

Table of Contents

<i>Miren Larrea</i>	
Editorial. Future perspectives on action research.....	3
Tribute to Danilo Streck.....	6
<i>Werner Fricke, Davydd J. Greenwood, Miren Larrea and Danilo Streck</i>	
On Social Productivity and Future Perspectives on Action Research.....	8
<i>Igor Ahedo Gurrutxaga</i>	
Discussion paper: When the Cinderellas unite.....	28
<i>Liliam Maria Orquiza, Laura Sánchez García and Bruno Gabriel Costelini</i>	
How is Action Research Being Used in Computer Science? A Review	34
<i>Malida Mooken</i>	
Articulating inherent values of action research for newcomers coming from the field of territorial development	52
 Book Review	
<i>Jan J. Zygmuntowski</i>	
Surveil and Control: A critical review of “The Age of Surveillance Capitalism”	71
 Interview	
<i>Interview with Øyvind Pålshaugen</i>	
40 years in 40 minutes	79

On Social Productivity and Future Perspectives on Action Research

Werner Fricke, Davydd J. Greenwood, Miren Larrea and Danilo Streck¹

Abstract: The paper addresses some of the consequences of neoliberalism in our societies and argues that the phenomena that is being discussed under the label of *surveillance capitalism* has deep implications regarding action research. It fractures individuals into apolitical wants and needs, neutralising the core of action research which is the integrity of the individual and the social fabric. But this can be a two-way relationship, and action research can contribute to counteracting these trends by recreating the citizen actor and integrating individuals in society. To discuss how this can be done in practice, the paper shares some positive deviants, which are positive examples that emerge under unfavorable conditions. Through their discussion the paper poses future-oriented perspectives on action research.

Keywords: action research, neoliberalism, surveillance capitalism, individual and social resistance

Sobre la productividad social y perspectivas de futuro de la investigación acción

Resumen: El artículo analiza algunas de las consecuencias del neoliberalismo en nuestras sociedades y argumenta que el fenómeno que se está discutiendo bajo la etiqueta de *capitalismo de vigilancia* tiene implicaciones profundas en relación con la investigación acción. Las tiene porque fractura a los individuos en una serie de deseos y necesidades apolíticos, neutralizando el núcleo central de la investigación acción, que es la integridad de los individuos y del tejido social. Pero esta puede ser una relación bidireccional, y la investigación acción puede contraponerse a estas tendencias recreando a la ciudadanía como actor e integrando a los individuos en la sociedad. Para ver cómo esto puede hacerse en la práctica, se presentan una serie de desviaciones positivas, que son positivos casos que emergen en condiciones desfavorables. A través de su discusión, el artículo comparte algunas perspectivas de futuro de la investigación acción.

Palabras claves: Investigación acción, neoliberalismo, capitalismo de vigilancia, resistencia individual y social

1 This article is the result of an extended online collaboration initiated and orchestrated by Werner Fricke to pose the emergent challenges for action research in the face of the multiple global crises and problems humanity and our planet face. Four colleagues with very different work experiences from different parts of the globe, and operating in different organisational environments worked to find a way to develop a coherent argument without hiding our differences and diverse priorities. Through a considerable variety of video conferences and manuscript drafts, we believe we have come together with an article that manifests ways of making our differences count. We were gratified by the process, because it shows how our shared commitment to action research enabled us to derive strength and clarity from differences, and find a shared way forward toward a better and fairer future. Action research cannot speak with one voice because our differences can become our strengths, enabling us to deal better with the complexity of an increasingly threatened world.

1. Introduction

A century has gone by since Kurt Lewin's studies in the 1920s. Looking back on these 100 years of action research (AR), we realise that the world has changed considerably and is changing with increasing speed. Capitalism, especially in its uncontrolled, disembedded forms that have emerged with the rise of neo-liberalism and the "new public management" since the 1970s, is the main force revealing this change. It is accompanied by imminent environmental disaster, created by uncontrolled capitalist pillaging of planetary resources for profit and unprecedented levels of global and societal inequality. The new forms of capitalism, among which we focus on disaster capitalism and surveillance capitalism, alienate work and convert individuals into internet clicks to be sold to advertisers without respect for their privacy, personal integrity, the conditions of production of goods and services, and often for the rule of law.

To address these challenges, action researchers need to situate our practices clearly in the global neoliberal capitalist context. Neoliberalism is the most recent attempt to force the world to conform to the profoundly antisocial model of society as a collectivity of individuals guided entirely by selfish rational choice. Despite the inhumane beauty of the ideal rational choice model, putting it into practice yet again as Reagan and Thatcher tried, ran into lots of powerful opposition.

Their first step in trying to impose a free market (already a fundamental conceptual contradiction) was what is now called the "New Public Management" (Behn, 2001). This is a public management model based entirely on the "audit culture". It distrusts any and all institutions, and the integrity of individuals to behave appropriately unless held to account quantitatively for the economic consequences of their actions, and punished for failure to meet the goals set for them by the neoliberals. "New public management" is the instrumentalisation of the neoliberal model in transport, healthcare, education, social services, conservation, science, etc.

The second step is disaster capitalism. Even armed with the New Public Management, the neoliberals were not satisfied by their efforts at "freeing up" the market. So, Milton Friedman and the Chicago Boys hit on taking advantage of major social disruptions to impose neoliberal discipline. Even this, however, did not produce the free-market utopia because even people as horrible as Augusto Pinochet recoiled at the harshness of the measures demanded by the Chicago Boys" (Klein, 2007).

Step three is surveillance capitalism. Rather than confronting the social forces "holding back" the free market head-on (because they continually failed to achieve their goals), the neoliberals have moved to surveillance capitalism. Here the imposition of neoliberal practices can be carried on mainly out of sight, without setting off reactions to stop the practices. Action researchers now have to understand that any AR project anywhere has to face such forces consciously and deal with them, not just by collaborative AR processes to help rebuild or re-create the integrity of the individual, but also by addressing the questions of power and contention for power directly.

The division of labour is extreme in this platform economy. Workers and many service organisations are suffering from a re-birth of Taylorism, particularly through globally decentralised supply chains and worker precarity. Employees are isolated from each other and their coherence as individuals is undermined, as factories and other work organisations that

Discussion paper: When the Cinderellas unite¹

Igor Ahedo Gurrutxaga

In the practice of action research, it is important to get things right with a good analysis of reality. Tools such as sociograms (Ganuza, 2010) allow us to define the formal and informal spaces that underlie a problem, the capitals of the actors involved, their level of access or exclusion from power, and the density or absence of their relationships. From a global perspective, at the beginning of the text that heads this section, Fricke, Greenwood, Larrea and Streck (2022) focus on delimiting the position of individuals in the sociogram of our societies, which are marked by the neoliberal revolution, disaster capitalism and vigilance: the raw material with which AR works (citizens) is a broken individual, adrift, “incoherent and apolitical in their desires and needs” (2022: 10).

This crude definition is not unknown to those of us who work with local communities, and it can be seen as the result of two complementary processes. On the one hand, the breakdown of community networks, resulting from material changes that promote the importance of the self in our societies. Needless to say, this argument has been exacerbated by undermining caused by the neoliberal individualist ideology. On the other hand, since 2008 the erosion of community networks has had the rupture of the individual added to it. The accelerated context of uncertainty and objective or subjective precariousness in which we are immersed, aggravated by Covid, has dashed the hopes of thousands of people who cannot find comfort in an “outside” marked by the weakening of community and identity networks. Thus, if we look at the analysis of reality, we must be aware that we work in cracked territories, in a barren land where community ties have been broken, and dozens of broken dolls survive adrift on the currents (Mirowski, 2009).

Perhaps for this reason, in my practical work energising local communities with Participatory Action Research processes, the metaphor of Cinderella emerges strongly. This symbol embodies those sectors I work with to change the sociogram of reality and access new forms of power. Ultimately, I understand that we work with (and like) Cinderellas, seeking to change the story of their (our) lives. Deep down, I believe that the objective of AR is none other than to change the story, as a metaphor for a change in reality needed by vulnerable people more accustomed to scrubbing floors (like Cinderella), than dancing in luxurious salons (like stepmothers).

In my two decades of research and community participatory action, when I go out into the neighbourhood, I detect a growing isolation of people increasingly traversed by not only objective, but increasingly subjective vulnerabilities and exclusions. Asking oneself, as Fricke, Greenwood, Larrea and Streck propose, about the role that action research should play in these times means, in my opinion, accepting that in the face of the utopian dimension of modernity, the victory of neoliberalism is increasingly diagnosed by people in a depoliticised way (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Mirowski, 2013). It is increasingly difficult for people to understand that their situation of vulnerability, marked by an inability to pay their mortgage, take care of their dependent children, get papers, or find affordable housing is not down to their bad

1 This paper is written in response to the article “On Social Productivity and Future Perspectives on Action Research” published in this issue of *International Journal of Action Research*.

How is Action Research Being Used in Computer Science? A Review

Liliam Maria Orquiza, Laura Sánchez García and Bruno Gabriel Costelini

Abstract: A literature review showcasing what specialists who work and publish scientific papers, involving action research in the field of computer science, think and do. It includes the 97 most cited (ten times or more) Computer Science papers that deal with action research, published between 2010 and 2019, and retrieved from *Scopus* and *Web of Science* databases. Specialists in information systems are using action research in various research capabilities, not only in the construction of artifacts, but mainly to improve their communication capacities with users and vice versa.

Keywords: Action research; computer; literature review; research methods

¿Cómo se utiliza la investigación-acción en informática? Una revisión

Resumen Revisión de la literatura que muestra lo que piensan y hacen los especialistas que trabajan y publican artículos científicos relacionados con la investigación-acción en el campo de las ciencias de la computación. Incluye los 97 artículos de informática más citados (diez veces o más) que tratan sobre investigación-acción, publicados entre 2010 y 2019, y recuperados de las bases de datos Scopus y Web of Science. Los especialistas en sistemas de información están utilizando la investigación acción en diversas capacidades de investigación, no solo en la construcción de artefactos, sino principalmente para mejorar sus capacidades de comunicación con los usuarios y viceversa.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción; computadora; revisión de literatura; Métodos de búsqueda

1. Introduction

The purpose of a scientific paper is to enhance access to knowledge and, among all types of scientific publishing, it is the fastest formal way of sharing new discoveries of scientists and researchers. Scientific journals, in their turn, beyond fostering the publication of papers, stand also as historical records of the advances in the various fields of knowledge, ensuring a scientific memory of all completed research.

The earliest scientific journals appeared in 1665: *Philosophical Transactions* and the *Journal des Sçavans* (Banks, 2010). Now, 350 years later, *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory*: one of the largest such directories in the world, accounts for over 70 thousand refereed and peer-reviewed journals, 50 thousand of which are available online. Papers published in peer-reviewed journals are generally more respected and recognised, inasmuch as they are eval-

uated beforehand, ensuring some minimal standards of what is published, not only in form but mainly in content (Day & Gastel, 2017).

Such a high volume of journals likewise leads to thousands of papers being published simultaneously, even when one looks at a specific field of human knowledge, it is impossible to access everything that is available. This problem demands some advanced organisational, storing, retrieving and reviewing techniques to manage this mass of knowledge and information that is being produced.

We propose then a discussion of the current state of action research academic publishing, since it is widely known that this is a methodology that lends itself more to actual intervention rather than scientific publishing per se. Also, given the authors involvement with the fields of education, computer science and information technology, our challenge is to figure out how action research is being used in the field of Computer Science. We then seek to identify what are the focus, purposes and results that are being showcased in scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals, in a timeframe that reaches back over the past ten years.

Although there is no consensus on who came up with the concept of action research, “it has been developed differently for different applications” (Tripp, 2005, p. 445). According to Tripp (2005, p. 445), action research has been used as a general term for four different methodologies: diagnostic research, participant research, empirical research and experimental research. For Tripp, at the end of the 20th century, Deshler and Ewart (1995) identified six main kinds developed in different fields of application, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Fields and applications of action research over time

Field and application	Precursor
In administration	Collier
Community development	Lewin (1946)
Organisational change	Lippitt, Watson and Westley (1958)
Teaching	Corey (1949, 1953) in the late 1940 s and early 1950 s
Political change, conscientization and empowerment	Freire (1972, 1982)
In national development in agriculture soon thereafter	Fals-Borda (1985, 1991)
And most recently in banking, health and technology generation	via the World Bank and others such as Hart and Bond (1997)

Source: Tripp, 2005, p. 445.

Social and human sciences have, traditionally, been the ones that started out using action research. Exact sciences, which used to be removed from it, have since incorporated its use more and more. Our research has revealed that Computer Science, in particular, has increasingly been making use of action research, focusing not only on product development, but also various other functions. We point out that action research has been used, not only in an instrumental fashion but also in a theoretical one, over the past few years, allowing for experts

Articulating inherent values of action research for newcomers coming from the field of territorial development

Malida Mooken

Abstract This paper discusses the inherent values of action research for newcomers coming from the field of territorial development. The discussion is framed around three dimensions: 1) inquiring about problematic situations in real-time; 2) contextual-temporal qualities of the process; and 3) reflecting-acting on what we have reasons to value being and doing as researchers, participants, facilitative actors, and citizens. The conceptualisation builds on theoretical influences, most notably the writings of John Dewey and action research for territorial development, and my own practice. Two cases are discussed. One is about a Knowledge Transfer Partnership in Scotland, and the other is with regards to on-going work in the wine-producing territory of British Columbia, Canada.

Keywords: action research, territorial development, inherent values, Dewey

Una articulación de los valores inherentes de la investigación acción para quienes se aproximan a ella por primera vez desde el desarrollo territorial

Resumen Este artículo debate los valores inherentes de la investigación acción para aquellas personas que se aproximan a esta forma de investigación por primera vez y desde el campo del desarrollo territorial. La discusión se plantea en torno a tres dimensiones: 1) la investigación realizada sobre situaciones problemáticas en tiempo real; 2) las cualidades contextuales-temporales del proceso y 3) la reflexión-acción sobre las razones para valorar ciertos modos de ser y de hacer de las personas investigadoras, participantes, actores facilitadores y la ciudadanía. La conceptualización está basada, además de en mi propia experiencia, en una serie de influencias teóricas, entre las que destacan John Dewey y la investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial. Se discuten, además, dos casos. Uno vinculado a la entidad denominada Knowledge Transfer Partnership en Escocia, y el otro conectado al trabajo en curso en el territorio productor de vino en la Columbia Británica, Canadá.

Palabras claves: Investigación acción, desarrollo territorial, valores inherentes, Dewey

1. Introduction

Amidst complex cultural, economic, environmental, social, and political dynamics, organisations and territories face increasing challenges, not least related to concerns like climate change, and inequalities. Universities as territorial actors with local and global knowledge capabilities are called upon to help address those challenges (Benneworth, 2013; Geschwind, Kekäle, Pinheiro, & Sorensen, 2019). This expectation of universities to meet societal needs is

not new. What has become clearer is that more collaborative and proactive approaches to research are needed.

The importance of knowledge co-creation and change through “action, co-ordination and collaboration across knowledge domains, sectors and types of organisations” is highlighted in policy and managerial circles (Geschwind et al., 2019, p.13). In responding to policy and societal demand, universities are directing more attention to the so-called third mission of societal engagement (Laredo, 2007; Uyarra, 2010; Karlsen & Larrea 2019). An implication is that university researchers are having to reimagine and reframe how they think about and approach research. To avoid a divisive approach to research, teaching and societal engagement, a balancing act of pursuing research that matters to society, in a way that is conducive to both good (and better) research, and practical outcomes, is desirable.

For many researchers, especially those who have been trained in traditional approaches, it may not be straightforward to change how they conduct research. Action research characterised by an integrative approach to action, research and participation in real-time offers meaningful perspectives in that regard. With that in mind, the paper explores the question: what are inherent values of action research that may appeal to those researchers who need to break away from hegemonic practices, and do research differently? By ‘inherent values’, I refer to what is valuable in and of the inquiry process itself. Inherent values are not external to the inquiry; they are at its core and define it.

Practical insights about the inherent values of action research are offered through two case presentations. One case is about a project between a university and an arts centre in Scotland, and the other concerns on-going work of a university in a wine-producing territory in Canada. Recognising that it is not possible to cover all the valuable aspects of action research in this paper, the discussion is framed around three dimensions: 1) inquiring about problematic situations in real-time; 2) contextual-temporal qualities of the process; and 3) reflecting, and acting on what people have reasons to value being and doing as researchers, participants, facilitative actors, and citizens. The framework is a result of connecting theoretical influences with my practice in the cases in the field of territorial development.

The paper is pertinent to newcomers to action research coming from the field of territorial development, where there are pressures to engage in third mission activities and deliver productive outcomes on various fronts (Aranguren, M. J., Guibert, J. M., Valdaliso, J. M., & Wilson, 2016). For example, by producing knowledge that is relevant to society and advances academic debates, *and* demonstrates the impact generated through those processes through academic reflection, writing and publications (Aranguren, Canto-Farachala & Wilson, 2021). The discussion may also resonate with researchers from other fields experiencing similar trends.

The paper is organised as follows. First, the rationale for the paper, its main focus and objective, and the interplay between first-person and second-person inquiry are articulated. Thereafter, concepts used in the case discussions, and which inform the framing of inherent values, are introduced. The two cases are subsequently introduced. Drawing on theoretical concepts and my learning from the cases, I develop the arguments about the three valuable dimensions to action research. The cases are discussed before concluding with final reflections.

40 years in 40 minutes

Interview with Øyvind Pålshaugen

Danilo and Miren:

Thank you, Øyvind, for granting this interview to the *International Journal of Action Research*. After your long trajectory with AR, and also in this journal, we want to integrate your insight in the emergent discussions we propose in this issue about the future challenges of AR. Let us start by giving the reader a perspective of your trajectory. How did you come to AR? You could certainly not study it at university. And how did you come to The Work Research Institute (WRI) in Oslo?

Øyvind:

That is correct. Even though I started to study sociology in the hope that if I understood society better, I would be better equipped to change it. I was far from the only one with that hope. However, those examples of action research that some of the academic staff were involved in, did not attract my interest. They were exerted mostly for the sake of using scientific knowledge to reinforce action, and less for using action to reinforce scientific knowledge. Having refused to join the army after college, my interest in politics rose considerably. This was in the early seventies, and the options for jumping into political action were many: there were many white feathers on the left wing, to put it that way. However, I could not fail to notice that pretty much of the political activity of the student's at the university was much about "paroles" and that the "parliament of the streets" was in fashion. It was a politics of words, which were both written and shouted out with lots of energy, but the fate of this energy appeared to me like the steam from a safety valve: it dissolved in the air.

I turned my back on the streets and went into the libraries. At the time, also Marx was in fashion, and after having read his texts on historical materialism I acquired a Danish translation of *Das Kapital*: all three volumes (12 in Danish), to read and discuss it within a not too large group of like-minded. We read this work not in the spirit of any kind of Marxism, but in the spirit of the last sentence in Marx' foreword to *Das Kapital*: "Every opinion based on scientific criticism I welcome. As to prejudices of so-called public opinion, to which I have never made concessions, now as aforesaid the maxim of the great Florentine is mine: *Segui il tuo corso, e lascia dir le genti*" [Follow your own course, and let people talk (paraphrased from Dante).

Thus, while reading Marx, it was necessary also to read Keynes and followers. To make a long story short by an understatement, it became pretty clear to me that attempts to change society, without engaging in the question of how to change the production system of society, were simply too superficial. This led me to join a group of students who were devoted to "the sociology of work and industry", and finally to a Master degree in this field in sociology. An empirical study of how economic and technological parameters conditioned the shaping of the

specific patterns of workplaces at a cable factory through the period from 1945–1975, was the outcome.

Having besides studied psychology, mostly Freud, and critical philosophy of language, I had not given much attention to what I should do for a living after having obtained my Master degree. I had heard about WRI, since the professor that was responsible for teaching on “sociology of work and industry”, Ragnvald Kalleberg, had a collegial and intellectual relationship with Bjørn Gustavsen, who at the time was the director of WRI. This was due to their common interest in Habermas’ theories of society, communication and dialogue. My impression of WRI at the time (1981) was that it was a social-democratic milieu that in their research co-operated closely with the employers’ and the employee’s national organizations.

Regardless of my impression, a few months before I finished my Master degree, I was headhunted to WRI by Gustavsen, via Kalleberg, to undertake a one-year study of the work environment of the garbage collectors of Oslo city. So I did. During this year I discovered that Gustavsen had a great intellectual capacity – and appetite. In particular his ability to grasp philosophical and theoretical ideas he found exciting, and to make productive use of them in the action research he and his close colleagues were doing, was striking. By the end of this first year I wrote a 120 pages research report about the garbage collectors, which led to nothing. Per H. Engelstad, the closest colleague to Gustavsen, and the researcher at WRI who was most engaged in the renewal in the kind of conferences that came to be termed dialogue conferences, suggested to organise one, with a large contingent of garbage collectors and their management as participants. From then on, real improvements of their work environment came to be exerted. The same happened to me, albeit in a different way. I told Gustavsen that I wanted to read Habermas’ book *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, which had been published in 1981, and write an article about it. He answered “fine”. Shortly after, Engelstad invited me to join him at a dialogue conference on regional development, in Western Norway. I answered “fine”. The rest is history...

Danilo and Miren:

What authors have been important reference points in your work? Could we say that Wittgenstein had a special influence on it?

Øyvind:

That would not be wrong, but if so, Wittgenstein is to be regarded *primus inter pares* with Foucault in my work with action research. With your permission, I will elaborate a little on this point.

My first publication in English on action research was written in 1987 for an international conference in Oslo, devoted to the memorial of Einar Thorsrud. The heading of the session for which I wrote my contribution, was: Can Social Science Contribute to Industrial Democracy? My article opens with a suggestion of posing this question slightly differently: Can a flow of words contribute to industrial democracy? To this question there might be many ways to answer. However, none of them can be given without using just a flow of words; but not just a free flow: Any use of words must be undertaken appropriately if the words are to be understood by others, and that what is appropriate is dependent on which kind of discourse the actual use of words is embedded in.

By opening my article in this way, I could easily remind us of the fact that within society there are many kinds of discourses, of which the discourse of social science is one. Then, I