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Coping with the future: Business and work in the digital age –
A cross disciplinary conference
The role of action research in social transformation

Editorial

This issue of IJAR consists of papers that were presented at the conference: "Coping with the future: Business and work in the digital age," in Kristiansand, Norway October 8-10, 2018. The conference focused on structural and systemic changes in business and work life, not least driven by digital technology, and the need to find more sustainable solutions for society. Nobody can say for sure that we are facing a new industrial revolution; however, there are strong indications that fundamental conditions for business and work are changing. The conference asked what should be the role of social science in such changing processes. One important thing to observe is that traditional research methods, such as gathering historical data, will not necessarily help us in understanding systemic change. In addition, this discussion comes at a time that has been called the post-truth society, when, among other things, society has been questioning the validity of research and science.

Action Research is affected by this discussion in at least three ways: firstly, the changes we see in technology, and in the call for more sustainable solutions, challenges workplaces in new ways; thus opening up new issues, new ways of participation in discussion, collaboration and the like. So, Action Research is needed to update our understanding of these new challenges. Secondly, as even Action Research has a bias towards the present or the past, it also faces challenges related to an unknown future. Thirdly, the focus on validity and truthfulness is not least an issue for Action Research.

The current special issue makes a solid contribution to addressing these challenges. As we see it, the issue contains three groups of articles. The first group formed by the two articles *New Challenges for Action Research* by Werner Fricke, and *(Why) Does Action Research need to intervene and change thing*s? by Olav Eikeland, both address the philosophical roots of Action Research. A core argument in Fricke's article is that Action Research oversteps some of the traditional dualisms in social science, for instance the interpretive versus the positivistic approach. Action Research brings into this traditional divide, the discussion of democratic dialogue and just social change. More specifically, the article deals with the illusion of self-determination, and argues that it is limited in the execution of work. It makes a strong statement of the first challenge for Action Research. Eikeland brings in a variety of knowledge forms that transcend some of the traditional dualisms in philosophy of science. Both articles open our mind to the plural challenges we see in work life. Eikeland,

specifically, challenges researchers of Action Research to think deeply about what type of change is produced by the research.

The second group of articles include *Action Research and Social Transformation: Memories and Projections* by Danilo Streck, *Participatory research in Latin America as engagement* by Emil Sobottka and *Democratic Dialogue and Development: An Intellectual Obituary of Björn Gustavsen* by Richard Ennals. The two articles, as well as the obituary of Björn Gustavsen, can be read as contributions to the history of Action Research. Streck's article has a focus on history of this journal. Sobottka takes us through some main events in the development of Action Research in Latin America. Björn Gustavsen, whom we honour in this issue, was a major contributor to the development of Action Research. In particular his work managed to bridge the communicative turn in philosophy of science and Action Research. We argue that one of the preconditions for addressing the challenges of the future is to reflect on experience from the past. We cannot copy the past in the future, but we can learn from the past in order to prepare for the future. The articles demonstrate the importance of contextual issues in Action Research; doing Action Research in Latin America and in Scandinavia has some similarities, but is at the same time quite different.

Thirdly, three articles address different methodological approaches to some of the challenges we already see emerging in work life related to new technologies. *The Contribution of Action Research to Industry 4.0. policies: bringing empowerment and democracy to the economic efficiency arena*, by Miren Larrea, Miren Estensoro and Eduardo Sisti, presents a methodological approach to addressing new technological challenges at the workplace, through the context of regional development where territorial governance is central. *Alternative learning frameworks: workplace innovation programmes and smart specialisation policies in the Basque Country,* by Egoitz Pomares, addresses regional policy initiatives to support workplace innovation through addressing issues of multilevel governance. *Doing Research Upside Down: Action and Research in Cross Self-Confrontations* by Laure Kloetzer argues for a psychologically base approach to Action Research. The usage of Cross Self-Confrontations helps the co-generation of knowledge and development of dialogues across the hierarchical boarder. All three articles acknowledge some of the challenges that we are facing with technological and societal shifts.

What role can social science in general, and Action Research in particular, have in times of social transformation? This is a grand question, and subsequently difficult to answer. We think that learning from the past is one important role. It is important is to discuss what were more generic, versus what were more contextual, dimensions in the past. Things that created injustice, or reduced empowerment in the past, might not be the same things that will do so in the future. Even the content of these terms might change: What is participation or autonomy in the platform economy? What is the new form of oppression, or emancipation under new technological conditions? These are issues that need to be addressed.

Several of the article in this volume refer to Kurt Lewin. Lewin is often seen as the founding father of Action Research. It could be relevant to recall Lewin's comments in his 1947 article *Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change*[1]. Here he writes: *"One of the by-products of World War*

1 Lewin, K. (1947): "Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change", published in *Human relations*, 1(1), 5-41. 1947.

II of which society is hardly aware is the new stage of development which social sciences have reached. […] by demanding realistic and workable solutions to scientific problems, the war has accelerated greatly the change of social science to a new development level. The scientific aspects of this development centre around three objectives: 1) Integrating social sciences. 2) Moving from description of social bodies to dynamic problems of changing group life. 3) Developing new instruments and techniques for social research." (Lewin, 1947). Lewin, who had participated in the Vienna Circle before the war, was strongly influenced by logical positivism. Logical positivism grew out of what was seen as misuse of science and invalid scientific claims in their time. The remedy was a strict, logical and fact-based foundation for science. Lewin saw a clear and proactive role for social science in modernising society in the post-war period, based on the new insight into social science techniques.

Articles in this volume show that even if one shares ambitions for science, one might still discuss its logical foundation and explore what the most relevant methodology should be. Furthermore, today the challenge is not the lack of scientific techniques, nor that we are unaware of imbalances in society. The challenge is rather that our previous solution to these challenges through economic development and growth, may not be the way forward. We should share Lewin's optimism and belief in science, but we should continue to discuss how social science in general, and Action Research in particular, can move society forward. For this task, the articles in the current volume represent a useful contribution.

Hans Chr. Garmann Johnsen and *Halvor Holtskog*
Guest editors

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New Challenges For Action Research[1]

Werner Fricke

Abstract
From the perspective of sociology of work, the article"New Challenges for Action Research" raises the question: How can dependent employees in heteronomous employment relationships fulfill their elementary need for self-determination, if the progressive economisation of the working and living world shapes their consciousness and even their identities? If utilitarian calculi supersede empathy and solidarity everywhere, and everyone is called upon to become a successful manager of himself under the pressure of so-called "self-optimisation" (Subjectification trap)?

Research in sociology of work and experiments in action research show how dependent workers can escape from the subjectification trap by engaging in processes of collective reflection, and so re-activate their capacity for active and democratic participation, and for self-determined designing their working conditions to regain the ability to act and the power to independently shape their working conditions. Finally, it is asked if and how this process is possible under conditions of digital work in platform economics.

Key words: Action research; democratic participation; subjectification; platform society

Nuevos Desafíos Para La Investigación-Acción

Resumen
Desde la perspectiva de la sociología del trabajo, el artículo "Nuevos Desafíos para la Investigación-Acción" plantea la pregunta: ¿Cómo pueden los empleados dependientes en relaciones de trabajo heterónomas satisfacer su necesidad elemental de autodeterminación, si la progresiva economización del mundo del trabajo y mundo de vida moldea su conciencia e incluso sus identidades? ¿Si los cálculos utilitaristas substituyen la empatía y la solidaridad en todas partes, y todos están llamados a convertirse en un exitoso administrador de sí mismo bajo la presión de la llamada "auto-optimización" (trampa de la Subjetivación)?

Investigación en sociología del trabajo y experimentos en investigación-acción muestra cómo los trabajadores dependientes pueden escapar de la trampa de la subjetivación al involucrarse en procesos de reflexión colectiva, y así reactivar su capacidad para la participación activa y democrática y para el

1 I am very grateful to Danilo Streck, Emil Sobottka .Tyler Olsen and Richard Ennals for their precise translation of my German text.

diseño autodeterminado de sus condiciones de trabajo para recuperar la capacidad de actuar y el poder de configurar independientemente sus condiciones de trabajo. Finalmente, se pregunta si y cómo este proceso es posible en condiciones de trabajo digital en la economía de plataforma.

Palabras Clave: Investigación-acción; participación democrática; subjetivación; sociedad de plataforma.

1. Posing the problem

How can dependent workers recognise their interests when the progressive economisation of the work and life – world and the so-called subjectification of labor (Moldaschl and Voss 2002) shape their consciousness, their identities? Cost-benefit calculations everywhere take the place of empathy and solidarity. Everyone is called upon to become a successful manager of themselves under the pressure of "self-optimisation". The result is widespread fatigue in the face of a plethora of supposedly unlimited opportunities (Ehrenberg 2015). Therefore, at stake in this investigation are the difficulties encountered by attempts to realise democratic participation in today's economy and society.

Democratic participation in the workplace depends on the commitment and activity of many stakeholders. Their motivation is the interest in participation and self-determination inherent in every human being as an anthropological constant (Fricke 1975, 2004, 2009). However, as our empirical work has often shown, the need for democratic participation and self-determination is often suppressed: in Fordist work situations due to high workloads of physical and emotional nature, through domination and control in the work process, through Taylorist forms of division of labor (Fricke et al.), in post-Fordist forms of work through the subjectification of work (subjectification understood in the sense of Foucault as the conditioning of the subject by social, as well as economic norms). This subjectification is at the heart of a currently successful rationalisation strategy of capital; its success stems from the fact that the management of companies succeeds in using the subjective skills of the employees to an unprecedented extent for the efficient organisation of their work. Employees are given limited freedom to design co-operation and work processes that give them the illusion of working independently. I speak of an illusion of self-determination, because the participation granted by management is limited to executing work, whereas the participation in the design of their working conditions (financial and human resources, time budgets, type of product) is excluded.

After a brief examination of some of the positions of current sociology of work on the thesis of the subjectification of work (Section 2), I will present the concept and my empirical experiences with action research based on Kurt Lewin (Lewin 1951), which aims at the activation of dependent workers (Section 3). Action research is suitable as a theoretically and practically founded concept to release dependent workers from the subjectification trap, inasmuch it develops and promotes their ability to act and their self-determination in processes of collective reflection and subsequent actions. In addition, it will be concerned with the concepts of autonomy and self-determination of the workers. I do not share a naive concept of individual autonomy. The subject is the ensemble of social conditions (Verhältnisse, nicht Beziehungen (relationships) (Marx) and therefore not autonomous as an individual.

But despite being socially shaped, the subject is capable and interested in dealing actively and consciously with social influences (norms, social background) in order to shape his/her identity as far as possible in self-determination and resistance to conditioning (alienation) through social norms and economic interests (Parin 1983; Foucault 1994; Eribon 2016).

2. The subjectification trap

I start with some remarks on the centrality of work for the subject.

There is increasing information from companies, psychiatric clinics and relevant literature that depressive disorders among workers are massively increasing (Déjours 2008). The psychologist Alain Ehrenberg explains that the modern subject of the twenty-first century becomes depressed as result of the effort to become self-actualised in the face of unlimited possibilities of self-realisation (becoming her/himself) and of the pressure to constantly self-optimise; the subject loses his/her ability to act.

Action research can initiate a healing process for these employees. It can become a counterbalance to today's widespread depression illness. Above all because, as a dialogical procedure, it enables employees to collective self-reflection and to act in processes of democratic participation. From a task of the individual self-determination it becomes the accomplishment of collective action. While autonomy in the first half of the twentieth century was still a possibility (Parin) attainable for the development of the individual subject, self – determination of subjects today is attainable and stable only within the framework of collective solidary action by groups. Individual employees acquire the ability to self-determination only in joint democratisation and reflection processes. And they preserve, even more: in the co-operative process they practice and increase their ability to act, their self-consciousness, their innovative qualifications, their ability to work. By exploring the possibilities of alternative work design together and realising it together, they no longer stand as individuals resigned to a wealth of unattainable possibilities; it is no longer about individual self-realisation, but forms of solidarity work design: through them then also to self-determination and strengthening of the subject.

One recognises the importance of co-operation and solidarity for successful self-determined work design, if one remembers that work is a social relationship that is characterised by a special relationship of subjectivity and work (Déjours 2006): Through work, the sensitivity of the subject develops, it changes and evolves. The result is a "bodily intelligence" that the Greeks called *metis* (cunning intelligence at Déjours 2006, p. 52, probably to be understood as *Geschick* in German).

Furthermore, Déjours addresses the subject's situation between individual experience and collective action. Work as a social relationship "... takes place in a human world characterised by relationships of inequality, power and domination. Working means involving one's subjectivity in a world that is hierarchical, ordered, constrained, and rife with struggles for domination. Thus, the reality of work is not simply that of the task ... Working is also experiencing the resistance of the social world, and more precisely that of social relations, to the development of intelligence and subjectivity. The reality of work is not only the reality of the objective world but also that of the social world" (Idem, p. 56).

The co-operation of workers, especially when they deviate from standard requirements and develop their own more productive ways of co-ordinating their work, is the result of discussions between them, which are not only about technical considerations, but also about preferences, taste, age, gender, health and medical history, in short: values (Idem, p. 57). These are processes of collective reflection (Eikeland 2007) and reflexive work (Langemeyer 2015; Fricke 2014). At this point, Déjour's reflections come very close to a central theme of work-related action research: promoting processes of collective reflection and democratic participation in the organisation of work (see Section 3).

Déjour's conclusion: "... work rules always have a double orientation – that of the efficiency and quality of work on the one hand, and a social objective on the other. Co-operation presumes a *de facto* compromise that is always both technical and social. This is so because working is never just producing; it is also, and always, living together (in the Aristotelian sense of the term)" (Déjours, 2006, p. 58). And elsewhere: "Work offers what is perhaps the most ordinary opportunity to learn about living together" (in Aristotle's sense) and democracy. But it can also give rise to the worst – the instrumentalisation of human beings and barbary" (Idem, p. 46, italics WF)[2]. Dejour's conclusion is: "At the core of these processes, the relationship to work seems irreplaceably decisive. But the relationship to work only offers this possibility if what emerges from subjectivity in work is recognised and respected. Contemporary changes in the forms of work organisation, administration, and management, in the wake of the neo-liberal turn, rely on principles that precisely suggest sacrificing subjectivity in the name of profitability and competitiveness" (Idem, p. 60).

Déjours opens the view on the ambivalent effect of work on the subject: as a social relationship, work promotes processes of subjectivation[3]. However, in its current neoliberal form (heteronomy of a domineering work organization, instrumentalisation of participation, interest and apparent autonomy in the context of indirect control in the service of efficiency and competitiveness) work causes subject subjugation, subjectification in the sense of Foucault. Not Déjour, but some German sociologists of work see both forms, becoming a subject and submission of the subject to the conditions of labor, as the results of the *same* process. Bröckling, for example, thinks that the creation and submission of the subject, his "social conditioning and self-constitution, go hand in hand" (Bröckling, 2002, p. 177).

Ines Langemeyer drew attention to this short-circuit, "that the *subject subjugation*, as a domineering conditioning and productive utilisation of subjectivity is short-circuited with becoming subject in the sense of developing a capacity for thought and action" (Langemeyer 2002, p. 364). She criticises Bröckling for hiding "forms of acting capacity and of becoming subject, which can point to the possibility of power-free relationships" (ibid). The present text is about this capacity for action and the need of the subjects to liberate themselves from domination, and to work and live as self-determined as possible. We have summarised the acting capacity and the need for self-determination in terms of innovative qualifications (Fricke 2009); in what follows, I would like to show how action research can

2 *Súzen sunérgia* (living together) is always working together at Aristotle. Citizens must co-operate in the accomplishment of tasks: that makes them, for Aristotle, political people, citizens.

3 I distinguish between subjectivation (as fully developing one's subjectivity or becoming an agent of one's subjectivity in the sense e.g. Rancière is using it) and subjectification in the Foucauldian connotation

foster the development and application of these innovative qualifications, albeit initially limited by heteronomy and domination of current neoliberal capitalism in work and social life.

If one attempts to develop forms of self-determined work under the conditions of heteronomous work in neoliberal capitalist enterprises, as is the goal of action research , then one must become clear about when, as we have done in our research, we may at least be able to speak of democratic participation, and when not. We did our best not to set the scale too low for that.

The increased and growing importance of the subjectivity of workers, or more precisely of their subjective qualifications such as creativity, content engagement, empathy, solidarity, etc., for coping with modern work processes is undisputed in the literature of sociology of work. Undisputed are also the interests of companies and their ability to exploit subjectivity for the purpose of increasing the efficiency of their work. On the other hand, it is controversial whether capital pays or is willing to pay the employees the price for using their subjectivity by recognising the claim of workers to self-determination in the work process and accepting its realisation, at least in the form of democratic participation.

Based on our research experience (Fricke et al. 1981; Fricke 2009), I conclude that companies and enterprises allow forms of participation, but as a rule this is an instrumentalisation of participation: companies grant opportunities for limited self-organisation in work processes (Pongratz and Voß, 1997, speak of heteronomous (fremdbestimmte) self-organisation, but this is neither democratic participation nor a form of self-determination: the participation in decisions on the framework conditions of work (human and financial resources, time budget, product) is regularly excluded, while the output and efficiency control via a system of indicators continues. Nevertheless, the workers engage in these forms of externally determined, limited and controlled self-organisation, because they seem to meet the interests of democracy and participation of dependent workers. However, this interest is not fulfilled by *granted* self-determination, but merely instrumentalised.

The view of instrumentalisation of participation is controversial in the literature. However, it is undeniable that the management of capitalist companies has repeatedly managed to practice reduced forms of participation using the same label. There has been a process of not only capturing experience of democratic participation by the management, but at the same time of its subsequent devaluation and reversal into its opposite. I do not want to go as far as Moldaschl, who speaks of "domination by autonomy" (Moldaschl 2002), but the "new autonomy" granted under indirect control (Nies and Sauer 2012; Sauer 2014) is a significantly reduced autonomy for workers: the possibility of self-determined decisions is limited to work execution and work organisation, while no participation is allowed on decisions about the framework conditions of the production process (product, financial and human resources, time budget). Therefore, I cannot agree with Dieter Sauer when he says that "companies *actually* fulfill the classic demands for more autonomy and independence" (Sauer 2014, p. 12). Harald Wolf is more precise when he does not call all forms of conscious allowing of decision-making that make independent problem-solving in specific areas part of the normal work role as autonomy in the sense of self-determined work. In organisational reality, "the granting of competencies of self-organisation in any case remains entangled with their limitation, with externally set goals, with organisational requirements and constraints" (Wolf 1999, p. 169). Participation offers by management, he says elsewhere (Idem, p. 160) "are used directly as leverage to mobi-

lise 'production intelligence', and sacrifices informal producer knowledge in order to increase efficiency. It is about 'optimisation' and 'rationalisation' in, limited, 'self-direction'". In the dispute between democratic participation and domination in the enterprise, the prescribed self-regulation serves the achievement of organisational goals, to which, besides efficiency and optimization of the production processes, also belongs the attainment of the employees' agreement to the domination by capital: "Self-activity is an essential condition of heteronomous work and the bureaucratic-capitalist organisations' capacity to survive" (Wolf 1999, p. 101).

Burawoy also points out the consequences of self-employment for the workers, which is limited by management and operational requirements. "It becomes the moment of a particularly sophisticated form of manipulation: here it is the management itself that deliberately creates or leaves free spaces, thereby providing a kind of playground with apparent options" (Ibid.). Through management agreement with domination is reproduced. "Workers create their own 'informal' rules and enforce them over the management, as essential for the coordination of production .... Such a minimal realisation of the radical need to control one's own work becomes a fundamental component of the approval of capitalist production" (Burawoy 1983, p. 510).

This view, supported by various authors (Fricke, Wolf, Burawoy), of instrumentalised participation in the form of granting only limited participation and self-organisation rights, which management can otherwise revoke at any time, is empirically justified. Boltanski and Chiapello cite the 1978 report of the Trilateral Commission, an international "mouthpiece of financial organisations and multinational corporations advocating capital internationalisation" (Sklar 1980, p. 73). "In this report the authors comment in favor of more direct forms of participation in the workplace: 'The growing awareness of the ineffectiveness of authoritarian management on the one hand and the limitations of systems of representation (the increasingly weaker unions, WF) on the other has led to the development of what Prof. Trist has called *work-linked democracy*. Essentially, this approach is about replacing authority management with semi-autonomous workgroups that take responsibility for organising the work tasks they have been asked to do. ... The principles of work democracy are easy to implement organisationally ... '" (Roberts, Okamoto, Lodge 1981, p. 231, translation by Boltanski and Chiapello, 2003, p. 241).

An international commission of representatives of financial organisations and multinational corporations therefore recommends the introduction of precise and limited forms of participation (responsibility for the *organization of the tasks assigned to them* in semi-autonomous groups), which is suitable for the instrumentalisation of participation. At the end of the 1970s, the motive and most important goal of the international employers was to regain control of the companies in view of the then widespread demands of the working class for self-determined work. This goal was achieved by "breaking with the previous control methods and endogenising the demands for autonomy and personal responsibility that had hitherto been regarded as subversive" (Idem., p. 244), but with the consequence of a reduction of the original claim of the worker's self-determined action to a fictitious participation, identified as externally organised self-organisation (Pongratz and Voß 1997).

Boltanski and Chiapello continue to report how, during the 1970s, French employers have tried hard to defuse and undermine workers' demands for self-determination and

recognition of their creative abilities in hundreds of work-organisation experiments in French industrial companies. There have been a number of extensive reports from companies on experiments on issues such as improving working conditions, abandonment of inspection facilities, etc.: at a metal plant assembly line work has been abolished in assembling electrical appliances "to give each employee greater autonomy"; Peugeot set up assembly units to "contribute to a flattening of hierarchical structures ... to increase autonomy in the workshops" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2003, p. 245).

These reports are important because they show *how*, in the age of indirect control, management has withheld from workers the fulfillment of their demand for labour autonomy: a problem not otherwise found in empirical sociology of work. The result: Too shortsighted, many a labour and industrial sociological as well as the international management literature equate a carelessly used concept of autonomy with the need of the workers for self-determined work. A similarly inappropriate use of the concept of autonomy can be found in the German research and action programme on the "humanization of working life", after all project approaches to the democratization of work had been removed from the program as of 1981 (Fricke, 2014). Both, the German humanisation program after 1980, as well as the several hundred work organisational experiments of the French companies, testify to the success of the entrepreneurial strategy of emptying participation from their business democratic claim and instrumentalising for indirect control (Nies and Sauer, 2012) or modernisation of the exercise of power.

The demands and expectations of employees in democratic participation do not end with the successful instrumentalisation of their interest in participation. Organizational practices of limited self-organisation and reduced participation in organisational goals lead to disappointment on the part of employees, and it is an important question how they handle it. Studies of work sociology, when pursuing this question, will be confronted with the potential, albeit perhaps buried, of employees that will enable them to act independently, and to participate in a democratic way. We were confronted with this potential in the Peiner humanisation project and called it "innovative qualifications" (Fricke et al 1981; Fricke 1983). Harald Wolf speaks of "germs of autonomy, of self-determined action" (Wolf 1999, p. 174). Given favourable conditions, the capacity for and interest in democratic participation can grow, though not quasi "on its own" but be fostered through social processes, such as through co-operation and dialogue with trade unions and scientists in the context of action research (see Section 3).

It should not be a question in work research to state *whether or not* subjects have an interest and the ability (the potential) for self-determined work and democratic participation. Rather, work sociological research is about initiating, accompanying, and analysing processes that have the potential of fostering workers' democratic action and self-determination. It is therefore necessary to think in processes.

Thinking in processes in terms of work, technique, cooperation; from this follows the consciousness of the historical and therefore designable character of all conditions of organisational work; the understanding of the workers as subjects of organisational processes in all their manifestations (work and technique, work organisation and working conditions, co-operative work) were the starting points for our research, leading us to develop processes of democratic participation, to demonstrate the existence of innovative qualifications as

creative potential, and ultimately to action research as the theoretical and research-practical concept appropriate to our intellectual interest. Our intellectual interest was "to discover starting points for social change in industrial work life" (Fricke 1975, p. 23). For this purpose, there is a need for subjects capable of action who know how to express their interest in self-determination in the world of work despite all the risks posed by neoliberal alienation and instrumentalisation. Action research can support them in collective reflection and action processes.

This ability of action research is all the more important as solidary acting is increasingly difficult today in times of neoliberalism. This applies for conditions forged by organisations, and increasingly digitally networked work, especially if it takes place as individual work without organisational context, mediated via virtual platforms (crowd-working) (Section 3.6). Precarious working conditions, widespread fears about keeping the work place or about the next job are fueling competition between those working as crowd-workers. All this poses great challenges for action research; action research can only meet them because subjects, according to our research experience: all subjects, possess the indestructible potential of innovative qualifications, this means having the capacity for and interest in democratic participation and self-determination (conceptual Fricke 1975, empirical Fricke, et al 1981).

This is true even though, as Ehrenberg has shown, we find ourselves in "a political crisis and a crisis of the subject, in a fundamental change of these two figures, politics and person: transformations that are mutually dependent" (Ehrenberg 2000, p 133). They express themselves in a threat to subjectivity through power and subsequently a *restriction of subjects' ability to act*. "Public action is no longer organised by mass movements, it no longer happens under the protection of an organisation and it no longer happens in the face of an identifiable adversary" (Ibid.). This interpretation of the weakening of the subject and the concomitant limitation of his political and operational ability to act seems to me to be more accurate and realistic than the assumption of the conditioning of the subject, understood as his/her submission to external ends. What disturbs this assumption, and makes it seem unrealistic, is the disregard of the subject's ability to resist the attempts of submission/conditioning. Instead of picturing in all facets the "subjectification of labour", understood as the subjugation of the subject, it would be necessary to investigate empirically and promote by action research, presupposing a normative concept of subjectivity (interest in participation as anthropological constant [Fricke], the generally human need to be free of domination [Rawls]; subject with emancipatory core in Eva Senghaas-Knobloch), possible forms of resistance to the subject's conditioning and usage of subjects for the purpose of exploitation. Foucault in his early writings and in his wake Moldaschl / Voss have apparently overlooked the subject's ability to resist.

From the late Foucault is a short text that supports this idea. In the epilogue to the study of Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow "Michel Foucault – Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics" (1982), Foucault writes: "We need to conceive and build what we could be in order to shake off this kind of political double-bind, which consists in the simultaneous individualisation and totalisation by modern power structures (of the state, global corporations and before that the church, WF) ... . We need to bring about new forms of subjectivity by adopting the kind of individuality rejected for centuries." (Foucault, 1994, p. 250). Summing up: "(T)oday the fight against the forms of subjectification, against the subjuga-

tion of subjectivity[4] becomes increasingly important, even if the struggles against domination and exploitation have not disappeared, quite the contrary."

In the following section I present action research (Idem) as a method to promote the individual and collective capacity of subjects (dependent employees) and to enable them to resist the conditioning for exploitation purposes so that they can actualise their need for self-determination as much as possible. Of course, in this purpose, to promote self-determination and the ability to act, it is necessary to consider the above-mentioned difficulty that Alain Ehrenberg has convincingly worked out (Ehrenberg 2015).

3. Action research: the road to workers' active and democratic participation

"Action research (AR) refers to the conjunction of three elements: research, action, and participation. Unless all three elements are present, the process cannot be called AR. Put another way, AR is a form of research that generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote social change and social analysis. But the social change we refer to is not just any kind of change. AR claims to increase the ability of the involved community or organisation members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so" (Greenwood and Levin 1998, p. 6).

Of all the characteristics of action research, the most interesting in terms of science is its special relationship between theory and practice. To this day, the social sciences are discussing "whether and how they intervene in social practice with the means of theory" (Vobruba 2017, p. 173). This is the central question of action research. Secondly, the relationship between scientists and practitioners in the research and design process is equally important and closely linked to the theory-practice problem. It is seen and practiced very differently in the different scientific concepts; the differences range from the hierarchical relationship between researcher and researched (i.e. research objects) over the value-free postulate and the artificial image of researching independently of the observer (the subject) to an equal relationship between actors from science and practice in action research.

3.1 Action research and critical theory

Action research has met with resistance and rejection in German social science for decades. A powerful root of this resistance was for a long time the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer saw the task of critical theory as: "to overcome the tension between the insight of the theorist and the oppressed majority *for which he thinks*" (Horkheimer 1937, p. 274, emphasis WF). The intellectual theorist, as Marcuse put it in 1989, "becomes a kind of a delegated thinker of society" (Marcuse 1989, p. 15, quoted in Vobruba l.c., p. 176).

Leo Löwenthal, a member of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research since 1924, has made a particularly decisive formulation of the relationship between theory and practice

4 The quoted text states: "Today the fight ... against subjugation *through* subjectivity becomes increasingly important ....". However, this formulation is based on a translation error. I have been made aware of this by Ines Langemeyer (2002, p. 366).

from the point of view of critical theory: "... the reflection of the relationship between theory and practice was its [critical theory's WF] innermost element", he says in a lengthy conversation with Helmut Dubiel, and he continues: "... this awareness of non-participation, of denial; the inexorable analysis of the existing as far as we were competent in each case is the essence of critical theory" (Löwenthal 1980, p. 79/80). On the criticism of a student in one of his seminars, critical theory had "completely disconnected from Marxism and lost sight of reality," Löwenthal would have answered "that he missed with this criticism the meaning of critical theory. *We have not abandoned practice, but practice has left us*" (Idem, p. 79). This sentence refers to the development of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party, but it also marks the great distance of critical theory to social practice in general, its hierarchical view of the theory-practice relationship then and into the recent past. Our slogan was "do not participate", says Leo Löwenthal elsewhere in the cited interview, "we were different and we knew better" (Löwenthal 1980, p. 75).

For Habermas too, theory and practice are two separate discourses. He denies any possibility of connecting them in any way and sees only a mediated influence of theory on practical changes: The critical theory can stimulate a process of enlightenment that brings about a change of practice "by educating the practitioners [*Praxisakteure*]". A direct involvement of the researcher in practical discourses is not recommended. According to Habermas, it can integrate the scientist so much into the process of change that he loses his ability to participate in theoretical discourses[5]. He resolutely and without further justification rejects action research: "The fashionable demands for a type of action research, which is to connect with political enlightenment overlook the also applicable to the social sciences circumstance that an uncontrolled change of the field with the simultaneous collection of data in the field is incompatible" (Habermas 1963, p. 18).

Habermas here draws the relationship between theory and practice as a one-way street; he overlooks the fact that in action research, participating in practical discourses for the researcher also means a learning process that can revert to theoretical discourse. Secondly, the argument against the "uncontrolled change of the field" is interesting: It comes from the natural sciences, in which the controlled change of the object under investigation belongs to the methodical canon of scientific experiments. In addition, one can read the wording in such a way that Habermas in action research misses the theory-controlled change of the field, this means also that he supposes the traditional superposition of theory over practice. With both readings, Habermas misses the understanding of action research.

More recently, a new development has emerged within the framework of critical theory, suggesting a growing understanding of action research. From the postulate of an epistemic rupture between the practice of "people" and that of scientists (Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas) to the gradual acknowledgment of reflexive abilities even of practitioners, critical theory has now come a long way. Recently recognised is the ability of practitioners to independently criticise the social conditions in which they live (Celikates 2009).

In the context of his reflections on the reflexive abilities of the practitioners, Celikates shows by examples that the abilities of the practitioners to "reflexively refer to the social conditions and their effects on themselves" can be hindered or blocked by certain social conditions; in other words, these abilities exist, even if they are hindered by blockages in

5 Concerning the position of action research see section 3.2.

their application, so that on the part of the actors "structural reflexivity deficits" become noticeable (Celikates 2009, p.174). Their overcoming can be done "not just by an impulse from the outside – by an external enlightening authority – ..., but .... ultimately can only be credited to those affected themselves" (op. cit., p. 179). Celikates implies, with these expressions, which I find remarkable, the possibility of actionable subjects with the capacity for collective reflection.

Both the recognition of the equivalence[6] of practitioners and scientific actors in the research process, and the departure from the postulate of epistemic rupture between the practices of each are prerequisites for answering the question, "whether and how to intervene with the means of theory in social practice" (Vobruba 2017, p. 173), a prerequisite for understanding the solution that identifies action research in this field.

3.2 Theory and Practice in Action Research

Vobruba sees theory as a social practice of its own kind. "If theory is considered sociologically, there is no categorial difference between theory and practice, but *two forms of practice,* namely the practice of people and the practice of those people that carry out sociological theorising and research ... It is no longer about the relation of theory and practice, but about *the conditions of possibility for coupling these two different practices*" (Vobruba 2017, p. 179, emphasis WF).

The understanding of theoretical discourse (theory) as a practice of (social) scientists can already be found in 2007 at the Norwegian action researcher Eikeland (Eikeland 2007). It is a common view in action research, and the question of the possibilities of "coupling these two different practices", which Vobruba postulates, but does not elaborate, finds its solution in action research.

For action researchers, the possibility of intervention in social practice with the means of theory is taken for granted, it is one of their core tasks: theoreticians of action research have been dealing with this question for a long time. Kurt Lewin: "For social concerns, it is not enough for university institutions to produce a new scientific insight. It will be necessary to create fact-finding organs, social eyes and ears, directly in the institutions (in the original: corporations") of social practice (Lewin 1951, first 1946, p. 285, translation slightly updated, WF), "Research should have the power to change the world, to intervene into social practice and thereby regain new theoretical problems" (Langemeyer 2011, p. 153).

The intervention of theory in social practice takes the form of dialogues as a form of collective reflection between scientists and practitioners. Thus, in the process of action research, the "coupling" of the two types of practice turns into a dialogical co-operation of science and practice with the twofold goal of (a) gaining new scientific knowledge and (b) shaping social practice according to criteria set in the dialogue of the participating actors from science and practice. The meaning of the co-operation of science and practice for the scientists consists in gaining new scientific knowledge from the process of designing social practice (Lewin called for the "development of more conclusive theories of social change",

6 Not their equality; of course there are differences, e.g. in the temporal rhythm of scientific and practical work, in the nature of work experience, work organisation, etc. But there are also common features (often overlooked or disputed), such as the capacity for reflection and self-reflection, the capacity for discourse, etc.

Lewin 1951, p. 287), for the practitioners correspondingly new practical knowledge from a changed practice.

This determination of the relation of theory and practice as a unity of learning, action and research (Idem, p. 291), of knowledge and change of social practice is constitutive for all definitions of action research. Here, collective reflection of practitioners and action researchers plays a central role, generating capacity for action and change processes. In a process of reflection of practice, scientific and practical knowledge is developed: "By (1) mirroring both the present and the past (practice), participants can thus (2) question the current ways of thinking, carry out (3) thought experiments concerning possible changes .... as well as planning practical experiments and evaluating them" (Eikeland and Nicolini 2011, p. 172).

Exactly according to this concept of change laboratories originated from activity theory (Virkkunen and Ahone, 2011; Clot 2009), but without knowing it then, we have built up in our Peiner Project for the Humanisation of Work Life 1975-1979 the process of development, agreement and evaluation of alternative working practices together with the practitioners (so-called "unskilled" workers). In other words, we have developed our research concept according to our question from the situation that we found at the beginning of our project: starting with an analysis from the point of view of the employees, and subsequently a participatory, dialogical – reflexive learning and action process including the development of a theoretical concept from practice[7]. "Within such a context ... theorising is constructed as internal, not external, to the practice at hand" (Eikeland and Nicolini 2011, p. 172).

Although the scope and duration of our approach was greater, its logic was that of the change lab: At the beginning of the project, we asked each worker at work three questions: (1) Please describe your working practice ("Mirroring both practices of the present and the past") (2) What do you have to criticise ("question the current way of thinking and practice") and (3) What would you change? ("Carry out thought experiments concerning possible changes").

This first phase of the reflection of current and possible alternative work practice (analysis of possibilities: E. and W. Fricke 1977, p. 104; Fricke 2010, p. 259) initially included three weeks in the organisation plus a one-week seminar with all 45 members of the cutting department (Anschneiderei) in an educational institution. In the course of the entire four-year humanisation project, four further weekly seminars took place outside the company, which served as an accompanying reflection and evaluation of the company changes as well as further training of the participating workers (Fricke et al. 1981). According to our experience, this high proportion of reflection and further education is an essential prerequisite for successful action research if it wants to liberate practitioners from the subjectification trap and develop actors capable of action who are able to change their working conditions according to their interests and carry out a process of democratic participation. Due to an agreement between top management and the local works council no participating worker was fired during or after the action research project. In addition their wage was, though modestly, raised acknowledging their innovative suggestions; moreover the wage system was changed from piece rate to wage per hour, which was an essential demand of the workers. For more details see Fricke et al. 1981; Fricke 1983)

7 I have briefly outlined our empirical approach in order to show how a theoretical concept can be developed from practice with the participation of the practitioners and with close attention to the initial situation.

3.3 Action Research is about Values

Action research is not a value-free social science. It is, and this also belongs to its core, committed to democracy. From the beginning, action researchers were dedicated to democratic values. Kurt Lewin always emphasszed the need for a value orientation for the social sciences in general, and for action research in particular. There are two aspects of action research: a process for changing social practice; and the effort to gain new scientific knowledge from change processes. These two aspects are for him not a random win-win situation for scientists and practitioners, but a condition for a non-technocratic social science. "Unfortunately, there is nothing in the social laws and social research that forces the practitioner to goodness. Science gives both doctor and murderer, democracy and fascism, more freedom and power. The social scientist should also recognise his responsibility in this regard" (Lewin, 1951, p. 295).

Given that there are a multitude of values in a pluralistic society, democratic dialogue (Gustavsen 1992) is the appropriate way of agreeing about values among the actors involved. In an action research project, the canon of values agreed upon for the improvement of a situation thus applies. This process may seem daring at first glance. However, since the practitioners from a concrete field of practice are dialogue partners of the scientists and provided that all dialogue partners (including the practitioners) participate in the dialogue on an equal footing, my experience is that the agreed upon values and the subsequent results of the action meet democratic criteria.

To support this consideration, I refer to Dewey's theory of democracy[8]. John Dewey's "Liberalism and Social Action" (Dewey 1935/1980) develops the concept of an *experimentally advancing history process* as an alternative to the idea that "human history takes the form of lawful progress." According to Dewey, the normative guide to experimentally seeking what constitutes the most comprehensive response to a socially problematic situation must be understood as the idea of freeing from barriers which resist free communication of society members for the purpose of intelligent problem-solving. *"The more potentials can be released and realized ... the more unconstrained the individual elements can interact with each other; from this, Dewey concludes that within the sphere of influence of human communities, the possibilities created therein can only be fully realized if all their members are able to participate as freely and unconstrained as possible in the communication..."*. (Emphasis WF)

"The historical-social experiments lead to better, more stable solutions.... the more comprehensively those concerned by the problem are involved in their exploration; for with each further freeing of communication from limits, the capacity of the community concerned to perceive as much as possible increases the currently idle potentials that would be suitable for a productive solution of the encountered difficulty" (Honneth 2015, p. 96-100).

In other words, the innovative potential of the citizens of a society or the workforce of a company, as well as their anthropologically based need for self-determination and democratic participation, must 'only' be liberated and made possible in order to develop a democratic society, whose members take together decisions concerning their present and future

8 In the following, I take over the summary of Dewey's core idea of his theory of democracy in the depiction of Honneth (Honneth, 2015, p. 96-100).

in egalitarian discourses. Action research is such an experimental procedure in the spirit of John Dewey, which explores and tests possibilities of democratic shaping of the working world with the participation of all concerned. With its resources it contributes to expand the field of communicative action as far as possible into the economy: economic and ecological democracy, post-growth society, equal rights for peoples, global peace would be the big goals; democratic participation in as many concrete practical contexts as possible, the little concrete steps enabled by action research.

3.4 Action Research – Motor of Social Movements for Industrial Democracy?

In political and social practice, the utopia of industrial democracy meets, as we all know, with the greatest opposition. This has also been experienced by Norwegian action research.

The Norwegian action research programme for the promotion of industrial democracy emerged in the 1960s from the consideration that a democratic society could only be named as such if democratic conditions prevailed also in the economy. In a large number of Norwegian companies, action researchers engaged in experiments with which they wanted to showcase how democratic processes and structures can be developed at company level. They organised forms of democratic participation in the form of practical discourses, in which they participated as scientists along with practitioners in order to conceptualise change processes and learn from them for theoretical discourses. They learned that words as well as theoretical propositions are not sufficient to effect changes in practice, but that participation in practical discourses, i.e., the opening of theory for practice is required; they also learned to share responsibility for the practice changes developed and agreed upon with practitioners.

In Norway, in the 1960s and 1970s, as part of the industrial democracy program, a wealth of experimentation on industrial democracy emerged in enterprises, some of which became internationally known as so-called “star cases” (Emery/Thorsrud 1982). These were projects of a model character, i.e., they took place in sheltered rooms under special, unusual conditions. Their claim was to model how democratic participation in enterprises would be organised if, yes, if the conditions under which these experiments were successful could be generalised, e.g. in that social forces (trade unions, democratic parties), in the framework of a successful labour policy, would advocate a generalisation of the conditions for democratic participation and in the perspective of economic democracy.

This expectation was not fulfilled. Emery and Thorsrud expressed disappointment at the lack of support from the unions. The Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions launched no national campaign to involve tens of thousands of people in the discussion on ‘everyday democracy’, as Emery and Thorsrud had expected. In the national unions there was initially little understanding of the two necessarily complementary aspects of industrial democracy: representation systems on the one hand and democratisation in the workplace on the other. (Emery and Thorsrud 1982, p. 143).

This diffusion deficit remained until the end of the programme. In their final report, Emery and Thorsrud state that the new labour unions’ working environment policy shows that “the structure of the union in Norway is not yet ready for change ... In 1973 and 1974, the Confederation of Trade Unions and the large national unions formulated the political

basis on work environment, including health and safety, shiftwork and working time, pace of work and monotony, etc. In other words, they had turned away from the core concern of the industrial democratisation program, the democratisation of the workplace (issues such as alienation and authority) ..." (Idem, p. 153).

An attempt to overcome the diffusion deficit was undertaken by the Norwegian action researcher Björn Gustavsen. At his suggestion, Norwegian employers' organisations and trade unions in the early 1980s grappled with the difficulties that had made attempts to democratise work fail so far. They reached agreements on questions of work organisation and the initiation of operational and / or regional development based on local co-operation (Gustavsen 1985). The agreements dealt less with issues than with procedures. The most important of these were dialogue conferences, which Gustavsen saw as the institutionalisation of a "mediating discourse" that gave all actors interested in the democratic development of working life, such as a region, sector or cluster of companies, the opportunity to discuss together what they wanted to achieve / change and how they wanted to do it (Gustavsen 2001, p. 18). Theoretical and practical discourses, which dealt with the actual processes of change in organisations, companies, regions, were evaluated and co-ordinated in the mediating discourses.

With the invention of the mediating discourse and the dialogue conferences, diffusion processes were integrated from the beginning into all individual projects of the action research programme. Thus, Gustavsen had not only developed an instrument to attract scientists and practitioners from companies but also actors from the social environment (labour market parties, regional and municipal representatives) for dialogues about change, but he had also found an answer to the question of how theoretical and practical discourses on how theory and practice could become "coupled" (Vobruba). The subject of the mediating discourse was the question "how to communicate about change ... In this focus three "poles" could be identified: a discourse on theory; a discourse on practical action; and a discourse on how to link them" (Gustavsen 2001, p. 19).

Gustavsen refers to Habermas' theory of communicative action as a theoretical foundation for his approach. He emphasises the immense practical significance of Habermas' theory that communication is a constitutive force of social life (as John Dewey did in 1935), but contradicts his assertion that researchers are so involved in the practical side of the issue through participation in practical discourses that their participation in theoretical discourses is no longer possible (Gustavsen 2001, p. 18). A process of liberation does not have to start with a theory, as Habermas argues for the relationship between theory, practice and social change, but rather with (modified) practice, preceded by, and at the end of, a communicative process between all actors involved in the project and in the social environment based on an agreement about what should be changed and who should take on which task. We did the same in our action research projects, and I agree with Gustavsen on the basis of our experience.

With the integration of diffusion strategies into the concept and practice of the action research programmes he has led, Gustavsen has tried to extend the temporary programmes to social movements. In particular, the involvement of societal actors in the communication process of action research programmes through dialogue conferences was an important tool. "To reach scale (i.e. social movement, WF) there must be two processes of 'diffusion' running in parallel: one within the research community, one among the people concerned"

(Gustavsen 2003, p. 97). In Norway, this concept has in some cases actually succeeded in generating sustainable development processes at regional level through the involvement of all relevant actors (employees, local and regional unions and employers' organisations, representatives of local and regional authorities) (Qvale 2008). At the national level, however, this was not possible permanently in Norway or Sweden. In the Swedish LOM Program[9], 60 social scientists have been trained as action researchers by participating in action research projects, they could in the future become actors of a social movement to democratise work, but not even in Scandinavia have the social conditions for the emergence of a movement as envisioned by Gustavsen been met, let alone in continental Europe.

In action research projects, it succeeds time and again to liberate small groups of practical actors from the subjectification trap and thereby make them capable of acting, but in view of the still prevailing neo-liberalism, no social movements are emerging from this. At present, even in Scandinavia, there is a lack of social actors (especially the unions lacking sufficient power resources) that could make the action-research-tested vision of democratising work politically viable. The limit that the industrial democracy programme in Norway was unable to overcome in the 1960s (Emery and Thorsrud 1982) still remains.

3.5 Democratic dialogue as a place of collective reflection

A central component of a future democratisation of work is the democratic dialogue. Democratic dialogues are processes of collective reflection in which practitioners and action researchers can collectively exercise democratic practice, and develop and agree on projects to shape work and its conditions. The Norwegian action researcher Björn Gustavsen has developed the concept of democratic dialogue and practiced it many times in action research projects, as well as in the context of mediating discourses in dialogue conferences involving social actors (Gustavsen 1992).

Greenwood and Levin point out that action research democratises the relationship between researchers ("professional researchers") and practitioners ("local interested parties") (Greenwood and Levin 1998, p. 4). This implies that, when collaborating with practitioners, scientists abandon the oft-cited claim of superiority of scientific over practical knowledge (epistemic rupture). That is easier said than done. Very often, scientists need to develop skills in the research process that they could not acquire in their academic education. These include, above all, dialogical skills such as the ability to listen, the ability to individual and collective (self-)reflection, to learn from the practical actors in the common research process, to bring into the dialogue one's own knowledge in a comprehensive and understandable way, but at the same time open to new aspects. Of course, these requirements also apply to practitioners; their knowledge is based more on experience, and their work experiences include the fact that new experiences can relativise existing knowledge, but can also develop it further.

The cooperative relationship of scientists and practitioners in the field of research, founded on self-reflection of the participating actors, is, in addition to the special theory-practice relationship, another central feature of action research. Herbert Fitzek described in a small essay, in a very original but plausible way in analogy to Velazquez's painting "Las

9 LOM = Leadership, Organisation, Medbestämmande

Meninas" from the 17th century[10], that a special feature of action research lies in the fact that the researcher not only discovered his presence in the field of research, but that he also perceives himself there as an actor: "As with Velazquez ... the attention to the observer as an actor ... (calls attention to the fact) that the 'extra-worldliness' ... of the researcher is a beautiful fiction, with which human science wants to ennoble itself to the status of natural sciences' exactness – although precisely modern physics has long rejected the ideal of subject-independent constitution of objects" (Fitzek 2011, p. 169).

While Lewin's understanding of the researcher's presence and active role in the field of research was initially "only" a methodological innovation, it also had a normative aspect, since it involved human relationships between scientific and practice actors in the research process. The action researcher will therefore not only, as is common practice, account for his subjective influence on the research result, but he will also seek to reflect on his relationship with his co-operation partners in the field of research and seek to shape it democratically.

Democratic dialogues are a field of practice to democratise relationships between representatives of different groups in an organisation, from top management to shop floor employees. In such heterogeneous groups power relations, based on position, training, habitus, eloquence, etc. play a major role. Some action researchers even go so far as to call participation referring to Foucault, in general, as "enactment of power", i.e., power games, and by no means only refer to those dialogues whose participants represent a large power gap (Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen 2011).

Although power often shapes human relationships, I find that attitude too static; it obscures the fact that partcipative democratic dialogues are processes in which democratic attitudes can be practiced: also and especially between people of different hierarchical positions. Experience from a variety of action research shows that democratic dialogues and participation do not make power relations disappear, but that they are very successful in subordinating and thereby reducing the exercise of power to democratic rules. Democratic dialogues become democracy exercises in this way. A look at the criteria of democratic dialogues (Gustavsen 1992, p. 3-4) shows that they can change the way power is used in hierarchical structures in the long term and can contribute to the democratisation of hierarchically structured practice in organisations.

For reasons of space, I cannot present the catalogue of criteria for democratic dialogue here. Instead, I limit myself to the presentation of their basic idea using three criteria as an example. "Practical work experience is the prerequisite for participation. It is, by definition, the only type of experience that all participants have". Participants should be able to allow for a growing level of disagreement. – The dialogue should at all times lead to agreements that can serve as a platform for a practical action. It should be noted that there is no contradiction between this criterion and the preceding one. The main strength of a democratic system compared to all the rest is that it allows a wide range of opinions and ideas to be put in-

10 In this painting, depicting the Spanish court of the 17th century, the artist can be seen in the background while working on the easel. But whom does he portray? Among the many possible interpretations, Fitzek chooses the one who lets the artist portray the viewer of the picture, especially as the artist looks in the direction of the viewer. The viewer is also part of the picture.

to practice while allowing decisions that can be supported by all those involved" (Criteria 5, 12 and 13, Gustavsen 1992, p. 4).

Equal participation in the research process does not mean that scientists and practitioners are pursuing the same goal. Both groups of actors remain attached to the social and work contexts from which they originate when they come together for a limited time to co-operate. Scientists remain members of their community; in addition to the action research process, they also pursue particular, specific interests: the scientists want to generate scientific knowledge that they can put up for discussion in their specialist disciplines; analogously, the practitioners are interested in design processes, i.e., in actions that lead to an improvement of their situation. But beyond that, their interest also focuses on the development of new practical knowledge, new work experience, new working methods that can be used in the professional discourse with his/her work colleagues, a new working practice, a new form of work organisation or the organisation of democratic participation processes and new organisational dialogue spaces as standard of their praxis.

New practical knowledge and new working methods are constantly emerging in the context of changing work activity. Processes of digitalisation of production and services open up new possibilities for action research and democratic participation[11], insofar as they take place in companies. Particularly in small and medium-sized IT companies, forms of modern, co-operative work emerge that demonstrate the relevance of action research. Digitalised work requires employees to act like action researchers: they analyse and think through their work practices to find innovative solutions, and they do so co-operatively; in a process of collective reflection on their work (Langemeyer 2015). This practice corresponds exactly to the practice of action research. Ines Langemeyer describes digitalised work she has empirically examined as "the scientification of work practice, which requires a form of intellectuality that is both practical and scientific, specific and general" (Langemeyer 2015, p. 31/32).

At the same time, Langemeyer also points to the flip side of processes of digitalisation. She shows how the digitalisation of production and services in conjunction with the accumulation of Big Data leads to global concentration of democratically uncontrolled power, as accumulated by the global companies Google, Amazon, Facebook, etc. With their economic and cultural power, the large data corporations undermine democratic structures (van Dijck 2018; Dolata and Schrape 2018), thus posing a considerable challenge for action research and the possibility of democratic participatory processes.

3.6 Outlook: Action Research in Platform Economy

Finally, I would like to discuss whether and how action research under the conditions of digitalised work in platform economics is possible, which effects it can have and which questions arise from the most recent forms of digital employment for action research. None of the previous three editions of the *Handbook of Action Research* (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, 2008; Bradbury, 2015) contains reports on platform economy action research projects; it is a new field for action research.

11 The effects of digitalisation in platform economics are different; see the next section.

So far, action research projects are taking place in companies, municipalities or regions, i.e, in rooms where the workers are physically present and co-operate as groups in work processes. However, in the platform economy, organisations are no longer the place of work and added value. Online work is developing a new way of organising work in the form of crowd work, in which the activities are carried out via an online platform or mobile applications (apps). The work is usually done in the homes of the workers; it is extremely flexible in terms of time and is thus unbounded to a degree that is unknown from company-organised work. Companies use crowdsourcing to gain access to an initially unknown number of jobseekers (crowd), thereby opening up greater potential for skills and manpower than they would be able to maintain in companies. They do not need their own infrastructure, but they use the infrastructure of the workers, in the case of Uber and Airbnb their cars and apartments. In platform economics, companies put work orders online with the help of external or proprietary platforms. Job seekers can register on these platforms and then apply for work assignments. The orders range from extremely detailed subtasks (microtasks) as a result of digital Taylorisation, which are paid to the so-called clickworkers with cents per Microtask (Click) (for example, checking addresses and phone numbers) to design and innovative or creative tasks (design of company logos or websites; translations; creation of publicity texts; programming; graphic design, design of t-shirts). In the so-called Share Economy, clients and contractors are brought in contact via a platform: new markets are organised online, orders such as taxi and delivery services are no longer handled online, but real: car owners make their cars available for Uber, and homeowners their homes for Airbnb. (For more details and the following information see Leimeister et al. 2016a and 2016b).

The platform economy reinforces and accelerates the long-term tendency towards ever more precarious employment, not only in the US (Srnicek 2017, p. 80), but increasingly also in Western Europe. The crowdworkers 'situation vis-à-vis the company and the (external or corporate) platform as a virtual market, where corporate orders and crowdworkers' demands meet, is precarious and characterised by many uncertainties and disadvantages:

- The status of the crowdworker is unclear; the companies see and treat them as self-employed (in fact, they are fictitious self-employed).
- As a rule, the crowdworkers work separated spatially and temporally. Among them there is competition[12] for the orders of the companies.
- Crowdworking is a fast-growing, extreme form of the low pay and flexibilisation of work. The payment of the Crowdworker is extremely low, it is determined by the platform or the offering company. Microtasks are remunerated with cent amounts per click. For 79% of the crowdworkers, the income earned is a secondary income; so far as it is the main income source, the earning is only € 1,500 per month with a weekly working time of 80 hours (Leimeister et al, 2016 b, p 10)[13].

12 Crowdworkers can register on a platform. They are scored by the platform or the company according to their work results and can gradually acquire the status of specialists / experts for certain work assignments.

13 Representative studies on the situation of crowdworkers are missing so far; The two Leimeister studies and the report by Pongratz and Bormann (2017) are among the first empirical analyses of online work and crowdwork in general. The Leimeister studies contain important and interesting information, but are not based on a representative sample.

- More qualified orders will be paid either on a profit or time basis. In the case of result-based compensation, only the winners selected by the company or the platform usually receive a payment, all other crowdworkers go out empty-handed; the right of design projects for websites or products often remain with the entrepreneur.
- There is a pronounced power asymmetry between crowdworkers and companies or platform operators, intensified by the Internet-based form of communication. Crowdworkers suffer greatly from non-transparent or imperceptible monitoring methods of the platform operators. It can happen that the crowdworkers are informed succinctly via the Internet that he/she should adhere more closely to the specification of the task he/she is working on. This machine-mediated, one-sided form of communication, the absence of direct personal contacts, precludes any form of respectful human relationships from the outset.

The brief sketch of their working conditions (further details in Leimeister et al. 2016a and b; Pongratz and Bormann 2017) shows that crowdworkers do not yet have any power resources (Brinkmann et al. 2008, p. 24). They lack structural power because their economic position in the labuor market or in the production / service process is extremely weak due to their isolation and in the face of competition. They do not have any organisational power yet; it is only since 2016 that unions have made isolated attempts to organise crowdworkers. The IG Metall has on 8.11.2017, publicly reported on the creation of a "Crowdworking Platform Ombudsman" to mediate conflicts between crowdworkers and platform companies. It should also be noted that the "Frankfurt Declaration on Platform-Based Work" of various European trade unions, with the participation of IG Metall on December 6, 2016, appeals to the customers and operators of platforms to pay workers the minimum wage, giving them access to social security (unemployment benefits and health insurance), to organise a neutral mediation in conflicts between employees and companies, to create transparency about the evaluation of employees, their qualifications and their work and, above all, to respect their right to a coalition (all information on Faircrowd.work/de/unions). In addition, various platform operators have agreed on a "Code of Conduct", which sets out ten principles for fair collaboration between browser sourcing companies and crowdworkers (crowdsourcing-code.de).

I have briefly summarised the main shortcomings and precarious features of the working conditions of crowdworkers and the initial reactions of German and European trade unions to show that the building of organisational power is (a) urgent and (b) still at the very beginning. However, the overall picture also includes crowdworkers developing their own initiatives to improve their situation. Here are three examples:

Among the food couriers of the British company Deliveroo, there has recently been a first strike when Deliveroo hired his messengers in Akkord, i.e., intended to pay per delivery instead of a fixed hourly wage. "The drivers organised a parade through the city ... all the way to the company headquarters, where they confronted a manager." He wanted to talk to each dissatisfied person individually, but: "We all want the same," said one of the drivers: an hourly wage of 8 pounds. In the end Deliveroo renounced the new payment model "... It was one of the first big fights of the Gig Economy, and many observers were amazed at how much the drivers held together" (Kramer, 2017).

In New York City 24 co-operatives (almost exclusively of women) have been set up, operating car rental companies independently of Uber. Women drivers who joined these co-operatives could increase their hourly wages from U$ 10 to U$ 25 (Scholz 2017).

In April 2017 employees of the Austrian bicycle delivery service Foodora founded the first works council of a platform company. They were assisted by the vida-Road Department, member of the Austrian Trade Union Federation ÖGB (Kuba 2017).

These examples show that creativity, the potential for criticism and resistance, the ability to act in solidarity and the knowledge of their interests, in short: the innovative qualifications among the platform economy employees as well as all dependent employees, and even under the extremely difficult conditions of this form of digital work, can be activated.

The isolation of employees can also be overcome, as the examples show. Drawing on the experience of joint action, platforms could be organized: let us call them Action Research Platforms, where crowdworkers, encouraged by action researchers, to share their work experiences, reflect on desired improvements, reflect on resistance to initiatives to shape their working conditions, and discuss to find ways to cope, briefly enter into a process of collective reflection in which actions are taken to improve their current situation.

One can think of inviting participants to seminars[14] in an action research platform in order to reflect on their situation with action researchers in democratic dialogues and to discuss and agree on options for action. For example, how can workers organise themselves a platform that they own, through which they obtain orders from companies and distribute them among themselves according to rules that are their own? The pay could be negotiated with the companies, if possible with the support of a union. Or: Crowdworkers can, based on the experiences of British couriers or New York taxi drivers, develop opportunities to form co-operatives, including the necessary infrastructure (apps), eliminating companies such as Uber, Airbnb, Deliveroo, Foodora, etc.

The conclusion is that the many activities of crowdworkers to improve their working conditions are based on their creativity, their commitment to their interests and their ability to act individually and in groups, in short: their innovative qualifications. With the support of the trade unions and supported by the determination of the workers, first attempts are being made to progressively achieve good working conditions in the platform economy as well; action researchers can build on these initiatives, reinforcing them and thus trying to fulfill the promise of action research: from the subjectification trap to a competent and active person.

However, it should be remembered that crowdworkers are extremely dependent on platform economics, and in many ways are hindered in self-determined collective action. The increasing tendency to precariousness of their employment relationships, of the spatio-temporal delimitation of their work and the resulting isolation has been mentioned above. In addition, platform economics is destroying social and welfare institutions such as co-determination (see Combating work Councils and Ver.di's years of unsuccessful attempts to agree on a retailer collective agreement at Amazon). They refuse to enter into employment relationships at all, and treat crowdworkers as self-employed workers in order to deprive them of employee rights. In this way, they are fundamentally changing the way in which capitalist companies function: outsourcing and lean management are being taken to the extreme, jobs are being fragmented and scattered by fake self-employed, companies have discovered a new raw material: data, whose collection and processing not only destroy

14 Allies can be trade unions, which have already started organizing seminars with crowdworkers, and are also making initial efforts to organise crowdworkers. See the above-mentioned Frankfurt Declaration of various European trade unions with participation of IG Metall in 2016

privacy and create large surveillance capacities (Srnicek 2017, p. 102), but also acquire a great deal of power to use them to destroy civil society and parliamentary democracy (example: Facebook, Cambridge Analytica and the US Congress 2017 elections).

In short, the platform enterprise grows great economic and socially uncontrolled power, which they are determined to apply (Dolata 2018). "These companies are anything but mere information owners; on the contrary, they are increasingly owners of the infrastructure of society. Therefore, the analysis of their effects on the economy as a whole must always consider the monopolistic tendencies of these platforms" (Srnicek 2017, p. 93). All Big Data companies are working to build their own privatised Internet: "... Amazon's cloud network is nothing more than a private Internet, and Microsoft and Facebook are working together on their own transatlantic fiber-optic cable" (ibid, p. 112-113).

In this way, a power complex emerges in society, which until now has hardly been politically controlled and which is inaccessible to any attempt to expand democratic procedures, tested in small contexts, to larger social contexts. "Today, the central question is: How can the extensive privatisation and commercialisation of the public in the network and the completely detached activities of the socially and politically mission-conscious corporations still be effectively limited? One thing is certain: it will not work without politics" (Dolata 2018, p. 86). The previous attempts of policies to regulate Big Data, including the Network Enforcement Act of 2018, are not suitable for this purpose (Dolata 2018).

The analysis of the social effects of a growing platform economy is still in its infancy. An outstanding example is the work of José van Dijck, Thomas Poell and Martijn de Waal "The Platform Society. Public Values in a Connective World". The authors describe the societal effects of platform economics as follows: "Online digital platforms, which are overwhelmingly American-based and operated, have penetrated every sector of American and Western European societies, disrupting markets and labour relations, circumventing institutions and transforming social and civic practices. Platforms steer users' behavior and social traffic that is increasingly data-driven and algorithmically organised. They are gradually infiltrating in, and clashing with, the institutional processes through which European democratic societies are organised. Platforms are neither neutral nor value-free constructs; the norms and values inscribed in their architectures may clash with the societal structures in which they are gradually embedded. So the emerging 'platform society' involves an intensive struggle between competing ideological systems and contesting social actors: market, government and civil society, raising important questions like: Who is or should be responsible and accountable for anchoring public values in a platform society?" (van Dijck et al. 2018).

Of course, these gloomy prospects for the endangerment of democratic social institutions by Big Data and their algorithms are jeopardising the possibilities of practicing democratic behaviour, dialogue and the development change processes by actionable and self-confident social actors through action research. Nevertheless, this must be tried again and again.

Finally, I would like to mention two perspectives that express the resilience of people and make success seem possible in the long term:

1. The necessity and effectiveness of utopias mentioned several times in the text. "Our inability to imagine a different life would be capital's ultimate triumph" (Scholz 2017). Anything else would be the capitulation to the worldwide triumph of an unregulated, unrestrained, globally-unbounded capitalism.

2. Who, if not the billions of "ordinary people" can muster the radical power to "sabotage" the production of the eternally mobilised and global capitalist-minded people, following the irritating stubbornness with which ordinary people confirm their Humanity ... A radical break-up of the given is still possible, since "the basic human virtues[15] in the lowest classes of society are still widespread" (Michéa 2014, p. 184, 189). The historically recurrent sources of power of self-determined individuals (common decency, basic human virtues, and workers' innovative skills) justify the perspectives of democratic participation and industrial democracy that guided this work.

Michéa refers to the concept of common decency, the elements of which George Orwell has formulated a variety of essays on the lives of ordinary people (Orwell 1984) and which Bruce Bégout summarises as follows: "The basic virtues of the ordinary people include" une dignité ordinaire, un sens viscéral de l'egalite, du respect mutuel, de la simplicité et de la solidarité". Common decency "n'est pas seulement un qualité morale (le sens de l'honneteté), mais aussi un compartiment social et une certaine forme d'estime de soi (a form of self-esteem)". Above all, however, Orwell reckons to the basic virtues of humans the instinctive rejection of the rule of human over human, i.e., thus, in my words, the need for self-determination as an anthropological constant: "ils épreuvent une aversion quasi instinctive pour toute domination de l 'homme sur l'homme". For Orwell, clinging to these basic virtues is the basis of his hope for a better society: "La reconnaissance de la decence ordinaire c'est donc fondamentale, puisqu'en elle réside riens de moins que la source de toute société juste. Il existe en effect dans la vie des gens simples des qualités sociales absolument primordiales (désintérèt (selflessness, WF), solidarité, dégout pour la domination) pour toute institution politique de la vie en commun" (All quotes from Bégout, 2006, p. 100, 101, 106, 107, 108).

Orwell does not propose an apotheosis of the "ordinary people" here. He does not ignore the negative aspects of the common people's customs, such as their sensibility (sensiblerie), their distrust of strangers, their tendency to fatalism (Bégout 2006, p. 107, translation WF). However, all in all he conveys an impression of the power of the people, of their power to change reality ("une force immanent qui modifie le reel", ibid., p. 116). Unfortunately, this power of the people, the basic virtues of the "ordinary people" on which it rests, is today suppressed and alienated by the neoliberal-capitalist strategies of subjectification in Foucault's sense. Action research has, in the accessible social contexts, the task and the opportunity to rediscover and stabilise the ability and the need of the practitioners for self-determination.

15 By this Michéa means the basic human virtues of giving, taking and giving back, which are the basis of trust and solidarity beyond the calculative capitalist exchange logic. Elsewhere, he refers to the concept of common decency, which George Orwell used to describe the basic human virtues deeply rooted in concrete socialism (Bégout 2006).

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(Why) Does Ar Need to Intervene and Change Things?[1]

Olav Eikeland

Abstract
One of the basic and for many, defining tenets of action research is contained in the "slogan" ascribed to Kurt Lewin: "In order to understand it, you have to change it". The slogan clearly resembles what Francis Bacon claimed for experimental science, however, and also Karl Marx' well known stance in his Feuerbach-theses. In this text I discuss this "change imperative" and relate it to its "pre-history" before action research. Most action researchers are not willing to subscribe to terms like "social engineering" but still call what they do for "interventions". The text argues that what most people spontaneously think of as "change" may not be necessary for calling what is done for action research. Yet, the alternative is not to withdraw to a disengaged, spectator position. The change imperative raises important questions about what kind of change action research initiates, and what kind of knowledge results from different forms of change. The text challenges the "slogan" as to what kind of change is appropriate and legitimate in working with changes in individuals, culture, communities, and organisations, and suggests ways forward through developing forms of practitioner research and native or indigenous research. To illustrate, insights from Aristotle and Hegel are invoked. Action researchers are challenged to discuss and clarify answers to questions about what kind of change is produced, and what kind of knowledge is generated.

Key words: action research, Aristotle, art as craft, Francis Bacon, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, praxis-research

(¿Por qué?) ¿es necesario intervenir y cambiar las cosas?

Resumen
Uno de los básicos y, para muchos, definidores de los principios de la investigación-acción, está incluido en el "eslogan" atribuido a Kurt Lewin: "Para entenderlo, debes cambiarlo". El eslogan se parece claramente con lo que Francis Bacon reclamó para la ciencia experimental, y también con la postura bien conocida de Karl Marx en sus tesis sobre Feuerbach. En este texto discuto este "imperativo de cambio" y lo relaciono con su "prehistoria" antes de la investigación-acción. La mayoría de los investigadores-acción no están dispuestos a suscribirse a términos como "ingeniería social", pero todavía llaman lo que hacen como "intervenciones". El texto argumenta que lo que la mayoría de la gente piensa espontáneamente como "cambio" puede no ser necesario para llamar lo que se hace en la investigación-acción. Sin

1 The text is an elaboration based on the presentation given October 10th, 2018 at the conference "Coping with the future" at the University of Agder (UiA), Kristiansand, Norway, organized by the UiA, in co-operation with NTNU Gjøvik, the European Network of Workplace Innovation (EUWIN) and the International Journal of Action Research (IJAR).

embargo, la alternativa no es retirarse a una posición de espectador desconectado. El imperativo de cambio plantea preguntas importantes sobre qué tipo de cambio inicia la investigación-acción, y qué tipo de conocimiento resulta de diferentes formas de cambio. El texto desafía el "eslogan" sobre qué tipo de cambio es apropiado y legítimo para trabajar con cambios en individuos, cultura, comunidades y organizaciones, y sugiere formas de avanzar mediante el desarrollo de formas de investigación practicante e investigación nativa o indígena. Para ilustrar, se invocan las revelaciones de Aristóteles y Hegel. Los investigadores-acción tienen el reto de discutir y aclarar las respuestas a las preguntas sobre qué tipo de cambio se produce y qué tipo de conocimiento se genera.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción, Aristóteles, el arte como oficio, Francis Bacon, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, praxis-investigación

Introduction

As in all kinds of practice, action research must differentiate between what a professional expert with years of studies and experience in action research should or must know and be able to do, and what novices in action research can be expected and need to know to get started (cf. Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986). Of course, age does not automatically correspond to maturity or competence. There's a big difference between a year of experience repeated 20 times on the one hand, and 20 years of accumulated experience on the other. There is no guarantee that old people know and understand more than young. Competence is not measured in time-units but in what I have elsewhere called "pragmadequacy" (Eikeland 2008: 32-33, fn18, 73, 191, 236, fn222, etc.). Hence, to ignore the difference between novices, apprentices, experts, and virtuosos: between amateurs and professionals, or to claim there is no difference in competence-adequacy, to ignore validity-dimensions like good and bad, truth and falsehood, etc. is to undermine action research as a skill and competence. Although there are many legitimate varieties of action research (cf. Eikeland 2012), and choices and adjustments must always be made to the requirements of the concrete situation, anything does not go, not even in action research. Then again, there are advanced challenges concerning where to start with or for novices, which in action research cannot be reduced to mere didactical teaching challenges. Action research itself challenges most taken-for-granted prejudices concerning both research and learning / teaching. Novices in action research tend to start thinking uncritically from such prejudices unexamined, however, as do other conventionalists not prone to critical reflection "outside given frames". On the other hand, there are advanced challenges of a principal character presupposing: or at least more easily available to people with, years of experience and reflection.

When, where, and how, then, can or should someone start doing action research? What do they need to know? Where do we start? Do we start just stumbling along without knowing how, where, or what, or with teaching basic principles as starting points mobilising philosophical authorities as witnesses? There might seem to be a paradox in bringing in Aristotle and Hegel, as the following text does. If action research is a common-sensical approach which anyone can follow, why bother to study two of the most difficult philosophers in history, both of them old, dead, white, European males?

There is hardly an either-or here, however. Even Paolo Freire (1970: 18, 31) writes about his inspiration from Hegel but he probably did not talk much about Hegel or try to

explain his philosophy when practising his "pedagogy of the oppressed" with illiterates. Personally, I started doing action research in the mid-1980s, with car-mechanics and sales-people. But I did not talk to them about critical theory, Plato and Aristotle, or Hegel and Marx. But this is no more a paradox than the fact that people know how to speak their native language without ever having been formally educated or taught its vocabulary and grammar, or the fact that people know how to think logically without even being aware that there is anything called logic (Eikeland 1997: 59ff.). You do not teach language to novices by talking about the theory of universal grammar of Noam Chomsky, and the controversy between followers of Chomsky and followers of Wittgenstein, although it might be quite relevant and necessary at a later stage.

So, why these philosophers? Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, and Marx were all philosophers committed to the anti-dogmatic, Socratic, dialogical-dialectical insight in the necessity of starting a discussion and search-process and -progress non-didactically from éndoxa, i.e. from prevailing opinions and ways of speaking among people of experience, from wherever dialogue-partners are in competence, intellectually, or opinion-wise, etc. This is, for example, the content in Marx' famous letter to Arnold Ruge from September 1844 (MEW 1: 343-346) where he writes (freely translated): "we do not anticipate the world dogmatically"…"until now, the philosophers have had solutions to all puzzles lying in their drawers (…) so that the only thing necessary for the world would be to open its mouth and be fed the truth like roasted pigeons from science"[2]. As Marx continues, the task is not to confront the current conditions with some alternative, decoupled, "doctrinary", and finished "system" to replace it : a utopian strategy he opposed, but to develop new principles from extant principles, immanent to and imminent in the here-and-now. Marx underestimated his philosophical predecessors, however. As Aristotle points out (against later Stoic doctrines), the tools of such a dialogue: called tà koiná or the intellectual "commons", are always already in use by everyone but subconsciously, like the rules of grammar or logic (Eikeland 2008: 333ff.). Like action research then, these philosophers challenged taken-for-granted prejudices of conventional research and learning / teaching.

So, is it necessary to study and know what these or other philosophers were thinking in order to do action research? Of course not. Would it help to know and understand their way of thinking? Probably. Would it help to consult any master of the art? Probably. Should one listen to the masters' teaching? Yes, probably, but not only. My task in the following text is not primarily to provide answers, however. It is to ask some questions concerning the self-conceptualisation and understanding of action research. I will not hide my own points of view. But my purpose is to raise questions through some historical examples, which I think action researchers need to reflect on and find answers to. The questions are "big", that is, comprehensive, and, with a long history of emergence, controversy, and development. Obviously, then, only some aspects can be presented and discussed in a short article.

My title has a "why" in parenthesis, indicating two or more questions in one. Let me spell them out. First, "why does action research have to change whatever is studied"? This one

2 Indessen ist das gerade wieder der Vorzug der neuen Richtung, dass wir nicht dogmatisch die Welt antizipieren (…) Bisher hatten die Philosophen die Auflösung aller Rätsel in ihren Pulte liegen, und die dumme exoterische Welt hatte nur das Maul aufzusperren, damit ihr die gebratenen Tauben der absoluten Wissenschaft in den Mund flogen

question is also two questions in one, however, since it presumes that the answer is yes to the second question: "Does action research need to intervene and change things"? I will discuss this as well, since I do not agree that action research necessarily must change whatever is studied, neither to deserve the title "action research" nor to produce interesting and important learning and knowledge. There are more questions lurking in the title too. For example: "What kind of change are we talking about"? and "What kind of knowledge is produced by changes inflicted"?

My working hypothesis in this text is that action research can be done: and some action research should be done, on the one hand without intervening from the outside in what it studies, i.e. without a plan for intentionally changing it, but also, on the other hand, without positioning itself as an external, non-intervening observer; abstaining from involvement in the practices studied. There is a third alternative. At the very least, however, the answer "yes" as to whether action research needs to change things: mostly taken for granted as legitimate by action researchers, is not obviously or self-evidently true or legitimate. It needs justification[3].

I have used most of my career and energy on doing action research, and on trying to understand the relationships between theory and practice or theory and experience, not only in action research but more generally in understanding and researching human beings, culture, and society (cf. Eikeland 1997; 2008). However, in this text I will question basic and taken-for-granted assumptions in action research, but not to undermine or disqualify the approach. On the contrary: Action research is important, and even without mainstream research recognising, mentioning, or even realising it at all (a major academic sin, by the way), current mainstream social research itself has for decades been converging towards positions and practices pioneered by action research for more than 80 years. My personal conviction is that action research: but not all kinds of action research (cf. Eikeland 2012), should have a position as quite basic: in fact, foundational, in any mainstream future social research or even research in general. To be able to carry the weight of becoming increasingly mainstream in social research, however, which I think it ultimately will and should, action research needs refinement. Refinement means mostly making both more, and more adequate distinctions. The following are suggestions.

The following, then, are arguments and justification strategies for the importance of action research and for the necessity to think through questions raised by different forms of action research. The arguments pursued in this presentation, however, are all independent from whether action research as it has been practised since the end of the 1930ies, has achieved its often-proclaimed ends of producing both theory and practical changes. Successes and insufficiencies in the history of the "really existing action research" is a different story.

The epistemic change-imperative credo

As people acquainted with the approach will know, there is a long action research tradition for claiming that "in order to understand something, you have to change it", attributed to

3 I will be using the expressions "thing" or "object" throughout as a shorthand for whatever is studied or handled by knowers, primarily because of the difficulty in English to express the meaning of the Germanic "*sak*" or "*Sache*" and of pragma in Greek.

Kurt Lewin by Alfred J. Marrow in his 1969 biography "The practical theorist". This "change imperative": as we might call it, has become a "mantra" and an article of faith among action researchers as a sort of constitutive basic rule defining the whole approach. The "credo" itself is older than action research, however. The best-known proponents of such an epistemic "change-imperative" credo, are Francis Bacon in the 17th century and Karl Marx in the 19th, who, as most people will know, have both had a huge impact until today in natural science and in social research and politics respectively.

The similaritise, at least superficially, between action research and these predecessors, are obvious. Francis Bacon's experimentalism was explicitly directed against positioning research merely as a passive observer from a distance without influencing the subject of study. He recommends active and systematic, forced intervention in nature, meaning, as he writes in his New Organon from 1620: "...nature under constraint and vexed; (…), when by art and by the hand of man she[4] is forced out of her natural state and squeezed and moulded (.....). The nature of things betrays itself more readily under vexations of art than in its natural freedom." According to Bacon, the trouble with passive, merely receptive observation – criticizing subsequent empiricists like Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, as well as 20th century positivists in this – is, as Bacon himself writes, that perception and the senses "would be sufficient of themselves if the human intellect were even and like a fair sheet of paper with no writing on it. But since the minds of men are strangely possessed and beset so that there is no true and even surface left to reflect the genuine rays of things, it is necessary to seek a remedy for this also." (Bacon 1620: 22, 25, 95, 98)

Bacon's diagnosis of perception as a foundation for knowledge was that it was not at all the "tabula rasa" of the empiricism of British philosophers coming after him. According to Bacon, perception is distorted, muddled, skewed, and biased: pre-formed and prejudiced, by so-called "idols": First **1)** idols of the Tribe, i.e. deceptive beliefs inherent in the mind of man as such, and therefore belonging to the whole human race, secondly, **2)** idols of the Cave; or prejudices peculiar to the mind of single individuals, next, **3)** idols of the Marketplace; i.e. errors arising from the false significance bestowed upon words obscuring the very thoughts they are designed to express, and finally **4)** idols of the Theatre, or errors due to false learning in theology, philosophy, and science, defended by learned groups and therefore accepted without question by the masses. This is a very Platonic, perception- and doxa-skeptic view, by the way. It is also quite modern, or "post-modern", anticipating the criticism of un-prejudiced perception or observation as the foundation of knowledge through the 20th century, triggered by the logical positivists' attempt to save a concept of unprejudiced or "theory-free" data, or even by the attempt in Husserl's phenomenology to somehow reach "below" the habitual through a form of epokhê (cf. Eikeland 1997: 46-48). As far as I can understand, "post-modernism", which has reintroduced idols en masse in the wake, or Wirkungsgeshichte, of Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1960) insights in the inevitability of "Vor-urteile", hardly sees any possible remedy at all against culturally-historically-institutionally-socially-psychologically, etc. positioned and embedded, and thereby biased views "from somewhere". To them, there is no view "from nowhere" (Nagel 1986) and "sub specie aeternitatis" (Spinoza). Bacon however, considered experimentation the remedy against idols; that is, "squeezing and forcing" nature in order to get to know her, like the arts do: i.e. the crafts, and also by means

4 For grammatical gender reasons, Bacon writes about nature as female.

of what he, quite interestingly, calls "Platonic induction" (he could equally well have called it Aristotelian): "analyzing nature by proper rejections and exclusions", in contrast to the more prevalent and simpler enumerative induction, which he calls childish.

Concerning action research, it is hardly a coincidence that Kurt Lewin had a background from experimental psychology in Germany. With Kurt Lewin, action research emerged in the US from this experimental tradition, bringing the "change-imperative" along to action research as it moved experiments from isolated laboratories to local communities, work places, schools, and families. As late as in 1978, Don Campbell (1978), the "godfather" of modern quasi-experimentation and even of "evidence-based" practice, confirmed the close relationship between experimentalism and action research, and as many will know, the Norwegian tradition of action research at the Work Research Institute started in the 1960ies as "field experiments", fully in line with Kurt Lewin's thinking. Lewin used the expression "social engineering" too, however, almost as a synonym for action research. Most current action researchers are not prepared to accept this synonymity. Many continue speaking about action research as "intervention research", however.

A couple of centuries after Bacon, Karl Marx wrote his famous Feuerbach-theses where he states in thesis two, that "the question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth – i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question." He ends up with his famous thesis eleven: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." It is worth emphasising, though, that Marx' point was hardly to promote any arbitrary change as a value in itself. As it says in thesis eight: "All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension (Begreifen) of this practice". Comprehension, das Begreifen, of practice is necessary and an aim, and promoted changes should, of course, spring from or be in accordance with the comprehension. This, clearly, is the meaning of the action research mantra as well. "In order to understand" means "understanding" is the end, "changing it" a means.

The epistemic change imperative is not only a few centuries older than Kurt Lewin, however. It can be found, in a language very similar to Bacon's, in the Hippocratic texts from the 5th century BC as well, as when it says in the text On the art (of medicine) (Perì tékhnês, XIII.1-20) that "when (…) nature herself will yield nothing (mê mênúôntai) of her own accord, medicine has found means of compulsion (anágkas), whereby nature is constrained or forced (biastheisa), without being harmed (azêmios), to give up her secrets (methíêsin)".

The important thing to notice in both Bacon and the Hippocratic text is that they talk explicitly about how art: that is, craft, intervenes and changes what it handles and studies according to the artisans own understanding and plans. Bacon treats "art" as synonymous with or at least as a vital supplement to science. Aristotle, who is the source of the medieval tradition Bacon goes against, does not conflate such concepts, however. He keeps these and several others distinct. Tékhnê or art as craft, is one among many ways of knowing in Aristotle (Appendix, table[5]). For Aristotle, art is defined by the fact that the principles and sources of

5 I relate to the table of knowledge forms in the appendix, but I will not explain it in detail since I have done so in several other publications (cf. Eikeland 1997, 2008, 2012 and others).

change in the thing studied or handled do not reside in that thing itself but in the external craft-individuals who intervene and change it according to their plans and skills. This means the change is not natural, that is, as the thing itself would have moved, changed, evolved, devel-developed, or transformed by itself. The change is literally "artificial"; made or created by art. So, in Aristotelian terms, the beginning of modern science as experimental, was a conflation of science and art as craft. The question is whether this was a confusing conflation of muddled thinking, or a necessary, organic fusion. I will leave that question open for now.

In Aristotle's terminology, anyhow, the kind of change recommended by the initiator of modern experimentalism, was exactly what both Bacon and the Hippocratics call it; something imposed on an object by rules of art (tékhnê). In Aristotelian terms, it was neither epistêmê, nor praxis (with an x), just to mention a couple of other forms (cf. table in Appendix). Epistêmê for Aristotle was theory, that is, aiming to understand things as they were naturally, having the principles of change, movement, development, or transformation in themselves, not imposed from outside. The theoretical question was "what is their nature?", not necessarily what happens "in nature", however, since in nature, many different "natures" collide and influence each other coincidentally and "artificially". Art was concerned with understanding, introducing, and mastering enforced and imposed artificial change, the way a carpenter relates to and forms pieces of wood as building material. Theory aimed at understanding the thing in its natural development or transformations, including all inherent potentials and different aspects of it, the way trees grow and could grow by themselves: not merely those aspects relevant for some user's or manipulator's unilateral interests and current intervention and change purposes.

Noli me tangere?

Against whom, then, were the modern experimentalists arguing? Against medieval scholastics, of course. These had literally receded to a scholastic or monastic position, basically abstaining from involvement with both nature and society, overly concerned with argumentation and divine revelation. But does this medieval scholasticism really have anything to do with Aristotle, or even more pertinent; what does it have to do with current action research or modern social research? To reconnect briefly to my point of departure, I wrote that action research does not necessarily have to intervene from the outside in what it studies, i.e. intentionally changing the thing's "natural" course of movement or development. On the other hand, it doesn't have to position itself in an "ivory tower" either, as an external, disengaged, non-intervening observer abstaining from involvement in the practice studied and, as much as possible, uninfluenced by the same.

Although there was and is a strong tradition for ascribing a scholastic life of abstention as an ideal to Aristotle and his discussion of the wondrous bíos theôrêtikós in Book X of the Nicomachean Ethics, I think this is a wrong interpretation of his philosophy, just as I think traditional interpretations (of Metaph980a22-982a3 and APo99b15-100b17) trying to make Aristotle into a conventional empiricist and deductivist are wrong. I have dealt with this extensively in previous texts and cannot pursue it here (Eikeland 1997, 1998, 2008, 2016). Aristotle's texts and several specific places indicate something quite different from ordinary empiricism, and quite different from abstaining scholasticism as well. Among other things,

Aristotle writes (GC316a5): "What causes our lack of ability to see connections in accepted facts, is our lack of experience (or inexperience [apeiría])." And inexperience or apeiría here, does not mean merely lack of "data". It means lack of practical experience. He continues: "This is why those having lived intimately with natural phenomena are better able to construct such principles which can connect much"[6]. Although this requirement is clearly empirical, it is much more than collecting data. What is lacking in apeiría is more like what Michael Polanyi (1962) characterised as "tacit knowledge" as a pre-requisite for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and understanding data competently. As Aristotle writes, people of experience are wiser than someone with just any haphazard perception (Metaph981b30-982a3). In fact, for Aristotle, people who merely observe at a distance, abstaining from practice – naïvely or narrowly gathering observational or perceptual "data", if you like – is a central part of what it means to lack the experience needed for epistêmê, since, as he writes, epistêmê emerges from grasping the experience based on habit. Experience is formed through and extracted from habit, refined as skill, and then articulated into epistêmê or theoretical insight and understanding[7]. This whole articulation- or grasping process, or the way towards insight and understanding, starting from prevalent opinions and in the middle of all the idols (éndoxa), is critical – making distinctions – and both deconstructively (anaskeuastikôs) and constructively (kataskeuastikôs) dialogical or dialectical, with Aristotle as it is with Plato, but that is a different story not to be pursued here.

What does this mean, then? Apparently, these are arguments strongly in favour of involvement and participation in the practices studied. There are no arguments for abstention or disengagement of a modern kind in Aristotle, neither concerning the study of nature nor the study of human beings. On the other hand, there are clear arguments against intervention and against reducing ethics and politics, including organisational studies, to a tekhnê or craft as depicted by Francis Bacon. Intervention, changing the course of events as they would have unfolded "naturally", is easily reduced to manipulation and instrumentalism as with Francis Bacon, for whom knowledge was reduced to the power to predict and control. Aristotle's arguments do not support intervening involvement and participation. It supports involvement and participation for theoretical reasons, however, i.e. as necessary for the purpose of developing insight and understanding: theory. Aristotle, in fact, summarizes his discussion at the end of the Nicomachean Ethics (Book X.viii.12, 1179a18-23) in words almost like Marx' second Feuerbach thesis. After admitting that theories in agreement with other "wise" people – or, scholars – do have some credibility (pístin tinà), he concludes: "but it is by the practical experience of life and conduct that the truth is really tested, since it is there that the final decision lies"[8]

What, then, is theoretical knowledge, and why has it had such an important position? First, for Aristotle, it was important to understand the thing in itself, as it is without blurring idols or other disturbances, and without interventions from the outside. Although, after

6 aítion dè tou ep' élatton dúnasthai tà homologoúmena sunoran hê apeiría. diò hósoi enôkêkasi mallon en tois phusikois, mallon dúnantai hupotíthesthai toiaútas arkhàs haì epì polú dúnantai suneírein.

7 For those without practical experience are like people abstaining and observing from a distance (hoi gàr ápeiroi hôsper àn apékhontes pórrôthen theôrousin). SE164b27. Epistêmê becomes epistêmê from grasping the experience based on habit (hê epistêmê ex éthous tên empeirían labousa epistêmê gínetai). MM1190b30.

8 pístin mèn oun kaì tà toiauta [hai tôn sophôn dóxai] ékhei tinà, tò d' alêthès en tois praktois ek tôn érgôn kaì tou bíou krínetai; en toútois gàr tò kúrion. ktl.

Kant, this ambition has been undermined repeatedly – since we cannot know the "Ding-an-sich", only as it is "for us"[9] – it still works as a regulative idea. Theory aims at understanding the thing as a whole, in its natural development or transformations, including all inherent potentials and different aspects of it. The importance of this kind of theory – i.e. a profound understanding of the thing concerned – is that it creates freedom to choose and to act for its carriers, while providing prediction and control over the thing known (cf. Eikeland 2008: 145-148, 282ff.). This, especially in a slightly modified form, where the carrier of the theory (or subject) and the thing known (or object) tend to merge, is still a good reason for the importance of theory (theôría in the table), even for action researchers.

Secondly, however, a certain form of theory, emulating the success of the natural sciences since the 17th century, gained general dominance in modernity. For Aristotle, this form of theory: theôrêsis, in the appended table, was explicitly secondary and applied. It is interesting that he mentions astronomy, part of the historical model or paradigm for modern "basic" science, as an instance of such a secondary and applied science, combining mathematics and observations. What resembled modern "basic" sciences in the Aristotelian intellectual universe, then, were what in his world were applied, secondary, derived, and subsidiary sciences (Eikeland 2008: 68ff., 160).

The Aristotelian argument for theory, then, is not to abstain and disengage, or to keep the distance, staring at things. There is no requirement for non-involvement or a totally detached point of view for theory in Aristotle; no "ivory tower". On the contrary. The quotes above from Aristotle point in the opposite direction. The aim is to study the things under scrutiny as they are in themselves, comprehensively, as a whole, with all their potentials and aspects, but not merely for some limited purpose; not merely for forming it as material or using it as a tool or instrument.

Hence, as I see it, by trying to expand an until then applied model of science into a universal model for basic science, and by a requirement to know the thing studied as it is in itself, undisturbed by researchers or other outsiders, modern social science has been misled and institutionalized as an invalidating division of labour between researchers and researched creating a labyrinth of validity and reliability problems impossible to solve inside the same division of labour. It was formed, first; by a model of science, taken over uncritically from astronomy as observation at a distance with its observatories and "protocol sentences", emulating natural science, and secondly; by the belief that the only way to engage with the studied object is by intervening and disturbing its naturalness, pursuing special interests biasing the view, thereby, in consequence, dismissing the experimental tradition whole-sale as more or less irrelevant for scientific purposes. There is both truth and falsehood in both premises. The ambition of knowing the nature of the thing as it is in itself, is good, the method for achieving it is false. The "change imperative", from the experimental tradition, is good, but the change model from the crafts is false. But there is a third way, which I have not yet explored here, along which action research has stumbled for 80 years, however.

9 Aristotle would agree. Cf. Eikeland 2008: 176.

Changes in ways of knowing. Social change?

To summarise, then: I am not arguing against the fact that we will gain a better understanding of something from trying to change it. I think this is true, although much could be said about applying modern experimental designs to social research. It's more a question of what kind of knowledge is gained, and conventional experimentation inevitably produces craft competence; technical poíêsis-knowledge. Historically, however, and especially during the 20th century, it is in the transfer of the "change imperative" from external nature after the model of craft, to history, human beings, society, and culture, including organisations, that challenges have popped up, in Heidegger's (1927) and Gadamer's (1960) connection to Aristotle's phrónêsis-concept, in Horkheimer's and Adorno's aporetic critique of the dominance of technical, manipulative rationality (1947), in Arendt's distinctions between labour, work, and action (1958), inspired by Aristotle's distinctions, in Habermas' distinctions between technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge interests (1973), inspired by Arendt's Aristotle-inspired distinctions, in Western Marxism's general critique of the lack of distinction between technique and praxis in Soviet Marxism, and in many other ways. The question is: Can Bacon's craft metaphor and slogan "knowledge is power" through prediction and control be generalised and transferred to history, human beings, society, and culture without inconsistencies resulting in what Adorno and Horkheimer called the "dialectic of enlightenment". How should we (or could we), using Francis Bacon's vocabulary, squeeze, mould, vex, constrain, and force human beings out of their natural state, and into something somebody, as an outsider, considers a desired state? Who are the "we" who may legitimately squeeze, mould, force, etc. or maybe more relevantly; stimulate, tease, allure, manipulate, or persuade? What is the "natural state" of individuals, society, and culture, anyhow? The whole analogy from art as craft is false when transferred to society, history, culture, and individuals in social science, as Aristotle himself pointed out (Pol1269a9).

Questions like these connect to a basic inconsistency in what the third Feuerbach-thesis calls "the materialist doctrine", "concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing". Marx claims that this (non-dialectical) "materialist doctrine" "forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society." So, the question remains: who educates the educators, who controls the controllers, who observes the observers, who predicts the predictors, etc.? The attempt to divide society into two parts, one superior to society is totally arbitrary, and in deed, impossible. The observers, controllers, predictors, and educators are inevitably part of society in quite different and more complex ways than how natural scientists are both separate and superior to but still part of nature. The problem is what the Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim (1959; 1973) called "self-referential" inconsistency still haunting social science and its "application" in politics and professional work: The external means for regulating and controlling "common people": cause-effect mechanisms postulated in theories and used as technical measures in politics, are quite different from the internal self-regulation and control, oriented towards understanding and validity criteria in different fields, of the controllers, educators, etc.

The dream of an un-disturbed social science, free from idols, and a non-intervening social science as well, not influencing the things studied, has been undermined by the internal,

methodological reflections of social research itself (cf. Eikeland 2006). The so-called interac- interactivity or reactivity of research methods, discussed for a long time in mainstream methodology (from Mayo 1933; Gillespie 2008; Rosenthal 1966, and more), indicates that all forms of research influence whatever is studied, bringing it out of its "natural state". It is unavoidable. Hawthorne effects, experimenter effects, the very division of labour institutionalised between researchers (knowers) and researched (known), etc. all influence the researched social objects like individuals, history, social structure, organisations, culture, etc. and decide what kind of knowledge is demanded and what tends to be produced. It is elementary though, that what is valid for individuals, societies, or cultures "under influence": squeezed, moulded, vexed, forced, manipulated, persuaded, is not necessarily true when they are not. The mainstream methodological strategy has for an equally long time been; trying to minimize the interactivity or reactivity (Cf. Eikeland 1985), for example by trying to influence all data-sources or "informants" in exactly the same way, or using different forms of so-called "unobtrusive measures", like spies essentially, and "big data" produced by extant social and technological practices themselves as today when Facebook, Google, and other surveillance agencies use data-traces left by our electronic gadgets.

Over the last decades, however, another methodological strategy has been pursued, at least by some. Since reactivity or interactivity cannot be eliminated, some, like Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), have suggested to use the reactivity itself as a source of "data" or information. This is fine. Kirsten Hastrup (1995) has even taken it a step further in anthropology transcending the model of participant observer, to explicitly become an observant and reflecting participant: both eating the cake and keeping it too, in other words. There isn't time to go into details. As I have argued elsewhere (cf. Eikeland 2006), these developments are part of how mainstream social research converges towards action research, but in at least two different forms: 1) Intentionally introducing change and intervention resulting in poíêsis-knowledge in the table. 2) Reflecting on the inevitability of reactivity and how our actions affect others, resulting in the table's praxis-knowledge.

What is not clear in the "change imperative" and its proponents as presented above, then, is that there are several different forms of change or practice. Pathos, khrêsis, poíêsis, and praxis in the table could all pass as "practice" in the undistinguished modern parlance. In the philosophy of Aristotle, however, the forms mentioned are different in principle, and there are even two concepts of praxis at work. Also, in Aristotle's terminology there are a) changes in place, i.e. movements in space, and there are b) changes in inessential properties and attributes like changes in colour, shape, clothing, haircuts, etc. (cf. Eikeland 2008: 122-131). These are kinds of change that can be made by art – i.e. tékhnê in poíêsis and khrêsis. Then there is c) change of essence, which is when something is born or comes into being and dissolves or dies. Both nature and "art" can make this. The forth form is d) what Aristotle, somewhat confusingly for modern ears, calls a quantitative change (kínêsis katà tò posòn) which implies a growth (aúxêsis) into and fulfilment of something's own proper and mature form (eidos). This can be a natural process, but hardly an artificial change made by outsiders. It can include natural transformations, as when a seed grows and matures into a tree with fruits, or an insect metamorphoses from egg to larva, through a cocooned pupa, and becomes a butterfly or beetle. These natural processes from inchoate beginnings and immaturity to mature stages, are where Aristotle, besides nature or phúsis, uses concepts like praxis and enérgeia with

standards and ends immanent, where things, while staying the same essentially, realise their potentials and become what they are through maturing transformations, finding their forms. The internal transformations of social research itself, just outlined above, could be seen as this kind of process since its driving force is not primarily external but internal to the activity, in trying to solve internal tensions and contradictions when attempting to achieve theoretical knowledge of its studied "object"; i.e. its own practice, through understanding and developing it. Distinctions like these are important reasons why Aristotle is interesting and attractive for so many modern philosophers and professionals.

As I wrote, the change imperative is not peculiar to Kurt Lewin and action research. It was even central to Hegel. His change imperative is not borrowed from art as craft as with Bacon, however. It is in fact, more like what Aristotle called quantitative change; a process of growth and maturation. Two hundred years before Mezirow et al. (1990), Hegel's central concept of change was a form of transformative learning, and his work "The phenomenology of spirit" (1807) is his demonstration of such processes of transformation. When he reflects on the process in his Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften 1 (1970: 8: 78f.), he writes (in my translation): Through reflection (das Nachdenken), some of the content of what first appears as perception, observation, or imagination is changed. It is therefore only through a change that we come to consciousness of the true nature of the object. In order to experience what is true in things, mere attention is not enough. Our subjective activity is necessary, which transforms what is immediately present. This seems at first sight totally wrong and contrary to the aim of getting to know something.[10] This transformative process is emphasized in his History of Philosophy (1971: 18: 303) as well, in writing about what he calls "die immanente Betrachtung des Gegenstandes" or freely translated; seeing the thing studied from the inside. Hegel requires that "Man setzt sich ganz in die Sache hinein" or roughly translated that "you get thoroughly acquainted with the thing". When this is done, he says, the thing itself reveals that it contains contradictions, and "sublates itself" (sich aufhebt)[11] or transforms.

To almost merge with the thing studied to get a view from the inside, seems utopian and highly unrealistic concerning external nature and the study of external objects. When it comes to the study of history, culture, society, and not the least, professional practices, however, it is not quite as preposterous. It is simply what is required to become a full member, or native to those things. As competently, practising natives, we are inside those things, and they are inside us. Although discussions over the last decades may have concluded that conventional anthropologists, working within the institutionalized divisions of labour, can never become quite like the natives and the cultures they visit to observe as "others", there is no reason why these "others"; the natives themselves, cannot become their own anthropologists. This is, in fact, what

10 Hegel (1970:8:78f.) Durch das Nachdenken wird an der Art, wie der Inhalt zunächst in der Empfindung, Anschauung, Vorstellung ist, etwas verändert; es ist somit nur vermittels einer Veränderung, dass die wahre Natur des Gegenstandes zum Bewusstsein kommt. (...) Um zu erfahren, was das Wahre in den Dingen sei, ist es mit der blossen Aufmerksamkeit nicht abgetan, sondern es gehört dazu unsere subjektive Tätigkeit, welche das unmittelbare Vorhandene umges¬taltet. Dies scheint nun auf den ersten Anblick ganz verkehrt und dem Zwecke, um den es sich beim Erkennen handelt, zuwiderlaufend zu sein.

11 (1971: 18: 303) (Der Gegenstand) wird für sich genommen, ohne Voraussetzung, Idee, Sollen, nich nach äusserlichen Verhältnissen, Gesetzen, Gründen. Man setzt sich ganz in die Sache hinein, betrachtet den Gegenstand an ihm selbst und nimmt ihn nach den Bestimmungen, die er hat. In dieser Betrachtung zeigt er sich dann selbst auf, dass er entgegengesetzte Bestimmungen enthält, sich also aufhebt.

is happening around us. Natives are becoming researchers, and we are all natives (to some culculture or practices). We always were. There are growing movements of native and indigenous research, practitioner research from within different professions, reflective practices proliferating into all kinds of work life, organisational learning, etc. This is already an important strand in what is recognised as action research internationally. Simultaneously, this "consciousness-raising" bottom-up from within practices, bringing subconscious general patterns in common conduct into language as objects of common consciousness, is praxis-research according to Aristotle's definitions. Articulating such patterns is a theoretical task if anything is, and it requires full and profound involvement and participation as competent and "professional" members of the practices concerned and studied: "going thoroughly native", if you like, becoming an observant and reflecting participant, and it does not necessarily change what it studies, certainly not according to a craft model. As in Hegel's phenomenology, however, it can perfectly well imply transformations, Aufhebungen, preserving and altering the point of departure simultaneously, in line with inner tensions and contradictions belonging to the nature of that practice, as stages in maturing or finding forms optimally adequate to the aim or end sought.

There are other interesting examples, as well, of what could be seen as "non-intervening", participatory, experience-based action research; praxis research. As I have tried to argue for many years (cf. Eikeland 1990), the methods of research methodology in mainstream social research is a good example of a self-reflective and transformative discourse: wonderfully illustrated as a personal story of learning in Reinharz (1979), progressing through a Hegelian immanent critique, articulating and developing the professional or vocational knowledge and competence of researchers, almost like a Trojan horse inside the fortified walls of conventional research. Although the methods of methodology, the professional knowledge and competence of researchers, are experience based, they are not themselves "research based" in a conventional sense. Hence, they could function as an analogical paradigm for an autonomous articulation of corresponding professional competence in other vocations and professions. I have also used grammar as an example of praxis knowledge, since grammar is basically an articulation of structures in a linguistic practice we are and carry with us as competent native speakers. I see clear tendencies toward praxis research in action research as promoted by Peter Reason and associates (e.g. Reason and Rowan 1981; Reason and Bradbury 2001), as well as in the CARN network (e.g. Rowell et al. 2016), and in directions inspired by P. Freire (Fals-Borda & Rahman 1991). The development of broad participation methods over decades in the WRI-tradition also moved it in praxis-directions, as I have discussed elsewhere (Eikeland 2012). Many different varieties of action research have appropriate times, places, and purposes (a kairós) for their applications. I think, however, that the road forward for refining it needs to go through a serious engagement with Aristotle's ways of knowing and Hegel's concept of a transformative, immanently critical change.

Conclusion

The moral of this story is not that "thou shalt never ever do theôrêsis or tékhnê" (in the table). Neither is it to drop collaborative projects between "researchers" and "practitioners" although

practitioners and natives are increasingly becoming researchers themselves. Labelling such collaboration "democratic" does not solve the challenges outlined here, however. Transitional forms like these can hardly be avoided in our kind of societies, and for most purposes, they are all to the good. Making space for other more praxis-based forms, requires social, organizational, and institutional changes, especially concerning collective, organizational learning and lifelong learning in the sense of providing preconditions for experiential learning by doing, through practice and reflection, in all contexts of life. My challenge is simple and in line with how I started: Mainstreaming action research needs more and more adequate distinctions. What I have presented, are some suggestions to think through.

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De Generatione et Corruptione (GC) (314-338)
Metaphysica (Metaph) (980-1093)
Ethica Nicomachea (EN) (1094-1181)
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Appendix

Aristotelian relational ways of knowing partly introduced by H.Arendt (1958) (labor, work, action) and Habermas (1970) knowledge interest (natural science: explanatory, technical / humanities: practical-interpretive, social research: emancipatory)

Basis	Way of knowing – *gnôsis* form	Associated rationality	English equivalent
Aísthêsis (*perception*)	*1.Theôrêsis = epistêmê*$_2$	Deduction, demonstration, didactics	Spectator speculation (*observation*), dispassionate explanatory, predictive modelling
	2.Páthos	??	*Suffering*; being affected / influenced passively / "passionately" from the outside
Empeiría (practically acquired and accumulated *experience*) and *enérgeia* / entelékheia (activity / actuality)	*3.Khrêsis*	*Tékhnê* (calculation)	*Using* external objects as instruments without changing them
	4.Poiêsis		*Making / creating*; manipulating external objects as materials, forming materials according to our preconceived plan
	5.Praxis$_2$	*Phrónêsis* (special form of deliberation)	*Doing*; virtuous *performance*, practical reasoning, ethical deliberation
	6.Praxis$_1$	Critical dialectics / dialogue as reflection. The way from *novice to expert*, from *tacit to articulate* knowing	Practice, rehearsing, training for competence development, mastery, and insight (*theória*)
	7.Theória = epistêmê$_1$	Dialogue, deduction, deliberation	Insight, understanding forms / patterns

About the author

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The Role of Action Research in Social Transformation: Memories and Projections

Danilo R. Streck

Abstract
The conference "Coping with the future: Business and Work in the digital age – A cross disciplinary conference" (Agder University, Norway, on October 8-10, 2018) had one section dedicated to "The role of action research in social transformation". The text contextualises the theme within the trajectory of the *International Journal of ActionResearch*, and more particularly of the biannual international conferences organised with the support of the journal. It was prepared for opening for the work of this section of the conference, and served as introduction to the presentation of other papers published in this issue.
Key words: Action research, International Journal of Action Research, social transformation, social sciences

La Función De La Investigación-Acción En La Transformación Social: Memorias Y Proyecciones

Resumen
La conferencia "Enfrentando el futuro: Negocios y Trabajo en la era digital - Una conferencia interdisciplinaria" (Agder University, Noruega, del 8 al 10 de octubre de 2018) tuvo una sección dedicada a "El papel de la investigación-acción en la transformación social". El texto contextualiza el tema dentro de la trayectoria de la Revista Internacional de Investigación- Acción, y particularmente de las conferencias internacionales bianuales organizadas con el apoyo de la revista. Se preparó para la apertura del trabajo de esta sección de la conferencia, y sirvió como introducción para la presentación de otros trabajos publicados en este número.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción, Revista Internacional de Investigación-Acción, transformación social, ciencias sociales.

Some words about the background

As executive editor of the *International Journal of Action Research* (IJAR) and in the name of my fellow editors, I welcome the opportunity for our journal to be part of the conference

"Coping with the future: Business and Work in the digital age – A cross disciplinary con-conference". My opening words will be dedicated to contextualise the theme of this section of the conference titled "The role of action research in social transformation" within the trajectory of IJAR, and more particularly of the biannual international conferences organised with the support of IJAR.

Going back in the history of action research, we realise that since its beginning action research has been concerned with work and transformation, more precisely with the social and economic conditions of workers. Kurt Lewin, in his seminal article "Action Research and Minority Problems" from 1945 refers to "an interview survey among workers in intergroup relations in the State of Connecticut". At his time and context, he was concerned with racial relations and the so-called minority problems, which he rightly acknowledges as majority problems. In this article he sets the basic principle of action research when placing it "within social life", and asking questions that still echo in the social sciences: "When, where, and by whom should social research be done?" (p. 37) Furthermore, he advocates an "integrated approach to social research," which could mean cooperation among disciplines or the amalgamation into one social science. Economics, he remarks, should necessarily be included in this symphony.

Also Karl Marx, whose bicentennial birth date is being commemorated in 2018, cannot be forgotten when dealing with research on work and transformation. In "A Workers' Inquiry" from 1880 he challenges the French republic to have a serious look into the country's working class, and to investigate the "facts and crimes of capitalist exploitation" even with the poor resources that were at his disposal. The novelty of this inquiryconsists in the active role attributed to the workers to describe their reality with the "full knowledge" that only they possess:

> We hope to meet in this work with the support of all workers in town and country who understand that they alone can describe with full knowledge the misfortunes from which they suffer and that only they, and not saviors sent by providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies for the social ills which they are prey. We also rely upon socialists of all schools who, being wishful for social reform, must wish for an *exact* and *positive* knowledge of the conditions in which the working class — the class to whom the future belongs -works and moves (Marx 1997).

Right after World War II, in 1946, the creation of the Tavistock Institute represents a landmark for action research and its contribution to social transformation, especially in Europe. In the Preface to the Institute's anthology, *Social Engagement of Social Sciences*, the editors (Trist and Murray 1989) explain that the use of the word *engagement* is not accidental:"The word 'engagement' (which echoes the French Existentialist usage) has been chosen as the best single word to represent the process by which social scientists endeavour actively to relate themselves in relevant and meaningful ways to society". It represents the intention to approximate theory and practice, action and reflection, and connect the micro or personal to the macro or social in consultancy and research with communities and organisations.

From there, it is a short distanceto the Scandinavian countries, where, among so many successful action research practices, we could identify the LOM (*Leitung, Organisation and Mitbestimmung* program in Sweden). Björn Gustavsen (1994, p. 25) highlights the relation of action research to social transformation when, referring to the program, he writes:

It is certainly not enough, simply to say: 'Now we would like to go to B (from A) – through simple discourse we will not arrive there. Furthermore, we need to have a representation of how to start the movement: which questions and problems have to be touched, and what is to be done? If transformation is a step by step movement, what do the particular steps look like?

In Germany, Werner Fricke, reflecting on the action and research program "Humanisation of work life" [Humanisierung der Arbeitsleben], from 1974 to 1981, writes about the hidden potential for transformation of workers once there is created space for themto actively and democratically participate in decisions concerning their work place and life. Based on research activities with workers he is quite categorical: "The democratisation of work can only be the work of the workers themselves" [Die Demokratisierung der Arbeit kann nur das Werk der Arbeitenden sebst sein] (Fricke 2012, p. 39).

At about the same time, without necessarily knowing of each other, there was conducted research "with people", sometimes under different names, but inspired and guided by similar epistemological and political principles. From the perspective of Third World countries, we have the following statement by Orlando Fals Borda: "We were sociologists, anthropologists, economists, theologians, artists, farmers, educators and social workers. Thus, it was a diverse and complex group, some of whom had decided to abandon the academic routines in universities to dedicate ourselves to alternative search." Then he goes on naming colleagues from places as diverse as India and Brazil, or México and Africa.

The International Journal of Action Research

The *International Journal of Action Research* is a continuation of the journal *Concepts and transformation* (CAT), founded in 1995 and published by John Benjamins (Amsterdam). The founders, Björn Gustavsen, Oyvind Palshaugen and Hans van Beinum, soon thereafter were joined by Werner Fricke and Richard Ennals.The choice of John Benjamins was due to the personal relations of Hans van Beinum, the first editor-in-chief[1], with the publisher. A key concern was the relation of AR and society, as well expressed in Gustavsen´s article of 2003, where he addresses the issue of how AR can overcome the single case dilemma. His first recommendation was not just to replace one single case with a larger number of single cases, but to create or support *social movements*.

In 2004, due to changes in the publishing policy of John Benjamins, who made the decision to terminate all book series and journals outside their core area, which was linguistics, it was necessary to find a new publisher for CAT. Werner Fricke´s arguments to convince Hampp were not based on a strategy of narrowing the scope of the journal, Instead, he argued in favour of *widening* the scope of the journal, both geographically and intellectually. Hampp Verlag found his argumentation sound, and the *International Journal of Action Research* was born 2005, with Werner Fricke as editor-in-chief.[2]

The guidelines of the journal, stated in the editorial information page, are as follows:

1 Øyvind Pålshaugen was co-editor with Hans van Beinum from 1996

2 See Editorial *to International Journal of Action Research* 6 (1), 2015:11-15.

The *International Journal of Action Research* provides a forum for an open and non-dogmatic discussion about action research, both its present situation and future perspectives. This debate is open to the variety of action research concepts worldwide. The focus is on dialogue between theory and practice.

The *International Journal of Action Research* is problem driven; it is centred on the notion that organizational, regional and other forms of social development should be understood as multidimensional processes and viewed from a broad socio-ecological, participative and societal perspective.

In 2017, due to Rainer Hampp´s retirement and the closing of his publishing business, a new move had to be taken. It was again Werner Fricke who took up the not so easy task to negotiate with the new prospective publishers. Making a long story short, we are happy to be hosted by Barbara Budrich Verlag, a respectful and well-known German publisher. There have been no changes in the journal's editorial policy.

Although each issue has a value and identity of its own, there are some issues that occupy a special space in the journal's trajectory. The issue that makes the transition from *Concepts and Transformation* to *International Journal of Action Research* represents Werner Fricke's concern of overcoming a Eurocentric perspective of action research, when he invited authors from Latin America to take up the word. The first article is an interview with Orlando Fals Borda with the suggestive title "One sows the seed, but it has its own dynamics", suggesting that no one has control on the real and lasting impact on his/her work.[3]

In 2007 IJAR published an issue on the "Diversity of Action Research: Experiences and Perspectives"[4] where well-known and experienced researchers present their views on AR. In the Introduction Oyvind Paulshaugen (2007, p. 13) reminds us that "as will be demonstrated in this issue of IJAR, it may be more appropriate to state that there are certain different constellations of both practical and theoretical aspects of the research process that constitute the different approaches". This speaks for the non-dogmatic policy of the journal as a platform for open discussion of practices and ideas.

More recently, in 2015, Werner Fricke and Sabine Pfeiffer[5] organised a special double issue on "Action Research perspectives in German social sciences". In the Preface they express their concern over the present day socio-political context for real democratic participation, this being a prerequisite for action research. There are, nevertheless, signs that something from the experience of action research in the humanisation of work life has survived, and the editors are confident that action research will grow in German social sciences.

These are examples of the journal´s concern to broaden its scope, geographically and epistemologically. While the journal is quite well established in particular regions in Europe and Latin America, in recent years more submissions have been received from different places in Asia and Africa.

3 The special issue was organized by guest editors Danilo Streck and Carlos Rodrigues Brandão. The interview was conducted by Lola Cendales, Fernando Torres and Alfonso Torres [IJAR 1 (1), 9-42]

4 The authors that contributed article are Marianne Kristiansen, Olav Eikeland, John Shotter, Bjorn Gustavsen, Danilo Streck, Davydd Greenwood, Bob Dick, Margareth Vickers, Gil Colemann and Margaret Geary.

5 International Journal of Action Research 11 (1-2), 2015.

The Action/Participatory Research conferences

The editors' concerns with Action Research, however, go beyond the publication of a good journal. It is their understanding that the journal has also a formative dimension, and the idea of an academy of action researchpopped up once in a while.In place of an association or academy, probably with a restricted membership, itinerant gatherings are beingorganised, either with the name of symposium, conference or congress. The spirit that illuminates these encounters is to bring together people who share concerns that fall under the umbrella of action research, be they experienced researchers or students in the process of becoming researchers, be they associated with academic or with organszational contexts.This one, in Kristiansand, is the fourth of the series of gatherings.

The first one took place in Brazil (Porto Alegre, from June 20 to 22, 2011) under the title *International Symposium on Action and Participatory Research*, organized by Danilo R. Streck, Emil A. Sobottka, Edla Eggert and Telmo Adams, affiliated with universities in the Porto Alegre metropolitan area.[6] The central focus of the symposium, as stated in the call for papers, was on qualitative social research that uses methodologies and strategies in which researchers and participants in the research process constitute close, intensive and long term relations as a way to observe social contexts, gather information, analyse and interpret data, report on the acquired knowledge and systematise their experience as a tool for critical and transformative action in their social contexts.[7] As may be noted, this quite wide scope allowed participation of professionals and students with distinct relations to action research.

The quotes of two beloved colleagues of the action research community, used in the opening of the symposium, express the search that certainly still inspires us today when gathering around action and/or participatory research:

> An emergent paradigm for us would produce the articulation of science with conscience, and of the heart hand in hand with reason. (Orlando Fals Borda 2009, p. 336)

> It seems a reasonable assumption that if the social sciences want to help construct the future and not only interpret the past, we can hardly avoid embarking on a course which will, in important respects, differ from the descriptive analytic tradition. What this means for notions such as 'research', 'science' and 'action research' is largely an open question. (Björn Gustavsen 2006, p. 24)

From Porto Alegre, the forum moved to Denmark (Copenhagen, from June 5 to 7, 2013) having as focus the tensions between participation and power in participatory research and action research. This *International Conference on Participation and power in participatory research and action research*, was hosted by the Department of Communication and Psychology and Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University. The organizers, Marianne Kristiansen and Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen (2013, p. 7), in the Preface to the special issue which they co-edited as guest editors with selected papers from the conference[8], proposed questions that remain major challenges.

6 Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS) and Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS).

7 Selected papers were published in a special issue of the International Journal of Action Research [12 (2), 2016], and a book in Portuguese (Streck, Sobottka and Eggert, *Conhecer e transformar.*

8 International Journal of Action Research, 9 (1), 2013.

What does co-production of objectives mean in situations like these (They refer to dilemmas such as choosing between efficiency or social change; solving immediate problems or challenging norms or assumptions, etc.)? Similarly, what is the raison d'etre of endeavours toward co-designing of processes and co-evaluation of results when partners and researchers often have very different forms of knowledge and competencies? What does co-communicating results mean? Does it mean that partners draw maps of power relations, co-author articles and books, or? And what do they expect, themselves?

The third meeting took place in Colombia (Bogotá, from June 23 to 25, 2015) as *III Simposio Internacional de Investigacion Accion: Homenaje a Orlando Fals Borda*[III International Symposium of Action Research: a Homage to Orlando Fals Borda], organized and coordinated by Alfonso Torres Carrillo, from the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional. As stated in the call for papers "in this next symposium we decided to focus the theme on methodological issues that are inherent to action research and participatory research. This emphasis will allow us to produce a critical appraisal in terms of problems, advances and methodological challenges of this research perspective in the beginning of this new century."[9]

This conference in Kristiansand, organised by Werner Fricke together with the co-ordination of the conference "Coping with the future", is a continuation of a process that hopefully can be continued in other places, integrating new researchers in the action community, and enriching the dialogue with new practices and reflections.

New – or old? – challenges for Action Research

In his contribution to the Porto Alegre symposium in 2011 Werner Fricke (2012, p. 36) highlighted the challenge that action research of any type should reflect, in practice and theory, on the socio-political conditions within which it is carried out. This is in no way an easy task in a globalised world system that entails divisions manifested throughout the world in the form of migrations, joblessness, economic and social inequalities, racial and gender discrimination, poverty and wars. In this context, the idea of social transformation itself has become a catchword, devoid of substantive meaning.

When referring to social transformation in terms of action research we are talking about values. For action researchers it should not be enough to make the system run smoother, introducing mechanisms of self-control that perpetuate inequalities and injustice. That's why the ethical-political dimension, which by the way permeates any research process usually in a hidden and implicit way, assumes an ineludible explicit character in action research. Who are our partners in the research process? What movements and powers do we strengthen or enable with our participation?

Everything starts, as Paulo Freire has taught us, with the reading of the world. A reading which is always an intersubjective and dialogical process that continuously

9 Selected papers were published in a special issue of the*International Journal of Action Research*, 12 (2), 2016).

problematises our being with others, and in and with the world. It is also a reading that is at the same time a pronouncing of the world, a word-in-action.[10]

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10 Paulo Freire coins the Portuguese word *palavração*, which is a combination of word plus action. See the entry "Word/Word-in-action [Palavra/Palavração]in the *Paulo Freire Encyclopedia* (Streck, Redin & Zitkoski, 2012)

Participatory Research in Latin America as Political Engagement

Emil A. Sobottka

Abstract
In a first part the text brings the search of Latin America for its self-interpretation on the base of some selected authors like José Martí, José Vasconcelos, John Mackay and Richard Morse. In this trajectory, the concept *people* changed its meaning from a holistic to a more differentiated one, that supposes a cleavage between local elites and the socially dominated groups. In a second part the text argues that this new interpretation underlies the emerging of participatory research in Latin America, understood by its pioneers Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda primarily as a combination of research and political engagement in favor of *the people* defined as a collective of oppressed social groups struggling for its emancipation.

Keyword: Participatory research; Emancipation; Latin America

Investigación participativa en América Latina como compromiso político

Resúmen
En una primera parte, el texto reconstruye la búsqueda de América Latina por su auto-interpretación sobre la base de algunos autores seleccionados como José Martí, José Vasconcelos, John Mackay y Richard Morse. En esta trayectoria, el significado del concepto *pueblo* cambió de una visión holística a otra más diferenciada, que supone una división entre las élites locales y los grupos socialmente dominados. En una segunda parte, el texto sostiene que esta nueva interpretación subyace al surgimiento de la investigación participativa en América Latina, entendida por sus pioneros Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, Paulo Freire y Orlando Fals Borda principalmente como una combinación de investigación y compromiso político a favor *del pueblo* definido como un colectivo de grupos sociales oprimidos que luchan por su emancipación.

Palabras-clave: Investigación participativa; Emancipación; América Latina

Introduction

Participatory research in Latin America has emerged in different contexts and has been developed over a very long time. It would be a mistake to describe it as a monolithic unit; it has never become a unified school or something like that. Nevertheless, there are some characteristics that make the different experiences fit without difficulty under this common name, assumed by the protagonists themselves. In this text I want to focus basically on one of them: participatory research or participatory action research in Latin America as an academic-political activity, usually carried out as part of the struggle for liberation from poverty and domination. Therefore, it clearly takes side by, and engages itself with, the dominated. It does so facing the cleavage between dominant and dominated groups that permeate all countries of this subcontinent, in a hardly imaginable dimension for those who live in a well-being, democratic society. This outstanding feature of participatory research reinforces the close relation between science and social context. Or, in other words, it makes once more clear that every kind of research is part and parcel of a specific social formation and influences the balance between social groups.

Before exploring this topic, I will briefly remember, based on few authors, how intellectuals in the subcontinent have tried to establish a differentiation with other regions, with other peoples.[1] Some authors consider that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries Latin America was searching for an identity. An identity that could reveal its uniqueness facing the Other. This Other at first was basically Europe. After the War of Cuba (1895), the United States replaced Europe in a response to the beginning of its imperialist phase in the region.

In regard to this last theme, namely the relation between the United States and Latin America, the manifestations have gone from a romantic admiration that saw in that country an ideal model, to the historically well founded accusation of a long record of political and military interventions, of cultural domination and of repeated attempts of vassalage, against which resistance is called (Tickner, Cepeda M. e Bernal 2015). Mirian Warde brings some historical examples of romantic admirers, like an engineer named Paula Soares, who in 1869 commented the educational system of the USA and wrote “Oh if we could imitate them! If we could forget the old and corrupt formulas to which we are subjugated, forgetting that we also live on the American continent!” (Warde 2000). She also mentions the editorial of a local newspaper from 1835 who says: “The United States was colonised and educated by philosophers; Brazil instead, by rude criminals and degradeds”. Thus to this day it is possible to find such self-loathing intertwined with feelings of admiration of the USA.

The United States’ successive alliances with sectors of the local elites in combating liberation movements, the recurrent deposition of democratic governments, the imposition and support of authoritarian regimes, and the repeated blocking of the development of democratic states of law, based on citizenship bestowed with equal rights and duties to each member of the respective society, all that contributed to merge the struggle of subaltern

1 Later it will be explained why, following the use made by the commented authors, in this text *people* is the designation of a collectivity as such, not of several individuals. For this reason it is sometimes used in the singular, other times in the plural.

groups against the domination by the local elites with the aforementioned anti-American sentiment. These same alliances between foreign imperialists and local elites deepened an internal polarisation, which was born along with the colonisation. This polarization made unfeasible such a kind of solidarity between employers and employees as could be found in some European countries during the peak of the social welfare regimes. In countries with welfare regimes this collaboration allowed the introduction of co-management (*Mitbestimmung*) in organisations, a reasonable income distribution and social assistance through public policies, not allowing the existence of an economic, political and social abyss between the dominant sectors and the dominated groups in the society. A trusting relationship even among unequal social groups seems to have been important in Europe in allowing the development of action research.

I will start by remembering some moments in Latin America's search for understanding itself, because it seems to me that it helps to understand how Latin American participatory research was developed and why it is considered a political-academic activity that in some aspects differentiates itself of the European tradition of action research.

Latin America searching for its self-understanding

The young Cuban Jose Martí, while in Guatemala in 1877, wrote: "After the natural and majestic work of American civilization was interrupted by the *conquista*, with the arrival of Europeans, a strange people was created, not a Spanish nor an Indigenous one [...]; it is a mestizo people who, after reconquering its freedom will develop and restore its own soul [...]. The whole work of our robust America will inevitably have the seal of the *conquista* civilisation; but it will improve, it will advance and surprise with the energy and the creative impulse of a people that in essence is distinct, superior in noble ambitions." (Martí 1983, p. 10).

In Martí's text, the focus is still on the fight for independence against Spain. The antagonism between the two Americas, which would become a few years later the tonic of another work, *Nuestra América,* is still very subtle here. But the text contains a certain romanticism with respect to the new people that should emerge strong, vigorous and full of virtues as a result of a forced *mestizaje* (race mixture) and the long colonial subjugation. In 1877 there were still seven years before the first of almost two hundred military interventions of the United States in the subcontinent that followed with the aim of stifling the freedom and sovereignty aspirations of the Latin American peoples.

The conviction that below the Rio Grande river a new and superior civilisation, the noble future of humanity, was emerging, was expressed again in the mid-1920s. The Mexican José Vasconcelos, in his book *La raza cósmica* (Vasconcelos 1983), published an "exalted allegory of the Ibero-American peoples as being the forgers of a new race that will finally culminate the yearnings of the human race" (Lorenzo Avila, in the presentation of the book). Vasconcelos is dealing with the neo-Darwinist theses of natural selection and with theories about pure races, which placed specific peoples of the North as superiors and disdained mestizo peoples as inferior. The author was instead convinced of the contrary. He does not deny that up to now only "a race with plenty of vices and defects has been formed

in the Iberian Continent. But it [e.g. this new race] is bestowed with malleability, able to develop quickly comprehension and emotions, the fertile elements to germinate the future species" (1983, p. 46).

Vasconcelos really trusted the people that resulted from the *conquista*. This new people will have to dispose some of its legacies received from Portugal and Spain and "discover new areas in its spirit" to fulfill its mission. For, according to the author, "only the Iberian part of the continent has the spiritual, race related and territorial ingredients that are necessary for the great enterprise to initiate the universal era of Humanity". Soon the time will come when "from the mestiso race of the Ibero-American continent", from this "people for whom beauty is the greatest reason of all things", which has "a fine aesthetic sensibility and a love of deep beauty, and which is oblivious to every bastard interest and free from formal locks", from this people will emerge the last great race of humanity, the race "which will fill the planet with the triumphs of the first truly universal, cosmic culture" (1983, p. 48-49). As can be seen from these quotations, the author had a practically unsurpassed optimism about the future of the Latin-American peoples.

A few years later, in 1932, John Mackay, a Protestant Scottish missionary who had adopted the Latin-American continent as his field of work, published the book *El otro Cristo español* [*The other Spanish Christ*] (1989), with a very different vision as that of Martí and Vasconcelos. Mackay suspects that the Christ who was brought to Latin America was not the one born in Bethlehem. This original Christ inspired e.g. the monk Bartolomeu de las Casas and other defenders of indigenous people in the continent. For Mackay, the Christ from Bethlehem "wanted to come to South America, but he was prevented", he was "imprisoned in Spain". Consequently, in this continent he "was little more than a stranger since Columbus until to the present" (1989, p. 114). Who in fact came to Latin America, according to Mackay, was "a Christ who was born [...] in North Africa […]. He came with the Spanish Crusaders to the New World [...] and he became naturalized in the Iberian colonies of America". In these lands he appears as "a Creole Christ, a Christ whom one knows living as a child or death as a corpse". This Creole Christ lacks of "the constituent features of the Christian religion: the spiritual experience and the internal ethical expression" (1989, p. 139). For Mackay, religiosity and local culture, and in particular the texts of its songs, express a particularly sad and passive Christ. It is not necessary to share Mackay's missionary goal to consider that his analysis of the Spanish Christianity that was brought to America seems very lucid when he describes its authoritarianism and its inability to pervade everyday life with some ethical-theological orientation. This Christianity has done little to make known the gospel's message of liberation and of a radically egalitarian solidarity. Its fruit, on the contrary, was education for the passivity of the poor and oppressed people. Or, as Mariategui (1976, p. 142) wrote: "The missionaries did not impose the Gospel; they imposed the cult and the liturgy, fitting them sagaciously to habits of the *índios*".

Against this passivity Martí (1983, p. 19) calls: "We should make common cause with the oppressed, and so strengthen the system opposite to the oppressors' interests and habits of command" (p. 19). In very different perspectives, Mackay and Martí call for engagement, with the intention of transforming the reality of the subcontinent. They do not expect a natural and gradual development, as Vasconcelos did. They are convinced that

only deliberate action can change the people's unacceptable situation. But while Mackay with *El otro Cristo español* and Martí, in his early writings (1984), turned their critique against the Spanish oppression, a few years later Martí began to point out an internal social cleavage in the Latin American peoples: a dominating elite exploits and oppresses the weakened majorities. The romantic vision of integrated nations or races living in perfect harmony disappears and gives place to the unveiling of an abyss between social groups or classes. One of the most lucid analyzes of the social polarization, contemporary of Mackay, is Mariategui's book *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* [Seven essays of interpretation of the Peruvian reality], published in 1928 (Mariátegui, 1976).

A late but original holistic analysis has been presented by Richard Morse in *Prospero's mirror*. This author conducted long-term research during decades in Latin America, especially in Brazil. He assumes that in Latin America there is a long tradition of mirroring the United States, and intends to re-signify this mirroring. Morse points out that "during the last two centuries an American mirror has been shown aggressively to the South". Now it would be necessary to "turn that mirror back". He believes that his country is in a crisis of self-confidence, therefore it seems to him that it would be "appropriate to the USA to confront itself with the historical experience of Ibero-America, no longer as a case study of a frustrated development, but as the experience of a worthy cultural option" (Morse, 1988, p. 14). The author explains that Prospero comes from a literary figure used by José Enrique Rodó in the text *Ariel*, in 1900, and used later (1907) as title of the book *El mirador de Próspero*.

Although "mirador" is strictly an observation tower, for Morse it is not at all equivocal to associate it with a mirror. Anyway, central to Morse is Prosper. In *Ariel* Prosper was an "old and venerable master" who fights against democracy in a time when the Continent showed strong influences of Comtian positivism. But according to the interpretation, this master "was not a benevolent and sagacious intellectual, but the paranoid coloniser". It will be this interpretation, confronted with the long history of military intervention, of fomenting military coups and cultural domination, which allows Morse to place the prosperous United States as Prosper, and Latin America "as a mirror image in which Anglo-America can recognise his own illnesses and it's problems" (1988, p. 13). It is not surprising that with such a thesis in his book Morse spent unsuccessfully 10 years looking for a publisher in the United States. According to the news of his death (New York Times, April 28, 2001), "His most influential work was perhaps Prospero's Mirror, published in Spanish in 1982 and in Portuguese in 1988, but never entirely in English".

To Morse, turning the mirror does not simply mean reversing all the signs of an evaluation that saw the United States as model, as an example plenty of success, on the one side, and Latin America as the condensation of backwardness on the other. He contrasts "two worlds" in the New World, recounting their origins, retracing their roads and showing the crossroads where certain influential choices have been made. According to Morse, the Anglo-Saxon culture has flourished in the United States as a successful mass culture, as very successful in individualisation, but it has failed by the inability to produce individuality. The southern part of America has instead preserved its holistic heritage of the Iberian peninsula. Consequently it was successful in avoiding the isolation of people from each other and the degeneration of social relations. Morse is convinced that instead of

presenting itself as a model, the United States should learn a little more modesty and learn from the Ibero-American culture, to whom the author recommends more self-confidence.

The publication of the book was followed by a heated debate, specially in Brazil (Arocena e León 1993). I want to mention here just one reaction, namely from Simon Schwartzman, reprinted in Arocena and León's book. Schwartzman highlights a series of material achievements of US-American society and emphasises that, despite possible problems such as those diagnosed by Morse, that society "still preserves a repertoire of creativity, pluralism and capacity for moral commitment", which would be incompatible with Latin America's "provincialism and corporatism". Schwarzman argues that before seeing any significant quality in the mirror, the new Prospero (USA) would see the ills of Iberian America as "a thick cloud of frustrated national states, astrayed ethnicities and societies, grotesque and tragic *caudilhos* [local authoritarian leaders], bloody and despairing insurrections, aborted projects of modernization and industrialization" (Schwartzman 1993). The author reinforces emphatically the predominant image of a subcontinent to the South, doubled under the weight of its ills, confronted with a successful model of civilisation to the North.

In the Latin-American literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century the authors use the Spanish word *pueblo* as well as the Portuguese word *povo* here translated as *people*. It is important to note that *pueblo* as well as *povo* refer to a *collective* of humans similarly to nation, and not to a sum of individuals like the word suggests in English. When Americans from the South refer to *a people*, they are not referring to a nation, for *a people* has there no real or imaginary common origin; nor mean the authors something like folk, because the designation as *a people* does not refer to the cultural and folkloric heritage of a group, but to the group itself. People is a political concept under construction and in dispute in Latin America. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century it designated primarily the result that emerged from the mixture of native humans from the continent with foreign colonisers, forming a new collective: perhaps the embryo of a new nation or a new race, but at the time *a people*, seen in a holistic perspective.

Even if it is not possible to define a precise period nor a single causality for it, discussions within the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean form the 1940e to the 1960s allow to perceive a change in this approach. Raúl Prebisch developed the concept of center-periphery to describe the structurally unequal relation between the countries of the North and the countries of the South, transferring wealth from the South to the North. Andre Gunder Frank and some colleagues went a step further and defended the thesis that development and underdevelopment are two faces of the same coin. That means, for these authors rich countries had developed themselves by exploiting, and so underdeveloping the countries in the South. A third step in the change of the holistic to an internal differentiated approach was the publication of the book *Dependence and development in Latin America* by Fernando Herique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto (1970). Cardoso and Faletto took the concept of center-periphery and applied it to the relation between the elites and the oppressed and exploited population within the different countries. Some authors widened this interpretation with Marx's conception of class struggle, describing the unequal relation as exploitation and domination of the underclasses by the elites (Sunkel 1995; Werz 1991).

The new interpretation of the relation between different social groups within the countries allowed a new usage of the concept *people*. In the last decades, it does not refer to the whole population of a country or of the continent, as it normally did before. Instead, *people* now refers to social groups in search of emancipation of poverty, of marginality, and of oppression. Some authors, such as Enrique Dussel, define people in a more restrictive way, including only those poor people who are organized in a liberation movement (Dussel 2016; Hernández Solís 2015). In general, however, the concept is kept open, to welcome all who engage in an inclusive, participatory and democratic society. This is the common meaning in the context of participatory research.

Participatory research and the discovery of its social place

In the troubled 1960s, the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Latin America and an important part of the youth groups linked to it became more acutely aware of the poverty and misery of the subcontinent. In addition to internal factors such as the Second Vatican Council, there were also impulses coming from Protestant churches through the World Council of Churches and from Latin American intellectual movements. In 1962, for example, protestant Christians hold a conference entitled "Christ and the Brazilian Revolutionary Process" (Bittencourt Filho 2016). With this conference, Protestantism has contributed to setting the foundation for the Latin American church's engagement in the ensuing decades in social issues. Protestants and Catholics began a review of their theology, including in it the knowledge about the concrete reality lived by the people. For the great majority this reality was one of hunger and poverty, due to centuries of domination and exploitation. As the Roman church at that time comprised approximately 90% of the Brazilian population, and a similar proportion in several other countries, the impact of its politicisation was very high.

The fear of communism and the radicality of some manifestations, however, made this engagement also provoke resistance and retreats. Influential sectors in the Roman Catholic hierarchy and in some Protestant churches gave explicit support to traditional authoritarian regimes and military coups. Nevertheless, the engagement in favor of the poorest groups in society survived, including the support and shelter of political activists who did not find legal secular channels for their activities by local church communities. Consequently many pastoral activities had among their leaders agnostic people and a plurality of people linked to socialist and communist movements.

The working methodology used in grassroots communities was often described as the combination of *seeing*, *judging*, and *acting*. The dimension of *seeing* involved for example hearing personal reports of experiences, whereas the moment of *judging* was a combination of biblical-theological reflections with theoretical instruments of social analysis derived from Marxism (Mueller 1996). The *action* that followed was increasingly becoming the form of social movements. They subsisted even beyond the period of authoritarianism and helped in the process of re-democratization (Sobottka 2006).

It was in the Roman church that Carlos Rodrigues Brandão developed his activities of research and participation, predominantly through the dialogue between anthropology and

militancy in youth groups. Reflecting later on his so emerged practice, at the beginning still without a name, Brandão says: Participatory research is a "collective knowledge, emerging from a work that recreates, from the inside out, concrete forms that give to these people, groups and classes the right and power to participate in thinking, producing and directing the uses of their knowledge about themselves" (1981, p. 9-10). The link between the generation of knowledge and the strengthening of the respective social group was among the central objectives of this kind of action: "A knowledge that comes out of the political practice that makes the commitment of popular groups with groups of social scientists possible and beneficial is an instrument for strengthening the power of the people" (Brandão 1981, p. 10). To a certain extent Brandão's trajectory reveals that *participatory research* was the name given to an engagement against authoritarianism and in favor of social transformation, as soon as it began to be systematized by academic reflection.

In a similar way Paulo Freire (Freire 1981; cf. Sobottka & Faustini 2007; Wener 1991) developed his methodology through engagement. After a degree in law, he was engaged in a social assistance activity maintained by an entity of industry entrepreneurs. In this activity he could experience a clash, typical of peripheral societies as the Brazilian one is: the social assistance oscillates between giving effectiveness to the citizenship rights and replacing them, and so establishing a relationship of dependence and subordination. The development of the literacy methodology started there was continued as an extension service of the public university. For the regime installed after the 1964 military coup in Brazil, however, the right to literacy, which Marshall (1992) had described a few years earlier as the most basic social right of citizenship in British society, was now seen as a subversion of public order. As a result of this "subversivity", Freire had to sour long years of exile. Apparently the power of the domain of literacy was an unbearable threat to the armed forces that had taken the arms to save the country from what they considered the communist danger.

Freire saw education as research and research as education. Research and education are then a partnership between researchers and professional educators and the community or social group in which they share experiences. With research and education it is possible to overcome the non-knowledge of the letters that make up words and texts. But above all, with them it is possible to overcome the non-knowledge of the texture of social relations, especially the relations of domination. To free oneself from this domination is the focus of Freire's research: "In the liberating perspective in which I situate myself [...] research, as an act of knowledge, has as cognitive subjects, on the one hand, professional researchers; on the other hand, it has the popular subjects. As an object to be unveiled, it has the concrete reality" (1981, p. 35). Research in education is conceived as a two-way formation: "not only for community leaders and other interested people, but also for researchers, teachers and external activists" (Fals-Borda 2007; Fals Borda 2008).

Orlando Fals Borda focuses on this same aspiration of liberation by unveiling the concrete living situation of the poor. He developed his perspective of engagement in the Colombian context through what he called "participatory action research". Through an approximation to the poor peasants, that he started as a curious and dilettante employee of a multinational company (Fals Borda 2006) and was later deepened through a formal university research, both a work methodology and a life commitment were born. The

methodology and the life commitment subsisted even when he later held important posi-positions in agrarian policy and in the university of his country.

Political research and engagement for liberation

In an interview in which he recounts this trajectory, Fals Borda explains that he understands participatory research as a research "that responds especially to the needs of populations like workers, peasants, farmers and *índios:* the most needy classes in contemporary social structures, taking into account their aspirations and potentialities of knowing and acting. It is the methodology that seeks to encourage autonomous (self-reliant) development from the grassroots and with a relative independence from the outside" (2006, p. 43). He expressed himself similarly in another text by saying that by bridging the gap between "scholarly erudition" and "popular wisdom" and by developing more engaging and personal relationships in research "we recover the popular version of history and strengthen culture and the self-esteem of grassroots people" (Fals-Borda 2007).

With this statement Fals Borda touches on three central themes present since the origins of the entire participatory research movement in Latin America. First, a reinterpretation of development towards a more equitable participation in the wealth and cultural advances of the respective society. This is closely related to the question of autonomy as the liberation of the bonds of subjugation and exploitation, and the extension of the possibility of creating individually and collectively one's own life projects. Finally, to stimulate self-confidence as a feeling of being, and of being able to do things, has always been central to the participation of intellectuals in communities. Even though they are different from the mainstream, this being and doing are no less worthy than those of the most economically, politically and culturally dominant social strata. To have confidence or even pride in being what one is is a feeling that often had to be developed or recovered by communities and social groups as a form of resistance to domination.

In the various quotations made above, the authors express another central characteristic of this tradition of participatory research: the emphasis on the place that the intellectual who approaches a social group to research and engage wants to have in relation to the group. He shares with his interlocutors the condition of co-subject of the generation of knowledge. Brandão (1981, p. 11) expresses it even more radically by saying: "To have in the research *agent* a kind of *people* who serves". According to this understanding, the intellectual's duty is not only to let the others be subjects of their own life projects, but he should put himself at their service. There is an ethical expectation regarding researchers that permeates the whole activity: that they engage solidarily and even selflessly with the group. Or as Fals Borda puts it: "[...] in popular struggles there is always room for intellectuals, technicians and scientists as such [...]. They simply have to honestly demonstrate their commitment to the popular cause pursued through the specific contribution of their own discipline, without completely denying these disciplines". According to the same author, this expectation "motivated a change in the orientation of the personal conduct of the activists and the addition of new social values such as simplicity,

democratic and direct participation in the daily routine of community work" (1981, p. 49-50).

This politicised practice of generating knowledge through a solidary and even empathetic encounter with those to whom the research refers turns explicitly against the claims of neutrality of traditional science. More than this: the participating researchers have developed a deep distrust of a hidden agenda in many traditional researches. "The seemingly neutral expression that exists in the idea of a research object often includes the idea and intention that those whose life and reality are finally known become recognized in order to be *objects* of History as well" (Brandão 1981, p. 10).

Instead of sticking to the questions of the inner logic of science, the pretension of participatory research has been to ask "questions of real people [...] who seem to discover with their own practice that they have to gain the power to be, after all, *the subject*, both from the *act of knowing* what they have been the *object* of, and from the *work of transforming* the knowledge and the world that have transformed them into an object" (Brandão 1981, p. 11). Fals Borda distances himself even from authors like Kurt Lewin, considering his methodology still too little engaged with his respondents. Paulo Freire is even more explicit in advocating a movement in which objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually excluding. On the contrary, for him reality can only be grasped in the tension between these two poles. "For me, concrete reality is something more than facts or data taken more or less in themselves. It is all these facts and all these data and additionally the perception that the population living in them has of them. Thus the concrete reality is given to me in the dialectical relation between objectivity and subjectivity" (1981, p. 35).

The here mentioned authors-researchers (Brandão, Freire and Fals Borda) refer to traditional science as knowledge linked to the dominant groups of society in a given period. This binding, according to them, prevents the generated knowledge of having an absolute, universal character; on the contrary, this knowledge fulfills certain functions: those of maintaining and strengthening domination, of docilisation of subordinate workers, of increasing productivity. Moreover, the "individuals called scientists" themselves have "motives, interests, beliefs and superstitions, emotions and interpretations of their social development" that directly interfere with their activity. Therefore, according to Fals Borda, instead of focusing on the analysis of the results of that way of doing science, for a critique it is necessary and more promising to examine the "process of production of scientific knowledge" (Fals Borda 1981, p. 41, 44). That is why they developed practices that are now known as participatory research or participatory action research.

When affirming the vocation of participatory research to help drive processes of social transformation, it is necessary to better specify how this vocation is understood. While it is true that in its birth this research occurred in contexts where projects of "social action", "rural development" or "community development" were being implemented by governments or international organisations, participatory research mostly was implemented as a resistance within them, in an attempt to overcome the developmentalist orientation that prevailed in international co-operation at that time.

Since its origin, participation was not intended to conquer the co-operation of the "recipients" of any policy, so that its effectiveness could be increased. On the contrary, since its beginning it was conceived as a political formation of all those involved in the

resistance to the dominant power. Brandão (2006) differs emphatically from the participa-participatory discourse of official agencies. For this pioneer of participatory research, it is the research and the researcher who participate in the life and struggle of the groups with which they are involved, not the other way round. Participatory research reveals its value through its contribution to the collective search for knowledge that helps make social relations more just, free and solidary. This would be its emancipatory sense: "Thus, research is 'participatory' not just because a growing proportion of popular subjects participate in its process. Research is 'participatory' because, as a solidary alternative of creating social knowledge, it is inserted and participates in relevant processes of a transforming social action with a popular and emancipatory vocation" (Brandão 2006, p. 32).

But from this brief exposition made here it cannot be inferred that participatory research in Latin America has a single orientation. On the contrary, it has historically constituted itself as a range of contextualized experiences, marked by the histories of each place in which it was practiced. It was also not always successful, but "on several occasions, practical experiences ended up reducing at once, affecting only partial aspects of social life" (Brandão 2006, p. 33). It was born and continues today as an open and plural collective project of social transformation in a context perceived as unjust, exclusionary and oppressive.

There is even something fundamental that differentiates the way of making science of the classic critical theorists, like the Frankfurtian critical theorists, from that of the Latin American participatory researchers referred to here. While for the former the subaltern social groups are source of political orientation and normative criteria, in the participatory research the generation of knowledge is made in the coexistence that shares the pains and the concrete struggles. It is in this sense that Fals Borda speaks about both the breakup of asymmetry between researchers and the researched and the incorporation of "social base people as individuals and thinkers in research efforts" as well as about "enabling them to break with their dependence on the intellectuals, and to conduct their own research" (1981). The traditional subject-object relationship is broken in order to establish a research whose methodology is based on subject-subject relations. This sense of the quest for autonomy, even in doing science, transcends a lot the conception of a social division of labor, in which the specialisations, and the social distance between them, remain unsurpassed.

In Latin America, since the re-democratization that followed the authoritarian phase of the military regimes, the anxieties and expectations of social groups historically placed at the margin have been mostly expressed in the idea of citizenship: especially as citizenship rights. Social movements, the constituent processes that took place in most countries in the 1980s and 1990s, and even the dominant groups, have assumed as legitimate the existence of a very broad set of rights. In some countries, constitutional texts have included significant lists of rights. Not infrequently, however, they received vague formulations or remained without indication about who would have the duty to ensure these rights. They are therefore more declaratory intentions than rights due by legal means or through social ethical pressure. But it is precisely around these rights of citizenship, already formally recognized but inaccessible in daily life, that the broadest and most fruitful field for the

interweaving of research with participation in daily political struggles is inviting for partic-participatory action research.

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Democratic Dialogue and Development: An Intellectual Obituary of Björn Gustavsen

Richard Ennals

Foreword

Björn Gustavsen commented on my profile of his work as a Great Organisational Change Thinker, for the Palgrave International Handbook of Great Organisational Change Thinkers (2017). He was already seriously ill with lung cancer. He was concerned with succession planning, so that his work could continue after his own death. This intellectual obituary is adapted from the profile.

Abstract: Björn Gustavsen, with an original professional background as a lawyer and judge in his native Norway, had a formative role in organisational development processes in Norway, Sweden, Scandinavia and the European Union over four decades. Following in the tradition of Norwegian working life research by Trist and Thorsrud, he provided the conceptual framework and practical case studies which have driven major national and international programmes. He learned from different experience of organisational change in, for example, the USA and Japan, but he identified a distinctive way forward for the European Union, where he acted as a senior adviser. In contrast to conventional Taylorist top-down management and reliance on expert consultants, his approach was bottom up and concept driven, with a focus on empowering workers. With a commitment to long-term sustainable processes, he emphasised the importance of capacity building and succession planning, highlighting development organisations. His approach to partnership and coalition building enabled collaboration across sectors, in the cause of creating collaborative advantage. He had a distinctive fluent academic writing style, but spentmost of his time engaged in the design and practice of development, and editing the work of younger colleagues. He saw the role of academic journals and edited books in the development process, so encouraged new publications, but without seeking to dominate. He took ideas of Action Research and case studies, and applied them to national enterprise development programmes, working with the labour market parties. This resulted in a distinctive research and development culture.

Key Words: Action Research, democratic dialogue, development coalition, development organisation, labour market parties,

Diálogo Democrático Y Desarrollo: Un Obituario Intelectual De Björn Gustavsen

Resumen: Björn Gustavsen, con una trayectoria profesional original como abogado y juez en su Noruega natal, tuvo un papel formativo en los procesos de desarrollo organizativo en Noruega, Suecia,

Escandinavia y la Unión Europea a lo largo de cuatro décadas. Siguiendo la tradición de la investigación de la vida laboral en Noruega, realizada por Trist y Thorsrud, proporcionó el marco conceptual y los estudios de casos prácticos que han impulsado los principales programas nacionales e internacionales. Aprendió de diferentes experiencias de cambio organizacional, por ejemplo, en EEUU y Japón, pero identificó un camino distintivo de avance para la Unión Europea, donde actuó como asesor principal. En contraste con la gestión convencional Taylorista de arriba hacia abajo y la dependencia de consultores expertos, su enfoque fue de abajo hacia arriba y orientado en conceptos, con énfasis en el empoderamiento de los trabajadores. Con un compromiso con los procesos sostenibles a largo plazo, hizo hincapié en la importancia de la creación de capacidades y la planificación de la sucesión, destacando las organizaciones de desarrollo. Su enfoque de la asociación y la construcción de coaliciones permitió la colaboración entre sectores, con motivo de crear una ventaja colaborativa. Tenía un estilo de escritura académica fluente y distintiva, pero pasó la mayor parte de su tiempo involucrado en el diseño y la práctica del desarrollo, y editando el trabajo de colegas más jóvenes. Vio el papel de las revistas académicas y los libros editados en el proceso de desarrollo, por lo que alentó nuevas publicaciones, pero no con la intensión de dominar. Tomó ideas de investigación-acción y de los estudios de casos, y las aplicó a los programas nacionales de desarrollo empresarial, trabajando con las partes del mercado laboral. Esto resultó en una investigación distintiva y una cultura de desarrollo.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción, diálogo democrático, coalición de desarrollo, organización de desarrollo, partes del mercado laboral

Introduction

Björn Gustavsen was a longstanding prominent contributor to international research literature, writing frequently at the policy level in Norway, Scandinavia, and Europe. His writing had a consistent purpose and was targeted to particular audiences. The focus of his work and writingwas not academic theory, butengagement in practice in working life.

For Björn Gustavsen, thought and action were closely linked: publications are actions, and research can have a political dimension. Because this approach diverges from North American orthodoxy, he is not easily compartmentalised in conventional academic terms. Accordingly, he may be unfamiliar to many readers. Drawing on Gustavsen's writing and practical interventions, we present his consistent approach to organisational change, illustrated with accessible quotations from his publications. His core themes are democracy, dialogue, and development. We highlight in particular the themes of *development organizations* and *development coalitions*.

Influences and Motivations

Björn Gustavsen began his career as a lawyer in his home country, Norway. At the time, Norway was seeking to find a sustainable way forward after the Second World War. Gustavsen's thought maintained a consistent political direction. He saw democracy as relevant to the workplace and to the political process. This perspective stemmed from his cultural context: Norway held a preference for consensus, rather than conflict. Accordingly, there

was a tradition of national agreements involving government and the labour market parties: employers and trade unions. That tradition has continued but has weakened in recent years. After decades of consensus, the extent of engagement by the labour market parties declined.

Protection and Participation

Gustavsen saw his work on drafting the Norwegian 1977 Work Environment Act as an important action research intervention (Gustavsen & Hunnius, 1981). Socio-technical ideas from the Tavistock Institute were put into practice through an intervention in the legislative process. To what extent could legislation bring about sustainable change? Could the rules within which decisions were made be changed? What would be the impact on citizens? These issues were important for a trained lawyer. In pursuing them, he helped to frame the legal dimensions of Norwegian life. He introduced the use of democratic dialogue to solve environmental and safety problems and other challenges in the workplace. This represented a transformation in approach, from worker protection to active participation for change. He saw the need to look at work environmental issues as a whole, combining technical and organisational factors. Even now, this notion still needs to be more widely understood by the labour market parties and the Norwegian tripartite system of government, employers and trade unions.

The View from Scandinavia

Organisations are culturally situated. The world can look different from Scandinavia. It is unlike North America. Indeed, "comparing Scandinavian societies to liberal capitalist ones, such as the UK and the US, may be like comparing a football and a pyramid" (Gustavsen in Ekman et al., 2011, p. 8).

The differences are certainly profound. Some of these differences have been captured in discussions of the Scandinavian Model of Business and Society, in which Gustavsen participated (e.g. Ekman et al 2011) where there is a focus on respect for work, social equity, a tripartite approach to the workplace, linking government, employers and trade unions, and consensus. This, in turn, has given rise to discussion about varieties of capitalism, in which Scandinavia has developed differently from the Liberal Capitalist economies of the USA and UK, and differently from the European Union as a whole.In this context, Gustavsen's account of *development coalitions* provided a language in which differences can be explored.

Although the United States and Japan have dominated management literature, Gustavsen's focushas been Norway. He has built on Norwegian experience to address international contexts, particularly in Europe. He also saw the Japanese approach to quality, with an emphasis on empowerment of workers through approaches such as Quality Circles, as providing a focus for workplace dialogue. Building on the work of the quality movement, hedid not emphasise compliance and control, but insteadsaw it in terms of dialogue and empowerment.

Quality has been misconstrued as a means of providing quantitatively testable measures, frequently imposed externally. It is rather a matter of language, whereby those who share concerns regarding quality find that they are engaged in ongoing communication, based on common understandings.(Ennals &Gustavsen, 1999, p. 82)

Gustavsen's influence extended far beyond his native Norway. He contributed to debates under many headings, crossing borders of countries, disciplines, and economic sectors. His positions and practical contributionswere consistent and distinctive.

Understanding Gustavsen

Gustavsen drove theory from practice (Toulmin &Gustavsen, 1996). He rejected a reliance on "expert-led change," which gives power to consultants and tends to be imposed top-down. Rather, he favoured "concept-driven" processes of change (Gustavsen et al., 1996): bottom-up, based on democratic principles. This theoretical objective was made practical through live cases with an emphasis on active participation. He did not offer single, dogmatic solutions or one best way. His work was intended to help people learn from differences, because differences represent a vital resource. He argued that we are best able to learn from the experiences of others when we ourselves are engaged in processes of change.

Gustavsen's Norwegian background is vital for understanding his work.Born in April 1938, he received a law degree from the University of Oslo in 1964. He was an assistant judge in the years 1965 to 1966. He joined the Norwegian Work Research Institute (AFI) in 1970, becoming its director from 1972 to 1983.He was then Professor at the Swedish National Institute for Working Life (NIWL) from 1986 to 1999. His focus throughout was on working life. He was not an ivory tower academic or a commercial consultant. Even prior to Gustavsen's affiliation with them, both AFI and NIWL (until its closure in 2007) hosted strong traditions of Scandinavian research on working life. AFI is now largely funded from contract work with industry sponsors. NIWL researchers were dispersed to universities and research institutes across Sweden.

Subsequent generations of researchers have not always understood Gustavsen's work and methods, especially researchers relying solely on academic literature. For example, they have sometimes suggested that Gustavsen disregarded issues of power. To the contrary, his tacit knowledge of such issuesinformed his actions, rather than being spelled out in text. He brokered deals with those in power; namely,the Norwegian government, employers, and trade unions.

Gustavsen must be understood in context. He was the architect of a series of major, government-supported development programmes in Scandinavia, whereas other international scholars have preferred to work only in academia or as consultants in the private sector. Unlike a generation of innovative pioneers who made generalisations based on reducing their differences, Gustavsen instead saw differences as a valuable resource for collaborative learning.

In contrast with many American management gurus, Gustavsen did not offer ready-made solutions based on celebrated cases. He opposed Taylorism, top down management practice, and, like Japanese quality experts, preferred to focus on empowering the workforce. This meant emphasising participation, engagement, and in particular, dialogue. Gus-

tavsen stated, “Dialogue refers to conversations, or discussions, between equal partners, characterised by openness, willingness to listen to each other, to accept good arguments and generally to learn from each other” (Ennals & Gustavsen, 1999, p. 81).

Gustavsen did not, however, offer neat and definite conclusions after the process of dialogue. If a process of dialogue is to be sustainable, he would argue, it cannot be brought to an end with final agreements. There must be room for additional participants, if development is to continue. This principle is fundamental for organisations. Thus, it may be a mistake to seek single answers. Democratic dialogue was a priority for Gustavsen, throughout his work.

Like the philosopher Wittgenstein, whose work he uses (Wittgenstein, 1954; Ennals, 2016), Gustavsen tended to set his own agenda rather than be driven by the academic literature. He did not start by thinking in terms of individual firms in a capitalist economic system. He chose different units of analysis, at the meso level, between individual firms and regions. Language and dialogue were important as participants are engaged. His perspective was bottom-up and strategic.

Rather than relying simply on developments in the United States, he tried to learn from changes in locations such as Japan and the European Union, and to apply them in particular to Scandinavia. His focus is on development, rather than management. He had deep personal roots in Norway, but he was able to maintain professional careers in both Sweden and Norway. This provided opportunities for comparisons and benchmarking.

Action Research and Organisational Change

Gustavsen’s practical engagement provided the basis for his theoretical contributions. He was a major figure in the *action research* academic literature (Gustavsen, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2007; Gustavsen et al., 2008), but he pursued his own pragmatic line of argument while based at AFI.Although action research has often centered on individuals, Gustavsen was primarily concerned with organisational change. He developed contexts for regional development and national enterprise development, and incorporated action research into major programmes. Action researchers became instruments of policy, and actors in the processes of organisational change (Gustavsen et al., 2001; Levin, 2002).

Gustavsen long worked closely with Norway’s labour market partners: trade unions and employers. Behind the scenes he maintained engagement in the collaborative culture and designed a succession of major programmes. He was also active in European projects, seeking to develop ongoing European networks. He held senior professorial posts at the University of Oslo (1985–1999), the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim (from 2000), and the University of Vestfold.

From that set of academic bases, Gustavsen led work on enterprise development and regional development.For Gustavsen, evaluation is a key part of any development programme, which is a process that requires engagement. He states, “Evaluations emerge as active, constructive processes in which those who perform the evaluation put a lot of their own ideas into the process” (Gustavsen in Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996, p. 26). He designed, led,and evaluated a series of programmes in Sweden, including Leadership Co-

ordination and Co-operation (LOM) and The Working Life Fund (ALF)(Gustavsen et al., 2006),and Norway, including Enterprise Development 2000 (Gustavsen et al., 2001) and Value Creation 2010 (Johnsen &Ennals, 2012). Each involved government, employers and trade unions,

Development

Organisational development requires effective collaboration. Gustavsen argued that individuals can achieve relatively little by working alone. We find partners with whom we can engage productively and develop a sustained relationship. We build a network of contacts on which to draw in particular circumstances. We create collaborative advantage. When a new challenge arises, we build a coalition of the willing from our partners and network contacts with different backgrounds, and we seek to bring about change. We refer to this as a development coalition. It may cross previous borders, facilitating change and offering a context in which action research can bring results.

Development can take place in many contexts. It involves a move from the known to the unknown. People work together, creating social capital, when they trust their coworkers and feel a common sense of direction or shared value. They engage in "precompetitive collaboration", creating collaborative advantage (Johnsen & Ennals, 2012).

Development Coalitions

Gustavsen's concept of development coalitions (Ennals &Gustavsen, 1999; Ennals, 2014) was applied at local, regional, national, and European levels. It provided a unifying theme for his work on organisational change.

A development coalition is a structure in which different partners come together to pursue a shared objective or create collaborative advantage. Regional and national development programmes, particularly in Norway, have at times recommended the creation of development coalitions, bringing together large and small enterprises, public sector organisations, and universities or research organisations. Sometimesa new legal entity has been created, with implications both for business and for democratic accountability.

Action research is encountered at the level of individual actors, such as reflective professionals,in accordance with the *Action Research Journal* tradition, and through the *International Journal of Action Research* tradition of organisational change and renewal. These traditions are different, with diverse philosophical reference points, and few common references, but Gustavsen wanted to demonstrate that they can be complementary. The integrative but often temporary role of a development coalition can be a link,because it facilitates collaboration. It can even be seen as a form of action research in itself, creating a structure that enables new possibilities.

Development coalitions are not a distinct and separate category of organisation; they do not provide consistent contexts for individual action research or for analysis by economic geographers. In some cases, where Gustavsen was influential in programme design and

management, researchers were employed to follow the policy of the programme, but in other cases action research was used to develop and implement strategy.

There have been historic cases of collaborative activity that we might now consider as action research, for example the creation of NGOs (non-governmental organisations formed as development coalitions) to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. We can build on past experience, and provide foundations for others to use. This tradition has continued in Latin America in emancipatory action research. So, the similarities between work in action research in Brazil and Norway can now be recognised.

Dialogue and Development

Discussion of development coalitions arises from a context of dialogue, particularly in Scandinavia, where dialogue seminars and dialogue conferences play prominent roles. Within dialogue, individuals can reflect on their own professional experience. They do not necessarily reach agreement, but they are able to move on in their understanding, often working with new groups of people.

Gustavsen articulated principles of "democratic dialogue" which are widely shared, especially in Scandinavia:

1. The dialogue is a process of exchange: ideas and arguments move to and fro between the participants.
2. It must be possible for all concerned to participate.
3. This possibility for participation is, however, not enough. Everybody should also be active. Consequently each participant has an obligation not only to put forward his or her own ideas, but also to help others to contribute their ideas.
4. All participants are equal.
5. Work experience is the basis for participation. This is the only type of experience which, by definition, all participants have.
6. At least some of the experience which each participant has when entering the dialogue must be considered legitimate.
7. It must be possible for everybody to develop an understanding of the issues at stake.
8. All arguments which pertain to the issues under discussion are legitimate. No argument should be rejected on the ground that it emerges from an illegitimate source.
9. The points, arguments etc. which are to enter the dialogue must be made by a participating actor. Nobody can participate "on paper" alone.
10. Each participant must accept that other participants can have better arguments.
11. The work role, authority etc. of all the participants can be made subject to discussion: no participant is exempt in this respect.
12. The participants should be able to tolerate an increasing degree of difference of opinion.
13. The dialogue must continually produce agreements which can provide platforms for practical action. (Gustavsen, 1992, pp. 3-4)

When we consider enterprise and regional levels, work organisation can be regarded as a missing link both within and between organisations. In *concept-driven development*, the

lead comes from workforce participation. A pivotal role is played by the development organisation, which is a temporary and transitional structure,allowing participantsto explore new ways of thinking and working. The participants may alternate between work organisation and development organisation, taking ideas and experience with them. The European Union can be regarded as an arena in which development organisations are facilitated, both at the national level and through networks supported by framework programmes.

Regional Development Coalitions

In Norway, with its enthusiasm for regional policies, there is a continuing focus on regional development coalitions, which have been a central component of nationally funded programmes of enterprise development (Gustavsen et al., 1997; Gustavsen et al., 2001; Levin, 2002). Regional development coalitions provide a means of advancing shared aspirations. They have sometimes been misunderstood as precise descriptions of particular organisational forms, rather than as the outcomes of collective efforts. After an informal start, Norwegian regional development coalitions have sometimes become government-funded policy instruments. Researchers were not autonomous, but rather were employees in such programmes. As a result, there was debate on the democratic credentials of a structure that represented a set of interest groups, and could not claim to be detached.

Even in Norway, no two regions are the same in their economic activities, leading institutions,or distinctive cultural histories. New patterns of collaboration were required. Discussion of the issue occurred at a level of analysis above the single enterprise and below the national government. Geographical regions are locatedat this intermediate (meso) level.

In Europe, regions vary in size, having in common only the fact that they are regions. They host distinctive patterns of innovation.Gustavsen's networking projects compared experience in many countries: Sweden, Norway, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and the United Kingdom (Ennals &Gustavsen, 1999). Gustavsen suggested the concept of *regions of meaning* (Gustavsen, 2004), thus escaping the constraints of geography.

Gustavsen led international collaborative research that brought education and training together in coalitions with regional development. His approach was to use European regional learning cases from participating countries such as Germany, Norway, Portugal, Greece, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Lithuania (Gustavsen et al., 2007). He anticipated that lessons could then be learned from the differences among them. Over a series of workshops, researchers described cases in which they were personally involved against the background of other cases. This procedure linked discourses on vocational education and training with regional development.

The Dialogue Conference

Gustavsen's influence can be seen in the continued impact of the Norwegian Model, which includes an emphasis on democracy, social partnership, social equity, and consensus. He designed and managed national programmes of enterprise development,made possible by

Norway's government income from oil and gas. He developed a research methodology for projects with working life, making extensive use of dialogue conferences (Gustavsen &Engelstad, 1986).This method of using dialogue conferences has been widely adopted by his followers.

Throughout the 1980s, by far the most important measure within the framework of the Norwegian agreement was a kind of conference, initially called a Mapping Conference, later a Dialogue Conference, With participation from all levels of the formal organisation, the purpose of the conference was to create local discussions around issues like work organisation, in the light of the challenges facing each enterprise. The point was the conversation as such.(Gustavsen in Johnsen &Ennals, 2012, p. 30)

Influence

Gustavsen was influenced by the work of the Tavistock Institute in Great Britainon socio-technical systems and organisational change, where he worked. In turn,his work has influenced Great Britain's Work Organisation Network and network partners across the European Union. He has shown himself capable of understanding issues in Great Britainthanks to the common ancestry of the research.Gustavsen has operated in many contexts and often at several levels at once, some of them behind the scenes.At times he was like Alfred Hitchcock, a writer and director who also plays a modest role on stage.

Gustavsen did not generally base himself in academia, but rather at AFI, with active engagement in projects and advisory roles within government. He did not favor grandstanding and Powerpoint presentations, but preferred active, engaged dialogue. His contributions appeared spontaneous, rather than prepackaged, as he used the language of his interlocutors. He joined debates and followed the rules of their language games. He operated inside the debate, rather than as a detached observer, and he sought to encourage concept-driven development, rather than expert-led development. This meant using the language of the dialogue as a starting point.

A concept driven process is not only a process which is organised around a specific idea: it also implies that the idea has been developed through broad dialogues within the organisation, where the concept emerges as an expression of contributions from a broad range of organisational members.(Ennals & Gustavsen,1999, 41)

Gustavsenwas interested in ideas of a "third way", between capitalism and socialism, but in practice rather than just rhetoric.This approach enabled him to explore development coalitions in both public and private sectors. Even when his projects took place in private-sector, capitalist contexts, Gustavsen's focus continued to be on partnership, dialogue, collaboration, and collaborative advantage. He looked at work organisation,both within and between organisations.

Diffusion

It is all very well to develop individual successful cases. Yet how can case studies be applied to specific situations to bring about change?The answer is not obvious. Gustavsen askedswhether "it [is] reasonable to believe that experimental changes, star cases, or other

examples of 'outstanding systems' could really be diffused or disseminated to other workplaces" (Gustavsen in Toulmin &Gustavsen, 1996,p. 18). The way change occurs, according to Gustavsen, is by being diffused through interactions between organizations. As formulated by Gustavsen (Gustavsen in Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996, p. 20):

- Changes are broadly defined efforts which seek to cover all major issues, organisational levels and interest groups within the enterprise
- Many enterprises are involved.
- In a pattern which encourages co-operation between the participants
- Based on a pattern of mutual contributions rather than leader-follower.
- Researchers and other professional resources play a role which is complementary rather than leading.
- The efforts are not steered by one single theory of good organisation.
- Theories or views on optimum organisational structures are kept open in the early phases of the process.
- General theory, general views, general assumptions pertain to the process of how to create local understanding and change.
- Continuous interaction between the enterprises themselves is the primary channel of diffusion.

Gustavsen can be seen as Norwegian, Scandinavian, and European. His influence can be seen in each arena. He talks and writes from the experience of practice and suggests an approach to learning from different cases.

Toulmin in "Cosmopolis" (Toulmin 1990) argues that a discursive comparison of experiences has to be the foundation for whatever can be extracted from each case for use in other cases. In a process of discursive comparison the point is not primarily to decide "who is best" or what "universal truths" can be derived from all the cases taken together, but to use cases in alternating figure-ground relationships which enable each participant to gain a better understanding of his or her practices when seen in the light of what others do, what options they see, and so on. The goal is not to lay down universally applicable laws, but to move ahead through a discourse on experience that can enrich all participants. (Gustavsen in Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996, p. 13)

At the same time, he used theory to frame practice; for example, when developing international seminars of researchers and practitionerswith the objective of creating connectedness rather than pursuing predetermined agendas. As he stated: "Innovation is connectedness. Only by being connected is it possible to know what others do and to use this as the raw materials for one's own innovative acts" (Gustavsen in Gustavsen, Finne, & Oscarsson, 2001, p. 245).

Gustavsen presented connectedness in terms of development coalitions, a central concept in his account of organisational change.In one representative passage, he states: "To form learning organisations or development coalitions, we need to learn together. …. This is not so much a question of methods as it is of good will" (Ennals & Gustavsen, 1999, p. 16).

Key Contributions

Gustavsen introduced a consistent language for discussing organisational change and development. This enabled others to follow him. Of course at times his followers were not familiar with the background. The key focus was on work organisation, within and between organisations, building the picture from the bottom upthrough productive partnerships, alliances, and development coalitions.

As an expression of the idea of learning organisations, development coalitions are fluid, transitional, continuously reshaping themselves to meet new challenges. Essentially they are made up of horizontal relationships, constituting channels through which information flows, experiences are compared and new solutions are worked out, through extracting the best out of a broad range of experience and ideas. (Ennals & Gustavsen, 1999, p. 57)

Gustavsen did not see work organisation as a separate and distinct area of study. Instead he argued that work organisation is a reflexive characteristic of organisations undergoing change. We must recognise that we are involved in such organisations.

It seems that where much research and thinking on work organisation has gone wrong has been in assuming that a phenomenon that is linked to a whole series of other issues and topics, where each and every one exhibits a substantial dynamic, can be made subject to an autonomous formation of theory. Rather, work organisation seems to demand a reflexive thinking. (Ennals & Gustavsen, 1999, p. 53)

Younger generations of researchers have adopted methodslike hisdialogue conferences, as a result of his focus on building critical mass.

Gustavsenalso contributed to theory and practice in action research, thus keeping abreast of debates in the field. For some academics his work was outside the mainstreambecause he emphasised managed research. He considered regions, nations, and continents, rather than individuals. This raised questions about a limited focus on individuals such as chief executives. For Gustavsen, action research and politics are hard to separate.

We see the role of the researcher as a partner in development coalitions. In a development coalition, the point is not for all participants to become alike but to pool resources, supplement each other, help each other, provide complementary resources.

Within such a context, research has a number of contributions to make, based on its specific competences in conceptual development, in interpreting events, in developing methodologies, and even, provided that the necessary care and caution is shown, to create theory.(Gustavsen, 1997, p. 199)

Researchers cannot simply claim objective detachment: they are engaged, part of the subject under study.

Gustavsen created the basis for a family of major programmes for organisational change on national and international levels: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, and the European Union.On the basis of the Swedish LOM and ALF programs, headvanced the development of critical frameworks and a benchmarking methodology.He emphasised that we can learn from our experience of change by describing it against a background of other cases.He introduced assumptions about dialogue and collaboration, rather than simply competition.

As a professor at NIWL, Gustavsen advised Allan Larsson, thenDirector-General of DG Employment and Social Affairs in the European Commission, on the 1997 Green Paper, “Partnership for a New Organisation of Work,” which expressed many of Gustavsen’s

ideas. This initiative was less successful than at first appeared, when it provided a focus for international networks. Larsson had been a Swedish minister, and the Green Paper recommended that the EU should follow a Swedish lead, shortly after Sweden had joined the EU. Others in DG Employment and Social Affairs, for example from France, took a different view. Gustavsen had a vision of development coalitions, a European network, and a network of networks, with Europe constituting a development coalition. He stated: "It is when we approach the idea of comparisons in settings made up of a large number of actors and enterprises that the idea of 'Europe' as a development coalition starts to gain credibility (Ennals & Gustavsen, 1999, p. 9).

Gustavsen led two collaborative projects that focused on Europe as a development coalition: Both followed his approach of dialogue and learning from differences. From his standpoint, "the European Union is itself a development coalition structure which has the objective of supporting development, both at a continental level, and in the terms required by the individual member states, themselves increasingly operating as development coalitions" (Ennals & Gustavsen, 1999, p. 75). However, other policy perspectives prevailed.As a result, Larsson resigned from the European Commission.

Gustavsen chose different units of analysis, rather than the single firm. In particular he wrote about the meso level, existing between the levels of the firm and the region, which could be highlighted by dialogue conferences. He developed an account of work organisation dealing with relations between organisations. He introduced productive partnerships, development organisations, development coalitions, and regional development coalitions.He envisioned "a movement towards network co-operation between enterprises, even a movement towards whole regions becoming 'units of change'" (Ennals & Gustavsen, 1999, p. 29).

Gustavsen built academic relationships with American organisational-change theorists, while working in a Scandinavian context. His American audiences did not always understand the context in which he worked; for example, the roles of labour market parties. He enabled the formation of new journals (*CAT, IJAR*) without seeking to dominate them.

He did not seeka high personal profile or sold consultancy services, preferring to orchestrate and to facilitate participation.He could be seen as a modern Machiavelli, working behind the scenes, while being sensitive to the needs of the major actors. He tailored his advice to the needs of actors, enabling them to take ownership. He empowered others to develop and to present challenges. His personal interventions were practical, making the complex seem simple. He drew on experience and tacit knowledge, which of course could not be fully documented. His actions expressed what needed to be said.

New Insights

I first met Björn Gustavsen in 1988, after my own experience of managing national research programmesin Advanced IT in Great Britain and the European Union. His ideas resonated, and they contrasted with conventional research management. He referred to a different philosophical framework from the techno-centric positivism which then dominated-Great Britain.For Gustavsen, collaborative research, even when the apparent focus was on new technology, wasprimarily about work organisationas a reflexive dimension of the organisation, the use of language, and the need for developing dialogue.

Gustavsen gave practical reality to philosophical theory in a way I had not previously encountered in Great Britain. He made confident use of philosophers and developed new ways of working. He and Bo Göranzon (Göranzon, 1988–1995; 2006) at NIWL were both influenced by Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein, 1954; Ennals, 2016) and worked with Stephen Toulmin (Toulmin, 1990, 2001), John Shotter (Shotter, 2006),and Oyvind Pålshaugen (Pålshaugen, 2006).

Gustavsen developed what has been called the communicative turn, developing dialogue in organisations and taking up ideas from Jurgen Habermas (Habermas, 1984). Live action research case studies provided a starting point for comparisons and further cases.He used discussion of case studies as "an apparatus for linking research to actors in working life, in such a way that research can contribute to practical development" (Gustavsen, 2007, p. 97).

Having taken a distinctive approach to action research, Gustavsen set it in a wider context:

> The difference between action research and other forms of research is not that somewhere along the line of arguments values emerge, but that action research explicitly faces the challenges associated with a commitment to values, rather than keep on under the pretence that the challenges do not exist. (Gustavsen, 2007, p. 103)

The philosopher Wittgenstein spent much time in Norway. In consultation with Toulmin and Shotter, Gustavsen developed Wittgenstein's work on family resemblances, language games, and forms of life. Typically practice went ahead of theoretical argument.

> It is this element of "family resemblance" between organisations that, in combination with the ability to conduct dialogues across as many boundaries as possible, constitutes the collaborative advantage of the Scandinavian societies. Numerous different alliances are possible, and the potential for innovation systems correspondingly large. (Gustavsen in Johnsen & Ennals, 2012, p. 37)

Gustavsen always took an interest in power. He advised governments and the European Commission. Perhaps more radically, he saw research and power as closely associated. In his national programmes, political and research agendas were often fused into a version of action research. This was not necessarily recognised as part of mainstream action research.

Legacies and Unfinished Business

If we apply Gustavsen's lessons to our own work, several broad points emerge. There is no one best way. We need to secure the active participation of everyone in an organisation if it is to develop; it is a matter of democracy in the workplace and in society. We need to be able to learn from differences. We must expect our successors to see things differently. Organisations will continue to change.

Gustavsen linked work organization and policy debate, research and politics. Gustavsen's work continues, with an associated literature. He always gave priority to publication and dissemination.He worked on the borders between policy and research, with a focus on practical development.

All concepts applied in social research have two sources of meaning: other words and practical experience. Making knowledge more actionable implies increasing the emphasis on the practical. …. The shift demands a process consisting of several steps, ranging from establishing dialogic relationships with other people to the development of "regions of meaning", where theory and practice can interact in new ways. (Gustavsen, 2004, p. 147)

Could the next generation match his breadth and depth? Alternatively, would they bring fresh ideas and inspiration? He helped establish the doctoral program in Enterprise Development and Working Life (EDWOR), based at NTNU in Trondheim, which brought together researchers from projects around Norway to build a national research culture based on action research. The successful graduates are now leading research institutes.

Gustavsen set out the core ideas for a strong European tradition in work organisation. He helped to develop a common language and conceptual approach for participants coming from diverse backgrounds across Europe. He influenced those who work in the AFI tradition, such as Oyvind Pålshaugen,Olav Eikeland, Morten Levin, and Hans Christian Garmann Johnsen. He continued to maintain links with Swedish colleagues such as Goran Brulin after the closure of NIWL.

Because of his work, the EU Green Paper,"Partnership for a New Organisation of Work" (1997), was Swedish or Scandinavian in tone and assumptions. There has been a continual, active network at national and international levels, such as Peter Totterdill at the U.K.Work Organisation Network (UKWON) and Steven Dhondt, Frank Pot, and Peter Totterdill of the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN).

Perhaps Gustavsen's most lasting legacy is in Norway, where hespent the last years of his career.Gustavsen's ideas, some tested in Sweden, underpinned a remarkable series of Norwegian national programmes:Enterprise Development 2000, Value Creation 2010, and the VRI programme of regional initiatives. It is unusual to have consistent national programmes over so many years.Diversity in local and regional programmes continued: there is no single common pattern.

Recent academic researchers have discussed issues of power. Gustavsen entered into partnerships with power because he saw dialogue with the labour market parties as underpinning projects on enterprise development.Gustavsen developed the theory and practice ofregional development coalitions, which were seen as ways of building collaboration and taking forward change processes.In an era when there was obsession with creating competitive advantage, he laid the foundations for work on creating *collaborative*advantage.

There has been considerable debate about how lessons can be derived from cases. Gustavsen opposed a mechanistic approach to project evaluation. By designing and implementing large-scale programmes, he brought cases into contact with each other. He pioneered Nordic benchmarking and what he called the *figure-ground approach* of describing one case against the background of another. Going one step farther, and drawing on action research, he showed what can be learned from a single case.

When something new enters a map of knowledge, it will not be much noted if the new element is exactly like one or more of those that were already there. It is only when it stands out that it is able to attract attention and trigger new thinking. The notion of learning from differences opens up, for example, forms of collaboration that cut across technologies, branches and the distinction between the public and the private. (Gustavsen in Johnsen & Ennals, 2012, p. 34)

Succession Planning

Björn Gustavsen continued to be active until the end of his life. He was not simply a detached academic observer. We can identify his concern for the future through his active succession planning, in which he tried to ensure that there are strong candidates for key posts, taking the work forward. This applies to Norway and Sweden.Gustavsen continued to influence other research leaders in fields such as Action Research (Greenwood &Levin, 1997; Levin, 2002; Reason & Bradbury, 2001, 2008), and economic geography (Asheim in Gustavsen et al., 2007; and Cookein Gustavsen et al., 2007)).He was eager to develop mechanisms for dissemination and diffusion, such as the EDWOR doctoral program, and new academic journals (*Concepts and Transformation, International Journal of Action Research*, and the *European Journal of Workplace Innovation*).

Gustavsen developed an agenda of continuing programme themes, which can drive new projects. As he emphasised, it is the conversation and the process of dialogue that are most important. We cannot expect to agree on final conclusions. We hope to continue to learn. Gustavsen tackled some big issues, which we continue to explore: regional development, productivity, innovation. He challenged over easy assumptions and emphasised the importance of the workplace in innovation. He laid the foundations for ongoing development. He focused on empowering practitioners, trade unionists, and employers, and on working with labour market parties. He saw beyond individual firms, with experience of programme learning from national programmes (Sweden, Norway, Germany, Finland). He worked with economic geographers, but he went beyond their vision, as he defined regions in terms of dialogue as "regions of meaning". He made a fundamental contribution to the new debate on workplace innovation (Gustavsen 2015).

A New Project

As this profile was being prepared for the *Palgrave International Handbook of Great Organisational Change Thinkers*, Björn Gustavsen marked his 78th birthday. He was also launching a new project (Hansen, 2016). As Norway was struggling to deal with the collapse in the prices of oil and gas, it had also accepted unprecedented numbers of refugees. It was a matter of concern to Gustavsen that this came when the framework of collaboration between the labour market parties and the wider tripartite dialogue needed to be strengthened. There needed to be new ways of organising co-operation, based on Gustavsen's ideas of development coalitions and creating connectedness. He explored*open co-operation*, where nobody owns the process, but everyone contributes on his or her own premises to create future patterns of co-operation rather than defining the final result in a tribal language. As so often before, Gustavsen was personally engaged.With his death on 5th September 2018, the work is unfinished. There is work to be done by his successors.

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Further Reading

As seen above, Gustavsen contributed to the development of a rich supporting literature.This final section includes a short list of reference books that enables readers to further their interests.

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The Contribution of Action Research to Industry 4.0 Policies: Bringing Empowerment and Democracy to the Economic Efficiency Arena

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Abstract
The article is written in the intersection of the fields of regional development and action research, which use different languages when referring to development. The first revolves around innovation revenues, market shares and competitiveness while the second focuses on emancipation, democratisation and empowerment. Based on an experience in Gipuzkoa, Basque Country (Spain), the case used in this paper tells us how a regional government, the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa and eleven county development agencies are collaborating in order to avoid small firms falling behind in digitalisation processes. The main argument is that action research can help construct collaborative governance modes which, as well as helping specific firms become competitive, empower territorial actors as a collective subject that decides on its own future.

Keywords: regional development, action research, Industry 4.0., social construction, participatory governance

La Contribución de la Investigación Acción a las políticas para la Industria 4.0.: trayendo empoderamiento y democracia al ámbito de la eficiencia económica

Resumen
El artículo está escrito en la intersección de los campos del desarrollo regional y la investigación acción, que utilizan lenguajes diferentes para referirse al desarrollo. El primero gira alrededor de la innovación los ingresos, cuotas de mercado y la competitividad mientras la segunda se centra en la emancipación, la democratización y el empoderamiento. Basado en una experiencia en Gipuzkoa, País Vasco (España), el caso utilizado en este artículo nos cuenta cómo un gobierno regional, la Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa y once agencias de desarrollo comarcal están colaborando para evitar que las pequeñas empresas se queden atrás en los procesos de digitalización. El principal argumento es que la investigación acción puede ayudar a construir modos de gobernanza colaborativa que, a la vez que ayudan a empresas específicas a ganar competitividad, empoderan a los actores territoriales como sujeto colectivo que decide sobre su propio futuro.

Palabras clave: desarrollo regional, investigación acción, Industria 4.0., construcción social, gobernanza participativa

1. Introduction

Action Research is well known in certain fields like education, health, feminism, and rural development. Its emancipatory and democratising principles together with its goals of empowerment, though not necessarily mainstream, seem to sit comfortably in these fields.

This paper on action research is written in the context of regional economic development. To date, this context has primarily been dominated by the principles of economics and business, where frameworks are defined in terms of innovation revenues, market shares and competitiveness and where emancipation, democratisation or empowerment are not on the agenda. Is the demand for action research in this field worth the effort? We believe that it is, and the rest of the paper is oriented to showing the benefits of this intersection both for action research and regional development communities.

The case we use for our paper is inspired by Action Research for Territorial Development (ARTD) (Karlsen & Larrea 2014; Arrona & Larrea 2018). The reason why we use the term 'territory' and not 'region' is that from the perspective of action research and the co-generation of solutions for specific problems, a multilevel approach is needed where not only the region, but also other territorial levels will work together. Inspired by Alburquerque (2012), who proposed this definition in a dialogue process with policy makers in the context of the AR process we use as a case, we define territory as the actors who live in a place with their social, economic and political organisations, their culture and institutions as well as the physical environment they are part of. Territorial development is the process of mobilisation and participation of different actors (public and private) in which they discuss and agree on the strategies that can guide individual as well as collective behaviour.

In this context, we argue for ARTD not as a methodology for research, but as a strategy for territorial development, a strategy for the mobilisation and participation of the actors. Territory is, therefore, not an object but the subject of territorial development.

How does this connect to innovation revenues, market shares and competitiveness? The main territorial actors we work with are governments and their agencies (a provincial government and eleven county development agencies owned by municipalities) and, through them, small industrial firms.

We believe there are different approaches to interpreting the role of these firms in territorial development. We mostly focus on two aspects. First, they are relevant actors in territorial development because they provide employment and, second, because they often serve as anchors in decision capacity at a local level. However, without any doubt, they are weak actors in the economic system, which is precisely what makes action research useful. Empowering small firms is relevant to help them play their role in the development of the territory.

Concerning Industry 4.0, digitalisation is one of the challenges that industries are facing today and will face in the future. We define Industry 4.0 as the in-depth transformation in work modes linked to digital technologies. The way of doing business is changing and will continue to do so. Small firms run the risk of being left behind in this process. The goal of action research in the case we study is to create a new governance mode, dialogue-based and participatory, where governments will directly work with small firms to help them overcome the digital gap. The goal, as we mentioned earlier, is the development of territories to increase their capacity to decide on their future.

The problem statement that has inspired our paper is that not all firm oriented policies are sensitive to territorial development challenges in the long term. There are either speculative or productive trends that increase the mobility of decision centres and can diminish the capacity of a territory to decide on its own future in the long term. The rationale behind this paper is that action research can help develop policies that support firms while also being beneficial for territorial development because they help strengthen a territory as a collective subject with the capacity to decide on its future. In a nutshell, participatory governance can create collective capabilities that anchor decision capacity locally. This is also applicable to Industry 4.0. policies, and thus our research question is: how can action research contribute to making Industry 4.0 policies simultaneously beneficial for firms and territorial development?

In our paper we argue that the main contribution of AR to policies such as Industry 4.0 is a specific type of participatory and dialogue-based governance which, in addition to being more efficient in implementing industrial policies, empowers actors and generates conditions for the territory to develop its own path. We will call this type of governance *territorial governance*, meaning that it generates the conditions for territorial development (mobilisation and participation of territorial actors).

The paper has been structured so that a conceptual framework section follows this introduction. Section 3 makes an introduction to the case while Section 4 presents the AR methodology used. Section 5 then describes the case. Finally, in sections 6 and 7 we present the discussion and some closing reflections.

2. Conceptual framework

The paper is built on the intersection of the research fields of regional development (including Industry 4.0) and action research. There are significant differences in these research traditions, some of which relate to the role of concepts and frameworks in the research process.

Research on regional development policies, among which we include innovation policies and thus Industry 4.0 policies, traditionally focuses on their *implementation*. This means that conceptual frameworks proposed by academics are often the source of recommendations to be implemented. Context specificity is used to argue the point that when policy makers implement the framework they should take into account that it will work differently in every context. However, little is said about how to handle specificity. There are critics of this linear approach to implementation in the literature. For instance, Kroll (2015) and Cappello (2014) claim there have been inconsistencies in the academic research on RIS3 (research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation) that have led to confusion when regional authorities have tried to implement the concept in practice. Kroll (2015, p. 3) states that "early RIS3 policy guidelines provided little in the way of helping regional policy-makers to make sense of local complexity and dynamism to the extent needed for solid policy-making".

Action research, through the concept of praxis (Freire 1996; Eikeland 2014), proposes a non-linear relationship between concepts and practice where concepts are not implemented but tested in practice, made more robust if they work and discarded if they do not. Practice is

not only a space to implement theory, but also to construct it. In this context, social constructionism, which is barely touched on in regional development literature, is accepted as part of action research. The connection between action research and social constructionism is explicit in AR literature (Gergen & Gergen 2008; Shotter 2014; Costamagna & Larrea 2018). The case described in this paper shows social constructionism from an empirical perspective, and includes an episode of how constructionism itself was discussed with policy makers.

Following Shotter (2014, p. 704) we argue that "social constructionism is […] a turn towards previously unnoticed features of social interaction as being of importance" and has "a focus on the ongoing, active, living relationships between people and the others and otherness in the surroundings, and on the creation amongst them all of what we take such things and facts to be". This language might feel strange to researchers in the regional development field. Nevertheless, we believe it can be very useful when trying to face the inconsistencies and intractable problems mentioned in previous paragraphs, and it is at the core of the discussion of this paper and our answer to the research question.

The role of action researchers in the case shows, as Gergen & Gergen (2008) write when referring to the dialogic relation between constructionism and AR developments, "an emphasis on research as political action, replacing methodological individualism with a collaborative epistemology, moving from a vision of research as mapping to one of world making".

In a nutshell, not only regional development and action research have different conceptual frameworks, but they use them in a different way too. Based on this we argue that cross fertilisation between regional development and action research oriented to integrating social construction in regional development could be a fruitful process. This is what the case shows, as governance in this case was not implemented following any framework in the literature, but learnt, negotiated and constructed collectively through interactive processes.

Finally, for our conceptualisation of governance, which is the core dimension of territorial development in the case, we follow Bevir (2011, p. 51) and his invitation to rethink governance as the result of "actions laden with meanings". He advocates the need of an approach to research that "encourages us to examine the ways individuals act on their beliefs to create, sustain and modify governance" (Bevir 2011, p. 58).

3. Introduction of the case

ARTD has mostly emerged in the context of a specific AR project ongoing since 2009. The project started under the name of Gipuzkoa Sarean (meaning 'A networked Gipuzkoa' in the Basque language) and was renamed in 2017 as the *Territorial Development Laboratory* (TDLab).

TDLab as an AR project is developed by a team of researchers from Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness, policy makers from the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa (one of the three provinces of the Basque Country, Spain) and county development agencies of this province.

The provincial council is a regional government with competencies in innovation policy, complementary to those of the Basque Government which leads industrial policy in the

region. Counties in the Basque Country are infra-provincial and supra-municipal entities, with no political or administrative representation but with county development agencies created by various municipalities that get together in order to achieve critical mass for development policies.

This paper focuses on a specific period, from April 2016 to June 2018, which helps see how Industry 4.0 is specifically addressed. It is nevertheless important to underline that this could not have been done without the learning processes developed since 2009 regarding territorial governance. The period we analyse inherited from previous stages of the AR process what we call *spaces for dialogue*. These spaces are where challenges are shared, developing a shared interpretation of them and where potential solutions are discussed and negotiated.

There were three spaces operating at the beginning of the period analysed:

a) The promoting group. This is a group made up of policy makers in the provincial council and researchers at Orkestra which meets weekly in order to follow the whole process and help the facilitation of the other dialogue spaces. The role of researchers is to generate the conditions for policy makers to reflect, decide and act on the process.
b) The Intercounty Table (ICT). This is a group composed of policy makers in the provincial council (elected politicians and civil servants), presidents of the eleven agencies (mayors of one of the municipalities in each county) and the directors of county development agencies. In the period analysed they met three to four times a year in order to establish the annual priorities for collaborative policies and make the decisions about which projects to launch and how to fund them. Researchers contribute with expert knowledge and methodologies for decision making, negotiation and evaluation.
c) The facilitators' action research process. This is a process where policy makers from the Council and the agencies participate in order to design and put into practice the policy decisions made in the Intercounty Table. The group holds monthly workshops and it is the space where action research is more explicit, including naming the particular space.

The case will mainly focus on describing how, through the workshops developed in the facilitators' AR process, a new governance mode for SME policies emerged that was later used to develop Industry 4.0.

4. Methodological approach to the case

The methodology used in TDLab is action research for territorial development (ARTD) (Karlsen & Larrea 2014; Arrona & Larrea 2018; Costamagna & Larrea 2018).

Figure 1 synthetises the type of AR process followed in the case.

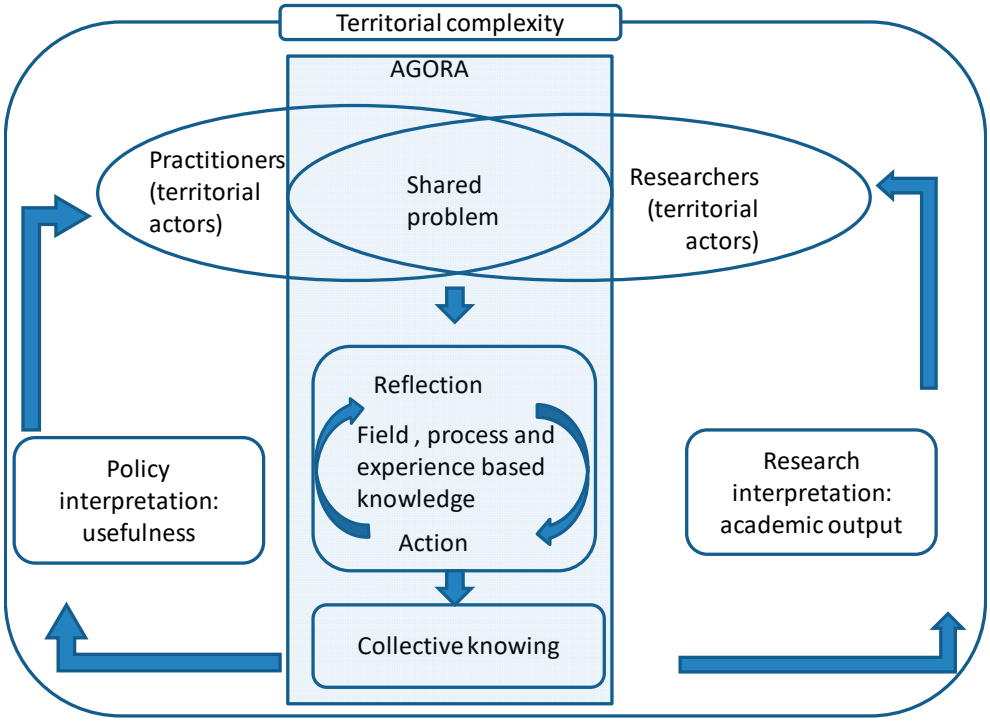

Figure 1. Cogenerative framework (Karlsen & Larrea 2014, p. 100)

The framework shows a cyclical process where researchers and policy makers from the provincial council and county development agencies have co-generated the solutions to the challenges that emerged when trying to respond to the main goal: to construct a new mode of governance for economic development in Gipuzkoa. In the following paragraphs, we briefly describe the different parts of the framework, focusing primarily on how they have materialszed in the case.

The whole process has been framed by the *territorial complexity*, which means that there has been an explicit reflection about the existence of diverse actors in the territory that can have different interpretations of what governance means, what the main challenges of governance are and how to solve such challenges. Furthermore, no actor occupies a hierarchical position to instruct the others on how to proceed and consequently, collaborative and dialogued solutions need to be sought. The case shows different perspectives of the provincial council and county agencies.

The *agora* is primarily where the facilitators' AR process and its workshops took place. The case focused on two cycles of reflection and action to solve specific problems. The first of the *shared problems* was that the provincial council programmes oriented to SMEs were not working as desired. In the words of one of the policy makers "The Council is not reaching small firms and small firms are not reaching the Council". This led to a process of monthly workshops between members of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa (PCG) and

the staff of county development agencies to reflect on how to solve this particular problem. There was also engagement on the part of all organisations to make use of these reflections through specific programmes. The challenge was to improve the way they were working with SMEs, which meant pursuing two objectives. The first was to reach not only more but also different SMEs, as the Council felt that they always worked with the same firms and wanted their programmes to be open to firms that had never been part of such policies. The second was to reach them more efficiently in that the programmes should address what SMEs considered to be their main problems, rather than what policy makers thought the main problems were.

Once the shared problem was agreed upon, *cycles of reflection and action* were initiated. Reflection took place in monthly workshops where representatives of the PCG and staff of the county development agencies worked together with researchers. After these workshops, the results of the dialogue were systematised and presented to all participants, so that they could make decisions to improve their approach to SMEs. This meant that each participating organisation could improve their own policies based on what they were learning, although this was not the final goal of the process. Following the framework in Figure 1, the process aimed to generate *collective knowing*, a shared capability to act together to solve problems. This was at the core of the new mode of governance, since the goal was to be able to work together to define policies that would be constructed in collaborative ways. This capability for collaborative work would translate into the capability of the territory to decide on and construct its own future.

The second *cycle of reflection and action* derived from a redefinition of the *shared problem,* first in the promoting group and then in the ICT. Instead of improving the way the provincial council and the agencies were reaching SMEs in a generalised manner, the goal was redefined into reaching SMEs to help them develop their capabilities for Industry 4.0. The methodology used was similar to the previous stage, and through workshops with action researchers, participants defined the methodology to work with SMEs and then started a dialogue process with more than 404 small firms. Thus, 404 firms were integrated into the new governance by being part of the reflection-action cycles of the co-generative framework of ARTD.

The following section goes into greater detail on how the process developed in the two ARTD phases previously described, and which are named as stage one and stage two.

5. Description of the case: building territorial governance for Industry 4.0 step by step

Stage one: negotiating a generic mode of governance for SME policy

This stage was developed through 11 monthly workshops between April 2016 and April 2017. During the **first workshop** the Director of Economic Promotion of the PCG informed the county agency representatives that the process had two goals: the first was the modernisation of small firms, and the second was the development of a new mode of governance to build relationships with small firms. This put governance at the core of the pro-

cess. But how were they to create a new governance? One of the researchers presented the co-generative framework (see section 4) as the method to be used, and participants agreed.

In the **second workshop,** we (action researchers) discussed with participants the relevance of the analytical frameworks we would construct based on their dialogue process. Through these analytical frameworks we could discuss with the members of the Council and the agencies our interpretations of what they were saying about the new governance.

A researcher said the following:

"this process is constructed by all of us and it is important that you all feel identified with these frameworks. They will be our working tools, and we will commit to the issues represented in them"
(Extract from the memo of the workshop held on 12th of May, 2016)

During this workshop representatives of the Council and the agencies worked to identify, based on their previous dialogue with SMEs, the main problems that the new governance mode should address. Going to firms and directly asking was still considered premature.

A list of the problems of small firms was agreed upon: lack of strategy, low participation of the staff, no own products, too small to internationalise, difficulties to fund technological innovation, and to relate with actors in the knowledge system. Also, the problems of agencies when working with SMEs were identified and categorised into the following types: structural problems for territorial development, co-ordination problems, organisational problems and capability problems. The first list was discussed with two firms per agency and adapted.

With the group having a shared perspective on which problems the new governance should help solve, **the third workshop** examined directly the contribution of constructionism to these problems. This was considered by part of the AR team as a risky move, since practitioners could consider constructionism as being too far removed from them. The main argument given by the researcher who led the workshop was that the solution to the problems previously agreed upon could only be socially constructed and thus, the group (policy makers and researchers) needed an explicit shared understanding of what this meant. Based on the work of Berger & Luckmann (1991), the concepts of institutions, social construction, intersubjectivity, externalization, objectivation and internalisation were discussed, as well as their meaning in terms of the problems of the Council and the agencies. We now present the responses of two of the participating policy makers when asked in the evaluation sheet what he/she liked most:

"[What did you like most?]: The concepts and their explanation. Very interesting concepts have been presented, even though they were abstract. This work dynamic motivates me very much"

"[What did you like the least?]": The terminology. The concepts were very abstract and deep. The theory or terminology used were sometimes very technical, though we could understand them when they were explained".

Sharing the constructionist approach in an explicit way with policy makers was what they liked most and the least, but it opened a path for the rest of the process.

The following workshops, from the fourth to the tenth, were used one by one to address the problems detected. Different experts were invited to the sessions.

On the ninth workshop a relevant discussion in terms of governance emerged. The main issue to be addressed was technology watch. A policy maker from a county agency presented a case where they had integrated technology watch and technological knowledge

into the agency, whilst a policy maker from the Council presented a programme where they took for granted that agencies did not have that type of knowledge, which corresponded to technology centres. When an action researcher asked the two of them about what they thought their role was and that of the other, the PCG representative stated that the role of agencies was sensitisation, while the agency representative said that agencies worked together with firms and the role of the Council was to protect that relationship.

Thus, there was conflict on how the Council and agencies interpreted the role of agencies. In the **tenth workshop** the action researcher that had asked the question presented her point of view saying that there were at least two very different interpretations of the roles of agencies among participants in the process. This posed a problem in that how could they collaborate if they understood their roles differently? From the discussions of that day the following analytical framework emerged.

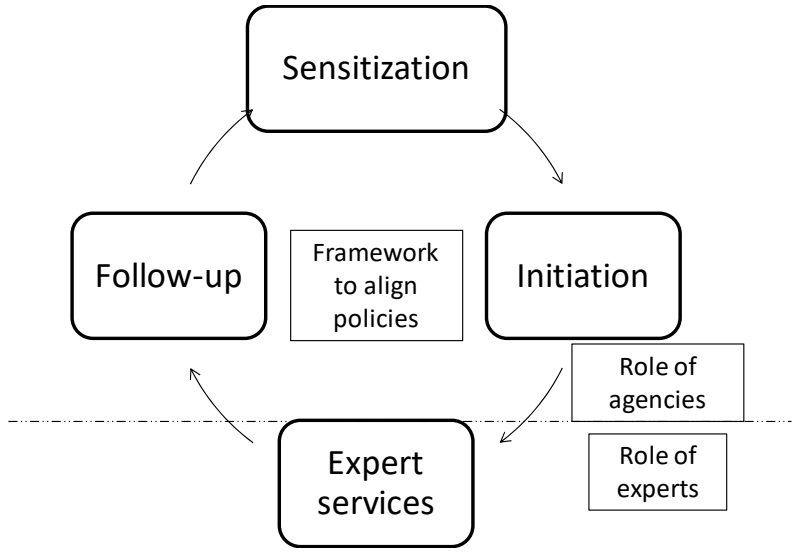

Figure 2. The role of county development agencies when helping SMEs in the new governance

The figure showed that there were actors in the territory with expert knowledge which was relevant for firms (universities, technology centres, vocational training), while also showing that the role of the agencies was not to sensitise (as the PCG representative had said) but was also in the initiation and follow-up phases. This was not only learning or making sense, but also a process of negotiation. By accepting this framework as part of the working tools in the process, they all institutionalised the governance emerging through action research. Definitions of roles were also agreed upon. The role in the *initiation* phase was compared with that of the family doctor, who can refer patients to a specialist, but can also handle certain cases directly and check up on the patient to improve the work of the specialists.

An agency representative wrote the following about this discussion in the evaluation of the workshop, when asked what they liked most:

"To have another chance to reflect on the "grey area". That debate on the basic level which we have not clarified yet: What is the role of agencies"

At this stage of the process discussions on Industry 4.0 emerged in the promoting group and the Director of Innovation of the PCG decided that they would support a process to start working on this issue in collaboration with agencies.

In April 2016 the last workshop of the first stage was held with the staff of agencies and a considerable group of policy makers from the provincial council. The agencies' staff evaluated the process saying there had been five main results in the process of constructing the new governance (extracted from the memo of the workshop held on 6th April 2017):

a) Getting to know and learning from each other
b) Agreed frameworks on roles and relationships
c) Formal agreement on collaboration
d) Closeness between the Council and the agencies
e) More visibility of agencies

With these results they faced the next stage that focused on Industry 4.0.

Stage two: using the territorial governance for Industry 4.0

The second stage of the AR process with facilitators focused on Industry 4.0 with SMEs. It started in May 2017 and is still ongoing. The description of the previous stage focused on sharing how a new governance mode was reflected upon and negotiated between the provincial council and county development agencies through action research. This stage focuses on how this new governance is brought into action with the goal of developing an Industry 4.0 policy. The case aims to show how AR is an efficient strategy to reach small firms to help them advance in Industry 4.0.

Policy makers and action researchers in the council discussed the objectives of the process in the promoting group. Nevertheless, when analysing the PowerPoint presentations used in the **first workshop** of this stage, we can see certain differences on how they presented them. Action researchers described the goals as:

– "To appraise the situation of firms nowadays and their conditions to take advantage of Industry 4.0 in the future"
– "To guide them [firms] to get help from the agencies and the Council to respond to their needs"

The relationship with the firms was dialogue-based (first they listened to what firms needed and then provided them with feedback on how they could receive better help from the public administration) and empowering (they would encourage firms to ask for help from the Council and agencies to respond to their needs together).

The policy maker in charge of the programme did not participate in the previous stage of the process. When he made the formal presentation to the staff of the agencies, the language was only slightly different from that of researchers but these nuances are important

in terms of the change produced through AR. According to his presentation, they wanted to build:

– "a framework for agencies to obtain significant and representative data of the whole of the territory" and that this would be
– "an action in the medium term that would allow us to have a real and comparative picture of firms which will help define and develop measures complementary to the existing ones"

The focus in this discourse was on gathering data, and action was interpreted as the policies the government would define.

Regarding the role of agencies in the process, action researchers shared the framework already agreed upon in the previous stage of the process (see Figure 2) and there was no need to discuss it, as it seemed clear that this was a process to be framed into the *initiation* phase.

In the **second workshop**, one month later, there was a slide that illustrated the agreement made by the agency staff, the policy makers in the Provincial Council and action researchers. The title of the slide was "Dialogue with firms" and it showed there would be two meetings between agency staff and SMEs:

– "The first meeting which will be used to present the initiative and appraise the firms' situation"
– "The second meeting where feedback will be given to firms, first sharing their in-depth analysis in a constructive way and then informing firms about the resources, programmes and actors that they have at hand to move on to the next stage"

The discourse evolved, from gathering data from firms, to entering into dialogue with firms, from focusing on policy, to focusing on the steps firms needed to take and understanding policy as complementary to that. There were also other agreements during the process. First, considering that there were different interpretations of what Industry 4.0 could be, agency staff sought to clarify the term. Departing from the proposal of action researchers, participants discussed and decided to work with the following different definitions of Industry 4.0:

a) "Industry 4.0 from the global perspective: We will use this concept to name the in-depth transformation in work modes that are linked to digital technologies"
b) "Industry 4.0 for firms: when we use this term referring to firms, we will use it to express a strategy, based on digital technologies and oriented to one of the following goals: more efficient processes […]; better quality products, more flexibility […], new services […] and hybridisation between industrial and ICT firms (start-ups)"
c) "Industry 4.0 from the perspective of policy: from the policy perspective, and in the territorial development framework of the Gipuzkoa Sarean project, Industry 4.0 is a territorial strategy where, through the collaboration of different public administrations and dynamising the knowledge system actors, help will be given to firms to develop their Industry 4.0 strategies and guarantee the future of the territory"

We worked out the meaning of Industry 4.0 together, through learning and negotiation processes. The second relevant discussion was about which technologies would be considered

as Industry 4.0. This would determine which firms were included in the process, as the most sophisticated technologies were not within reach of some of the firms. An agreement was made to take a comprehensive approach. A pyramid was drawn and agreed upon, where all technologies were included, the most basic at the bottom and the most sophisticated at the top. We were all aware that the technologies at the bottom were considered too basic in some Industry 4.0 policies. Nevertheless, this Industry 4.0 policy was established as a process to help all firms that wanted to become more technological to take a first step. Those that had nothing would be helped with the basic technologies while the rest would be helped to move up the pyramid. In a nutshell, we created an inclusive definition of Industry 4.0 technologies.

This inclusiveness influenced the conceptualisation of the process which we would help firms through. In addition to a set of requirements that firms should meet for them to be considered as ready to undertake Industry 4.0, we also laid down some preconditions. These were mainly related to the modernisation of firms regarding different spheres of their organisation, products and processes. Thus, the process to help SMEs was outlined, from the development of preconditions to conditions to finally reaching Industry 4.0.

Based on all these design decisions and agreements on the spirit and principles of the process, researchers proposed a specific guide to initiate the dialogue process with firms. The guide was then discussed and adapted by the PCG and agency policy makers. The **third workshop** was used as a training session where agency staff themselves took the responsibility to present the tools created together with researchers. A list had been made with all the firms (529 in total) of the targeted size (10-99) for each county and the agency staff committed to starting a dialogue with each of them. They also agreed to upload quantitative and qualitative information from the firms in their counties into a database set up by one of the researchers. This would provide data to establish a typology of firms based on the conditions and preconditions.

The AR process was developed through two monthly workshops and continuous dialogue among policy makers from the PCG, agency staff and action researchers till June 2018. During this period agencies dialogued with firms too. We now look at an episode that will later be used in the discussion. During this stage agency staff realized that a consultancy firm contracted by the Basque Government was also gathering very similar data through telephone calls in order to analyse the situation of firms. Firms demanded more coordination but neither the Basque Government or the Provincial Council wanted to give up their work method and process. A minimum agreement was made to inform each other about agendas so that, although overlapping remained, whichever party was speaking with firms knew if the other party had already been in touch.

The last workshop of this first stage was held in June 2018. The goal was to reflect on the process and the data gathered and decide among all what would be done the next year.

Before the meeting, the Council decided that a budget would be drawn up to continue with the process for one more year and asked researchers to design a voting system where the agency staff prioritised with which firms they wanted to work. The reason was that it was the agency staff who contacted firms and therefore they knew better. Staff prioritised working with firms that met the preconditions and needed to fulfil certain conditions to start the Industry 4.0 process. During the workshop the voting results were presented, and an

agreement was reached to work with the 70 firms that were categorized in this group after the dialogue process. At the time of writing this paper, the third cycle of ARTD is being developed to help these firms evolve to the next level of Industry 4.0.

One of the issues highlighted by policy makers of the provincial council at the beginning of this last workshop was the high number of firms that had participated in the programme, 404 out of 529 existing in the territory. Reflecting over this, one of the members of agency staff said: "I felt more comfortable with this methodology than in previous times, because we developed it together".

We now share another participation in the workshop for the sake of the following discussion. One of the action researchers stated that in the last promoting group meeting she was asked by one of the policy makers: "What is different about this assessment compared to others?" She answered: "From other assessment processes we obtained data. But now in addition to data, we have the pressure from agency staff, who have come face to face with firms and are looking for solutions for firms, and that pressure will force us to move forward".

6. Discussion

We have written this paper thinking of two academic communities, one is the academics in the field of regional development who aspire to increase the impact of their research on policies. What this discussion offers to them is the possibility to think of AR as a research approach that, despite little being known in their field, could make a difference to it. The second community is that of action researchers. The discussion provides them with the possibility of exploring a context, i.e. regional development, where AR could grow in the following years, creating opportunities for action researchers to contribute with their knowledge to face development challenges. If global societal and economic challenges are to be faced, this type of intersections for cross fertilisation between fields will be relevant.

The discussion responds to the research question posed: how can action research contribute to making Industry 4.0 policies simultaneously beneficial for firms and territorial development? Although the reflection focuses on Industry 4.0, we believe that most of the considerations would be applicable to a wider array of industrial and innovation policies developed in the framework of regional development. Our straightforward answer to the research question is that action research can contribute through the social construction of collaborative governance modes which, in addition to increasing the efficiency of firm-oriented programmes, increase the capacity of the territory, as subject, to decide on its own future.

We develop the previous statement in two steps. First, we argue for collaborative governance as a democratic and efficient path to develop policies which are simultaneously beneficial for firms and territories. Second, we address what we consider to be a question that the literature has not solved: *how* collaborative governance can be developed. This discussion, based on how we used ARTD to accomplish this, contributes to previous reflections on governance for territorial development in the field of action research (Arrona & Larrea 2018; Estensoro & Larrea 2015; Garman Johnsen, Knudsen, & Normann 2014; Vasstrom & Normann 2014).

a) Collaborative governance: is there a trade-off between democratisation and efficiency?

To discuss how ARTD helped develop policies that simultaneously address firm and territorial levels in the case, we must go back to the definition of territorial development. The participants in the case (policy makers and action researchers together) created their own definition of territorial development as the process of mobilisation and participation of different actors (public and private) in which they discuss and agree on the strategies that can guide individual as well as collective behaviour. This definition is not neutral. From this perspective, the policies claiming to contribute to territorial development should dynamise the participation of territorial actors. The case shows a transition from a centralised approach, where the provincial government designed its programmes and later transferred them to agencies for them to implement, to the co-development of policies by both of them.

During the nine years of the project, the ARTD process had to overcome two issues that strengthened the status quo. On the one hand, the fear expressed by policy makers that participation would make the policy process less efficient since participatory decisions take more time. On the other hand, that co-design of policies required a redistribution of power, i.e. the regional government had to give up part of its power on behalf of the other participants (agencies and firms).

Our argument is that although it took time to construct the new governance, once operating, it was precisely participation that made the Industry 4.0 process efficient. In 2018, through collaboration the provincial council, the county agencies and researchers from Orkestra together reached out to 404 firms. There was face-to-face dialogue between agency staff and firm managers and together they reflected on the situation of firms regarding Industry 4.0. The Council alone would never have been able to directly reach and dialogue with that number of firms.

Reaching 404 firms was deeply satisfying for members of the Council, the agencies and researchers. Especially since at the beginning of the process, two years earlier, the problem had been defined as "the Council is not reaching small firms and small firms are not reaching the Council". We therefore argue that policy efficiency is not in contradiction with developing more democratic policy processes where different territorial actors decide together on their future. In the case, there was no trade-off between efficiency and democratising the process.

b) How can a collaborative governance structure for Industry 4.0 be created?

We now move on to the second part of the argument about how this more participatory and still efficient governance structure was created. We focus this part of the discussion on the two different approaches identified to reach firms, when we discovered that the Basque Government was also conducting a diagnosis of small firms. The process by the Basque Government represents how a relevant part of data gathering in regional development research is conducted. Comparing both processes can be illustrative of some of the specificities of the contribution that action research can make in the field.

Data gathering for the diagnosis process of the Basque Government was conducted by a consultancy firm through telephone calls. The government obtained data faster than the

Provincial Council, but our argument is that all the government obtained was data. In the ARTD process we decided that the meetings were not for data gathering but were the initiation of a dialogue process between agency staff and firms in their county. We saw this dialogue as part of a structural relationship with firms as we wanted to incorporate firms into the collaborative governance structure already operating among the Council, agencies and action researchers.

The provincial council and agencies obtained data, but we argue that they obtained much more than mere data. What was most important in the process was that every firm had a contact person in the agencies, and these firms had expectations that something would come out of this process. Consequently, one of the most recurring phrases of agency staff in email correspondence and workshops was "now the pressure is on us to go back to them and offer them something worthwhile". The interaction and trust attained with firms had put pressure on policy makers to respond, which is absent in data gathering processes that are not dialogue-based.

This pressure to do something about the diagnosed problems brings action research closer to action. Dialogue generates not just data and a rational understanding of the problem, but tension and an emotional engagement with the solution.

It had taken years to build this collaborative governance and to have everyone on board. Once that was achieved, a new programme was designed in a few weeks after the last workshop described. This programme has two main strengths. First, it builds directly on the problems and situations shared by firms with agency staff. Second, there is no question about how the programme will reach firms, which was the biggest problem at the beginning of the period. Every firm has a contact person among agency staff, that acts on their behalf in the policy design process, and will immediately bring the programme to the firm once it is running. This governance is what makes the process both more efficient and more democratic.

We now address the answer to the research question on how this governance was developed, to argue that it was a process of social construction through action research. Participants constructed a shared interpretation of what territorial development is, what Industry 4.0 meant for them, what the role of each actor was to help small firms take the step into Industry 4.0, and what dialogue meant when approaching firms. Collaborative governance exists, to the extent that the different actors participating in the process acknowledge the agreed concepts, frameworks and procedures. What keeps collaborative governance going is the sense of belonging of the participants to the same process of territorial development. Two relevant features of this process of social construction were the importance of co-generated analytical frameworks that helped keep track of what was being built together, and an explicit discussion on social construction, so that everybody could be aware of what the rationale was behind concrete discussions and their corresponding analytical frameworks.

Consequently, the answer to the research question is that action research can contribute to making Industry 4.0 policies simultaneously beneficial for firms and territorial development through the social construction of collaborative territorial governance. Such governance increases efficiency in public policy responses to firms while also creating the collective capability of the territory to become the subject of its own development process.

7. Closing reflection

As we wrote this paper, we were challenged to reflect on how digitalisation had affected our own research process. The process had a very relevant face-to-face component, but the open database where we gathered all the information on firms played a relevant role too.

The database created by researchers and fed by agency staff after each dialogue session with firms contributed to maintaining constant dialogue between researchers and agency staff, as well as building a link between researchers and firms. Combined with email correspondence, it created a virtual space for a relationship that emerged from the face-to-face interactions in workshops. This demonstrates how digital technology, as is the case of our database, can also contribute to the social construction processes of territorial governance.

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Alternative Learning Frameworks: Workplace Innovation Programmes and Smart Specialisation Policies in the Basque Country

Egoitz Pomares

Abstract
The paper explores alternative learning frameworks addressing the adaptation of socio-economic institutions to emerging technological paradigms. Based on workplace innovation and development programmes, an exploratory model is presented considering multi-level governance issues. The framework can contribute to better policy implementation of smart specialisation strategies, considering workplace innovation programmes as institutional entrepreneurs. In this sense the framework is applied, in a constructivist way, to regional, sub-regional and organisational institutional contexts.

Key words: workplace innovation, development programmes, policy learning, programme learning, governance, experimental institutions, and technologicalrevolution.

Marcos de aprendizaje alternativos: programas de innovación en contextos de trabajo y políticas de especialización inteligente en el País Vasco.

Resumen
El artículo explora marcos de aprendizaje alternativos que permitan abordar la adaptación de las instituciones socioeconómicas a los paradigmas tecnológicos emergentes. Sobre la base de los programas de innovación y desarrollo en contextos de trabajo, se presenta un modelo exploratorio teniendo en cuenta la gobernanza multinivel. El marco pretende contribuir a una mejor implementación de políticas de estrategias de especialización inteligente considerando los programas de innovación en los contextos de trabajo como emprendedores institucionales. En este sentido, el marco se presenta, con un carácter constructivista, a contextos institucionales regionales, subregionales y organizacionales.

Palabras clave: innovación en contextos de trabajo, programas de desarrollo, aprendizaje de políticas, aprendizaje de programas, gobernanza, instituciones experimentales y revolución tecnológica.

1. Introduction

Digitalisation is a central aspect of a wider economic transformation that includes robotisation, automation and new production processes. This phenomenon has been conceptualised as Industry 4.0. The term, used by the German government for the first time in 2011 refers to a high-tech strategy. After mechanisation, electrification and information, the 4.0 concept is considered as part ofthe so-called fourth industrial revolution. Phenomena like globalisation and technological change force public and private sector organisations to develop new products, new services and new forms of production.

Technological revolutions represent a paradigm shift for society, business and work that need to be analysedfrom a systemic perspective (Garmann Johnsen et al 2018). In particular amongst others, technological shifts attract political attention due to their direct implications on jobs, work-processes and skills demand and supply. These issues are included in the New Qualifications Agenda for Europe (European Commission 2016) stressing the need for the labour market and national vocational, education and training systems to be able to provide a skilled workforce for the digital transformation. Skill gaps are relevant for companies, as there may be significant shortages in the actual workforce (Fernandez-Macias 2012). In line with this, it is recognised that skill acquisition can be realised through a diverse variety of forms beyond formal initial education, which includes the workplace (Cedefop 2015; OECD 2010; European Commission 2001). Due to the technological transformation, the current societal context requires a new integration of theoretical and practical knowledge on the organisation (Dhondt & Van Hootegem 2015). Skills gaps can arise because workplaces are integrated in dynamic environments, an issue that addresses workplace and lifelong learning (Cedefop 2015, 85-87). For these reasons, workers adaptability throughout working life is considered to be a critical factor (European Commission 2001). In overall the globalisation of the economy, the introduction of disruptive technologies, demographic, social, cultural and environmental changes will shape working life in the next years. Thus two interlinked limitations are identified to mainstream policy (Lorenz et al. 2016): the first refers to tacit knowledge acquired in daily work and problem solving experience; and the second concerns the work organisation and the way this affects employees in their learning and skill development processes.

Technological unemployment represents a major area of concern in the academic and policy-making environments, but as pointed by Lundvall (2013, 51) few attempts can be identified concerning how innovation relates to work processes. Lundvall argues the importance of workplace learning as a factor in the understanding of the how work and innovation processes are linked. Following Lorenz (2013, 86-71) he concludes that in innovation studies research on work organisation and organisational design has been marginal, and points out the importance of institutional framework conditions for learning and innovation, also acknowledging the relevance of micro-policy initiatives, that focus on organisational change and innovation at workplace level.

An exception can be found in some experiences in the northern part of Europe, with workplace development programmes and initiatives launched in the 60's and the 70's. Main topics at that time were focused in the Scandinavian countries and Germany as part of the Quality of Working Life movement and the humanisation and democratisation of work. In

the last 40 years action research has played a dominant role in this area as Gustavsen (i.e. 1996, 2004) and Fricke (i.e. 1997, 2003) have documented.

In the present, Workplace innovation (WPI) is a good example of the growing interest in holistic approaches to work organisation (European Commission, 2014; OECD, 2010). WPI is an inherently social process, which creates self-sustaining development by learning from various sources and through experimentation (Pot et al. 2016).

The concept of WPI refer to "strategically induced and participatory adopted changes in an organization´s practice of managing, organising and deploying human and non-human resources that lead to simultaneous improved organizational performance and improved quality of working life" (Eeckelaert et al., 2012; 8).

In addition the concept refers to "collaboratively *constructed* changes that also supports other types of innovation" (Alasoini 2011, 25). As *constructed,* workplace innovations can be analysed by using three-dimensional approach based on the content, the process and the context in which it occurs. This view is important, considering that innovative practices derived from organisational or managerial change may include technology change, network relations and employment and labour relation (Alasoini, 2011, 35-36). These issues are of concern in the so-called fourth industrial revolution.

Thus, the main argument of this article addresses the issue of workplace innovation and its potential link to macro-industrial policies in the light of the technological transformation and regionally based specialisation strategies. For this purpose, regional policy and governance will be the central object of analysis. The paper focuses on the potential contribution of workplace development programmes, supporting the implementation of smart specialisation strategies by contributing to new forms of work organisation and innovation processes from a learning perspective. Thus, three major areas comprise this paper; skills and workplace learning, smart specialisation strategies and workplace development programmes. For this purpose, I will focus on the analysis of policies that are being developed in the Basque Country (Spain) with a special focus on the province of Gipuzkoa; one the three territories composing the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

The paper is organised in four conceptual parts; first, a framework of technological revolutions and its impact on social and economic institutions is explained (Perez 2004); the second partfocuses on workplace development theory programme (Alasoini 2016) and workplace innovation. Considering the above mentioned, the main focus on this paper explores the plausible potentiality of public initiated workplace innovation programmes able to produce learning aimed at better policy implementation, through alternative links between the macro (regional) and the micro (local organisations and stakeholders) policy spheres that can support adaptation to rapid changes through an entrepreneurial discovery process. In a constructivist way the paper explores how skills and competence building through workplace learning could be linked. For this purpose workplace innovation and its Programme Theory (Alasoini 2016) articulates the link to top-down policy of smart specialisation at regional level, and the bottom-up emergence of the entrepreneurial discovery process that happen at organisational level. Workplace innovation or development programmes are here identified as *meso*-level policy spheres of articulation capable of creating alternative and complementary learning spaces based on broad participation. The third part analyses the potential contribution of policies being developed

at provincial level (sub-regional) as complementary or alternatives to support the mentioned digital transformations. The fourth part summarises some findings about the WPI programme in Gipuzkoa through an analytical dimension in a context of multilevel governance. Data will show the potential of cumulative knowledge and its capabilities of expansion. Beside some conclusion on the general framework will be introduced.

2. Technological,economic and social transformations

Considering digital change is of interest to understanding how transformation happens in cyclical terms. Each technological revolution involves the replacement or modernisation of some technologies by others, in the so-called long waves covering a period of 50 years according to the Schumpeterian interpretation. Long waves of economic transformation can be divided in two interrelated dynamics of growth and recession of 20-30 years each (Perez 2004). According to Carlota Perez, based on T.S Kuhn's view of paradigms, the introduction of a new technological pattern is originated by the depletion of the older one. She argues that two operating subsystems can be identified in the capitalist model: the techno-economic and the socio-institutional. Each technological revolution is driven by a technological pattern, which generates changes at individual, organisational and societal level. A technological revolution is defined as a set of technologies, products and industries with the ability to boost waves of long-term development; therefore, each revolution is based on a set of interrelated technologies and organisational principles that leads to the modernisation of the productive system, giving entry to a new techno-economic paradigm (Perez 2004).

"A techno-economic paradigm is a model of optimal practice constituted by a set of technological and organizational, generic and ubiquitous principles, which represents the most effective way to apply the technological revolution and to use it to modernize the rest of the economy. When the adoption is generalised, these principles become the basis of common sense for the organization of any activity and the restructuring of any institution" (Perez 2004, 41).

In this context of transformation, individual actors and companies represent central subjects of change from which new organisational paradigms emerge. Considering this, the formal structures of organisations arise in highly institutionalised contexts (Meyer & Rowan 1977) characterised by rules and requirements to which organizations must adjust in order to receive support and legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). With institutionalised frameworks, elements of the rational structure are deeply rooted in organisations. Thus organisations are influenced by normative, cognitive and cultural models, which are embedded in the organisational structure design (Meyer & Rowan 1977, DiMaggio & Power 1983, March & Olsen 1989). In these terms, the process of adopting certain practices are done independently of their effectiveness with regard to the particular organisational contexts where they operate. The homogenisation process that includes organisational structures and practices is defined by the term *institutional isomorphism* (DiMaggio & Powell 1983, Hannan & Freeman 1977).

Isomorphism "forces a unit of a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (DiMaggio & Powell 1983: 149).

Based on this theory, once the organisational models become institutionalised they tend to spread, which means that the organisational structures become more and more similar to each other. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) theorise about the limitation that the adoption of these institutionalised behaviours have for the innovative capacity of the organisation, which brings on organisations to be trapped in institutionalised trajectories or path dependency issues(Mahoney 2000; Lagerholm & Malmberg 2009).

Institutionalised structures, once they have been developed and disseminated in a given organisational field, limit and constrain the ability to develop new structures to adapt change. When paradigm shift take place, occupations change in a dynamic manner originated by changes in the organisation of the production. The diffusion of new form of production models generates new types of qualifications, demanding new occupations able to create new products and services align to the new technological pattern, which means a change in the occupational structure.

These changes and adjustments are generally translated, as indicated in the introduction, into new demanded competencies and skills (having their origin in the process of dissemination and installation of new transformations) that are conceptualised as waves of development (Perez 2004, 46-47). In that sense the socio-institutional environment can facilitate the adoption of new paradigms that entail the need for new innovative skills (Fricke 1983, 2012), which flourish in a process of complex mechanisms of adaptation. For this purpose, social sciences need to pay attention to the changing tendencies of emerging technological patterns, in order to transform and align the socio-institutional system.

Without an effective transformation of the socio-institutional sphere, able to regulate and facilitate the installation and development of the emerging paradigm, this becomes de-aligned from the techno-economical sphere, which derives tension between both sub-systems; as the technological parading changes more obsolete, turns the socio-institutional sphere having an impact on social cohesion and sustainability. In the paradigm change new organisational designs emerge, which are conducive to new ways of interaction and networking.

Having explained how technological revolution impacts in the socio-economical setting, the actual 4.0 transformation represents a shift that entails the need to deepen into a better understanding of the installation and deployment processes, which can be translated in terms of a tension between the new and the old qualifications and an extension of occupation, organisational design and labour market structure.

3. Learning, Participation and Innovative qualifications in the workplace

Conceptually competencies and skills can be generic or specific, and can be acquired through formal and informal learning processes. Formal learning refers to the acquisition of individual competencies, capabilities and skills within educational institutions, as informal education relates to the other processes, which occurs through embodied practices in non-educational settings such as workplaces. Traditionally, formal and informal learning are considered as separate spheres, considering the prevalence of formal learning over the

informal type (Malcolm et al. 2003). However, both formal and informal learning have a common denominator, based on the development and expansion of skills during working life (Cedefop 2015).

In this sense, a particular area of policy concern is associated with the underutilisation of skills (Green & Zhu, 2010) and the way digital transformation will impact on job quality (Warhurst et al. 2017). Werner Fricke (1983) argues that the innovative capacity of workers is often not realised, due to the many different types of obstacles that the worker cannot address. Some of these barriers can be identified in the hierarchical structure of companies, and their organisation and taylorisation of work within these structures. These conditions have been aggravated due to the influence of external experts, resulting in the isolation of workers with respect to the division of labour. All these relate to "factors in the work environment which determine the extent to which employees can make full use of their competencies and creative potential, thereby promoting job satisfaction and personal development (Totterdill & Hague 2004, 46).

In this context, the creative potential that occurs in the dialogical relations to which mutually responsive reactions can give rise are excluded (Gustavsen 1993; Shotter 2004), thus the capacity for participation and self-determination are often blocked. In a context emerging forms of work organisation, based on learning and experimentation workplace must address interdependent arenas able to stimulate knowledge and creativity, workplace partnership and employee participation, and job enrichment and team-working (Totterdill & Hague 2004) which enhances democracy at the workplace.

The participatory capacity of employees has been defined as innovative qualifications (Fricke 1983). Innovative qualifications are the basis of the workers´ ability to organise their working conditions according to their interest, which provides opportunities to act as subjects of their work (Fricke 2012, 162). Innovative qualifications must be distinguished in their origin and use as capacities for production and reproduction that are developed through a continuous process of learning and reflection. Two types of qualifications linked to the action (work) are identified in this approach: the vocational and the innovative. The former refers to qualifications required to fulfil the task and the objectives of the work; the later defines the creation of alternative elements in the labour situation, which responds to the workers' interest over the operational design of established work organisation patterns (Fricke 2012). It can be argued that search for convergence can be mean of a *new collective bargaining* (Cressey, Totterdill & Exton 2013) in which employees gain confidence, empowerment and intrinsic rewards, by making their tacit knowledge and creativity available as a resource for organisational improvement and innovation (Totterdill 2017). Overall, the institutional environment has significance for the evolution of practical solutions at organisational level. This reinforces the importance of actors in regards of workplace development (Alasoini 2009).

Considering the above mentioned, how organisations and individuals are constrained by institutional isomorphism and its effect on organisational practices having an impact on the potential contribution of workers knowledge and experience, in the next section a link that connects those emergent processes will be introduced in the context of new research and development policies.

4. Workplace Innovation and development programmes

As pointed in the introduction, workplace innovation is a social process that can contribute to better policy implementation and the adjustment of social and economic institutions. Different policy approaches can be made to promote workplace innovation. A usual distinction is made between hard or legislative intervention, soft or non-binding or deregulation (Alasoini 2011; Alasoini, Ramstad & Totterdill 2017); this can be summarised in the policy matrix below.

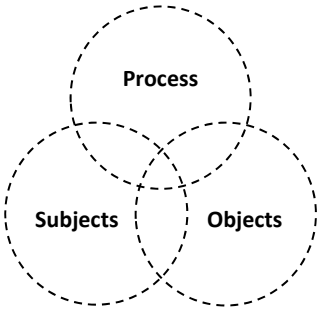
Table 1: Policy Matrix in the promotion of workplace innovation

Hard/Indirect regulation Directives or binding rules which focus indirectly on workplace innovation through some other policy area		**Hard/direct regulation** Directive or binding rules which focus directly on workplace innovation
Soft/ Indirect regulation General policy frameworks and recommendations	**Soft/Intermediate-stage regulation** Education and training programmes, research, learning networks, etc.	**Soft/Direct regulation** Subsidised consultancy, development and action-oriented research projects, tax credits, etc.

Source: Alasoini 2011; Alasoini, Ramstad & Totterdil, 2017.

Development programmes have been a "widely used soft form of regulation to promote the development of working life in different countries" (Alasoini 2009; 2016, 27) "which generally utilise direct and intermediate-stage measures" (Alasoini 2016, 35) "launched and governed by key regime actors with an aim to support sociotechnical transitions" (Ibid. 2016, 39). Ideally a programme, as a soft form of policy intervention, means a fixed-term institutionalised activity (Alasoini 2011, 30). Thus a programme is understood as the conjunction of three aspects (Alasoini, 2008); first, several organisations participate in a development process guided by a shared framework; second, the content to be developed within the framework is agreed by the organisations, and other stakeholders groups like government, social partners, researchers, consultants and other experts; third, the development process requires interaction, co-operation and information exchange.

Chart 1: Programme framework, subject, object and process of learning



Source: adapted from Alasoini (2008).

In the analysis of the adaptation of emerging techno-economic paradigms and having in consideration organisational isomorphism, the modernisation of social institutions is identified as a driver for successful change. From a sociological perspective the tension between structure and agency has been explained using the concept of entrepreneurial institutions (Battilana et al. 2009; Garud et al. 2007) which refers to "agents who initiate changes that break with the prevailing institutional logic within a given context by actively participating in the implementation of these changes through the active mobilisation of resources". The concept of development programmes as institutional entrepreneurs has been introduced by Tuomo Alasoini (2016)*:*

*"*Workplace development programmes represent a collective or distributed agency that typically comprises the parties involved in expanded triple helix co-operation." (Alasoini 2016, 29).

The European Commission is driving new policy concepts founded in Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisations (RIS3), aiming to reach Europe 2020 strategy objectives. In this framework all member state regions are required to have a strategy, in order to receive funding from the European Regional Development Fund. RIS3 are defined as integrated, place-based economic transformation agendas, which focus policy support and investments on key challenges and needs, for knowledge-based development as building regional/national strengths, competitive advantages and potential for excellence (European Commission 2012).

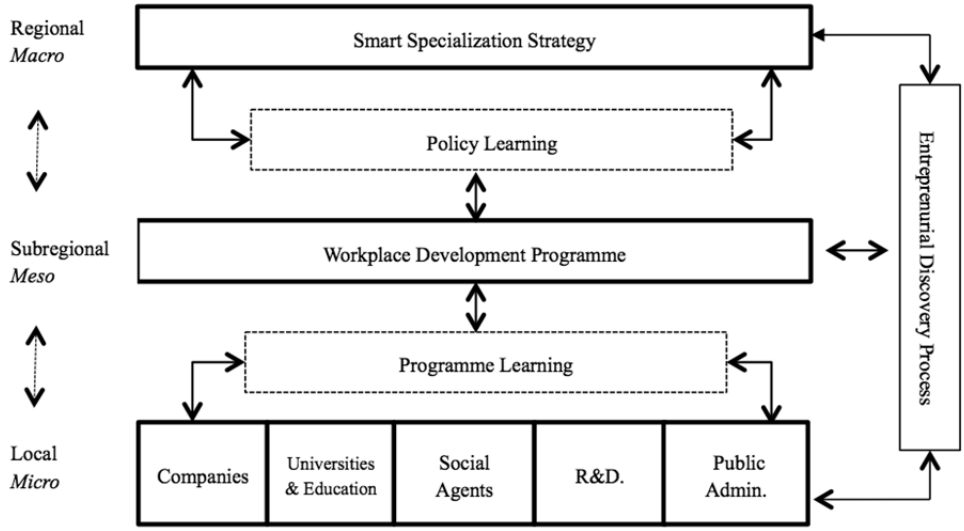
However specialisation must be interpreted as an exercise of diversification instead of pure specialisation (McCann & Ortega-Argilés 2011). Conceptually, the implementation process of the strategy marks regional priorities through an *entrepreneurial discovery process* in which all key stakeholders collectively seek and agree on strategic priorities (Foray et al 2012). Originally the concept refers to (Foray et al., 2009; Foray 2009) the learning process in which a region, driven by entrepreneurs, gradually discovers prioritisation areas in R&D and innovation linking the ability to transform current economic structure to a path of growth and employment. Entrepreneurs must be understood in a broad sense, including companies, higher education institutions, public research institutes, researchers and so on) gathering anyone who is in the best position to combine different approaches for new market opportunities in a creative manner (IPTS 2012).

The rationale supporting RIS3 is based on coordination and governance as a key issue. Within the RIS3 framework interaction between institutions and actors can be linked to the perspective of regional learning (Lundvall 1996; Gustavsen, Nyhan & Ennals 2007). As pointed by OECD (1996) learning economy requires a rapid and continuous adaptation of skills. This addresses organisational arenas where research and participation (Gustavsen 2005; 2017; Fricke & Totterdil, 2004) can potentially contribute to the process of transformation (Totterdill 2018) and systemic change (Garmann Johnsen et al. 2018).

Considering the above mentioned, themain focus on this paper explores the plausible potentiality of public initiated Workplace Development Programmes able to produce links between the macro (regional) and the micro (local organisations and stakeholders) policy spheres that support adaptation to rapid changes through an entrepreneurial discovery process. For this purpose, the Programme Theory developed by Tuomo Alasoini (2016) articulates the link between the top-down policy of smart specialisation at regional level, and the bottom-up emergence of the entrepreneurial discovery process that happens at the

organisational level. Development Programmes are here identified as *meso* policy spheres of articulation.

Diagram 1: Integrated dynamic framework



Source: Own elaboration.

According to the systemic framework, Workplace Development Programmes should be understood as a production and development system:

"As production system a programme is called on to produce outcomes derived from the role and function of the programme (…). As a development system, on the other hand, a programme should produce programme learning and policy learning" (Alasoini 2008, 64).

Ideally a programme can act as an interactive learning space where learning and knowledge creation requires a shared and common space (Alasoini 2006) or a development coalition (Ennals & Gustavsen 1999) fostering joint learning and knowledge creation. In this framework programmes are introduced as dynamic systems capable to generate learning at programme and policy levels. The former: programme learning, refers to the learning during the implementation where subjects of learning are the programme implementers.The latter: policy learning,contributes to a broader context of learningincluding policy-makers (Alasoini 2008, 66).

"Programme learningrefers to learning that occurs *inside* the programme during its implementation, whereas policy learning*transcends* the programme and extends to the role and function of the next-generation programme" (Alasoini 2016, 84).

Publicly promoted development programmes focusing on workplace innovation have demonstrated improvements in terms of productivity and quality of working life (i.e. Gustavsen et al. 1996; Alasoini 2006). Gustavsen's ideas (2003, 2004) about programmes

as generative mechanisms for social change point out the challenge to create interactive and parallel processes in a variety of organisations simultaneously. Thus, the impact of programmes can be understood as cumulative and mutually supportive innovations able to produce change in Society. This change can be producde at regime level (i.e. national, regional, sectorial level) as new paradigms of work organisation. As noted before, workplace innovation also supports other types of innovations. Programmes to produce change at regime levels depend, not only by the programme's characteristics, but other economic and social benefits that this innovation can produce (Alasoini 2016, 105-106).

Based on a constructivist view, the next section exemplifies a potential regional learning approach in the Basque Country combining regional policy making addressed to companies and other stakeholders in a broad sense that pivots through sub-regional policy interventions based on workplace innovation. To do this, the institutional context of both regional and sub-regional (territorial) scenarios and how learning can be fostered will be explained.

5. The institutional context in a nutshell

The institutional Basque system is highly de-centralized with respect to the Spanish State, with the capacity to establish its own self-governing bodies granted through the Statute of Autonomy, which is recognised constitutionally. This means rights over self-tax regulation, healthcare, public safety, education and territorial organisation. Within this institutional framework each province of the Basque Autonomous Community has its own public budget and tax regulations policy to manage public policies, in particular in areas related to social, knowledge and economic promotion areas. A more in deep analysis of the regional innovation systems and its institutional context have been describe elsewhere (i.e. Pomares et al. 2016).

From a European comparative perspective, the Basque Country excels in three dimensions: human resources, attractive research systems, and favourable environment to innovation (Eustat & European Commission – EIS 2017). In regards to the training of human resources, considered as key to innovation, the region stands out by exceeding the EU averages in three key areas; new graduate doctors between 25 and 34 years, population between 25 and 34 years with tertiary education, and the level of inhabitants comprised between 25 to 64 years participating in lifelong learning activities. Regional performance is also above the average of the EU (Eurostat, 2017-Eustat 2017).

Within the regional development approaches, the Basque Country has been characterised as a successful history of regional transformation (OECD 2011). The European Commission also determines the region as an example of good practice regarding the RIS3 (Aranguren, Morgan & Wilson 2016). The Basque RIS3 is included in the Innovation, Science and Technology Plan 2020 (Gobierno Vasco 2015), which has defined 3 priorities aimed at advanced manufacturing, energy and biosciences. Along with this, a series of opportunities have been identified, such as cultural and creative industries, urban planning & regeneration, nutrition and ecosystems (Gobierno Vasco 2014). Advanced manufacturing (aeronautical, naval and railway, automotive, machine tools, capital goods)

represents one of the areas of regional transformation regarding Industry 4.0 concept. How-However, the RIS3 implementation process brings some challenges (Navarro et al. 2012). One of them is considered to be multilevel governance (Morgan 2016). Multilevel governance is a key challenge, especially in the Basque Country, which is composed by three territories (provinces) with their own institutions (Provincial Councils) and its polycentric orientation (Pomares et al. 2016).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Basque RIS3 process is the appearance of emerging plans located at territorial levels, considered as local experimentation opportunities, aligned to the emerging models of experimental governance in the EU (Morgan 2016). Experimental governance (Sabel & Zeitlin 2012) has gained academic and political attention regarding its potential impact for learning in the public policy making of EU member states. The term refers to a multi-level architecture, which links in an iterative cycle oriented to learning processes broad framework goals, discretion to lower levels in the goal implementation, practices of regular reporting and assessment, and periodical revision of frameworks (Sabel & Zeitlin 2012, 169).

6. Territorial approach to the Province of Gipuzkoa

With regard to the promotion of knowledge, innovation and economic policies, the Territory of Gipuzkoa has been aligning its development to the EU Lisbon Strategy. First lifelong learning public programmes were launched in the mid 80's along with information and technology-based investment initiatives. Since 2014 the Territory has been active in policy-making focusing on participation. First workplace innovation programmes in this period promoted workers' participation in management, strategic decision-making, results and capital. In 2016 a provincial tax rule was introduced to support workers participation in the capital of company level, which can be understood as a policy mix complementing development programmes.

Workers participation has gained importance in the political agenda as a driver for competitiveness and social cohesion. An example of this political interest can be found in the Strategic Management Plan (2015-2019) and the *Etorkizuna Eraikiz* (Building the Future, in Basque language) Programme, which focuses on the institutionalisation of a new collaborative governance model oriented to the strengthening of the endogenous capacities of the Territory (Barandiaran & Luna 2018). Considering the Territory as a system of action (Luhman 1995) public policy-making has turned from traditional to more open and innovative design that can be conceptualised as meta-governance (Jessop 2003; Kooiman 2003; Sorensen & Torfing 2005, 2007). In this scenario, meta governance refers to the analysis of policy actions which integrates diverse collaboration through different experimental and strategic programmes on economic, social, political and cultural arenas, including climate change, active aging, employment, cyber security, education, gender, work and family balance and workplace innovation among others (Barandiaran & Luna 2018). In regards to policymaking, Gipuzkoa has experiencedactionresearch and its contribution policy learning (Karlsen & Larrea 2014a; Karlsen & Larrea 2014b), a feature that reinforces the open and collaborative character of the territory and its institutions.

Understanding the multi-level governance of the Basque Country and considering sub-regional (territorial) policy spheres, the potential contribution of the experimental institutions, such as workplace innovation programmes, can support the entrepreneurial discovery process in an alternative strategy. In this sense, workplace innovation can result as a driver to promote learning arenas aimed at productivity and quality of working life.

7. Workplace Innovation Programme´s Analytical dimensions

The purpose of this section is oriented to locate the territorial Workplace Development Programme promoted by the Economic and Knowledge Promotion Directorate of the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa. Based on previous research more information on the programme can be found elsewhere (Pomares et al. 2016; Alasoini, Ramstad & Totterdill 2017)). To do this in a complementary manner, the methodologically revised F. Naschold´s framework, designed by Tuomo Alasoini (2009, 2016, 115-118) as a learning oriented model will be applied.

Both the original and the revised model are based in six generic principles considered as crucial for the social impact of programmes (Alasoini, 2009): policy context, orientation, participation, horizontal networking, aim and resources and infrastructure.

– *Policy Context*: Based on the programme description on the aim is addressed to workers participation (capital, results, strategic decision making and management) by the promotion of people´s centred approaches, learning, territorial development and social cohesion. The programme´s strategic justification relies primarily on sustainability territorially rooted decision-making power and lifelong learning to improve productivity and better quality of working life. Macro-industrial policy issues such as digitalisation, robotisation, automatisation, globalisation, competition and de-localisation must be considered as underlying external pressures in the territory. This links programme and company or workplace levels by guiding development activities. Integrated into a broader knowledge promotion policy of Gipuzkoa, the programme supports other policies at the macro-level (Basque Country) as smart specialisation strategies, which aims to impact on territorial socio-economic performance. As a special feature, the strategy relies on the promotion of participated business structures as a key driver for endogenous socio-economic development. Thus the social legitimacy addresses territorial industrial relations and social dialogue at company level. Research is contained in the aim of the programme as a foundation to explore new formulas on participation and work organisation including territorial research system. The design of the programme emerges from the Provincial Government, and involves in its implementation to businesses, research organisations of STI network, higher education institutions and training centres, social partners and other strategic organisations. The focus of the programme is based on the sub-regional level.
– *Orientation*: The programme´s goal setting is focused on strengthening the territorial business ecosystem, through workplace innovations and people's centred systems, skills and competence building, organisational or individual learning and networking between participants. In the light of the programme this means of new forms of work

organisation to be developed by research, new methodologies, instruments, evaluation models, and the diffusion, socialisation and experimentation. Overall, the orientations mainly aim at fostering emerging objects for development based on local reinvention as "useful practices" more than "best practices" (Alasoini 2016, 116).

– *Participation:* Workers participation at workplace and company level is contained in a broad way. Gender and age issues are central, which are embedded on sustainable and more cohesive formulas of territorial development policies. The programme is more process than design oriented, as it promotes research on new formulas for workers participation at broad company level issues.The process driven dimension is contained in the goal of the programme by the promotion of participation among managers, workers, researches, social agents and education or training institutions (mobilisation), the inclusion of gender and ageing issues in regards of business continuation and sustainability (social inclusion), and the openness of different partners considering a right balance, able to include different interest and aspirations of a variety of actors (dialogue) (Alasoini 2016, 117).
– *Aim and Resources:* Main objectives can be identified on economic and social development on a sustainable territorial transition, which are integrated in the Programme's vision and guidelines as described before (intellectual resource) (Pomares et al. 2016). For this purpose, the programme resources are primarily based on economic funding (material resources) for learning based R&D and diffusion activities. The programme has an annual periodicity where participating players (individually or by association in networks) submit development projects (R&D or Diffusion), which are funded. The cost susceptible to being financially covered depends on eligibility criteria such as the innovative nature of activities, the coherence of project activities and methodologies, with the programme goal setting, and the impact, quality and intensity of cooperation in participatory processes (Pomares et al 2016, 119). Other types of resources such as the participation in new or established networks, and the dissemination are also included (social resources), but this depends on implementers and the purposed projects by participants. The programme includes diffusion-and-extension-based activities to sustain or create intermediate or cross-organisational learning networks for dissemination of practices (Alasoini 2016, 118).
– *Networking:* Based on the territorial axis, the programme focuses on the organisational and/or workplace level based on learning by interaction, co-operation and participation, which includes a diverse class of players. This includes individual workplaces, business organisations, social agents, research centre or higher education or training centres. Learning and networking is promoted through research and development projects or diffusion activities.
– *Infrastructure:* The programme is oriented to promote territorially based cooperation and interaction as a vehicle to strengthening social and economic development based on knowledge. For this purpose, in order to be addressed exclusively to business or private organisations it comprises also other actors from the social, economic and knowledge areas, such as research centres, education and social agents.

8. Findings

This section focuses on programme-level issues: Workplace Innovation programmes. To understand the effectiveness it is important to consider programme design and implementation (Alasoini 2016, 40). However, this paper, as driven by a constructivist view, focuses on the potential and integrated framework that Workplace Innovation Programmes are able to support considering other regional policies. The main objective is therefore in describing the contextual factors capable of producing this approach instead of doing an evaluation. In particular, the purpose is to increase the capacity of companies' capacity for learning and adapt (Alasoini 2016, 27) by using broad based participation supporting other regional policies such as smart specialisation. In spite of the supportive capacity of the programme to support other policy spheres aiming at socio-economic development, each programme has its own goals. Ideally, four types of different goals can be addressed in terms of assessment (Alasoini 2006):

– *Public policy goals* addressing the rationale such as i.e. socio-economic development, productivity growth, working life reform, regional development, cooperation or development of networks or clusters.
– *Programme level goals*, which refer to the alignment to the way programme is implemented and resourced to realise, desired change and determined policy goals.
– *Generative results* or external effects mean the capacity of developed activities to be transferred from individual workplace and organisations and benefit to other spheres.
– *Workplace level* results consist on the outcomes generated by the development carried out inside the programme.

Having this in mind, for the purpose of this paper, in this section the main focus will be to describe a combined approach to the way the programme has been implemented.With minor changes (i.e. the title of the programme) since its launching in 2014 workplace innovation has been described as the integration of people, skills and technology based on innovative forms of work organisation through autonomy and learning as a source of productivity and quality of working life (Pomares et al., 2016). In regards of public budgeting, the programme has an annual investment of 3M. In overall between 2014 and 2017 the expenditure reached 13.4 million euros. The total investmentin the programme considering the annual public budget of the Economic Promotion Directorate reaches almost 15%. It has to be considered that the Economic Promotion Department is composed by 5 Directorates: Economic Promotion DG, Innovation and Internationalisation DG, Agriculture and Rural Development DG, Mountains and Nature DG, Territorial Balance DG.

Table 2: Budget and programme funding.

	2014	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**Total**
Total Funding (million Euros)	3.3 M. €	3.2 M. €	3.4 M. €	3.4 M. €	**13.4M.** €
% Of theEconomyDG Budget	15,35%	21,31%	11,68%	11,39%	14,93%

% Of the Government Budget	0,44%	0,44%	0,43%	0,41%	0,43%

Source: Government of Gipuzkoa. Own Elaboration.

The WPI Programme policy goal is set on socio-economic endogenous development as it contributes to other programme and policy spheres in different levels. The unit of analysis in this frameworkis the number of approved projects in the WPI programme. Following Alasoini, different type of activities can be developed in this framework. In theory programmes can address desirable effects and changes by developing three types of projects: user oriented projects, method based project and learning networks. Each of development projects (potentially) can generate different types of outcomes. In example, three main types of projects are identified within the WPI Programme Theory (Alasoini 2008): user oriented, method based and learning network projects. Each of these development activities differs in terms of the capacity to generate results. User oriented projects generate new design or development systems able to be extended and transferred to others. Method based projects refers to implementation of standards reducing the customised developments. Learning networks represent a hybridisation of user oriented and method based developments, which can contribute to broader learning effects.

In focus, within the WPI Programme of analysis participants can propose several projects for each programme period. In the table below a resume of the approved projects is shown. In overall during 2014 and 2017 a total of 430 projects have been developed. The three types of development activities above can be included, but with regard to available data and the aim of this research, the focus is set on the nature of funded activities. For this purpose a further division between research & development or diffusion projects can be made. Data shows a total of 430 projects, with up to one hundred funded projects per year (see table n. 3). In regards of the type of activities funded within projects, R&D project represent 47,1% and Diffusion activities are 52,9%.

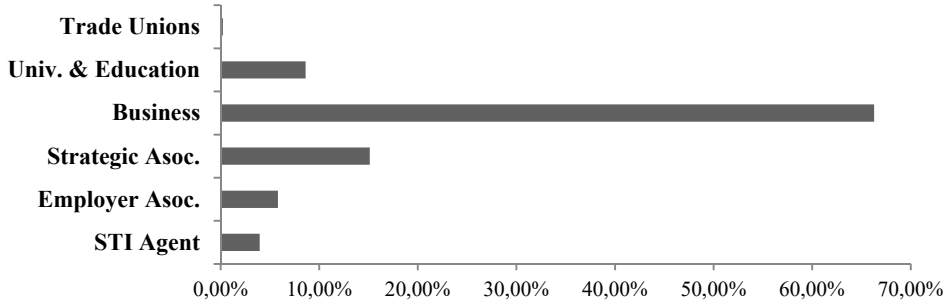
Table 3: Participating Projects.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Total Projects	103	116	115	96	**430**
R&D	45,63%	49,57%	47,83%	45,26%	**47,10%**
Diffusion	54,37%	50,43%	52,17%	54,74%	**52,90%**

Source: Government of Gipuzkoa. Own Elaboration.

Major players in the programme (over the period 2014-2017) are projects led by Business (66%) and followed by projects of Strategic Associations (15%), such as county economic development agencies. Minor players are Universities and Education Centres (9%), Employers Associations (6%) and Science Technology and Innovation Agents (4%). There was only one project by Trade Unions in the first year of the programme.

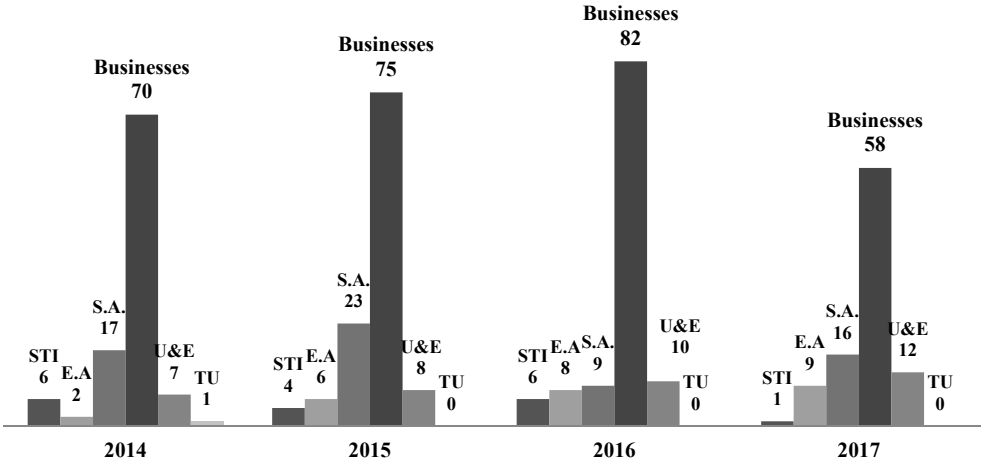
Chart 2: Percentage of participating projects (2014-2017) by player type.



Source: Government of Gipuzkoa. Own elaboration.

In the chart a detailednumber of participant projects classified by agents shows that more than half of the funded projects are led directly by companies. As pointed out above, territorially based strategic associations, followed by universities, training and education centres, employer associations and STI agents, take part in less substantial mode. Trade Union project representation is symbolic. However, using the project as a unit of analysis does not describe the nature and goal of approved project. Many of the projects developed by minor agents can be addressed to a large number of activities or companies (i.e. County economic development agencies which gather country-based organisation networks, or universities and ST agents developing activities and projects addressing infrastructure or territorial capacity building).

Chart 3: Number of participating projects by player type and per year.



STI=Science, Technology and Innovation Agents; **E.A**=Employer Associations; **S.A**.=Strategic Associations; **B**=Business; **U&E**=University and Education Centres; **TU**=Trade Unions
Source: Government of Gipuzkoa. Own elaboration.

9. Conclusion

Strategic justifications for WPI Public Programme originally were set on working life reform, participation and industrial democracy. As part of the socio-technological school, workplace innovation has been described as *constructed* and *participatory* changes able to produce simultaneous improvements in productivity and quality of working life, but also supporting other type of innovations. Technological shifts require rapid adaptation at workplace level, which should be supported by the modernization of socio-economic institutions (Perez 2004) in order to reach well-balanced transformation of work, organisations and society. Workplace Innovation Programmes as Institutional Entrepreneurs (Alasoini 2016) are examples of alternative modes for learning able to produce better policy implementation. In particular, the regional setting gains importance in terms of the experimental character of institutions and multi-level governance structures as they create complementary routes linking micro, meso and macro spheres. In this sense "causation is contingent on the context" so "produced Programme and Policy learning must be understood as dependant on the content" (Alasoini 2016, 116).

Workplace Innovation and public promoted Programmes can be pivotal, contributing to broad innovation strategies able to produce better understanding when complex objects (i.e. work organisation, new technology implementation, technological disruption, working life reform, job quality or welfare state and tax systems) require integrated approaches. To reach desirable social changes, broad based participation is required, including a wide range of actors that simultaneously work with shared complex object can interact, co-operate and exchange knowledge and experience. For this reason, it is important to consider Programmes as (learning) mechanisms to transform social institutions as working life.

Within the particular scenario of Gipuzkoa and the Basque Country, a four-year period of investment in areas focused on work-organisation, participation and learning shows that alternative institutional learning frameworks can be designed. The vision of the Government in Gipuzkoa (since the 80's) and its learning and sustainability based policy orientation is an example of that.

The challenge now is set on creating (social and political) awareness on the potential complementarity of these programmes, in regards of social transformation, as they can produce niche innovations and cumulative knowledge. As shown in the findings, more than 13 M. euros investment and 430 projects have been developed by a large number of companies, territorially based strategic associations, universities and education centres, employer associations. Trade Unions participation still remains low. For this reason, future research must be guided to the analysis of the results and the generative capacity of the Programme to reach policy and programme goals. This can contribute to a better understanding of new ways for cooperation, learning and new forms of work organisation within local contexts able to be expanded in regional contexts.

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Doing Research Upside Down: Action and Research in Cross Self-Confrontations

Laure Kloetzer

Abstract
This paper highlights three main points. Firstly, it argues that despite the positioning of mainstream psychology as "objective research" i.e. disengaged from taking action in public life, there has always been in psychology a (quantitatively) minor but (qualitatively) strong tradition of intervention, defined as a joint practice engaging researchers and practitioners in social transformation. It shows how this alternative way of doing research affects all dimensions of the researchers' professional practice, for better or for worse. Secondly, it presents a specific perspective on intervention, created in France and used in multiple work settings in the last twenty years, called *Clinic of Activity*. It then introduces and discusses a methodology designed to support development at work through collaborative work analysis and structured dialogue, the *Cross Self Confrontations*. Thirdly, it reports on a research in Cross Self-Confrontations recently conducted in a Swiss factory, and shows how this methodology supports the co-creation of knowledge and the development of dialogue within a group of workers and across the hierachical lines, therefore contributing to the deep discussion and transformation of work practices.

Keywords: Activity Analysis, Activity Development, Cross Self-Confrontation, Dialogue, Dialogical Methodology, Social Transformation

Haciendo La Investigación Al Revés: Acción E Investigación En Trans -Auto-Confrontaciones

Resumen
Este artículo destaca tres puntos principales. En primer lugar, se argumenta que a pesar del posicionamiento de la corriente principal de la psicología como "investigación objetiva", es decir, desconectada de la adopción de medidas en la vida pública, siempre ha habido en la psicología una tradición de intervención (cuantitativamente) menor pero (cualitativamente) fuerte, definida como una práctica conjunta que involucra a investigadores y profesionales en la transformación social. Muestra cómo esta forma alternativa de hacer investigación afecta a todas las dimensiones de la práctica profesional de los investigadores. En segundo lugar, se presenta una perspectiva específica de intervención, creada en Francia y usada en múltiples entornos de trabajo en los últimos veinte años, llamada *Clínica de Actividad*. Luego, se introduce y discute una metodología diseñada para apoyar el desarrollo en el trabajo a través del análisis de trabajo colaborativo y el diálogo estructurado, *Trans-autoconfrontaciones*. En tercer lugar, se informa sobre una investigación en auto-confrontaciones

cruzadas llevada a cabo recientemente en una fábrica suiza y muestra cómo esta metodología apoya la co-creación de conocimiento y el desarrollo del diálogo dentro de un grupo de trabajadores y a través de las líneas jerárquicas, contribuyendo así para una discusión profunda y transformación de las prácticas de trabajo.

Palabras clave: Análisis de actividad, desarrollo de actividad, trans-autoconfrontación, diálogo, metodologia dialógica, transformación social

1. What shall we do? About intervention in psychology

Kurt Lewin, commenting on the problems of intergroup relations in the United States in his foundational paper on *Action Research and Minority Problems* (1946), reported being in contact with a wide range of professional organisations and parties, which would make most of today's psychologists envious. He added: "Two basic facts emerged from these contacts: there exists a great amount of good-will, of readiness to face the problem squarely and really to do something about it. If this amount of serious good-will could be transformed into organised, efficient action, there would be no danger for intergroup relations in the United States. But exactly here lies the difficulty. These eager people feel in the fog. They feel in the fog on three counts: 1. What is the present situation? 2. What are the dangers? 3. And, most important of all, what shall we do?" (p.34). Although we might be less optimistic than Kurt Lewin on our possibilities as researchers to dispel the fog, the question: "what shall we do"? remains. It resonates with some today's urgent social issues, from social inclusion, migration, and the rise of nationalism across Europe, to the global threats of climate change. According to Kurt Lewin, research has the power to organise good-will into efficient collective action, in so far as it adopts a "social management or social engineering" agenda: "It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice." (p.35). How? By the close integration of action, training and research, all based on an underlying principle: the wish to face reality collectively, with appropriate methods, in "co-operative teams formed not on the basis of sweetness but on the basis of readiness to face difficulties realistically, to apply honest fact-finding, and to work together to overcome them…" (p.42). Lewin considers that efficient action requires "objective standards of achievement", collectively established in order to evaluate our actions.

Twenty years before, Vygotsky had been opening the way for a new practice of psychology, engaged simultaneously in active theorising of a revolutionary psychology of human development, and in tackling social issues with an urgent commitment to implementing new social practices and institutions. The relationships between theory and practice are at the core of his reflections. He suggests that we establish success, or failure, of our ideas in practice as an official standard of achievement for theory, as explained in this extract through a colonial metaphor: "Previously, practice was a colony of theory, depending in all on the metropolis; theory in no way depended on practice; practice was the conclusion, the appendix, to put it simply an excursion outside the limits of science, a para-scientific, post-scientific operation, which began where the scientific process was

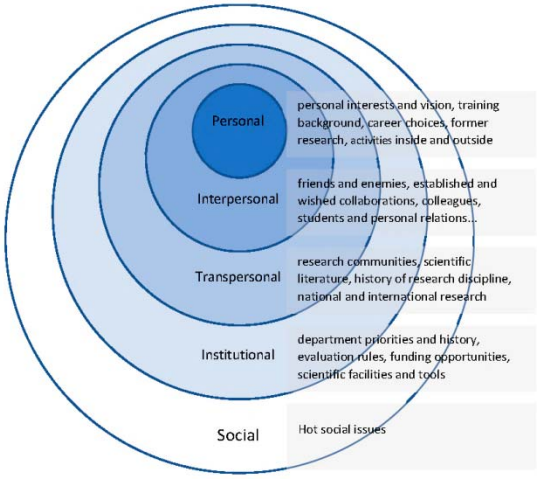
considered complete. Success or failure had virtually no impact on the fate of the theory. Today the situation has reversed; practice creeps into the deepest foundations of the scientific process, and transforms it from beginning to end; practice proposes the tasks, and serves as the supreme judge of theory, criterion of truth. " (Vygotsky 1999, p.235, our translation). This (once again) optimistic view of social science as a foundational block of the historical development of society is grounded in a broad conception of the scope of activity of the researchers, actively engaged in writing, teaching, and developing news programmes for facing social and educational challenges, for example. It challenges the unfortunate but well-established division of labour between researchers and researched, and therefore adopts a political perspective on research in psychology.

Considering the relationships of theoretical constructions and practical challenges again, we notice that although Lewin and Vygotsky call, in very different times and contexts, for renewed relationships, they consider them in reverse ways: for Lewin, research will help evaluate objectively the efficiency of collective actions towards social progress (and therefore drive their continuous progress), while Vygotsky claims that engagement in action will help evaluate objectively the success and pitfalls of research (and therefore trigger new theoretical developments). In this paper, we chose the word *intervention* to refer to research approaches defined as a joint practice engaging researchers and practitioners in knowledge construction and social transformation. Although mainstream psychology has generally adopted a cautious and disengaged approach, inspired by the natural sciences, in which the relationships between researchers and researched are neutralised and protocolised as much as possible in order to pursue the research purposes without risks of "biaising" its results, intervention has a long-standing tradition in psychology. However, the respective positioning and part of researchers and practitioners in joint action and concrete social transformation varies according to the theoretical and methodological perspective of the researchers, as well as according to the situations and goals of intervention. It is outside the scope of this paper to track its various roots and inspirations. We would like to describe now how these alternative ways of doing research affect all dimensions of the researchers' professional practice. To do so, we will contrast "intervention" in general with "mainstream psychology" in general, which obviously has some limits. As mentioned, each research project deploys in its own ways, considering how its research question is turned into methodological steps for data collection, analysis and communication. Therefore, we will complete this abstract overview at the end of this paper by documenting the recent case of a collaborative research in Cross Self-Confrontations in a Swiss factory, showing the specific forms that this challenging way of doing research "upside down" takes in this project. This paper will offer a mostly French view on the relations between action and research, informed by the history of work analysis and intervention in French-speaking ergonomics and work psychology.

When researchers engage in the time-consuming and unsure process of creating relevant knowledge and new practices collaboratively with practitioners, this has implications in the practice of research on a number of dimensions: the first one being the definition of the research project and setting of the research question, which is arguably the leading dimension of each research project. In *mainstream research* in psychology, the research question is defined by the researcher (or the research team) at the crossroads of

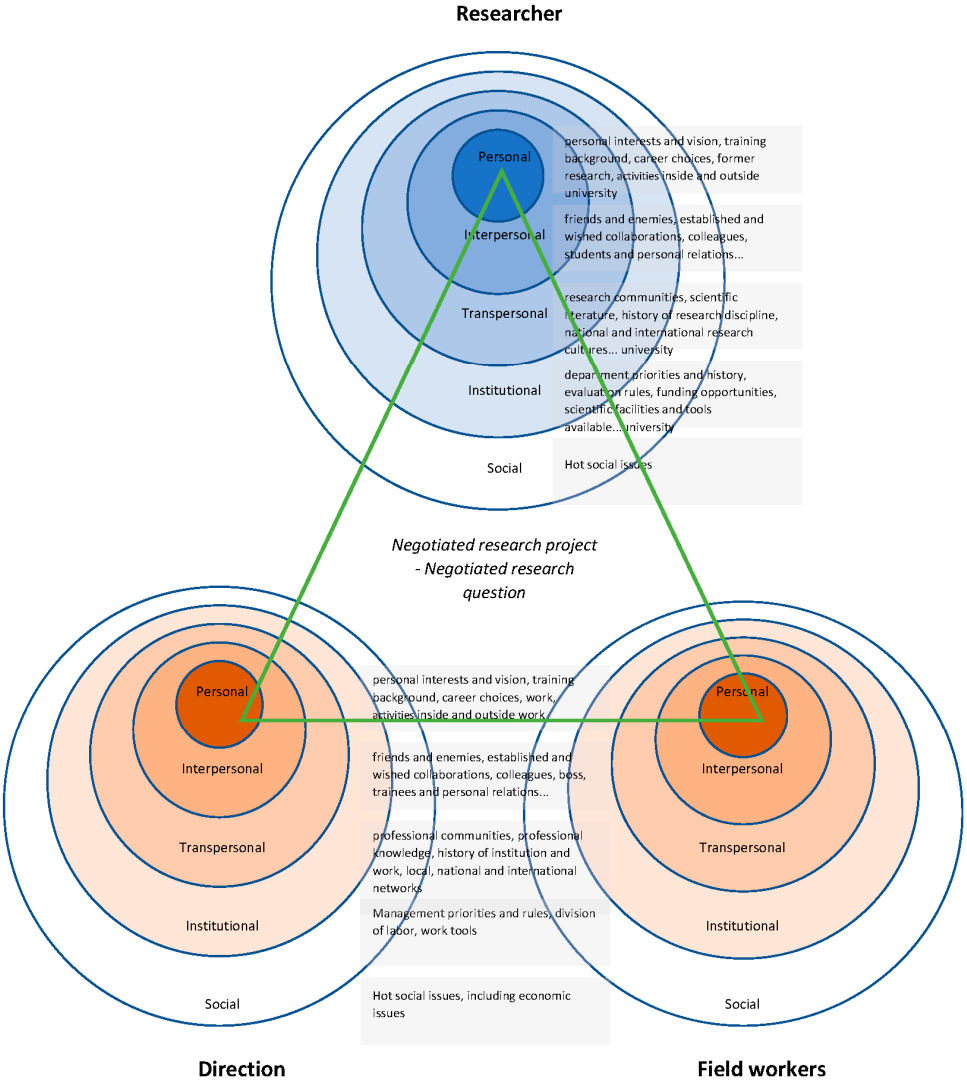
personal interests and current advances of the scientific knowledge as displayed in the sci-scientific literature. A careful analysis of the literature on a given topic convinces the researcher (or not) that there is something interesting to look for here. The research question is usually crafted in the continuity of (or at least in dialogue to) one's own past research. Scientific activity being strongly influenced by collective dynamics, it is also highly dependent on which scientific communities the researcher is participating in: the type of epistemic objects discussed in these communities, the nature of the discussions and current framing of scientific problems, strongly nurture the thought of the researcher. Research questions are historically shaped and physically located. Historical specialties of university departments, epistemological choices and contrasted identity of research teams, territories and established collaborations, have an effect on which research questions a researcher active in a given department may tackle. Additionally, the research question might also be influenced by larger institutional dimensions, such as university priorities or funding opportunities in a specific time and country, for example. Scientific tools and facilities which are available at a given time may also generate research questions which are tailored to make the best use of them. Finally, researchers being normal human beings, some research questions are inspired by their life experiences or frictions, and linked to their extraprofessional concerns or hobbies (family experiences, sport or artistic experiences, friendships, for example). In some cases, the research question reflects broader social issues and engagements through the understanding that the researcher has of her scientific and social responsibilities. The "question of the research question": how it emerges, why this research question appears now, which kind of research this research question drives, etc., is therefore already extremely complex in mainstream psychology. It is the complex interplay of personal, interpersonal, historical and organizational dynamics in a research and life community, centred on the researcher herself.

Figure 1. Dimensions at play in the definition of the research question in mainstream psychology



In the case of intervention, the situation is even more complex: as for mainstream research, all these dimensions are at play in the definition of the research project and question. However, the research project and question are not defined solely by the researcher (or research team) but in interaction with the fieldworkers/participants. The research project needs to make sense for the actors in the field. These actors usually have diverse, sometimes diverging, views on what the problems are in the field and how to solve them. They are both experts in their work, work practices and work organisation, and sometimes, following Lewin, in the fog. Changing the purpose of research to include a concern for action in practice, means changing the ways of working for researchers to take practice and practitioners' perspectives seriously into account. French-speaking ergonomics have developed a specific couple of concepts to catch the dynamics of negotiation associated with transformative field research in work organisations. In their vocabulary, the researchers have to navigate and negotiate both the organisational command and workers' demand (Ombredane & Faverge 1955; Daniellou 2005). The organisational command is the question or issue addressed to the researchers by the direction of the company or public institution. The researchers try to understand this explicit and implicit command and its underlying logics and issues, thanks to discussions with the direction, trade unions, managers and field workers, as well as thanks to a first round of observations of the work process and analysis of documents describing the work organisation. The researchers negotiate the command, and re-formulate it in a way which is interesting and acceptable for both the researchers and the decision makers. Opportunities to engage further into discussion with the decision makers on a potential intervention within their organisation are usually a follow-up of earlier successful collaborations. In some economic fields, like in High Reliability Organisations (HRO: including aviation, train transport, nuclear plants, and hospitals, for example), the history of collaboration between researchers and practitioners is so rich that research is without question part of the design process and evaluation cycles of new tools and procedures. However, a negotiated command is not enough to allow researchers to proceed; they also need to check that this command from the direction meets some authentic demand from the fieldworkers. Demand, in this perspective, is the interest expressed by the fieldworkers for the research project and question raised by the researchers (which reflect the negotiated command of the direction and their own understanding of the realities of the work process). In this context, the research project and question cannot be fully defined by the research team. They result from observation, analysis, dialogue, and negotiation with multiple partners within the organisation (directions, trade unions, managers and fieldworkers to begin with). Research projects and questions in an intervention perspective are "boundary objects" (Star & Griesemer 1989), «both adaptable to different viewpoints and robust enough to maintain identity across them».

Figure 2. Dimensions at play in the definition of the research question in intervention



Although this negotiated, decentred way of defining the research project and question is precious for action purposes, it may raise some concerns regarding the research per se. Among these concerns are the following points: this flexible, almost ad-hoc, way of setting a research question contradicts the expectations of generalisation and cumulative knowledge. Theoretical generalisation from case studies being an important challenge in social science (Becker 2014; Markova 2016), the situation is even worse when the research question is the outcome of a complex negotiation between multiple actors, some of them with no interest in academic research at all and lots of urgent practical concerns. The ad-hoc setting of re-

search questions makes the generation of knowledge across different research projects even more difficult. This may also be challenging for the career of the researcher. This delicate balance between energy invested in practical transformation/energy invested in theoretical construction might not be fully recognised in the academic setting, focused on theoretical production.

This way of setting the research project, purpose and question has multiple implications on diverse dimensions of the scientific process, including the relationship to the field, the status of research participants, the research method, the research setting, the ethics of the research, the analysis of the data, the ownership of the data, the communication of the findings, and the diffusion of the research.

Regarding the relationship to the field, in mainstream research, the field may have no relevance at all and research participants may be considered as individuals independent from a specific social context. The challenge for researchers is to gain access to these research participants, which results from an individual negotiation process (convincing them to participate in the research, asking for permission to proceed). Usually the relevance of the research to the research participants, beyond minimal curiosity, is of limited interest for the researcher. If the research includes field research, then the challenge of gaining access is extended to the institution. In case of intervention, the process is reverse: the successful definition of the research project guarantees its practical relevance. Therefore, the challenge is in understanding the different dynamics around the potential research project and negotiating good conditions to do it. Access itself is granted by the existence of a command, and further granted by the successful negotiation on the purpose and methodology of the research, and its relevance for the organisation/participants.

Regarding the status of research participants, intervention aims at overcoming the institutionalised division of labour in research between researchers and researched, who are in the best case considered as research subjects, and might even sometimes be considered as research objects, in mainstream research in psychology. Collaboration takes various forms in different intervention traditions. However, it should be considered true collaboration only if the research participants have power on the definition of the research project per se, including its purpose, ways of investigation (method), analysis and communication. Therefore, the change from mainstream research to intervention implies also a redefinition of the research methods. Which methodological innovations are required? All those who give some control to the research participants on the research question, choice of data to be collected, and analysis of these data. These innovative research methodologies usually require the creation of dialogical frameworks during the research project in order to discuss collectively and collaboratively (between researchers and different participants to the research project) the data collected and the subsequent analyses.

Tab 1. How intervention transforms the scientific process.

	Mainstream research in psychology	**Intervention**
Definition of the research project/Research question	Set by the researcher according to his interests and understanding of his scientific activity (researcher-centred view)	"Boundary objects", negotiated by the researcher according to his interests and understanding of his scientific activity, as well as the relevance of the project for the partner organisation, explicit and implicit command and perceived field demand (decentred view).
Relationship to the field	Gaining access is the challenge. Access to the field/to the research participants needs to be negotiated. The researcher usually presents the topic of his/her research and asks for permission to proceed.	Negotiating command (explicit/implicit), demand (the existence/the nature of a demand) and the research process and resources is the challenge. Relevance of the research for the work organisation and research participants is central.
Status of research participants	Research subjects, informants (in the ethnographical tradition) providing data to the researchers	Participants in the research project, contributing to its design, by extension: co-researchers.
Research method	Any quantitative or qualitative method aiming at producing data for the researchers	Any quantitative or qualitative method aiming at producing and discussing data which will be used collaboratively by researchers and research participants to pursue action and research purposes. Creation of dialogical frameworks to support the co-analysis of data.
Research setting	University (lab or meeting room) or field or any other location (home, cafés, etc.)	University (lab or meeting room) or field or any other location (home, cafés, etc.). However, the way the research project deploys itself in the space of the partner organisation is an object of reflection and negotiation for the researchers.
Ethics of the research	Procedural ethics, validated by an academic ethics commission, to protect informed and free participation and anonymity of the participants.	Beyond procedural ethics, the researchers consider how to really protect the participants in practice and confidentiality of data collected. They take the responsibility of controlling how the data will be used and interpreted, what for and by whom.
Analysis of data	Performed by the researchers	Performed by the researchers and the research participants iteratively, although the researchers take the final responsibility of the analyses.
Ownership of data	Owned by the researchers	Data are under the control of research participants. Ownership and use are negotiated, the data may be owned by the researchers, or jointly by the researchers and the partner organisation. All ownership is ruled by contractual safeguards.
Communication of findings	In academic networks, for the benefits of the researcher. Publicly, for the benefits of the society. Sometimes in professional networks, training programs, museums, theatres, public mediation spaces…	In debriefing sessions, for the benefits of research participants and of the partner organisation. In professional networks, for the benefits of similar organisations. In academic networks, for the benefits of the researcher. In training programmes, museums, theatres, public mediation spaces… Publicly, for the benefits of the society.
Forms of findings	Usually scientific writings (reports, papers and books). Sometimes, alternative forms (videos, theatre plays, newspaper articles…) adapted to a public audience.	Mixed forms adapted to a local audience of research participants, workers and decision-makers (videos, training sessions, meetings, short reports, etc.). Also scientific writings (reports, papers and books). Sometimes, alternative forms (videos, theatre plays, newspaper articles…) adapted to a public audience.
Diffusion of research findings	By the researchers, in their communities and other public spaces they choose.	By the researchers, in the partner organization, in professional networks, in their communities, and other public spaces they choose. By the research participants and by the partner organisation, for their own purposes.
Outcomes of the research project	New knowledge	New knowledge, social innovations, shared experience of collaboration.

2. Cross Self-Confrontations: designing a research methodology supporting development

In this section, we present a specific perspective on intervention, created in France and used in multiple work settings in the last twenty years, called *Clinic of Activity* (or *Activity Clinic*, depending on the translations. The original name in French is *Clinique de l'activité*). In particular, we will introduce a methodology designed to support development at work through collaborative work analysis and structured dialogue, the *Cross Self Confrontations (CSC)*. The methodology of CSC (Clot, Faïta, Fernandez & Scheller 2000) is linked to the Clinic of Activity approach, which was developed since 1990s at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (Cnam) Paris, France, by Yves Clot and his colleagues (Clot 1995, 1999, 2008). It is now applied by researcher-interventionists with professionals in very diverse work settings (teachers, surgeons, artists, managers, sportsmen, construction workers, factory workers, prosecutors, judges, priests, translators…) mostly in francophone countries (France, Switzerland, Canada, …). Clinic of Activity is grounded both in clinical work psychology and work psychopathology (Le Guillant 1984; Tosquelles 2003) and in French-speaking work and activity analysis, largely inspired by the seminal work of French ergonomics in diverse work settings to understand the activity of the workers in its context and transform it (Ombredane & Faverge 1955; Guérin, Laville & Daniellou,1997; Wisner 1995). Above all, this French tradition builds heavily on Vygotsky's works, and his insight that to study development, we need to provoke it. Action therefore is both one goal of the research and its means. Development of health: defined following Canguilhem[1] as the possibility of an active contribution of the subject to one's own history and to one's social life, and therefore, "power to act" (Clot 1999, 2008) of the subject are at the core of this approach. of all partners taking part to the intervention. The power to act, inspired by Spinoza's work, is defined as measuring: "*the radius of effective action of the subject or of subjects in their everyday professional milieu, what is called the radiance of activity, its power of re-creation*[2]" (Clot 2008, p. 13). Clinic of Activity is therefore defined as a method for action, with a goal of transformation, and as a method of research, with a goal of production of scientific knowledge.

Following Vygotsky, Clinic of Activity considers a unit of analysis of the work activity which is the psychological activity of the subject, conceived as being multidimensional; it is personal (it is the subjective activity of a singular subject), interpersonal (the work activity takes its forms and meaning through interpersonal interactions), transpersonal (it is dynamically situated in the history of the place, and inherits from collective ways of doing, speaking, learning and acting, which it may also transform) and impersonal (it is situated in a specific work organisation, and deals in creative ways with its fixed rules, tasks and tools). Clot (1999) introduced the concepts of reality of the activity to go one step beyond the usual distinction between the task (what is expected from the worker, the normative ac-

1 "I am going well, to the extent that I feel capable of taking responsibility for my actions, of bringing things into existence and of creating relationships between things that would not come to them without me" (Canguilhem, 2002, p. 68, our translation).

2 Le pouvoir d'agir « mesure le rayon d'action effectif du sujet ou des sujets dans leur milieu professionnel habituel, ce qu'on appelle le rayonnement de l'activité, son pouvoir de recréation » (Clot, 2008, p. 13).

tivity) and the (realised) activity (what gets really done to answer the demands of the tasks and manage to do the work, while also taking into account one's physical and psychological condition). As stated by Yves Clot (Clot 2006, p.165): "The"real of the work"understood as what is difficult to achieve, to do or to say, but also as a crucible where we can express our full potential, or as pleasure of the possible – on the technical level as on the social level- is subject to social repression".

In this context, CSC have been developed as a means to support the workers' reflexivity on their own work practice and work organisation. CSC bear some similarities with the Change Lab methodology and Developmental Work Research of Y. Engeström and colleagues, which cannot be fully discussed here, but are discussed in (Kloetzer, Clot & Quillerou-Grivot 2015). In CSC, the researchers transform the conditions in which workers reflect on their own activity, in order to support collective elaboration, discussion and transformation of the work activity on all these dimensions: the personal and interpersonal can be developed, as well as the collective resources for thinking and action and the work organisation itself (transformation of rules, procedures, spaces, tools, tasks, and most importantly, objects of work and ways of collaborating, for example).

A CSC intervention interweaves two tracks. *"The first track is focused on conducting a clinical co-analysis of the work activities with a group of volunteers. The detailed analysis of actual work activities with volunteer subjects, who constitute the associated research group, is the vital first step required to question the organisational procedures and requirements in a documented and constructive way. On the second track, this detailed co-analysis, jointly performed with the workers within the steering committee formed for the intervention, triggers and and constrains the discussions between managers, workers, and the experts who design the work organisation. The clinical co-analysis with workers becomes a tool to transform the conditions of the dialogue at all hierarchical levels in the company."* (Kloetzer et al., 2015, p. 51). The term "associated research group" comes from I. Oddone's works (Oddone et al. 1977/1981), highlighting a specific research and training configuration in which the researchers support the efforts of the workers in analysing their own work activity. The relationships of action and research are here singular: research supports the development of action for the professionals taking part in the research.

CSC owe their name to the process of confrontation of one's own activity to the activity of the others, and to the perspective of the others on their own and one's own activity, which takes place in the research process. Confrontation to the alternative perspective of the other begins within the initial phase of the research, when researchers come to the workplace to observe the activity and interact with the workers. In comparison to observations conducted in ergonomics interventions, for example, here the researchers attempt to place the workers in the position to observe their own activity (Simonet, Caroly & Clot,2011). The confrontation process continues during the phases of simple confrontation and cross confrontation. In simple confrontation, the workers discover their own way of working with a refreshed look, thanks to its video recordings and the active presence and questioning of the researcher, who does not primarily attempt to understand but to make the workers *think* on their activity. In cross self-confrontations, this is intensified by the presence of a colleague, who engage into a peer discussion. Thanks to detailed, concrete, observable traces of the work activity, the riddle of the realised activity can be worked

through in dialogue. The CSC framework helps some aspects of the real activity to enter the public scene for potential debate, therefore highlighting this transformative potential. Expanding the power to act of the participants relies on structured confrontation, based to embodied experience, and dedicated to "*transform past experience into an instrument for dealing with future experiences*" (Clot 2008, p. 148). Video recordings of all the discussions constitute the raw data that the researchers work on to construct short video films, which will support the reflection and discussion process in the steering committee. These video recordings are edited, and then analysed and discussed repeatedly in diverse dialogue spaces: the simple self-confrontation interview; the cross self-confrontation interview; the meetings of the associated research group; the meetings of the steering committees; and the final restitution to all factory workers of the units in which the research took place. They differ by the participants involved, the material and temporal settings, the goals and instructions set by the researchers, and therefore their dialogical registers.

The video films are edited from the data collected in the research process: early in the research process (for Simple Self-Confrontations), they present only selected sequences of the work activity. The sequences are selected by the researchers, on the basis of the topics and moments discussed within the associated research group, as well as of their own understanding of the critical episodes in the field. Later in the process, they integrate sequences of work activity with sequences of dialogue in simple and cross self-confrontation interviews. They therefore present complex work situations and activities together with perspectives on these activities expressed in dialogue. As the researchers do not look for immediate convergences, but encourage silent thinking and the expression of disagreements, alternative views, questioning, and even controversies, these perspectives may well appear multiple. Therefore, the video films present real work activities with dialogues commenting these activities with a specific "colour", which is the colour of the joint efforts of investigation, exploration and analysis of the participants. Reversely, the researchers get an understanding of the work process: and of the nature of the expertise, not only through direct explanations by the workers, but also indirectly through controversies emerging between experts, and between experts and their hierarchy, in these dialogical frames.

In CSC intervention, researchers pursue firstly action purposes through the means of research, and then research purposes through the means of action. Professionals also pursue action purposes, but they agree to take the indirect way of researcher-supported work analysis and discussion in CSC. They might on the way discover what makes the uniqueness of their work activity (why it is worth doing it, what they know and what they do) and also experience its collective nature, esp. that the difficulties they face are largely shared by their colleagues. Facing the difficulties of work therefore becomes a collective endeavour. The research methods brought by the researchers open ways to pursue this collective endeavour, through the simple means of close work analysis and dialogue. Research per se happens twice in the research project: during the intervention, the researchers discuss their own ways of doing, what is happening in the field, and the way the CSC are progressing, in order to envision the next steps of their action in the field. They also analyse the data with the research participants, with a practical angle (they analyse it in order to support workers' reflexivity, organisational questioning and social transformation). After the intervention however, the researchers come back to their data, analysing the data collected during all the

project with a theoretical perspective. They then wonder what happened in the intervention, and how what they saw and documented relates to what they know about learning and development, health, or quality at work, for example.

3. Case study in a Swiss factory: co-analysing work, transforming dialogue in the organisation, questioning work practices.

We now report on a research in CSC recently conducted in a Swiss factory and show how this methodology supports the co-creation of knowledge and the development of dialogue within a group of workers and across hierarchical lines, therefore contributing to the deep discussion and transformation of work practices.

This research project has been conducted during 18 months in a Swiss factory manufacturing files for blacksmithing, forestry, ski industry, jewellery or surgery. Except for a limited number of references, for which there is massively automatised mass production, the production follows the laws of low volumes, high range of references (around 2000 file references in the company catalogue, with the additional possibility to manufacture special orders on demand, even for very small series of 1 to 10 items), with the constraints of reducing stocks and speeding delivery times. The production process is complex, with many steps, performed on a large pool of unique, sometimes 100 years old, home-made machines, each of them with its own setting features, qualities and moods: according to the temperature and moment of the day, for example, these "old ladies" may behave differently and require different technical gestures. A specific organisational context made the research project possible. First of all, the Human Resources Director and Production Director were both new in the company, and eager to solve some long-lasting difficulties: the HR Director's wish to create a new training centre to answer challenges of knowledge transmission met the Production Director's wish to analyse in detail some aspects of the production process in order to guarantee constant top quality. Secondly, the researchers and the HR Director knew each other well from a former research collaboration on a different topic and in a different context, and the HR Director had had the opportunity to personally test the Clinic of Activity approach on her own work activity. The first idea of a joint research project was launched, called: *"a file is a long story"*[3], a title capturing both the complexity of the production process and its social meaning for the local industry, after one of the researchers visited the factory and discussed with both Directors and some workers. Many negotiation steps (with the CEO, in the direction board, with staff representatives, with the teams, with the middle managers, with different workers from different departments, with the university) however were needed before the project could be fully fledged and launched. We decided to focus our efforts on a specific category of workers, who exemplified expertise in the sense of mastery of complex, embodied skills: the "setters". These expert workers are in charge of preparing and setting the machines. They are also responsible of the quantity and

3 In French : « Une lime, c'est toute une histoire », which is a word game with deux meanings of this sentence : it requires many complex steps ; and it has a long, local history.

quality of the production for a subset of machines. The research project was finally established at the crossroad of diverse but joint interests and concerns of these different stakeholders, with two joint research questions: How do expert setters proceed to get a high quality production? How to innovate in the transmission of expertise in the factory? The research project was then funded by a grant for innovation from a local foundation, which did not interfere within its objectives nor planned process.

From the beginning, the research project has been collaboratively designed. The research goal, question and method have been jointly defined by the researchers, the managers and the field workers. The negotiations with the managers included two parallel discussions: one was on the ethical engagement from the research and direction team on how the data and results of the research process, especially video films, were to be used. We contractualised who would have access to them, how they would use them, and whose property the data are, at all steps of the research process (covering rushes, working films, final films, and other final products like scientific papers). The idea of the researchers was mostly to preserve the confidentiality of the data collected and to give the workers, on an individual and collective basis, full rights to decide what to show and what not to show to their colleagues, managers and directors, as well as to preserve their own freedom and independence as researchers. The second discussion was on the boundaries of the expertise, and explored which kinds of files were the most interesting for this limited analysis. It introduced the complexity of work experience and processes into the construction of the research process. Following this discussion, two groups were created, which met regularly over the course of the project. The steering committee gathered seven people with different profiles (HR Director, Production Director, two line managers, one staff representative, researchers, later joined by delegates of the associated research group). The associated research group gathered six participants (five expert setters, one novice setter), who volunteered to explore their ways of working with us, and discuss them collectively. One of their first choice was to decide what to analyse. They selected relevant work sequences and paired for the CSC analysis. They selected six sequences of work in three different cutting types (piqué, chisel and squeegee). They recorded these work sequences, then they analysed and discussed them in simple self-confrontation, cross self-confrontation, and then within the associated research group and finally with the steering committee. They also introduced the research project to their colleagues during the final presentation in the factory with the following words:

"It wasn't easy for us to come up with acting. I hope that you will excuse our lack of knowledge in this field. You'll see that we present the basic settings of the different machines for the different shapes and sizes of steel files, as well as the quality control where we give instructions as to the making of the prongs as well as to the general quality of the files. Our work is not only to prepare the machines but also to keep in constant contact with the foreman, in order to get information about the priorities and organisation of the work. Also, with the other departments, internal accounting, the planning department, maintenance for the broken machines, the management of our fleet of machines and the staff who work with us, training new setters and operators. We need to have constant contact with our colleagues who execute these tasks upwards and downwards, setters, deburrers, in order to anticipate and manage our settings with the dippers, sanders and controllers during quality testing. Craftsmanship lies in the sum of all of these competencies. We hope to have met management's expectations in this film on our craft. We have tried to be clear and precise without going too much into technical detail. Above all, knowledge and craftsmanship is learnt on the job and needs time and patience."

These words are very interesting, as they refract the appropriation of the research project by the research participants: on the one hand, the research project was about playing in a movie, meeting the management's expectations (the researchers' expectations are not explicitly mentioned here). On the other hand, the research project was about discovering and uncovering complex dimensions of craftmanship: in the research project, the workers got the opportunity to show that they master a large repertoire of technical gestures and a technical vocabulary, which allow them to do precise settings, to monitor the quality of the production, and to quickly and smoothly deliver top quality products. Caring for the machines (thanks to maintenance and preparation of the machines, maintenance and redesign of tools) is part of their tasks. But they also learnt that they engage in multiple other activities, esp. interprofessional activities extended in the whole factory, to anticipate, regulate or optimise the production process: interprofessional and inter-departmental collaboration with foremen, accounting and sales, planning, maintenance, methods and engineering, as well as collaboration with numerous colleagues upstream and downstream the production process, and within their teams, with middle managers and other workers, critically contribute to the quality of the final production.

Taking a closer look at the last steering committee's meetings, we can observe how our films, edited by the researchers from rushes of the research project, reflect these realities of expert work in this factory. Both the technical and the organisational activities of the workers appear in these films, directly in the recorded work sequences, and indirectly through their sophisticated, critical and far-seeing comments in the CSC dialogues. The two directors therefore experience the relevance of the workers' critical look and analysis on a number of important issues for the production process. For example, regarding the quality of the products, the workers express their views ranging from the quality of supplies to the quality of the quality control. As far as the Production Director is ready to listen, the discussion with the workers offers tracks to solve some difficulties, reframes some other difficulties with a different angle, suggests things to change, and also allows discussion of why certain things will not change. Moreover, the content of the dialogue is less important than the experience of the dialogue itself: experiencing together that a simple dialogue across hierarchical lines, on important and well-documented issues of the work organisation and production process, is possible, productive, and safe, might be the most important outcome of this research project. It rejoins Gustavsen's claim that action research may offer the experience of democratic dialogue at the workplace, therefore maybe supporting also the extension of democracy in the public sphere (Gustavsen 2017).

Conclusion

We can now come back to our initial question: how does intervention transform the scientific process? Thanks to the case of the research project "a file is a long story", we can document these ways of doing research upside down more concretely.

Tab 2. How intervention transforms the scientific process: the case of the research project "A file is a long story"

	CSC intervention in the research project called *A file is a long story*
Definition of the research project/ Research question	What is professional expertise in the field of machine setting in the file industry? How can we innovate in learning at work and transmission of professional knowledge in this context?
Relationship to the field	Negotiating command of the Human Resource director (improve professional training by establishing an innovative competence centre) and Production director (secure file production by relying less on embodied experience of expert workers) and demand (interest for sharing embodied experience in order to share the realities of the factory with the direction and improve the situation). Negotiating the research process (CSC) and resources (choice of volunteer workers, participation during working hours, access to good meeting places, commitment of middle managers and direction in the project through steering committees meeting). Negotiating also the non-intervention of a HR assistant. Reminding the HR director of the specificities of the method and discussing its (non) generalisation.
Status of research participants	Participants in the research process are co-researchers in the associated research group or members of the steering committee (direction, trade union, middle management).
Research method	CSC: work analysis in the factory, with the workers; gathering of a group of volunteers for further investigation, use of the method of CSC, creation of dialogical spaces to support the co-analysis of data and transformation of organszation.
Research setting	Factory. Production site, training centre, and meeting rooms.
Ethics of the research	Researchers guarantee free and volunteer participation, respect of all participants, safe dialogical space, investigative but non-critical approach of each others' job, confidentiality of data collected and discussions (even from the direction), constant control of the research participants on what gets shown to others in the associated research group or steering committee.
Analysis of data	Co-analysis by the researchers and the research participants, based on sequences selected jointly by the researchers and by the participants. Discussion and validation of the final analyses by the research participants.
Ownership of data	Data are owned by the researchers, but kept under constant control of the research participants (even from the direction). Conditions of use have been negotiated in a research contract signed at the beginning of the research between the researchers and the company.
Communication of findings	General presentation of the findings to the workers in the factory, presentation of the research project and of some findings in the form of a video clip to shareholders. Presentation of the research in three conferences and two research papers. Presentation of the research in teaching at the university. Use of research findings within the new training centre in the factory.
Forms of findings	Four films (around 30 minutes each). Three conference presentations, two research papers. A video clip (2mn30). A blog post. Pictures (photographs of the research participants at work).
Diffusion of research findings	By the researchers and by the HR director. To the factory workers, shareholders, professional HR organisation, families of the factory workers who volunteered for the project, and new employees in the training centre. To academic colleagues and organisations, students.
Outcomes of the research project	New knowledge, some organizational transformations (linked to the relations of the factory workers with other departments, for example Methods & Engineering, Supplies, Scheduling and Quality Control), shared experience of different dialogical possibilities across the hierarchy lines, shared experience of the excellent contributions of the factory workers to broad organizational issues, shared experience within the associated research group, the steering committee, and in the factory production department, of collaboration with researchers in a CSC research & training project.

This research project highlights both the surprisingly powerful outcomes, but also the limited reach, of this CSC intervention. Although experienced researchers engaged in a time-consuming, complex, sophisticated, well-instrumented, delicate and fairly successful research project, backed by strong methodology and theoretical background, with the explicit aim to support development and organisational transformations at work, the research resulted, in the

time scope of the project, in only limited effective changes of the work organisation. Most of these effective changes relate to the recognition, organisation or quality of interprofessional collaborations. Some are more directly technical, linked to a redefinition of common ground and shared understanding regarding the quality of the products, as well as to a redesign of the quality control procedures. This might seem rather limited considering all our efforts. However, the research project produced something which is precious, rare and not easily found in work organisations: a specific quality of dialogue, defined as both precise and simple, a specific dialogical genre, in which close joint observation of the work realities nurtures the dialogical process, and extraordinary dialogical spaces, in which the different research participants made an experience that may be robust enough to survive their evanescence. What gets first transformed in this research project may be the way the different partners look at each others' expertise on the production process; as well as the kind of dialogues that can happen in the company across hierarchical levels, the objects of these dialogues, and the positioning of the partners in this dialogue. This might be little, but this little experience is critically important for democracy and social innovation.

Concluding with Becker's words:

"To have values or not to have values: the question is always with us. When sociologists undertake to study problems that have relevance to the world we live in, they find themselves caught in a crossfire. Some urge them not to take sides, to be neutral and do research that is technically correct and value free. Others tell them their work is shallow and useless if it does not express a deep commitment to a value position. This dilemma, which seems so painful to so many, actually does not exist, for one of its horns is imaginary. For it to exist, one would have to assume, as some apparently do, that it is indeed possible to do research that is uncontaminated by personal and political sympathies. I propose to argue that it is not possible and, therefore, that the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side we are on" (Becker 1967, p.239).

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Reviewed by *Egoitz Pomares*

The big wheel keeps on turning
On a simple line day by day
The earth spins on its axis
One man struggle while another relaxes

Hymn of the big wheel (Massive Attack, 1991).

Based on the close relationship between the nature of work and the productive structure of society, the University of Adger organised in Norway, together with NTNU Gjøvik, the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN) and the International Journal of Action Research (IJAR) a conference based on dialogue with a clear theme: to combine atomised discourses about the future from the perspective of digitisation and the sustainability of work, organisations, social models and the emergence of a new social contract. The seminar held between October 8th and 10th was titled *Coping with the Future.* In this scenario that summoned researchers, students, practitioners and people from the business world the book that carries the same title was presented.

Coping with the future is a book that starts from the academic tradition and is aimed at a wider community of professionals with a concern for the transformation of society, business and work. With a certain foundation and orientation based on philosophy, the book can be considered an epistemological manual, as a guide, which offers a solid overview of the current way of thinking based on historical trajectories. The book delves into the reflection of strategies that, based on sustainability, contribute to the exploration of uncertainty and disruption. The central discussion of the volume focuses on the exploration of the potential contribution of the social sciences from a systemic perspective in search of reasonable present itineraries looking to the future. Thus, it deepens into the options and possibilities of formulas to work in the present and prepare for the future. For this purpose the editors and 25 contributors pose a *big picture* turning it into a *wallet size*. These photographs, called by the authors "*Kodak moments*", refer to situations and positions that, taken for granted, change from night to morning. Based on these snapshots, the book explores the challenges of structural changes in the economy and global order. Mainly based on a Nordic perspective, models of cohesion and social development are reviewed and proposed, taking into account the technological revolution and innovation of our society. It is precisely the dialogue-based tradition of these countries that determines the present itineraries that will affect the work, organisations and the society of the future.

The book is organised in three sections. The first part of the book "*Future political, social and institutional landscape*" delves into the pressure on the structures and institutions that exert the disruptive changes generating an understanding of the past, the responsible

action of the present, and the preparation for the future from the perspective of social sciences. The scenario in this first section is established in a macro analysis of the future of the political, social and institutional environment. This means a deepening of economic policy and its involvement in work and organisations. Starting from the hybridisation of the dialectical traditions, the authors relate different models of political organisation that include *libertarian democracy, constitutional democracy, communitarian democracy and deliberative democracy*, in an argument between the universal and the local that entails the need to establish understandings between the policies at national and sub-national level. As a consequence of globalisation, this requires resilient institutions, based on stability and flexibility, to support innovation that promotes learning about social, institutional, technological and economic factors at local levels. The interdependence of these factors leads to the development of knowledge that should influence economic development policies and the challenges for the future, as allowed by the preservation of basic values and ideals.

The second part "*Knowing the future*" reviews the concept of knowledge, the way in which it is built, and what we can know about a future that presents as always uncertain. The development of knowledge from a pluralist perspective, based on imagination, establishes the main line of thought of the chapter introducing models of rationality in the taking of positive decisions for the future, which implies the development of sustainable strategies and methodologies to deal with unpredictability. For this, the role of the social sciences as a knowledge system, understood as a process of social construction, contributes to the creation of a repertoire about the past, the present and the future of social and economic development. This implies a better understanding of the degree of knowledge institutionalisation and within public and social spheres.

The third part *"Future technology, organisation and work"* incorporates reflections on the three great pillars of transformation; technology as a socially embedded phenomenon, pluralism and sustainable organisations, and new models of leadership. All of these aspects will have an impact on the redefinition of the link between working life and society, and the concept of work in a more globalised world, which appears to be digitally transformed and based on new forms of organisation.

Although the range of questions that compose the book have a Nordic origin, the experiences and reflections that complete the authors' results are refreshing. These contribute to topical issues about current challenges concerning European (such as Brexit) and global policy (as reflected in US policy today). The three parts build a Gestalt. A *Massive Attack* on how to understand the past, work in the present and prepare for the future that local, regional, national and EU policy makers face by means of effective intervention strategies to uncertainty and change. This contributes in the same way to researchers, leaders and people involved in social change, helping them to reflect critically on current practices and the exploration of new perspectives. The authors demonstrate an overall perspective, based on philosophy that is oriented to the analysis. This effort requires the attention of the reader. Understood as a criticism, the reading stimulates to the extent that some of the contents, i.e. the transformation of society, work and business, causes a tension and a state of constant reflection going back and forth. It is worth mentioning that the book is accompanied by illustrations in an ironic sense, and that throughout the reading diverse references to cases of study can be found. Each of them is strongly linked with the themes and contents developed in each of the sections.

Starting from the above there is a question of interest that deserves to be explained. The beginnings of what is now known as *Quality of Working Life movement* that started in Norway around the democratisation of work by the Tavistock Institute in 1960 and the sub-title of the book *"Rethinking assumptions for society, business and work"* have a common denominator that unites the past, the present and the future; the term assumption. The concept describes the underlying assumptions on which the behaviour of a group is based. The concept became popular with the work of W.R. Bion, one of the founders of the Tavistock Institute in 1947 and who later chaired the Planning Committee that reorganised the (new) Institute for Human Relations. Bion's work in-group dynamics was compiled in 1961 in the book *Experiences in groups* as an exploration of the processes initiated by the complex experience of being and participating in a group. Bion specifically identified three basic assumptions: *dependency*, *fight-flight* and *pairing*. When a group adopts any of these basic assumptions, it interferes with the task that the group tries to perform (work). The author believed that the interpretation of the basic assumptions of group dynamics would give rise to a potential perspective with respect to effective cooperative group work. In the current scenario, cooperative work comprises a pillar that, based on dialogue, potentially allows us to determine the route to navigate when uncertainty and disruption determine the state of our society.

As the authors of the reviewed book point out (pp. 202) organisations, as groups, play an important role in modern society, assuming an undervalued role. The organisations of the future cannot be in conflict with society. This means that the future requires an understanding of public and private organisations, consistent with systemic sustainability (pp. 213).

Overall the book can contribute and be very useful for those researchers, policy makers, business professional and practitioners willing to understand the times we are living through, and offers an open-minded attitude to current and future societal challenges. Readers with interest in philosophy, political science, sociology, economics and technology will find theoretical foundations, but also well contextualised examples, allowing an epistemological navigation in a structured route. Its reading could help in exploring, in a reflective and deeply ingrained manner, about the past, present and future. Submerged in this stage readers will find familiar routes that offer new landscapes, allowing to rethink *normal* and *alternative* models.

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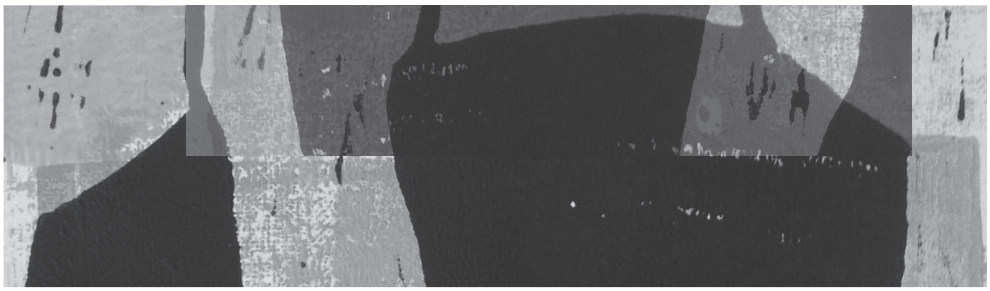

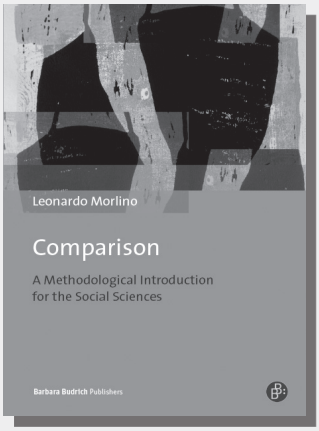

Leonardo Morlino

Comparison

A Methodological Introduction for the Social Sciences

2018 • 128 pp. • Pb. • 19,90 € (D) • 20,50 € (A)
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Comparison is an essential research method in political science. This book helps students to understand comparison as an academic instrument, to grasp its necessity and its effective purpose for research. For that reason the author answers three simple' questions: why compare; what to compare; and, how to compare. Doing so, he considers not only the comparative tradition but he takes also into account methodological innovations of the last two decades.

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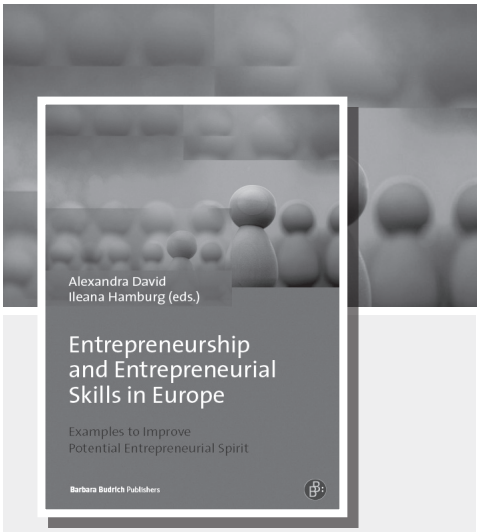

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