

Action Research in a Fluent and Unpredictable World

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In times of crisis at many levels and increasing uncertainty and unpredictability in the world, action researchers persistently continue to work in projects for societal transformation, democracy, human rights, social justice, education and development in communities and organizations. The movement of action research is continuing despite of political, societal, structural and financial constraints. In this volume of IJAR we present five very different articles on action research from different parts of the world: The United States, Argentina, Spain, Canada and Denmark and, as well, a review of a new exciting book, which we consider highly relevant for people working with action research and related inquiries.

The first article in this issue is a theoretical contribution to the field of action research and is written by Kenneth J. Gergen from the US. In his article, which has the title, “*Action Research as Process-Based Knowing*”, Gergen argues for a relational process paradigm as a foundation for action research and related approaches to research. He argues that in our times of crisis, in a social world characterized by rapid change and continuous and unpredictable disruption, there is a particular need for action research and related collaborative research inquiries based on a relational process-oriented way of thinking. Instead of describing the here-and-now, by trying to mirror the world or predict the future, a relational process orientation focuses on *being in the process of becoming* within the ongoing flow of unpredictable change. Gergen argues for action research as *future forming*, as *process-based knowing* aimed at transformation, which means a kind of research which can *actively bring about desired futures* and maybe even inspire for transformation at policy level. He points out that we’re embedded in a fluid world of rapid and chaotic change, and he argues that research should be a matter of participatory realization of transformation, rather than attempts to describe or predict a world of fixed entities. Gergen understands patterns of behaviour, traditions, and institutions as co-created human constructions, which are not fixed, but open to change through collaborative participation – for instance through action research. In his article, Gergen argues that action research represents a relational ethic in practice, whereas it cares for the quality of the relationships in the process, and the co-creation of social change for the common good. He also points out that, the outcomes of action research will always be in process and should never be considered as finalized. Gergen explains in his article that, a relational process paradigm of knowledge must “remain open to continuous unfolding as relations among participants and the temporal context continue to change”. His analysis in this article is based on four overall assumptions concerning *pragmatic potential, ontology, epistemology, and ethics*.

The second article is carrying the title “*Systematisation of experiences and its contribution to Action Research: Transformative knowledge in a process of territorial development in Latin America*” and is written by Erica Porras and Mariana Chrestia from Argentina.

This article is introducing to *Systematisation of Experiences* (SE) as a methodology used in Latin America, which has the aim of facilitating the co-creation of knowledge from practice. The authors explain and demonstrate the value of SE for researchers who draw on experiences and practices as sources for scientific knowledge production and discuss the potential of SE to complement processes carried out within action research. Related to that, a case from Argentina is presented, where this approach has been applied in a participatory territorial development process taking place in the southwestern part of the Province of Buenos Aires. The presented case demonstrates and explains the capacity of SE to generate collective learning, strengthen local capacities, and contribute to development in similar ways in other territories. In sum, the article serves as a recognition of the potential of SE and argues for SE to be adopted into the framework of action research.

The third article is entitled “*New cartographies of inclusive education through narratives and action research*” and is written by Ignacio Calderón-Almendros, María Teresa Rascón-Gómez, Luz del Valle Mojtar-Mendieta and Jesús Moreno-Parra. This paper is about the use of narrative approaches in Participatory Action Research (PAR) and discusses a particular PAR project initiated in Spain in the field of education involving more than 700 participants. In this project, inspired by Jerome Bruner, Pablo Freire and Fals-Borda (among others) the participants worked for the creation of a more inclusive educational system. The approach was based on narratives from teachers, students and families in their struggle for recognition of diversity and disability in the schools. By taking an active part in this project, both teachers, students and families turned into activists, forming networks of mutual support and resistance that lead to resilience processes aiming at structural transformations for the benefit of people with disabilities and for the recognition of diversity in the educational community in general. The overall intention of the project was to combat exclusion, inequality, prejudices and epistemic oppression in relation to students with disabilities. The authors describe how this project gave voices to the students, their families and their teachers and, in this way contributed to conscientization, resistance and resilience in their struggle for social change. In this way the project scaffolded a collective movement against oppressive assumptions, prejudices and conditions these citizens and their families encounter in the school world and in society in general.

The fourth article is written by Thomas G. Ryan from Canada and has the title “*Enabling Professional Development via Tertiary Action Research Praxis*”. The author argues that there is an on-going need for professional development among teachers in tertiary educational institutions and points at action research as a useful inquiry to develop professional practice in the education and training of teachers in Canada. The article describes how teachers through action research can take a role as researchers in their own teaching practice. The author argues that action research as a methodology in the education of teachers can help the teachers improve their professional practice, strengthen their self-awareness, reflexivity, and their professional identity as teacher. He points out that action research can be role-centric, personal, professional and practical at the same time and can become an integrated part of daily praxis. Inspired by Kemmis (2011, 2012) the author describes praxis as involving “reflective action that can lead to change and transformation” and that it involves “experience and engagement with content that is transformational”. The author points out that action research can be a useful approach to shape and develop self-awareness through experience and that it also can contribute to build up social communities.

The fifth article is written by Charlotte Reimert Munch from Denmark and has the title “*Temporality and Processuality in Narrative Action Research: Working with collaborative ‘reflexive revisits’ in the analytical process*”. This article is a methodological contribution and is written from a relational, processual understanding of action research inspired by social constructionist ideas and process thinking. It shows and discusses how narrative approaches to action research, inspired by Michael White and David Boje (among others), can be applied to foster development in teams of leaders and how the participants as co-researchers may become actively involved in the process of analysis through so-called “reflexive revisits”. The author describes these “reflexive revisits” as facilitated sessions forming part of the action research process, where the co-researchers analyse transcribed excerpts from audio files from the dialogical process in the group and reflect together to understand their own process as a group. The overall conclusion of the article is that narrative action research with “reflexive revisits” can work as a useful approach to strengthen reflexivity, development, and cohesion in leadership teams.

In addition, we present a review of a new and very interesting book: *Embracing the Messy Complexities of Co-Creation: A Dialogic Approach to Participatory Qualitative Inquiry* written by Louise Phillips from Roskilde University in Denmark. The review of her book is elaborated by Carol Gorelick from the Bowling Green State University in Ohio (US).

As editor-in-chief of IJAR I wish to thank all the authors and the blind peer reviewers who have spent their precious time contributing to this issue with many different perspectives on action research. The five papers in this issue show a big variety and diversity within the field of action research. In the editorial group we leave it to the individual reader to reflect further on the various contributions and hope that they may serve as inspiration for future action research projects. We also hope that the readers will feel inspired to continue the dialogue on action research in our journal and in our action research community.

In this regard, we would like to make an announcement: The community of IJAR is organizing an international symposium online, which takes place on the 23rd of April 2026. The symposium is entitled: ***Action Research as Future Forming***. We hereby invite action researchers from all over the world to participate and join the conversations about action research by sharing your experience and thoughts on action research to support each other and continue developing the field of action research. The symposium will be based on dialogues about our work with action research in relation to important themes such as social justice, human rights, democracy, welfare, sustainability, regional development and organizational learning. It is an excellent opportunity to meet action researchers from different countries, exchange experience and learn from each other, so please feel welcome to join us!

Date and time of the IJAR symposium: *Action Research as Future Forming*

23rd of April 2026 on ZOOM from 2 PM to 6 PM (UTC/GMT + 2.00).

Deadline of signing up: 1st of March 2026

The symposium will be held in ZOOM. Participation is for free, but each participant is encouraged to sign up by writing a few lines about oneself and the motivation for participation and e-mail these lines to the organizing group at: ijar@ikl.aau.dk with the heading: “Motivation for participation in the IJAR symposium 2026”. After signing up each participant will receive a ZOOM link to the symposium.