The place of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the development of Indigenous tourism.

Case study : GDR PARCS and Aborinet

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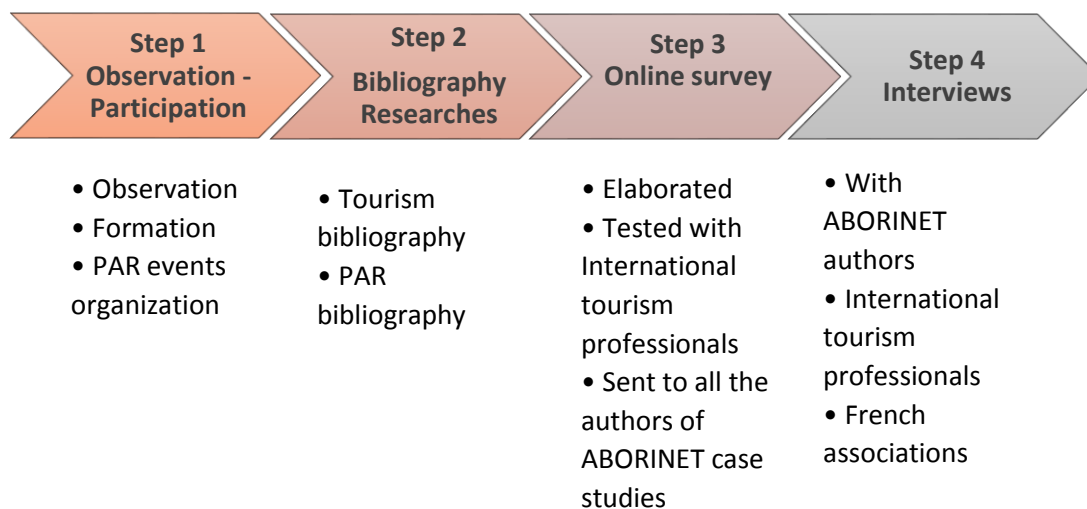
Picture : Annie Lamalice

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GDR PARCS

Context of this research

During my internship at the French National Research Center (CEFE) I have been involved in two tasks simultaneously. I was taking part in the training program of the [Research Group on Citizen Sciences](#) and updating at the same time the Indigenous tourism [Guide Book online](#). I merged the 2 fields in my Master thesis. My main research question was related to the place and role of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the development of Indigenous tourism.

Development of this research

During my 3 months' internship, I worked on the organization and the valorization of three PAR (Participatory Action Research) training sessions. I also initiated the update of [ABORINET](#) website.

These missions helped me to set up my research that I planned as explained below:

Step 1 Observation - Participation	Step 2 Bibliography Researches	Step 3 Online survey	Step 4 Interviews
• Observation • Formation • PAR events organization	• Tourism bibliography • PAR bibliography	• Elaborated • Tested with International tourism professionals • Sent to all the authors of ABORINET case studies	• With ABORINET authors • International tourism professionals • French associations

I drafted and tested a questionnaire and posted it online using a Limesurvey software. I received 7 responses and interviewed 10 people.

Who were interviewed?

ABORINET authors:

- Khanat Chiryazdan (Blue Wolf Travel en Mongolia) ;
- Guido Van Es (RESPONSible Peru) ;
- Nikki Rose (Crete's Culinary Sanctuary) ;
- Randall Borman (Communauté Cofan de Zabalo).

Professionals of International tourism and associations:

- Sue Snyman (Wilderness Safaris en Afrique du Sud, IUCN association) ;
- Anna Spenceley, (TAPAS coordinator, IUCN) ;
- Megan Eper Wood, (International ecotourism consultant and researcher) ;
- Philippe Marais (Saïga ecotourism association) ;
- Maxime Kieffer (Echoway association, University Professor, Mexico)
- Fabien Buot (ATR association)
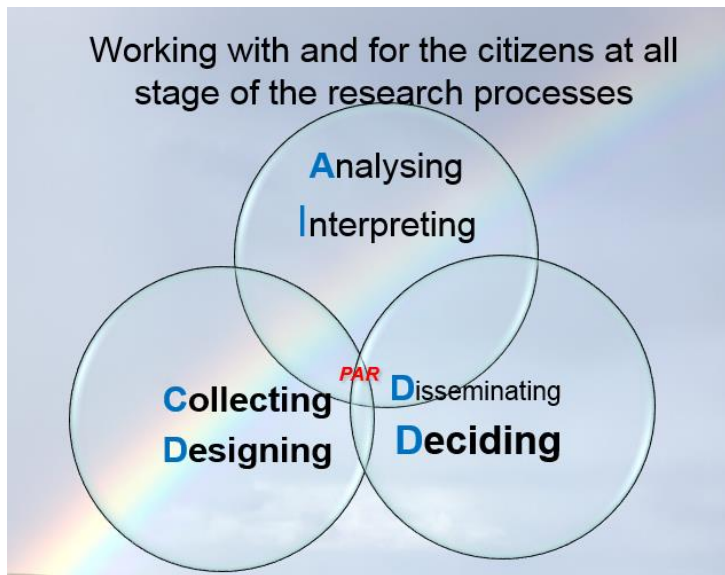
What do we mean by Participatory Action Research (PAR)?

PAR training sessions facilitated by Jacques Chevalier and supported by the GDR PARCS, March 2016
Photos Pascaline Bourgain, Adèle Boudier

The GDR PARCS (Research Group co-directed by Sylvie Blangy), defines the **Participatory Action Research** as a research where:
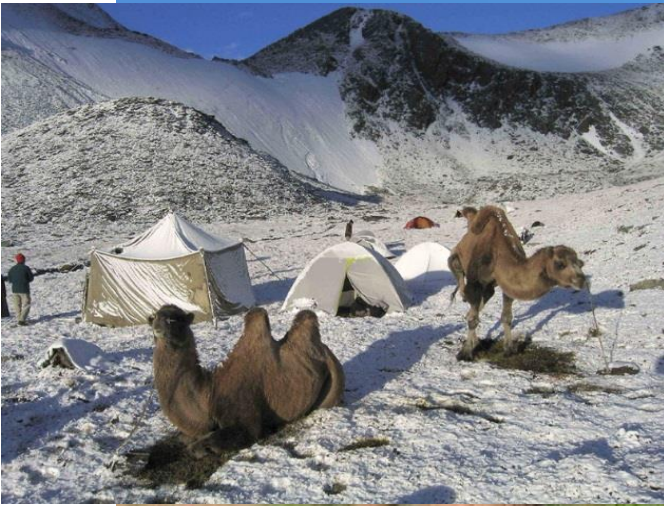
- the actors are involved at all steps of the research process (Conception, Collection, Gathering, Analysis, Interpretation, Dissemination, Decision) ;

- the actors involved are co-decision makers ;
- the production of knowledge is useful and benefits to all parties (academics/scientists and local actors) ;

However, it seems to me that, the majority of the research programs in the world are conducted in a conventional way (according to a problem and a method pre-established by the researcher without discussion with citizens and local actors).

Bayan Olgii Cheriyazdaa, Mongolia, Canat Cheriyazdaa

Alidou's House, Burkina Faso, aborinet.cefe.cnrs.fr

Indigenous tourism is defined as "an activity in which one indigenous communities are directly implied, controlled by them (partially or totally) and where their culture is the main attraction"[1]. The link with PAR can be made by this implication of local actors and their values.

While updating the Guide book online I soon realized that the majority of the contacts were obsolete/out of date (the guide book case studies were uploaded on the website 10 years ago). Some of the initiatives have closed down since 2007. Many reasons have led to the tourism businesses to close down (lack of profitability, insecurity in the region, organizational reasons, geopolitical instabilities etc.).

Only 7 of the 185 initiatives included in the guide book answered the survey online. This very few responses and the different interviews I conducted later made me realized **how fragile the Indigenous sector is**. Thanks to the different contributions gathered, we can identify some of the **failures** known in this sector:

- Inconsistency in front of the values declared ;

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[1] Blangy (Sylvie), « Co-construire le tourisme autochtone par la recherche-action participative et les Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication », 2010, p1-20

- A lot of promises not kept (by the NGOs for example) regarding the benefits for local communities (wrong expectations) ;
- A lack of knowledge regarding marketing ;
- The instability of the sector and the lack of explanations of this risk to communities (political, environmental, economic risks) ;
- Lacking support and training to increase the commercial skills of local communities who would like to get involved in tourism ;
- Importance of official collaborations. A need for outbound and inbound tour operator to support the community businesses.

The online survey

Kabani Association, India, Sumesh Mangalassery

7 of the 185 initiatives contacted answered to the survey online. The results give an interesting global overview of the situation but are not statistically significant to be generalized.

The results are summarized below:

Questions	Results
Benefits of the Guide book	
Do you think that both hard copy and online guide book have generated some **benefits** to you and/or to the community?	**- 6 yes (85,71%)** - 1 No (14,29%)
What were the major **benefit**?	**- Learning from others, sharing knowledge and management approaches** **(3 people; 42,86%)** - Better promotion of their initiative and an increase of the number of visitors (2 people; 28,57%) - Get to know other tourism initiatives (1 person; 14,29%) The person who didn't identify any benefit thinks that the case studies "should be translated in other languages"
Would you say that having **the immediate answer to the web based survey** on a google map is an important source of information for you?	**- 6 Yes (85,71%)** - 1 No (14,29%)
Have you used the **results of the web-based survey** to develop your business?	**- 3 Yes (42,86%)** - 4 No (57,14%)

Link with research	
Are you hosting or have you **collaborated with a research program** such as a partnership with scientists or academics?	- **4 Yes (57,14%)** - 3 people (42,86%)
For what kind of **projects**?	- **Tourism (4 times)** - **Conservation (3)** - **Education (2)** - Ecological restoration (1) - Restocking, wildlife (1) - Poverty alleviation (1) - Health (1) - Agriculture(1)
According to you, what is the major approach currently used in the research projects you are involved in?	- **Participatory "High":** research questions co-constructed, data co-collected, co-analysed and results co-disseminated, co-authorship (2 people; 28,57%) - Conventional: data collected by the researchers (1 person; 14,29%) - Participatory "Light": limited participation of the community on the research project, data collected by the community and treated by the researcher (1 person; 14,29%)
According to you, what are the major benefits of working in close partnerships with academics using participatory approach?	- **finding your own solutions to community concerns (2 people; 28,57%)** - Empowerment (1 person; 14,29%) - Engagement (1 person; 14,29%)

According to you, what are the main downsides of working with researchers	**- Slow process (1 person; 14,29%)** **- Slow feedbacks (1 person; 14,29%)** **- None (1 person; 14,29%)**
Have you used some of the techniques described in the CREE toolkit sent to you to develop a tourism project?	**- 5 No (71,43%)** - 2 Yes (28,57%)
Are you using other tools belonging to a Participatory-Action Research program or a similar approach in your community?	**- 4 yes (57,14%)** - 3 No (42,86%)
ABORINET Website	
Do you think that this **website could be more efficient?**	- 5 yes (71,43%) - 2 No (28,57%)
What are the principal aspect to be improved	**- Interaction with travelers** **(3 people; 42,86%)** - Promotion (1 person; 14,29%) - Sharing on specific issues (1 person; 14,29%)
Which tool could be used for this improvement?	**Better web strategy (5 people; 71,43%)**
Would you be interested in being involved further in the website improvement?	**- 5 Yes (71,43%)** **- 2 No (**28,57%)

To sum up, the majority of the authors asked, think that the guide book has generated some benefits to them. They have learned from others and shared knowledge and management approaches. The immediate answers of the web-based survey on a Google map seems to be important but only 3 people used the web based results to develop their business further.

Half of the respondents has collaborated with research programs, especially in tourism, conservation and education issues. Participatory *High, Light* and *conventional approaches* are used but the "participatory High" seems to be the most important way to find their own solutions to community concerns, even if research is considered to be a slow process : feedbacks are taking time to be reporting to the community. The tools of the CREE toolkit sent are generally not used but other tools are known.

The majority of the respondents thinks that the ABORINET website could be more efficient and the interaction with travelers could be improved with a better web strategy. The majority is interested in being involved further in this website improvement.

Participatory mapping to develop a tourism tour in Eeyou Istchee, picture: Sylvie Blangy

Participatory Action Research and Indigenous tourism are sharing **common values** (sharing, co-construction and learning). They also face **similar issues such** as:

- the plurality of actors and the complex synergy associated ;

- a need for training ;

- a certain gap between some practices and values declared.

Both need a **valorization of the different knowledge**. The implementation of partnerships would be beneficial to both of these sectors and practices should be improved. PAR and indigenous tourism are based on local and traditional knowledge that need to be enhanced and promoted. **Using PAR** to develop aboriginal tourism projects **could improve and secure sustainable projects in the long term**.

Digital, interactive and collaborative tools are essential for sharing and co-constructing a research project. For example, a web-collaborative research could be set up to determine the success criteria of the Indigenous Tourism development. The web platform

could be used to share the good practices between stakeholders themselves while providing a direct link with travelers.

Project to be developed

www.echoway.org

Tamegroute, Morocco, picture : Adèle Boudier

While conversing with all of you through skype, I came to the idea that we could merge the two platforms, the ABORINET geocollaboratory and the association Echoway using Participatory Action Research tools and techniques (online and/or face-to-face). Please also look at Jacques Chevalier's website regarding "*Participatory Action Research, Planning and Evaluation*".
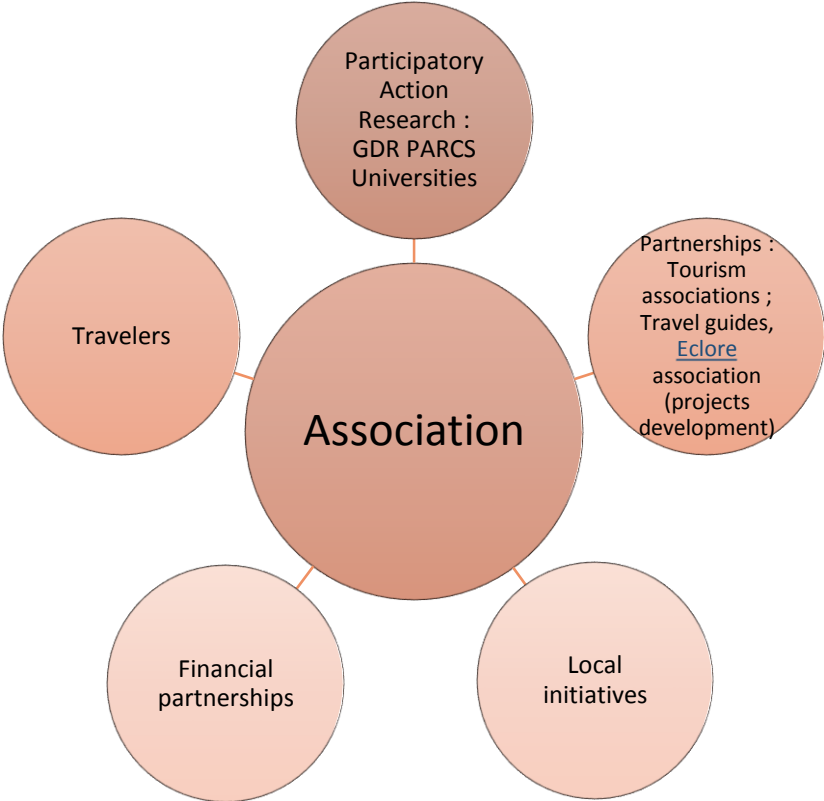
This brand new project (merging the previous ones mentioned above) would aim at providing a better link between:

- Local initiatives and travelers ;
- Local initiatives themselves to share about their experiences and lessons learned ;
- Local initiatives and researchers.

We also would like to find a way to support some local initiatives if they need and ask for it (for marketing, commercial skills for example).

Please find attached to this email more information about this project according to my idea before this internship.

We think now that this project should follow the plan below:

Participatory Action Research : GDR PARCS Universities

Partnerships : Tourism associations ; Travel guides, Eclore association (projects development)

Travelers

Association

Financial partnerships

Local initiatives

Global tourism project supported by Echoway, Adele Boudier, 2016

This project **still need to be developed further and supported financially**

If you have any idea of how to proceed, (source of funding, other web sites with the same aim…) please inform me and I will keep you informed on my end.

Thank you again for your collaboration.

I hope to collaborate with you in the future.

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French Master Student at Montpellier 3 University. I studied Communication, advertising and tourism in France and Canada. I worked in both countries in different places (in communication, community centers, tourism resorts, restaurants etc.) before going back to university.

I have always evolved in a multicultural context driven by exchange and curiosity which gradually increased my interest in sustainable and indigenous tourism around the world. Today, I'm really interested in developing sustainable tourism projects in cooperation with local communities while respecting their culture and the environment.