

The “Family” of Participatory Approaches to Research

Chambers (1994) ¹: “One view is that labels do not matter...Many sets of practices overlap...There is continuous innovation, sharing and exchange...An alternative view is that careful use of terms can help to maintain and improve quality, both by setting minimum standards for “good” (practice), and by distinguishing them from each other.”

Activist Participatory Research

- late 60's, Latin America
- Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, popular education
- focused on empowering poor, exploited, underprivileged and encouraging political action
- the poor can and should do their own investigation and analysis

Field Research on Farming Systems

- emerged mid-1970's
- focused on the value of diversity of farming systems, farmers are capable, rational, knowledgeable, and analytical experimenters

Participatory Research (PR)

- emerged mid-1970's
- associated with the adult education movement, Africa, India, US
- strong overlap with PAR Activist Participatory Research
- focused on poor and powerless investigating and analyzing their condition, taking action

Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)

- emerged late 1970's, 80's
- focused on outsiders quickly learning about local people and conditions using essentially extractive/elicitive approach

Agro-ecosystem Analysis

- late 1970's onward, SE Asia
- based on systems and ecological thinking
- focused on innovative methods of information gathering – transect walks, mapping, diagramming by local people

Applied Anthropology

- emerged 1980's
- focused on distinguishing “etic” (outsider) world views from “emic” (insider) world views
- methods focused on “relaxed” and flexible field learning, value of indigenous technical knowledge

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

- emerged late 1980's/early 90's
- Evolved from RRA but more participatory/empowering with outsiders as catalysts/facilitators

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- early 1990's
- strong overlap with PR and Activist Participatory Research
- focus on poor and powerless investigating and analyzing their condition, taking action
- focus on collective research, production, diffusion of new knowledges through accessible communication

1. Chambers, Robert. 1994. “The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal.” World Development 4 (7): 953-969.