# 15 Participatory Approaches

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## Key Points

- Participatory research aims to democratize the research process by involving the 'researched' in all stages.
- Participatory research presents a challenge to hegemonic approaches to knowledge production by positioning research 'participants' as knowledge producers.
- Institutional ethics procedures can pose dilemmas for participatory research.

# Introduction

Participatory research is founded on an ethical and political commitment to collaboration, in order to counter hegemonic approaches to knowledge production within the academy. As an approach, participatory research aims to cultivate a space in which different forms of knowledge can be generated and valued. It demands continued reflexivity and attentiveness to these situated knowledges through a distinctive set of ethical engagements and commitments. As we work across boundaries and scales in developed/developing worlds, participatory approaches recognize that those who have experienced oppression, dispossession, racism, violence, and socio-economic disadvantage, and the structural formations that shape them, are 'experts' in effecting positive change (Chambers, 2006; Nagar, 2014; Pain, 2004; Sultana, 2007).

In this chapter, we offer an introduction to participatory approaches and the common methods and techniques of participation. We then turn to consider some of the limitations of participation and the dangers that are involved when assumptions are made about the ability to undermine hegemonic structures of power. Having offered an account of some of the challenges that participatory approaches present, we explore dilemmas that arise when the ethical commitments of participatory research clash with the requirements of procedural ethics, producing tensions in 'the field' that call for care and responsibility. We conclude with some reflections on participatory research in northern Australia, examining how the ongoing brutality of racism, displacement, and dispossession in a white settler society are experienced and endured by diverse migrant and **Indigenous** groups.

## Participatory Research and the Call to Action

There are a range of theoretical resources with radical lineages that call for involving participants in every stage of the research process, from the generation of questions and the identification of foci, through to the analysis and implementation of strategies for change (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Lahiri-Dutt, 2011). Such a stance presents a challenge to normative conventions of research that tend to present the researcher as an expert in search of truths, while participants become the passive object of study (Halse and Honey, 2005). In order to create more collaborative projects, participatory approaches recognize the varied skills, knowledges, and histories that all participants bring to the table, while also placing an emphasis on building capacity and skills so that participants are positioned as co-researchers (Bawaka et al., 2016; Sultana, 2007). Participatory research thus tends to be embedded and local given its focus on situated knowledge and a concern for enabling change on participants' terms – a form of everyday **activism** that positions the researcher as a learner.

Although participatory approaches often centre collaboration, some researchers prefer 'participatory action research' (PAR) to not only emphasize dialogic engagement but also give prominence to enacting 'research-informed change' (Pain et al., 2007: 29). As Mason (2015: 499) describes it:

> The entangled relationship between PAR's epistemology and ontology can be summarised as seeking to understand the world by trying to change it for the better, where 'better' is defined by the particular research partners but typically involves their empowerment in the teeth of oppression.

If action and capacity-building is a key component of PAR then 'success' cannot be measured by outputs alone, but by the process, capacity, skills, dialogue, and relationships that have been facilitated (Basnet et al., 2020; Pain, 2004). Participatory approaches draw on a wide range of research methods and can often involve training participants in research techniques so that everyone can participate in the collection of data. The choice of research methods is often shaped by a concern for securing maximum involvement, making it necessary to question who is involved, what skills they have, and how diverse people can be brought together. For example, in her work on austerity with unemployed and precariously employed women in the UK, Raynor (2018: 694) demonstrates how collaborative theatre-making can prioritize the lived experiences of 'otherwise "less-heard" and/or marginalised research partners' through exploring how stories are co-developed, made visceral, and enlivened through a range of performance

practices. Participatory techniques might therefore include interviews or focus groups, but also diagramming (Kesby, 2000), mapping, storytelling, **auto-photography**, and participatory video and arts practices (Hickey-Moody and Harrison, 2018; Kinpaisby 2008). These methods and techniques are often used to overcome obstacles to participation, which might include varying abilities, cultural differences, literacy levels, and a preference for communicating and engaging in ways that don't rely on ‘talk’ (Lobo, 2018; Pain, 2004).

## Limitations

Participatory research is not without critique. Important interventions have underlined the various ways in which so-called ‘participatory’ work can be an illusion that masks uneven power-relations that can be further exacerbated through ‘participation’ (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Jordan, 2009). It has been noted that this is a common occurrence when participation is reduced to ‘a set of techniques’ instead of a genuine commitment to collaborating with communities in partnership (Cahill et al., 2010). At the same time, Gallagher (2008) has challenged simplistic conceptualizations of power and **empowerment**, arguing that critiques of participation need to reflect on the multiplicities of power relations and their subversion. For example, in the context of children's geographies, he highlights the ‘complex multivalency of power’ and notes how researchers might be underprepared for ‘the ways in which children may exploit, appropriate, redirect, contest or refuse participatory techniques’ (Gallagher, 2008: 137). Such a lack of preparation, he argues, may further exacerbate the hierarchies that participatory research is supposedly designed to unsettle by insisting upon forms of participation that aren't wanted, in the false belief that they are somehow ‘empowering’ (Swerts, Chapter 7 in this volume). In a further reflection on the workings of power, Kesby et al. (2007: 21) identify a variety of ways in which participatory research might go awry, such as instances where: participants might grant researchers the status of ‘expert'; ground rules for a project or activity might be imposed on participants by researchers; promises about outcomes might be used to guarantee participation; or coercion might occur if participation is seen as the only route out of a set of challenging circumstances.

## Dilemmas in the Institution

It has been argued by a number of scholars that formal ethical review procedures can often present dilemmas for researchers doing participatory and action-orientated work and leave little room for their own interpretation of what it means to be ethically responsible (Askins, 2007; Khanlou and Peter, 2005).

In this respect, researchers often find themselves in ‘ideologically uncomfortable spaces’, which requires that they remain constantly vigilant about the potentials to become complicit in the very systems and power relations they seek to dismantle (Halse and Honey, 2005: 2160). Indeed, as Askins (2007: 351) notes, if those who cherish PAR consider ethics as ‘emergent through social relations in place’, then how can any one person or body claim to have any kind of authority regarding ethics? Ethical codes such as those set out by university ethics committees might even have the effect of absolving researchers from engaging with the messiness of ethical decision-making, as issues present themselves because they already have ethical clearance by the time the project commences, allowing ethical practice to fall away as a core concern. In this respect, there are five chief concerns in participatory research ethics: collaboration and the status of the participant; intimacy and relationships; ownership of knowledge; timeframes; and writing/publishing.

## Collaboration and the Status of the Participant

Many advocates of participatory research place importance on collaboration, whereby the research engages with communities in order to ‘mutually identify a problematic, uncover its sources, and then negotiate contextualised solutions’ (Blake 2007: 412). Yet too often, as Blake argues, the process of ethical review positions research participants as ‘an object upon which research is done’ (2007: 414). Not only does such positioning make reflexive beings disappear, but also it starts from the assumption that participants ‘are always, already exploited by the researcher and harmed by the research’ thus warranting mechanisms for protection (2007: 414). While protecting participants from harm (or minimizing it) is critical to good, ethical research, the ‘at-risk’ participant only ever appears as a powerless, vulnerable subject, to be discussed by ethics committees and hearings but never invited to one as an active partner capable of negotiation and consultation. If researchers value participation throughout the research process, this creates inherent tensions. Fundamentally, any process that considers participants to be an object of study rather than an active collaborator creates a chasm between the researcher and the community with which they are working, and overlooks the complexity of social relationships. The researcher in this context is automatically granted a status above the participant in a way that stands in contradiction to the emphasis that participatory research places on disrupting power relations.

## Intimacy and Relationships

As Cahill et al. (2010: 407) have argued, much participatory action research involves intimacy and intimate relations, and working with people who in various ways are considered close to the researchers. This might involve working with friends or family (Ellis, 2007), or with the community in which the researcher is already embedded, or with relationships that have been developed over a long period of time. Yet, most ethical review procedures will require information about how participants will be *recruited* (thus assuming that no prior relationship exists), and often assume that no relationships will continue beyond the timeframe of the research project. As advocates of participatory research have suggested, the kinds of intimacy that are often central to action-orientated research challenge assumptions that the researcher can enter and leave ‘a field’ (Katz, 1994) or simply ‘detach’ at the end of a project (Cahill et al., 2010).

Despite formal ethics procedures, in practice it can become difficult to negotiate a context in which you are researching with friends or in your own neighbourhood. How are boundaries to be managed? When are you doing the research and when have you stopped? Collaborators might be implicated in each other's lives (Torre, 2009), and the bureaucratic processes that formalize relationships can have the effect of eroding trust (Blake, 2007). While consent forms and research information sheets are often seen as central to building trust, the introduction of consent forms can have the effect of undermining what were previously ‘easy’ relationships and creating a contract between friends that can constrain the intimacy that was central to the work and the development of the research project. For example, Chacko's (2004) research in rural India highlights how Eurocentric research frameworks pose ethical dilemmas when knowledge is embodied and intimate relationships can emerge by chance with ‘strangers’ in the field.

## Ownership of Knowledge

Blake (2007) asks what is at stake when a focus on the protection of participants is reduced to a concern with **anonymity**. How might participants negotiate ownership over their own words and ideas? Anonymity can be essential for all manner of reasons, but it can also have the effect of writing participants out, such that they lose their agency and right to be identified as authors of the research ideas, words, and outputs (see Wilson, Chapter 5 in this volume). If participatory action research is about foregrounding collaboration and challenging the assumption that knowledge lies within the academy, then naming participants can be an important mechanism for crediting them for their knowledge. For example, participatory research in Darwin and Broome, Australia, made Lobo and Kelly aware of how the preservation of anonymity could be interpreted as disrespectful, particularly when listening to stories

told by Aboriginal peoples who were keen to be identified by name (see Louis and Grossman, Chapter 16 in this volume).

Ownership is a concern that remains long after the project has ended. For instance, in the UK it is common for funders to request that anonymized data be deposited at the end of a project so that the data can be used by other researchers (see Wilson, Chapter 11 in this volume). The rationale for such a demand is to ensure that publicly funded research can have wider benefits and impact. However, in practice, the signing of consent forms and the depositing of data transfers the ownership of words away from participants and the communities involved, such that they have no further say in how they might be taken up elsewhere or used for different purposes in different contexts. While ensuring that publicly funded research has wider use is often seen as good practice, there are unacknowledged implications that pose a different set of ethical questions.

## Timeframes

Because of the desire to develop meaningful collaboration and relationships, participatory research is often slow and incremental, which can be at odds with the timeframes that are imposed on research projects by universities, funders, and degrees. Indeed, as Kindon et al. (2007: 2) suggest, the process of PAR might be considered ‘cyclical’ in that, together with participants, researchers identify a problem or an issue that requires some form of change, undertake research to facilitate action, and then reflect on this action in order to begin a fresh cycle of ‘research/action/reflection’. This kind of cyclical working often jars with institutional timeframes and assumptions about the linear development of research. In reflecting on the different time limits that are sometimes imposed upon a project, Mason (2015) highlights the importance of ‘exit strategies’ in contexts where relationships and participatory work can't be continued. This requires reflection, for instance, on what happens when a degree is completed, funding runs out, or a job contract comes to an end. While recognizing the dangers of making assumptions about the position of the researcher as being one of privilege, Mason underlines the importance of passing on roles and responsibilities, while also considering in what ways the researcher might continue to collaborate with partners in one way or another.

## Publishing/Writing

Most research grants or student assignments are expected to produce some form of output. Too often such written outputs make writing as a collective ‘we’ difficult because it is the individual that is

assessed and ultimately held accountable for the written piece and data collected (Cahill et al., 2010). If the knowledge is co-produced, this raises thorny ethical questions for the researcher. In some instances, these questions can be negotiated by including participants as co-authors, but this is not always an option, especially in student assignments (see Noxolo, Chapter 29 in this volume).

At the same time, academics within the neoliberal university are under ever-increasing pressure to publish and are subjected to performance reviews of various kinds (see Darling and Wilson, Chapter 2 in this volume). In these contexts it has been frequently noted that collaborative, community research can be undervalued (Kindon et al., 2007) and that the management of a career or degree can come into conflict with an emphasis on producing different outputs – reports, campaign materials, theatre productions – ahead of any academic publication (Pain et al., 2007), requiring that researchers address competing commitments.

Having outlined the ethical dilemmas that can arise when navigating a commitment to participatory research, the remainder of the chapter offers reflections from Michele Lobo and David Kelly's research in northern Australia.

# Participatory Approaches in Darwin and Broome

In this section, Michele and David explore the challenges of engaging in participatory research in Darwin (Larrakia Country) and Broome (Djugun/Yawuru Country), two urban areas in resource-rich ‘remote’ northern Australia with histories of discriminatory policies that have dispossessed Indigenous peoples. In both instances, they discuss the research trajectories that led them to explore methods and approaches that encompass elements of a participatory approach. In doing so, they do not argue for a singular model of ‘doing’ participatory research or that they are emblematic of any such model. Rather, these cases offer reflections on how both researchers came to engage with participatory approaches in and through the negotiations of their fieldwork. For this section, special thanks are owed to the research participants, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory, Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network, Darwin Community Arts, Northern Institute, and Charles Darwin University, Australia.

## Case Study 1: Seeing Darwin

Michele's research focused on Darwin, a city that, prior to the introduction of Australia's policy of offshore detention for asylum seekers, housed four asylum detention centres and a range of lower-security sites of community detention

in ‘apartments’ and ‘lodges’. Given this carceral context, and the hostile rhetoric around asylum in Australian public life more broadly, it is no surprise that there is fatigue as well as suspicion of researchers in Darwin who make promises to ‘improve the life of the population on the ground on a daily basis’ through participatory research but rarely do, particularly if they ‘breeze in and breeze out’ from ‘down south’ (Interviews, Darwin 2012). Researchers from Australia's southern cities like Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Hobart, Adelaide and Perth often conduct fieldwork in the tropical north during the cooler winter months of June to August when the weather is more pleasant. Perhaps they are akin to ‘winter birds’ or *sheeter pakhi*, a Bengali word used by researchers in Bangladesh to describe scholars from elsewhere who avoid the hot summer or humid rainy season in tropical places when conducting participatory research.

As a Melburnian and Australian woman of Indian heritage who encounters ‘in your face’ racism as well as the subtleties of white privilege, the tropical heat, torrential rain, sandflies, mosquitoes, frogs, lizards, and even large bats in Darwin and Broome felt welcoming. It was like being ‘back home’ in Kolkata (West Bengal, India) but with the privilege of air-conditioned public buses, air-conditioned research accommodation, as well as an uninterrupted provision of running water and electricity. These tropical atmospheres, encounters, and infrastructures strengthened my commitment to conducting participatory research that centred the everyday life of racialized peoples in reimagining belonging and citizenship. In this way, my research focused on exploring the everyday manifestations of race, identity, and belonging among diverse groups of Darwin's residents, attentive to the haptic, embodied, and **affective** ties that emerged between them.

I spent long days outdoors from 8am to 9pm walking the Darwin streets and meeting residents (including ethnic /ethno-religious minorities and Indigenous peoples) in public spaces such as beaches, parks, public squares, open-air markets, shopping centres, and community halls. ‘Hanging out’ in shady groves with ‘long-grassers’ (Aboriginal people who ‘live rough’) and travelling daily by bus made me aware of the diversity of Aboriginal languages spoken in Darwin as well as common words that we shared such as *thonga*, a Hindi word for paper bag. These informal conversations with residents as well as support from organizations such as Larrakia Nation (the traditional custodians of the land on which Darwin was built in 1869), the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory, faith-affiliated NGOs, ethnic-minority organizations, as well as migrant advocacy networks, presented the opportunity to engage in interviews and focus groups. These methods provided a voice for Indigenous and ethnic-minority participants, produced in-depth insights into their everyday lives, and enabled me to reflect on power relations in the field through the process of critical self-reflexivity that was attentive to emotions (Lobo, 2010; see also Probyn, Chapter 8 in this volume). But participants were often tired of such conversations with researchers and did not always want to talk, particularly when conversations were recorded or their oral English skills did not align with dominant ‘Australian’ ways of speaking or expression. I had to think and act in ways that deviated from strict guidelines set out by institutional ethics committees.

I went for beach walks with Larrakia rangers as they cared for Country as well as walks with asylum seekers living in community detention. I met ‘long-grassers’ in shady groves along the beach where I painted with them at the bi-weekly event organized by Larrakia Nation that focuses on healthy engagement and wellbeing (Lobo, 2018). I cooked and sewed with senior citizens and humanitarian migrants and participated from the sidelines at cross-cultural football matches (‘Football Without Borders’) that welcome male asylum seekers. Through the process of ‘hanging out’ at informal events, relationships of trust and care began to emerge. It was difficult, however, to gain insights into

embodied encounters with people, things, and places that were part of their everyday life through 'talk'. It seemed like 'common sense' to explore these visceral encounters that nourished co-belonging with human and more-than-human worlds through photographs and videos when 'talk' focused on outrage, anger, and despair circulated by dehumanizing government policies and everyday racism. The camera enabled residents to express affects, sensations, and intensities from these multiple worlds that were difficult to articulate in words (Lobo 2019a, 2019b), but the ethics of negotiating and conducting such research with vulnerable participants was a concern raised by the university ethics committees. It was important that I teach participants how to use a small video camera and ensure that anyone who might be captured by video photography in public spaces provide consent.

I anticipated negotiating participation in the 'field' to be extremely difficult. Not least because this involved using a small video camera and adapting to the varied technological competencies of my participants and myself. However, in practice, this was not as difficult as I had imagined. I asked participants to use the camera to express how they felt in semi-public/public places; there was curiosity, eagerness, joy, and relief when I told them they would be behind rather than in front of the camera. Prompts used if and when required were: 'Why do you come here?', 'What do you like and dislike about this place?', 'How do you feel in this place?' and 'Can you use the camera to express what you feel?'. Through this process residents of diverse backgrounds, in particular, ethnic/ethno-religious minority migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and Indigenous peoples, individually and collectively participated in producing films of events that entangled them with the many people, non-humans, landscapes, and seascapes of Darwin.

The affordances of digital technologies, the ethical process of negotiating participation, and the editing process with three researchers was a creative one but also time-consuming. Collectively we engaged in producing collaborative films of 24 events from more than 300 hours of video footage, but I exercised power in exploring emerging themes and final editing decisions. Although I showed these films to the participants and minor changes were suggested, they were not involved in the actual process of editing even though they were happy to hear that I would show the films at exhibition and conference venues in Australia as well as overseas. As I continue to publish findings from my fieldwork which commenced in 2012, the most vulnerable Indigenous and ethnic-minority residents made me aware that it was necessary to slow down as well as perform care and responsibility in collaborative research that makes sense of the 'maze' of lived experiences. Rather than own this knowledge, my aim is to follow cultural protocols of acknowledging Larrakia people, traditional custodians of the land, and perform feminist geographies of 'caring with' (Askins and Blazek, 2017: 16; Askins, 2018) residents of diverse cultural backgrounds who participated. These gestures are important in decolonizing research that privileges Western frameworks and ways of engaging in fieldwork. As scholars situated within privileged institutions who aim to be ethical, perhaps participatory research with 'vulnerable' participants teaches us how to move, inhabit, and engage in collaborative research that values the agency that runs through multiple human but also more-than-human worlds.

## Case Study 2: Becoming-activist

In preparation for the field while in Melbourne, David's research design process was typically formulaic. Labouring over reviewing the literature, making organizational connections in Broome, crafting research and ethics proposals, and scrounging for fieldwork funding marked what seemed to be a clear distinction between *preparing for* and *doing* fieldwork. Upon 'arriving' in the field however, it became clear that such a distinction was far less pronounced

except for a drastic shift in climate, geography, and the rhythm of everyday life. The research design was constantly updated and reshaped through situations and moments in the field that demanded flexibility and reflexivity. Personal and academic life continued as I became entangled within the field, implying that 'the field' was not a hermetically sealed time and space, but more a bleeding continuum of fieldwork events (Katz 1994). Katz (2013: 762) argues that *preparation* and *doing* is 'all fieldwork'; it takes a while for the researcher to realize it, but unfortunately academic institutions rarely do. Despite attentive planning and close mentoring, changes in research relationships, place contexts, and political interests meant that the design and focus of the project had to be recomposed with sensitivity to new knowledges.

New knowledges and situations were precluded by the dramatic withdrawal of my organizational partners based in Broome, just as I had arrived in the field to commence gathering research material. In the fray of this moment the project necessarily became reorientated in the service of *othered* knowledges. These knowledges were most evidently embedded within a number of activist projects currently being performed. Thrusting myself into the politics of place, I became a supporter/contributor of activist projects that included a movement against the forced closure of remote Aboriginal communities and another against the practice of hydraulic shale-gas fracking on Aboriginal land (Kelly, 2019). Using my body as 'an instrument of research' (Longhurst et al. 2008), it became necessary to embrace the mess of the moment and throw it into uncomfortable situations. I participated in public activist events and met with Aboriginal protest organizers in anxious terms on their ground, and with time to nurture relationships, the project actively and enthusiastically committed to a trajectory that 'embraces dissensus' (Crane and Kusek, 2014: 112). This was in part a tendency embedded within the ethos of the research – in that I was attempting to address ongoing colonial dispossession – but it was also serendipitous that I found myself in a space outside of an industry that seeks to serve the interests of Aboriginals in Broome. In the wake of disengaging with incorporated institutions, the project sought to privilege the voices and imaginations of the dissenters, a group of people who don't quite fit within those institutional structures and who include Djugun, Yawuru, Nyginya, Jabbir-Jabbir, and Bardi people and their non-Aboriginal allies. In doing so it embraced a politics that set the scene for a disagreement with institutions and structures that quell dissent.

Enveloping oneself in the messy politics of place that amplify marginal voices 'deviate[s] from mainstream ways of conducting ethical research' but is 'instrumental in negotiating Aboriginal participation' (Lobo, 2014: 21). In order to negotiate participation in this research, according to participatory action research principles, a leap of faith was required in which I positioned myself as an outsider, in spaces that centre Aboriginality. I went to the homes of participants, shared meals and drinks, went to social gatherings, and protested along-side at rallies. I performed mundane tasks such as collecting everyday provisions around Broome with one participant, which I took back to his off-the-grid home nearly 200kms out of town. I drove protest organizers from Broome to Derby in order to attend an important *Kimberley Futures* meeting and set up a street protest. It was in these reciprocal moments that I was able to negotiate and co-design a participant-driven mode of research.

This participation required an embodied commitment that went beyond plain language statements, spoken promises, and consent forms. What I could produce as a material outcome of the research encounter would be a narrowly written and read account in the form of a doctoral thesis. The ability for this research to bring about real change, in line with the real change sought in their activism, could not be promised or predicted. It was the good will, generosity, and establishment of friendships with activists and their allies that enabled a participatory mode of action

research. As fellow activists, rather than researcher and participant, the knowledge produced as an outcome of interviews and other ethnographic data was collaborative in effort. In this sense, I regarded my position as an activist-scholar who aims to reconcile the deficit of traditional qualitative research outcomes for researched groups through 'being useful' (Taylor 2014). In line with principles in action research, this project sought to 'give back' to its participants (Kesby et al., 2007) – at first through negotiating shared objectives, but subsequently from the establishment of friendship and **solidarity** networks that outlive particular social movements and research projects. Years after the research has 'ended' (it never really does) I am still in touch with these friends; we meet if we can, and we check in to see how each are doing.

Through communicating findings in publications, classrooms, and seminars, and working with other activist/advocate communities, the effects of participatory research accumulate over time and leverage further interventions that interrelate as challenges to structural inequity. For instance, in the creation of friendships, alliances, and shared ideas, I was able to continue being useful through everyday activisms in an academic institution. As Chatterton states, the activist-scholar is 'someone who sees the value in radical education and the public debate of ideas which challenge the norm' (2008: 421); spaces reserved for the challenging and dissemination of ideas enable this. Having allies that are embedded within the structures that have too-often perpetuated and reproduced inequalities might be regarded as an activist project. In order to enable the opportunity to give back, it was imperative that I break with the position of the researcher, embrace dissensus and embark on the embodied process of becoming-activist. Participatory research requires commitment beyond the normative parameters of qualitative research, be that the location of the 'field', the role of researcher in being 'objective', or the temporality of research connections. These participatory moments were precursory moments that informed the research design, which included interviews and participant-photography conducted months into the formation of connections and exchange of knowledges. They established ground rules and allowed for participants to vet and then vouch for my own politics: the personal politics of the researcher cannot be more valuable in these participatory scenarios. Participatory research of this kind involves a commitment to attuning to the political desires of research participants, and in this example, requires a commitment to becoming an activist within already established solidarity networks.

# Conclusion

Participatory approaches can take many forms, but what is held in common across this diversity is a commitment to collaboration and the disruption of hegemonic forms of knowledge production. As we have outlined, this commitment to collaboration can sometimes clash with the requirements of procedural ethics, raising tricky questions about the status of the 'participant', the negotiation of intimacy and relationships, the ownership of knowledge, the timeframes of research, and the production of outputs. In addition to such clashes, it is vital to ensure that 'participation' does not mask uneven power-relations in the false belief that all forms of participation can be empowering. Involving participants in every stage of the research process and recognizing their varied skills, knowledges, and histories are necessarily a messy process that requires constant dialogue, negotiation, and compromise.

# Recommended Reading

Cahill, C. , Sultana, F. and Pain, R. ( 2007 ) ‘Participatory ethics: Politics, practices, institutions’, ACME , 6 (3): 304–18.

This paper introduces a special issue exploring the ethical challenges of participatory research, and the tensions between academic institutions and participatory ethics. The introduction offers an accessible account of the specific ethical questions raised by working in a participatory manner, and considers how geographers have sought to negotiate those questions in practice.

Kindon, S. , Pain, R. and Kesby, M. (eds) ( 2007 ) Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting People, Participation and Place. London: Routledge.

This edited collection offers a series of insights into the practice of participatory research, and a critical introduction to how participatory approaches are mobilized in different social and disciplinary contexts. The collection considers some of the intellectual foundations of participatory research, and some of the challenges and dangers that have been associated with a turn towards participation across the social sciences.

Nagar, R. ( 2014 ) Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring Feminisms across Scholarship and Activism. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

This book examines the complexities of feminist activism and scholarship, drawing on experiences of transnational research on development and its gender politics, to consider how questions of co-authorship, translation, and community engagement shape research and its diverse outcomes.