

Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism: some considerations on the 7th Action Research Network of Americas Conference

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Abstract: The seventh conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) took place in Montreal, Canada, from the 26th to 28th of June, in 2019. Having as title “Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism”, the event gathered people from different areas of practice coming mostly from the North American countries: Canada, United States and Mexico. The discussion presented here is based on notes made by the authors in the course of the conference, in which 40 words/keywords were identified, serving as a base to debate the validity of the principles of participatory research and action research in its repoliticisation and activism. Thus, we presented a systematisation of some key themes of the conference, among them, the commitment with the rupture: in relation to the traditional practices of research, the role and the social responsibility of the universities and the transforming character of participation, with emphasis in the effort for its repoliticisation and activism.

Keywords: ARNA (*Action Research Network of the Americas*); Participation; Action Research; Activism; Repoliticisation.

Repolitización de la investigación participativa/acción: de la investigación en acción al activismo: algunas consideraciones sobre la 7a Conferencia de la Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas

Resúmen: La séptima conferencia de la Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas (ARNA) se llevó a cabo en Montreal, Canadá, del 26 al 28 de junio de 2019. Con el título “Repolitizando la Investigación Acción Participativa: de la Investigación Acción al Activismo”, el evento reunió a personas de diferentes áreas provenientes en su mayoría de los países de América del Norte: Canadá, Estados Unidos y México. La discusión aquí presentada se basa en registros realizados por los autores en el transcurso de la conferencia, en los que se identificaron 40 palabras/conceptos, que sirven de base para debatir la vigencia de los principios de la investigación participativa y la investigación acción en su repolitización y activismo. Así, presentamos una sistematización de algunos temas clave de la jornada, entre ellos, el compromiso con la ruptura – en relación a las prácticas tradicionales de investigación, el rol y la responsabilidad social de las universidades y el carácter transformador de la participación, con énfasis en el esfuerzo por su repolitización y activismo.

Palabras-clave: ARNA (*Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas*); Participación; Investigación para la Acción; Activismo; Repolitización.

Introduction

The *Action Research Network of the Americas* (ARNA) presents itself as a network of university researchers who work with research and teaching in different contexts and levels. Among several initiatives, it aims at promoting the different research methodologies: in local, regional, national and international contexts, by supporting a democratic and sustainable society and disseminating critical knowledge in the Americas (ARNA, 2020). In this regard, recognising the multiple voices and experiences contained in complex realities in this continent, ARNA has as one of its goals the investigation of perspective diversity from its members in relation to the socio geopolitical challenges in the present time, through action/research and participatory research. (ARNA, 2020).

Since 2013, ARNA has held annual conferences aiming at the creation of bridges of solidarity in America and in the world, “while walls of intolerance are publicly displayed” (ARNA, 2020). Its seventh conference took place at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, from the 26th to the 28th of June, 2019. Having as title “Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism”, the event gathered people from different areas of practice coming mostly from the North American countries: Canada, United States and Mexico¹.

As participants of a Research Group² that has Popular Education and Participatory Action Research as theoretical and practical reference points, we seek to follow some discussion forums about these two fundamentals: locally, in our universities and through the relation that we established with popular movements; regionally, in the Studies Forum: works by Paulo Freire; nationally, in the Work Group 06: Popular Education in the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Education (Anped) and in the Freirean Network of Researchers (PUC-SP); and internationally, in the *Latin American Studies Association* (LASA) and in the *Action Research Network of the Americas* (ARNA) – the latter, an object of discussion on this article.

The discussion presented here is based on notes made by the authors in the course of the 7th Conference, and through these notes, around 40 categories/keywords were identified and served as base to the systematisation of some central themes from the referred event and to our analysis. Thus, we aim at presenting the validity of the principles of participatory research and research/action in its movement of repoliticisation and activism.

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- 1 On this occasion, we could observe a minority of participants deriving from South American countries, which in part, can be explained by the high cost required to an on-site participation (registration fee, plane tickets and accommodation); due to insufficient financial resources, on the part of teaching and research institutions for research communications in international scientific events; as well as for the limits imposed by the official languages of the event: French and English.
 - 2 In Brazil, we formed a network of researchers who originated from the Grupo de *Pesquisa Mediações Pedagógicas e Cidadania* (Pedagogical Mediations and Citizenship Research Group), sited at the Vale do Rio dos Sinos University (UNISINOS). From this group emerged: Popular education – Action and Research, linked to the *Universidade de Caxias do Sul* (UCS), led by Sandro de Castro Pitano; and, *Educação Popular, Metodologias Participativas e Estudos Decoloniais* (Popular Education, Participatory Methodologies and Decolonial Studies), linked to the Santa Cruz do Sul University (UNISC), led by Cheron Zanini Moretti.

Action Research with participation: solidarity and co-creation

To take action in research under the perspective of participation and action consists: from the early stage of the project, in taking on innovative point of views before the dominant epistemological paradigm. The participant methodologies, especially in the Latin American strand, express a deep dissent in relation to the neutrality defended by positivism.

The research developed according to this paradigm, even in its variants, constitutes itself as an action that only brings closer external individuals to others' problems, those who experience them on a daily basis. However, being part of the problem, why they cannot accept themselves as responsible agents for building confrontations and searching for solutions?

It is considered dominant epistemology, the conception of knowledge that we call conventional, in which researchers are subjects and participants are objects. In a conventional research, the results are in service of a more bureaucratic enterprise, at least in relation to social problems. Transformation is not the emphasis of projects. Principles like scientific neutrality, isolation and variable control; and, researchers' lack of interference in the object are typical of a tradition marked by a Cartesian methodical doubt.

On the opposite end, we highlight the fundamental characteristic of action research: it will always display an empirical base, associated with an action or solution of a problem perceived by the participants, which must involve confrontation and the involvement of the researchers in a solidary way. As methodology, it has been used in several areas with reformist purposes for administrative and functional principles, such as private companies and public institutions. The search for higher levels of efficiency in management is very common in action research, especially for European countries.

The criteria of truth in participatory methodologies are settled in the collective and solidary process that allows the building of knowledge. A renewed knowledge emerges, thanks to the lack of exclusion of different perspectives, in which the conflict and the difference are valued, tensioning and qualifying the group reflection and the construction of an authentic epistemic thinking.

According to Brandão (2014), qualitative research forces the researcher to trust himself/herself: that is an important leap when we consider quantitative research, whose referent is external to the researcher just as well as the individuals involved in the processes: in other words, it means the same as: "I doubt myself and the other. And, for this reason, I arm myself not only with 'objective' instruments, but with strict procedures and relations ruled by impersonality" (Brandão, 2014, p.44), as a way of protection from the subjectivity of those who research. Now, the participatory research requires a leap that goes beyond the qualitative, that is, it has as its "objective substance the extension of a fundamental act of trust". Thus,

"(...) I (researcher), who trusted myself before the other, trust the other before me (...) as a co-participant of the solidary creation of knowledges. (...) before a social research that suits me or the academic world of my origin and destiny, it suits the individual-other and the world of life where he/she is willing to accept me as partner of a participatory research." (Brandão, 2014, p.45).

In this conception resides the pedagogical dimension of participation in relation to research. This dimension also responds to a social demand, expressed by the historic fragility of par-

ticipation in different political and social contexts in our field. Participating shapes itself as a learning that depends on experiences capable of consolidating a participative culture. The interactive character of participation before the concreteness experienced, involving different individuals, generates a fruitful pedagogical process. In such process, teaching and learning are undeniably present, settled in the trust provided by the collective and dialogical dimension that reshapes the individuals' view in relation to their daily lives.

One of the main characteristics of action research is, according to Thiollent (1988, p. 15), that it necessarily implies the participation of the people involved with the outlined objectives. This participation arises from the purpose of identifying the problem in a clear way, evaluating the confrontation of possibilities and acting in a planned way. Therefore, it is closer to tangible social actions when the subjects (researchers and other participants) play a decisive role in the reality experienced, directly seizing and interfering in the problem. The solution of problems, followed by a deepening of the knowledge about them, is the ideal of action research aimed at social realities, avoiding the simple activism. Finally, it comprehends a practical objective: the solution of problems and a pedagogical objective, constituted by the enhancement of the knowledge on the matter in question.

In 2012, a Circle of Learning was carried out by the *Work Group on Action Research* (AR) from the American Educational Research Association (AERA), in order for them to have a better comprehension of this type of research, preserving the diversity and coverage presented by 30 researchers and members. Among the considerations presented by this community, we highlight the knowledge that,

"(...) The nature of action research places the researcher in the middle of the problem and not on the outside as an observer and/or experimenter. Action researchers do not claim 'neutrality' but rather account for their position in the action and inquiry. A strength of action research is that the researcher studies what she or he does in concert with others. Therefore, the knowledge created through action research is inevitably dialogical in nature, and is thus always a negotiated and co-created knowledge. This knowledge is not inert, but serves to improve the quality of life by engaging participants in a quest for deeper understandings that lead to improvement." (Rowell; Polush; Riel; Bruewer, 2015, n.p).

And, to this end, sharing the results found is an important part of the knowledge co-creation process. "The action researchers also expect these findings to be examined by other professionals, including professionals whose knowledge and belief system can be very different from those of the action researchers", as studies from Rowell, Polush, Riel and Bruewer (2015, n.p) showed in the scope of the AERA/AR.

We can observe that this comprehension is going to guide the ARNA foundational concept, and that in each international conference to be carried out, the network will be aiming at leaping forward³. Moreover, the role of the universities has also been a recurrent concern

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- 3 Subsequently, we can follow how action research has been discussed by ARNA, particularly, by looking at the central themes of each of the annual conferences. In 2013, the first one and that took place in San Francisco, California (USA), and had as main theme: *The Invention and Reinvention of Knowledge: Action Research across the Americas*. In 2014, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (USA), *Enacting our beliefs: The So-What of Action Research*. In 2015, the conference happened in Toronto, Ontario (Canada), and the main topic was *Joint Action – Learning with and from one another*. In 2016, the conference returned to the USA, to Knoxville, Tennessee, and had as main focus the theme: *Making a Difference: Action Research for a Change*. In 2017, for the first time an ARNA conference was hosted in South America: it took place in Cartagena, Colombia and had as main discussion theme, *Participation and Democratization of Knowledge: New Conver-*

among ARNA members, insisting on the reflective direction upon social responsibility of higher education institutions. Questionings and problematisations on this subject area inquire about the traditional and innovative ways, and even the subversive ones of producing knowledge, followed by their purposes. What draws the distinction in a traditional research: of positivist foundation, from the participant methodologies, mainly those which integrate action as a practical challenge? If we consider the multiple aspects of academic teaching, how can participation impact on the formation of professionals as of its fundamental principles? Will there be differences in the performance of these professionals, in their scope of work, in relation to others trained under the traditional perspective? Which one can be considered more committed to a performance considered socially responsible? These are some of the emerging problematisation, many of which, although they induce an answer, they seek to trigger a reflection, and seize the differential represented by the participation in the process of professional formation. As proposed by popular education, it is worth taking on as an elementary challenge for a liberation project, the active involvement of subjects in confronting their problems with solidarity, and through the co-creation of knowledge.

Politics and Activism: principles on the move

The central theme of this annual Conference focused on the *repoliticisation and activism* of participation and action research, considering them to be fundamental tasks in the current international educational and political context.

From the observation and systematisation of our participation, we highlight nearly forty words and keywords during the event, they are: research, action, emergence, community, change, inclusion, collectivity, social transformation, collaboration, activism, popular education, interdisciplinarity, social responsibility, interculturality, teacher training, resistance, politicisation, ethics, criticism, mobilisation, reflective rationality, the role of university, engagement, participation limits, democracy, critical thinking, gender inequality, coloniality, action research, empowerment, participative pedagogical planning, research impacts in the community, identity, deficiency, power, hope, youth, oppression, teaching and learning.

And, from the same observation, we identified an emphasis in the search for references to think and make a repoliticization of the participation and action research, where the names of Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda were highlighted. These two Latin American intellectuals still are held as the main authors, both for debates during work presentation sessions and in the texts submitted and approved for the event communications.

However, what does the repoliticisation of the action research and participation mean? Repoliticising opposes the intense process of depoliticisation imposed by the systemic logic all over the planet, which has been remarkably escalating in the last years. It is possible to see that citizenship, for example, that the status of a person in the political and social con-

gences for Reconciliation; as well as hosting the 1st *Global Assembly for the Democracy of Knowledge*. In the following year, the conference returned to the USA, in San Diego, California, with the theme: *Knowledge Mobilization for Equitable and Peaceful Social Progress*; and, lastly, in 2019, in Montreal, Quebec (Canada), the conference that we based this manuscript, which focus is the object of our analysis: *Repoliticizing P/AR: From Action Research to Activism*.

text is summed up by the right to consumption; the participation is replaced by representation and, in the educational scope, the popular is replaced by the social, directed to the cultural and less political dimensions of the human existence. Therefore, to repoliticise participation and action research means to put back in the scope of investigative practice the concern with issues such as inequality, apathy and anti-personification in society in the contemporary period. This period was marked by an apolitical movement, wisely and broadly used by right-wing political parties and their representatives.

Activism, in this context, is understood as a concrete position taken, interfering in reality, based on the knowledge produced by research practice, socially and politically committed. The interference involves not only the fight for certain causes or against a given reality, such as gender, race or creed oppressions, the environmental issue or against social inequality. It implies permanent and engaged action towards denunciation, making certain problems and its causes clear. There is great affinity with the Freirean posture of denunciation and announcement: denunciation of the oppression in its various faces, the causes and the conditions of sustenance; announcement of resilience possibilities, through hopeful struggle and problematising education. Activism is linked to many issues that are fundamental and relevant to participatory research and action research, such as the argumentative and critical skills, openness to dialogue, attentive listening and respect to differences.

For decades the works of Paulo Freire (1981): starting from his early experiences in cultural and literacy movements, stand out as references for participatory methodologies in education. Identifying the people with their precise conditions, Freire (1981) promotes as the base of his educational conception the dialogue among the different through formative processes in the liberating perspective. Investigating their own reality, deepening the comprehension about the problems imposed by their reality, individuals will be able to fight for transformation based on their reading of the world.

In the works of the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, participation and action are definitely close to participatory action research. In Latin American, the conception was disseminated mainly by the progressive catholic movement called Liberation Theology, and it was globally broadened through the interaction among researchers from the South and North contexts (Thiollent, 2014).

Participatory action research, considered for the transforming perspective of the reality, was widely present during the debates of the seventh conference. It was considered a rather pluralistic approach, explored from various contexts, such as secondary schools, universities and communities. The perspectives covered the impact of the processes developed in participatory research, for example, to allow the reflection about real problems and the respective overcoming. Participation is understood as an attitudinal principle in relation to the educational professionals' formative issues, and to the fight against school violence. Regarding youths, some presentations about this subject, usually referred to politicisation, sought to emphasise the need for political education as an educational process among young people.

The adherence to approaches with real dimensions of the phenomena should be highlighted, reflecting one of the main characteristics of participatory methodologies: it has as starting and arrival points the specific environment experimented by the participants. The changes or transformations (these are considered to be more decisive than changes) will be

authentic, the more collectively they are thought and executed, involving a radical identification with the materiality of the place.

Accepting the risk of contradiction, one questions if the classical statement from the empiricist Francis Bacon, “knowledge is power” could be embodied by the powerless, by the socially exploited in their fight for liberation. We understand that it can, because when the statement is embodied in its conditions, needs and world perspective, the premise is transformed in power by knowledge. It is knowledge that enables transformation and not reproduction, producing critical and problematising knowledge of contexts and people, transforming them in a permanent process.

Some of the highlighted categories/keywords have a dense articulation among themselves, like, for example, collaboration, collectivity, inclusion and community. There was noticed a concern to comprehend what can be common in particular groups, reinforcing its identification and belonging from the traits that bring them together. People will feel, and they will even be included in the dimension of collectivity if there is a collaboration based in common interests for the community. The very notion of critical thinking, explicitly featured in dialogues also overarches such perspective. After all, thinking about common problems collectively in search of alternatives is a way of knowing the causes in a fuller and deeper manner, besides allowing the setting of alternatives.

Concerns were manifested during the event from researchers of areas like education, due to the limits of classical methodologies for the production of knowledge, settled in positivism, which instigate the search for methodological alternatives. Such concerns are mainly motivated by the dissociation caused by the positivist inclination, between science and its results in face of the social conditions of the participants. Participants who in general are considered objects of study, and are analysed as things through the scientists’ lenses, the knowledge owners who seek to deepen their knowledge. In this perspective, the social problems experienced are investigated and interpreted by the skilled look, and will produce interpretations in which the results will generate solutions. Reproducing the classical logic, the positions in the research process are maintained unchanged: researchers remain subjects, participants and their problems remain objects. In other words, active subjects act on passive objects.

It was perceived through the panels, tables and works presented that knowledge was mainly themed through analyses aimed at the valuation of the process, without detracting from the product. It is emblematic to consider what is known, although, rarely one wonders how something is known, or how this particular knowledge was obtained. The matter of validity of the knowledge in relation to the respective forms of construction would be implicit in this dynamic, which refers to the potential of interaction and convergence among the differences. Knowledge produced in isolation, represented by the scientist’s action, in contrast to the knowledge socially built: which one is more ‘real’? What would be real for the participants involved in processes of this nature? Moreover, what represents a greater capacity of appropriation by the participants, taking part of the production or passively receiving its results, and facing the need to conform to what is said from the outside, from a third party? In this perspective, a criticism in relation to the authenticity of the knowledge is perceived.

Participatory research has as its greatest characteristic participation in the process. As it does not necessarily involve a real action like action research does, it can be better identi-

fied with the academic normative principles, mainly in terms of deadlines, team definition, etc., and with research in education. Although it does not involve the solution of a real problem, like in action research, participatory research places the knowledge it intends to build collectively at service of this same collective, and in connection with a liberation project: communities, popular groups, unions, associations, and so on. According to Brandão (2014, p. 66), “the practice of participatory research has been considered as a critical and humanist instrument of dialogical knowledge production”. If you consider it in the long term, it is possible to notice that participatory research also involves the solution of real problems, bounded to broader contexts in relation to the local level.

Even if the results of participatory research are related to a local demand or need, it cannot be untied from a broader context. It constitutes its utopian dimension, understanding that through participation the social transformation will be possible, beginning with the transformation of the individuals in a local level. A direct relation between participatory research and the work developed by Paulo Freire (1981): since the end of 1950’s in the Northeast of Brazil, can be observed, connecting political education and appreciation of popular culture. Freire developed a literacy project in which people actively participated in the definition of learning principles and contents.

In education, the main focus of the series of reflections developed during the ARNA (2019) conference, action research is constituted as a rather rich process for the development of research professors, able to provide a permanent improvement to one’s professional practice. In general, action research is considered a movement, in order to search for improvement through investigation, in a solidary manner with the group of individuals involved in the research. In this movement, the knowledge production process is simultaneous to the qualification of practice, that is, the learning is about doing and researching, which are inseparable within a process.

Taking on participation as a methodological alternative to the conventional processes to approach reality involves defining what one conceives as knowledge, as well as reality itself. If the intent of research is getting to know reality better, it is necessary to define an aspiration to a specific truth, from which one operates in a given epistemological perspective. In popular education, this perspective will always be identified with a project of social transformation, outlining the political character constituted by it, refuting the principle of neutrality.

When we state our position in favor of transforming a reality, we refer to a specific comprehension that considers it inadequate in the way it is being done. Hence, our purpose will not be reproducing it, neither only changing reality, but rather transforming it (although we consider sequential changes, connected as a means of transformation).

Aiming at defining reality, it is important to take on as starting point that all the things around us, objects and phenomena, both natural and human, do not have an existence in themselves. They exist as long as they are related to individuals according to their countless ways of apprehending. They are countless, since each individual is the outcome of a single story full with experiences and perceptions (what was experienced and what was built in the scope of subjectivity). It is also a decisive factor of such multiplicity the way each one of us is in the world, a material and symbolic expression of the place one inhabits. Historicity and the place in the world constitute the individuals, who perceive and interact with others in a singular way with objects and phenomena. Reality and consciousness form a com-

plex relationship, suggesting the need to conceive the existence of realities, in the plural (Duarte Junior, 1994).

The daily reality involves us in a way that we naturalise the events and the particular dynamics which characterise them. We call this dimension of the real routine. On the face of it, it seems that we know everything we need to continue and to go ahead, without major concerns. This is an aspect that we can consider not to be problematic in daily reality, on which there is a difficulty of critical perception, due to the naturality in which we experience and reflect. The other aspect is the result of the problematisation of reality by the individual's action. That is when our look registers, nurtured with curiosity and strangeness, a certain dimension of reality, comprehending what before was considered natural in another way. Once the problem is dimensioned, there remains the search for its in-depth comprehension, and for the respective confrontation that necessarily includes the construction and reconstruction of knowledge.

The elaboration of transformative alternatives is not the work of isolated individuals, but rather of groups that are identified by their worldviews, projects and ideologies. Isolated confrontations, in addition to causing little impact, can be framed as absurd or marginal, that do not provide the necessary support. However, in the collective dimension, the situation changes considerably, the problematisation and the confrontation shared add quality, reinforcing actions, aside from raising the adherence of other individuals with similar positions. Let us not forget: we are rarely willing to change, let alone facing transformations.

The comprehension and confrontation of perceived problems by different individuals may occur parallelly, structuring the same process. Participatory research is based on these principles, above all in education: collective solidarity, concomitant comprehension and confrontation of problems. They are part of the transformative trends in research methodologies addressed during the congress: action research, participatory research and participatory action research. Not intending to conceptualise or establish paradigms, it is important to check how they are characterised individually, and how they are close enough to be identified as transgressive methodological, as alternatives to the mainstream epistemology, how it was addressed in the congress (ARNA).

Also, it is essential to highlight that the event enabled, as it has happened in all its editions, the exchange of plural experiences after they have been systematised. It was a fruitful procedure with respect to the knowledge produced. When one shares, a gathering of knowledge is promoted with individuals who have endured similar experiences, where their own reflections meet, strengthening learning in a collective dimension. For instance, in face of a similar problem, how did the individuals react and perceive the problem after the systematisation? The sharing brings together doubts, desires and allows the elaboration of more complex solutions than the individual scope does. Still, it is important to emphasise that the reflection on the experiences gathers practice and theory, for thinking critically about the practice promotes its theoretical development.

The experiences are unique, that is why the records: which are sources of information and data, are essential (notebook notes, pictures, videos, meeting minutes and other documents). The same experience lived by multiple individuals will have, thanks to systematisation, a critical, complex and promising approach for collaborative learning, which will be able to promote the individuals' qualification and their future practices.

The reflection on practice in education and participatory research involves the construction of a concomitant autonomy to the construction and reconstruction of knowledge, without a unilateral direction, normally imposed by researchers. The participatory dimension reduces this possibility, yet without cancelling the qualified view that researchers have in relation to the phenomenon. It is about a research conception that reflects the political, epistemological and social posture of the researchers who undertake such conception. Namely, their worldviews are materialised through the investigative practice. According to Streck and Adams (2014, p. 117), in this Direction the research involves a social, political and pedagogical practice,

We argue that it is a social practice as long as it takes part in the construction of meanings and in directions that guide a society; it's a political practice when the production of knowledge implies on decisions with political and ethic nature, which reflect the power games and actively participate in them; finally, it is a pedagogical practice as long as the research relations: among researchers, research participants, object of the investigation and knowledge produced, are inserted in the teaching/learning to be humans, one way or another.

In short, what identifies the three denominations: action research, participatory research and participatory action research is, no doubt, the participative base which pervades them. That is why it is considered that they form a set of participatory methodologies in (popular) education and in research, offering a transgressive horizon focusing on social transformation. The set of reflections that pervaded the dialogues from the ARNA conference in Montreal pointed in this direction, anchored in repoliticising the participation and in theoretically based activism.

Final considerations

In accordance with the considerations throughout the text, the projects which take on participation as a political, epistemological and social foundation, arise from the individuals' engagement and from their conception of reality. The defiant posture of whom undertakes such perspective clearly manifests itself, in relation to the traditional approaches of reality, that reproduce positivist normativity. In another dimension, it confronts the colonialist culture historically rooted in Latin American societies, mainly in the Brazilian. As proposed by popular education, in the face of vertical and antidialogical relationships, it affirms the horizontality of dialogue. Against the competition and individualism, it assumes the solidarity and the collective work. Confronting the belief that culture and popular wisdom are inferior, it chooses them as the foundation of a different epistemology, focused on social transformation.

That is how the development of participatory projects resulted in a fruitful field of reflection, whose characteristics point to a fidelity concerning the principles mentioned in the introduction. Especially in relation to the defiant character of the participation, which maintains itself thriving till the end of the experiences. Without tracing a rigid set of normative principles, doing research and education in a participatory matter is a brave bet on an uncertainty that permeates permanently open processes, bringing movement to them. Without a single direction, these processes can easily contradict and depart from the institutional arrangement, especially the academic and the main way of producing knowledge. For this

reason, often they are academically marginalised, taking their protagonists to other mazes of transgression, their trademark.

The examples of participatory research and action research exposed and discussed in the event, show the dimension of the complexity resulting from the integration of multiple perspectives. Its processes, originally identified as research, are constituted in formative praxis for all the participants. The very conception of learning ends up subverted by denying the polarisation of learning, which is located in everybody, and in the relation of the individuals with objective concreteness, even when one considers a greater or lesser level of politicisation. At the same time, participatory research and action research, in their different ways of implementation, mainly stemming from the North American context, are struggling with institutional limits, real obstacles to be confronted. In any case, we identified a search for principles such as politicisation and activism in the research for the confrontation of real problems from these realities.

In 2021, ARNA national conference will remain in North America, but this time in a Latin American context, in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Possibly, some issues like social inequality, violence, oppression and participation will continue as main concerns, under the theme: co-creating knowledge, empowering the community. A greater attendance of Latin American researchers and students is expected in relation to the 2019 edition, reinforcing the network of action research and participatory research of the Americas as a collective which is effectively American.

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