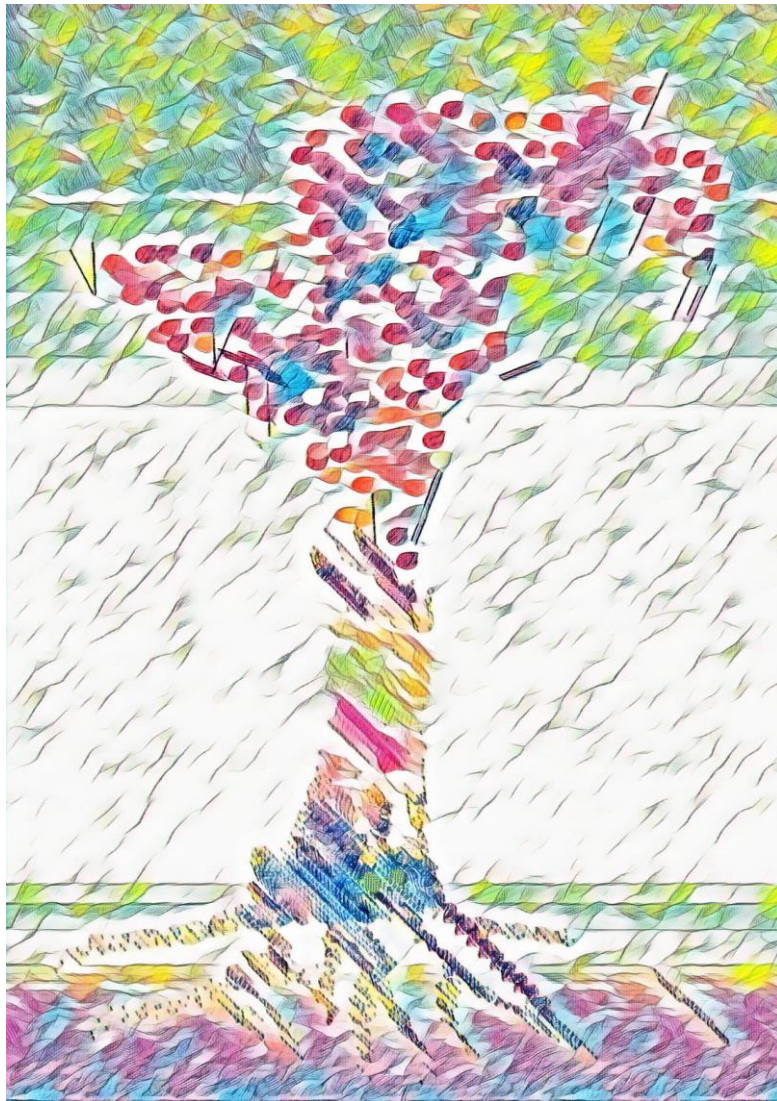




THE SEED FOR ACTION

*ON THE BARRIERS TO AND ENABLERS OF FUNDING
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH*



NAME: TARA SMEENK
SUPERVISOR: JOOST VERVOORT
IN COOPERATION WITH:
MADELON EELDERINK

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SUMMARY

In scientific research, inappropriate recommendations have frequently followed from the failure to take local priorities, perspectives and processes into account (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Participatory Action Research (PAR) is known as a research method that does actively involve locals, which has been shown to enhance effectiveness and save money and time in the long term. PAR is about understanding and respecting the people with and for whom researchers work, and about realizing that local people are knowledgeable and that they, together with researchers, can work towards solutions.

A challenge that occurs with PAR is that because of the high level of local participation, uncertainty about the outcomes of projects is also high, which is something financiers generally do not like. Consequently, PAR-researchers often struggle to find funding for their projects. Scientific literature about the barriers to and enablers for funding this research method is still lacking. Therefore, the following research question is investigated: *What are the barriers to and enablers of funding Participatory Action Research?* In order to answer this question, information from literature research and in-depth interviews with researchers and financiers is analysed and integrated using a Thematic Analysis. Three Organizing Themes (OTs) are identified by using own interpretation of the results:

- It is time for organizational change;
- It is all about the team;
- Creation by Participation.

The three OTs are connected to one Global Theme: the need for a shift towards a more participatory research paradigm. Also, for each OT, the barriers to and enablers of funding PAR are provided. The main barrier for PAR-researchers in funding PAR is that it is difficult for them to generate accountability in procedures that satisfy financiers. The main barrier for financiers in funding PAR is that it is difficult for them to cope with the high level of uncertainty that comes with PAR projects. Moreover, it was found that the barriers and enablers in different OTs are related to each other. Therefore, in order to make the shift towards a more participatory research paradigm, a circular transformation process consisting of constant reflection and feedback between the different themes is suggested.

1. INTRODUCTION

Our society is increasingly facing persistent problems that cannot be solved by current policies based on traditional approaches alone. These policies too often lead to inefficient solutions which generate even more complex and persistent problems in the long term (Loorbach & Rotmans, 2006). In order to resolve persistent societal problems, transitions are necessary. These transitions require system innovations which are realised by a variety of participants within the system and which fundamentally change both the structure of the system and the relation among the participants (Idem).

One of the systems that is linked to societal problems is that of scientific research. Here, inappropriate recommendations have frequently followed from a failure to take local priorities, perspectives and processes into account (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). In response to this, local organizations have taken on the implementation of a broad range of initiatives addressing economic, social, and health improvement in local communities (Tembo, 2003). Where state agencies often carried out top-down procedures in the past, these often organization-led projects emphasise local participation in project design and implementation, while focusing on revealing the often different views and mutual comprehension of those views of stakeholders (Tembo, 2003).

Taking into account the increased importance of local participation, scientific research can and has an imperative to adapt to increasingly participatory agendas. Not only can insights of local people improve the quality of research and ensure face validity, the involvement of people has important implications for the appropriateness and sustainability of interventions (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). A research method that actively involves local people within the process of research design and implementation is known as ‘Participatory Action Research’ (from now on referred to as PAR). The practice of this type of research raises personal, political and professional challenges that go beyond the bounds of the production of information. Affirming that people’s own knowledge is valuable, this kind of approach regards people as agents rather than objects: capable of analysing their own situations and designing their own solutions (Idem).

However, the positive impacts of organization-driven projects using a participatory approach are often cut short due to the uncertainty and complexity of the physical and social world (Eelderink et al., 2017). One problem that occurs is that with the use of a more participatory approach, researchers struggle to reconcile the demands of funding agencies. Financiers, on their turn, lack the funding flexibility to respond to communities’ requests for research (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). It is asserted that part of this disconnect between financiers and PAR-researchers comes from the often limited knowledge of financiers about local conditions and how these local conditions will impact the efficacy of the programs (Gent et al., 2015).

While a substantial body of literature is already available about the barriers to carrying out PAR itself, scientific literature about the barriers to and enablers of funding this research method is still lacking. However, looking at the uncertainty and complexity that comes with PAR and the resulting struggle of PAR-researchers to live up to the expectations of financiers, it is important to better understand the relation between the two. Also, facilitation of the funding of participatory research projects is relevant to society, because the inclusion of local people’s norms, values, perspectives and objectives is a prerequisite for successful implementation of development projects (Tembo, 2003).

Because of these reasons, this research focuses on the main question: *What are the main barriers to and enablers of funding Participatory Action Research?* In order to answer this question, a set of sub-questions are asked. The research will be divided in three parts:

1. Literature research – learning from theory: in this part, the theoretical foundation for the research is provided. The following sub-questions are asked:
 - *What are existing theories about how project funding works?*
 - *What is the difference between PAR and non-participatory research methods?*

2. In-depth interviews – learning from practice: in this part, information about experiences from (PAR) researchers and financiers with funding PAR is provided and used to identify main barriers and enablers. The following sub-question is asked:
 - *What do researchers and funders report as the main barriers to and enablers of funding PAR?*
3. Discussion of the results – integration of theory and practice: here, the results from literature research and in-depth interviews are combined to provide an answer to the research question. The following sub-question is asked:
 - *What lessons can be learned from integrating the results from theory and practice?*

2. METHODS: LITERATURE REVIEW

For this research, two types of data collection were used:

1. Literature Research (learning from theory)
2. In-depth Interviews (learning from practice)

For the first type, now follows an explanation of the design of the data collection, the type of data that was collected, and of how the data was analyzed.

2.1. LITERATURE RESEARCH

Design – The identification of the barriers in stakeholder engagement with PAR requires a solid scientific foundation. Therefore, in the first phase of the research an extensive literature review was conducted. For this literature review, the six generic steps for conducting a literature review explained in Templier and Paré (2015) were used:

1. Formulating the research question and objective,
2. Searching the extant literature,
3. Screening for inclusion,
4. Assessing the quality of primary studies,
5. Extracting data, and
6. Analyzing data (see Section 4.2).

Although these steps are presented here in sequential order, it was kept in mind that the review process is allowed to be iterative and that many activities can be initiated during the planning stage and later can be refined during subsequent phases (Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013; Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). The first step of the design was already fulfilled prior to the start of the course. During conversations between the author of this research and Dr. Joost Vervoort (supervisor) and Drs. Madelon Eelderink, the objective and main question for this research were determined.

Type of data – In step 2-4 of the literature research, an effort was made to be as comprehensive as possible in order to ensure that all relevant studies were included in the review and conclusions will be based on an all-inclusive knowledge base. Literature that is representative of most other works in the research area was selected for the analysis, partly by searching for key-words on Google Scholar, and partly by extracting important works from articles written by Drs. Madelon Eelderink. The amount of studies included in the literature research depended on how fast the research became saturated. Subsequently, the applicability of the materials identified in the previous step was identified (step 3). Also, the scientific quality of the studies was taken into account (step 4). In order to improve the quality of the literature research, scientific literature from different time periods and different perspectives was included in the analysis. The data extracted from literature research is mostly qualitative.

Data analysis – after the studies that are included in the literature research were selected, it was decided which information is relevant to the problem of interest (step 5). This was done by scanning the selected studies and coding them with the research tool NVivo 12 Pro. This is a software for gaining richer insights from qualitative and mixed-methods data (NVivo qualitative data analysis software, 2012). After the relevant information was coded, evidence from the included studies were summarized, organized, and compared in step 6 (see Section 4.2).

3. RESULTS: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. NON-PAR RESEARCH VS PAR

The most important distinctions between non-participatory research and PAR centre on how and by whom the research question is formulated and by and for whom the findings of the research are used (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). In other words, the two research approaches mainly differ in the alignment of power within the research process (Idem). This distinction is relevant because as was stated in the introduction, in non-participatory research, inappropriate recommendations have often followed from a failure to take local priorities, perspectives and processes into account. In contrast, in PAR the emphasis is on a ‘community-up’ approach with a focus on locally defined priorities and local perspectives. (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). The involvement of local people as participants in planning and research has been shown both to enhance effectiveness and save money and time in the long term (Idem).

Literature on PAR approaches for development interventions emphasises the importance of stakeholder inclusion in order to find each stakeholder’s normative preferences and to induce a process of social learning. It acts as a facilitating factor for the early detection of risks of conflicts or other societal problems, for project development and implementation, and enhancing sustainability (Miller and Shinn, 2005; Grin and Loeber, 2007; Moret et al, 2007; Moret-Hartman et al, 2007). Affirming that the knowledge of locals is valuable, this approach regards people as agents rather than objects who are capable of analysing their own situations and designing their own solutions (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Ultimately, PAR is about understanding and respecting the people with and for whom researchers work. It is also about realizing that local people are knowledgeable and that they, together with researchers, can work towards solutions. This involves recognizing the rights of those involved by research, enabling people of setting their own agendas for research and development and thus giving them process-ownership (Idem).

Consequently, according to Cornwall and Jewkes (1995), the key element of PAR also lies in the attitudes of researchers, which determine by and for whom research is conceptualized and conducted. In PAR, researchers become learners and facilitators, catalysts in a process which takes on its own momentum as people come together to analyse and discuss (Idem). In other words, whilst non-participatory research tends to generate ‘knowledge for understanding’ which may be independent of its use in planning or implementation, PAR focuses on ‘knowledge for action’. Also, PAR is often characterized as being flexible, reflexive and iterative, in contrast with the rigid linear designs of most non-participatory research (Idem).

3.2. CHALLENGES

It has become clear that PAR, if carried out well, has the potential to contribute to finding solutions for the persistent societal problems that were mentioned in the introduction. However, PAR-researchers often struggle to reconcile the demands of funding agencies (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Generally, both PAR-researchers and financiers face a variety of challenges during the process of project funding. First, there is the challenge of showing accountability. While a PAR research team has the necessary information about its abilities and objectives, it faces the challenge of credibly revealing this information to financiers. Consequently, PAR-researchers have an incentive to signal high capability through actions and outcomes (Boulding, 2009). Grant and Keohane (2005) argue that ‘reputational effects are involved in all issues of accountability’.

Second, research teams strive to build a reputation because they want to distinguish themselves from the crowd by establishing an identity or brand (Grant & Keohane, 2005). Underlying the logic of improving accountability and the overall competitiveness and effectiveness of research teams is the notion that there is an emerging marketplace of teams that will naturally improve their outputs (Gent et al., 2015). Next to that, information asymmetries play a large role in creating uncertainty for financiers, which desire to select high-quality research teams (Boulding, 2009).

Third, in research teams, accountability is often felt as an *enabling* rather than as a *monitoring* process (Fry, 1995). Research teams are required to produce many different accounts, in different forms, to regulators and external stakeholders (Boomsa & O’Dwyer, 2019; Ebrhaim, 2003;

O'Dwyer & Boomsma, 2015; O'leary, 2017; Unerman & O'Dwyer, 2006), particularly to the providers of resources and beneficiaries. Moreover, the accountability requirements for research teams that are doing participatory projects are often considered to be higher than the ones that are imposed on other research teams (Unerman & O'Dwyer, 2006). These demands include organisational governance and management; stakeholder engagement; external regulatory compliance; and demonstrating delivery of purpose.

Fourth, while accountability measures can be used to ensure that research teams will use the contributions of financiers wisely, they often generate externalities as well, possibly decreasing the effectiveness of research teams (Agyemang et al., 2009). For research teams that facilitate participatory projects, the drive for accountability can influence their behaviour by shifting their focus from pursuing their underlying mission to satisfying certain bureaucratic requirements. What results is that the emphasis on accountability discourages the research teams from taking on more difficult projects, while also hindering the effectiveness of research teams (Wenar, 2006).

The reputation trap

The challenges that were previously mentioned sometimes can place PAR-researchers and financiers in a difficult position. When challenges become very complex, PAR-researchers and financiers can even become stuck at an impasse. This is because, even if it is assumed that financiers and PAR-researchers have the same ideological preferences, financiers are often unable to determine if the PAR-researchers they are supporting are capable of effectively pursuing their goals. This uncertainty is critical to understanding the motivations of financiers and their push for accountability (Gent et al., 2015). Consequently, PAR-researchers face the difficult task of generating accountability in procedures that satisfy financiers, while financiers face the challenge of judging the performance of PAR-researchers (Gutner & Thompson, 2010). As financiers cannot easily evaluate the performance of PAR-researchers, financiers are forced to focus on outcome-based metrics in order to assess whether or not a research team meets expectations (Idem).

By requiring PAR-researchers to provide signals of their quality, financiers do not aim to impede durable policy successes. Rather, they simply wish to maximize the potency of their resources by only funding effective and competent PAR-researchers (Gent et al., 2015). What follows is that in order to survive financially, PAR-researchers become frustratingly hobbled by their continuous need to produce tangible results to maintain their reputations. Acting rationally, high-quality research teams find themselves in what is termed a 'reputation trap'. Despite being aware of the problem and having no intention of constraining PAR-researchers, financiers can find themselves similarly caught in the trap (Idem).

Given their needs to report positive results to financiers within one funding cycle, PAR-researchers tend to pursue observable, attributable strategies that can be implemented within this funding cycle. In many cases, this need for attributable outcomes results in a focus on activities that do not lead to durable outcomes (Gent et al., 2015). Attributable outcomes are policy successes that a donor can clearly connect to the activities of a research team. Non-attributable outcomes include macro-level political, social and economic successes that are the product of many different causal factors, as well as other effects of PAR-researchers' activities that can only be observed in the long term (Idem).

Table 1 provides an overview of the reputation trap:

Table 1:
Simple Explanation of The Reputation Trap

	Less durable policy impact	More durable policy impact
Attributable policy success	Reputation trap	Reputation mechanism (no trap)
Non-attributable policy success	Donor uncertainty	Donor uncertainty

Note. From Gent, S. E., Crescenzi, M. J., Menninga, E. J., & Reid, L. (2015).

When faced with the choice between focusing efforts on attributable outcomes that may lead to less durable policy outcomes (the upper left hand cell of Table 1) and the production of more durable, but non-attributable policy outcomes (the lower right hand cell of Table 1), research teams that need to secure funding from an uncertain donor are likely to opt for the former (Gent et al., 2015). Such a non-efficient outcome is not the result of incompetence on the part of PAR-researchers or financiers. Instead, both parties are acting completely rationally given the circumstances.

This section has provided an overview of the differences between non-participatory research and PAR, the challenges in project funding that relate to these differences, and also the beneficial effects that can come with a participatory research approach. However, while the mechanism of project funding and its main challenges can be identified and explained with the use of theory, not much information exists in scientific literature about solving these challenges. Therefore, this research now continues with describing the practical experiences from researchers and financiers with financing participatory projects. An attempt is made to define both the barriers and enablers in project funding by analysing these practical experiences. Subsequently, the steps for solving the challenges within funding PAR are elaborated on by integrating the theoretical and practical findings in the discussion.

4. METHODS: INTERVIEWS AND DATA ANALYSIS

For the second type of research – learning from practice – now follows an explanation of the design of the data collection, the type of data that was collected, and of how the data was analyzed.

4.1. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Design – 7 in-depth interviews were done for this research. The structure of and questions for the interview were determined in collaboration with Drs. Madelon Eelderink. For the selection of people that were interviewed, snowball sampling was used. The structure of these interviews is unstructured. The choice for these type of interviews was made because of the limited time for this research.

Type of data – as the time and resources for this research were limited, it was decided to do fewer in-depth interviews instead of more, structured interviews. The aim of this method was to gather broad, qualitative data and deep insights in the research area.

Data analysis – for the analysis of the in-depth interviews, a Thematic Network Analysis was used (see section 4.2.). This method consists of the following steps:

1. Getting familiar with the data (reading and re-reading);
2. Coding;
3. Searching for themes with broader patterns of meaning (see Section 3.2.);
4. Reviewing themes to make sure they fit the data (see Section 3.2.);
5. Defining and naming themes (see Section 3.2.); 6. The write-up (see Section 3.2.) (Rucker, 2016).

For the coding of the interviews, the program NVivo 12 Pro was used (NVivo qualitative data analysis software, 2012).

4.2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As described in the introduction, lessons from theory and practice are integrated in order to give and answer to the research question. For this final part of the analysis, the analytical framework of the *Thematic Network* (Attride-Stirling, 2001) was used. The framework (figure 1) consists of three classes of themes:

1. *Basic Theme (BT)*: the lowest-order theme that is derived from the textual data. Basic themes are simple premises characteristic of the data, which need to be read within the context of other Basic Themes to make sense. Here, a first attempt was made to define the concepts that are related to PAR project funding.
2. *Organizing Theme (OT)*: a middle-order theme that organizes the Basic Themes into clusters of similar issues. Their role is to enhance the meaning and significance of a broader theme that unites several Organizing themes. In this phase, concepts were combined in order to define separated factors influencing PAR project funding.
3. *Global Theme (GT)*: a super-ordinate theme that encompasses the principal metaphor in the data as a whole. It is like a group of Organizing Themes that together present an argument, or a position / assertion about a given issue of reality. This state was used to identify the core principle(s) related to PAR project funding.

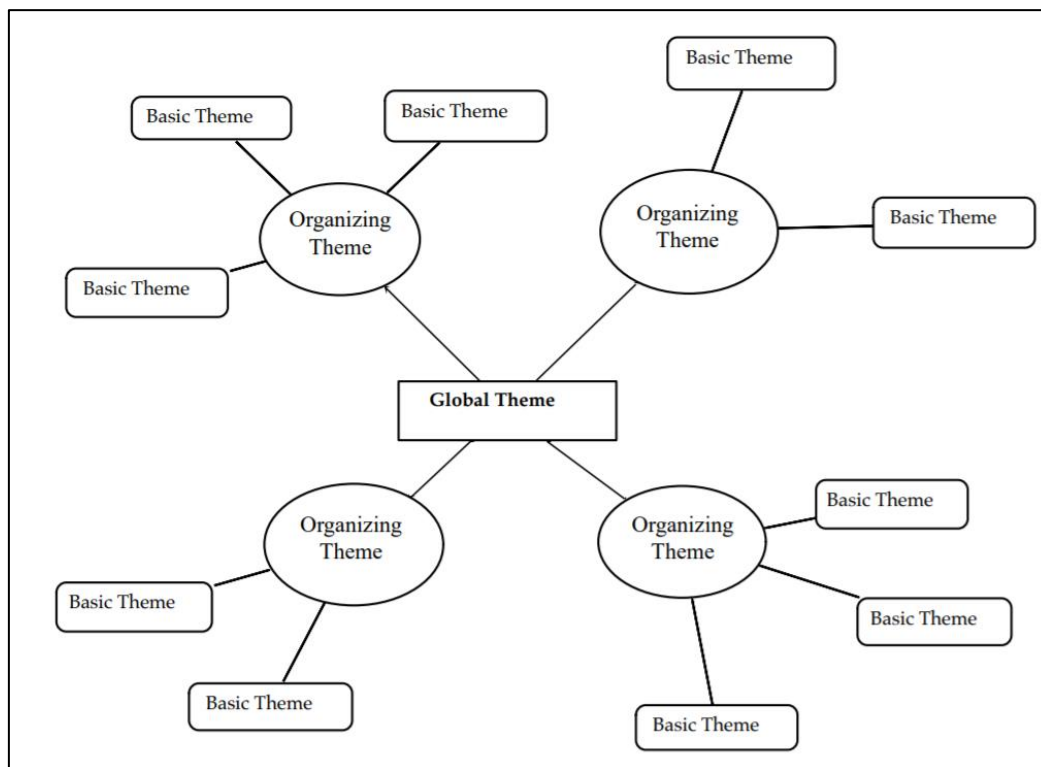


Figure 1: Structure of a thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Box 1. Describes the steps in creating a thematic network. The methods for step 1 and 2 for each of the types of data are described in the previous section. It is important to stress that thematic networks are a tool for analysis, not the analysis itself; the themes that emerge in stage A have to be explored in stage B. In stage B, the patterns that underlie the themes are identified, leading to an interpretation of the patterns and an answer to the main research question in stage C (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

ANALYSIS STAGE A: REDUCTION OR BREAKDOWN OF TEXT

Step 1. Code Material

- (a) Devise a coding framework
- (b) Dissect text into text segments using the coding framework

Step 2. Identify Themes

- (a) Abstract themes from coded text segments
- (b) Refine themes

Step 3. Construct Thematic Networks

- (a) Arrange themes
- (b) Select Basic Themes
- (c) Rearrange into Organizing Themes
- (d) Deduce Global Theme(s)
- (e) Illustrate as thematic network(s)
- (f) Verify and refine the network(s)

ANALYSIS STAGE B: EXPLORATION OF TEXT

Step 4. Describe and Explore Thematic Networks

- (a) Describe the network
- (b) Explore the network

Step 5. Summarize Thematic Networks

ANALYSIS STAGE C: INTEGRATION OF EXPLORATION

Step 6. Interpret Patterns

Box 1. Steps in creating a thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

4.3. JUSTIFICATION, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The set-up for this research is created with the theory of Transformative Learning in mind, which describes that research projects of students should include real-world learning opportunities, next to the development of analytical and research skills (Bootsma & Vermeulen, 2011). It is assumed that, in order to answer the main research question while learning transformatively, a solid understanding of the research topic in combination with relevant, practical experience from the 'real world' is essential. Therefore, the combination of literature research, in-depth interviews and questionnaires is chosen for this study.

By combining different research disciplines and including non-academic actors that participate in studying a common issue and creating new knowledge and theory in the process, the combination of literature research (research skills) and interviews (real-world learning opportunities) and data analysis (analytical skills) stimulates a transdisciplinary approach (Vermeulen et al., 2014). In this way, the research project is most likely to contribute to Education for Sustainability (Warburton, 2003), and with that, to the development of the student. Also, by using a transdisciplinary approach, this research is most likely to provide a valuable contribution to the research field.

In this research, proposition about funding PAR projects were made. These propositions were based on literature research and unstructured interviews. In more qualitative research, reliability and validity are conceptualized as quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). In order to eliminate bias and increase the truthfulness of propositions about social phenomenon as much as possible (Denzin, 1978), triangulation is used. This concept is defined as "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000). However, it is possible that important or relevant articles were missed during the literature research. Moreover, unstructured interviews are less comparable than structured interviews, and possibly include more subjective statements. Also, the use of snowball sampling can have severe effects on the quality and generalizability of the results.

4.4. ETHICAL ISSUES

It is important to consider ethics from the initial stages of planning research and throughout the process, particularly if it includes questionnaires or interviews (Halej, 2017). Therefore, the following core principles (Idem) of social research ethics were taken into account:

- **Social responsibility:** the potential risk of harming participants and researchers were minimized while maximizing the benefits of the research. It was made sure that participants were not harmed by participating in the research.
- **Informed consent and voluntary participation:** research participants, especially the ones that participate in interviews, were given appropriate and accessible information about the methods, purpose and intended uses of the research and about what their participation in the research entails.
- **Anonymity and confidentiality:** the identity of the research participants was protected at all times through confidentiality or anonymity, unless participants explicitly agreed to, or requested the publication of their personal information. This especially applied to the in-depth interviews that were done for this research.

Integrity and transparency: all stages of research design and data collection, coding and analysis were documented appropriately. This provides transparency for research participants and improves the integrity of the research itself.

5. RESULTS: INTERVIEWS

Seven interviews were carried out in order to gain information about the practical experiences with project funding of both researchers and funding agencies. For the analysis of these interviews, the analytical framework of the *Thematic Network* (Attride-Stirling, 2001) was used. In this section, stage B: exploration of text, is provided. From the analysis, three Organizing Themes are identified using own interpretation:

1. Time for organizational change,
2. It is all about the team,
3. Creation by Participation.

These OTs are now shortly described:

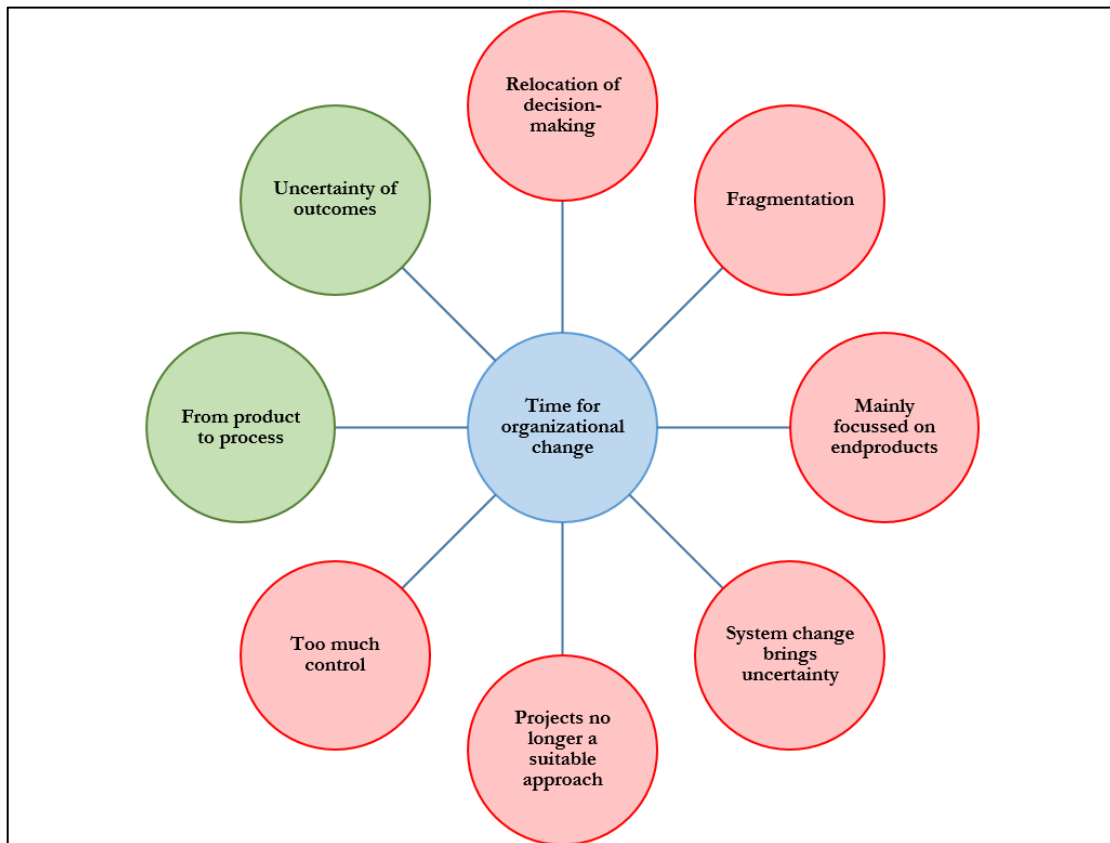


Figure 2: Organizing Theme 1 – Time for organizational change. The OT is indicated with blue, barriers with red, and enablers with green

Figure 2 shows the first OT; Time for organizational change. This OT mainly focusses on the need for a change in the mechanism of project funding itself. This OT is connected to several BTs, which are mainly barriers. Six barriers were found to be connected to this OT:

Funding is mainly focussed on end products – often, financiers only focus on the end product of a project, and the business model is adjusted to that. However, in PAR, most of the time the problem that has to be tackled is clear, but the solution is not.

Funding is fragmented: especially in projects that are funded by municipalities, project funding is very fragmented. Different departments have certain budgets for specific topics (e.g. welfare, sewer system, youth care), and those budgets can only go back and forth between the budget and the specific project. Consequently, locals have to come to separate information meetings for every topic, which frequently leads to a decline in interest.

Financiers want too much control – in the end, PAR is a searching process. In order to do research in a safe environment, financial security is essential. If, in every step of the process, there is a chance that funding will be stopped, the research cannot be performed in a free and explorative way. Also, when financiers continuously need to be convinced to keep financing the project, this takes a large amount of time and energy, which otherwise could have been invested in the research itself.

Projects are no longer a suitable approach for tackling societal problems – the project approach itself appears to be questionable. Projects generally consist of a pre-set goal, a budget, and an end-time. On these factors, a project plan can be based. However, when working with current complex problems, it becomes difficult to write a project plan containing those factors. Because of the complexity of this kind of problems, the course of the project becomes dependent on so many factors, that it is almost impossible to provide clarity in the beginning.

System change brings uncertainty – people that are trying to change the system of project funding experience resistance. The system has been the same for a long time, and people are used to doing things a certain way. In order to change the system, a change of behaviour is needed. This change of behaviour leads to uncertain situations, which people generally do not like.

Relocation of decision-making – in participatory projects, locals are more actively involved in process design and decision-making. When people are allowed to participate more, a certain field of tension arises: when locals get more control, people that were previously in power see their influence decline. This results in a shift in power, which can be hard to accept.

Within this OT, also two enablers were identified:

From product to process – an important organizational change could be to start focussing more on the process instead of the product. The aim of the project could be determined at the start, but it should be accepted that the way to get there remains uncertain. Questions could be asked like: which successes are needed to come to a solution? Which obstacles were faced during the process? In this way, instead of financing a product, money would be invested to create space and time to create this product. This would also be beneficial for researchers and project workers that will work on later projects, because the focus is on lessons learned during the process.

Accepting the uncertainty of outcomes – in order to shift the focus from the product to the process, the uncertainty of the outcomes of the process has to be accepted.



Figure 3: Organizing Theme 2 – It is all about the team. The OT is indicated with blue, barriers with red, and enablers with green

Figure 3 shows the second OT; It is all about the team. This OT mainly focusses on the importance of investing in the reputation of a research team. This OT is connected to several BTs, which consist of a mix of barriers and enablers. Four barriers were found to be connected to this OT:

Funding PAR is like funding a prize – even if an research team has a good story, funding PAR can feel like funding a prize, you can never be sure who wins it. This is in general something that funders do not like to do. One exception would be if it would be sure in advance that the “winner of the prize” – or in the case of PAR, the solution – would be in line with the values and wishes of the donor.

PAR projects most of the time cannot be matched with the wishes of financiers – especially donor foundations work with donations. Financiers give their money to the foundation and specify in which topic it should be invested. Because the outcomes of PAR projects often are unsure, it is hard to match donations with such projects. It could only be possible when financiers specifically donate their money to something like ‘participation projects’.

Current societal problems are highly complex – even in an research team wants to improve its reputation and provide details about the aims and expected outcomes of participatory projects, the high complexity of current societal problems makes it difficult to write detailed project proposals.

Lack of trust in locals – this especially happens in municipalities, where people find it hard to accept that locals can have expertise in the field that is related to the problem. However, some

neighbourhoods contain multiple experts from different disciplines. Also, retirees can contribute significantly to the setup of project plans.

Within this OT, also four enablers were identified:

Acquiring subject knowledge – financiers often assess if the people working for an research team have sufficient knowledge of the subject that is related to the project they want to do. They ask questions like: did the research team establish contact with the right people/parties? Does the research team have a clear picture of the context of the situation? Is this project truly as unique as the research team claims it to be?

Telling a good story: it is important to convince a funder that the project could actually work. Telling a good story certainly helps to achieve this. This story should include things like: what is this research team like? What are its key values? What does it do? How does this research team work? Sometimes when financiers choose to fund a PAR project, it is not about the method of this project, but it is about the story that a research team shares.

Investing in credibility – specifically in projects of which the outcomes are unsure, financiers tend to not invest in the product, but in the people who are creating the product. They investigate who are standing in front of them: are PAR-researchers experienced, professional, and integer? What would the PAR-researchers do if something went wrong? Information about these types of things could be provided with diplomas, certificates, resumes, or stories about other projects.

Building a track record – in order to build trust, what really helps is building a substantial track record. A track record shows the past achievements of a research team, which – when it contains several examples of finished projects – improves the likelihood that a research team is capable of creating successful projects. Financiers also look at how long a research team has been active. A research team that has been active for five years is more credible than a new research team with only a few researchers. However, a track record of course has to be created from scratch. If a research team is new, it could start creating its track record by funding its first projects by itself. Also, a new research team could experiment with projects ideas in a small scale. By doing that, a research team can show that a certain project approach works, before it is applied in a larger scale.

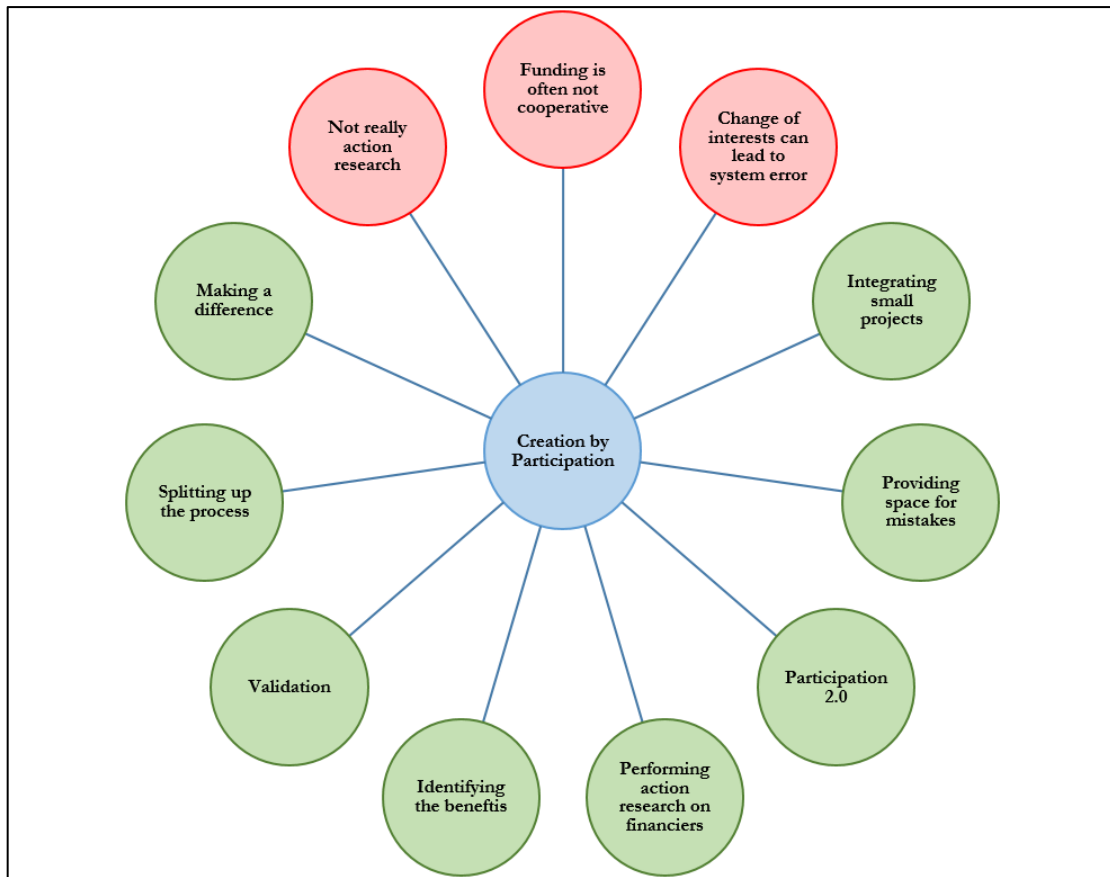


Figure 4: Organizing Theme 3 – Creation by Participation. The OT is indicated with blue, barriers with red, and enablers with green

Figure 4 shows the third OT; Creation by Participation. This OT mainly focusses on total participation of both financiers and PAR-researchers throughout the whole process. This OT is connected to several BTs, which consist of a mainly enablers. Three barriers were found to be connected to this OT:

A change of interests can lead to a system error: when the system changes, and the input of locals is valued and taken into account when decisions are being made, this can lead to a system error. This is because the participation of locals adds new interests to the process, which can be valued as high as money, but that is not happening yet. For instance, when a professional is willing to lead a participatory project on a voluntary base, and asks the municipality to put his/her salary in something like a ‘community budget’, this approach is too unfamiliar and is most of the times not implemented.

Funding is often not cooperative: PAR is based on cooperation, and it is questionable if funding is suitable for this because until now, it has had a more individualistic connotation. Funding is often: “I have to do this, I have to deliver this product and justify it.” This is opposed to the idea of PAR.

Not really action research: sometimes, projects are called ‘PAR-projects’ too fast. These projects are more about researchers observing social phenomena, combined with responsive evaluation, but do not include enough real action. This negatively affects the quality of the research, and it can be confusing to financiers. Moreover, it is not beneficial to the reputation of PAR, as these researchers often do not really understand the key principles of action research.

Within this OT, also eight enablers were identified:

Integrating small projects: locals often have to attend many different gatherings because there is a separate budget for every subject. If these budgets can be combined to fund one larger project, covering multiple subjects simultaneously, this will be beneficial to many projects.

Participation 2.0: in public participation, the old Thorbecke model of making a plan within the municipality, informing civilians, and carrying it out, has been used for a long time. It is now time for the old model to evolve to something like a “participation 2.0”. Values, opinions and expertise of locals should be included in this type of participation.

Providing space for mistakes: when the focus shifts from the product to the process, there must also be an increased value given to lessons learned from the process. Also, the process must be allowed to fail. If the product is not the main focus, this should not be a problem, as long as the lessons that are learned are being transferred to the next group working on the product or solution. If a research team has very much confidence in its own project, it can also be agreed on that a funding company only needs to provide funding when the project is a success.

Performing action research on financiers: financiers are also people, and not every funding company can be convinced to fund PAR in the same way. It is important to have a good understanding of the type of resistance that is encountered when trying to convince a financier to fund a participatory project. Therefore, it can be wise to also perform some kind of action research on the funding company itself.

Identifying benefits: if it is not possible to provide a clear expectation of an end product, it can be valuable to give an impression of how people can benefit from the results. For instance, the end product of a neighbourhood project may not be clear in the beginning, but the project will certainly contribute to social cohesion.

Validation: sometimes, it is possible to perform a preliminary investigation, it can even be possible to receive funding for this. During this investigation, the support for or trust in a certain approach or project can be investigated, which can be presented to a financier in order to build mutual trust. It is important to quantify this results to increase reliability.

Splitting up in phases: if the confidence in a certain project is not very large yet, it can help to split up the process in different phases. In this way, funding can be provided in multiple steps. However, it must be made sure that this approach does not lead to too much control instead of more freedom (see OT 1: Too much control).

Making a difference: for funding companies, it is important to be sure that they can really make a difference by supporting a project. Therefore, the financial contribution of a funding company should be substantial in relation to the whole budget of a project. If a very large budget is required, what could also work is that a large body like the government or municipality provides about 60%/70% of the budget, and small funding companies provide the remaining percentage. When different companies fund one project, it is important to make agreements about the duration of the project and the funding, because if one financier decides to cut its budget, the whole project is at the risk of failing.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This part contains part C of the Thematic Analysis: integration of exploration. The results from literature research and in-depth interviews are integrated and interpreted in order to give an answer to the research question: *What are the main barriers to and enablers of funding Participatory Action Research*. Also, limitations are discussed and suggestions for further research are given.

Lessons learned for PAR-researchers and financiers

The main finding from literature research about the funding mechanism of PAR is that financiers and research teams that want to set up PAR projects are in danger of falling into the “reputation trap”. This mainly happens because PAR-researchers often struggle to reconcile the demands of funding agencies, while the latter are unable to determine if researchers are capable of effectively pursuing their goals. This concept was further explored during interviews with researchers and financiers, in which multiple barriers to and enablers of funding PAR were identified and grouped into three Organizing Themes:

- It is time for organizational change;
- It is all about the team;
- Creation by Participation.

A first pattern that becomes apparent when looking at the three OTs, is that OT1 consists of relatively more barriers, OT2 has an equal division between barriers and enablers, and OT3 consists mainly of enablers. This pattern can be explained by the fact that OT1 mainly involves identifying why it is difficult for financiers to fund PAR, OT2 mainly is about improving the funding mechanism by investing in the reputation of research teams, while OT3 basically describes what a system using an improved funding mechanism could look like. Each of the OTs contains several barriers to and enablers of funding PAR. It will now be discussed how these barriers and enablers relate to each other, after which the most important steps that both PAR-researchers and financiers can undertake are elaborated on. Tables 2-4 provide an overview of the relations between the barriers and enablers in the three OTs. Enablers that can be used by PAR researchers are indicated with green, enablers that can be used by financiers with blue, and enablers that financiers and PAR researchers can use together are provided in black.

Table 2: Organizing Theme 1, barriers and related enablers.

Barrier	Related enabler
<i>Funding is mainly focussed on end products</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From product to process (OT1) - Telling a good story (OT2) - Investing in credibility (OT2) - Building a track record (OT2) - Participation 2.0 (OT3) - Providing space for mistakes (OT3) - Performing action research on financiers (OT3) - Identifying benefits (OT3) - Validation (OT3) - Splitting up in phases (OT3)
<i>Funding is fragmented:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrating small projects (OT3) - Participation 2.0 (OT3) - Performing action research on financiers (OT3)
<i>Financiers want too much control</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepting the uncertainty of outcomes (OT2) - Telling a good story (OT2) - Investing in credibility (OT2) - Building a track record (OT2) - Participation 2.0 (OT3) - Providing space for mistakes (OT3) - Identifying benefits (OT3) - Validation (OT3) - Splitting up in phases (OT3) - Making a difference (OT3)
<i>Projects are no longer a suitable approach for tackling societal problems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From product to process (OT1) - Accepting the uncertainty of outcomes (OT1) - Participation 2.0
<i>System change brings uncertainty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepting the uncertainty of outcomes (OT1) - Telling a good story (OT2) - Investing in credibility (OT2) - Building a track record (OT2) - Participation 2.0 (OT3) - Identifying benefits (OT3) - Validation (OT3) - Splitting up in phases (OT3)
<i>Relocation of decision-making</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From product to process (OT1) - Acquiring subject knowledge (OT2) - Telling a good story (OT2) - Investing in credibility (OT2) - Building a track record (OT2) - Participation 2.0 (OT3) - Performing action research on financiers (OT3)

Table 3: Organizing Theme 2, barriers and related enablers.

Barrier	Related enabler
Funding PAR is like a prize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepting the uncertainty of outcomes (OT1) - Investing in credibility (OT2) - Building a track record (OT2) - Identifying benefits (OT3)
PAR projects most of the time cannot be matched with the wishes of financiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From product to process (OT1) - Telling a good story (OT2) - Performing action research on financiers (OT3)
Current societal problems are highly complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From product to process (OT1) - Acquiring subject knowledge (OT2) - Providing space for mistakes (OT3) - Validation (OT3) - Splitting up in phases (OT3)
Lack of trust in locals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investing in credibility (OT2) - Building a track record (OT2) - Participation 2.0 (OT3) - Identifying benefits (OT3) - Validation (OT3)

Table 4: Organizing Theme 3, barriers and related enablers.

Barriers	Related enabler
A change of interests can lead to a system error	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From product to process (OT1) - Participation 2.0 (OT3) - Performing action research on financiers (OT3)
Funding is often not cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrating small projects (OT3) - Participation 2.0 (OT3)
Not really action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquiring subject knowledge (OT2) - Investing in credibility (OT3)

The first part of the answer to the main research question considers PAR-researchers. The main barrier for PAR-researchers in finding funds for their projects is that it is difficult for them to generate accountability in procedures that satisfy financiers (Gutner & Thompson, 2010) (see also section 3.2.). This is stated because a large share of the barriers that are directed towards PAR-researchers have to do with a lack of trust between them and financiers. Tables 2-4 show that most enablers that can be used to overcome this main barrier are coming from OT2: It is all about the team. These enablers present different ways to improve the reputation of PAR-researchers. This can be done partly by investing in the credibility of the researchers themselves, and partly by improving the reputation of the research team/company/organization (e.g. by telling a good story, building a track record, validation, acquiring subject knowledge).

The second part of the answer to the main research question considers financiers. The main barrier for financiers in funding PAR is that it is difficult for them to cope with the high level of uncertainty that comes with PAR projects. This is stated because many barriers directed towards financiers point to the fact that they generally do not like uncertainty. Still, this uncertainty is also what makes PAR – being characterized as flexible, reflexive and iterative (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995) – so effective. However, apart from providing space for mistakes, there are no enablers that can be used by financiers on their own to overcome this main barrier. All the other related enablers have to be used in cooperation with PAR-researchers, so in general, it can be assumed that financiers need to participate more when funding PAR. It is therefore not surprising that multiple enablers that can be used to overcome the main barrier for financiers can be found in OT3:

Creation by Participation. Moreover, the two enablers in OT1 – “Shifting the focus from product to process” and “learning to accept uncertainty” – are essential steps that have to be undertaken before the enablers from OT3 can be used. When financiers and PAR-researchers together take these steps, both can engage in a form of “participation 2.0”. PAR-researchers can involve financiers in their research by “performing PAR on financiers”, and they can make each other enthusiastic and more confident about PAR projects (e.g. by identifying benefits, splitting up the process in phases, integrating small projects).

Relation to scientific research and society

It has become clear that there are multiple steps that both financiers and PAR-researchers can take to make the mechanism of project funding more suitable for PAR. The steps to improve this funding mechanism were based on the barriers to and enablers of funding PAR that were identified in the three OTs. These OTs are, as shown in tables 2-4, connected to each other by relations between their barriers and enablers.

This connection can be described by one overarching Global Theme: the need for a shift towards a more participatory research paradigm. In this shift, solving the barriers in OT1 will mainly serve to initiate organizational change, overcoming those in OT2 improves the reputation of research teams and the relation between financiers and PAR-researchers, while OT3 mainly illustrates which enablers become available when financiers and PAR-researcher engage in “participation 2.0”. However, as many barriers and enablers within the three OTs are related to each other, the transition towards a more participatory research paradigm cannot be linear process. OT1 cannot simply be “solved” first, because doing this also requires the use of enablers from the other OTs and vice versa. This suggests that in order to achieve change and make a transformation to a more participatory research paradigm, a circular process consisting of constant reflection and feedback between the different themes is required.

The need for a transition towards a more participatory research paradigm may sound radical. However, considering the fact that societal problems are becoming more complex and that non-participatory approaches often lack the capacity to take into account local perspectives and priorities, radical claims are not misplaced. Until now, scientific research has been expected to produce ‘reliable’ knowledge, provided merely that discoveries are communicated to society. However, it is becoming more expected that scientific knowledge is ‘socially robust’, and that its production is seen by society to be both transparent and participative (Gibbons, 1999). Moreover, not only scientific research, but society in general seems to have become too much based on efficiency. Everything has to be measured and monitored, but most forms of monitoring are based on distrust (Rotmans, 2014). In order to transform to a society and a research paradigm in which humans become the centre of attention again, patience and radical system change are necessary. To get there, we have to learn to cope with structural uncertainty, which takes courage (Idem). This is what the transition towards a more participatory research paradigm is all about.

How should this transformation process go? As stated before, a cyclic transformation process consisting of constant reflection and feedback allows key players to take small, acceptable steps towards change and with every learning cycle, change can become more substantial. The steps towards a more participatory research paradigm are illustrated, using the three OTs, in the form of a “Participation Tree” (figure 5). This figure illustrates the different phases of a cyclic process, taking into account the barriers to and enablers of funding PAR for every phase:

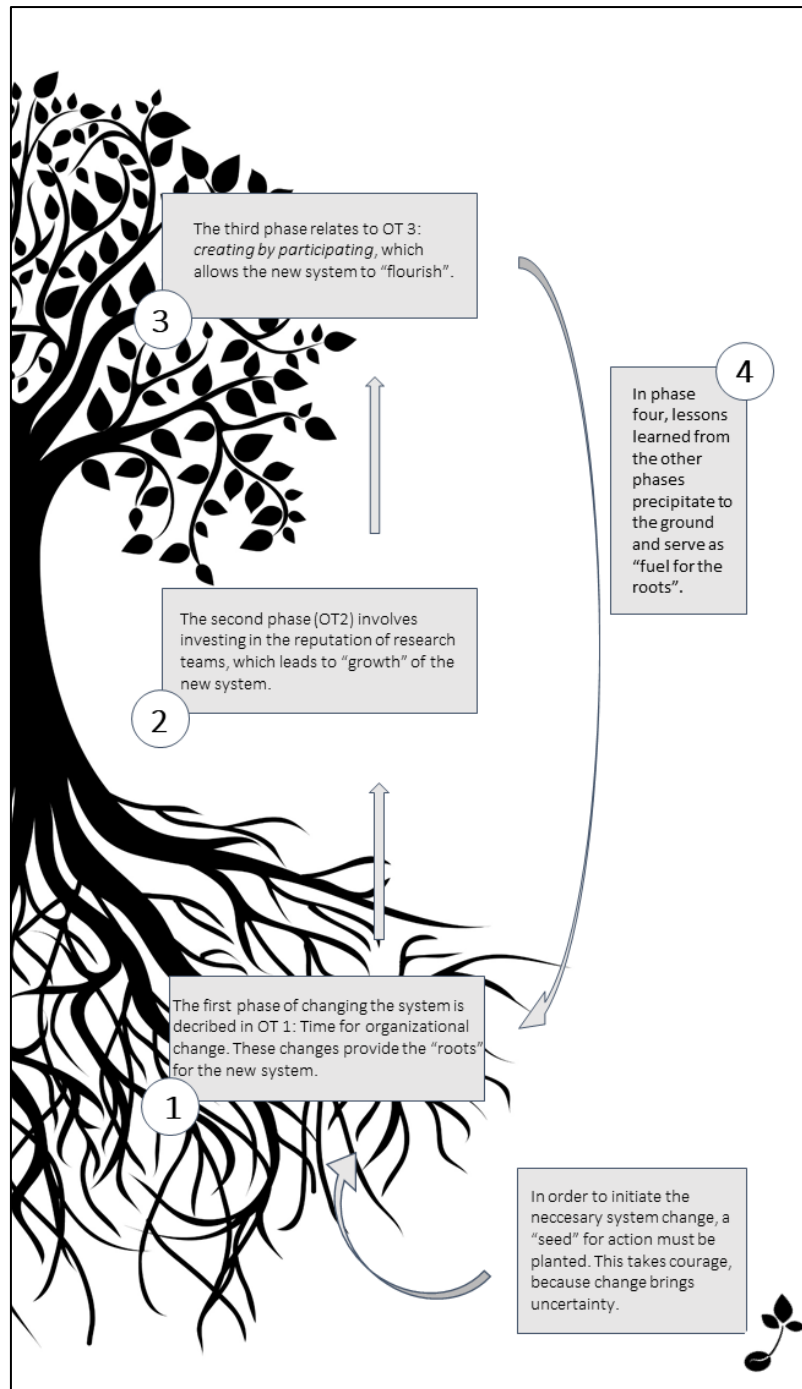


Figure 5: The Participation Tree – taking steps towards system change.

The transformation process has to be initiated, which is called here "planting the seed for action". This initiation requires letting go of the old system, without knowing exactly what the new system will look like. This takes courage, boldness, and leadership (Rotmans, 2014). Most likely, intrinsically motivated pioneers who will be the first to take this step. The four phases that follow the initiation are related to the OTs. Again, it is important to notice that these phases are connected to each other by their barriers and enablers in a non-linear way. While the first phase is about establishing organizational change, table 2 shows that enablers coming mainly from phase two and three are required to overcome the barriers in phase one. The same holds for the other two phases: the barriers to and enablers of funding PAR in all three OTs can influence each other. This is why phase four is an important addition to the three OTs. It has the function of translating the lessons learned from phase two and three back to the first one by means of reflection and feedback. In

this way, a cyclic transformation process that allows financiers and PAR-researchers to move step by step to a more participatory research paradigm is created.

To summarize, this section has provided an answer to the main research question: *What are the main barriers to and enablers of funding Participatory Action Research?* This was done by first identifying the main barriers for both PAR-researchers and financiers, after which it was discussed how these main barriers can be overcome. Then, the three OTs were related to each other and to one GT: the need for a shift towards a more participatory research paradigm. Subsequently, the three OTs were used to illustrate the steps for making this shift. It was suggested that this transformation should be a cyclical process, in which frequent reflection and feedback are used to ultimately increase overall participation between the parties that are involved with PAR projects.

Limitations

This research has provided much information on barriers to and enablers of funding PAR and on the relation between the two. Still, there are some important limitations that have to be considered (for limitations of the methods of this research, see section 2.3.). The implementation of PAR, in which the visibility of the researchers and the transparency of their intentions are much greater than in non-participatory research, presents multiple challenges. For instance control over the research is seldom completely devolved onto the “community” (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Moreover, participation is time consuming and local people may be highly sceptical as to whether it is worth investing their energy and time in participatory projects (Idem). Much of what passes as ‘participatory research’ actually goes no further than researchers contracting people into projects which still are entirely led, designed and managed by scientists (Idem). This is understandable, as research is most easily facilitated when organized through the medium of dominant local stakeholders or ‘leaders’, who are often most able to articulate concerns and mobilize resources, yet the most marginalized are rarely represented among them (Idem). Next to that, it is important to realize that PAR is not suitable for all types of research. Especially in natural sciences, using PAR is not necessarily beneficial.

Further research

It is recommended to perform further research on multiple aspects related to funding of PAR. First, it is important to investigate how often non-participatory research projects “fail” in relation to participatory research projects, in order to investigate if the assumption that PAR has a higher risk of failing is correct. Second, further research on the motivation of both researchers and financiers, but also locals, to engage with PAR would be valuable. This will provide more insight in how likely it is that the ‘seed for action’ actually will be planted, because most likely, the initiation of change will depend on enthusiastic pioneers. Third, research on how to achieve system change is necessary, because making a transformation towards a new research paradigm is a very complex process. This research has made an attempt to illustrate the steps that can be taken in order to change the current funding system, however, these steps remain on an abstract level, and more detailed research about system change has to be done to improve reliability. Lastly, it would be relevant to investigate how researchers, financiers and other important actors could be trained to perform or at least be involved with PAR, because knowledge about the research method is an important requirement for effective implementation.

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