Democratising Participatory Research

Pathways to Social Justice from the South

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3. Traditions and Limitations of Participatory Research

Power is the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way, whereas inequality is the lack of equality, the ability not to be treated fairly. These two concepts are very crucial elements in the university, they work hand-in-hand with one another. Whereby we have come to a point where when you do not have status or if you are not well-known by the management of the university, your issues or concerns will not be taken into account. It relates to who you are, what you are and how well you are connected to those people. This is what our country has become: 'status'.

When it comes to inequality it is a very critical issue in a sense that we as the students of the university, we are not treated equally, given the same opportunities and privileges. It plays a very vital role in the university because there is a big difference between white and black students, we are all not being given the same opportunities, leading to racism among other issues. Also, here, language discrimination plays a huge role, for example, last year accounting students wrote an auditing paper only to realise that the question paper on the Afrikaans side already contained the right answers.

What does that create?

It creates unfairness and unequal distribution of opportunities and privileges.

Narratives on Social Injustices: Undergraduate Voices, 201

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the complexities when investigating participatory approaches as a research field. Firstly, the chapter divides the field into four major research areas (industrial, development, Indigenous, and educational) in order to clarify the diverse foundational assumptions of different practices and their distinct theoretical grounds. Among the

research areas, the industrial branch represents the beginning of Action Research (hereafter AR), a term coined by Kurt Lewin (1946). Secondly, the development family adds a critical perspective to the initial AR practice. This family uses terminologies such as Participatory Research (hereafter PR) and Participatory Action Research (hereafter PAR) as a way to highlight that active and engaged participation lies at the core of these practices. In this section, various traditions are presented and their commitment to some of the decolonial aims is outlined, in addition to their focus on liberation and emancipatory-type theories. The third family, the Indigenous family, focuses on post-colonial theory. It is founded on the invisibility of Indigenous people, and their ways of understanding research and producing knowledge. And the final category, the educational family, is presented due to the educational focus of this book. This family is explored via the category of Educational Action Research (from now on EAR), and subcategories such as Action Science (AS), Action Learning (AL), Classroom Action Research (CAR), Action Learning Action Research (ALAR)/Participatory Action Learning Action Research (PALAR) and Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR).

After the exploration of all these branches, a summary of the major challenges throughout the field is provided. The chapter investigates issues around individual/collective practices, the contested terms and application of participation in different practices, credibility and validity within the academic context, and the challenges arising from embracing diverse practices. This chapter focuses on the gaps between each of the four proposed branches and decoloniality, highlighting spaces where we might usefully introduce the Capabilities Approach as a theoretical frame. Thus, this chapter provides the starting point for a conceptualisation of participatory capabilities-based research, in order to resolve certain limitations of these four branches.

3.2 Introducing Participatory Approaches

Participatory approaches represent an extended family composed of methods, methodologies and research typologies, from the most conventional and academic frame to the most radical post-modernist-decolonial understanding of enquiry (Reason & Bradbury 2008;

Bradbury 2015; Rowell at al. 2016). This diversity of practices is reflected in the numerous terminologies used among the international literature in the field, highlighting different origins, aims and theoretical influences (Etmanski et al. 2014; Dick 2015; Higgins 2016). To provide some examples of these diverse typologies, the table below presents just a few terminologies.

Table 1: Typologies of participatory approaches.

Participatory Action Research	Cooperative Enquiry	Soft System Approaches	Feminist Participatory Action Research
Action Research	Industrial Action Research	Participatory Research	Participatory Community Research
Educational Action Research	Action Science	Classroom Action Research	Community Based-Research
Participatory Rural Appraisal	Action Learning	Critical Participatory Action Research	Community-Based Participatory Research
Tribal Participatory Research	Constructionist Research	Participatory Learning and Action	Cooperative Research
Critical System Theory	PALAR (PAL and AR)	Participatory Indigenous knowledge Research	Visual Participatory Research
Participatory Design Research	Queering Participatory Design Research	Design-Based Research	Rapid Rural Appraisal
Participatory Rural Appraisal	Participatory Poverty Assessment	Appreciative Enquiry	Participatory Video

The sample above shows that participatory approaches have been adapted to different fields and practices, creating specific tools for scholars that are committed to democratic values, social change, and social accountability in different ways (Reason & Bradbury 2008). For

this reason, the present chapter aims to make an in-depth exploration of these typologies, highlighting some traditions and current challenges in order to provide the space for a capabilities-based typology.

First of all, the diversity highlighted above has mostly been embraced by scholars in the field in a positive way. Reason and Bradbury (2008), among others (Greenwood & Levin 2006; Dick & Greenwood 2015), honour and value all the different orientations, appreciating the richness and diversity of this wide family. Additionally, Chambers (2008) calls it *eclectic pluralism*, which is inclusive of its diversity, expressing that all participatory typologies must be complemented by 'mutual and critical reflective learning and personal responsibility for good practice' (2008, 331). Equally, Dick and Greenwood (2015) attest that 'being sectarian and narrow about the varieties of AR is not an option' (2015, 195). Nevertheless, although it seems positive to embrace all these typologies, it is true that not all of them act and are implemented in the same way, nor are their aims all equal. This fact might obstruct the way scholars in the field understand the different practices and traditions, impacting the mutual and reflective learning between them. For this reason, the following section attempts to undertake a critical analysis and to present a structure of traditions among participatory practices, in order to better understand their differences and commonalities and their role in decoloniality.

3.3 Participatory Approaches: An International Analysis

Action Research is the broadest term for naming this type of practice, although as the following sections will highlight, initial understandings of AR differ greatly, with current practices and debates about participation and community involvement. Countless terminologies can be found within the AR family, as mentioned above, and it is very difficult to track down a clear classification or definition in the literature.

In an attempt to historically organise influences over AR, Feldman (2017) proposes a classification based on three eras (Era 1, Era 2 and Era 3, see Feldman 2017) in the English-speaking world. This analysis, although helpful and inspiring, does not confront major complexities within the field, and makes the Spanish-speaking tradition, along with

many other non-English speaking traditions, invisible. Therefore, to advance current classifications this chapter presents four research areas to be considered when referring to participatory approaches. These four areas structure the chapter, which considers their presentations and subcategories and concludes with limitations and possibilities for decoloniality and the democratisation of knowledge.

The four families are:

(1) the industrial family, where AR was born, which focuses on improving production processes and is strongly influenced by a positivist understanding of social change, implemented by cycles of reflection and action (Lewin 1946).

(2) The development family, which provides a more critical perspective in participation and epistemic debates and mostly focuses on community interventions and the voiceless (Fals-Borda & Rahman 1991).

(3) The Indigenous family, which is intimately linked with the development family, however, the Indigenous strand has acquired more radical perspectives.

(4) And finally, the educational family, which initially is the application of an industrial perspective to the improvement of professional educational practices (Noffke & Somekh 2009), but which is progressively being influenced by more critical perspectives such as Freireian pedagogy (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013).
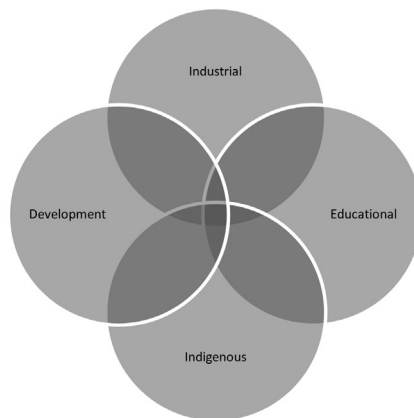

Figure 1: Participatory Families (image by the author, 2021).

Although the graphic seems to clearly divide these four areas, the categories can also be seen to overlap in terms of practices and foundational features. Nevertheless, some of them, such as the initial industrial family and the Indigenous family, possess irreconcilable theoretical features. To a certain extent, this complexity explains the current difficulties of classification and differentiation in the literature, which is camouflaged by an ethos of embracing the diverse and extended family of participatory approaches (Greenwood & Levin 2006; Dick & Greenwood 2015).

3.3.1 Industrial Family: Action Research

The industrial democracy movement refers to the first large-scale projects of AR (Greenwood & Levin 2006). Kurt Lewin was the first person to use the term AR, which dates back to 1934 (Adelman 1993).[1] Lewin was trained as a social psychologist and was interested in human behaviour, inter-group relations and social change (Lewin 1946). This led him, together with his students, to test factories and neighbourhoods in quasi-experimental studies, exploring the increased productivity that came about through inclusive participation instead of authoritarian management (Adelman 1993). For instance, an example of one of their studies is the case of the Harwood Factory in Virginia, where they explored how participation affected productivity and work absenteeism (Kristiansen & Blosch-Poulsen 2016). However, Lewin's studies were not only related to factories but also researched family habits and military efficiency. A particular example is his experiment conducting real-life research with the aim of achieving a particular goal in small groups, in this case, that of modifying family habits (Lewin 1947). Equally, Lewin conducted studies in the US, aiming to change food habits among American civilians and allowing the soldiers to get better quality meat, or worked with bomber squadrons in the Second World War, where the cycles of reflection and action are easily visible, with the process being repeated over and over again until the achievement of the goal (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013).

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1   Even though Lewin was the creator of the term 'Action Research' some authors (Gazda et al. 1997; Dash 1999) refer to Moreno as the methodological inventor of Action Research. J. L. Moreno was a group psychotherapist in 1914 and he applied action-oriented interventions for groups and inter-group therapies.

Lewin designed a research methodology which, through cycles of action and refection, could act as a catalyst for social change as a desirable aim, through a pragmatic and positivist frame of human behaviour. This positivist frame presumed that there were universal laws motivating human behaviour and, therefore, that it was a cause-effect problem. Generally, the researcher identifies the problem and implements the research until the behaviour in the population being researched changes. Lewin's research, especially in the early stages, aimed to change habits according to policy recommendations or the researcher's interest, with the participants' involvement going no further than their being changed in accordance with the researcher's desired outcome. This differs greatly from actual and/or critical understandings of AR.

According to Feldman (2017), the cycle of AR for Lewin was based on six steps.
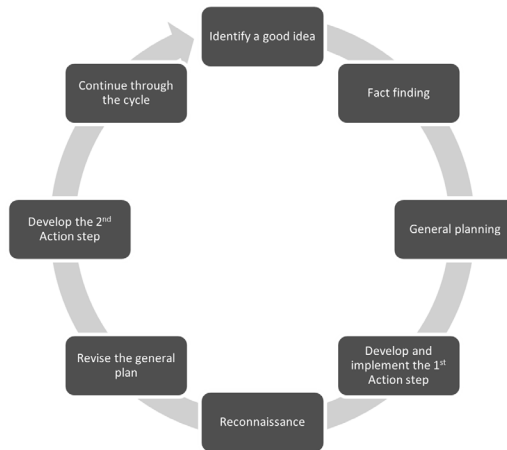
Figure 2: Diagram of Lewin's Action Cycle (image by the author, 2021, based on Fieldman 2017, 127).

Following these steps, the researcher acts as a catalyst for the desired behavioural change in the population.

Later in his career, Lewin also tried to democratise the research process by introducing into his research the participation of communities or groups excluded from his initial approach (Adelman 1993). However, there are challenges in how 'participation' is understood, due to Lewin's historical moment and his positivist scientific background. In Lewin's thought, participation was based on a superficial or instrumental

enrolment or limited understanding of participation according to posterior practices (Kemmis, McTaggart & Retallick 2004). Problems were determined by experts, and participants were used to resolve the experts' concerns, such as changing eating habits to provide better pieces of meat for soldiers during the war, or reducing absenteeism in manufacturing for the benefit of the manufacturer's management.

Therefore, the scientific production and pragmatism underlying Lewin's notion of AR is clearly visible. As Adelman (1993) states, 'Action Research was the means of systemic enquiry for all participants in the quest for greater effectiveness through democratic participation' (Adelman 1993, 7). Nevertheless, that democratic participation was shaped by the circumstances of the time, and governed by authoritative and disciplinary models that were focused on increasing productivity. In general terms, his studies were generally more informed by a pragmatic and scientific positivist rigour than by an urge to expose abusive power relations within working environments or major ontological debates by unmasking an oppressive epistemic system. That is why Adelman (1993) corroborates:

> Lewin's ideas on democratic participation in the workplace did not include any critique of the wider society, particularly the range of economic relations between worker and employer, capital and labour. Indeed, a fair observation would be that although Lewin and his co-workers demonstrated the efficacy of action research for improving productivity, they did not develop conceptual structures that took explicit account of the power bases that define social roles and strongly influence the process of any change in the modes of production. (Adelman 1993, 10)

Therefore, although Lewin's approach attempted to increase democratic relations within the arduous and intricate industrial context after the Second World War in Europe, it was implemented as a means of advancing more productive industrial processes and more efficient solutions to social problems within a Western industrial context.

Nevertheless, after several decades of work, Lewin and his co-workers were able to classify four distinctive typologies according to the different practices, which evolved from their initial work (Adelman 1993). These typologies[2] were more varied, exposing not only the instrumental

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2   For more information on the features of each of these categories, see Adelman (1993).

function of AR in increasing productivity, but also alternatives that have over the years become slightly different from the original AR type.

Today there is a broad range of definitions for AR, with a mixture of identifying features, which are at times contradictory, and originate from a wide range of discourses across participatory approaches from the 1930s until today. What is clear is that the initial understanding of AR seems now to be distant from current practices and restricted in its ability to advance decolonisation and democratise knowledge.

3.3.2 Development Family: Participatory Action Research and Participatory Research

In the 1960s 'participation' was added to AR, as an ideological sign of what came first: participation, not action. This second phase of AR is marked by enquiry implemented in developing contexts, such as Africa, Latin America and Asia (Kindom, Pain & Kesby 2007), all of which shared, to a greater or lesser extent, the desire for a different research practice (Brydom-Miller 2001). Enquiry was regarded as a toolkit that, when adequately supplied, could liberate the oppressed (Greenwood & Lewin 2006). Influenced by Freire's pedagogy, popular education and Orlando Fals Borda's awareness-building and liberating interventions, the practice of PAR spread across Colombia through Orlando Fals Borda, across Brazil through Freire, across Tanzania through Liisa, and across India through Tandon (Brydom-Miller 2001; Thiollent & Colette 2017). Furthermore, Rowell and Hong (2017) acknowledge that Fals Borda used PAR as a way to reverse the unequal politics of knowledge through the validation of popular episteme.

There is however no consensus on who proposed PAR and when the terminology was coined, but two practitioners are generally mentioned and proclaimed as its initiators within the PAR literature: Marja-Liisa, with her Jipemoyo project (Nyemba & Meyer 2017), and Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia, who popularised the term 'Investigacion Accion Participativa' (Thiollent & Colette 2017).

First, Dr Marja-Liisa Swantz attributes the creation of PAR to herself through her work in Tanzania, stating that:

> Somehow I actually wanted to create a different way of doing research and so I did not base it on specific theories but looked for ideas how to make people co-researchers and aware of the significance of their

own ways of conceiving ideas and making use of their resources of
knowledge. (Nyemba & Meyer 2017, 4)

She especially refers to the Jipemoyo project as her first PAR project
from 1975–79, which aimed to encourage inhabitants of Jipemoyo, in
Tanzania, to resolve their problems with their own resources (Nyemba
& Meyer 2017).

Secondly, Orlando Fals-Borda is recognised as the initiator of PAR[3] in
Colombia, which was influenced by a Freireian ideology (Brydom-Miller
2001). These interventions were characterised by their aim for radical
social change and emancipation (Kindon, Pain & Kesby 2007). PAR was
a practice focused on the liberation of oppressed groups and classes,
and the unlocking of deplorable injustices arising from the politics of
knowledge (Fals Borda & Rahman 1991). He highlighted the relevance
of 'empathetic engagement' understanding participants and researchers
as 'sentipensantes'.[4] The principal aim of PAR was the combination of
different knowledges supporting excluded groups or communities
through investigative techniques (Rappaport 2017). According to
Rappaport (2017), Fals Borda combined rigorous data collection with
the participatory process, inviting the relevant community or group
to determine the agenda, and making them the ultimate owners of the
research outcomes, free to use them as a political tool. This was a 'dialogo
de saberes',[5] a communal self-reflection process, combining 'academic
and grassroots notions of research' (Rappaport 2017, 147). Furthermore,
Rappaport (2017) states that Vasco Uribe, another contemporary PAR
practitioner, considered the process differently, placing ideas at the
core and seeing thinking as a research process. For Uribe, it was not
necessary to collect data, systematically analyse it, and give it back to
the community. For him the process of thinking together was a counter-
hegemonic way of non-academic research.

Although different practices could present different theoretical and
practical insights, this group was characterised by a critical perspective
of participation, where participants' enrolment meant ownership of the

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3   The literature presents different terminologies. While initially Orlando Fals-Borda
     referred to the methodology as Participatory Research (Fals-Borda & Rahman 1991),
     posterior publications situate equally Fals-Borda (Thiollent & Colette 2017) and
     Swantz (Nyemba & Meyer 2017) as the creators of Participatory Action Research.
4   'Thinking-feeling individuals'.
5   'Knowledge dialogue'.

process from the very beginning to the very end, combining different knowledges. The use of research was seen as an ideological weapon against homogenising trends and the use of practice as a catalyst for the liberation of the communities or individuals oppressed (Fals Borda & Rahman 1991). However, in the last thirty years, development studies have made extensive use of this family of participatory approaches, diversifying its implementation; thus, new terminologies have come onto the scene,[6] expanding and homogenising the types of practice applied (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995). This homogenisation has limited the potential of PAR as a counterhegemonic tool for participatory research practitioners (Santos, 2013).

3.3.3 Indigenous Family: Indigenous Research

Indigenous research is closely related to PAR practices, however, in this case, Indigenous practices focus on Indigenous communities and are strongly linked with post-colonial theories. Scholars from this Indigenous branch believe that science is a universal or objective representation of reality, and legitimises its own politics of truth (Soldatenko 2015). Thus, there were, and continue to be, many scholars who highlight the contradictions within modernism and its imperial project (Thaman 2003; Escobar 2007; De Sousa Santos 2014, Dussel 2007; Appiah 2010; Mbembe 2015; Diop 2010). Thaman (2003) states:

> Critical reflection on the philosophy of science and liberal education, as well as what passes for 'objective' truths, will reveal that our academic education is not culture-free and gender-neutral, nor does it occupy an ideologically neutral high ground because academic, scientific, and liberal beliefs and values, like all beliefs and values, are embedded in a particular cultural curriculum and agenda. (Thaman 2003, 6–7)

Therefore, authors claim that there is a need to include Indigenous knowledges and worldviews, as the perspectives of a historically excluded group, and for them to be promoted and recognised (Ninomiya & Pollock 2016). What they refer to as Indigenous knowledges are:

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6   Southern Participatory Action Research, Participatory Community Development, Rural appraisal, Cooperative enquiry, Participatory Community Research, Community-Based Participatory Research, Tribal participatory Research, Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Participatory Poverty Assessment or Development Research (Greenwood & Levin 2006; Kindon, Pain & Kesby 2007).

> Understood as the common sense ideas and cultural knowledge of local peoples concerning the everyday realities of living. They encompass the cultural traditions, values, belief systems, and the world views that, in any Indigenous society, are imparted to the younger generation by community elders. (Semali & Kincheloe 2002, 1)

Indigenous knowledges represent the internal processes through which members of the community understand themselves and their surroundings, their beliefs, and history (Semali & Kincheloe 2002). Supporters of Indigenous research have presented an alternative paradigmatic position, which explains differences from the 'academic paradigm'. The Indigenous paradigm negates the academic assumption that knowledge is created individually and that it is owned by the researcher and the academic community (Chilisa 2012).

Thus, this emphasis on post-colonial studies aligns this Indigenous branch with decolonial challenges in academia, as discussed in the previous chapter. For instance, for Chilisa (2012) decolonisation is the process of co-researching through community ontologies and epistemologies, recognising the colonial object of study and applying its palliative 'recognition' and 'use of otherness'. Therefore, as Smith (1999) highlights, it is a matter of decolonising the process of research through the deconstruction of its own established tools, such as interviews, and substituting them for flexible methods or already accepted Indigenous methods that do not contradict Indigenous cosmovisions and worldviews. For Nnaemeka (2004), it is within the decolonisation process that we can start to talk about participation and real democracy, when Indigenous views, Indigenous ontologies, knowledge and values can come to the forefront and be experienced. And for Dei (2014), this process can only start with the recognition of space, of knowing 'otherwise', of the political, emotional and spiritual aspects of knowledge. As she claims, 'Central to Indigenous research are concepts of spirituality, spiritual knowing, the interface of body, mind, soul, and spirit, and the nexus of society, culture, and nature' (Dei 2014, 52). As Hlela (2018) highlights in the case of Southern Africa, we need to discover and rediscover 'the value of Ubuntu' (Hlela 2018, 4–5) in a constant and engaging dialogue. For her it is a question of historical justice and commitment towards Indigenous communities' future.

Further, ethical questions are substantial when using Indigenous participatory research, as Chilisa (2012) remarks. The researcher

is a 'provocateur and transformative healer guided by the four Rs: accountable responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and rights and regulations of the researched, as well as roles and responsibilities of researchers as articulated in ethics guidelines and protocols of the former colonised, Indigenous people and the historically oppressed' (Chilisa 2012, 7). In this matter, Chilisa (2012) proposes four dimensions for Indigenous research,

1. It targets a local phenomenon instead of using extant theory from the West to identify and define a research issue

2. It is context-sensitive and creates locally relevant constructs, methods, and theories derived from local experiences and Indigenous Knowledge

3. It can be integrative, that is, combining Western and indigenous theories

4. In this most advanced form, its assumptions about what counts as reality, knowledge, and values in research are informed by an Indigenous research paradigm. The assumptions in an Indigenous paradigm guide the research process

Figure 3: Four dimensions for Indigenous research (image by the author, 2021, based on Chilisa 2012, 13).

To conclude, Indigenous methodologies and research processes can be easily linked with PAR practices, however, their focus is slightly different as these practices are centred on Indigenous populations while PAR focuses on oppressed populations and communities. For this reason, Schroeder (2014) explains that Indigenous research is not the same as PAR, although Indigenous practitioners can use PAR as a methodology. It is, therefore, clear in this family that Indigenous research works towards the decolonisation of knowledge by widening the borders of the system, moving beyond a Eurocentric way of knowing (Dei 2014; Escobar 2007). However, the questions here is: can we operationalise decolonial research when we are not co-researching with Indigenous communities? What about experiential knowledge, intuitive, cultural or local knowledge coming from marginalised communities that are not necessarily Indigenous?

3.3.4 Educational Family: Educational Action Research

To conclude, the educational family offers a highly diverse field, which ranges from a more scientific approach, close to the European-Western perspective of AR, to a more radical perspective, situated close to the borders of a PAR practice. Thus, the following sections shall explore

the varieties born of the need to accommodate distinct practices among educational practitioners.

The educational field nurtured the development of AR within pedagogy. In this area, AR is considered a learning process (McNiff & Whitehead 2002). According to the literature, Educational Action Research (EAR) accomplishes a different set of goals depending on the underlying theoretical background. It presents a diversity of practices among practitioners. All these varieties follow different guidelines, placing emphasis on different aspects and actors within the research. For instance, Action Science (AS) was born as an organisational/industrial strategy; however, it has been used to improve practices through collaboration and reflective dialogue among teachers (Argirys et al. 1985; Zuber-Skerrit, Fletcher & Kearny 2015). Conversely, Classroom Action Research (CAR) is mostly guided by teachers with the help of a professional researcher to explore and improve their own pedagogical practices (Somekh 2006; Whitehead 1991). The following sections will examine some of these EAR categories in order to provide a better overview of the different practices and applications of Educational Action Research.

Educational Action Research as a Broad Category

As highlighted previously, AR has infiltrated the field of education, giving rise to the new category of Educational Action Research. EAR practitioners believe that AR involves a learning process: 'Action Research is always to do with learning, and learning is to do with education and growth' (McNiff & Whitehead 2002, 15). Furthermore, in the last twenty years, there has been an increasing interest in EAR across the Americas, Europe, Australia and Africa. Since the 1990s, interest has also grown in Asia and Eastern Europe (Noffke & Somekh 2009), and there is a flourishing academic literature on its application and theorisation (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Elliott 1991; McKernan 1991; Stenhouse 1975; McGrill & Beaty 1995 among others).

According to the literature, EAR aims to improve learning, teaching, curricula and administration within primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions (Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher & Kearney 2015; Altrichter et al. 1991). Moreover, it provides a link between those involved in educational institutions and movements seeking to bring about social

change (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013). As Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon state 'they made the global, local and the personal, political' (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013, 13).

Additionally, Kember (2000, 30) provides an explicit list of features which characterise the vision of EAR as a broad category. These are:

Table 2: Features of Educational Action Research (table based on Kember 2000, 30).

Project teams are composed of small groups who share a similar interest or concern. It is also possible for individuals to conduct AR projects within courses they teach.
The topic for the project is defined by the participants, to fit within the broad framework of investigating and improving some aspects of their own teaching.
Project groups meet regularly to report observations and critique their own practices. This discourse provides for the possibility of perspective transformation.
Projects proceed through cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. At least two cycles are normally necessary to implement and refine any innovatory practices. The time-scale for the cycles is consistent with the extended period necessary for perspective transformation.
Evidence of the effectiveness of teaching practices and their influence on student learning outcomes is gathered using interpretative methods.
The evidence gathered can be used to convince departmental colleagues, not originally participating in the project, that they too should change their practices and the curriculum.
Lessons learnt from the projects can be disseminated to a wider audience through publications. Participants are, therefore, eligible for rewards through the traditional value system of universities.

As can be noted from the above features, in Educational Action Research, the staff of educational institutions are the main actors, and promote their own reflection and learning through their individual educational practices. Although nowadays there are varieties of EAR which also include students, academics tend to focus on teachers (secondary, primary), lecturers (tertiary) or university students of education (those who are training to teachers) (Carr & Kemmis 1986; Kember 2000). Two clear examples of this are visible in Carr and Kemmis (1986), when they

state that EAR 'involves [educational] practitioners directly in theorising their own practice and revising their theories self-critically in the light of their practical consequences' (Carr & Kemmis 1986, 198), and Kember (2000), who gives teachers power over the research process:

> The topic is something of interest to the teacher so there is motivation for them to conduct the study. The topic can be some innovation they feel is worth introducing into their teaching. It can be a problem they want to solve or an issue they want to tackle. It can often be a concern that they have been aware of for some time, but which has lain dormant because they were unsure how to tackle it. (Kember 2000, 24–25)

Nevertheless, as previously discussed in relation to AR, the use of different practice discourses and traditions over the years has fostered an extensive variety of practices in EAR. Therefore, terms such as Classroom Action Research (CAR), Action Sciences (AS), Pedagogical Action Research (PAR), Action Learning (AL), Participatory Action Learning Action Research (PALAR) and Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) are becoming more and more common among EAR practitioners. In the following sections, I will explore these varied terms in order to develop a more informed perspective of the practices applied within education.

Action Science

The first type reviewed in this section is Action Science. Action Science has mostly been used in organisations and management sciences, however, its application within educational institutions and educational practices makes it relevant for this section (Argyris et al. 1985). To a certain extent, this typology can be situated between the margins of Industrial Action Research and Educational Action Research.

AS was developed by Chris Argyris,[7] a student of Kurt Lewin who also was influenced by the work of John Dewey (Raelin 1997; Helskog 2014). In this typology, AS:

> Is a strategy for increasing the skills and confidence of individuals in groups to create any kind of organisation and to foster long-term

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7   However, it can equally be attributed to his colleagues Schon, Putnam and McLain-Smith.

individual and group effectiveness. This strategy applies to any form of human relations, either organisational, group, or interpersonal contexts where individuals work on challenging tasks together.[8]

For AS the aim is to increase professional effectiveness by helping individuals in small groups,[9] improving practices through collaboration and reflective dialogue (Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher & Kearney 2015). This is an organisational framework to improve practices that build systematically 'between academic organisational psychology and practical problems as they are experienced in organisations' (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013, 10). Moreover, it pays attention to formal and professional knowledge-analysing gaps between theory and practice as a way to create new understanding and to change practices (Dash 1999). Therefore, this typology possesses a stronger link with initial approaches of AR from Lewin's tradition than other EAR practices, developing a systematic process of reflexivity individually or collectively with an organisational perspective.

Classroom Action Research

Classroom Action Research (CAR) is a practice developed by teachers in their own classrooms, analysing their own practices with their students, mostly in the context of primary and secondary education (Somekh 2006). It usually involves an academic partner who helps the teacher to apply the research, collect data and reflect on how to improve their educational practice (Elliott 1991). Moreover, it mainly applies qualitative, interpretative modes of enquiry (Whitehead 1989). It consists of a practical exercise where theory and practice combine to displace 'living theory' or 'living one's educational values' (Dadds 1995; Goodnough 2008; Stenhouse 1975; Wells 2009). This typology seems to be the most widely used among practitioners in education, however, it has been criticised for not paying attention to the social and political aspects of educational institutions and their practices (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013) as its focus tends to be on professional improvement and teaching efficiency.

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8   See http://www.actionscience.com/actinq.htm#basic.
9   For more information see http://www.actionscience.com/actinq.htm#basic.

Pedagogical Action Research

Norton (2009) proposes Pedagogical Action Research (PeAR) as a different methodology designed for an alternative educational context. He states:

> I want to consider briefly the history of the action research movement and show how being a practitioner doing action research in higher education is distinct from being a practitioner doing action research in other educational contexts. This is why I have coined the term pedagogical action research. (Norton 2009, 50)

Norton states that EAR might be of use to primary and secondary levels but is not of use to higher-education institutions. That is why he proposes Pedagogical Action Research (PeAR) as a specific typology for the higher-education context, due to its significant differences from other educational institutions. Norton highlights that PeAR 'refers to the principles of learning and teaching that occur at tertiary level' (Norton 2009, 59). Therefore, this practice is oriented to lecturers, creating a research process where professionals can systematically investigate their own teaching and learning, while also improving their practice and contributing to academic knowledge (Norton 2009).

According to Norton (2009), referring to the literature available in EAR, the purposes of PeAR are:

Table 3: Purposes of Pedagogical Action Research (table based on Norton 2009, 59-60).

A training for university academics in systematically analysing their own practice
A training for university academics in systematically analysing their research methods and expertise; an aid to reflective thinking which results in action
A support for professional efficacy
A way of challenging existing beliefs, concepts and theories in the scholarship of teaching and learning
A method of improving the student learning experience and their academic performance
A process that enables university academics to articulate their knowledge about learning and teaching

An approach that enables university academics to understand better the process of teaching and learning
A method of continuing professional development for university academics
A method of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in universities
A method of inducting new professionals
An approach that helps university academics understand how practice is socially constructed and mediated
A process which can ameliorate the theory-practice gap in university learning referred to by Carr and Kemmis (1986) as 'praxis'

Therefore, Norton's approach differs slightly from other EAR typologies, giving particular relevance to the context of higher education. However, his conceptualisation equally supports the idea of PeAR as a practice by educational professionals—university lecturers—for reflecting on their own pedagogy. Thus, it is a type of CAR, but one centred on higher-education institutions.

Action Learning

Action Learning (AL) appeared in organisational contexts as a developmental innovation in the 1960s. This typology, along with Action Science, is situated on the border of the industrial and educational strands, however, its importance lies more in its formation of the foundational base for its educational successor ALAR/PALAR, which is explored in the following section.

Firstly, the term Action Learning was coined by Reg Revans, an academic professor of natural sciences, who transferred his attention to social sciences, and more specifically education, due to his interest in the role of non-experts in problem-solving (Pedler 2011). He criticised traditional approaches to management as unsuitable for solving problems in organisations (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013). The aim of AL is:

> [The] improvement of human systems for the benefit of those who depend on them. Action learning is a pragmatic and moral philosophy based on a deeply humanistic view of human potential that commits us, via experiential learning, to address the intractable problems of organisations and societies. (Pedler 2011, 22)

In Revan's view, the aim underlying AL was to bring people together to learn from each other. For instance, this involved cultivating relationships between workers and their institutions, instil harmony and generate a positive method of conflict resolution (Dash 1999). According to Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2013), the focal point of AL, in Revan's view, is organisation efficacy and efficiency. Although this focus is visible in his work and posterior academic publications, Revan also expressed a political commitment to a bottom-up approach to decision-making processes and organisational problem-solving (Revan, 2011).

Revan (2011) created an equation regarding processes of AL ($L = P + Q$), where L symbolises learning, P is programmed knowledge or the content of traditional instruction and Q is the questioning insight, derived from fresh questions and critical reflection. Pedler (2011) explains this equation by stating that Revan understood social problems differently to puzzles, and therefore there was no correct solution for social issues, just a compendium of possible choices, and thus Q was essential for new lines of thinking, action, and learning. Revan (2011) equally acknowledged that this learning process must be in small groups or 'sets' from the organisation, workplace or community which is under research. This equation and subsequent practices following AL were created to reflect critically on experiences and find a suitable action as an outcome of the shared learning experience (Zuber-Skerrit, Fletcher & Kearney 2015).

In the academic literature, AL seems to struggle to define the characteristics which distinguish it from AR. This is because of the absence of a definition from Revan (Pedler 2011) and the support of AL as an intrinsic personal/collective experience within AR (Kember 2000). According to Kember (2000), AR's relative popularity compared to AL lies in the former's non-existent literary proliferation, due to the unpublished nature of learning experiences, which are rarely shared among academics. Furthermore, McGill and Beaty (1995) acknowledge that both AR and AL share the same learning cycle, although AL does not necessarily apply a research process, so participants focus on their personal observations and reflections. They also highlight that while AR can be implemented by an individual, AL requires the involvement of a group (Kember 2000).

However, according to the literature, the two typologies are not as different as Kember (2000) or McGill and Beaty (1995) claim. Nowadays, there is not a single generally approved understanding of AR, nor is there a generally approved understanding of how to implement 'research' in AR or participatory approaches as a whole. As a result, scholars have already unified both terminologies into a sort of common ground, ALAR/PALAR, which is the next category.

Action Learning and Action Research (Alar-Palar)

ALAR (Action Learning and Action Research) was originally proposed by Zuber-Skerritt (2001) as a practice which combined AL and AR. Nevertheless, in previous publications, Zuber-Skerritt (2011) has reconceptualised the term as PALAR, adding P (for 'participatory') to the original ALAR:

> ALAR has been extended to PALAR by adding and integrating the concept of participatory action research, mainly for achieving social justice for all, positive change and sustainable development in disadvantaged communities. (Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher & Kearney 2015, 114)

Zuber-Skerritt and her colleagues have produced an extensive literature theorising and implementing PALAR (Zuber-Skerritt & Roche 2004; Zuber-Skerritt 2011; Kearney & Zuber-Skerritt 2012; Wood & Zuber-Skerritt 2013; Kearney, Wood & Zuber-Skerritt 2013; Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher & Kearney 2015). They consider PALAR as more than a methodology, stating that it is more a way of living, working and being. It is a way of thinking influenced by values, philosophical assumptions, paradigms of learning, teaching and research (Zuber-Skerritt 2011). It advocates the 'philosophical and methodological assumptions about learning and knowledge creation' (Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher & Kearny 2015, 107). PALAR is understood as a 'new vision of AR for professional learning in higher education and beyond' (Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher & Kearney 2015, 10). They consider that it is applicable not only in an educational context, but also for individuals excluded from formal educational systems. They acknowledge that as a global community we need alternative epistemologies:

> We need to clarify what constitutes, in the widest sense, knowledge (including what is commonly recognised as scientific, conceptual, experiential, intuitive, local, Indigenous and cultural knowledge) and learning (including individual, collaborative, professional, organisational, critical and reflective learning). We need to understand how to facilitate the processes of learning and knowledge creation at all levels. (Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher & Kearney 2015, 2)

Therefore, PALAR, and its predecessor ALAR, pay full attention to professional involvement in education, using a participatory practice as a means to reconstitute professionals' private and professional lives without excluding the external actors who do not take part in formal educational systems. This perspective opens up a more flexible and holistic approach to educational practices, which have traditionally been influenced by the industrial family and its focus on professional improvement in educational institutions. PALAR gives emphasis to the social and temporal context in which educational institutions are situated, as well as advancing some of the critiques proposed by the PAR or IR families.

Critical Participatory Action Research

The last but not the least, category, is Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR). It shares common characteristics with PALAR practices, due to its similar approach to participation and critical commitment to social issues, social change, and social justice. Nevertheless, CPAR was born out of a different theoretical framework, with different authors further developing it over the last thirty years (Kemmis 2008).

Carr and Kemmis (1986) conceptualised the term of Emancipatory Action Research (EmAR) during the 1980s. However, this conceptualisation was further theorised by these same academics together with other staff members at Deakin University in Australia, who collectively coined the term of Critical Participatory Action Research in the 1980s and 1990s. This typology was designed as an academic resource for students and published under the titles of *The Action Research Planner* and *The Action Research Reader* in 1988. CPAR emerged from the Deakin academics' dissatisfaction with CAR, which, according to them, did not present a critical perspective regarding the relationship

between education and social change (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013). They used CPAR as a means of advancing social justice and participants' emancipation from a critical theoretical perspective. They presented a distinction between Technical, Practical and Critical Action Research, selecting the critical line to determine their methodology (Carr & Kemmis 1986; 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart 2000; Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher & Kearney 2015).

Additionally, the theoretical background of CPAR differs from other educational typologies. The group of scholars framed their methodology according to Habermas's thinking, which made the theorisation and practices slightly different. CPAR has a strong commitment to participation, a critical approach to social phenomena, and seeks to highlight disempowerment and injustices brought about by industrial societies (Kemmis & McTaggart 2000). It focuses on the revitalisation of the public sphere and the decolonisation of the life-world. It looks for alternatives to recreate *vivencias*,[10] and deconstructs those social systems that usually regard humans as institutionalised (Kemmis 2008). The approach provides a more comprehensive human perspective, exploring and acknowledging human life. CPAR regards participatory practice not only as an inclusive instrument, applicable to educational institutions and professionals, but also as a nexus with other AR collectives, building alliances with social movements (Kemmis 2008).

In brief, the feature that distinguishes it from other educational approaches is its strong positionality regarding who gets involved in the research project and how, which is also supported by some PAR practitioners (Fals-Bordan & Rahman 1991). They sustain the idea that participants do not need the explicit intervention of academic practitioners, and that participants are able to conduct research for themselves due to their 'insider' status and that, as insiders, they enjoy certain advantages when researching their own context (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013). Moreover, this practice, like PALAR, also challenges the traditional practices of EAR, highlighting some of the decolonial issues discussed in the development and Indigenous categories. However, although it is important to understand traditions and their position in relation to decoloniality, it is perhaps even

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10   *Vivencias* is the Spanish term for 'lived experiences'.

more important to understand their operationalisation and resulting limitations.

3.4 General Challenges within the Operationalisation of Participatory Approaches

Despite differences among categories, there are several challenges within the overarching category of participatory approaches that require attention due to the strong influence of Western science and the alignment of participatory practices with this discipline. The first complexities arise from the debate regarding the individual or collective practice of participatory approaches. The individual use of participatory practices refers to when a researcher enquires into her or his own practice as an Action Research process. In this individual area of AR, living theory exerts a huge influence on today's practices as part of educational strategies (Whitehead & McNiff 2006). This practice constitutes an individual reflection of a professional practitioner about her or his educational influence. On this matter, Adelman (1993) has heavily criticised the use of AR as an individual practice, citing Somekh and Schon as the major proponents of the idea. Adelman (1993) considers that individual uses of AR signal a departure from Lewing's original understanding of AR as a collective democratic process or posterior conceptualisation challenging an individual aspect of academic research (Chilisa 2012). Nevertheless, current academic literature continues to use Action Research as a process that can be developed individually, even if this might reproduce and uncritically accept the feature of knowledge as a private/individual entity, as assigned by Western science (Reason & Bradbury 2008; Chilisa, 2012).

On the other hand, the collective use of participatory practices seems to be a major source of disagreement among scholars. This disagreement arises from the diverse interpretation of 'participation' and the many levels of enrolment possible among practices and fields of application (Webb 1996; Hayward, Simpsons & Wood 2004; Cornwall 2003; Vaughn et al. 2016). Santos (2013, 499) rightly highlights that 'because different ideologies inform (P)AR discourse and practices, these parentheses also indicate that participation is regarded as a problematic term that presupposes different ideas of participation'. Equally, on this matter,

Thiollent and Colette (2017) question the fact that some scholars working in this field attribute little value to active participation. They critique scholars' superficial understanding of participant involvement and poor critical perspectives on what participatory practices aim for and fight against. This is connected to the abuse or misuse of participatory practices (White 1996; Higgins 2016) or the ambiguity resulting from the use of different terminologies (Balakrishnan & Claiborne 2016). All of these issues are summarised well in the following quote:

> The term participation has various meanings, forms, types, degrees, and intensity. It is sometimes confused with other terms such as 'collaboration' or 'cooperation'. Moreover, the term is also used rhetorically and in political or ideological discourse. We should note that the term participation or the adjectives 'participant' or 'participatory' are often associated with research or investigation as if it were easy to characterise – yet, in actuality, the research may or may not be participatory. (Thiollent & Colette 2017, 169)

The fact that scholars use this rhetoric does not automatically mean that their practices are participatory in nature, as Thiollent and Colette (2017) emphasise. Some scholars relate with the success of certain practices to their level of participation, and there are a significant number of practitioners who support the full participation of the co-researcher as an essential aspect of participatory approaches (Rowel et al. 2017; Wick & Reason 2009 among others). However, it is not clear to what extent these claims are purely theoretical or have been applied in practice. As Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) state:

> Participatory research is theoretically situated at the collegiate level[11] [Community full ownership] of participation. Scrutiny of practice reveals that this level is rarely if ever, achieved. Much of what passes as participatory research goes no further than contracting people[12] into projects which are entirely scientist-led, designed and managed [...] In many cases, people participate in a process which lies outside their ultimate control. Researchers continue to set the agendas and take responsibility for analysis and representation of outcomes. (1995, 1669)

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11   Collegiate level involves full participation. The local people have control over the process in a process of mutual learning (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995)

12   The contractual level of participation refers to when: 'people are contracted into the projects of researchers to take part in their enquiries or experiments' (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p.1669).

Therefore, although there is an extended use of participation in research practices, the use of this and other terminologies might not actually refer to full participation, but conversely, may denote partial participation, as the extended use of participatory methods in academia.

Unfortunately, these challenges to full participation arise in a research field which accepts the diversity and heterogeneity of practices. What is clear is that the increase of participatory research in academic literature has ended up standardising and homogenising practices along Eurocentric lines (Vaughn et al. 2016; Thiollent & Colette 2017). 'Participatory' often means an engaging method following steps one, two and three for the researchers to collect data. These are what I here refer to as 'Western participatory trends'. Clearly, what many participatory approaches bring to the debate is the nature of science and the philosophical tensions between schools of thought, which is significant for the reconsideration of colonial issues in the present. Moreover, in this matter, Higgins (2016) acknowledges that participatory approaches have 'degenerated into a cure that may be worse than the disease' (2016, 1), exposing that the very idea that participatory approaches exist is mystifying, and distracts from the deep challenges that they present.

Regardless, all of these typologies perform distinctive functions and practices, and their accomplishments under different theoretical frames still make them valid. This heterogeneity of theoretical assumptions positions the different branches of participatory approaches as incommensurable. However, this issue can be overcome when we evaluate these practices in terms of their contribution to solving colonial issues and to promoting democratic practices in a particular way, as this book does.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an exhaustive analysis of participatory approaches. Firstly, it has classified four research areas that are not static, but fluid. This structure has contributed to a clearer understanding of the foundational pillars of various typologies. By revealing some of the more relevant categories, and discussing their commonalities and divergences, we have established a better perspective on participatory issues and debates.

Let us reflect briefly on the categories analysed. Firstly, the industrial category seems to perpetuate many of the critiques of the hegemonic system. It defines the AR process as a rational process of thinking. AR focuses on efficiency and social change in a desirable way for the researcher, who is able to identify any issues. It promotes a vision of a community or group of individuals that need help from an expert to change, which is problematic from a decolonial perspective. This pragmatic view limits the potential of such practices to challenge some of the colonial issues highlighted in previous chapters. With this observation, I am not denying the use of AR in this way, but I am highlighting its internal limitations with regard to certain colonial challenges. For instance, AR does not consider the multiplicity of knowledge systems or the involvement of participants in all stages of the research process, as participation is mostly limited to a contractual manner. Furthermore, management theories, which are rooted in post-Enlightenment European thinking, limit understandings of industries, organisations and human relations outside of Western societies.

Secondly, although there is a critical strand within the educational category, the majority of practices seem to approach the issue individually, from an industrial perspective, as, for instance, evident in the extended use of projects in which teachers reflect on how to improve their pedagogies. Again, this practice is not bad per se, and should continue to be implemented to achieve its own particular aims, i.e. the research of pedagogical practices. However, just as this study is highlighting colonial issues, these types of practice (like conventional research processes) instrumentalise the participants to achieve a desirable outcome or to better understand a phenomenon in order to change it. Moreover, the educational category, in general, seems to pay little attention to the connection of educational institutions with society more broadly, or to their role in the resolution and advancement of social justice as a political and ideological tool from the dominant system (Freire 1972). This excludes two particular typologies, CPAR and PALAR, which I will explore below as part of the development category, given that they are situated in the margins between both education and development.

The Indigenous category makes a relevant and adequate critique of the Western system and its impact on communities. Nonetheless, this

perspective can be seen at times to focus too greatly on Indigenous Peoples, neglecting other knowledge systems in the process. This is not the case for all scholars and practices of this group. However, it is most definitely a widespread approach among scholars in this group.

Finally, the development category presents a powerful critique of the hegemonic system of domination and a strong defence of epistemic justice. However, although the development category claims the need for full participation, this does not mean that their actual practices involve communities or individuals as agents of the process, as previously highlighted (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995). Homogenising tendencies definitely constrain the potential of PAR. Further, the development category is mostly based on Western theories that might misdirect their potential towards decoloniality. For instance, scholars use complete theories, instead of approaches able to accommodate cultural specificities for cultural translation. This might be the case for CPAR, or other theories related to ALAR/PALAR (living theory, experiential learning theory or hope theory), typologies that, although not necessarily in the development family, are situated in the margin between educational and development practices.

All these limitations provide a need for the introduction of an alternative framework that, although in this investigation applied to the educational context, does not overlook society at large, and can be used both within and outside of educational institutions. Moreover, this alternative framework needs to be conceptualised in line with decolonial critiques so as to provide a flexible ontological approach that is able to accommodate different epistemic systems. This is the Capabilities Approach.

Therefore, in order to overcome these challenges within participatory approaches, it is necessary to explore how this debate is in conversation with the Capabilities Approach. We must ask how a capabilitarian participatory practice can be informed by this decolonial perspective to advance current limitations in the field, and to orient our practice towards a genuine democratisation of knowledge. Thus, the following chapter aims to provide a justification of how the Capabilities Approach is aligned with decoloniality and Southern perspectives, as part of a pluriversal and decolonial vision to theoretically orient our participatory practices. It will explore how the Capabilities Approach, being

ontologically incomplete and epistemically diverse, can provide a more adequate theoretical foundation for the decolonial aim of participatory practices as a way to overcome hegemonic, homogenising and Western participatory trends.

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