

Stirring the fire under the ashes of action research

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I start this editorial with a sentence resonating in my mind: “no researcher can, on his or her own, make a broad impact. This can be achieved only by working together”. It is a sentence by Bjorn Gustavsen that Danilo Streck cites in one of the articles of this issue. I cannot help but think that journals have an academic goal, but beyond that, they can be spaces where communities are nurtured. An action research journal is a space where action researchers around the world can meet each other through our work, our ideas and practices.

In this spirit I want to start by remembering Morten Levin, who passed away while we were preparing this issue. His work together with Davydd Greenwood was my first step into the action research community, and I started to openly say I was an action researcher only after visiting him in Trondheim with James Karlsen. Our condolences and gratitude to his family and colleagues.

Nurturing a global community of action researchers is precisely the aim of Danilo Streck in the first article of this issue entitled “Action Research, Democracy and (Global) Citizenship: Building bridges among traditions and practices”. He presented these ideas initially in one of the keynote speeches of the IJAR Symposium held in Istanbul in October 2023. Streck was editor in chief of this journal for a long time and he is still a member of its editorial board. His article, I feel, represents the spirit of the International Journal of Action Research and its board of editors.

One of the core contributions of the article is a conceptual framework for comparative action research studies. It is a framework meant to operate as a bridge between different traditions and practices within action research. Therefore, it is a proposal to action researchers from different traditions to dialogue with and learn from each other. To reach this framework, Streck guides us in a stimulating journey through the contributions of four authors: two European voices and two Latin American. Through the discussions of democratic dialogue (Bjorn Gustavsen), democratic participation (Werner Fricke), popular science (Orlando Fals Borda) and people’s participation (Paulo Freire) Streck builds the bridges that he invites us to cross. He thus stirs the fire under the ashes of action research with an article that he opens asking whether there is still fire under those ashes.

The second article of this issue, entitled “Dissensus as part of dialogue in organizational change processes: a case study in an NGO” departs from the work of two of the authors presented by Danilo Streck: Paulo Freire and Bjorn Gustavsen. The goal is to discuss in depth the concept of dialogue. Maider Gorostidi – Garcia, Arantxa Rodriguez – Berrio and Iratxe Aristegui – Fragua guide us through their learning process of organizational transformation in an NGO. They initially share an action research process that had apparently failed, as dialogue was not happening the way the authors had expected following the literature. However, they did not give up, and instead of accepting that result as a failure, they questioned the main-

stream theory. This questioning took them to explore new contributions that helped them resignify dialogue. They propose the dissensus approach as useful to reinterpret their case and share how, from this perspective, the case is no longer a failure. They consequently underline the value of differences, and open a gateway to more complex dialogical perspectives.

The third article, by Nikolai Kunitsõn has the following title: “Exploring the Transformation of Habitus: a Case Study of Forum Theatre in Estonia”. Kunitsõn first presents the Bourdieusian concept of habitus, and argues that it explains why subjects act in a society in a particular way. He then argues that Bourdieu said that the transformation of habitus is possible, however, he did not specify how. Consequently, he explores action research as a potential answer to transform habitus. To do this, he first builds conceptually on the work of John Dewey and Paulo Freire, and then presents a specific case where he worked with Forum Theater as a method of Participatory Action Research. In this process he worked with participants from the russophone minority in Estonia, addressing a series of issues that this group wanted to tackle – for example, miscommunication between different ethnic groups, mask-wearing in public spaces, bullying in schools and problems between pupils and teachers. The goal with the process was to see whether and how Forum Theatre as a method could change participants’ habitus regarding these issues. The case shows the difficulties of measuring this kind of change, however, Kunitsõn concludes that some transformation took place.

The fourth article in this issue is authored by Barbara Mihók, Judit Juhász and Judit Gébert and entitled “Slow science and “caring” research – the transformative power of collaborative research with hard of hearing youths”. It is part of a *thematic series on action research and citizen social science* guest edited by Patricia Canto and Reidun Norvoll. I invite the readers of International Journal of Action Research to see their guest editorial in this issue, where they introduce three articles that will explore this theme in this and two other forthcoming issues of the journal.