## POPULAR EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

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The field of community organizing in the United States could be greatly benefitted by the triple standpoint of research-education-action akin to popular education and participatory action research tradition in Latin American. This chapter aims to go deeper into these two approaches for a better understanding of their basic principles, methodologies, and practical implementation.

For Paulo Freire, the late Brazilian pedagogue considered by many as the founder of popular education or liberation pedagogy, this type of educational approach is one that fosters the discussion of the social issues in which the individuals are embedded. In effect, through dialogue, this pedagogy attempts to build a critical awareness to help individuals overcome a naive attitude about the world they live in: "An education that enables the brave discussion of their problems, their insertion into those problems" (Freire, 1975a: 85)[2].

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[1] Edited by Dawn Fae Adolfson
[2] Original in Spanish

From a Popular Education perspective, the task of the educator/facilitator is not to lecture about reality or "to give" or extend the content on selected topics, as if this knowledge is an all-finished and static object. On the contrary, his/her role is to motivate learners to reflect on their reality, in which the educator is not indifferent, since she or he is also problematized by that reality.

Popular Education, like any other educational approach, is always political. That is, the practice of a neutral education, aseptic and untouchable from the point of view of values is impossible to achieve.  While those involved in formal education studies usually won't admit it, nevertheless, this discipline is as political as the ones that openly proclaim their political nature.

> What to know?, how to know?, for what to know?, in favor of what and for whom to know? - And therefore, against what and against whom to know? – Those are theoretical and practical issues and not intellectualisms…So, to deal with the question of what to know? I find myself necessarily gotten into the what for? the how?, the favor of what and who?, and against what and against whom to know?,"(Freire, 1978: 135-136).

**Popular Education Methodological Principles**

*The relationship between theory and practice*

Popular education merges theory and practice in its methodological approach. While this type of educational perspective acknowledges that the educator/facilitator brings a wealth of theoretical knowledge that enlightens and inspires practice, it is also true that this  same educational exercise produces new theoretical knowledge through a dialogue between the educator/facilitator and the student/participant.

Therefore,  new theory is created through a process of uncovering and examining the student/participant´s social practice, then reflecting/theorizing on that practice, and finally enhancing the student/participant´s social practice with what has been learned in the process. This dynamism allows both the educator/facilitator and the student/participant to get closer together to their subject knowledge. In the words of Carlos Núñez, the late Mexican educator and politician:

It is the continuous and systematic process that involves moments of reflection and study on the practice of a group or organization. It is the confrontation of the systematic practice, with elements of interpretation and information to take such conscious practice to new levels of understanding. It is the theory of practice, not theory over practice (1985: 55)[3].

### *Relationship between subject and object*

Popular education breaks the subject-object dichotomy in the relationship between the educator/facilitator and the student/participant. This approach challenges traditional education's  vertical structure in which the educator is located in a superior position vis-a-vis the student/participant. When the conventional approach is taken, the educator is the subject who knows, who explains, and his/her role is active; the student is the object who learns, and this role is passive. In this regard, Freire makes an exhaustive list of the dynamics that operate within the traditional educator-student contradiction.  Due to its clarity and richness, it is worthy of an extensive  quote  (Freire, 1986: 59):

> ... To reflect the oppressive society ... banking education maintains and stimulates the contradiction (teacher and student) Hence it happens that:
> a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
> b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;.
> c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
> d) the teacher talks and the students listen-meekly;
> e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
> f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply; .
> g) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
> h) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
> j) the teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.

On the other hand, from a popular education perspective, both parties,  the educator and the learner, are *active subjects* of knowledge, mediated by the world that constitutes the object that they reflect about. Thus, instead of being regarded as the source of the knowing act, education is actually the mediating act between two

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[3] Original in Spanish.

cognitive subjects: the educator and the learner. This relationship also involves, as a prerequisite, overcoming the contradiction that operates between the educator and the learner through dialogue. Hence, Freire´s famous reasoning about the social nature of education argues that:

> Now, no one educates anyone, nor anyone educates himself or herself, men are educated in communion, mediated by the world. Mediated by knowable objects, which in the "bank" educational practice belong to the educator who describes or deposits them into the passive learners (Freire, 1976: 90).

### Collective Production of knowledge

Similar to all critical pedagogy, popular education aims to unveil social reality. In order to achieve this, it traces the causal relationships between its various components and seeks to produce collective knowledge which somehow describes and explains that reality, while helping to transform it at the same time. In that process, popular education confronts the educator´s key theoretical and technical knowledge with the traditional, popular lore of the learners.

Moreover, this traditional knowledge has allowed these groups to survive and resist in extremely harsh conditions of oppression, marginalization and/or exclusion. So *lore, folklore, popular science, or science of the people* refers to all the knowledge that has been treasured for generations by the marginalized, oppressed or excluded collectivities, and this knowledge has been necessary in order to survive and resist. It is therefore, experiential knowledge that needs to be recovered, systematized, and tinged with academic knowledge. In the words of Carlos Rodriguez Brandao (1987: 39), this science is popular: "First ... by being committed to the popular cause. Second 'popular' because it thinks from the logic of the people ... the way it conceives its reality."[4] Orlando Fals Borda (1981: 22), who coined the term "popular science" for the very first time, defines it in similar terms:

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[4] Original in Spanish

By popular science or folklore, knowledge or wisdom, we understand the practical empirical knowledge of common sense, which has been an ancestral ideological and cultural procession of people from the grassroots; the one that has allowed them to create, work, and interpret predominantly with the resources that nature directly offers to man.[5]

What are the elements of this lore? Following Carlos Rodriguez Brandao in his paper "*La Participación en la investigación en los trabajos de Educación Popular*" (The participation in research in the works of popular education) (1983: 94-97) and from an anthropological reading, those elements can be traced to the social practice of the popular sectors.

In the practice of living, people exchange material goods, services, and meanings in a "vast and full of interactions" repertoire. In this process, they exchange knowledge, ways of knowing, and values. Symbols and meanings, according to the plot of the reality in which they are involved (religion, health, education, productive work, family life, politics, etc.), " constitute what we know from the outside as popular culture, popular science, popular religion, and folklore."

However, this knowledge is more than cultural forms of "rustic technology" of "primitive philosophy" or "spontaneous science." It includes particular structures and the production and reproduction of lore that wisely reflects the reality that participants come from in their own language.

## POPULAR EDUCATION METHODOLOGY

Methodologically speaking, there is a difference between designing a popular education process with a *series* of educational events that have a common, continual theme developed through several topics and a *single* educational event.

### Popular Education process

When designing a popular education process, the first thing to do is what Paulo Freire called "Thematic Research." This is participatory research conducted with the

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[5] Original in Spanish

future participants of the educational process. The aim of this research is to identify the main themes and topics that the community is demanding to learn. Instead of deciding the main theme and subsequent topics unilaterally, the facilitating team conducts a consultation with the future participants about the pertinence of those contents.

Usually, the thematic research departs from a central pre-defined theme and a list of topics. These are confirmed by the participants (discarding some, and adding others), or they are prioritized. Changes are allowed in order to make sure the content of the process will match the cognitive needs of the participants.

Ideally, the educational process should be part of a much more complex process, but there isn't always time and resources to do so. Nevertheless, the future participants under consultation should suggest the majority of the topics.

### *Participatory workshop with a popular education methodology*

Typically, a popular education workshop follows an internal structure or logic (referred to in Latin American as "Vertical logic") of three consecutive moments: Practice-Theory-Practice improved and Research-Education-Action. Along with the vertical logic, there is a horizontal logic that details the distribution of time, content, procedures, and resources.

# Vertical and horizontal logic



The first moment, "Practice/Research," is the introductory time period when the facilitator uncovers the participants' previous knowledge, experience, or judgment about any determined topic that is going to be reflected on throughout the workshop. To do so, the facilitator gathers information from the participants using participatory learning tools like games, drawing, storytelling, dramatization, etc., usually in breakout groups. Then, a plenary session follows, where all the groups share their work. The second moment begins during the plenary session.

The second moment "Theory/Education" is when the facilitator tries fuse the knowledge that he or she brings to the workshop, with what the participants have just shared. During this process, the facilitator also constantly draws out and explains the participants' own perceptions, feelings, and examples, without forgetting his or her content as well.

The third moment, "Practice/Action" (also called "Commitment" in some circles), is the final phase when participants go back to their groups, or to a plenary session, to discuss the future applications of what they have learned or the possible utilization of the knowledge built during the workshop. It antecedes the final evaluation.

An important element of a popular education workshop is the utilization of participatory learning tools, which foster the participants' real integration into the educational event. There are a variety of participatory tools, depending on their utility (energizers, integration, analysis, research, etc.), mode (audio, experiential, video), and the type of group being utilized (individual, break out groups, pairs).

**PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

According to critical pedagogy authors Stephen Kemmis  and Robin Mctaggart (2,000: 2):

> Participatory research (often called PAR) is an alternative philosophy of social research (and of social life, experience), often associated with social transformation in the Third World. It is rooted in the theology of liberation and the neo-Marxists community development approaches (In Latin America, for example), but also has its origins in the liberal human rights activism in Asia, for example. Three particular attributes continually distinguish participatory research from conventional research: shared ownership of research projects, community analysis of social problems, and an orientation toward community action. Given their commitment to social, economic, and political development geared to the needs and opinions of ordinary people, proponents of participatory research have highlighted the political nature of conventional research, arguing that orthodox social science, despite its intended neutral value, usually serves the ideological function of justifying the position and interests of the rich and powerful.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is consists of  a triple combination of elements: 1) research that builds knowledge in a collective work; 2) educational activity that includes a process of social raising awareness; and 3) action for social change.

> This research method involves -itself- a learning process … Very synthetically arguably participatory research is research, education and learning, and action. The participatory research is itself an educational method and a powerful tool for awareness (Bosco Pinto, Joao, 1977: 25, quoted in De Schutter, Anton, 1981: 164).[6]

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[6] Original in Spanish

The PAR is not at the service of any social group, but rather is a method for the ones who struggle to overcome the objective and subjective constraints that limit and maintain them in oppressive situations. As stated by Peter Park, "The PAR is a way to deliver research capabilities to poor and subjected people to transform their lives by themselves" (1992: 138).[7]

From this perspective, the cognitive interest of the PAR is not only the production of knowledge for knowledge's sake. Rather it involves an emancipatory, liberating interest, which seeks the knowledge that is useful to the objectives of social change.

This is an investigative process, which involves a new attitude of the social scientist engaged in the production of liberating knowledge. That is why it establishes new collaborative relationships with the actors-subjects of the research process:

> The real investigator in this case is not the traditional researcher who ... is related to the "subjects" of research ... just as objects of research, or as a source of information. Rather, they are ordinary people ... those who collaborate with the researcher to know the dimensions of oppression, structural contradictions, and the transformative potential of collective action. (Park, 1992: 140).

### PAR Methodological Principles

, Various authors stress different fundamental methodological principles of PAR that they believe would be basic to this research discipline. Thus, according to these authors, the eigenvalues of the Participatory Action Research methodological principles are as follows

1. *Commitment*: The researchers involved in PAR assume a commitment to investigate realities and give away concrete contributions of their discipline(s) to the popular sector and its cause (Fals Borda, 1992). Paraphrasing Freire, researching from a PAR perspective, the research team asks itself for what and for whose interests the research is being conducted; and at the same time, against what interests and against whom the action research is directed.

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[7] Original in Spanish

2. *Analysis*: Participatory research from a methodological point of view is an analysis of class, gender, race, ethnicity, geographic location, age, sexual orientation, etc. of the region where the research is conducted (Fals Borda, 1987: 92). For those researchers conducting participatory research, society is a conflicting reality permeated by different mechanisms of power, subordination, and inequality.

3. *Critical Recovery of history*:  The researcher and his/her colleagues seek the historical roots of social antagonisms in the community where the research is being conducted. Especially, they try to bring back popular memory of those institutions and individuals who in the past defended the interests of the community where the research is implemented, in order to learn the lessons of history and the achievements made.

4. *Systematic devolution*:  In PAR, the researchers return the results of the investigation to the groups with whom they implemented their work. The primary interest is to contribute to the results of the investigation in order to provide an illustration of the population's own reality - their strengths and weaknesses, potential opportunities, and the cracks in the system.

6. *Rhythm Action-Reflection-Action*: The knowledge that results from a process of PAR advances like a spiral from action to reflection and reflection to action on a new level of practice. In this research, the data about the reality of the grassroots is taken from the mouths of the actors. The information is digested at the first level, and then it is reflected at a more general level.

7. *Modest science and dialogic techniques*: The implementation of the PAR assumes that social science can advance even in the most modest and primitive conditions without sophisticated instruments and complex scientific apparatuses. PAR makes use of local, economic, and practical materials, which are precisely those that can be found in popular contexts. However, this simplicity does not mean that the knowledge produced from the PAR processes is second-class or inferior; on the contrary, it should be rigorous if it really tries to meet people's needs.

8. *The Research-Education-Action model becomes methodological moments of a single process for social transformation*: These three activities are integrated into a

single process, constituting not necessarily a sequential or linear model, but rather, an indispensable and articulated model (Rodríguez Hernández, Gabarron and Landa, 1994: 43).

*PAR Methodology*

The PAR methodology is comprised of the following phases:

1. Assessment: Assess the problems of reality.

2. Planning: Prepare actions to solve the problems.

3. Implementation: Apply the planned actions.

4. Evaluation: Assess the actions performed.

5. Systematization: Reconstruct the experiences of the entire process, and create theory out of it.

*The assessment* consists of an investigation of the key issues that exist in the social practice of local communities, social movements, and social organizations. This is the time to collect information and analyze possible causes and consequences, relationships with other problems and other major realities, conflicts, etc. The tools implemented during this phase are popular research tools known as "participatory appraisals" or "rapid rural appraisals."

*The planning phase* is to prepare and organize the educational process, and to design a possible action plan to tackle the problems identified in the previous phase. The plan might include the following elements: the actions to take, how they will be implemented, the people who will be involved, the type of relationships that they seek to establish, the resources needed, and the time it will take to implement those actions.

*The Implementation phase* is the central phase toward which both the upstream and downstream phases of the work cycle point. Here, the action plan is implemented with the means and resources available, and there is an attempt to meet the deadlines that were fixed.

*The evaluation*, which happens throughout the process, reflects the positive, negative, regular, planned, or unplanned consequences of the actions that have been

made. It is best that the evaluation is constant during all phases of the project, following the dynamic Action-Reflection-Action process, to correct errors and change the course of the project if necessary.

*The systematization* is the reconstruction of the work done, from the assessment of the problems to the evaluation of the action plan. This is the time to achieve a more comprehensive and deeper insight into the practice. The systematization can be done some time after the completion of the cycle or after each action plan.

Another way of describing the PAR methodology follows:

*Extractive-Investigative*: It is the process of presenting the research proposal to the community,  its objectives and their validation, incorporation of auxiliary community members into the research team, the visit to the areas, the implementation of participatory appraisals, informal dialogues with community members, participation in festivities, cultural and religious events, sharing working and resting moments, the triangulation of different sources of information, and the determination of themes and topics demanded by the community.

*Programmatic*: The education process is designed. Themes and topics are chosen and confirmed by future participants from the community. The participatory workshops are designed, the codifications are created and toolkits are written.

*Educational*: The workshops are implemented. The experience is registered and analyzed by the multidisciplinary team. The definite themes are chosen and developed into topics. Some "hinges topics" are determined since they are considered fundamental. The elaboration of the didactic units begins, and the educational program is presented to the community for future implementation.


**Participatory appraisals**

Participatory appraisals are basically local investigations implemented by local communities, complementing or replacing the extractive research done by external agents in the practice of social-development projects. (Schonhuth and Kiewelitz, 1994: 4).

There are different types of participatory appraisals: social (social problems map, the social tree, rich-poor drawing, etc.); historical (the community history chart, the time line, the seasonal analysis, etc.); ecological (the natural resources and land use map, transect walk and diagramming, farming map, etc.); gender (the gender use of time, the benefit analysis, the mobility map); and organizational and planning (organizational institutional analysis, community planning map, action plan matrix, etc.)

It is important to have in mind some of the methodological principles of the participatory appraisals, so that their implementation is not done mechanically with the risk of neglecting some basic assumptions that make these tools really participatory. A number of people who are familiar with these tools have provided guidance about their use (Pretty, Guijt, et al,1994: 56-57; Chambers, s/f: 4); Schonhuth y Kiewelitz, 1994: 7-13; and the World Bank, 1996:12):,

1. *Multiple Perspectives*: A central goal of this type of methodology is to seek diversity, rather than to simplify complexity. This involves recognizing that different individuals and different groups make assessments of situations that lead to different actions. However, as much as possible, the team should try to see reality "through the eyes of those affected" (Schonhuth and Kiewelitz 1994: 7).

2. *Triangulation*: This is a test method based on the variation of sources of information and techniques applied. Each group should contain members from different disciplines, forms of knowledge, and genders, ensuring that each subject is approached from different points of view and with different research techniques.

3. *Appropriate Instruments*: Participatory appraisals rely on informal, but structured, research tools. The techniques implemented are selected based on the participation they promote. Available materials (ie. flipcharts, markers and tape) which are considered suitable means to describe realities and analyze systems also are used.

4. *Visual report-back*: The results of the investigation are shown in visuals: maps, models, and diagrams, so that everyone can see, point out, discuss, manipulate, and modify representations or physical objects. Here, the crosschecking and triangulation

occurs. The information is visible and public, added, owned, and verified by the participants.

5. *Analysis and Presentation in place*: The results are presented to the entire community, which has the ability to discuss with team members. The presentation of the results may be not be only writing;  it  also may use  tables, graphs, photographs, cartoons, theater, puppets, stories, etc.

## Examples from a popular education workshop

The following are popular education tools that have been implemented during a leadership training process with a group of immigrant workers in Jupiter, Florida. These examples follow the logic "Practice-Theory-Practice" or "Research-Education-Action" that is so appropriate to that methodology.

### *Ice Breakers*

These types of exercises are important within a popular education workshop, since participants need to feel empowered from the very beginning. This way, participants break out, not only from the barriers amongst them, but also from the traditional expert paradigm that concedes the protagonist role only to the educator and not to the participants. Here is an example:

***"What I miss the most"***

The purpose of this icebreaker is to create an atmosphere of trust. After the introductions, the facilitator asks the participants: "What do you miss most about your country of origin?" The participants answer by stating their names (only their first name), their countries of origin and then, what they miss most from that particular country (while drawing that particular object on a piece of paper). Typically, this exercise is performed in a circle, to enhance an ambiance of real trust. Once finished, there is a reflection about how those things that are important for them continue to be part of their identity in this country. At this point, they feel better than when they arrived at the workshop, since they have shared their identity and their background. Additionally, they have performed the primary role during the first exercise.

### *Where do I come from?*

This exercise begins by  choosing a card from a set displayed on the floor. The cards contain images of their countries' social reality. The participants pick one that is somewhat familiar to them and share with the rest of the group the reason why that image is significant for them. In addition, they state their name and county of origin. At the end of the exercise, they have reflected about the social context of their countries of origin,  have shared their own identity, and have begun to know  the rest of participants. The exercise is concluded with a reflection about the common aspects of the reality of the countries represented in the group.

### *Active learning exercises*

These  kinds of exercises are convenient to discuss, and they reflect about main concepts that the educational process attempts to address. Here are some examples:

### The trust walk

This exercise helps to reflect about the concept of leadership in a participatory way. The tool is a real metaphor in two parts: 1. The active exercise; 2. The decoding of the exercise. The procedure is as follows:

**Step 1**: Form a circle with participants. Divide into pairs by asking individuals to select someone with whom they haven't established contact yet.

**Step 2:** In each pair, one person leads. The other person keeps their eyes closed. The leader takes the follower by placing one hand on their shoulder or under their elbow and guiding with a supportive hand.

**Step 3:** The exercise is carried out with some happy music [8]

**Step 4:** The leader takes the follower around the area at the follower´s pace.

**Step 5:** After a few minutes, partners change roles. Form a circle again and ask the

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[8] "All Together Now" The Beatles' song is suggested since it is a happy song *in crescendo* which follows the music hall tradition of asking the audience to join in.

following questions:

1. How did you feel with your eyes closed?

2. How did you feel when you were leading?

3. What is the meaning of this exercise?

4. In what ways does this exercise relate to your role as leaders in your organizations and communities?

Usually, the participants conclude that the word "leader" comes from "lead" which in fact is what they have just been doing during the exercise: leading other people, while avoiding obstacles or other participants, and trying to concentrate while the music is playing. At the same time, they have been guided when they had their eyes closed during part of the exercise. Normally, while decoding the exercise, they come to the conclusion that a community leader is somebody who leads the community in the path of improvement and sometimes is guided by the community when he/she listens carefully to its needs and demands. In addition, a good community leader should be attentive to the conditions of the context (like when they were avoiding other participants in order not to stumble into  each other, and concentrating while the music was playing) in order to really respond to the community needs.

After everybody has participated, the facilitator promotes a reflection about what is leadership, while trying to depart from the participants´  own assumptions (practice). Then, the facilitator adds some reflection about the word "leader" and its possible implications (theory) and finishes the exercise with a proposal about  how to lead and be  guided by the community (action). This way we close the cycle practice-theory-action.

### *The naval battle*

This exercise´s purpose is to share collectively what the participants already know about how to define a strategy, goals, and objectives for their organization. The procedure is the following:

> **Step 1:** Form 2 groups. Each group has a "captain," "ships," and "mines".
>
> **Step 2:** The captain directs the exercise. The ships can move but can´t see; the mines can see but can´t move.
>
> **Step 3:** Each team prepares its own strategy. The goal is to get the ships to the other team´s field without exploding the mines by crashing into them. The captain cannot talk, just direct the ships (while their eyes are closed) with sounds, tapping them or pushing them, etc. If a ship crashes with a mine, it has to stop there and it cannot move.
>
> **Step 4:** Once each group has achieved its goal, the numbers of ships are counted and the winner is whoever has more ships on the other team´s field or has gotten there first.
>
> **Step 5:** In a circle, the facilitator invites the teams to share their different strategies (defensive or offensive plan), and their tactics (sounds, tapping, whistle, etc.).

Finally, the whole group discusses why one strategy was better than another. Usually,

elements like, good communication, coordination, and clarity about the goals are the reasons that explain why a particular team won the game. Finally, the facilitator points out how cooperation and  good leadership are important in designing an organization´s strategy.

The exercise and the dialogue about it help to gather the participants´  assumptions about the concepts they´re reflecting on together (practice). Then, the conclusion of the exercise and additional presentation about strategy produce a new collective knowledge (theory) and the final discussion after the presentation leads to the practice, thereby closing the cycle of popular education methodology.

***The song "Tres Veces Mojado"***

Finally, the song "Tres Veces Mojado" ("three times a wet back" in Spanish) depicts the journey that immigrants transit from their native country. After watching the video, the participants share their own experience in coming to the U.S. by crossing three borders. As they share their testimony, the facilitator tries to identify patterns and invigorate the dialogue with those similarities. Finally, the participants conclude with a dialogue about the structural or root causes of immigration, their purpose of staying in the U.S., and the type of contribution they could provide while living here -  especially for the organizations that work for the immigrant community.

*Decoding the song: root causes of immigration and reasons to return*

In this case, the triple logic of popular education methodology works in three steps: 1. Research: listening to the song and recovering their own experience; 2. Education: The facilitator shares his/her knowledge about the root causes of immigration; 3. Action: At the end of the session the group defines, collectively, the main conclusions of the session, and what they can do in terms of their own leadership.


## Examples of participatory action research tools

There are a variety of popular tools utilized in participatory action research to analyze the local context. Below, some of them are analyzed in their implementation during

training with some local organizations in the Bay Area of San Francisco, California. The main theme was "immigration reform" and the efforts carried out by local organizations to achieve that reform.



*Time line. San Francisco, California*

### Timeline of resistance/oppression

Timelines are very useful to recover the recent history or resistance of a community. On this occasion, the focus was on the fight for immigration reform by a local immigrant organization in San Francisco, California. The procedure was as follows:

**Step 1**: Form a group. Appoint a person as secretary and as spokesperson, who then will present the group's work to the rest of the participants.

**Step 2**: Ask the group which are the most important historical events during the last 12 months related to immigration reform or the movement in favor of immigration in California. Those events are divided between facts about immigration repression and facts about resistance against that repression. The Secretary writes the facts on a piece of paper.

**Step 3**: On a flipchart, draw a horizontal line with an arrow in both directions. The events related to the history of immigration-repression are written at the top of the arrow. The events related to the history of immigration-resistance are written at the

bottom of the arrow. Try to identify the historical trends of each level with a dotted line.

**Step 4**: Finally, answer the following questions: What are the lessons learned in that historical process? Lessons from the past: POSITIVE: Which year or group of years has been more intense in terms of positive events? What conclusions can we draw from that period? NEGATIVE: Which year or group of years has been more intense in terms of negative events? What conclusions can we draw from that period? Lesson for the future: What seems to be the tendency in the near future? What can the organization do to influence the current historical tendency in favor of the communities that it works for?

On the top of the timeline are listed the "immigration oppressive events" (red) during the last year and a half previous to this workshop (2013). At the bottom, the "resistance events" (green) or organized actions against that repression and in favor of immigration reform. Additionally, the dotted lines indicate the tendencies through time. Thus, in both cases, the repression and resistance tendency has been variable.

*Social tree. Asheville, North Carolina*

### *The social tree*

The social tree is a very well-known PAR analytic tool. Using the metaphor of a tree´s structure and functions (roots: nutrients, trunk: structure, foliage: breath). The procedure is as follows:

> **Step 1:** Assign 2 basic roles: *Coordinator* (to guarantee everyone's participation during the discussion) and a *note taker/spokesperson* (to document in writing and present the group's work).
>
> **Step 2:** Using the social tree in the illustration, describe the meaning of each of the elements of the tree:
>> 1. *The roots*: the base of the social structure, its economic system. Economics has to do with who owns what, the primary sources of income and economic productivity, how people survive their conditions of life, and how economic resources are distributed.
>> 2. *The trunk*: the social and political structure that makes the system run smoothly. It regulates the system through laws, policies, and institutions. Also, it relates to alternative use of power by social movements.
>> 3. *The leaves/fruits*: the ideological and cultural elements of society. This includes beliefs and intuitions such as churches, schools, and the mass media (news & entertainment) that shape values, ideas, and norms.
>
> **Step 3:** Divide participants into three sub-groups. Ask each group to analyze a different element of the social system. Give them 20-25 minutes to complete the task, draw the social tree, and prepare to share their work in plenary. Discuss each group´s analysis of how the different aspects interrelate.
>
> **Step 4:** Questions for group discussion:
>> 1. Which economic groups or sectors and industries are in favor or against immigration reform?
>> 2. Which institutions, political parties, associations, and organizations are in favor of immigration reform and which are against?
>> 3. What values, messages, cultural organizations, and mass media entities are in favor of immigration reform in the region? What values, messages, and media are against immigration reform in the region?

In the example above, the participants analyzed the dominant social forces (on the right hand side) that oppose immigration reform and the progressive groups (on the left hand side) that support immigration reform throughout the social structures. When examining the roots, they identified the key economic groups and organizations in the Bay Area; the trunk discussion focused on the institutions and organizations that sustain the local society; and the foliage dialogue centered on the dominant and counter-cultural ideas, values, mass media, and cultural organizations from the region.

*Social problems map, Chelsea, Massachusetts*

### Social Problems Map

This a very useful tool to analyze the social context and its social, economic, political, and cultural components, in order to identify the most pressing issues that affect a community and to determine the priority issues to be tackled in a possible action plan. The procedure is as follows:

**Step 1:** Assign 2 basic roles among the members of the group. Appoint a person as *coordinator* (to guarantee everyone's participation during the discussion) and another one as *note-taker and spokesperson* (to document in writing and verbally present the group's work during the plenary sessions).

**Step 2:** Read the corresponding instructions (step 3 below) for the work assigned to the group.

**Step 3:** List and classify the most relevant problems. Ask the group, what are the most important economic, social (gender, class, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, age, and geographic location related), cultural, and political problems that affect the communities in your region? Try to classify the answers, if possible, by counties or

specific places or communities in the region. The note taker lists the problems on a piece of paper.

**Step 4:** Locate the most important problems. On a large piece of paper (usually, 6 flipchart sheets stuck together with tape), draw a map of the region, distinguishing the different counties or localities within it. The map does not have to be perfect. (It is not a competition or an art exhibition!) What *is* important is the information collected and represented in the map. Paste the color cards representing the different problems in their corresponding location in the region (assign one color to each type of problem, e.g. red for economic problems, black for political problems, and so on). You could also draw specific problems (funny drawings are allowed and encouraged to be done!). Try, if possible, to identify certain patterns or characteristics within the region: most impoverished localities, most politically conservative, most repressive against immigrants or other minorities, etc.

**Step 5:** Prioritize and analyze. Prioritize the different problems by identifying the 5 most pressing problems in each category that the communities can tackle in the future. Fill out the chart that is provided for the note taker (just point out the challenges, but not in detail).
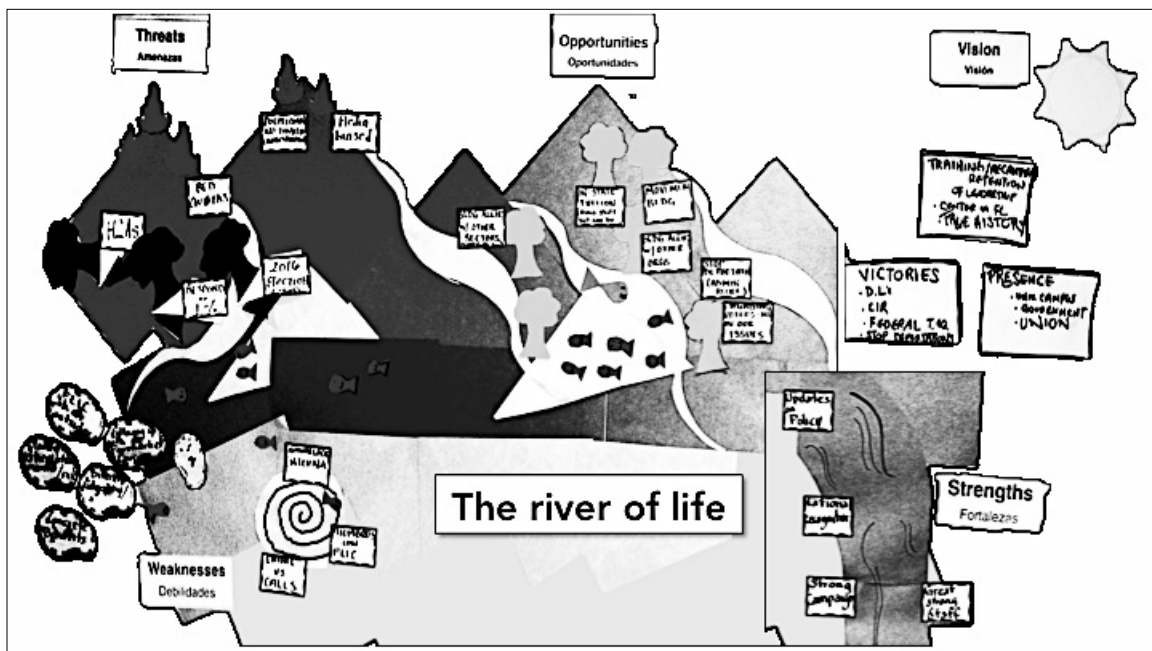


*River of Life. Tampa, Florida*

### The river of life

This PAR tool is oriented toward the recovery of an organization's or social movement's history throughout the years. Again, being a metaphor, every component is symbolic and represents different aspects of the organization's/social movement´s evolution. The

procedure is as follows:

>**Step 1:** Assign 2 basic roles among the members of the group. Appoint a person as *Coordinator* (to guarantee everyone's participation during the discussion) and another one as *Note-taker and Spokesperson* (to document in writing and present verbally the group's work during the plenary sessions).
>
>**Step 2:** Read the corresponding instructions (step 3 below) for the work assigned to the group.
>
>**Step 3:** The group compares the drawing of the river with the progress followed by the organization during the last ten years:
>
>>**Facilitators:** *clouds and rain* (factors that improve the emergence and growth of the organization), *tributaries* (alliances which fortify the organization), and *trees* (factors which permit the sustainability of the organization)
>>
>>**Obstacles:** *stones* of different size or *fallen trees* in the river (context conditions that limit or prevent to a different extent, the advancement of the organization's plans); and the *fire in the mountain* (context threats)
>>
>>**Successful actions:** *Waterfalls* (activities that create a stronger organization, good practices, good management, and a greater impact on society, etc.)
>>
>>**Unsuccessful actions:** *swamps, eddies* (activities that undermine the organizations, failed projects, bad policies, bad management, etc.)
>>
>>**Current challenges** (*dam*) and future proposals (*the sea*), hopes and dreams (*the sun*)
>
>**Step 4:** Analyze. Reflect on the lessons learned from the organization's evolution. What does this historical process teach us? Conclude by identifying lessons learned and best practices implemented by the organization during the process.
>
>**Step 5:** Review the results with the group. If the group is satisfied with the outcome, the work is ready to be presented.

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