Material Deprivation: Lack of Relational Support/Care
Doer	Lack of opportunity for action/agency (paid work, care work, political participation, play etc
Judge	Adaptive Preferences (lack of "capacity to aspire"); Lack of Recognition

This multidimensional anthropological understanding and its related interpretation of social disadvantage should inform social policy aiming at the expansion of human capabilities. From this perspective, it is not enough to redistribute income (as in "passive" social policy) nor to help individuals to enter the labour market (as in "active" social policy). Capability-enhancing social policy should also open opportunities for action beyond paid work, for example recognising the value of care work and political participation. Furthermore, they should aim at the *recognition of the beneficiaries of social policy* and at *their involvement in the formulation of social policies* themselves. **Thus, rather than simply "beneficiaries", citizens should become co-authors of social policy interventions, establishing their goals and instruments**.

Figure 3: Nussbaum's Ten Capabilities

Welfare Model	Traditional Welfare State	Social Investment State	Capacitating Welfare State
Anthropological reference	Passive Receiver	Human Capital (Doer as Worker)	Receiver, Doer and Judge

This anthropological conception is reinforced by the human rights approach, where the double justification based on the categories of human vulnerability and human dignity confirm that human beings are fragile and needy ("receivers") but also active citizens with rights and dignity, capable of influencing the direction of social change ("doers" and "judges"). Therefore, combining the capability and human rights anthropological frameworks provides a complex view of human beings that creates the basis for the normative assessment of welfare policies and social investment strategies (see Figure 4).

Participation of the vulnerable in defining rights and capabilities

Burchardt and Vizard's (2011) understanding of the capability approach reserves a central role for broader processes of democratic deliberation and debate in the identification of valuable capabilities. Thus they supplement human rights-based capability selection with a process of giving the general public and those at risk of discrimination and disadvantage a defining role in identifying and justifying the selection of central and basic capabilities for any human rights-derived capability lists.

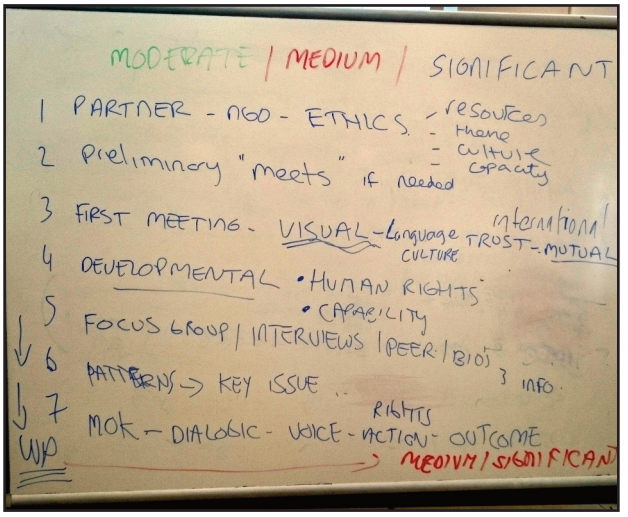
The method of human rights-based capability selection is set out in Vizard (2006, 2007) and involves working backwards (or inductively) from the actual standards recognised in core international human rights treaties to a set of underlying (or implicitly defined) states of being and doing that are viewed as being protected and promoted in international law.

Similarly, Alkire (2008) argues for a process of ongoing deliberative participation, an iterative participatory process, in order to identify the appropriate specific indicators or activities to pursue for basic capabilities, or needs. This can provide a greater understanding of the multidimensional aspects of poverty. This highlights the importance of participation of the disadvantaged in the development and definition of capabilities and rights from the starting point – rather than just expert definitions as a way to empower the disadvantaged and ensure measurements and indicators reflect their reality.

Participatory methods can capture the dynamic and multiple aspects that influence the transformation of opportunities into achievements. Participatory methods have the potential to expand capabilities by encouraging public debate and stimulating local-level action.

Participation and the capacitating welfare state

Public debate and democratic processes are the distinguishing feature of empowering collective action. In this perspective, democratic decision-making procedures are both 'an element and condition of social justice' (Young 1990: 23). It is, therefore, of crucial importance to take account of the issue of political agency of disadvantaged and socially excluded people. Such a perspective is clearly in line with the three anthropological dimensions underlying the capability approach outlined above.



However, neoliberal theories and policies focus on the necessity to emphasise individual agency at the expense of collective action and social solidarity. Participation is about the 'empowerment' of individuals to enter the labour market rather than being active agents in deciding their own lives and achieving a life of dignity. Furthermore, there is a democratic participation deficit as the poor suffer structural political exclusion due to high levels of economic inequality in a situation of "post-democracy" (Crouch 2004). In this context, poor people may well decide that it is not worth it to participate since politicians fail even to discuss the subjects that are relevant for the poor (Solt, 2008, 2010).

Capacitating welfare states, therefore, should not only guarantee a just distribution, but also promote process freedom, whereby individuals not only are respected and recognised but can also

participate in the co-construction of the welfare state itself.

A just distribution cannot compensate for disrespect and misrecognition or lack of participation. For instance, if welfare claimants feel humiliated to receive benefits because of the stigma attached to being 'on welfare', then this is not in line with the capacitating welfare state. The same is true for all welfare practices that may involve disrespect, such as high degrees of conditionality or benefits that tend to neglect the dignity of the citizen.

Thus we come to the central role of a participatory framework within our theoretical approach. The participatory aspect is certainly the most neglected both in the political and the academic discourse on welfare reform. Yet, a capacitating welfare state implies the democratisation of the welfare state (Fitzpatrick, 2002). Thus, while the mistake of the traditional welfare state was to leave citizens little control over welfare institutions (conceiving them only as receivers), neo-liberal approaches interpret empowerment 'in terms of market individualism and consumerism, ignoring democracy altogether' (Ibid: 162). By contrast, a capacitating welfare state requires establishing a 'deliberative welfare' which would aim for the elimination of those inequalities that impede the equal participation and enhance the capabilities of citizens in relation to their receiver *and* doer and judge dimensions.

This is the reason why the RE-InVEST project puts major emphasis on the participation of those in poverty in the design and implementation of social policies (Bonvin and Laruffa, 2017).

In the RE-InVEST framework, taking vulnerable people's voices seriously is a prerequisite, therefore, to promote their agency in a way that is valuable in their eyes, rather than imposing on them, in a top-down way, a view of agency that they may well not share. This then leads us to a further theoretical and practical task – how is such participation of the disadvantaged and vulnerable to be achieved in practice? And what approaches and theories enable us to develop a methodological framework to undertake this? In order to answer these challenges we have drawn on the theory and practice of Participatory Action Research and the co-construction of knowledge, and applied it to our human rights and capability theorisation, which is the subject of the next section.

Participatory Action Research

'the space for the exercise of such agency will not come simply as a gift from government. It will be wrought out of a political struggle by teachers and others within society, to create the material conditions for a free, open and democratically constructed practical discourse to emerge as a context for professional action'

(Elliott 2005:363)

Participatory action research (PAR), refers to a social process where people engage in, examine and interpret their own social world, shaping their sense of identity.

Research cannot be done on others; people can only carry out action research on themselves. Participatory action research was founded in the work of Kurt Lewin, who coined the term "action research." It is a form of qualitative research that seeks to understand human experiences, but goes beyond understanding to taking constructive action to ameliorate difficult, often oppressive, situations (Olshansky, 2005). It aims to be an *emancipatory process* which helps people challenge and remove themselves from unjust social structures which limit their self-development and self-determination.

PAR involves a process of critical reflection that enables people learn to theorise about the social structures which constrain them and this is done with others who share this social world and requires collaborative reflection on the contradictions of the social world. 'It involves learning about the real, material, concrete, particular practices of particular people in particular places' (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998:24) and is summarised in six key features (see Box 1).

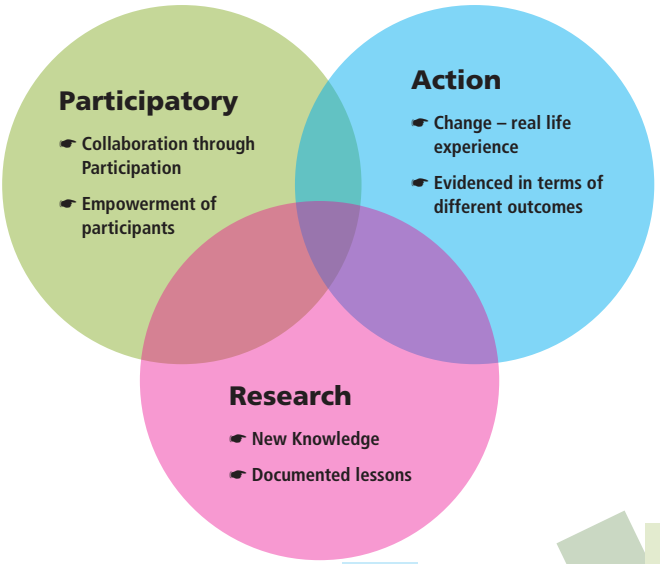
Box 1

The Six Key Features of PAR

1. ***Participatory action research*** is a social process – it investigates the relationship between the individual and the social
2. ***It is participatory*** – people engage in, examine and interpret their own social world, shaping their sense of identity. Research cannot be done on others; people can only carry out action research on themselves
3. ***It is practical and collaborative*** – it engages and connects with others in 'social interactions'. It is 'a process by which people explore their acts of communication, production and social organisation' and work on reconstructing these
4. ***It is emancipatory*** – it attempts to help people challenge and remove themselves from unjust social structures which 'limit their self-development and self-determination'
5. ***It is critical*** – it is a process of reflection in which people learn to theorise about the social structures which constrain them and this is done with others who share this social world
6. ***It is recursive (reflexive, dialectical)*** – it requires ongoing reflection on the contradictions of the social world, an act which is also carried out with others who share the same social world (emphasis in original)

PAR is frequently used interchangeably with other terms, such as action research, cooperative inquiry, community-based research, and others. The intent of these research approaches seeks to empower others, particularly the marginalized, to emancipate themselves from oppressive situations.

Figure 4: Participation-Action-Research



Co-production/co-construction of knowledge

PAR draws heavily on Freirian approaches. Freire (1997) argues that people have a universal right to participate in the production of knowledge: "In this process, people rupture their existing attitudes of silence, accommodation and passivity, and gain confidence and abilities to alter unjust conditions and structures. This is an authentic power for liberation that ultimately destroys a passive awaiting of fate" (Freire, 1997: xi). Freire also highlighted the central role of the poor and oppressed in research action:

"The silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world."

— Feirie, cited in Cahill et al (2007, p.308)

Oakley (1981), in a feminist critique of sterile models of research which seek to mine data for extraction, argues for egalitarian and reciprocal meaning making enterprises where the researcher travels as facilitator in an active relationship that leads to empowerment. A vital feature of PAR is that the researchers work collaboratively with the "researched" in an effort to achieve social justice in the form of improved conditions. By collaborating as partners with the "researched," the researchers are pro-actively including those directly affected by the research. Rather than conducting a study "on" a group of people, these researchers are truly conducting a study "with" a group of people, integrating their perspectives and their input into all stages of the research process.

Co-Construction of Knowledge

We understand knowledge as an analytical concept 'that can be used as a framework to identify explicit and implicit assumptions or conceptions concerning social relations and the norms which support them' (Cavanghan, 2010:18).

Farruga and Gerrard (2016) argue critical research is invariably steeped in the politics of power and privilege where as Bourdieu (1991) finds – given its capacity to represent and to name social experience – research carries significant symbolic power, particularly when authorised by the academy. Unsurprisingly, given the academy's long-standing interest in marginality, disadvantage and 'the other', academic knowledge has been subject to challenge and critique from a

range of standpoints in the attempt to unveil and upend the taken-for-granted assumptions and authorial positions on which research narratives are based. Co-creation of new knowledge through PAR is, therefore, at least a 'potential' power (Gaventa and Cornwall 2003).

The value and usefulness of the PAR approach lies not just in the 'new knowledge' it creates but also in its more inclusive way of generating knowledge and breaking silences. In reflecting more closely the lived experience, it offers possibilities to reposition 'the researched' from being a 'social problem' to become 'a community of valorised and normatively legitimate subjectivities' (Farragua and Gerrard 2016). This form of new (often gendered) knowledge disrupts embedded, and often implicit, knowledges or assumptions employed in social policy.

A participatory paradigm for research, one based on true democracy, aims to give autonomy to the voices of subordinated groups, accepting that there are many truths rather than one universal truth. It elevates the diversity of human experience over the imperative of economic 'progress', and locates social and environmental justice at its heart.

It is common now to read about co-production and co-creation of knowledge but it less common to hear about involving socially excluded people as co-researchers in the co-construction of knowledge.

An important innovation is the Merging of Knowledge (MOK) (see Box 2, page 15), a method and approach developed by the International Movement ATD Fourth World (ATD 2013, Courtney, Godinot, and Wooton 2006). Godinot (2006), understands knowledge as constructed from three parts: scientific knowledge of academics and researchers; experiential knowledge of poverty and exclusion; and the knowledge of those who work among and with the vulnerable in places of poverty and social exclusion.

Box 2a

[4] Merging of Knowledge Video: https://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/422668,

http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/Guidelines-for-the-Merging-of.html

http://www.4thworldmovement.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/05/Guidelines_for_the_Merging_of_Knowledge_and_Practices.pdf

Box 2b

Merging of Knowledge (MOK)

Wresinski (2006) highlights that there is a duty for those engaged in scientific research on poverty to make a place for the knowledge which the poor and the excluded themselves have of their condition. This is because it is unique and indispensable, as well as autonomous and complementary to all other knowledge about poverty. Furthermore, this research should 'help this knowledge to develop'. The basic problem is that academic knowledge of poverty and social exclusion—as of all other human reality—is only a partial knowledge and that it lacks, by definition, a direct grasp of reality and, consequently, is not a knowledge that can mobilise people and prompt them to action. With Merging of Knowledge (MOK), ATD seeks to show that it is only through reciprocal efforts rooted in empathy, not pity or charity, that we can endeavour to develop our human capacity for change. In MOK it is essential that each participant is involved in all aspects of the project.

The MOK approach is based on the principle that the 'knowledge' of the very poor, is about 'being condemned for life to contempt and social exclusion' and 'covers everything that that signifies: facts, suffering, but also the resilience and hope called forth by those facts. It also includes knowledge of the surrounding world, including certain attitudes toward the very poor that only they would know' (Wresinski, 2006:17). There is, therefore, a requirement for researchers to "change their life situation and become partners with the poor in a project which is no longer one of mere research but of liberation"(ibid.p.17). Wresinski (2006) noted:

"to hinder the poorest by using them as informants rather than encouraging them to develop their own thinking as a genuinely autonomous act is to enslave them… they alone have direct access to an essential part of the answers...

All human beings and groups are researchers, seeking independence through understanding themselves and their situation so that they control their destiny rather than submitting and being afraid…

They ignore the strategies of self-defense that the poor create to escape the influence of those on whom they are dependent. They protect their own existence, which they carefully hide behind the "life" that they spread out like a curtain and "play" to create an illusion for the external observer".

The methodology for the merging of different types of knowledge developed by ATD Fourth World is a key development in achieving an empowering participatory approach. This includes putting together high-level academics, practitioners and people living in extreme poverty as co-researchers and co-writers. MOK processes should in no way be confused with a simple process of ensuring the participation of people living in poverty" rather there is a relation between 'participation' and 'co-construction'. We must broaden the knowledge base of research, policy and practice with the perspective and experience of all parties involved.

Joseph **Wresinski**

The Moments in PAR

PAR research focuses on a research question that is related to a social or community issue that involves oppression of a group of people; that is, a power differential that results in social injustice for several or a group of people. Representatives from that group of people are included, from the beginning, in the actual formulation of the research question. A typical approach to conducting the research is a focus group where community participants engage in open discussion with researchers about their experiences in relation to the particular issue being studied. The analysis of data is conducted collaboratively with the community participants in order to reflect, as closely as possible, the actual experiences of the people. The data is used as evidence for the need for change and for specific directions for change. An important step in this research process is advocating for social change collaboratively in the research. PAR is an iterative process where data is collected and analysed leading to reflection and further research.

The key principles of PAR include; participation/collaboration, co-construction of knowledge, empowerment, and social change. There are four key "moments" that comprise PAR. These moments are: reflecting, planning, acting, and observing. All four of these moments actually occur iteratively, as there are several cycles involved and each of these moments occurs in each cycle.

PAR: Knowledge, Agency and Action

A key question for research that adopts a PAR framework is to what purpose/end is the co-construction of new knowledge undertaken? This section develops the PAR approach as both a theory of co-construction of knowledge *and* of transformation. Conducting research that documents a social problem without addressing solutions and engaging in social action, is not enough. Ledwith (2007) argues for a form of PAR called emancipatory action research which includes both generating knowledge and actively working toward solving the problems. She highlights that PAR should be underpinned by what Freire calls an 'authentic praxis': true reflection leads to action. It calls for an ongoing dynamic between emancipator action research, critical reflection and collective action.

According to Ledwith, an emancipatory methodology, emerging from a participatory paradigm, seeks to identify and change the root sources of oppression. It engages with the causes, not the symptoms, of oppression. Emancipatory action research is founded on an anti-oppressive ideology:

"By that, I mean that respect, dignity, mutuality and reciprocity provide an ideological lens through which every stage of its process is framed. It seeks to be participatory and collaborative, involving everyone in the process of change. It

The moments of PAR

- **Reflecting** – focusing on the shared concerns of the members of the research team in an effort to clearly define the research problem being studied. In PAR, this means that the entire research team, including the research participants/community members will meet together and discuss their views and concerns. Reflection in PAR is that moment where the research participants examine and construct, then evaluate and reconstruct their concerns .
- **Planning** refers to the process of developing the strategies involved in conducting the research project. In PAR research, all the members of the team, including the community members, will develop strategies for gaining entry into the community within a context of trust. There is a better chance of developing trust by having community members as part of the research team. The planning phase is when the research team creates the strategic framework for how they will work with the community and foster an environment of trust and communication between the research team and the larger community.
- **Acting** refers to the actual implementation of the strategies developed in the planning moment. As with reflecting and planning, community members are involved in the actual implementation of the research
- **Observing** refers to the analysis of data and is very much intertwined with the acting moment. By including community members in the analysis of data, it is more likely that the data analysis will reflect the perspectives of the research participants.

Outcome – a more informed, empowered community that has experienced improvements in areas of interest as a result of collaborating with the outside researchers.

commits to identifying and challenging unequal power relations within its process. It is rooted in dialogue, attempting to work with, not on, people, and intends that its process should be empowering for all involved. More than this, it is committed to collective action for social change as its outcome" (Ledwith, 2007 p.599).

Ledwith argues that the researcher is challenged to 'be as open to change as the "subjects" are encouraged to be—only they are now more like co-researchers than like conventional subjects' (Rowan, 1981, p. 97). All participants act in the interests of the whole. It begins in everyday realities, and is a mutual process of discovery 'where the researcher and the researched [sic] both contribute to the expansion of the other's knowledge' (Opie, 1992, p. 66). To ensure that every stage of the process is true to its claims, validity questions are set in consultation with everyone involved in the research process, as a system of checks and balances. For example, if my research claims to equalise power within the research process, what evidence is there that participants experience themselves as co-researchers?

Knowledge in action is, therefore, engaged in the world rather than alienated from it. PAR then can challenge the way that epistemologies define not only whose knowledge is dominant, but in turn influence ontological truths, reinforcing what is 'normal', 'right' and 'proper'. These levels of critical analysis, by connecting the personal to the political, can expose the structures of domination as a *common sense* that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

'Being critical' then involves an inner and outer process of search and research. In the inner process, we need to be reflexive: to question our reflections, and take them to a deeper level in order to challenge our inner attitudes and prejudices. And, in the outer process, we need to create critical spaces where we can engage with others in building a body of knowledge that takes our collective understanding to more complex analytic levels. The notion of critical public spaces with the potential for critical reflection and collective action, and for the deepening of consciousness, are essential to the process of 'being critical'. This highlights then the importance of PAR creating a space of being critical – this is an act of transformation in itself.

However, we need to be clear about whose truth we are telling, and that involves an analysis of power from a perspective of difference. In order to dislodge white patriarchal Western power, we need to engage with multiple truths. That involves humility not arrogance, and a preparedness to locate our understanding in local lives, taking lived realities seriously. It calls on us to be self-critical at every stage of the process, checking our validity with incisive questions designed to reveal the prejudices, beliefs, assumptions and values that lurk beneath the surface of our own skins. To fail in this endeavour involves *cultural invasion*, the arrogance of a dominant way of seeing the world as the only truth.

In this context, the role of the social scientist researcher is that of encouraging and helping the research participants to increase their awareness and capacity for action. Rather than simply collecting data, the aim of the intervention is that of identifying the struggle to become an actor, whereby an actor is 'a participant in the production of society'

(Touraine, 2000: 906).

Being critical in research

Freire saw a process of 'denunciation and annunciation' as 'being critical': the 'act of analyzing a dehumanizing reality, [and] denounce it while announcing its transformation' (Freire, 1985, p. 57). This narrative approach also engages with feminist pedagogy locating the *personal as political* by making the vital connection between the deeply personal and the profoundly political. Similarly, Kemmis talks about the necessity for emancipatory action research to tell unwelcome truths that people do not want to hear (Kemmis, 2005). These are necessary tools in 'being critical'. Without this denunciation, or truth-telling, our work lacks a critical challenge and is unlikely to be transformative. So, in Quaker conceptualisation, we need to 'speak truth to power', which involves risk and consequences, but silence is complicit and results in inaction or thoughtless action or uncritical action.

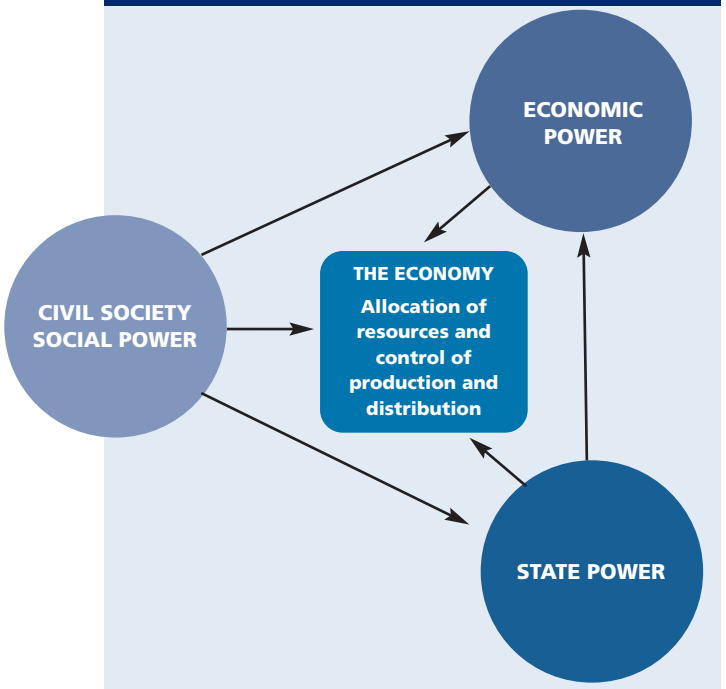
PAR: from capabilities to transformation

Empowerment

If your aim is to work with vulnerable groups to enable them challenge power and injustice then it is important to consider deeper possibilities of empowered participative change such as the vulnerable group *becoming* policy makers and politicians. There is a need, therefore, to explore what we mean by *transformation* and *social change*.

Erik Olin Wright focuses on transforming society through emancipatory alternatives. He argues that transforming existing institutions and social structures has the potential to substantially reduce human suffering and expand the possibilities for human flourishing (see Figure 6). Real transformation involves structural change toward democracy, flourishing, equality and social justice. He points to a process of 'symbiotic transformations' which involve strategies that extend and deepen the institutional forms of social empowerment involving both state and civil society simultaneously helping to solve certain practical problems faced by dominant classes and elites. These are reforms that simultaneously make life better within the existing economic system and expand the potential for future advances of democratic power.

Figure 6: Multiple Pathways to Social Empowerment

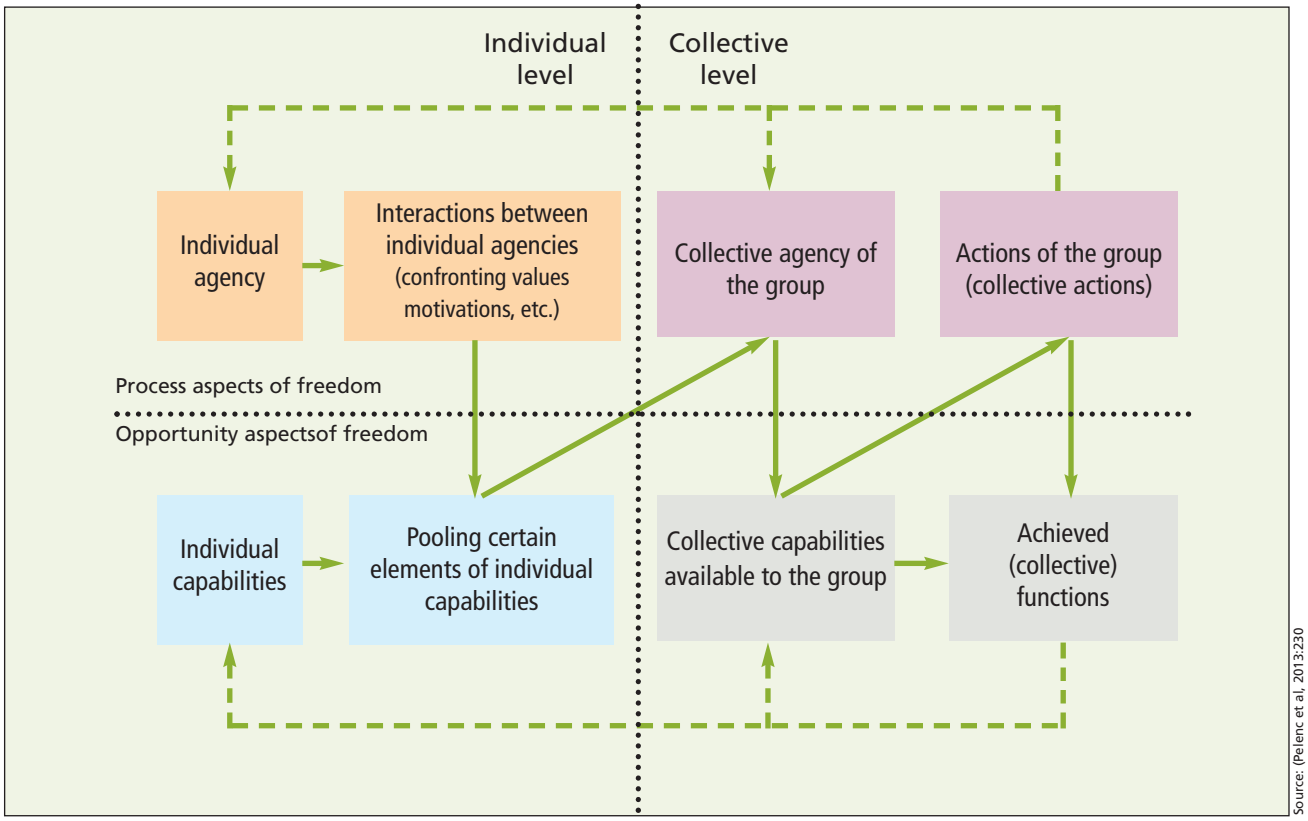


Source: Olin Wright, 2013

Pelenc, Bazile and Ceruti (2015) develop a useful framework that links PAR to the capabilities approach through the concepts of individual and collective agency. They highlight the importance of collective discussion and deliberation for developing a sense of responsibility towards others and sharing certain values. If these discussions result in a convergence of values, further social interaction is going to follow and may lead to collective action based on these shared values (Pelenc et al. 2013). To put collective action into practice, group-building needs to take place. One crucial step in this process is the pooling of resources. Thus, group members provide some of their private resources (and powers in the case of social relations) for the collective action. From this, (new) collective capabilities emerge that may be exercised in collective action. The interesting point in this framework is that it links the preconditions of individual capabilities – namely resources and conversion factors – to the collective level as well as individual and collective agency (Lessman, 2017).

Giddens' (1984) structuration theory similarly notes that 'Action depends upon the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs... An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability 'to make a difference', that is, to exercise some sort of power.' (Giddens, 1984: 14). In particular, individuals must know a lot about the structure and institutions of society in order to exercise agency. But their knowledge is mostly practical knowledge that does not amount to 'discursive consciousness' and hence they may not be able to express verbally what is motivating their actions. Yet, they will be able to act, to use their knowledge of the rules of behaviour, language and so on in order to change the pre-existing state of affairs (Kießling 1988, p.291). In this way they may contribute to the reproduction of the structure or may transform it. Especially vulnerable individuals can substantially improve their "capability for voice" if they organize themselves in collectivities (Lessman, 2017).

Figure 7: Conceptualising interactions between the individual and collective levels in the CA



Source: (Pelenc et al, 2013:230

Participation – Arnstein's ladder

Since those who have power normally want to hang onto it, historically it has had to be wrested by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful.

(Arnstein 1969:12)

Participation as a term requires considerable interrogation and clear definition. This is in order to avoid neoliberal approaches to participation which focus on individual 'investment' and hollow out the collective empowerment central to Ledwith and Kemmis's emancipatory approach to participation. Cleaver, argues, "as 'empowerment' has become a buzzword in development... its [participatory approach to development] radical, challenging and transformatory edge has been lost. The concept of action has become individualized, empowerment depoliticized" (Cleaver, 2001:37).

This highlights the critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process. The difference is excellently capsulised in a poster painted in 1968 by French students to explain the student-worker rebellion (See Figure 8). The poster highlights the fundamental point that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo.

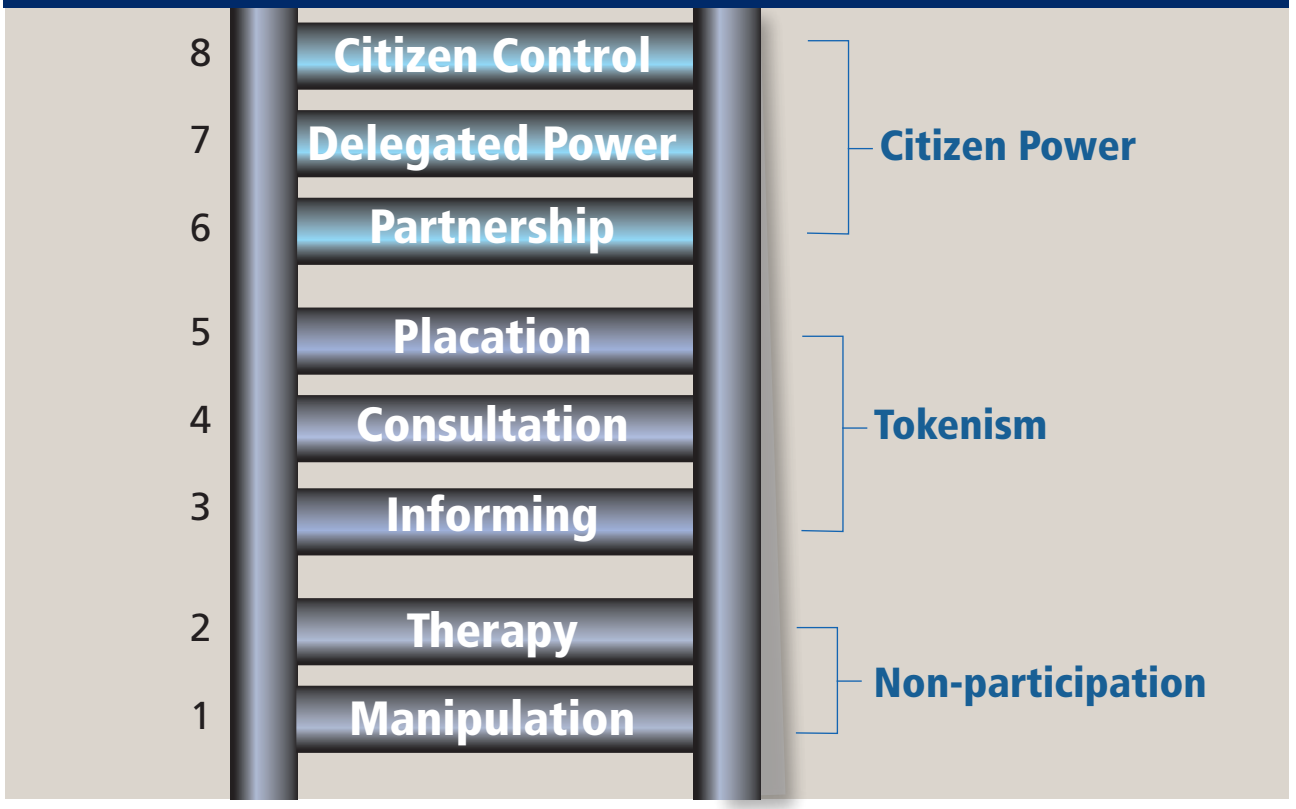
Figure 8

Figure 8. French student poster. In English, "I participate, you participate, he participates, we participate, you participate... **they profit**."

(from Arnstein, 1969)

Arnstein provides a typology of eight levels of participation to help in the analysis of participation of vulnerable people in planning and implementing policies. For illustrative purposes the eight types are arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product. (See Figure 9 below) This helps to illustrate the point that so many have missed – that there are significant gradations of citizen participation.

Figure 9 Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation



"Citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society".

(Arnstein,1969, p216)

Arnstein noted 'roadblocks to participation' on the powerholders' side, including 'racism, paternalism, and resistance to power redistribution'. On the 'have-nots' side, they include "inadequacies of the poor community's political socioeconomic infrastructure and knowledge-base, plus difficulties of organizing a representative and accountable citizens' group in the face of futility, alienation, and distrust".

PAHRCA: a participatory human rights and capability framework

We see PAR then as a transformative social justice project which is epistemologically and ontologically rooted in democratic participation, critical inquiry, and action. More than a method, PAR is an ethic of inclusion (Cahill, Sultana, and Pain, 2007; Manzo and Brightbill, 2007) that has profound implications for rethinking the politics of representation and challenging what Foucault (1980) identified as the 'subjectifying social sciences' (Cameron and Gibson, 2005; Cahill, 2010).

According to Cleaver (2001) participatory methods need to be complemented by a theory that explores the nature of people's lives and the relations between the many dimensions of well-being: The RE-InVEST capability and human rights theoretical approach provides a comprehensive and flexible theory of well-being that can capture the multiple, complex and dynamic aspects of individuals, poverty, vulnerability, and individual and collective agency.

By bringing together human rights, capability and PAR with the theoretical framework of the individual as receiver, doer and judge we can develop a deeper approach to participation and transformation. This Participatory Action Human Rights and Capability Approach (PAHRCA) focuses our academic-practitioner research lens on the concept of agency and democratic practice and related collective actions as instruments by which to confront structural injustice. Sen's Hunger and Public action encapsulates this approach:

"It is, as we have tried to argue and illustrate, essential to see the public not merely as 'the patient' whose well-being commands attention, but also as 'the agent' whose actions can transform society. Taking note of that dual role is central to understanding the challenge of public action against hunger". (p.279)

Sen also noted two ways of overcoming voicelessness – "self-assertion of the underprivileged through political organisation" and "solidarity with the underprivileged on the part of other members of the society, whose interests and commitments are broadly linked, and who are often better placed to advance the cause of the disadvantaged by virtue of their own privileges."

(Dreze and Sen 2002:29)

Therefore, in order to achieve transformation and a rebalancing of power there is a requirement for the construction of societal solidarity with the underprivileged, a key part of which is to enhance the capacity of the underprivileged to undertake self-assertion. A PAR approach can play a role in this – in enhancing the knowledge and capacity to aspire of vulnerable groups. Within this process, as Sen noted, is an objective to "*enable those who are in the institutions to be exposed to others, to develop affiliation with them – and hope these frail bonds of relationship would urge the persons to reflect on their institutions from within"* (in Alkire 2008:9). The dialogical approach as a form of action in a PAR process can enhance this process of affiliation.

The PAHRCA framework

Drawing on these theoretical approaches we develop the following human rights and capability participatory action research framework which highlights the key aspects to be addressed in undertaking capability and human rights orientated PAR research.

There is, we would argue, a spectrum of participation and transformation achievable within PAR approaches. This ranges from raising the sense of agency and the (subjective) well-being of participants to collective action and structural change. There is also a need to think through the role for the academic researcher to enhance empowerment and transformation in PAR.

Empowerment

We think there is a need to interrogate the real meaning of empowerment in participatory research.

We must honestly ask is the purpose of the research to simply gather the voices of those in poverty?

Is it a temporary form of empowerment? Is it maintaining the status quo of disempowerment by enabling policy makers fulfil their box ticking exercise of achieving a loosely defined 'participation'. Is it placating vulnerable groups by manipulating them into believing they have in fact been truly 'heard'? Is there a redistribution of power? PAR needs to work towards achieving a genuine level of empowerment of the vulnerable group with power redistribution between power holders and citizens.

The aim of the research is to bring people into processes, which involve them challenging and changing their own world and in the co-production of knowledge. The goal is about liberation of those in poverty and not just the production of knowledge. It is about working with vulnerable groups to empower them to understand and challenge the structures that cause their marginalisation and oppression.

A human rights and capability approach combining with PAR can develop spaces, practices, and processes where capabilities and human rights are enhanced through a 'democratic participation' of individual and collective agency.

Thus aspects of Olin Wright's structural transformation of society can take place through attempts at equalising power (however small or temporary) by empowering those currently disempowered to engage in transforming society. PAR can be seen, then, in the capability and rights theoretical framework, as a political and cultural conversion factor for transforming formal political rights into the capability for individuals and for individual and collective agency of groups. Enhancing agency in PAR through participation is also a contribution to well-being, whereby vulnerable people become involved in decisions that affect their lives and

TABLE 1: A Conceptual Framework for PAHRCA: A Participatory Action Human Rights & Capability Approach

PAR Framework	Aims	Detailed aims
Participation (Judge)	Arnstein's 'ladder of participation' Co-production of knowledge Raising voice Critical consciousness raising Creating new spaces for public deliberation and *political participation*	Democratisation of knowledge production Does it open up spaces for democracy and participatory politics? Education to enhance people's awareness of their rights Increased awareness of policy measures
Empowerment (Judge/Doer)	Enhancing capabilities/capacity & human rights Strengthening individual & collective agency Improving individual & collective well-being Achieving political participation Challenging structural causes of injustice/oppression	Does it nourish people's 'capacity to aspire' and 'sense of entitlement'? Creating a culture of rights? Improve 'capability for voice' Increase awareness and capacity for action
Transformation (Doer)	Action Impact on public policy Impact on public sphere Become a fulfilled citizen Power redistribution Public critical action Challenge existing patterns of inequality Rebalancing power Structural change towards social justice	Making results/knowledge public Empowering vulnerable groups to enter the political sphere as a public actor Achieving democratic participation – speaking uncomfortable truths Transforming practice of institutions & welfare state Academic as publically engaged NGO/Trade union/civil society engaging in empowerment & transformation

then in turn fulfils their human right and enhances their capabilities/well-being.

In PAR the doer and judge dimensions of individuals can be enhanced and allowed fulfil their potential. Through an empowered form of participation in PAR the socially excluded are not just participating in a tokenistic manner as receivers of a service, but are empowered to become doers, agents and actors in changing their own world.

And this transformation is a structural shift toward achieving a society where all can have their capabilities and rights fulfilled.

Part Two:
The PAHRCA Model

"In this process, people rupture their existing attitudes of silence, accommodation and passivity, and gain confidence and abilities to alter unjust conditions and structures. This is an authentic power for liberation that ultimately destroys a passive awaiting of fate"

(Freire, 1974: xi).

We now outline the key steps we developed as part of the PAHRCA model in RE-InVEST. Later we provide some case study examples of the method in practice, and in Part Three there is advice on the role of the academic and reflections on the PAHRCA process. The Practice Handbook provides details of the various methods that can be used and more in-depth case study information. It is important to keep uppermost in our approach that PAHRCA aims to work outside the 'normal' research process of data extraction and instead, works towards a process of co-construction of knowledge and action / transformation. The PAHRCA model we have developed is built on six key features of PAR as outlined by Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998: 23-24) and referenced on page 13. It is also built on the following understandings or underlying philosophies:

Axiological level, our understanding of human nature (**our ethical perspective**) is heavily informed by a human rights based framework and principles of equality, solidarity and interdependence (Peil and van Staveren, 2009).

Ontological level, we must be aware that **our understanding of reality** is socially constructed. Concepts of poverty and the 'poor', 'vulnerable' and 'precarious' are socially constructed identities that (paradoxically) can sometimes work as barriers to social inclusion. For example, the scientific literature on poverty and social exclusion is to a large extent crowded with scientists from the upper and middle classes, who tend to build on their own culturally determined preconceptions and have limited access to the (more authentic) knowledge of people with a personal experience of poverty. The poor themselves, hindered by low literacy skills, often internalise these preconceptions and, consequently, remain trapped in biased self-images without being able to develop and share their own critical thinking on their lived experiences. Building individual and collective capacity to deconstruct and build new social constructions is therefore core to the capability approach (Stewart, 2005; Ibrahim, 2006).

Epistemological level, the **nature of knowledge** and the relationship between the researcher (knower) and that which would be known (subject of enquiry) is not absolute or positivist; rather it should be critical, reflexive, dialogical and open to interpretation. In mixed research teams including academics, NGO as well as individuals from vulnerable target groups, it must avoid biases generated by imbalances in power and communication skills (Ledwith, 2011).

PAHRCA aims to be a **transformative paradigm** which seeks to use human rights and capability approaches to enhance the capacity of social investment to address these crisis related societal challenges. The methodology thus centres on creating a network of academics and civil society actors, who work in a transformative paradigm (TP) built on a collaborative relationship between grounded NGOs ('intermediaries') from member countries and a range of 'pracademics', or academics who commit to working in collaborative and transformative ways with civil society to translate existing research into action for social change.

The methodological framework

The PAHRCA methodology develops qualitative research processes that enable collaborative and transformative ways that researchers, along with civil society can translate existing research into

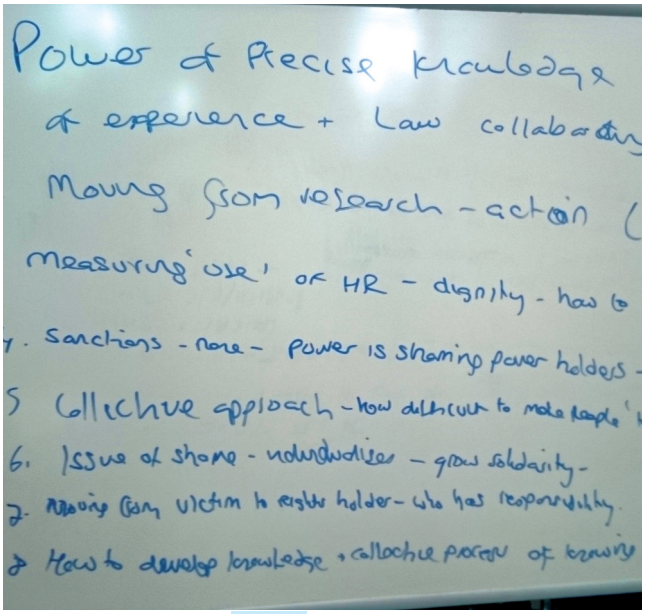
action for social change; this includes a stress on lived experience, asymmetric power relations, the link between social enquiry and action and the need to derive method from theory. This is an *approach* to research and contains a set of principles and practices for originating, designing, conducting, analysing and acting on a piece of research. It is committed to *Partnership* as an approach to the research which is understood to mean an approach where power is redistributed through negotiation between the researcher and the researched. PAHRCA research principles include:

- Positive discrimination in the allocation of time and resources, with priority being given to the weakest participants in the process.
- Effective investment in the research capacity and capability of those groups.
- Phasing in of joint collaboration to the highest possible levels.
- Purposeful adaptation of analytical instruments and language.
- Intercultural and intersectional (including gender, age, etc.) sensitive approaches
- Continuity and feedback at all stages of the research.
- Empowerment.
- Dialogical and reflexive approaches.
- Communicative and democratic decision making.

PAHRCA – five key chronological steps:

PAHRCA is a flexible approach with five key steps:

1. **Identify, meet and develop agreement with partner NGO/intermediary**
2. **Preliminary 'meet ups' with participants – trust building**
3. **Developmental & capacity building: educate & implement human rights & capability approach: capacity building**
4. **Inquiry/data gathering/analysis: method of inquiry**
5. **Undertake action/outcome**



STEP 1. Partnership with NGO's

The first step is to identify and meet the partner NGO.

Academic researchers often value NGOs and other intermediaries (such as trade unions and community groups) just as gatekeepers to recruit participants for research projects for them. They rarely see the NGO as an active holder of knowledge with great capacity to use research for transformative ends. In contrast, the RE-InVEST PAHRCA approach treats the intermediary as a key participant themselves – as an active holder of knowledge with the capacity to use action research for transformative ends.

Thus when we refer to 'co-researchers', research 'participants', and 'participation' we are including

the vulnerable groups/those in poverty/suffering social exclusion, the academic researchers and the intermediaries (staff/volunteers in the NGO, trade union, community group etc). It is important to remember that you as researcher and the NGO/ intermediary are also an active participants in this PAHRCA process. You must remember to be reflective as you are an active subject within the research project.

From an ethical perspective, action research can only ever be sustainable when grounded in a longer term systematic way so that the research can become part of a transformative project.

These means that the NGO/intermediary should have an active role in the earliest possible stage of the research and before research questions are fully developed (the vulnerable group should also be enabled to input at this stage).

It also means that the academic researchers should scope out with the NGO; the full range of possible input they can make, the supports and upskilling they require or aspire, and honest discussions about research ethics, resources, culture and capacity. This will take time, will require a process of trust building and is necessary to ensure a full understanding of the project and the agreed parameters, scale of ambition and respective roles.

It is useful at this stage to develop a 'partnership agreement' which can be used at various stages of the project including evaluation.

- An explicit process should be developed (sub committee, steering group) for the period of the project. The committee oversees the research and the choice of methods that maximise the role of participants to determine the content of the research and express their voice.

- Partnership in practice means that planning and decision-making responsibilities for the research are shared, for example the partnership agreement could include explicit agreements on the data collection, analysis, drafting and action dissemination where the academics, the NGO and the vulnerable participants have clear roles.

- The NGO is an active partner in the project and a source of expertise and insight. When partner NGOs are involved in focus groups, workshops and seminars, opportunities should be identified to ensure they have an active presence and a voice in proceedings.

- Knowledge construction and co-construction of knowledge: the NGO and research participants should have the opportunity to engage in a dialogical process developing the research findings to that they can be used locally.

The Practice Handbook provides examples in detail of implementing this stage in practice.

STEP 2.

Preliminary 'meet ups' and meeting with participants – trust building

Step two involves the setting up and carrying out of initial meetings with participants. The focus should be on 'trust-building' and creating the group. Here we suggest using visual group work and individual methods that put the focus on building mutual trust (be aware also of overcoming language/culture barriers) – ensure a very open meeting – people need to enjoy it, feel safe, feel listened to and part of the research process.

The Practice Handbook outlines a number of collective trust building methods which can be used in group work at this stage.

STEP 3.

Developmental and capacity building: human rights and capability approach

This step involves implementing the developmental human rights and capability approach with participants/the group. The aim is to develop an enhanced ability amongst the disadvantaged and vulnerable participant/co-researcher group to talk about/understand capabilities and rights. We introduce, in a creative way human rights and capabilities. Participants may reject this language. In the Practice Handbook examples of how this was implemented in practice are detailed along with a number of methods that introduce human rights and capabilities through creative ways e.g. cartoons.

STEP 4.
Inquiry/data gathering/analysis

While the method of inquiry should be directly related to the research question the PAHRCA approach encourages the use of participative methods to collect and analyse data with as much input as possible from the NGO and research participants including the intermediary and those affected by social exclusion.

It is both possible and good practice to engage research participants in data analysis and report drafting, moving toward the use of 'peer researchers'. Participants with sufficient literacy can engage in colour coding key themes in transcripts, those with less literacy can identify key themes from audio recordings and in visual exercises. Anyone who wishes to can read drafts, offer comments, suggest accessible language and in particular use local or thematic knowledge to assist in turning broad conclusions into more specific and practicable policy recommendations.

Part three of the Practice Handbook includes collective data collection methods to use in this stage.

STEP 5.
Undertake voice/action/outcome

After the data collection and analysis stage the research process including academics, NGO and research participants will be in a position to identify ways of using the research findings and outcomes to influence social change using the PAHRCA 'voice - action - outcome' approach. Later we outline a number of examples of action that can be undertaken through the PAHRCA approach. Such action research could include a 'crossing of knowledge' process with local policy makers or a local advocacy project based on a rights and participation approach.

Co-researchers (academics, NGO/intermediary and the research participants) should work together to identify emerging issues that can be progressed over the course of the research as a form of action (for example, improving the local delivery of a specific public service).

The PAHRCA is about maximising the opportunity that the research might be able to realise some shorter term transformational outcomes. Some principles for action include:

- The group should be asked to decide what action they would like to take and develop this themselves. The more time and effort that the researchers/projects can give to working with the vulnerable groups the greater the likely level of PAR/action that is taken.
- This can take place at local, regional, national and international levels
- The more concrete the demand is the better, e.g. specify an issue the NGO or state services can change, something that is localised and small enough to be addressed.
- Participation and voice are core principles of both human rights and capability approaches, and approaches that create dialogue and enable voice and participation are an essential part of transformation.
- Action ideally should involve bringing the voice of participants and new knowledge created into the public sphere
- Action and advocacy are a feature of the research dissemination process.

Importantly for policy-orientated research, the participatory Human Rights (HR) framework can open up a process of co-development of policy alternatives. Indeed the explicit aim within PAHRCA of influencing and changing policy and practice to meet the HR of the vulnerable groups can attract participants. It can motivate them to continue to engage in the process up to the stage of action to influence policy, which can take the form of a dialogue with policy makers and practitioners,

leading to a change in making service provision more rights and capability orientated.

The dialogue action can influence policy makers and leave them with new insights and new commitments to bring back to policy development and practice within their institutions.

Action can also include more overt political campaigning and protest, national or local media dissemination and ongoing dissemination and promotion of the new knowledge in different public, political and policy spheres (including local or national parliamentary committees, academic seminars, NGO or business conferences etc.).

It is essential to build a strong relationship with the intermediary / NGO and ensure there are capacity / resources / motivation to continue to work towards further PAR and action during and after the lifetime of the research project.

There may also be tension between the aims and outcomes of PAR research and the aims of NGOs (particularly those focused on service management and relationships with state actors). It is important, therefore, that NGOs are supportive of the transformative and empowerment aspects of PAR and accept that it is likely to be challenging and that this is 'ok', and a necessary step towards improving social exclusion.

Flexibility of the PAHRCA approach

Given that the resources / capacity of researchers / projects and the relationship and capacity / motivation of the co-researchers vary considerably, it is understandable that a broad range of levels of PAR will be undertaken by co-researchers implementing a PAHRCA – from a moderate level of action to, hopefully in some instances, a more significant level of participative public and policy action. It is important to emphasise that the PAHRCA is a flexible approach, in particular in the following areas:

Ambition of PAR: this can range from a moderate, medium to significant level of PAR within PAHRCA. The approach is designed so it can be scaled up and down as appropriate or possible.

Degree of diversity: It is essential to recognise (and work to achieve) diversity of people and target groups involved in the research as this will influence the approaches used to mediate and train all participants. Specific attention should be devoted to the composition of 'mixed research teams', particularly also the gender/age/ethnic profile of participants from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Scale of engagement: it is possible to work with a range of methods within the overall methodological framework; this choice depends on the specifics of each research team and the research questions they are working with. Each project should adopt a method that best suits their abilities / capacity and partnership setting.

Action: People on the frontline (NGOs and co-researchers) understanding of 'action' can be different from an academic researcher's interpretation or understanding of action, so the concept of 'action' should be flexible and fluid to enable groups work at different levels of ambition. There may also be a desire on the part of some participants to engage in more public and collective action than that which NGOs or academics are familiar or comfortable with – this should be supported. It is important to aim to at least bring about a development of people's capacity through awareness raising / education of their rights and capabilities: and this in itself is a form of action / PAR.

A meaningful outcome could, therefore, be as moderate as enabling / empowering vulnerable participants to define their rights. But if a group wants to engage in more public collective action, this should also be supported as a form of bringing voice into the public sphere and empowerment towards transformation. The group should decide the action and develop this themselves.

Appropriate: as with any research approach or method PAHRCA may not be suitable for the question being asked, the group, or the researcher.

Case studies of PAHRCA from RE-InVEST PAHRCA research 2016-18

CASE STUDY 1:
AUSTRIA

The case of older job seekers in Austria

"a person is not old at 50 – we contribute to something in our lives. As co-researchers it gave us a real voice. Even if it was only temporary. It significantly contributed to all of our confidence and self worth"

(Peer/co-researcher, Austria)

Researchers:
Ortrud Leßmann and Elisabeth Buchner, Internationales Forschungszentrum für soziale und ethische Fragen (ifz)
Peer researchers Helmut Moser, Konny Obermüller, Karin Owsanecki, Michaela Ziegler

Research location:
Salzburg, Austria

Research target group:
45+ years old and unemployed, many of them with health problems, some with care-duties

CASE STUDY 1: **AUSTRIA** PAHRCA STEPS	
Step 1 – Partnership with NGOs	The Austrian team drew on the institution's contacts specifically those organisations working on labour market issues, and through this approach they identified and met with their NGO partner 'Alliance for Jobs for Best Agers' (Bündnis Arbeit für Best Ager), a grassroots initiative of older unemployed people. The researchers met with leading figures in the NGO several times and established a steering group based on the existing contacts and aimed to ensure NGO knowledge was well integrated in the project.
Step 2 – Preliminary meet ups and meeting with participants	The aim of the next phase was 'recruitment and trust building' – the research team and NGO launched a call for participation which was published by other stakeholders as well. Six women and three men from the target age group came to the first meeting, where the team explained PAHRCA and the context of RE-InVEST (including the content of the informed consent form). As an initial trust building exercise the participants and researchers did some sociographic line-ups. Participants discussed and agreed upon rules of conduct within the group which included: confidentiality, respect and recognition of limits, no advice unasked for, no discouraging story-telling, punctuality, reliability, and honesty. They also used a drawing exercise as an ice-breaker, asking the participants to express their views of the government.
Step 3 – Developmental and capacity building: human rights and capability approach	To introduce the capability and human rights approach participants were asked to indicate the three most important elements of a good life. In a second step, participants were asked to indicate their achievements in a grid referring to the human rights dimensions identified by Burchardt and Vizard 2011b (see Figure 9). This proved a useful way working with vulnerable groups, using capabilities and human rights to develop their own definitions and dimensions of wellbeing.

CASE STUDY 1: AUSTRIA PAHRCA STEPS Continued

Step 4 – Inquiry / data gathering / analysis

Data collection methods focused on use of a snake time line & biographical story telling. The main data collection tool used was an individual 'snake' which represented both the last ten years in their lives and also the collective concerns regarding the economic, social and political developments in Salzburg, in Austria and in Europe. Many of the participants had a strong desire to speak about their lives with people who listened and understood their experiences. In terms of biographical storytelling, a core group of three participants engaged in story telling while the others listened and commented afterwards on the biographies, and on the ensuing conversation which began to identify the main concerns for the group. The resulting findings were then discussed with the full group in a meeting type setting.

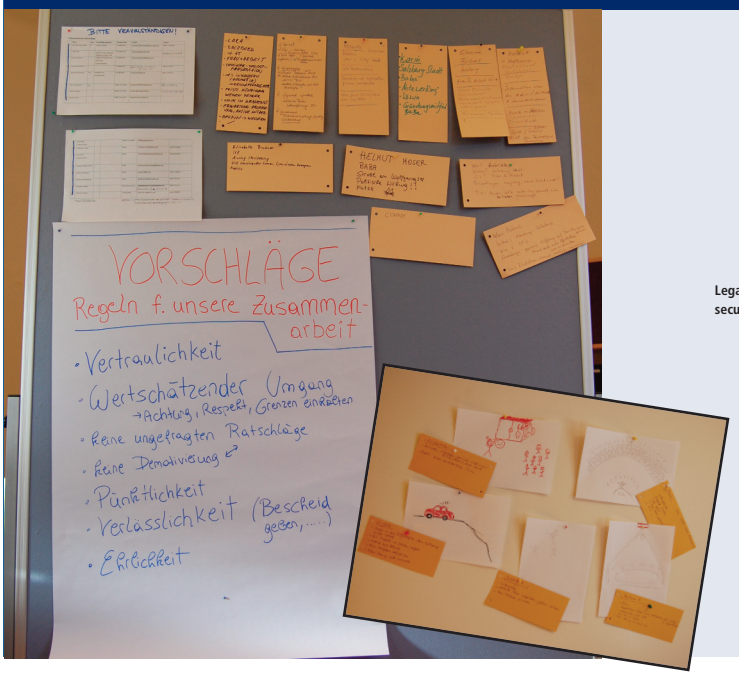
Step 5 – Undertake voice/ action / outcome

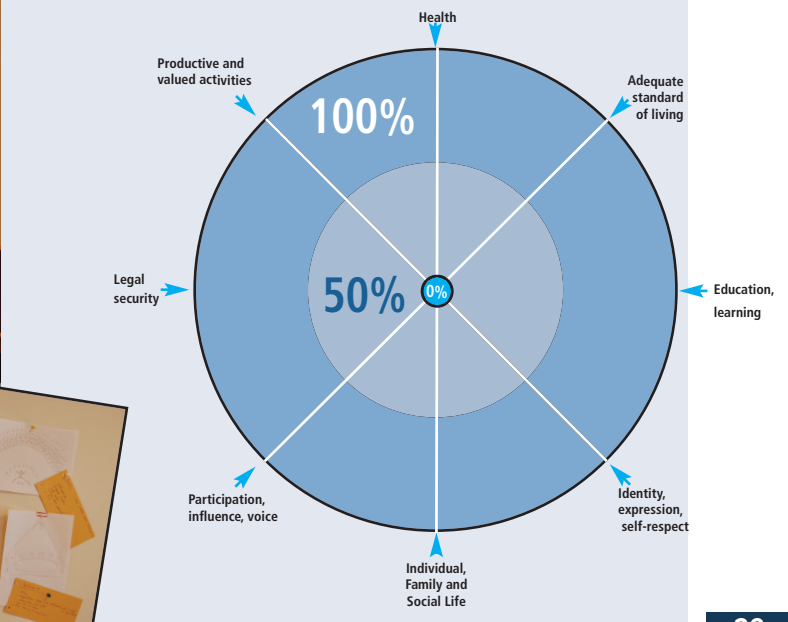
Participation was maximised through group discussions with participants. Several times the group of 10 split into two small groups of 5. Discussions amongst and with the other participants emerged.

The drawing exercise in the first workshop showed participants distrust in politicians and the political system. Participant's portrayed politics as a slimy wall and the political institutions as separated from the population. They viewed politics as a circus that exhibits vulnerable people in its ring and worried that politics engulfs society in the abyss.

Participation in society is mainly ensured by agency, i.e. by being an active member of society. Employment constitutes one form of agency, but other activities constitute agency just as well. It is most important to enable unemployed people to become agents of their own well-being and counter the loss of social recognition – both at the individual as well as at the collective level.

FIGURE 10. List of elements of a good life





Case studies of PAHRCA from RE-InVEST PAHRCA research 2016-18

CASE STUDY 2:
IRELAND

The case of homeless people

Researchers:
Mary Murphy, Zuzanna Kuchardski, Rory Hearne, Emma Richardson, Paul Haughan, Kathleena Twomey, Tom Kelly

Research location:
Dublin and regional towns

Research participants and homeless group:
Homeless individuals and homeless families

CASE STUDY 2: **IRELAND** PAHRCA STEPS	
Step 1 – Partnership with NGOs	Academic researchers engaged with Focus Ireland, a charity NGO that works with homelessness. The research team recruited four peer researchers (present and previous clients of Focus Ireland services who had experienced homelessness in the past) to collect and analyse data for the national report also to help embed a more participatory culture in Focus Ireland. The research team organised six 2-hour sessions to develop their peer research skills.
Step 2 – Preliminary meet ups and meeting with participants	All participants in the research were invited via contact with a Focus Ireland key worker. The research team worked with same NGO to identify how to focus the research question and to recruit participants. They also worked with a second NGO to advance recruitment with the team eventually comprising the peer researchers and ten homeless families. The participant families were all female-headed families (9 of whom were lone parents, seven were of Irish origin and three were migrants), all with young children.
Step 3 – Developmental and capacity building: human rights and capability approach	The team worked over twelve weeks using PAHRCA, the first session was introductory, explaining the aim and purpose of the research and trust building. The initial focus of the research was to gather families' experiences of marketization of social housing policy, however the families consistently raised the impact of the emergency accommodation on their wellbeing so this was also included. The sessions introduced the families to recent trends in housing policy in Ireland and the right to housing. Participative methods (such as drawing and small group dialogue) were used to enable them to identify what the right to housing meant to them, to identify their key issues of concern, and to contextualise them in a rights and capability framework.

CASE STUDY 2: IRELAND PAHRCA STEPS Continued

Step 4 – Inquiry / data gathering/ analysis

As the sessions continued the researchers discussed influencing policy makers and agreed to organise a 'dialogue' between the families and policy makers to try influence policy on social housing. The families were prepared for the dialogue through role play, enabling them to practice what they would say, anticipating responses and questions, while also co-constructing solutions aimed at transforming policy that could be proposed at the dialogue.

Step 5 – Undertake voice/action/ outcome

The key 'action' for empowerment and transformation was the organisation of a 'dialogue' between the homeless families and policy influencers. Held in June 2016 with two senior local authority officials, a housing spokesperson of the main opposition party in the national parliament and the Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). The principles of dialogue were explained to all participants. The policy makers found the dialogue to be a powerful and unique approach which gave them new insights which they committed to inform policy development and practice. The families felt empowered through the dialogue process. The knowledge generated by the research found an institutional home when IHREC subsequently took up the research recommendations.

Policy Brief: A comprehensive policy brief (Hearne & Murphy, 2017) was also published to bring this new co-constructed knowledge and policy recommendations into the public sphere and influence policy and practice. This resulted in national media coverage, discussion in the national parliament and a subsequent invitation to discuss the findings with the parliamentary committee on housing in September 2017. Research findings were also discussed at NGO organized housing seminars and conferences (some of which were attended by research participants and peer researchers presented at it). The families, pleased to see the research published in the public domain, felt it was an accurate portrayal of their views and experiences.

Lessons

- The two female peer researchers played an important role in relationship building with the families. Formerly homeless themselves, the peer researchers chatted informally with the families before and during the sessions, they explained to them the various aspects of the sessions in non-academic language, thus enabling the families to feel comfortable and enabling them to engage fully in the sessions.

"The participants were very open once they learned we were homeless before ourselves – if we said we were staff members they would have closed up – they opened up as a result to us. We were trying to get information (from the participants) but not poke too much. Because we were homeless before and we were open about being homeless – they kinda looked up to us"

- "Helping the participants 'feel at home' and comfortable in the NGO created an atmosphere which enabled relationship and trust building".
- It was the explicit aim within PAHRCA of influencing and changing policy to meet the human rights of the vulnerable groups that attracted the families to the research, and motivated them to continue to engage in the process.
- The research required significant personal input, research resources and time.

Case studies of PAHRCA from RE-InVEST PAHRCA research 2016-18

CASE STUDY 3:
ENGLAND

The case of mental health care users

Researchers:
Michael Lavelatte, Rich Moth, Joe Greener, David Neary

Research location:
Liverpool, England

Research target group:
Self identified people with mental health problems and are in regular contact with mental health services.

PARCHA Steps

In recruiting respondents we drew on existing links between a university department that the researchers were based in and a local non-profit welfare providing organisation through a service users group, Person Shaped Support (PSS). There were 13 members of the group with a reasonable age spread, 9 females and 4 men. The table below gives a synopsis of five of the research meetings.

CASE STUDY 3: **ENGLAND** PAHRCA STEPS	
Step 1 – Partnership with NGOs	In recruiting respondents the team drew on existing links between a university department that the researchers were based in and a local non-profit welfare providing organisation through a service users group, Person Shaped Support (PSS). There were 13 members of the group with a reasonable age spread, 9 females and 4 men.
Step 2 – Preliminary meet ups and meeting with participants	In this session the researchers explained the aims of PAHRCA and the wider RE-In-VEST project. Each member of the group was asked to briefly introduce themselves and then blank 'snakes', essentially timelines, were handed to each participant. Group members were asked to fill in the snake by noting major life events since 2007. The researchers asked them to include personal changes in family life, changes in employment, welfare services and benefits they had received or lost and also major changes in their mental health, including periods of crisis and periods where they felt they were improving. After the snakes had been completed, a group discussion was had regarding what they felt about the exercise of reflecting on their lives since the financial crisis.
Step 3 – Developmental and capacity building: human rights and capability approach	This meeting kicked off with an overview of what human rights are and, in particular, a summary of the UK Human Rights Act 1998. After this the group were asked to fill in a worksheet in which they high¬lighted what rights they felt were most important and whether they thought that they had experienced specific instances of human rights abuses. After this a group discussion was had where we collectively worked through the Human Rights Act 1998 to explore which rights were relevant to people experienc¬ing mental distress and welfare service users. A second meeting kicked off with an overview the capabilities approach. In operationalising the capabilities approach the researchers focused on two issues. Firstly, they asked respondents to fill a worksheet reflecting on the full range of factors in their life, both in terms of informal support networks, welfare services and hob¬bies, which helped them in managing mental distress. Secondly, they asked them to think about what their current life plans were, how these could be achieved and what barriers they faced.

CASE STUDY 2: ENGLAND PAHRCA STEPS Continued

Step 4 –

Inquiry / data gathering/ analysis

Given that in the first 4 sessions so much conversation had orientated around the ways that interactions with welfare professionals and other people in the community were often harsh, stigmatising and degrading, the group felt it was important to look further at the ways others depicted welfare users. For this session the researchers chose a selection of newspaper headings which reported negatively on disabled people and benefit recipients. These were shown to provoke a general debate about social policy reform and the political dimensions of austerity.

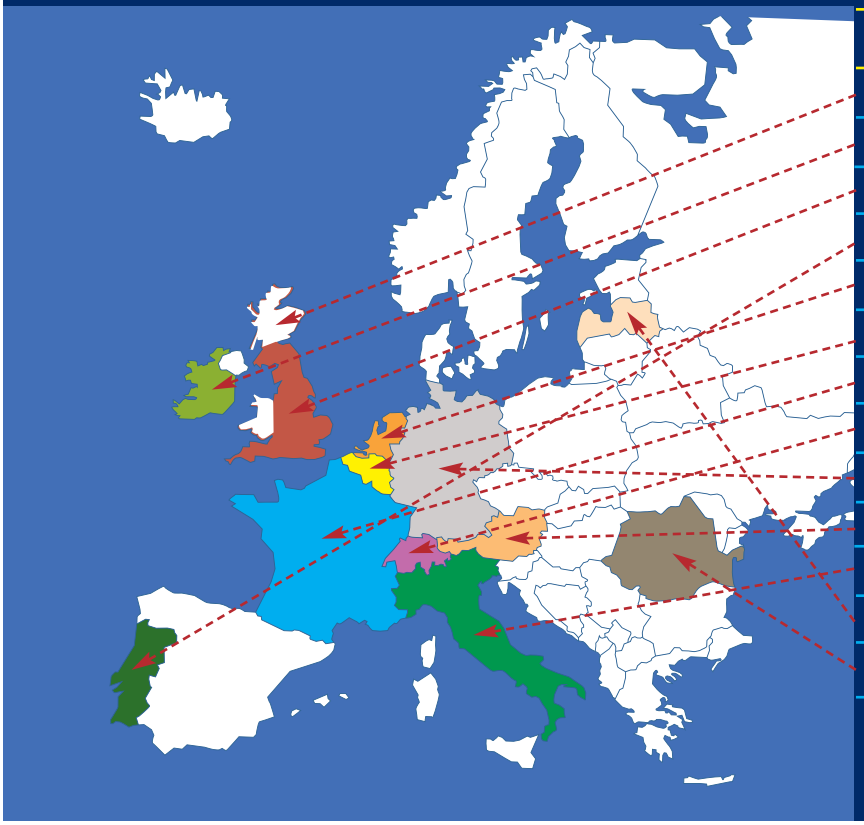
Step 5 –

Undertake voice/action/ outcome

The action component of the research had been discussed at various points in previous meetings but in this session it was agreed that they would develop, as a group, a photo exhibition. The group were given cameras and then took photos which they felt spoke to two main themes. Firstly, what experiences in their everyday life result in deteriorating mental health and, secondly, what are the resources in their communities which allow them to survive in spite of mental distress and other forms of marginalisation.

points in previous meetings but in this session it was agreed that they would develop, as a group, a photo exhibition. The group were given cameras and then took photos which they felt spoke to two main themes. Firstly, what experiences in their everyday life result in deteriorating mental health and, secondly, what are the resources in their communities which allow them to survive in spite of mental distress and other forms of marginalisation.

FIGURE 11. 13 EU Countries and their perceived major issue



Country	Issue
Scotland:	Lone parents
Ireland:	Housing
England:	Mental Health
Portugal:	Work
Netherlands:	Housing
Belgium:	Immigration
France:	Immigration
Switzerland:	NEET
Germany:	Work
Austria:	Work
Italy:	Vulnerabilities
Latvia:	Disability & Work
Romania:	Migration

Part Three:

Reflecting on PAHRCA: Ethics, the academic and learnings from practice

In this section we explore ethical considerations when undertaking PAHRCA research. This is followed by a discussion on the role of the academic/policy maker co-researcher involved in PAHRCA (for information on the role of the disadvantaged co-researcher, the NGO / intermediary, and peer researchers (please consult the Practice Handbook). Table 2 provides an overview of the varying motivations for engagement in PAHRCA amongst the different co-researchers. The section then concludes with a reflection on what we learnt from the iterative process of co-constructing and implementing the PAHRCA approach such as empowerment, dealing with time pressure, adjusting expectations, accepting realities and limitations.

Table 2 Motivations of vulnerable groups, NGOs and academics for partnership in PAHRCA

NGO	Academics	Vulnerable & Vulnerable Groups
Instrumental need for advice on methodology, evaluation, commissioning research	Opportunity for knowledge transfer amongst the partners. A desire to understand social ex-/ inclusion issues better from an insider perspective	Voice
Add academic knowledge to own knowledge and/or opportunity to reflect	Enhance impact and dissemination	Aspiration to advance, learn skills
Rubber stamp validity – enhance status and trust	Requirement of funding	Solidarity
Access to resources – journals	Social transformation agenda of public intellectuals and civic minded universities committed to public social science	Social change
Dissemination and impact	Need for gate keeper to recruit research participants	Need to acquire resources

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval is often required for research from Universities, funders and NGOs. Both action and participatory methodologies are seen to require special attention in terms of ethics due to:

- The sustained period of research
- Closer relationships built between participants and researchers
- The involvement of a myriad of organisations
- The nature of relationships are often necessarily embedded within the 'micropolitics' of the social setting
- The involvement of vulnerable participants
- A requirement of consistent reflection on the politics of the research

When reflecting on the ethics of your research you will need to consider:

- Role and capacity of university research boards to determine ethical approval
- Ethics 'done' in the field –guidelines debated, or privacy/informed consent contested
- Never consider that ethics is 'done' – it is an ongoing process (design – data collection – publication)
- Payment for participants time
- Developing an agreement – discussions about confidentiality, privacy and informed consent and making sure it addresses group confidentiality
- Code of conduct for relating to each other in the group and dealing with any disagreements
- Stick to notions of 'action' which are truer to the definition set out in theory
- Consider who the ethical agreements are to be made with – the NGO, vulnerable group etc.
- NGOs often have their own different ethical guidelines.
- Highest regard should be given to the research participant rather than the research institution.
- Consider how the research is providing support for the disadvantaged participants
- Issues relating to ownership of data and data obligations under new May 2018 GDPR

The role of the academic co-researcher

Baker et al. (2004) challenges the researcher to be reflexive while Gill (2017) encourages us to be less silent about the conditions in which research is produced, our experiences as 'knowledge workers'. Most academics are middle class and while many who will use this handbook may have applied research backgrounds in community based campaigns, others may be venturing into this approach for the first time.

This guide reflects approaches within the 'scholar-activist' tradition and also the tradition of 'pracademics' who cross policy and academic worlds (Murphy 2016).

- Scholar-activists, are academics working as both teachers and researchers in third level institutions, while also being activists striving for progressive or more radical social change (Murphy 2016)
- Pracademic' describes scholars who have professionally bridged the academic and practical world, particularly those who go into academia having already embarked on a career as a practitioner (Volpe and Chandler, 2001)

A PAHRCA approach to research should prove challenging for academic researchers, challenging our own biases and motivations, forcing us to re-examine notions of empowerment and to question the boundaries of our own commitment to this form of research and our role in public engagement and societal transformation. Different levels of expectations are likely. Middle class academics will often have to 'check their privilege' and will find themselves challenged to do so by both participants and peer researchers.

Intersectionality, gender, class, race and age will also influence the process of research, and in all likelihood pose practical cultural and linguistic challenges.

Researchers will also have to negotiate carefully through a research ethics which define research questions with the active participation of research participants. Researchers will have to be ready to adapt, change and lose original research questions as they share the research space equally with others.

There are also challenges of managing research relationships with NGOs and the expectations from the research of broader critical policy and political communities. In some instances researchers may have to respect collective decisions to hold back research findings considered damaging by the wider community.

Bertosa (2017) argues universities need to take practical steps to create conditions to encourage societal impact via the co-creation of knowledge. Universities (rather than academics), however, are not easy partners for NGOs as they are highly fragmented and siloed. They are also driven by marketization and globalisation and the related league table competitive culture which leaves little

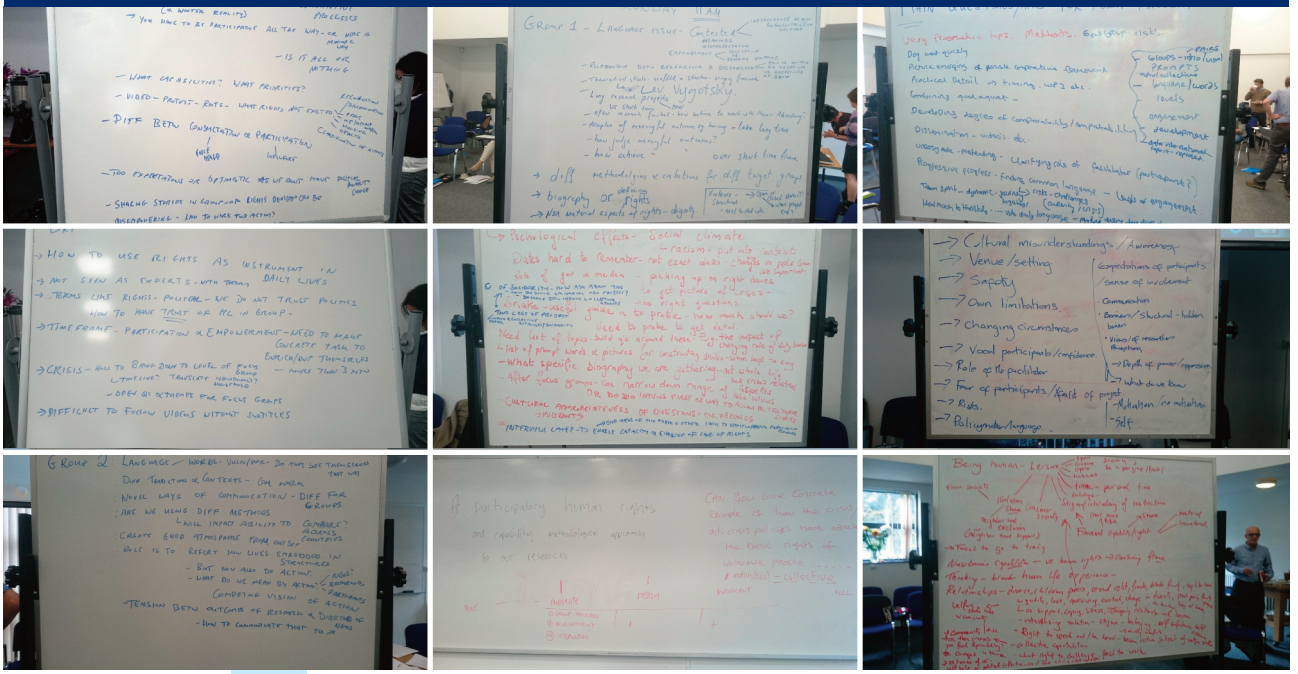
space for collaboration with NGOs, not to mind vulnerable groups. For example:

- Time frames can be different: NGOs are more immediate while academics work under varying time frames; participatory research can be extremely time consuming.
- Language and terminology is different as well as communication styles.
- Budgets are different, university research costs are often staggering to NGOs who in their opinion often do more with less.
- There are key differences between knowledge transfer (which academics do) and knowledge exchange – or knowledge co-creation, co-production (which NGOs want to do).
- Reviewers (of journal articles and funding applications) often lack the expertise to appreciate the nuanced process behind co-creation and the time and work involved.
- Those academics that work towards co-construction are often working outside their comfort zone and in ways that are not always nurtured within the university.
- Ethical considerations for co-construction are difficult to process in university settings which often require specific details before the research process begins and requires the academic to position those they will work with as passive 'subjects' rather than active co-researchers.

Furthermore, Bertosa (2017) highlights other complexities that should be considered in partnerships between academics and NGOs:

- Legal and practical notions of intellectual copyright.
- What and whose problem needs to be researched.
- Which and whose knowledge is most valued.
- Which impacts are valued, media, political, academic publications.
- How can cultural shifts happen.
- What are the implications of co creation for research methods and design.
- How do partnership relationships develop.
- What models of co-production work and do not work and why.

Table 3 The Iterative Process of Knowledge Co-construction



Reflecting on iterative practice of PAHRCA: achievements and limitations

It is important, in providing a guide to PAHRCA, to highlight that this is not a perfect formula to achieve PAR, empowerment and transformation. Any attempt to do PAR in an effective manner is an extremely challenging (and rewarding) process for all co-researchers. Implementing and developing PAHRCA was no different. Here we present some of our reflections as we progressed through the iterative process of doing our best to implement PAHRCA (though not always succeeding).

Working with 'rights' and capabilities

The importance of the non-material aspects of rights and capabilities approaches such as the concept of human dignity was emphasised. It was a challenge to try to define how 'rights' can be used as an instrument in daily lives. In some country specific contexts it was noted that terms like rights can be seen as political and some vulnerable participants 'don't trust politics'.

We were aware that it can be difficult to make people 'talk' about feelings in poverty such as 'shame'. This approach can often individualise a sense of self-blame for their experience of poverty rather than growing a sense of solidarity amongst participants. The rights framework can be useful in addressing this by moving from victim, to the concept of rights holder, as it focuses on the duty bearer who has responsibility for addressing social exclusion. In this context it is important to be able to empower people to work towards action.

Developing Rights

In the rights approach there is a need, working with the vulnerable group, to identify a set of rights and how they relate to a measurable social problem that affects them. This can also provide a mechanism for empowering those who are considered 'rightless' or at least seen as to be not entitled to the same rights as everyone else. For the projects and groups including their partners the challenge in the rights approach is how to develop a collective process of deepening / developing knowledge on rights.

Time frame and definition of Action in PAR

The lack of time and issues of resources and capacity, were key issues and barriers for completing PAHRCA in the RE-InVEST projects. In the end we concluded that they were inadequate to provide a deeper PAR experience. Projects were keenly aware that the limited time frame of RE-InVEST (for example, having just a few weeks, or months to work on a specific project with participants, rather than the much longer periods of time required to achieve an effective PAR) reduced their ability to deliver genuine participation and empowerment. This raised the challenge for RE-InVEST of how to judge / assess if an outcome / process is meaningful and, most importantly, how can projects achieve meaningful outcomes over the short time periods.

While acknowledging the considerable time needed for truly participative processes it was suggested that implementing a participative approach should not be a case of 'all or nothing'. The difference between consultation (voice heard) and participation (influencing) was emphasised. It was felt that there was a need to achieve a level of co-production of knowledge from the outset and also to raise our awareness, and the participants' awareness of structural issues – a requirement to 'raise consciousness'.

Once the research was finished, there was generally no further work with participants as a collective group by either the researchers or the NGOs, although in some cases on-going support and involvement was provided by NGOs and academic co-researchers to peer researchers. When the research is finished, how can researchers continue to work with the vulnerable group that they have set up?

Also NGOs, as service providers, rarely engage in collective action empowerment of service users as a group, as they have a different set of priorities and limited resources. The collective action approach in PAHRCA can, therefore, be challenging to their internal structures and approaches. Faggura and Gerrard (2016) discuss the reality of complex relationships between the state, service delivery, advocacy, and campaign organisations, and research and how funding allocations restrict advocacy.

Expectations and shared ownership

It is challenging to promote the idea that social problems are structural in cause whilst simul-

taneously retaining the possibility of transformation and attempting to encourage and undertake social action amongst participants. A key question is 'how do (research) projects promote the structural conceptions of people's position in society but then also retain a possibility for change and transformation?'

Are there too many optimistic expectations about achieving the level of change highlighted in the PAHRCA approaches without having the resources (as academics or NGO co-researchers) to exert (or create) the political power to change these things? There was also a concern of being 'too political' by encouraging public collective action of participants. On the other hand, some of the most impactful results from the RE-InVEST projects were achieved when such public collective action was undertaken.

Co-construction of knowledge

The PAHRCA approach aims to be a prefigurative form of developmental socialisation – where the capacity of all actors is enhanced in a collaborative way using trust building exercises including information sessions, discussions, role play, visual methods and dialogue. All of these enabled co-construction of new and important understandings related to crisis impacts and policy responses in RE-InVEST. The transformative participatory methods over multiple sessions enabled the co-construction of these insights. The focus on empowerment and participation as equal co-researchers ensured that the research findings reflected their grounded realities while also enhancing their capacity to understand their own challenges in the wider policy context. Importantly for policy-orientated research, the participatory human rights frame work also opened up a process of co-development of policy alternatives. Indeed the explicit aim within PAHRCA of influencing and changing policy to meet the human rights of the vulnerable groups can attract research participants as well as motivate them to continue to engage in the process up to the stage of action.

Action

For RE-InVEST the achievement of actions within PAHRCA was the most challenging aspect of the research approach. Many projects achieved the co-construction of knowledge, but did not have the time, experience, resources or NGO support to undertake collective action towards transformation. However, as we have shown in Part Two in the case study examples, there are also some good examples within RE-InVEST of forms of action that enhanced (if even temporarily) the individual and collective rights and capabilities of participants and challenged social injustices. Action in the public sphere can be immensely empowering but also extremely challenging for those are not seasoned activists.

There needs to be greater consideration given from the outset to this question of action, how and who is to undertake it, and what role the different actors can play.

Concluding comments

The PAHRCA research process of prefigurative politics with a 'bottom-up' lens did generate a genuine empowerment of vulnerable groups. In many instances our research process of mutual knowledge co-creation and learning sessions evolved into dialogue and action, where participants built on their experience to express their views in the public sphere and in public policy documents (for more detail on this see the case study examples in the Practice Handbook). The co-construction of knowledge process offered the opportunity to policy makers to better understand the gaps between the reality of vulnerable participants' experiences of specific forms of social exclusion and the explicit and implicit knowledge about the vulnerable that informs much of policy responses.

Drawing out such implicit assumptions illuminates policy contradictions, policy failures and underlying tensions in policy discourses.

However this outcome of PAHRCA is necessarily nuanced. Achieving this level of empowerment was very challenging for the co-researchers: academics, partner NGOs and the vulnerable participants. It requires significant personal input, research resources and time. The very short time frame of H2020 and other funded research limits the ability to achieve the level of deep participation and empowerment required to fulfil the full aims of PAR. Predetermined research questions (e.g. including the requirement for H2020 funding proposals) can also limit the capacity to engage vulnerable groups in all aspects of the research design.

The PAHRCA aim of bringing the voice and reality of vulnerable groups into the public sphere did

translate into enabling the concerns and experiences of socially excluded participants to be taken seriously within some local and national political and policy spheres. However this was limited in scale, scope, and ultimately outcomes. Nonetheless, such new co-created knowledge now exists in the public sphere as a benchmark for assessing policy into the future and can be effectively drawn on by various stakeholders and civil society campaigns. At the more local level, it can be used by service providers to respond to some of the issues raised by the research. Overall then we found that PAHRCA as a form of PAR research has been worthwhile in empowering the voice of vulnerable groups and bringing that voice into the academic and public policy debates.

However, a key issue in our experience, has been the lack of purchase of new forms of knowledge amongst policy makers and the resistance of such state actors, at national and international level, to examine the ways in which the policy system reproduces specific knowledge(s) about vulnerable groups which is too often stigmatising, inaccurate and exacerbates inequalities.

We hope that these Guides provide you with the theoretical tools, methodological steps and real-world motivation to undertake your own PAHRCA in partnership with NGOs and vulnerable groups.

Using these guides should help you contribute to a furthering of the unruly process of knowledge co-creation, that empowers the vulnerable voice and challenges systemic exclusion, injustice and inequality.

Part Four:

Links

Project website: http://www.re-invest.eu/

Publications including Policy briefs, Newsletters, Reports and Articles: http://www.re-invest.eu/documents/reports

https://www.facebook.com/RE-InVEST-1550863868513522/

https://twitter.com/REInVEST_EU

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