

## PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH APPROACH: PRINCIPLES, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

GOHAR TADEVOSYAN, MICHAEL SCHOENHUTH

### Participatory Research Approach

The PR approach is relatively new in the social science and is based on the critical social science theories and participatory worldview, where the primary purpose of human inquiry is practical<sup>1</sup>. PR is considered a new paradigm, which Chambers describes as *'a coherent and mutually supportive pattern of concepts, values, methods and action amenable to wide application'*<sup>2</sup>. It drives from Action Research work back to the 1940s.

Participatory research is viewed as an alternative perspective to conventional social research, which grew out of a reaction to approaches developed in North America and Europe. It is flexible and open-ended. It has roots in the qualitative research tradition, which Reason and Heron describe as *'a half-way house between exclusive, controlling, quantitative, positivist research on people and fully participatory, co-operative research with people'*<sup>3</sup>. But it's not anti-quantitative, as several PR-tools collect also quantitative data. PR aims to explore and interpret the views, concerns and experiences of people from their own perspectives and allows them to undertake measures to improve their situations. It is the answer on the question "Whose reality counts" (Chambers 1997)<sup>4</sup> which makes the difference. These differences to conventional social researches' approaches are discussed below.

**Principles and approach:** PR is based on the principles of *"participation"* and *"self-development"*. It treats people as *"research participants"* rather than *"research subjects"*. It is *people-centered* in the sense that the process of critical inquiry is informed by and responds to the experiences and needs of people involved<sup>5</sup>. The fundamental principle of participatory research is that it is research *with* rather than *on* people<sup>6</sup>. It emphasizes *"knowledge for action"* and a *"bottom-up approach"* in contrast to conventional research, which is more *"top-down"*. PR

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<sup>1</sup> Heron, J., & Reason, P. A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 1997. Vol. 3(3). Pp. 274-294.

<sup>2</sup> Chambers, R. Normal Professionalism, New Paradigms and Developments. Institute of Development Studies. Discussion Paper 227. University of Sussex, Brighton. 1986. P.1.

<sup>3</sup> Heron, J., & Reason, P. A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 1997. Vol. 3(3). Pp. 274-294.

<sup>4</sup> Chambers, R. 1997: *Whose Reality Counts. Putting the Last First*. London: Earthscan.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, L. D. *People-Centered Development and Participatory Research*. *Harvard Educational Review*, 1985. Vol. 55 (1). Pp. 69-75.

<sup>6</sup> Reason, P., Heron, J. *Research with People: The Paradigm of Co-operation Experiential Enquiry*. *Person-Centred Review*. 1986. Vol.1, 4. Pp. 456-476.

is characterised as a “*democratic*”, “*cooperative*”, “*partnership*” and “*non-hierarchical*” type of research relationships in designing research proposal, data gathering, data analysis, dissemination and action.

**PR is applied social research and is owned by local people:** In the CR the role of researchers is to study social phenomena and identify basic social regularities. The practical aspect of knowledge application is not seen as direct responsibility of social researchers. PR is a more applied type of research, where the primary focus is on the “research-action -social change” link. It has been developed as an alternative way of knowledge creation, where people are recognised as researchers themselves and as real owners of the research process in contrast to conventional social research.

**PR as a source of social change:** In PR the research process is viewed as a potential *source of change* and *empowerment* for the research participants. As Park stated, a critical difference between CR and PR is that in the latter the people on whose behalf the investigation-action cycle is carried out, get directly involved in the process, from problem formulation - to inquiry - to action<sup>7</sup>. PR is described as *a process for influencing policy-making and local settings by reflecting the views and opinions of local people*<sup>8</sup>.

**Knowledge is power:** Participatory research creates a knowledge which further applies to collective problems through social action. According to Reason and Heron, participatory research *invites people to participate in the co-creation of knowledge about themselves* with the purpose to change the world. It is aimed at both generating knowledge and producing action, in common with other forms of action-oriented research which, unlike academic research, is driven by practical outcomes rather than theoretical understanding<sup>9</sup>.

According to Blackburn and Holland *‘Participation is making efforts to create such conditions which would contribute to empowerment of those members and groups of the society, who have little control in the oversight of powers determining their life’*<sup>10</sup>. Thus, PR empowers people, especially socially marginalized ones, by involving them in the knowledge creation process. It is built on the principle that *‘knowledge is power’* and that is why this approach supported people to investigate their situations, analyze it, and then undertake relevant collective action to improve their lives. Knowledge for the sake of knowing is deemphasized. In this approach knowledge is directly linked to its utilization, which is a concrete action<sup>11</sup>. This makes the quality of knowledge stronger and action justified.

**Location of power:** The PR approach promotes power-sharing in the research and planning phases of development through the incorporation of the perspectives

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<sup>7</sup> **Park, R.** The Discovery of Participatory Research as a New Scientific Paradigm: Personal and Intellectual Accounts. *The American Sociologist*. 1992 winter. Pp.29-42.

<sup>8</sup> **Swain J., French S.** Researching Together: A Participatory Approach. In French S. and Sim J. (eds.) *Physiotherapy: A Psychosocial Approach* (3rd ed.). Butterworth-Heinemann. Oxford. 2004.

<sup>9</sup> **Park, R.** *Management Learning*. SAGE Publications London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi. 1999. Vol. 30(2). Pp.141–157.

<sup>10</sup> **Blackburn, J.** with **Holland, J.** Ed. *Who Changes? Institutionalizing Participation in Development*. Intermediate technology publication. 1998.

<sup>11</sup> **Pant, M.** Participatory Research. In *Participatory Lifelong Learning and Information and Communication Technologies*. Course 01. An-Aladin. India Initiative. Participatory Adult Learning, Documentation and Information Networking (PALDIN). 2005.

of local people. Therefore, the critical difference of the PR and CR, as Cornwall and Jewkes explain, is the “*location of power in the various stages of the research*”<sup>12</sup> and researchers who apply a participatory approach are attempting to change these power relations and to ensure that research is owned and controlled not only by researchers, but also by research participants.

**Participation modes:** The degree of participation and the purpose of participation vary widely depending on the type of research being done. In CR the role of local people is limited mostly by giving information regarding the research topic. In contrast to that, in PR local people/researchers have greater role and participation. Chambers and Jewkes identified modes of participation, which can be seen as a continuum for ensuring participation in the research project<sup>13</sup>:

- **Contractual arrangements**, which involve the contracting of people to participate in providing data which researchers need;

- **Consultative arrangements**, which promote consulting with people “for their opinions” before interventions are made;

- **Collaborative arrangements**, which encourage the researcher and local people to work together towards identifying, designing and initiating projects managed by researchers;

- **Collegiate arrangements**, which promote local people and researchers working together as “colleagues with different skills to offer in a process of mutual learning where local people have control over the process”.

On the continuum of participation, according to the above mentioned typology CR is more contractual, extractive or consultative and the PR process is more collaborative and collegiate.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Participatory Research**

Like all types of social researches the PR has got its strengths and weaknesses<sup>14</sup>. The participatory research approach has many **advantages**, which makes it very useful for any kind of research, but especially, when it is: applied, exploratory and learning, target-group or action-oriented and when local commitment is needed to make a process sustainable. Here we would like to discuss some of the strengths of PR:

- **PR allows understanding social reality from ordinary people’s perspectives:** People’s own analysis of their situation provides a deeper understanding of such dimensions, which usually are not identified through the conventional approaches. One of the best examples is Participatory Poverty Assessment methodology, where poverty and livelihood are defined and analysed from the perspectives and experiences of poor people. This enables decision makers to recognize real needs of the poor and elaborate needs-based and right-based<sup>15</sup> policies.

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<sup>12</sup> Cornwall, A., Jewkes, R. What is Participatory Research? Social Science and Medicine. 1995. Vol. 41(12). Pp. 1667 – 1676.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Adapted from <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/page/toolbox-additional-strengths-weaknes> website and further developed by authors.

<sup>15</sup> “Right-based” approach to development, which has intensified in recent years, calls for existing resources to be shared equally.

- **PR is a type of applied social research, which helps to address problems and find practical solutions:** Involving local people in the research process gives good opportunities to re-think and re-interpret their situation, which in its turn might increase the relevance, applicability and delivery of research findings to address problems of their daily life and to improve it.

- **PR is based on flexible methodologies to support communication of the findings for the desirable change:** Involving local people would change the nature of research in terms of developing more flexible, relatively simple and widely generalisable field techniques. This will allow to communicate and share relevant information between stakeholders and researchers, and facilitate the research and development process. This will create also a sense of ownership of the research process and findings and will lead to more tangible results. Therefore, PR is based more on approaches, which are highly flexible and adaptable for investigating different social settings.

- **PR allows understanding the complexity of social settings:** PR enables to understand the complexity of social reality and the diverse nature of people's livelihood strategies and the factors affecting them. Involvement of different stakeholders assists in having a holistic picture of the reality, establishing causality and identifying problems according to different socio-demographic characteristics.

- **PR is aimed at people's empowerment:** For the promoters of this approach, participation has developed from a research technique in the 1970s into a means of empowerment in the 1990s until today. As Chambers states "the ultimate output of PR is enhanced knowledge and competence, and ability to make demands, and to sustain action"<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, capacity building of local people, advocacy and participation in policy development are important features of PR.

- **PR enables to influence policy:** The conventional research approach very often ignores the importance of research context. Therefore, the data obtained through this type of research are more general and context-free, which affects also the quality of policies. By contrast, the in-depth and context-based nature of participatory research approaches can provide good insights for policy actions. Therefore, participatory research processes enable us to incorporate local knowledge into the broader policy dialogue process and increase its relevance and effectiveness.<sup>17</sup>

- **Promoting culture of social dialogue:** The long-term involvement in different level of stakeholders in the research and mutual learning process promote a dialogue, partnership and cooperation. This provides a good base of collective analysis and actions.

- **Changing attitudes:** The successful application of PR undermines the traditional stereotypes according to which the change and reform can be only initiated by the Government. Hence, it encourages bottom-up changes. Therefore, the overall success of PR highly depends also on the personal values and motivations of people involved.

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<sup>16</sup> **Chambers, R.** Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis and Experience. World Development. 1994b. Vol. 22 (9) 1253-68. P.1266.

<sup>17</sup> For more insights on PR and Policy Making see: Rietbergen-Mc Cracken 2009: Participatory Policy Making. Electr. Article: [http://pgexchange.org/images/toolkits/PGX\\_F\\_Participatory-Policy%20Making.pdf](http://pgexchange.org/images/toolkits/PGX_F_Participatory-Policy%20Making.pdf) (22.2. 2011)

- **Establishing new institutional arrangements<sup>18</sup>**: PR is also about identifying social problems and their solutions and assist in bringing institutional change by establishing structures and mechanisms which can guarantee the sustainability of new relationships and knowledge for the overall benefit of people. However, this is possible only through a long term PR process, where its potential is fully applied. These institutional arrangements can guarantee the success and sustainability of PR applications.

As other types of researches the participatory research approach also has some limitations. Below are listed some of them:

- **The quality of information**: Engagement of local communities in the research process put under question scientific value and rigour of PR and creates some room for methodological criticism. Besides, the accessibility and simplicity of some PR techniques make it possible to apply them mechanistically, which also affect on the quality of findings. PR implementation should be based on multidisciplinary knowledge and skills. Successful application requires justified methodological approach, good communication, and facilitation and conflict negotiation skills.

- **Unequal attention towards different stages of PR**: If we consider PR not only as a research approach, but also as a policy tool, we should pay equal attention to all stages of PR. Experience has shown that for effective outcomes, preparatory process (training, identification of stakeholders) and follow up period (dissemination, advocacy and policy linking) takes equal if not more time than fieldwork itself. The process of transformation and social change highly depends on stakeholders' involvement, advocacy and follow-up activities.<sup>19</sup>

- **Limitation of generating statistical data**: Although some of the PR methods can produce quantitative data, a flexible and open-ended nature of PR requires a more qualitative approach to research, because it aims to provide in depth analysis of locally identified contexts. However, in some cases the quantitative methods can provide insights to guide the collection and disaggregation of broader nationally and regionally generated statistical data. Therefore, in the last few years participatory research specialists discuss the possible use of quantitative approaches and data in PR practice. Chambers and Mayoux argue that *'When used well, participatory approaches and methods can generate both qualitative insights and usually more accurate quantitative data than more conventional approaches and methods.'*<sup>20</sup>

- **There's no blue-print<sup>21</sup>** – In contrast to conventional research PR is highly flexible in terms of research methodologies and procedures. That means that the

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<sup>18</sup> Adapted from **Neiland, A., Bennett, E., Townsley, Ph.** Participatory Research Approaches – What Have We Learned? (2006). The experience of the DFID Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS) Programme 1995–2005. [www.research4development.info/thematic/summaries/fmnsparticipation.pdf](http://www.research4development.info/thematic/summaries/fmnsparticipation.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> For a whole range of methods in a Participatory Governance process see: PG Exchange 2011: Participatory Governance Toolkits: [http://pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com\\_alphacontent&view=alphacontent&Itemid=79](http://pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com_alphacontent&view=alphacontent&Itemid=79) (2.2.2011)

<sup>20</sup> **Chambers, R., Mayoux, L.** Reversing the Paradigm: Quantification and Participatory Methods. Submitted to the EDIAIS Conference on “New Directions in Impact Assessment for Development: Methods and Practice” University of Manchester, UK. November 2003. Pp.24-25.

<sup>21</sup> Adapted from Research and the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Approach. In: **Carney D.** (ed.) Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: What Contribution Can We Make? London: Department for International Development (DFID). 1998.

choice of research methodologies and the research process itself need to be adapted to each situation. This requires strong knowledge of different research approaches and tools. PR application requires some improvising talents on the researcher's side depending on the local situation. PR methodologies have their ideologies and procedures. However, how they will be implemented depends on the specifics of local settings and people. This flexibility is a great advantage of PR, but at the same time it can turn to disadvantages if not professionally applied. Given the social, cultural and political diversity in which projects and programs are situated, strategies and approaches cannot be a 'blueprint' approach, but rather must be contextualized, developed and adapted by research and development practitioners -- together with the members of the communities in which they are working<sup>22</sup>.

- **Participation limitations:** Here it is important to discuss two things. *First*, participatory research can be very effective in some, but not all, situations<sup>23</sup>. It is important to recognise when participatory approaches are appropriate to avoid participation becoming the end in itself and devalue the very meaning of 'participation' or 'participatory'. We should take also into account that there are different modes of participation, which can produce different outcomes. *Second*, participation is not just about involving people. It is complex and long term process. It is about establishing partnership and collaboration between stakeholders at different levels of society, because development requires early and substantive involvement of all stakeholders in the design of activities that will affect them. That is why it is very important to involve all stakeholders from the very beginning of the PR, so that everybody has the same understanding of the process. It is crucial also to pay attention to local power structures. PR that is trying to change a social situation can't be very efficient without involvement of central and local governments, who have power and resources to improve the situation, but also to thwart the whole participatory process. Blackburn and Holland point out that *'participation would not make sense as long as power-holders do not allow others to participate in processes of setting priorities, making decisions, managing and controlling resources'*<sup>24</sup>.

- **Law level of democracy and decentralization:** The governance context may strongly limit the extent to which 'participation' can be translated into meaningful outcomes. Unclear mechanisms of democratic governance make citizens dependent on decision-makers and obstruct the equal participation of people in decision-making processes and implementation. The absence of a culture of cooperation among the community institutions at the regional and local levels also impedes the process of reforms.

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<sup>22</sup> Gonsalves, J., Becker, T., Braun, A., Campilan, D., De Chavez, H., Fajber, E., Kaporiri, M., Rivaca-Caminade, J., and Vernooy, R. (eds). Participatory Research and Development for Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management: A Sourcebook. Volume 1: Understanding Participatory Research and Development. International Potato Center-Users' Perspectives With Agricultural Research and Development, Laguna, Philippines and International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada. 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from Neiland, A., Bennett, E., Townsley, Ph. Participatory Research Approaches – What Have We Learned? (2006). The experience of the DFID Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS) Programme 1995–2005. [www.research4development.info/thematic/summaries/fmssparticipation.pdf](http://www.research4development.info/thematic/summaries/fmssparticipation.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Holland, J. with Blackburn, J. (Ed.). Who Changes? Institutionalizing Participation in Development. Intermediate technology publication. 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1998. P.6.

- **Mistrust of the society and participation fatigue:** Indifference and mistrust of the society, and its alienation from participatory process can highly influence the outcomes of PR. This problem is quite typical for developing countries, including former Soviet Republics, where the dominant approach was paternalistic, according to which all changes and reforms had been initiated and implemented by the Government. In addition to that, PR in its turn also can create some mistrust and so called participation fatigue,<sup>25</sup> if not organized properly to deliver desirable outcomes.

- **Micro-macro linkage and impact on policy making:**<sup>26</sup> Information gathered and shared in different contexts may be hard to synthesise for central planning. However, comparison of findings across a range of contexts can enable national policy makers to distinguish between policies that are relevant for local, regional and national formulation and implementation. Besides, if the purpose is central planning, it is worth to use some benchmark indicators, which will allow comparison across the regions and sectors.<sup>27</sup>

- **Raising expectations of local people**<sup>28</sup> - One of the problems of researchers working intensely with local people, with the purpose to improve their livelihood is to raise their expectations. The closer the relationship gets, the greater the raised expectations.<sup>29</sup> This situation can affect also on the research findings by creating false impressions about the local situation and questions the quality of obtained knowledge. That is why this approach is more appropriate for long-term involvement, so that the expectations and demands can be met. This problem can be overcome also by informing all stakeholders and participants about the objectives and outcomes of PR exercise from the very beginning, so that everyone has a clear idea and understanding about his/her role and expected results.

### Critical appraisal of Participatory Research

Despite its wide application in the development contexts in the last 20 years PR has been highly criticized. The critiques of PR approaches are mostly related to its non-scientific, rhetoric and formality nature. Andreas Neef in his article 'Participatory approaches under scrutiny: will they have a future?'<sup>30</sup> systematised the critics of PR and discussed seven critical issues, related to methodological limitations, communication process and power relations<sup>31</sup>. There are indeed issues that are de-

<sup>25</sup> Cornwall, A. 2008. Unpacking 'Participation': models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal* 43 (3): 269-28 (Special Issue: Participatory Approaches in Community Development: Transitions and Transformations).

<sup>26</sup> Chronic Poverty Research Centre (n.d.): <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/page/toolbox-additional-strengths-weaknes>

<sup>27</sup> For a critique on PR-Approaches being not policy-oriented enough see: Guijt, I. and A. Cornwall 1995. Critical reflections on the practice of PRA. *PLA Notes* 24, 1995, pp.2-7. For an early outline for up-scaling on the policy level: Pretty J. 1999. *Sustainable Agriculture: A Review of Recent Progress on Policies and Practice*. United Nations Research. Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Geneva.

<sup>28</sup> Adapted from Neiland, A., Bennett, E., Townsley, Ph. *Participatory Research Approaches – What Have We Learned?* (2006). The experience of the DFID Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS) Programme 1995-2005. [www.research4development.info/thematic\\_Summaries/fmssparticipation.pdf](http://www.research4development.info/thematic_Summaries/fmssparticipation.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Edwards, R 1995. PRA and raised expectations: potentials and pitfalls.

<sup>30</sup> Neef, A. 2003: Participatory approaches under scrutiny: will they have a future? *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture* 42 ,4: 489-497.

<sup>31</sup> Cooke, B., Kothari, U. (eds.) (2001): *Participation: the new tyranny?* Zed Books, London, New York. P.4-5.

terminated mostly by non professional application of PR and exaggeration of its role in the social change process. Below we assemble some of the most critical issues and our opinion and responses to them:

**(1) Methodological limitations and lack of scientific rigour** – The methodological critique is related to the purification of knowledge and experience, creation of rigor scientific knowledge; objectivity of information; the non scientific nature of PR – flexible, simple, but not rigid and formalized enough for scientific scrutiny.

When assessing PR from CR or positivists standpoints it might be hard to consider it a scientific research approach. Therefore, every research should be discussed and assessed within its own epistemological and methodological framework. Consequently, PR should be analyzed within the participatory worldview, which is based *'on a subjective-objective ontology; on an extended epistemology of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical ways of knowing; on a methodology based on co-operative relations between co-researchers; and on an axiology, which affirms the primary value of practical knowing in the service of human flourishing'*<sup>32</sup>.

**(2) Naivety about the complexity of communication processes, group dynamics and power relations** – Cooke and Kothary in their book on “Participation: the new tyranny?” assert that participation in practice is nowhere near to the participatory, bottom-up, open process that it is commonly held to be. According to them participation can be described as largely maintaining existing power relationships, through masking this power behind the rhetoric and techniques of participation. This masking, therefore, in their words represents the tyranny of participation. However, we believe that PR can make a difference if it is viewed as a tool or a component of a broader policy process rather than a single research activity.

In addition, the social reality is much more complex and it requires time and commitment from the researchers to understand it and to take it into account while conducting PR. Therefore, researchers should have very good knowledge and a holistic understanding of local settings, in order to avoid biases determined by the local institutional and group structures and communication process.

**(3) Reduction of participatory methods to the diagnostic stage** – PR is more than a research and as Blackburn and Holland point out, *'Participation is a way of viewing the world and acting in it. It is about a commitment to help create the conditions which can lead to significant empowerment of those who at present have little control over the forces that condition their lives'*<sup>33</sup>. That is why PR cannot be used simply in certain stages of the project. For long term and sustainable impact one should use PR's full potential, in order to empower local people to improve their situation.

**(4) Myth of instant analysis of local knowledge** – Local knowledge is non-verbal, tacit and culturally, socially and politically constructed. Therefore one-off, short term and standardized PR exercises cannot always capture the multidimensionality of local knowledge. That is why the emphasis of PR is on the process, which creates spaces for social learning and dialogue between different stakeholders, rather than pure output. Also, due to its qualitative and participative nature

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<sup>32</sup> Heron, J., & Reason, P. A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 1997. Vol. 3(3). Pp. 274-294.

<sup>33</sup> Holland, J., with Blackburn, J. eds. *Whose Voice? Participatory Research and Policy Change*, London, Intermediate Technology Publications. 1998. P.3.

PR data analysis is time-consuming. In order to have a comprehensive picture of the local setting the information must be carefully filtered and analysed to make sense and to come to valid conclusions.

**(5) Instrumental character of participatory methods** – PR is highly flexible and it is built mostly on qualitative methodologies and tools. However, very often the organizers of PR tend to use more standardized procedures, which makes it difficult to represent ‘local representations’ and an understanding of ‘traditional types of communication’. We should be aware that in contrast to CR the PR focus should be more on the process rather than on the outcome, because the ultimate objective of PR is to empower local people to reassess and reinterpret the existing knowledge and behave accordingly.

**(6) Underestimation of the costs of participation** – As can be seen by the acronym “R” in Rapid Appraisal, in the early stage, the RRA/PRA movement was a response to the pressures for quick results by national organizations and donor agencies. However, we should recognise that the success of PR depends on extensive engagement and contribution from all sides. It is a complex activity and by trying to overcome the methodological and conceptual shortcomings of PR approaches we should have enough resources. That is why it is better to analyze the costs and benefits of PR in the beginning to avoid poorly and ineffectively organized research. PR is anything but no low-cost research approach.

**(7) Participation as a substitute for good governance.** – In general, participation and civic engagement success depends on a favourable socio-cultural, socio-economic and political context and level of decentralisation. In order to have long term sustainable impacts, PR should be linked with wider processes of democratization and decentralization. However, very often, participatory approaches are used as a substitute for democratic structures and good governance. Thus, in this case the outcomes of the PR are going to be fragmental and not sustainable.

### **Future Perspectives**

PR is a type of social research, which means that it should be organized and implemented according to professional standards. However, in most cases in the practice PR is organised in a very instrumental and standardised way, which creates false impressions about the potential and scientific value of this research methodology. Besides, there are a lot of manuals and guidelines, which say that PR is quick to implement, easy to organize, that anyone can do it, because it is not requiring special skills and knowledge that has nothing to do with politics etc. This is wrong and Pretty et al. classified these impressions as myths about the Participatory Research<sup>34</sup>. We strongly believe that these myths derived mainly from non-professional approaches toward this kind of research.

In contrast to conventional social research the researchers who use the PR approach should be equipped with some additional knowledge, such as facilitation,

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<sup>34</sup> Adapted from Pretty, Jules, N; Guijt, Irene; Thompson, John; Scoones, Ian. Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainers Guide. IIED, London. 1995. Pp.68-70. For an early critique on leaving out gender issues in Community Participation Processes see: Guijt, I. And M.K. Shah 1998. The Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development. London: Intermediate Technology Publications in Participation Series.

communication, empowerment and conflict management. The latter is very important, because as Pretty et al. state “all participants have responsibilities for their actions” and the very engagement and empowerment of ordinary people is likely to create tensions and the researchers may need to take sides or take on the role of mediators or negotiators.

In general, the role of social scientists in this rapidly changing world is crucial and we should be actively involved in the process of analysing and transforming the new social realities determined by the current global, regional and local challenges, using more innovative and flexible research approaches that could be relevant and adoptable for diverse social settings. Participatory research has a great potential not only to gather reliable and sensitive information, but it has also power to improve the situations of local people. Therefore, this research methodology implies a great responsibility on all sides, especially on the side of the researchers, who are responsible for the overall quality of the PR process and its consequences. We believe that with careful design, approbation and implementation, most of the problems associated with the PR approach can be addressed to get reliable qualitative and quantitative information and to inform a strong and needs and rights-based policy design and implementation.

**ԳՈՂԱՐ ԹԱԴԵՎՈՍՅԱՆ, ՄԱՅՔԼ ՇՈՆՅՈՒԹ – Մասնակցային հետազոտական մոտեցում. սկզբունքներ, խնդիրներ և հեռանկարներ** – Ընդհանուր առմամբ զարգացման յուրաքանչյուր հարացույց հիմնվում է նոր գիտելիքի ստեղծման և կիրառության կամ էլ առկա գիտելիքի կիրառության նոր ձևերի վրա, ինչը հնարավորություն է տալիս հասնելու գիտական և կիրառական ցանկալի արդյունքների: Այդ տեսանկյունից զարգացման տեսությունները և պրակտիկաները, որոնք առավելապես զարթոնք են ապրել 20-րդ դարի երկրորդ կեսին, պահանջեցին հետազոտական նոր մոտեցումներ, որոնք թույլ կտային լիովին հասկանալ նոր ստեղծված սոցիալական իրականությունն ու հիմնավորել այդ իրականության վերաբերյալ առկա տարբեր ընկալումներն ու մեկնաբանությունները: Արդյունքը եղավ այն, որ զարգացման գործընթացների վերիմաստավորման համատեքստում վերջին երեք տասնամյակներում ի հայտ եկավ հետազոտական մի նոր մոտեցում, որն ուղեկցվեց ժողովրդավարության, ապակենտրոնացման, քաղաքացիական ներգրավվածության և մասնակցության դիսկուրսներով:

Հոդվածում քննարկվում է մասնակցային հետազոտական մոտեցումը՝ որպես այլընտրանք ավանդական սոցիալական հետազոտություններին: Մասնավորապես, վերլուծված են մասնակցային հետազոտությունների առավելությունները և սահմանափակությունները, ինչպես նաև ներկայացված են վերջինիս քննադատությունը, խնդիրները և հեռանկարները զարգացման համատեքստում:

**ГОАР ТАДЕВОСЯН, МАЙКЛ ШОНУТ – *Партисипаторный исследовательский подход: принципы, задачи и перспективы.*** – Каждая парадигма развития основывается на создании новых знаний или на новом применении уже существующих. Вот почему теории и практики развития, сформировавшиеся во

второй половине XX столетия, требовали новых исследовательских подходов, позволяющих понять абсолютно новые социальные реальности и обосновывающих их различные восприятия и толкования. Пересмотр взглядов на социальные реальности, произошедший за последние три десятилетия, привёл к возникновению на международной арене развития нового типа исследовательского подхода, что сопровождается серьёзными дискуссиями о демократии и децентрализации, о вовлечении в эти процессы граждан.

В статье обсуждаются партисипаторные исследовательские подходы (в дальнейшем именуемые PR) в качестве альтернативы традиционным исследованиям. Анализируются преимущества и недостатки PR, а также их критика, задачи и возможные перспективы в контексте развития.