Participatory Design Guide

Sanders, Brandt and Binder proposed the following framework to structure participatory design research. Since participatory design is a broad term for various tools, this framework can help to determine which specific method to use to carry out the research.

1. **Start with considering the form.** What is the kind of action that is taking place between the participants? They propose three main forms:
   a. Making
   b. Telling
   c. Enacting

2. **Decide on the purpose.** Why are the tools and techniques being used? They propose four dimensions:
   a. For probing participants
   b. Priming participants to a particular topic
   c. Getting a better understanding of their current experience
   d. Generating ideas or design concepts

3. Determine the context. Where and how are the tools being used? They describe this in four dimensions.
   a. Individual
   b. Group
   c. Face-to-face
   d. Online

Below are examples of how the authors uses form, purpose and context to determine which tools to use for their research. This should help get you started and fuel your thinking. It is not a full list of participatory design tools, but rather a snippet. You may also disagree with some parts of the table - that's okay. Remember that the research tools can be tailored to specific situations and that it is not a one-size-fits-all.

Table 1: Tools and techniques of participatory design mapped by purpose.

Tools & Techniques	Probe	Prime	Understand	Generate
MAKING				
Collage	X	X	X	X
Maps		X	X	X
Mock-Ups			X	X
TELLING				

Diaries (writing, drawing, photos, videos)	X	X	X	
Cards (organize, categorize, prioritize ideas)			X	X
ENACTING				
Games		X	X	X
Props			X	X
Role Play			X	X
Improvisation				X

Table 2: Tools and techniques of participatory design mapped by purpose.

Tools & Techniques	Group	Individual	Face-to-face	Online
MAKING				
Collage	X	X	X	X
Maps	X	X	X	
Mock-Ups	X	X	X	
TELLING				
Diaries (writing, drawing, photos, videos)	X		X	X
Cards (organize, categorize, prioritize ideas)	X	X	X	
ENACTING				
Games	X	X	X	
Props	X	X	X	
Role Play	X	X	X	
Improvisation	X	X	X	