

Editorial

As has been mentioned in previous issues, in June 2015 a group of universities in Bogotá, Colombia, hosted the Third International Symposium of Action and Participatory Research, following the conferences in Porto Alegre (2011) and Copenhagen (2013). The International Journal of Action Research promoted the development of this space of discussion, understanding that the journal's role goes beyond the regular publication of good papers. The symposia are a place where dialogue about practices and theoretical tendencies can be explored in a face-to-face encounter between researchers of different fields, of different regions and countries, and with diverse curricula, sharing and learning from one another.

In this issue we present a selection of four papers presented in the Bogotá symposium. Although they could not be intended to cover the vast array of experiences presented in panels and group work, they signal some important facets of the discussions. The first article, by Emil Sobottka, discusses the issue of ethics in research and the human sciences. While reflecting more directly on his Brazilian experience of elaborating national guidelines for research in human sciences, he develops his argument inserted in a broader international context. Based on medical and health sciences, the criteria of most ethics committees, fail in understanding the distinct character of research in social sciences. How does action and participatory research deal with the ethical dimension? Is the premise that all are supposedly equal participants in the production of relevant knowledge for promoting changes and new understandings about a situation a sufficient guarantee that it complies with ethical standards? The article provides thought provoking ideas for dealing with these questions.

The second article, by Marianne Kristiansen and Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen, focuses on employee participation in organisational action research (OAR) which is no less than a political and ethical issue. Based on three examples, the article develops three arguments: the first one, that participatory approach can unintentionally create new hierarchies or reinforce existing ones; the second, that partners and action researchers produce new project contexts by their ways of speaking, acting, and organising; and third, that handling these participatory hierarchies ought to become a goal in OAR projects to be included along with producing practical and theoretical results. The article argues that this might contribute to handling participatory hierarchies and power relations in more transparent ways in OAR projects if partners and action researchers decide to do so.

In this journal issue, there are presentations of two experiences from quite different Latin American contexts, both of them concerned with overcoming poverty and social exclusion. One of them comes from a Brazilian rural area, where peasants were engaged in changing and improving their living conditions. The article describes the action research strategies that enabled access to the formal market of farmers who produce in the slash-and-burn system, the added value to products from this system, and, above all, their collective organisation. The text ends with a statement that, according to the authors, says much about the eight year process: "Today we are treated like human beings". Action research, in this case, had to do with economic improvement, with social organisation as a co-operative enterprise, and with the conquest of individual self-esteem.

Marina Ampudia invites us to look at some Argentinian experiences of Action Research. In the Introduction the author draws attention to the fact that participatory-framed social research practices in Argentine academic community did not keep up with the development achieved in other Latin American countries throughout the seventies and the eighties, due to the political repression during the military dictatorship, and to a strongly rigid, positivist

tradition that was present in many social sciences careers, especially in the area of Sociology. The two experiences presented and discussed come from educational contexts in poor neighborhoods in the Buenos Aires area. Although Participatory Action Research still occupies a subordinate position in academic research, Ampudia argues that a new '*ethos*' that questions binary dichotomies which legitimise knowledge is emerging.

We are sure that the reader will benefit from these experiences and reflections, and thank the authors for sharing them with us.

Danilo R. Streck

Editor-in-chief