

## **On the value of participatory action research for mission studies**

Paper proposal for the 2016 IAMS conference on 'Conversion and Transformation'

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(This paper replaces my earlier paper proposal on "'Epistemological crisis' as a tool for understanding Muslim-Christian conversions")

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As argued in the introductory paper to the conference, 'mission always aims at transformation of some sorts'. This contribution explores which methodological approaches are most appropriate to study this reality. Many research methods are based on sociological or anthropological methods that intend to describe a situation as it is rather than aim at transformation. This also influences the buy-in of a number of non-Western communities into research projects from elsewhere that are experienced as Western and irrelevant to the interests of the local Christian community. These local communities tend to interests that are at once both theoretical and practical, but never merely theoretical.

This article argues that participatory action research provides an approach to research that respects this interest in transformation. It will therefore also raise the buy-in of local Christian communities and allow for truly intercultural research projects. The paper will engage with concrete examples.

This paper proposal is closely related to a parallel proposal of Dr. Klaas Bom, which concerns a joint research project 'Science and Religion in French-Speaking Africa' in which we are both involved (as director and leading investigator) which incorporates elements of appreciative and action research.