Participatory Action Research

- Key elements of participatory action research (PAR):
  - Seeks to explain social situations while working toward empowerment and change
  - Problem-focused, context-specific and future-oriented
  - Whole group actively involved in change process; shared ownership of all phases from design to interpretation and dissemination

Challenges

- AR/PAR often arises in the field context; welcome to the political world
  - Future directions rooted in values; but are these shared by organization, funders?
  - Funding bodies/managers may not favour empowering others (e.g., Province after DCC/VATJS study)

Participatory Action Research

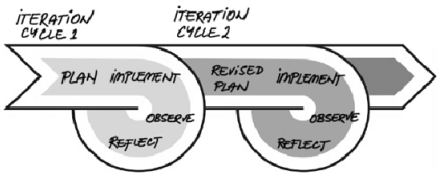
- Key elements of participatory action research (PAR):
  - Aims to be educative and develop "critical consciousness" within the community
  - Problem identification, planning, action and evaluation all interlinked; iterative process
  - PAR described as social, participatory, practical and collaborative, emancipatory, critical, reflexive, transformative

Challenges

- Not all parts of the organization may be equally ready/eager for change
- "The community" may itself be very diverse and have different ideas for how to move forward. Pressure for consensus?
- May or may not lead to bigger questions about why the people are marginalized in the first place

Participatory Action Research

- An inherently iterative process



Challenges

- Big investment in time has consequences:
  - Staff turnover may impact research process
  - Academic researchers do need to keep up their publication records
- Co-opting of the warm fuzzy appeal of PAR by cold non-fuzzy institutions
- Be careful about over-selling possible outcomes