

What is “PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH” (PAR)?

We understand the PAR idea as follows:

For Whom? Participatory

The PAR Program is built in order to respond to the specific needs of a particular community. In other words, the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries of research are not the scholars themselves confined within the institutional framework of academia or funding agencies, but communities of people assembled around very concrete concerns and problems to be solved. Those communities can be of different dimensions (international, national, local); cemented around different issues (cultural, social, political, religious, artistic, ecological, economic, etc.); connected by different means of communication (face-to-face contacts, social media networks, etc.).

How? Action

The needs of the community are formulated as a problem to be solved. In other words, the PAR program does not stem from questions dictated by the development of a given academic discipline, politics or indeed fashions regulating the academic profession, but from questions that scholars help the community to articulate and then strive to answer in a way that the community who is the beneficiary of the research will find satisfactory.

Since the questions around which the research revolves are dictated by complex needs of real communities of people, they are heterogeneous in nature and consequently require an interdisciplinary approach. Contrary to common practice, these problems are not narrowed down in order to fit a specific disciplinary framework and methodology, but they are analyzed from different disciplinary perspectives that will intersect and influence one another, and they are solved with the outmost respect for their original complexity.

Research: What?

Analyzing and solving complex problems from diverse disciplinary angles requires the participation of an interdisciplinary team of scholars. Moreover, it also requires the participation of researchers who bring a very diverse intellectual, cultural, gender and generational background into this common endeavor. Indeed, the research teams gathered around solving each heterogeneous question involve senior faculty, junior faculty as well as graduate and undergraduate students.

In this way, research conducted in the PAR program is inextricably linked to teaching, while teaching becomes a research project, leading the participants to complete required degrees in their academic careers (BA senior theses, MA theses, PhD dissertations, tenure books, etc.), while contributing their expertise directly to the community.

We believe this new component is indispensable to strengthen the academic and civic network partnership so that the Polish-Russian “window” is not closed as a consequence of repression against NGOs and other civil society structures in Russia.